

Strengthening KPSOM's Culture: An Evolving Action Plan Framework
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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 year.

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 now placing greater focus on the culture of our community. We are continuing to 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.

Since the first action plan framework was announced in January 2021, we have been taking a series of concrete steps designed to co-create the culture and community we aspire to be. The original framework goals were to:

- Accelerate and advance the further building of a culture that embraces inclusion, equity, and anti-racism. Internal and external experts 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.

Details related to each goal are described below, including our view of the progress made as of this writing. We will continue to update this document in future communications, adding new sections (italicized) as appropriate and adjusting older text to reflect progress.

During the first three months of 2021, Deans Schuster and Willies-Jacobo hosted a series of 26 voluntary small-group listening sessions with a total of over 280 students, faculty, and staff. We thank everyone who participated and include below information about the most concrete suggestions from those sessions that were not already contemplated in the action plan framework. These suggestions are organized by relevant goals. Therefore, some goals include several suggestions, while others include none.

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

- a. We have engaged the Winters Group (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. With their help, we expect to 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.

- The Winters Group began working with us in January 2021 and has conducted an inclusion readiness assessment and interviews with a number of students, faculty, staff, and administrators. They will follow up with a survey later in the year and then advise on next steps.
- b. Lindia Willies-Jacobo, MD, who holds 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, are working with the Winters Group and accelerating the EID Office's anti-racism work ([KPSOM Anti-Racism and EID Plan.pdf](#)). The EID Advisory Committee, a standing school committee consisting of students, faculty, and staff, has been convened and has begun advising the Dean on this EID and anti-racism work.
- c. We include information about concrete actions most often suggested by students, faculty, and staff in the January-March 2021 small-group sessions with respect to the school's culture, as well as departments and offices that will take primary responsibility:
- Engage the Office of EID to continue conducting bias training for new students, staff, and faculty and developing and overseeing ongoing educational programs for all members of the school community.
 - Engage the Offices of Human Resources, Academic and Community Affairs, and Student Affairs and all leaders to develop trainings and coachings to support environments that encourage all students, faculty, and staff to understand the various avenues for raising issues of concern.
 - Engage the Offices of Human Resources and Academic and Community Affairs to offer more social and team-building events for faculty and staff within and across departments and offices, and school-wide. Some events are already occurring, and more are being planned.
 - Engage the Offices of Academic and Community Affairs and Medical Education to develop more robust approaches to orient faculty to their roles and connect them to faculty development resources. A faculty-wide needs assessment regarding faculty development will be conducted this summer.
 - Engage the Office of Research and Scholarship to work with stakeholders in developing a long-term plan for facilitating EID scholarship by students and faculty.
 - Engage the Offices of Human Resources and Academic and Community Affairs to support departments and offices in developing proposals to enhance work-life integration for faculty and staff.
 - Engage all departments, offices, and schoolwide leadership to continue discussing progress and emerging issues with students, faculty, and staff.

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. All the groups are now meeting regularly.
- c. One of these committees, the Learning Environment and Professionalism (LEAP) Committee, is responsible for setting and monitoring the standards of professionalism for students, faculty, and faculty administrators. Working in conjunction with the Faculty Conduct Committee and the Student Progress and Promotion Committee, the LEAP Committee provides a mechanism for students, faculty, and staff to have input regarding concerns in our school environment.
- d. By the end of June 2021, the committees will have conducted early examinations of their structures, processes, and functioning and proposed modifications if needed.

3. Evaluation of our school communication and communications channels:

- a. The Office of Marketing and Communications 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. The survey, originally scheduled for the end of February 2021, has gone through several refinements with faculty experts on survey design and is now scheduled for June 2021.
- b. Pending input from the survey, periodic 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. We will explore and welcome creative new ways to bring us together to continue building community, adapting as the pandemic restrictions are eased.
- e. We include concrete actions most often suggested by students, faculty, and staff in the January-March 2021 small-group sessions, as well as departments and offices that will take primary responsibility:
 - Engage the Offices of Academic and Community Affairs, Human Resources, and Student Affairs to work with the Office of Marketing and Communications, and General Counsel as needed, to develop protocols for communicating decisions within and across relevant offices and departments where possible while still maintaining necessary privacy.
 - Engage schoolwide leadership to institute a comment feature for relevant members of the school community regarding major new policies and procedures. This has already been completed, with institution of a community comment period before submission of policies to the Policy Advisory Committee ([Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Policies](#)).
 - Engage the Offices of Marketing and Communications and Technology Services to develop dedicated communication platforms including a user-friendly campus calendar, a webpage that posts schoolwide updates in real time, and both virtual and physical communication boards for students, faculty, and staff groups to post schoolwide announcements.
 - Engage the Offices of Marketing and Communications and the Offices of Academic and Community Affairs, Human Resources, and Student Affairs to develop processes to increase communication from committees, affinity groups, and other groups

about their work, their meetings, and how people can join. Planning for posting of standing committee reports is already in progress.

4. Development of a more school-centered infrastructure:

- a. In January 2021, we began 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 are continuing the planning process now with an understanding that these actions are structural and long-term and may require a reorganization of our infrastructure and additional staffing. We aim to release and begin executing these plans before the start of the next academic year.
- c. Concrete actions most often suggested by students, faculty, and staff in the January-March 2021 small-group sessions include the following:
 - Engage all departments, offices, and schoolwide leadership to identify administrative approval processes within and across departments and offices that might be streamlined or better coordinated to increase efficiency and effectiveness.
 - Engage all departments, offices, and schoolwide leadership to identify barriers and inefficiencies involving non-school parties that might be improved.

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—receives 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 developed and posted a job announcement for the Ombudsperson in March 2021. Representatives of students, faculty, and staff are participating 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.