

## Daniels Diversity & Equity Committee

Minutes – August 13, 2020

### In Attendance

- Jane Wolff (Chair)
- John Shnier
- Nene Brode
- Nicole Tratnik
- Mary Lou Lobsinger
- Randa Omar
- Jenny Hill
- Janice Miyagi
- Danijela Puric- Mladenovic
- Aziza Chaouni
- Clara James
- Mauricio Quiros Pacheco
- Mitchell Akiyama
- Markus Peterson
- Bomani Khemet
- Andrea McGee
- Fadi Masoud

Minute taker: Harold Tan

Convened: 5:04 pm

### 1. Introductions

Chair introduced guests from the Black Architects and Interior Designers Association (BAIDA):

- Anne-Marie Armstrong
- Shane Laptiste
- Michael Otchie
- Farida Abu-Bakare
- Camille Mitchell

### 2. Final Approval of August 6 Minutes

Moved: Mitchell Akiyama

Seconded: Nicole Tratnik

Motion carried. Opposed: None. Abstentions: Fadi Masoud.

### 3. Notes from Chair – Questions

For the Fall 2020 term, meetings will no longer be held on Thursdays at 5:00 pm.

**Action:** Harold to send out Doodle poll and explore alternate meeting dates.

### 4. Presentation: Black Architects and Interior Designers Association (BAIDA)

Chair invited BAIDA to present. Highlights from presentation:

- BAIDA formed in 2017
- Non-profit with over 100 members
- Aim is to be an overarching support for our professions
- Started initially as social gatherings
- We later recognized the need to develop our own professional network
- Four prongs are:
  - Advocacy
  - Mentorship
  - Networking
  - Community engagement
- Four Task Forces:
  - **Advocacy Task Force.** Support of licensed members in the workplace with regard to recruitment, staffing, pay parity, continuing education and skills training
  - **Mentorship Task Force.** Support and development of our Undergraduate, Graduate Students and Intern Architects members
  - **Networking Task Force.** Strategy and development of partnerships with local membership bodies and local firms
  - **Outreach Task Force.** Support of local communities initiatives, not-for profit organizations, black businesses, schools, and agencies
- We started to see the need to step away from the social aspects and start to build our own professional network
- American Institute of Architects (AIA) collects race-based data

- In Canada, organizations don't recognize race-based data
- Our founding members sat together and tried to create a structure we felt would help build that sense of network and support
- Over the past three years, we have had the opportunity to collaborate with many organizations:
  - OCAD U reception for Kunle Adeyemi
  - Breakfast with Francis Kere (collaboration with Interior Design Show)
  - Herman Miller
- **Outreach.** Importance of tapping into the pipeline early in the process when students are considering careers in Architecture, etc.
- **BAIDA Survey.** A few months ago, BAIDA decided to design a survey
- So far have received several dozen responses
- We realized that we are an incredibly diverse group of professionals with various backgrounds both academically and professionally
- We will share the survey data with our members
- Help us understand what networks we can create

### **Discussion: Collaborative Possibilities**

**Question:** Why did BAIDA decide to create this survey? What kind of information are you hoping to get?

**Response:** When we first started BAIDA, we thought we would be focused more on networking and mentorship. Over the past two months, our group has heard many stories from our members, and we wanted to capture those stories. Since we had already created a safe space for people to tell us their stories, it made sense for us to conduct the survey ourselves rather than hire an external organization to do it for us.

Survey data is intended to be a catalyst for letting people know how we're feeling, what we're dealing with, and our history. People didn't know we existed and have been part of this community.

**Question:** How do you think the survey data will help with your planning?

**Response:** Survey has allowed us to reach a lot more members that we would have been able to do previously. We found members in Vancouver, Edmonton, Montreal, etc. We are seeing a need that is not just local, and the data will influence the plans we make for the next 2, 5 and 10 years.

**Question:** Are you tapping into the knowledge and expertise of those who preceded you?

**Response:** We are reaching out the trail blazers in our community and seeking their advice.

**Question:** How are you reaching out to students? What does mentorship look like right now?

**Response:** We are connected, and are making connections, with various school boards across Ontario. Also have been using a lot of social media. BAIDA members are connecting with the alma mater. Some of us are also teaching in our alma mater, so we have a direct connection to students.

We are creating a database of mentors who are looking for mentees. Mentees will have access to a mentor list, and they can approach potential mentors directly. BAIDA currently doesn't have the capacity to match mentors with mentees.

Right now, we have a lot of peer mentorship. We have an active Facebook page where people share information about design competitions. Members can collaborate on projects. Currently, mentorship is not one-on-one, and we don't have the capacity.

**Question:** Daniels Faculty Outreach Office is already working on a number of initiatives with BAIDA. Do you have any advice on best practices and ways to sensitively move forward?

**Response:** Reach out to people and bring them into the conversation. Make them participants and designers in the process. Get feedback. Right now, we're focusing on low-hanging fruit like getting one-to-one feedback on portfolio reviews for BIPOC students.

Pipeline is also important. You need to know from Grade 9 the kind of courses required for Architecture. How do you get children interested early in their education? Also need to educate our community (and parents) on career possibilities. When your child in grade 5 says "I want to be an Architect", what do you say?

We are working to make connections with guidance counsellors in school boards (eg. Toronto District School Board) to build their knowledge capacity. We want to expose children in the critical 11-12 years age range to under-represented fields.

**Comment from Daniels Outreach:** We are working with BAIDA on school outreach pilot project that we hope we can replicate in communities throughout Canada. Another example of collaboration is that Alex Josephson sponsored a space for a Black student to participate in this summer's Daniels Bootcamp. We found the student through BAIDA.

**Response:** Answer has to be long-term and requires a broader vision. Initiatives done by Daniels Outreach is great because it provides a diversity of experiences and doesn't treat the Black community as a monolithic block. It's about listening to the community and creating programs that meet their needs.

**Comment from Daniels Outreach:** One of the unintended consequences of COVID is that I'm now connected with all of my peers in other U of T Faculties who are doing outreach. Happy to connect BAIDA to this network.

**Response:** That would be great. It's important for us to reach out across other disciplines. News about the first Black Valedictorian in Medicine had a huge impact. Opportunities for Daniels Faculty to create momentum as we move towards hiring a Diversity & Equity Officer, and support from our new Interim Dean.

**Action:** Daniels Outreach to facilitate connection with U of T Outreach Network and BAIDA.

**Comment from faculty:** Medicine has been more open to embracing disciplines. Architecture and Landscape Design more restrictive in its outlook. We need to look broader at communities that aren't simply Ontario or Canada-based. If you go to Global Architecture History Theory Criticism forum, you will see a broader range of practitioners who engage in questions around race. There's a broader world that needs to come back into that will help us understand what we're engaging.

**Comment from faculty:** opportunity for BAIDA to be involved in planned events, especially in February 2021 re: Emerging Architect Voices in Africa.

**Action:** A. Chaouni to connect with BAIDA. Also opportunity for M. Otchie (BAIDA) to feed into discussion, given his connections to Ghana.

**Question:** Is there a way for Forestry students to be involved?

**Response:** Opportunities for Forestry to connect with Landscape Designers. BAIDA is reaching out to Planners and Interior Designers, as we want to be inclusive.

**Question:** Are there ways that this Committee specifically might work with/learn from/complement/support BAIDA? Committee can push idea of transformation into curriculum (eg. B. Khemet and J. Wolff have been conversations with program directors in short and medium term), outreach, diversity and equity training for search committees, and programming. Are there other things we can do?

**Response:**

BAIDA needs assistance in having access to students. Would be helpful if there were structure/processes in place to connect Daniels students to BAIDA mentor/mentee relationships. Also looking for Daniels faculty willing to be mentors.

BAIDA values its ongoing relationship with Outreach, and look forward to other ways to collaborate re: student events, educational events (eg. seminars), etc.

Daniels and University of Toronto (as a whole) have a lot of influence. To have you as partners would enhance BAIDA's ability to broaden its network.

**Question:** Are there other Ontario institutions/organizations that do outreach well?

**Response:** Daniels Spectrum (Regent Park neighbourhood) have been doing some cool things. Harbourfront has also done great outreach. Depends on intention. U of T Engineering has had a long-standing history of innovative outreach, but their goals have been somewhat different from Medicine's.

Outreach is also in charge of events and public programming. Daniels has a student group called Daniels Arts Directive, and they are creating a mural. It's their initiative, and Outreach is support them.

Outreach also has influence over using the Daniels buildings as a venue for external organizations to hold events. If BAIDA is looking for space, we can have that discussion.

**Response from BAIDA:** we are always struggling to find space, so that would be amazing once things start to normalize. We are creating a social media space to house nascent artistic material, and it would be great if that material could eventually be turned into an exhibit.

**Response:** Robert Wright, the Interim Dean, is keen to support the work of the Committee. Possibility for Daniels basement exhibition space to be used, particularly if there is Daniels student participation.

Daniels is just creating the governance structure for a new Exhibition Committee. They are tasked with setting the rules and process for what gets exhibited. Outreach can arrange meeting with BAIDA and Exhibition Committee to discuss.

**Response from BAIDA:** We are closely aligned with NOMA (National Organization of Minority Architects—US-based), and are having conversations with colleagues internationally. If we have a space, it would be a great way to collaborate and involve international partners.

**Action:** Outreach to connect BAIDA with Exhibition Committee.

**Question:** Who should students contact if they are seeking BAIDA mentors re: Fall portfolio?

**Response:** Undergraduate and graduate students can reach out to C. Mitchell.

## **5. Motion to adjourn**

Moved: Danijela Puric- Mladenovic

Seconded: Janice Miyagi

Motion carried. Opposed: None. Abstentions: None

Meeting end: 6:18 pm