

Winter 2022

MILTON ACADEMY

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS



FORWARD

Amid national outrage over racism, violence and the murders of people of color in the spring of 2020, students and alumni shared stories of racial injustices and inequities experienced at Milton Academy—leading the Milton community to demand change. In response, Milton Academy created the **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission (DEIC)**, composed of a diverse group of current and former employees, alumni, parents, and trustees. The Commission was charged with engaging members of our community to understand critical needs and develop a series of recommendations to guide Milton’s diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice efforts.

As the head of school and president of the Board of Trustees, we are incredibly grateful for each DEIC member and **the care and commitment they showed to our community** throughout the Commission’s year-long work. Our gratitude extends to all who participated in focus groups and fireside chats, as well as our external consulting group, Diversity Directions, for their expertise in conducting a climate assessment and understanding of our strengths and opportunities for institutional and community growth.

We are excited to share in this report the **DEIC’s final recommendations**, which were endorsed by the Board of Trustees in the fall of 2021. The Commission’s vision for what Milton Academy can and must be is inspiring and bold, and it continues to reinforce our existing commitments to one another and to every member of our community.

Sincerely,

Todd Bland, Head of School

Lisa Donohue, President, Board of Trustees

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MILTON ACADEMY MISSION STATEMENT



Milton Academy cultivates in its students a passion for learning and a respect for others. **Embracing diversity and the pursuit of excellence, we create a community in which individuals develop competence, confidence and character.** Our active learning environment, in and out of the classroom, develops creative and critical thinkers, unafraid to express their ideas, prepared to seek meaningful lifetime success and to live by our motto, *“Dare to be true.”*



INTRODUCTION

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are fundamental to a strong community and the **fulfillment of Milton Academy's mission**. Milton students grow by developing their own identities, learning from and listening to the lived experiences of others, and living and working among peers whose differences they accept with respect and care.

With such strong alignment between Milton's educational mission and the call to action from our community, the DEIC united around a common goal: to lead Milton Academy in building an antiracist and inclusive community of students, employees, families, and alumni **that serves as a model for K-12 institutions**.

In working toward **bold, systemic, and sustainable change** across Milton's learning environment, school culture, day-to-day practices, and overarching strategy, the DEIC began its year-long work with deep stakeholder engagement. From fireside chats, focus groups, and a climate assessment curated by an external consulting group, Diversity Directions, members of the DEIC prioritized listening to and understanding the experiences of students, employees, alumni, and families.

Relying on these perspectives and themes, the DEIC developed the recommendations found in this report. Rather than propose a new, discrete framework, the DEIC aligned its recommendations specifically to Milton Academy's mission statement and the DEI Strategic Plan approved by the Board of Trustees in 2019. Doing so conveys the incredible opportunity and potential to dig deeper into our mission and **fulfill our existing commitments** to one another and our broader community.



GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2019–2024 Board-approved DEI strategic plan outlined the following five goals for Milton Academy:

1

Define cultural competency knowledge and skills to

shape common ground for community understanding and serve as the foundation for program and professional development.

3

Provide structures to support positive identity development of community members through opportunities to explore and understand their own identity and the identities and values of others.

5

Develop and implement assessment tools to

assess Milton's trends and ongoing progress and opportunities in its efforts toward sustaining and supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion.

2

Ensure strong multicultural education curriculum and experiences to build

strong cultural competency skills and understanding of the values and impact of culture and identity.

4

Continue focused attention to recruit and retain a dynamic diverse employee community to educate, reflect and support our diverse student body.

GOAL I

Define cultural competency knowledge and skills to shape common ground for community understanding and serve as the foundation for program and professional development.

Through these recommendations, Milton Academy has an opportunity to further demonstrate its commitment to creating a community in which individuals develop competence, confidence, and character, as stated in our school mission. Specifically, our success as a community relies on all stakeholders continuing to learn, grow, and develop.

DEIC RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR EMPLOYEES:

- ▶ Require differentiated, ongoing DEIJ learning and development for all employees.
- ▶ Support employee attendance at DEIJ conferences and workshops.
- ▶ Provide circle training for employees to learn key tenets of circle practice.
- ▶ Reserve professional development days across divisions so employees can work together to apply relevant insights and practices in their areas of responsibility (sharing best practices, assessing individual spheres of responsibility, and working collaboratively).

FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP:

- ▶ Require regularly scheduled DEIJ conversations, learning, and development for trustees.
- ▶ Schedule regular meetings between the Board of Trustees DEIJ committee and DEIJ implementation teams.
- ▶ Require Administrative Council to participate in in-depth DEIJ learning and development.
- ▶ Require all members of the administrative team to hold specific DEIJ implementation responsibilities, and include such duties in applicable job descriptions. Ensure that school leadership evaluates performance.
- ▶ Achieve a membership profile on the Board of Trustees that reflects diversity across professions and social identifiers.

FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS:

- ▶ Develop DEIJ learning and development opportunities for parents in partnership with officers of the Parents' Association for each division and parents who conduct admissions tours.
- ▶ Include DEIJ presentations during Revisit Day and Family Weekend.
- ▶ Establish affinity groups for Upper, Middle and Lower school parents and guardians.
- ▶ Adjust Parents' Association meeting schedules to better accommodate working parents.



GOAL 2

Ensure strong multicultural education curriculum and experiences to build strong cultural competency skills and understanding of the values and impact of culture and identity.

Through these recommendations, Milton Academy has an opportunity to further demonstrate its commitment to an active learning environment, which develops creative and critical thinkers in and out of the classroom, unafraid to express their ideas, and prepared to seek meaningful lifetime success, as stated in our school mission. This commitment requires equitable support for students as they navigate Milton Academy and a shared understanding about the importance of multicultural experiences in a diverse community such as ours.



DEIC RECOMMENDATIONS

ACADEMICS AND COURSES:

- ▶ Review all course offerings to identify opportunities to improve inclusive content and pedagogy (K-12). Determine support and resource needs to enable curricular enhancement.
- ▶ Develop DEIJ learning goals (K-12).
- ▶ Incorporate the history of the land Milton inhabits and the histories of early benefactors into the school's K-12 curriculum. Couple this acknowledgment with development of partnerships with local Indigenous communities.

CO-CURRICULAR EXPERIENCES:

- ▶ Assess school traditions in all divisions and commit to centering inclusion. Reflect our diverse community in these events and traditions.
- ▶ Create ongoing DEIJ K-12 student programming throughout the year to promote positive self-identity and to practice the skills and habits of ally work.

ACADEMIC PLACEMENT AND SUPPORT:

- ▶ Offer access to academic support services (e.g., tutoring, neuropsychological testing) to all students who need it; align access with financial aid scale.
- ▶ Assess course placement policies. If gaps in access or opportunity are identified for any demographic group, take action to remove obstacles.

GOAL 3

Provide structures to support positive identity development of community members through opportunities to explore and understand their own identity and the identities and values of others.

Through these recommendations, Milton Academy has an opportunity to further demonstrate its commitment to cultivating a passion for learning and a respect for others, as stated in our school mission. Specifically, we are inspired by a world in which students are curious about and respectful toward one another as their identities are affirmed and celebrated in all aspects of their Milton experience.



DEIC RECOMMENDATIONS

STUDENT-FACING STRUCTURES:

- ▶ Require developmentally appropriate orientation programming for all new students K-12 to foster understanding of DEIJ goals and a sense of belonging. Include affinity opportunities across a wide range of social identifiers.
- ▶ Reinstate developmentally appropriate, optional Upper School Transition Program for new students of color and international students.
- ▶ Create developmentally appropriate, optional Middle School Transition Program for new students of color.
- ▶ Create developmentally appropriate, optional Lower School Transition Program for new students of color.
- ▶ Expand Counseling Center staff with a particular emphasis on achieving diversity across social identifiers.
- ▶ Create student-to-student buddy/mentoring program across academic divisions.
- ▶ Implement gender-inclusive practices tailored to each academic division.

EMPLOYEE-FACING STRUCTURES:

- ▶ Regularly capture experiences of students and graduates across social identifiers and share with employees of each academic division.
- ▶ Make attendance at affinity spaces and cross-cultural learning spaces possible for all employees. Provide access to additional opportunities for DEIJ professional development to all employees.

COMMUNITY-WIDE STRUCTURES:

- ▶ Host DEIJ-related orientation programming, events, discussion opportunities, speakers, and fireside chats for parents, alumni, students, trustees, and employees.
- ▶ Establish adult affinity options for parents, alumni, and employees.
- ▶ Develop DEIJ-relevant materials and programming exploring the history of Milton.

GOAL 4

Continue focused attention to recruit and retain a dynamic diverse employee community to educate, reflect, and support our diverse student body.

Through these recommendations, Milton Academy has an opportunity to further demonstrate its commitment to embracing diversity and the pursuit of excellence, as stated in our school mission. Specifically, by recruiting and retaining a diverse community of high-quality employees and continuously supporting their growth, development, and sense of belonging, their experiences, and subsequently students' experiences, improve.



DEIC RECOMMENDATIONS

RECRUITMENT AND PROMOTION PRACTICES:

- ▶ Embed DEIJ goals and responsibilities in all job descriptions.
- ▶ Revise Milton's voluntary self-identification form for new employees and create an annual process to identify demographic profiles not currently represented within the employee base. Prioritize filling these gaps in hiring cycles.
- ▶ Create a hiring process with interview cycles that are as equitable, standardized, and unbiased as possible.
- ▶ Create cohesive messaging, used by all participants in the hiring process, to articulate the school's DEIJ commitments and work.
- ▶ Create an expanded recruiting strategy that leverages connections within and beyond the independent school network and prioritizes hiring candidates from diverse backgrounds.
- ▶ Review the process for vetting and selecting department chairs, program leaders, and directors. If gaps in access or opportunity are identified for any demographic group, take action to remove obstacles.
- ▶ Revise the structure of faculty interview schedules to allow all department or grade-level members to meet with teaching candidates, and:
 - Assign a point person who is not on the hiring committee to help the candidate throughout the on-campus interview day.
 - Include students in the interview process.
 - Allow candidates to share videos of their teaching instead of or in addition to demo lessons with our students.
 - Provide feedback for those we do not hire in order to encourage goodwill and shared learning.

GOAL 4

DEIC RECOMMENDATIONS

SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYEES:

- ▶ Establish wellness and self-care initiatives that are coordinated with expanded affinity space offerings for employees.
- ▶ Create a consistent and equitable compensation system for DEIJ work done by employees that includes advisors of culture clubs and affinity groups.
- ▶ Expand and revamp the Upper School teacher mentor program to include all divisions and staff, with an increased DEIJ focus and greater diversity, with equitable compensation.

TARGETED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES:

- ▶ Create director of equity and inclusion positions in the Lower School and Middle School.
- ▶ Reconfigure and expand the K-12 DEIJ structure in order to establish clarity of communication, alignment, and organization.
- ▶ Hire a full-time administrative coordinator for the K-12 Department of Equity, Inclusion, and Justice.
- ▶ Consider adding new or revising current roles to include:
 - Dean of faculty (9-12)
 - Dean of residential life (9-12)
 - Ombudsperson to process matters with employees and provide feedback to school leadership



GOAL 5

Develop and implement assessment tools to assess Milton’s trends and ongoing progress and opportunities in its efforts toward sustaining and supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Through these recommendations, Milton Academy has an opportunity to further demonstrate its commitment to our motto, “Dare to be true” as stated in the school mission. Fittingly, this requires a commitment to truth: to robust data collection and analysis, to accountability structures, and to cycles of revisions in order to achieve a more inclusive community with more just and equitable policies.



DEIC RECOMMENDATIONS

INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT TO DEIJ:

- ▶ Create centralized DEIJ communication mechanisms, including a web landscape and performance dashboard. Each division, department, and program should regularly publish progress updates with respect to their DEIJ goals.
- ▶ Assess financial contributions made by the school and seek alignment with DEIJ priorities.
- ▶ Make a conscious effort to search for diverse vendors.

EMPLOYEE ACCOUNTABILITY AND COMMITMENT TO DEIJ:

- ▶ Create a 360 review process for administrators and employees.
- ▶ Create and share a series of responsive actions to apply to employees who do not meet expectations for engaging in DEIJ learning and growth.
- ▶ Evaluate administrative systems to create accountability for stated quantifiable institutional goals for admissions, hiring, retention, and curriculum.

CONTINUOUS INSTITUTIONAL IMPROVEMENT:

- ▶ Facilitate exit interviews with the Department of Equity, Inclusion, and Justice for employees with marginalized identities in addition to those that occur with HR.
- ▶ Utilize the Bias Incident Reporting Protocol across the school, along with further development of restorative practices.
- ▶ Gather information about the broader DEIJ landscape in independent schools.
- ▶ Develop an ongoing, school-wide climate assessment strategy.

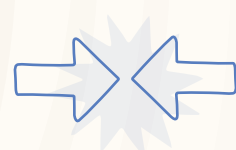
ENABLING CONDITIONS

A number of systems, processes, and procedures must be applied across Milton Academy to support successful and sustained change and impact:



Diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) commitment reflected on campus, in collateral, and in messaging:

Institutional commitments such as the school mission statement must be assessed and revised as needed, ensuring they reflect our community's goals. The commitments should be posted visibly around campus and featured in all school collateral (e.g., parent handbooks, admission materials, re-enrollment letters, employee evaluations, and re-appointment contracts) to ensure all stakeholders—internal and external—can see and hold Milton Academy accountable to its priorities. Lastly, the chief equity and inclusion officer role should be an endowed chair in order to signal Milton's commitment to DEIJ for posterity and provide further acknowledgment of importance.



Aligned implementation:

Milton's various DEIJ initiatives (from K-12 admissions to student programming and professional development) must be aligned and coordinated with the work of the school's Department of Equity, Inclusion, and Justice. To promote integration and consistency, the Administrative Council should address institutional silos and establish team-building strategies.



Robust data collection and analysis:

Essential to ongoing monitoring and accountability are robust systems for collecting, analyzing, and acting upon quantitative and qualitative data from all facets of interaction with the school (including during student pre-admission, the employee application process, and various forms of alumni engagement).



Continued stakeholder engagement and accountability:

It is essential to continue to engage all stakeholders in building community capacity in DEIJ and support for upcoming initiatives. Specific structures should be embedded to seek and capture regular feedback.

- ▶ Affinity spaces and committees should be developed, allowing students, employees, trustees, alumni, and parents to provide targeted feedback to implementation efforts.
- ▶ In implementing these DEIJ recommendations, cross-functional collaboration is essential (e.g., collaboration with the Alumni and Development Office to identify fundraising updates and outreach initiatives).

DEIC MEMBERSHIP

By submitting its recommendations, the DEIC concludes its charge: to aggregate critical areas of need and identify best practices toward creating a more inclusive and antiracist community. We thank the members of the DEIC (listed at right) and all our community members whose input made this document and its recommendations possible. Their steadfast commitment to this work and to Milton Academy is key to the school's future and continued improvement.

Below, please find a list of 2020-2021 DEIC members and any relevant affiliations:

- ▶ Shirin Adhami, Nesto Gallery Director, Upper School Faculty, Student Studio Art Association Advisor
- ▶ Rob Azeke '87, Board of Trustees
- ▶ Doug Chavez '93
- ▶ Vanessa Cohen Gibbons P'22 '24, Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer
- ▶ Kurt Collins '97
- ▶ Eleanor "Tabi" Haller-Jorden '75 P'09, Board of Trustees
- ▶ Mark Heath, former Upper School Faculty, Class Dean, and Dorm Parent
- ▶ Terri James Solomon, College Counselor and Muslim Student Association Advisor
- ▶ Annie Jean-Baptiste '06
- ▶ Tyler Jennings, Lower School Dean of Teaching and Learning
- ▶ Josh Jordan '11, Lower School Communications, Upper School Dorm Parent
- ▶ Amy Kirkcaldy, College Counselor and Co-founder of AWARE (Alliance of White Anti-Racist Educators)
- ▶ Joshua Kronenberg, Middle School Faculty
- ▶ Sharon Mathieu P'19 '21, Middle School Faculty
- ▶ Tasha Otenti, Director of Services for International Students, Asian Affinity Advisor, Dorm Parent
- ▶ Ronnell Wilson '93, Board of Trustees
- ▶ Sarah Wooten '04, Former Admission Staff and Dorm Parent
- ▶ Vivian Wu Wong P'13 '18, Upper School Faculty, Advisor to Asian Society and Asian Affinity
- ▶ Donnaree Wynter Grant, former Alumni and Development Staff

MOVING FORWARD

Following release of the DEIC's recommendations, Milton Academy's Department of Equity, Inclusion and Justice will partner with school leadership on implementation and continuous improvement. With these recommendations in mind, the Department of Equity, Inclusion and Justice has identified and articulated the following principles and practices for Milton Academy:

- ▷ **We believe** that all human beings have value.
- ▷ **We believe** that injustice exists, both interpersonal and systemic, due to identities that people hold.
- ▷ **We believe** that we have a responsibility to challenge unjust behaviors, practices, and policies within our sphere of influence.

MILTON ACADEMY DEIJ PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

Created by the Department of Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

Learning principles and practices that inform community programming, courses, co-curriculars, and professional development:



IDENTITY AND BELONGING

- ▶ Practice self-awareness
- ▶ Foster positive self-identity
- ▶ Build understanding across difference
- ▶ Center relationships



EMPATHY AND INQUIRY

- ▶ Embrace an inquisitive mindset
- ▶ Explore societal topics with empathy
- ▶ Investigate the impact of identity
- ▶ Examine internal biases
- ▶ Persist through the discomfort of unpacking and unlearning biases



PERSPECTIVES

- ▶ Explore different points of view
- ▶ Develop critical thinking skills
- ▶ Build skills for resolving conflict



ACTION AND LEADERSHIP

- ▶ Interrogate unfairness
- ▶ Model 'upstander' behavior by challenging injustice with courage
- ▶ Lead and partner in school-wide endeavors as an inclusive role model



MILTON ACADEMY
EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND JUSTICE