Dear Students and Members of the SSA Community:

As we settle into spring quarter, I am pleased to provide you with some updates on various inclusion, equity, and diversity efforts at SSA:

- **Inclusion, Equity & Diversity Committee.** SSA’s new committee recently sent its first update (on March 28th) noting the important work it has begun to take up, notably:
  - **SSA’s search for an Associate Dean for Inclusion, Equity, and Diversity.** University Human Resources is now reviewing the job announcement, which the committee worked to complete. Because this is a national search, the hiring process is likely to span several months. We will be including faculty, staff, and students in vetting qualified candidates as the search process progresses. Please watch for updates from the committee about the hiring process and timetable.
  - **SSA building lobby banners and mural.** The committee is reviewing how the physical environment in the Mies building can become a more welcoming and inclusive one, and the committee is now taking up discussion that includes rotating lobby banners to reflect a more inclusive circle of leaders connected with SSA, and addressing the west wall mural.
  - **Training and learning opportunities.** In addition to a number of professional development programs for faculty, instructors, and staff, the committee is developing a calendar of diversity, social justice, and related events, including events within and outside of UChicago. Cristina Ortiz, who is coordinating this calendar, will send a periodic emails to the SSA community announcing these events. Please share information with Cristina at cristinao@uchicago.edu.
  - **Committee-sponsored lecture.** Dr. Iris Carlton-LaNey, Professor at the School of Social Work at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and SSA alumna, has been invited to deliver a School-wide lecture on Wednesday, April 13 at 4:30 pm. Dr. Carlton-LaNey is a highly respected social welfare historian, has received several national awards, including the Distinguished Achievement in Social Work Education Award by the National Association of Black Social Workers and the Social Work Pioneer Award in 2015 by the National Association of Social Workers. Watch for more details in the coming weeks.

For more about the Committee’s work as well as contact information, please refer to the committee’s email (dated March 28, 2016) and posted on the MySSA site: ([https://myssa.uchicago.edu/download/EmailsfromtheCommitteeonInclusionEquityandDiversity.pdf](https://myssa.uchicago.edu/download/EmailsfromtheCommitteeonInclusionEquityandDiversity.pdf))

- **Grievance Policy Review Working Group.** The Grievance Policy Review Working Group, co-chaired by Professor Mark Courtney and Associate Dean of Students Joe Edwards, has begun its work and aims to submit a set of recommendations by the end of the academic year.
- **Community Conversations.**
  - The following *Doctoral Theory, Professional Development, and Teaching Workshops*, held on Thursdays (12 noon–1:20 pm, W-IV), may be of interest:
    - April 7: *Race and Pedagogy Working Group: Classroom strategies for addressing positionality*, led by Emily Marker, Maddy Elfenbein, and Amanda Michelle Jones
    - April 14: *Grand Challenge: End Racial Injustice*, led by Dr. Larry Davis, Dean and Donald M. Henderson Professor, School of Social Work, University of Pittsburgh and Director, Center on Race and Social Problems
  
  For more information, please contact Cristina Ortiz or Tasha Keyes.

- The following *CHAS Michael M. Davis Lecture* may be of interest:
  - Tuesday, April 26 (12:00 pm-1:20 pm, WI a+b), Intergenerational Trauma: Clinicians Trained to Diagnose and Treat Elderly African American Survivors of Jim Crow Suffering with Symptoms of Segregation Stress Syndrome, presented by Dr. Ruth Thompson-Miller, Assistant Professor at the University of Dayton. RSVP here.

- Several new pop-up conversations are in the planning stages and that address such topics as the Syrian refugee crisis, Ta-Nehisi Coates’ book, *Between the World and Me*, and drug policy revisions. Please watch for an email from the Dean of Students Office announcing details about these programs

- **Update on Dean of Students Search.** Since posting the position, we have received numerous responses and now are carrying out a preliminary review. Once we have identified prospective candidates of high promise, we will be seeking student, staff, and faculty input to help assess candidates’ qualifications. We will keep you posted as this search moves forward.

- **Dean’s Office Hours.** As mentioned in my email at the end of Winter Quarter, I have arranged office hours throughout the remainder of the academic year for students who may wish to meet with me. Professors Waldo Johnson and Deborah Gorman-Smith, co-chairs of the Committee on Inclusion, Equity, and Diversity, also will be joining me at some of the meetings as noted below:

  - Wednesday, April 13, 4:00-5:00 pm with Professor Waldo Johnson
  - Tuesday, April 26, 4:30-5:30 pm with Professor Waldo Johnson
  - Wednesday, May 4, 12:00-1:00 pm with Professor Deborah Gorman-Smith
  - Tuesday, May 17, 12:00-1:00 pm with Professor Deborah Gorman-Smith
  - Wednesday, June 1, 12:30-1:30 pm

  If you are interested in scheduling an appointment with me, please contact Ms. Tanya Hines, at hines@uchicago.edu or 773-702-1430.

My best wishes for a fulfilling spring quarter,

Neil Guterman
Dear Students and Members of the SSA Community:

I am pleased to provide you with updates on a number of new and important developments and activities regarding our inclusion, equity, and diversity efforts at SSA:

- **Launch of SSA’s New Committee on Inclusion, Equity, and Diversity.** The Committee (the membership of which I announced earlier) held its inaugural meeting on February 10 and has begun to set up its charge and process in guiding SSA on matters of inclusion, equity, and diversity in the curriculum and climate at SSA:
  
  - **New Alumni Association Committee Member.** With a request from the SSA Alumni Association, the committee’s co-chairs, Professors Waldo Johnson and Deborah Gorman-Smith, appointed a representative to the committee from the SSA Alumni Association and community: Ashley Jackson, AM ’11, serves as the Vice President for the SSA Alumni Association, lives in New York, and works at Local Initiatives Support Corporation, which addresses neighborhood revitalization in high poverty areas.
  
  - **Job Description for a New Associate Dean for Inclusion, Equity, and Diversity.** As a first point of business, the Committee is focusing its early efforts on completing a job description of a new Associate Dean for Inclusion, Equity, and Diversity at SSA, which will initiate a national search to fill this newly created position.
  
  - **Lobby Banners.** The Committee has also begun to discuss a process for changing the banners in the SSA lobby in a way that displays a more inclusive circle of leaders we visibly honor in the Mies Building. The Committee is working on setting up a process to seek broad input for identifying future banner honorees. We are pleased there is already substantial interest in this effort, and I would like to encourage you to provide your own thoughts directly to any member of the new committee as they actively deliberate on a selection process going forward.
  
  - **Committee Schedule, Minutes.** The Committee is planning to meet approximately biweekly for the remainder of this academic year, and will post its minutes, once approved, on the MySSA website at [https://myssa.uchicago.edu/Students/](https://myssa.uchicago.edu/Students/). The Committee will also provide the SSA community with periodic email updates about its ongoing work.
• **Grievance Policy Review Work Group.** SGA has now recommended a representative, J.R. Pinedo (and alternate, Katie Matteson), to serve on the grievance policy review group. With this, the work group roster is now complete (the remaining membership of which I announced earlier) and they are presently arranging meetings to take up a review and revision of SSA’s grievance policies. Given Dean Bergman’s limited availability for the remainder of the year, Associate Dean Joe Edwards has agreed to serve as the group’s co-chair, along with Professor Mark Courtney.

• **Professional Development for SSA Instructors and Staff.** SSA has planned and held a number of professional development opportunities for instructors this quarter addressing inclusion, equity, and diversity. Among these are workshops on implicit bias in the classroom, developing critical pedagogy, promoting collegiality, and building transgender cultural competency in the classroom.

In addition, SSA has organized and begun a professional development series for staff on race and multicultural competence. The three-part program, which is taking place over the next month, includes self-assessments, videos and co-facilitated discussions on the origin, meaning, and ideology of race, and institutional legacies, and is organized by external consultant, Aneesah Ali, and her training partner, Arnie Aronoff.

• **Community Conversations.** As noted in earlier emails, a variety of venues and events have been arranged to further conversations among members inside and outside the SSA community to build constructive dialog on questions of inclusion, equity, and diversity. As just a few examples, the following events have taken or will take place in the winter and spring quarters:

  o *Illuminating (In)Justice: Bridging the Divide*, held on January 27, highlighted collaborative efforts among the YMCA Youth and Violence Prevention Team and the Chicago Police Department, and the coordinators led peace circles with the attendees.

  o The SSA Black Student Association organized and held “*On Black Social Work: A Collaborative Learning Space*” on February 6, which focused on black peoples’ contributions to the social work field.

  o The Race and Pedagogy Working Group organized a conversation, “*What’s Going On? Finding a Shared Language for Transformation on Chicago’s South Side*,” which was held on February 16 at the University’s Arts Incubator on Garfield Boulevard.

  o “*If I Knew Then, What I Know Now...*” was held on February 18, with a panel of six SSA alums discussing questions of identity, diversity, and inclusion, and their preparation for the professional field at SSA. This panel was organized by Professor Charles Payne and his class, *The Social Meaning of Race.*
• The SSA African American Alumni Committee hosted an all-day symposium on February 20, entitled *Phenomenal Black Women and Girls*. The symposium addressed disparities, policy, and program issues affecting the advancement of black women and girls.

• The next Illuminating (In)Justice event, organized with Justice Works and Professors Gina Fedock, Matt Epperson, and Deborah Gorman-Smith, will be on Thursday, February 25, 5 to 6:30 p.m., in Room E-I. It will feature a panel discussion with Adult Redeploy Illinois and will look at adult redeploy as a model of multidisciplinary collaboration and decarceration.

• **New Pop-up Conversations.** Several new pop-up conversations are in the works, including a discussion of the book *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates; a discussion on the intersections of faith, religion, and decriminalization; and another on the Syrian refugee crisis and the United States. These will be announced soon by the Dean of Students office, so please watch your email for details.

• **Office Hour Meetings with the Dean and Inclusion Committee Co-Chairs.** I am arranging regular meetings with SGA president Dominique Mikell to facilitate ongoing communication with SGA leadership on institutional efforts which elevate the educational experience for students at the School. In addition, and particularly in light of Dean Bergman’s upcoming transition off staff, my office will be scheduling office hours for SSA students who may wish to make an appointment with me. We are also arranging office hour times that include Professors Waldo Johnson and Deborah Gorman-Smith, Co-chairs of the Committee on Inclusion, Equity, and Diversity. My office will be back in touch shortly on available times for the remainder of this year.

• **Check the MySSA and SSA Electronic Discussion Board.** Please check both sites as we periodically update the timeline and announcements for activities addressing inclusion, equity, and diversity. Also posted on the MySSA site will be the charge and approved minutes of the new Committee on Inclusion, Equity, and Diversity.

We will continue to keep you updated about ongoing related work and activities at SSA. And please try to stay safe and warm through this winter storm!

Neil Guterman
Dear Students and Members of the SSA Community

I hope that your winter quarter is off to a good start. I am writing to provide you with a few updates on several important initiatives as SSA moves forward in addressing matters of inclusion, equity, and diversity:

- **Committee on Inclusion, Equity, and Diversity.** I am delighted to announce that SSA’s new standing Committee on Inclusion, Equity, and Diversity is now composed, following the election of student members, and ready to begin its work. As you will recall, this was a primary recommendation of the Task Force for Radical Transformation (TFRT) summer work group and a primary “first step” I mapped out as SSA establishes its organizational platform for taking up these matters in the School’s curriculum and climate, doing so with ongoing institutional commitment and attention, and in ways that are transparent and coherent.

The inaugural committee consists of faculty, staff and student representatives, and includes:

- Professor Waldo Johnson (Co-Chair, Faculty)
- Professor Deborah Gorman-Smith (Co-Chair, Faculty, and Deputy Dean for Faculty Development and Research)
- Celia Bergman (Dean of Students)
- Alisa de los Reyes (Master’s Program Student Representative)
- Joe Edwards (Associate Dean of Students)
- Professor Gina Fedock (Faculty)
- Bharathi Jayaram (Associate Director of Field Education)
- Amanda Michelle Jones (Ph.D. Program Student Representative)
- Alex Ngo (Master’s Program Student Representative)
- Professor Tina Rzepnicki (Faculty and Deputy Dean for the Curriculum)
- Jesús Palafox Valdovinos (EEP Student Representative)
- Professor Marci Ybarra (Faculty)
- Bridgette Davis (Alternate, Master’s Program Student Representative)

In addition, to foster a successful launch of this committee, both Aneesah Ali (the external consultant assisting SSA on this agenda) and I (ex officio) will serve on and support this committee for the rest of the academic year.

My thanks to the members of this new committee for stepping up to serve in this important role for SSA and in particular I want to express my thanks for the leadership of Professors Johnson and Gorman-Smith, who I am confident will be dedicated and skilled inaugural chairs in service to the SSA community and field.
One early agenda item for this committee will be to work with the School’s administration to guide a search process for a new senior administrator who, once hired, will round out SSA’s organizational platform to advance our ongoing efforts, serving as the primary administrative coordinator of new initiatives and policies growing out of this committee (another primary recommendation of the TFRT work group). I look forward to ensuring the successful launch of the committee and subsequent search process and I encourage you to be in touch directly with any member of this committee to share your thoughts and perspectives as they take up their new responsibilities.

- **Small Group Discussions.** We are now planning a variety of small group venues for students, school leadership, and faculty to advance constructive community discussions in support of our forward work and community building and will be in touch as these are scheduled throughout the winter and spring quarters.

- **Student Grievance Review Work Group.** Dean Bergman’s office, in consultation with SSA’s external consultant Aneesah Ali, has now set up a new working group that will review and revise student grievance procedures and due process. This group includes:
  
  - Professor Mark Courtney (Co-Chair, Faculty)
  - Celia Bergman (Co-Chair, Dean of Students)
  - Nancy Chertok (Director of Field Education)
  - Joe Edwards (Associate Dean of Students)
  - Professor Matt Epperson (Faculty)
  - Peter Fritch (Master's Student)
  - Professor Jeanne Marsh (Faculty)
  - Jenny Meade (Director of School Social Work)
  - Angelica Velazquillo (Ph.D. Student)
  - A representative of SGA (once the SGA election is completed)

  In addition, Alisa de los Reyes (Master's Student) and Matt Borus (Ph.D. Student) will serve as alternates. This group will be initiating its work very shortly, so I encourage you to reach out to any of the above committee members with input you might wish to provide in support of their work. We will keep you updated as they carry out their review and develop recommendations for the revision of SSA’s student grievance process.

- **SSA Electronic Discussion Board.** As Dean Bergman noted last month, the School has now set up a pilot electronic discussion board to foster constructive community dialog and to provide members of the SSA community an additional venue to share their viewpoints and experiences on matters pertaining to the School and to professional social work. This space can also be used to discuss local, national, and international events. Here are some guidelines:
When you log in to Chalk you will see that you can click to participate in the SSA Discussion Board if you choose.

Once you enter the site you will see several discussion forums with the following topics:

1) **Your Views**: Sharing of personal viewpoints and experiences

2) **In the News**: Discussion of local, national, and international topics

3) **Community Board**: Advertise non-University events, programs, fundraisers, etc.

Within each forum you will be able to enter an existing conversation or start a new conversation (i.e., thread).

Please note that your posts will immediately appear with your name on the site, and we ask that you follow some shared ground rules before finalizing and submitting your post: (drawn from the Critical Multicultural Pavilion: [http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/](http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/)):

- 1) Speak from your own experience or perspective instead of generalizing (“I,” instead of “they,” “we,” and “you”).
- 2) Do not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions, and refrain from personal attacks. Focus on ideas.
- 3) Participate to the fullest of your ability and interest. Community growth rests on the inclusion of many voices.
- 4) Instead of invalidating somebody else’s story with your own view on their experience, share your own story and experience.
- 5) The goal of the discussion board is not necessarily to agree with others or to conduct specific business, but rather to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the viewpoints of SSA community members. Utilize other available venues (e.g., email, phone, office) to pose specific requests to individuals.

All posts will identify the author and are expected to comport to the expectations of the University concerning the principles of free expression.

The SSA Discussion Board will be moderated by a panel consisting of Professor Stan McCracken, Associate Dean of Students Joe Edwards, Ph.D. student Christina Ortiz, and a representative of SGA once the SGA election is completed. If a post violates the rules of conduct for the discussion board, the moderators may opt to remove it. If a member of the SSA community feels that a post does not comport to
the above ground rules, such individuals can email the site moderators directly at: ssamoderators@ssa.uchicago.edu.

We are piloting this electronic discussion board with the hope that you will utilize it as one additional means of furthering constructive community dialog, and will assess its progress as it rolls out.

- **Pedagogy Support Series.** Deputy Dean Tina Rzepnicki’s office has scheduled a series of pedagogical support sessions for SSA faculty and instructors this winter quarter and will be adding further sessions in the spring quarter. The sessions include a mix of peer consultation and structured training opportunities in support of our instructors focusing on a range of topics such as unconscious bias and microaggression, and serving transgender and gender nonconforming students.

We look forward to keeping you updated as we move ahead and work to elevate our efforts on this important agenda for SSA. My best wishes for a successful winter quarter.

Neil Guterman
December 16, 2015

Dear Students and Members of the SSA Community:

I hope that your winter break is off to a good start and that you will find some time to rejuvenate in the coming days. I am writing to let you know of some recent updates on a number of efforts to move us ahead in a more productive fashion to advance SSA’s work on matters of inclusion, equity, diversity, and community building.

- **Organizational consultant.** While we now are setting up the new standing committee at SSA and then initiating a search for a new senior administrator (as noted in my November 13 email and as recommended in the Task Force for Radical Transformation (TFRT) Report, we have hired an interim consultant to enable us to move ahead with specific short-term initiatives for which we can forge expeditious progress. Aneesah Ali of TIU Inclusion (bio sketch found here: https://myssa.uchicago.edu/download/AneesahAliTIUbioNov2015.pdf) has now begun consulting with us on:

  1. reviewing and revising student grievance procedures
  2. assistance in identifying faculty development resources to address pedagogical approaches and skills in the classroom
  3. identifying expertise to proceed with a more systematic needs assessment on these matters which will enable us to map ongoing areas of future attention and growth
  4. assistance in developing a robust and effective search process to identify outstanding candidates for the new senior administrator role to address inclusion, equity, and diversity in the climate and curriculum at SSA

Each of these four areas of work follow from key recommendations of the TFRT report, and we can begin to move ahead on this in the short term.

Aneesah is highly experienced in the full spectrum of equity, diversity, and inclusion work, especially in higher education. Prior to this year, she served as the University of Chicago’s Associate Provost and Affirmative Action Officer. In that capacity she was responsible for coordinating the University’s compliance with equal opportunity and nondiscrimination laws and policies for faculty, students, and staff. Aneesah has already begun to hold initial discussions with key constituents including students, faculty, and staff, and I know that she will want to hear from you as we move ahead with initiatives and additional conversations to elevate our work in the area. I encourage you to reach out to Aneesah directly at TIU.Inclusion@gmail.com. We will provide a schedule of her Winter Quarter office hours as soon as it is available.

- **Expanded section on MySSA.** To maintain a central point for communications and updates to the SSA community on these activities, we are building out a “Community Forum” section on MySSA (go to “Student Life at SSA” at this link: https://myssa.uchicago.edu/Students/) to
house action steps and a timeline of upcoming steps, TFRT-related correspondence, policies, and statements.

You will be able to find, for example, such content as a newly updated Timeline of Actions SSA has taken and will be taking (https://myssa.uchicago.edu/download/TimelineofAction12-16-15.pdf) the TFRT Report, Community Forum Notes, SSA’s organization chart, revised student election policies and procedures, emails from Dean Bergman and me, and student responses. We will expand and update this section and the action timeline with new content on an ongoing basis.

- **Regular email updates.** I will be communicating via monthly emails to update the SSA community about progress and activities related to the action steps identified in my November 13 email and on additional recommendations of the TFRT report. Please keep an eye out for these messages from my office, starting in January 2016.

- **Regular in-person, conversation opportunities.** To continue our discussions about student experiences at SSA, we are planning to schedule regular small group conversations with students beginning in the winter quarter so students can discuss concerns, new ideas, and their thoughts on ways to foster a stronger SSA community and educational experience. We are also planning additional community engagement activities, such as the December 2 “Illuminating (In)Justice” event (http://ssa.uchicago.edu/illuminating-injustice-candle-lighting-ceremony) and additional “pop up” conversations at SSA. Please watch for upcoming communication about these meetings as well.

Please know that I recognize that navigating an institutional growth process like the one we have undertaken can raise difficult and challenging feelings, experiences, and expressions, and I am committed to advancing SSA on these matters in a way that moves us forward substantively and thoughtfully. I know the leadership team and the faculty of the School also share this commitment. It is also up to every member of this community to address this change process and to treat one another with respect and a willingness to listen to others’ viewpoints, even if views expressed may diverge from our own. Building community, and improving our learning experience rests on a foundation of respect for all the members of this community, and an openness to change and growth. It is my own view that discussions and sharing of different perspectives hold the potential to ignite deeper and more grounded mutual understandings, which can propel us to a higher level of social work professionalism and humane service to others. It remains my belief that we can, as individuals and as responsible members of a larger community, each find teachable moments for ourselves and those around us, so that SSA will grow and emerge into an even more exemplary educational institution for this year and thereafter.

Sincerely,
Dear Students and Members of the SSA Community:

As many of you know, last year students expressed views that their experience at SSA fell short of our stated aspirations of promoting social justice and a more humane society, notably with respect to how we have addressed questions of diversity, difference, privilege, power, inclusion, and oppression in the curriculum and climate at SSA. Students submitted a petition in the spring urging attention to these matters, and in June we held a community-wide forum to hear student perspectives and experiences, so that we could begin to make more open and visible to the SSA community some of these views and experiences. These conversations and the student petition stimulated the SSA faculty and those in leadership roles at the School – me included – to more concordantly reflect upon and begin to take concrete visible actions, so that our School and students are better equipped and supported in assuming their important responsibilities and roles as future professional social workers and as educators. The petition and community forum helped create an important opportunity for us to strive to create a more inclusive and responsive learning environment at SSA: one that builds our capacity to respect, hear, and learn from diverse viewpoints and experiences; one that fosters open discourse for all members of the community and values rigorous, evidence-informed, and pluralistic ways of thinking in our approach to problems of the profession; and one that can build the SSA community. At the June community-wide meeting and at a subsequent meeting with student groups organizing the petition last spring, I noted that that we would initiate a number of actions in response to address these issues.

As one important first step, I have expressed the view that SSA needs to build a more robust and visible organizational and administrative platform to take up these matters in ways that are transparent and coherent to students, and in ways that ensure that we attend to the concerns with continuous commitment, attention, and improvement, woven integrally into the fabric of SSA. Toward that end, I charged a summer ad hoc committee composed of faculty, staff, and students to consider and recommend the most promising models of organizational structure for SSA to take up these concerns, so that we can establish such an enduring institutional platform.

That summer ad hoc committee was comprised of:
- Professor Gina Miranda Samuels (Faculty and Committee Chair)
- Celia Bergman (Dean of Students)
- Nancy Chertok (Director of Field Education)
- Peter Fritch (Student Representative from the Elephant)
- Tamara Johnson (Provost’s Office)
- Professor Waldo Johnson (Faculty)
- Candace Jones (Student Representative from the Black Students Association)
- Tasha Keys (Doctoral Student)
- Dominique Mikell (Student Representative from the Elephant)
- Professor Tina Rzepnicki (Faculty and Deputy Dean of Curriculum)
- Jesús Palafox Valdovinos (Student Representative from the Latin@ Students Association)
- Professor Marci Ybarra (Faculty)

This committee worked intensively through the summer and submitted to me a thorough and thoughtful report on September 30, which I attach to this email for you to read. This report offers much to consider as we move forward, not only on the question of organizational platform, but also...
on matters such as curricular development, pedagogical training, and community building at SSA. I want to express my gratitude for the hard work of the members of this committee.

Since receiving this report, I have followed up with a series of meetings with the committee and its chair, with SSA’s senior administrative team (consisting of all SSA’s associate and deputy deans), and, just last week with the full faculty of SSA who reviewed and discussed the report as well. I am pleased to note that broad support and enthusiasm was expressed in these meetings for the goals expressed in the report. And, as one would expect from a vigorous community of independent thinkers, a variety of viewpoints were also expressed on next steps to best move us forward, with some clear consensus on specific actions.

While ongoing careful deliberation of the faculty and leadership of the School will continue, we will also proceed with a number of immediate and substantive actions flowing from the report and follow up discussions. We will review these actions in fuller detail at two community meetings at SSA on Monday, November 23rd (4:30-5:30 p.m.) and Tuesday, December 1st (4:30-5:30 p.m.). We have arranged two times so that as many members of the community can participate within their schedules, and we will hold additional periodic community gatherings throughout the academic year for further conversations. These meetings will offer opportunities for the wider SSA student body and community to weigh in and offer thoughts and questions as we proceed on these matters.

Below is a brief preview of some of the immediate action steps we will or already are moving forward on (particularly for those of you who may not be able to make one of these meetings). We will provide the opportunity to review and discuss these further on November 23rd and December 1st:

- Foremost, and consistent with the recommendations of the ad hoc committee report, we will establish a new standing committee of the School, and, in conjunction, create a new senior administrator role at SSA, whose specific charges will be to take up concerns related to inclusion and diversity in the curriculum and climate at SSA. The new standing committee will be comprised of approximately four to five faculty members, two to three key staff (including the new senior administrator), and two to three student representatives. The committee will both advise and be advised by the full faculty of SSA. This new organizational structure (standing committee in conjunction with senior administrator) will provide the needed organizational leadership, coordination, and visibility, to enable us to take up these matters in ways that SSA is not presently adequately organized to address. One of the first tasks of the new standing committee will be to begin the search process to identify and bring on board the new senior administrator, whose responsibilities will entail implementing and steering specific initiatives and policies to address these matters at SSA. The report of the summer ad hoc group, which offers many recommendations, will be provided for the use of the committee and its work.

- Second, I have already charged SSA’s Curriculum Policy Committee, which oversees the educational curriculum for the master’s degree programs, to review and revise how we address content on diversity, inclusion, power, and privilege in their current deliberations pertaining to revision of the overall master’s degree curriculum.

- Third, this year we have begun to include student representatives on SSA’s Curriculum Policy Committee to provide the opportunity for students’ perspectives to be heard more tangibly in the context of curriculum revision deliberations and to provide improved communication and transparency to students on the process.
Fourth, we are now planning for faculty development and training opportunities on matters of difference, diversity, privilege, and oppression, (including opportunities at SSA’s annual faculty retreat), so that instructors at SSA can expand their own pedagogical capacity to address these matters in the classroom.

Fifth, I have asked the Dean of Students office to initiate a review and revision of student grievance procedures so that due process for student grievances are clarified and spelled out to ensure a fair and impartial grievance process.

Sixth, a student-run Election and Rules Committee has now completed its work reviewing and substantially strengthening and clarifying procedures for student government elections at SSA, setting the stage for a new SGA election to take place in the coming weeks. Dean Bergman will provide more information on this shortly.

Finally, we will continue to create opportunities for the SSA community to come together, for students to express views, and to update students about curricular and school developments on these and other matters.

Once we compose the new standing committee of the School and bring on board a new senior administrator whose specific charge it is to take up these issues, we will be much better equipped to implement a variety of initiatives, and to provide continuous attention and improvement for the SSA community and field.

Please know that the faculty of SSA and the leadership of the School are committed to elevating the educational experience for our students on these matters and to doing so in a way that values diverse experiences, open and respectful expression of viewpoints, rigorous, thoughtful and evidence-informed analysis and action, and dedicated service to the field of social work and social welfare. While we – faculty, staff, and students – are continually striving and evolving to reach our highest aspirations, and are “works-in-progress,” my sincere personal hope is that these actions and discussions will enable us to create important “teachable moments” for the SSA community to grow, do even better, and enlighten and educate one another – so we can better step up to the very real challenges of those whom we serve beyond the walls of SSA. I look forward to working with you to move us toward these ends, and I hope to see you soon at one of the upcoming community meetings.

Sincerely,

Neil Guterman
Dear SSA Students:

At the close of your first week of the Autumn quarter, I wanted to send you a warm welcome to the start of the 2015-16 school year. It's great to see the vibrancy return to the Mies building after a period of summer quiet, and I hope you have each gotten off to a good start for the year.

The SSA faculty and staff are very excited that we have launched a new school year with you, and please know that we are here to support you in your professional education and development. You are fortunate to have a dedicated team of staff in the Dean of Students Office, overseen by Joe Edwards, until Dean of Students Celia Bergman returns from abroad with her new son at the end of October. The Dean of Students office has put in place a number of improvements, to be introduced in the coming weeks, which respond to your educational needs for the coming year. They are eager to receive feedback about your experiences and how they can best serve you during your time with us. There are also a number of new courses at SSA this year addressing such issues as dying and loss, community empowerment, resilience and healing in post-genocide Rwanda, and working with veterans.

We have also been working over the summer to take up in a more explicit way questions of inclusion, difference, diversity, and power -- both within SSA's formal curriculum and in our school climate. I have just received and look forward to studying a report from a summer ad hoc committee I charged, composed of students, faculty, and staff, and which offers recommendations on ways we can organize such efforts. We will update you later this quarter as we begin to consider this committee's recommendations and plan action steps to elevate our collective work on these matters.
Finally, a student-run Election and Rules committee is now carefully preparing procedures and policies that will set out a fair election process for selecting student government officers at SSA, and which should take place later this quarter.

There is much to look forward to and we are delighted to welcome you back. Wishing you much success and growth this year!

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Dear Members of the SSA Community:

I would like to provide you with an update on some developments related to the student petition submitted in the late Spring and the subsequent community-wide forum on matters of diversity and inclusion at SSA.

Subsequent to the community-wide forum in June at SSA, a meeting was held on June 23rd with student groups sponsoring the petition which urged SSA to better address these matters. In addition to student representatives from the Elephant, Black Students Association and the Latin@ Students Association, that meeting included the faculty liaisons to the student groups, as well as Deputy Dean for Curriculum Tina Rzepnicki, Dean of Students Celia Bergman, Associate Dean of Students Joe Edwards, Director of Fieldwork Nancy Chertok, and representatives from the Provost’s office, the University’s Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, and the Dean of Students in the University. You received an email from Dean Bergman on Friday of last week that provided the notes from the discussion held at that meeting.

One point I made at the meeting was that I believe SSA needs to put in place a more robust and coherent governance and administrative structure in order to enable us to better take up matters of diversity and inclusion in the curriculum and climate at SSA. Toward that end, I have charged a summer ad hoc committee to consider and provide their evaluation of the most promising institutional models that can enable SSA to do so. Professor Gina Samuels is chairing this summer ad hoc committee, and the other members of the committee are: Dean of Students Celia Bergman, Direct of Fieldwork Nancy Chertok, Peter Fritch (student representative for the Elephant), Tamara Johnson (Provost’s office), Professor Waldo Johnson, Candace Jones (student representative for the Black Students Association), Tasha Keys (doctoral student), Dominique Mikell (student representative for the Elephant), Deputy Dean for Curriculum Tina Rzepnicki, Jesus Palafox Valdovinos (student representative for the Latin@ Students Association), and Professor Marci Ybarra. I have asked the committee to carry out their work and submit their report to me by the end of September so we can proceed forward on implementation, and with this timing, I would encourage
you to share views you may have on this question with Professor Samuels and/or any of the members of this group at your earliest opportunity.

At the meeting with student groups, I also noted three additional next steps that I believe will be helpful as we move us forward in responding to concerns raised by students: First, the SSA faculty has been deliberating on revisions to the Masters curriculum and I have asked Deputy Dean for Curriculum Tina Rzepnicki (who chairs SSA’s Curriculum Policy Committee steering this review) to bring the question of infusing content regarding diversity and inclusion into their deliberations on revisions to the curriculum, in order to better structure-in attention to these content areas. The summer ad hoc committee chaired by Professor Samuels is formulating recommendations which can provide guidance to help inform these deliberations on the Curriculum Policy Committee.

Second, to improve transparency and communication flow on these faculty-led deliberations and students’ views on these matters, I am asking that, to the extent schedules permit, SSA begin to include student representatives on the Curriculum Policy Committee. Ongoing input from and communication with students as we revise the curriculum can be essential as we work through these concerns in the curriculum.

Finally, recommendations from the summer ad hoc committee related to pedagogical skill and development will be provided to SSA’s Deputy Dean for Faculty Development Harold Pollack. Deputy Dean Pollack will draw from these to investigate opportunities that can assist in advancing SSA’s instructional capacity and skill development on diversity/inclusion-related concerns.

Dean Bergman’s office will be planning additional opportunities during the upcoming academic year where students can continue to share views of their experience at SSA, and we will keep the SSA community updated on the work of the summer ad hoc committee and ongoing next steps on this important work for SSA and our students.

We continue to welcome your thoughts and suggestions to address these concerns and ways to elevate the educational experience at SSA, and I encourage you to share these with me, Dean Bergman, Professor Samuels, or any other member of the summer ad hoc committee.
My best wishes for a good summer,

Neil

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