



MEMORANDUM

To: UUA Board of Trustees

From: Carey McDonald, Executive Vice President

Re: Staff updates - COVID-19 response, and Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace

Date: January 19, 2022

COVID-19 Pandemic

As the omicron surge has swept across the country, the UUA has revised its workplace policies to respond. Last fall, we planned to lift the travel and event restriction on January 3, 2022 which had been in place since March 2020. The staff travel restriction was extended to January 28, after which we are encouraging staff to make their own decisions about travel, in consultation with their supervisors, and based on their personal and local risk profile. We have also canceled the in-person portion of the Pacific Western Regional Assembly (February 4-6), so the event will be entirely virtual.

We had also planned to allow staff to work regularly and host meetings at 24 Farnsworth starting in January. Staff have had the option of working individually at Farnsworth St in “limited access mode” since September. Instead, we have now asked staff to work from home if possible during January. We hope to get back to the next phase of re-opening the building in March, depending on the path of the pandemic.

Recognizing that the pandemic is likely to continue to unfold in unexpected ways, we are also working to revise our guidance to congregations to anticipate this need for flexibility. Rather than advice on how to conduct specific activities, we are shifting to emphasize overall strategies and risk analysis. We hope this will create a more “evergreen” approach to our communications and materials. This will encourage congregations to engage their own communities in the key decisions rather than expecting the UUA to continuously shift its guidance.

Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI)

Taquiena Boston retired on January 3, 2022 as Special Advisor to the President for Inclusion, Equity and Change. Her service as a UUA staff member and executive over two decades has been invaluable to the Association. In her last few months, she helped form a new group of staff members for the second iteration of our workplace Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Team.

Shige Sakurai has been hired as Taquiena’s successor to be the Director of Equity, Belonging and Change starting February 7. With Shige, the role has been revised to have a broader scope. They will continue to focus on convening JEDI team and leading workplace change in partnership with the Human Resources staff and our Staff Group Directors’ Council. However, the position will also have broader focus on thought-leadership and communication for institutional change across the UUA. This includes building organizational capacity to implement the 2020 recommendations from the Commission on

Institutional Change. We anticipate Shige will serve as the staff liaison to the UUA accountability commission, currently in development as one of the COIC's key recommendations.

We have also added a new Staff Learning and Relations Director in the Human Resources department, also expected to start in February (announcement forthcoming). This person will be a key collaborator with the Director of Equity, Belonging and Change, working closely with the JEDI Team to address workplace culture and practice issues. They will support learning community opportunities, feedback systems and direct conversations to address concerns and issues, manage staff culture assessments, and oversee related policies and programs.