

Strengthening KPSOM's Culture: An Initial Action Plan

January 4, 2021

KPSOM is driven by its mission to provide a world-class medical education that ignites a passion for learning, a desire to serve, and an unwavering commitment to improve the health and well-being of patients and communities. The school has had significant early achievements, including the safe delivery of in-person classroom, clinical, and community teaching in the midst of a pandemic; incorporation of anti-racism principles throughout the curriculum; and ongoing improvements in various aspects of the medical education experience over the semester.

The school has also faced challenges. Some are related to external factors such as the pandemic, and others have revealed work that our relatively young enterprise needs to undertake. We realize that fulfilling our mission and values requires a culture that fosters strong relationships between and among students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

Stated simply, we are going to place greater focus on the culture of our community. We will fully develop the structures, processes, and norms needed to establish and maintain a healthy and ever-evolving balance among individual autonomy, teamwork, mutual respect, inclusion and equity, limits and boundaries, and collective purpose.

We will take a series of concrete steps designed to co-create the culture and community we aspire to be. The goals of our action plan are to:

- Accelerate and advance the further building of a culture that embraces inclusion, equity, and anti-racism. Internal and external experts will work with students, faculty, staff, and administrators to undertake together a comprehensive cultural assessment of our school.
- Deepen our processes for community-building conversations and governance. We will fully operationalize all affinity groups and standing committees.
- Strengthen communication channels throughout the school. We will survey school members to evaluate current communication approaches and develop additional or alternative strategies.
- Build a more school-centered infrastructure. We will enhance the human resources and communications functions to serve the specific needs of an academic community.
- Establish an independent pathway for addressing concerns. We will create a new position of Ombudsperson to help ensure that all community members—students, faculty, staff, and administrators—receive fair and equitable treatment when matters of concern or complaints are raised.

1. Accelerate and advance the further building of the school's culture:

- a. We have engaged the Winters Group (<https://www.wintersgroup.com/>), a global diversity and inclusion consulting group, to undertake a comprehensive cultural assessment of our school, including, but not limited to, identifying and addressing bias. We expect that with their help, we will better live up to and enhance our commitment to equity, inclusion, and diversity and make additional strides toward building the culture to which we aspire.
- b. The Winters Group will begin to work with us in January 2021 and conduct listening sessions and interviews with students, faculty, staff, and administrators; make

recommendations based on gaps identified; and assist as needed with developing additional programs and further training and education.

- c. Lindia Willies-Jacobo, MD, who was recently appointed to the new position of Senior Associate Dean for Admissions and Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity (EID), and Walter Conwell, MD, MBA, Associate Dean for Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity, will partner with the Winters Group and accelerate the EID office's anti-racism work ([KPSOM Anti-Racism Action Plan.pdf](#)). The EID Advisory Committee, a standing school committee consisting of students, faculty, and staff, will also play a major role in this work.
 - d. This first assessment will establish a critical baseline against which future progress can be measured. Additional assessments will follow.
- 2. Full implementation of all major governance committees and affinity groups:**
- a. Governance committees and affinity groups are intended to support our mission, create community, and provide a foundation for addressing individual and school-wide opportunities and challenges. We believe the full functionality of these entities will improve communication and meaningful community contributions on a broad range of issues.
 - b. Over the past several months, all planned student affinity groups, staff and faculty affinity groups, elected and selected student class board positions, and standing faculty governance committees have been initiated. Most of the groups have already held their inaugural meetings.
 - c. The Learning Environment and Professionalism (LEAP) Committee is responsible for setting and monitoring the standards of professionalism for students, faculty, and administrators. Working in conjunction with the Faculty Conduct Committee and the Student Progress and Promotion Committee, the LEAP Committee will provide a mechanism for students, faculty, and staff to have input regarding concerns in our school environment.
 - d. By the end of January 2021, all groups will begin meeting regularly.
 - e. By the end of June 2021, the groups will conduct early assessments of their structures, processes, and functioning and propose modifications if needed.
- 3. Evaluation of our school communication and communications channels:**
- a. By the end of February 2021, the Communications Office will survey the community to learn more about how members have been engaging with our existing communication tools and crowd-source ideas to enhance conversations among us. A key organizational focus is better two-way communication.
 - b. Pending input from the survey, the monthly student town hall meetings with the Dean and all-staff and faculty meetings, as well as regular and as-needed email communications from the Dean and others, will continue.
 - c. We will find additional ways to convene students, faculty, staff, and administrators; create opportunities for shared experiences among all groups; and encourage ongoing meaningful dialogue.
 - d. Within limitations imposed by the pandemic, we will explore and welcome creative new ways to bring us together to continue building community.
- 4. Development of a more school-centered infrastructure:**
- a. In January 2021, we will begin developing plans for bringing more human resources and communications functions into the school, while continuing to leverage Kaiser Permanente's experience and expertise. Our goal will be to develop internal resources and capabilities focused on the varied needs of our academic community.

- b. We will begin the planning process now with an understanding that these actions are structural and long-term. We aim to release and begin executing these plans before the start of the next academic year.
5. **Creation of the position of Ombudsperson:**
- a. In many institutions, the Ombudsperson serves as an independent, neutral mediator to ensure that everyone—students, faculty, staff, and administrators—receive fair and equitable treatment when matters of concern or complaints are raised.
 - b. The Ombudsperson facilitates communication and assists parties in reaching mutually acceptable agreements when conflicts arise.
 - c. The school will develop and post a job announcement for the Ombudsperson by the end of February 2021. Representatives of students, faculty, and staff will participate in the search and selection advisory process.

These initial steps to strengthen our culture and align it with the mission and values of the school are part of an ongoing process that will require continued commitment of time and resources. Although each step will be hard-won, this work is critical to fulfilling the vision of Bernard J. Tyson and so many others who made this school a reality. We commit because we know that the school is worth the effort, and that the school has shown itself capable of becoming not only everything we initially set out to build, but much more.