

EDI Forum – Chair’s Report

01 March 2023

Associate Provost (EDI)

The College has decided to abandon the (largely mysterious!) distinction between Assistant and Associate Provost titles. All such appointments now become Associate Provost.

On a personal note, my term as Associate Provost (EDI) will come to an end in Sept 2023. Plans are in hand for recruiting a successor to the role. From September, I will take up an appointment as one of the College Consuls (representing FONS and Cross-College Entities).

New College Management structure

The College has introduced a new management structure. The President’s and Provost’s Boards have been merged into a new committee, the [University Management Board](#) (UMB) which is chaired by the President and meets monthly. The UMB will be serviced by seven sub-committees, which comprise members of the UMB and others. These include the new People and Culture (P&C) Committee, which is chaired by the President and has a remit:

“To consider strategic issues relating to people, culture and EDI (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion). To help Imperial’s leaders to remain proactive and make well-informed and strategically aligned decisions relating to people, which support the institution to further develop and achieve its ambitious strategy.”

The Associate Provost (EDI) is a member of the P&C committee, but not the full UMB. The full implications of this new arrangement for the EDI Strategy Group are still being worked out. The P&C committee will meet for the first time on 08 March 2023.

New College Strategy; new EDI Strategy

As many people will know, the President has announced a consultation on a [new strategy](#) for the College. This will be launched in October 2023 and take a long view (10-20 years) of how Imperial should be developing. The strategy will embrace all aspects of the College’s mission – including EDI – though is unlikely to drill down into the fine detail.

Separately, it is time to review the [College EDI Strategy](#), which was developed in 2017-18 and published to the College community in 2018. This process can begin now but will very likely be concluded by my successor as Associate Provost (EDI).

To start that conversation, I would be grateful if members of the Forum could reflect on the range of actions and initiatives that have taken place over the past several years (*e.g.* Race Equality Charter, Sexual Harassment Working Group (introduction of Report & Support tool), new EDI committee structure, formation of the Stonewall Action Committee, introduction of reverse mentoring, policies on conferences and toilet provision, provision of free period products, clearer support for staff networks, launch of the EDI Seed Fund. Other significant initiatives include the Values and Behaviours work, formation of the Imperial Together Action Group, the examination of Imperial’s history and development of a research Culture toolkit.

Collectively, this work has resulted in an array of action plans. While these still need some work to integrate them and weed out overlaps or duplications, they set a framework for ongoing commitments and targets. **How might this framework be optimised? Are there gaps or opportunities that have been overlooked? Is our EDI work sufficiently structural; *i.e.* becoming embedded as part of ‘normal operations’?**

Political climate

Attention from various quarters (internal and external) over the past few months has highlighted the need for us to be clearer about the boundary between promoting our EDI ambitions and fulfilling our duty to protect academic freedom and freedom of speech. In writing guidance on our webpages or policy documents, we need to be clear about legal requirements and definitions and mindful of not giving people the wrong impression about College intentions.

Issues where some concerns have been raised include our guidance on white allyship, the wording of the policy on toilet provision, and the definition of transphobia. In particular, we need to be mindful of instances where wordings are open to mis-interpretation. These matters are likely to be discussed at the upcoming People and Culture Committee. As far as I understand it, the main issue is about being clear about what we intend; it is not a matter of diminishing our commitment to creating an environment that is fully inclusive of diversity.

Prof Stephen Curry

~~Assistant~~ Associate Provost (EDI)

23 Feb 2023