

June 5, 2017

## **“Ever-widening Circles of Solidarity”: Interim Hiring Procedures for UUA Staff**

In response to the controversy surrounding the hiring process for a Regional Lead on the Unitarian Universalist Association’s Congregational Life staff group, the UUA’s Interim Co-Presidents announced a modified hiring freeze until new Interim Hiring Procedures could be adopted.

This is a time of leadership transition. These Interim Hiring Procedures are being put in place by the UUA’s Interim Co-Presidents. They are intended to remain in place until reviewed by the Commission on Institutional Change. The Commission will evaluate experience with these procedures and may well recommend modifications or a different approach. Beacon Press, which already exceeds the goals outlined below, has been exempt from the freeze and will not be covered by these procedures.

### **Background**

Foundational to our most important values as a community of faith is our collective aspiration to resist and dismantle oppression within our institutions. That religious imperative is grounded in our affirmation of the inherent worth and dignity of every person and our vision of a Beloved Community embodying justice, equity and compassion.

The UUA By-Laws provide the broadest and most permanent description of that central commitment:

“Systems of power, privilege, and oppression have traditionally created barriers for persons and groups with particular identities, ages, abilities, and histories. We pledge to replace such barriers with ever-widening circles of solidarity and mutual respect.” (UUA By-Laws C-2.3 Inclusion)

Given that aspiration, what would a faithful and lawful staff hiring process look like? Our answer has been a robust “equal opportunity” approach: As Rule G-2.3 states: we have a special responsibility to “promote the full participation of persons in all of [our] activities ... without regard to racialized identity, ethnicity, gender expression, gender identity, sex, disability, affectional or sexual orientation, family



and relationship structures, age, language, citizenship status, economic status, or national origin and without requiring adherence to any particular interpretation of religion.”

Each of these identities is important and we affirm the intersectionality of the operation of privilege. Based on the priority set by the Board of Trustees in its charge to the Interim Co-Presidents and its call to “make concrete steps toward expanding the number of professional people of color, employed within Unitarian Universalism,” these Interim Hiring Procedures will focus on racial/cultural identity, not to the exclusion of other identities, but as a primary focus while the Commission on Institutional Change does its work. Existing UUA procedures designed to provide equal opportunity for persons with these other identities, some of whom are persons of color/indigenous, will remain in place.

What happens, however, when that equal opportunity approach fails to overcome the cultural inertia of white privilege and results in the maintenance of a culture of white supremacy? What steps must we, as faithful people, take to bring our reality into greater alignment with our shared vision?

At this time, we believe that the pledge contained in our By-Laws calls us to set specific goals and to expect and inspect the **outcomes** of our hiring policies rather than the **intent** alone. Our experience confirms that it is not enough to operate “without regard” for race and culture.

This approach has been called for before. The 1981 Institutional Racism audit called for an Affirmative Action policy for the Association’s staff with “plans for recruitment, goals, and timetables, and procedures and guidelines for effective implementation and effective monitoring of progress.” That Audit described the language of intent in numerous General Assembly Resolutions as “void of tangible meaning or realistic possibilities of implementation.” Providing “equal employment opportunity” especially in “key decision-making positions” (Equal Opportunity in Employment, 1973) was judged then to be an inadequate response. After more than 35 years, though progress has certainly been made, we affirm that judgment and the need for an approach to hiring that will produce results consistent with our aspirations.

In some job categories, the availability of “qualified” persons of color has posed a challenge. We recognize that “qualified” can be a code word for white and privileged. Living into a staff composition that reflects more



nearly the racial/cultural makeup of the world we are called to serve may well require broadening searches geographically (as Beacon Press has done) or adjusting compensation. It will certainly require placing significant value on the lived experience of persons of color/indigenous persons as an important element in assessing the overall skills and gifts an individual would bring to work for the Association.

The Association's responsibility as an employer does not end with hiring. We will need to create an environment in which a racially/culturally diverse workforce can flourish, not flounder. On-going staff training (like the White Supremacy Teach-In) and continuing education opportunities tailored to the specific needs of particular employees will need to be part of our normal process.

### **New Interim Hiring Procedures**

The new interim procedures begin with the establishment of numerical goals, informed by comparison to other institutions and assessment of our own past experience. This approach has been used in the corporate, the educational, and the religious worlds. It is the approach used by the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) within our own community. This approach shifts attention from intention to outcome.

Numerical goals will be set for racial/cultural diversity for the UUA staff. The percentage of Persons of Color/Indigenous Persons will be the measure.

These goals will apply to the staff overall and to subsets of the staff.

The UUA President, Chief Operating Officer, and Leadership Council will be accountable for movement toward these goals, as will all hiring managers. The Director of Human Resources will have significant responsibility to manage and resource hires under this new policy, employee support systems, and staff continuing education.

When these goals are not met, the hiring of Persons of Color/Indigenous Persons takes on added importance and value for the UUA.



In circumstances when qualified Persons of Color/Indigenous Persons do not apply, hiring managers will broaden search and recruitment efforts. Geographical flexibility may be required.

Interim or temporary employees may be needed while expanded search and recruitment efforts take place.

No individual will be terminated to achieve these goals.

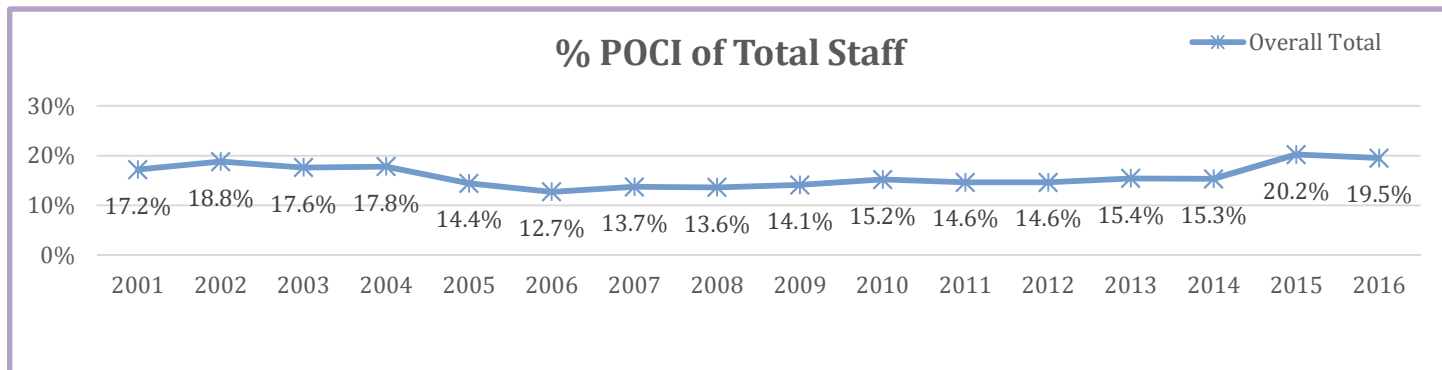
The staff and/or subsets of the staff will never be penalized for achieving greater diversity than called for in these policies.

### The Goals

What outcomes can we set as our goals?

Some Comparisons:

The overall POCI (Person of Color/Indigenous Person) diversity within the UUA staff has varied from 13% to 20% over the last 15 years.



EEOC 2015 Statistics	National Aggregate		Massachusetts		Religious - MA*		Religious - Local**		UUA - 2016	
	POCI	White	POCI	White	POCI	White	POCI	White	POCI	White
Executive/Senior Level Officials and Managers	14.01%	85.99%	8.54%	91.46%	13.68%	86.32%	12.60%	87.40%	18.18%	81.82%
First/Mid-Level Officials and Managers	23.26%	76.74%	14.77%	85.23%	16.55%	83.45%	15.99%	84.01%	10.26%	89.74%
Professionals	27.86%	72.14%	20.87%	79.13%	16.58%	83.42%	15.83%	84.17%	16.25%	83.75%
Technicians	33.44%	66.56%	25.85%	74.15%	15.04%	84.96%	14.52%	85.48%	0.00%	0.00%
Sales Workers	36.32%	63.68%	22.20%	77.80%	22.39%	77.61%	13.51%	86.49%	0.00%	100.00%
Administrative Support Workers	38.53%	61.47%	24.82%	75.18%	25.19%	74.81%	26.23%	73.77%	24.64%	75.36%
Craft Workers	31.26%	68.74%	20.84%	79.16%	35.77%	64.23%	35.29%	64.71%	0.00%	0.00%
Operatives	43.09%	56.91%	40.08%	59.92%	9.20%	90.80%	6.45%	93.55%	0.00%	0.00%
Laborers	57.12%	42.88%	45.88%	54.12%	27.22%	72.78%	25.91%	74.09%	0.00%	0.00%
Service Workers	53.55%	46.45%	48.23%	51.77%	29.35%	70.65%	28.30%	71.70%	80.00%	20.00%
<b>Overall Total Participation Rate</b>	<b>37.72%</b>	<b>62.28%</b>	<b>27.46%</b>	<b>72.54%</b>	<b>22.80%</b>	<b>77.20%</b>	<b>21.98%</b>	<b>78.02%</b>	<b>19.51%</b>	<b>80.49%</b>

The UUA staff, just over 19% POCI in 2016, is significantly less diverse than the profile of all US organizations, which average 38% POC, and is even less diverse than all Massachusetts organizations, which average 27% POC. (EEOC 2015 Statistics)



\*Religious, Grantmaking, Civil, Professional, and Similar Organizations (Massachusetts)

\*\* Religious, Grantmaking, Civil, Professional, and Similar Organizations (Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA)

The UUA has a higher percentage of members in the “lower paid service worker” categories which tend to increase reported diversity in other organizations given the concentration of POCI workers in lower paid jobs.

Overall, the UUA comes closer to, though we do not quite match, the diversity of all religious organizations nationally (23% POCI) or in Massachusetts (22%).

In the key categories of “First/Mid-Level Officials and Managers,” we fall very short of even these averages with 10% POCI. The Regional Lead position involved in the most recent controversy falls in this category.

POCI Diversity, for the UUA, is concentrated in the lower wage categories (“Administrative Support Workers” and “Laborers”).

### Interim Goals for Racial/Cultural Diversity

Given our commitments as a faith community and our collective aspirations, a result that is “almost as good” as the typical religious community is unacceptable.

The standard set by the UUSC, which it meets, is 30% POCI overall and 40% among managers.

Adopting this standard would call for the UUA to increase the racial/cultural diversity of its staff by 50% overall. It would approximately triple the diversity at the managerial level.

Is there a reason for the UUA to set lower standards than our partner organization? Our requirement for ministerial ordination, while POCI remain so underrepresented among our religious professionals, might perhaps justify a somewhat lower standard. Perhaps.

Should we say 25% for the staff overall and 30% for executives and managers?

The practical impact of that difference, over the expected life of these Interim Policies (until the report of the Commission on Institutional Change), would effectively be zero. We fall far short of both sets of goals.

We will therefore set the goals at 30% overall and 40% for managers (Executives, Managers, and Professionals). These goals will be subject to review by the Commission for Institutional Change.

Given budget realities, it is also true that expansion of the UUA staff is unlikely over the life of these policies. This policy would impact only normal turnover.

Should any reduction in staff be required by budget realities, our commitment to maintaining staff of color/indigenous will be a consideration within the broader requirement to retain critical skills.

### **Exceptions**

In unusual circumstances, the UUA President may make an exception to this policy. Such exceptions should be exceedingly rare. The insistence on this policy by the CEO has been the critical element in its success in other organizations.

The Interim Co-Presidents believe that these Interim Hiring Procedures are an important beginning to creating “ever-widening circles of solidarity” within the UUA staff.

