

A TIMELINE ON GORDON’S COMMITMENT TO RACIAL DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND MULTICULTURAL TEACHING PRACTICE

1995

- Board-approved Strategic Plan identifies “diversity” as one of the five areas that need action. The Plan calls on the school to “Recognize and celebrate Gordon’s current diversity of people and talents and set clear objectives for enhancing and expanding diversity within our community.”
- The Diversity Committee is reactivated as a standing committee of the Board of Trustees

1997

- The Board approves an enrollment proposal to attain 15% students of color by 2000, and simultaneously sets a policy to annually commit 10% of tuition revenue to financial aid

1998

- The Admission Office holds an Open House specifically for families of color
- The Board approves a new Strategic Plan with goals for the enrollment and retention of students of color and hiring and retaining faculty of color
- The Diversity Committee focuses on religious diversity for an entire year and holds two parent forums with this focus

1999

- First African American faculty member of color hired
- Parents of Students of Color (POSOC) holds its first meeting
- Diversity Committee makes decision to focus its efforts on racial diversity
- Vision Statement for Racial Diversity drafted and approved by the Board

2000

- A “town meeting” is held for parents and faculty to discuss how the school can successfully achieve the objectives outlined in the Vision Statement
- David Bourns facilitates a Board retreat that ignites a planning process resulting in the Strategic Plan for Racial Diversity (approved by the Board in June 2000)

2001

- Jennifer Foley is hired as the first Director of Diversity
- Enid Lee, an internationally recognized multicultural educator, is hired as a consultant to lead the faculty’s work on multicultural education
- Gordon School presents its work at the National Association of Independent School’s annual People of Color Conference
- The Board explores the “true cost of a Gordon education” and commits to providing resources to make the academic day (7:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.) financially accessible to all students (financial support for field trips, academic support, assistance with sports equipment, and hot lunch)

2002

- Voluntary racial self-identification is part of the admissions paperwork

- Board-approved Strategic Plan directs the school to “fulfill the mandates of the Strategic Plan for Racial Diversity”
- Eric Polite is hired as the Director of Diversity (Jennifer Foley is hired to be the Middle School Director)
- The annual 8th Grade Civil Rights Trip is established

2003

- Gordon becomes a regular presenter at the summer Cultural Diversity Institute at Milton Academy where annually 70 administrators and teachers from independent schools around the country gather to advance their school’s institutional diversity efforts
- There has been a Gordon presence at the Diversity Directions Independent School Seminar (formerly known as “Milton”) since 2003. That presence includes as both attendees and presenters
- Gordon faculty are asked to present their teaching practice and curriculum at regional and national conferences (these requests are now persistent)
- The Civil Rights Trip is endowed through the Bready-Lapides fund

2004

- A Community Diversity Assessment (CDA) is conducted by the Diversity Committee. It provides feedback on the school’s diversity work and the faculty’s development of multicultural curriculum from trustees, parents, faculty and Middle School students
- Eric Polite is published in the NAIS Independent School Magazine: Go Ahead, Open the Box: Assessing Diversity to Initiate Change
- The National Association of Independent Schools recognizes Gordon for its leadership in creating a racially diverse school by awarding the school its Leading Edge Award for Equity and Justice”
- The NAIS People of Color Conference is given its own line item in the budget to ensure that the school’s faculty and staff of color who want to attend can attend
- Using the results of the CDA, the Board develops and approves two strategic plans: The Strategic Plan for Building and Sustaining a Racially Diverse Community and The Strategic Plan for Evaluating and Enhancing Multicultural Practice
- The school handles multiple requests for site visits from faculty, administrators and trustees from other independent schools (these requests persist)

2005

- In an effort to give specific definition to their commitment to multicultural teaching practice, the faculty develops the Guiding Principles of Multicultural Practice – a specific set of teaching expectations that define multicultural education for Gordon’s faculty
- April 2005, the Diversity Committee presents a year’s worth of research into race-based affinity groups in N – 8 schools to the Board of Trustees

2006

- Common Ground, a race-based affinity group for students in 1st – 4th grade, is established. Two faculty members are the facilitators

2007

- The ten year accreditation process includes a recommendation to “embark on a Mission and Philosophy review, including a careful study of the language, words and phrases to

reflect actual practice.” The recommendation adds, “Careful attention needs to be paid to the principles related to diversity and clearly incorporating them into the mission and core principles of the school.”

- Common Ground moves into the Middle School
- The Board approves the Centennial Strategic Plan that includes objectives to “meet and exceed” goals for racial diversity, enhance economic diversity through increased financial aid resources, strengthen faculty professional development in multicultural practice, and research and implement a plan to establish a Teacher Residency Program
- Lynn Bowman and several middle school faculty develop and lead the Middle School Institute on Multicultural Practice – a summer institute for educators across the country with a focus on multicultural education.

2008

- The Diversity Committee leads a Racial Climate Assessment that provides the school with feedback on the school’s progress in its diversity work from trustees of color, faculty and staff of color, Middle School students of color, and POSOC
- Dr. Kim Ridley is hired as the Director of Diversity and Multicultural Practice – the change in title evidences the position’s greater engagement in faculty professional development and curricular assessment
- The Diversity Committee conducts a year’s worth of research into best practices of anti-bias education in elementary and middle schools with regard to family structure, sexual orientation and gender identity and shares its recommendations with the Board (May 2009)
- Tim Wise, a nationally recognized author on white privilege, speaks to Gordon’s employees

2009

- Board approves a new Mission Statement, Guiding Principles and Statement on Inclusivity
- Middle School Common Ground and Social Justice Advisory become a standard part of the academic week
- Dr. Jennifer Bryan, a nationally recognized consultant on gender and sexuality diversity, conducts a day-long workshop for faculty and staff
- Deb Roffman, a nationally recognized author and consultant on human sexuality, speaks to the parent community (and to the Board in February 2010)
- The Board retreat focuses on multicultural education, academic excellence, and race-based privilege through a workshop led by Elizabeth Denevi, co-Director of Diversity at Georgetown Day School in Washington, D.C.
- The administration sets a commitment to have employees attend the White Privilege Conference each year (*need to double check the date on this*)

2010

- Dr. Jennifer Bryan conducts a second day-long workshop on gender and sexuality diversity for the faculty and staff
- The faculty and staff are required to participate in race-based affinity groups that meet on a monthly basis. The groups are facilitated by faculty and administrators
- The Diversity Committee develops a parent education series on gender and sexuality diversity

- The Gordon School/Roger Williams University Teacher Residency Program is established which grants a master degree in multicultural teaching practice and social justice education
- The Middle School Institute for Multicultural Practice evolves and eventually becomes the Multicultural Institute-an internal professional development 3-day workshop for faculty and staff held in June

2011

- Enid Lee conducts a parent education night on “Academic Excellence and Multicultural Education”. The night features several faculty presentations of specific curriculum pieces that connect multicultural practice with “results”
- Elizabeth Denevi and Mariama Richards, co-Directors of Diversity at Georgetown Day School, lead a parent education night on affinity groups which features a panel of Gordon’s faculty who facilitate Common Ground
- Faculty and staff continue their work on issues of white privilege and continue to meet in race-based affinity groups
- Kim Ridley and Julie Parsons (Kindergarten teacher and Common Ground facilitator) are published in the NAIS Independent School Magazine: Identity, Affinity and Reality: making the case for affinity groups in elementary schools
- The POSOC group receives an endowed fund to assist in the continuation of its work
- The Diversity Committee begins planning a Climate Assessment for the 2012/2013 school year

2012

- 30% overall enrollment of students of color achieved
- The Gordon Community Association (Gordon’s parent association) participates in a workshop with Robin DiAngelo, author of the book, Is Everyone Really Equal?
- The Diversity Committee conducts a school-wide Community Diversity Assessment which includes focus groups, individual interviews with trustees and online surveys of parents, faculty, staff and middle school students

2013

- 34% overall students of color
- The school-wide Community Diversity Assessment is completed. Results are analyzed and shared with the Board, administration, parents, and faculty and staff. The annual Board retreat focuses on the results and strategy going forward
- Kim Ridley’s title is changed to Assistant Head for Faculty Professional Growth and Multicultural Practice
- Using the results of the CDA, the Diversity Committee writes a strategic plan entitled, “Sustaining Momentum and Setting a Vision: Eight Action Steps Resulting from the Community Diversity Assessment of 2012-2013” which the Board approves in June 2014
- Summer issue of Independent School Magazine publishes article Examining Privilege: An Essential Strategy for Digging Deep in Diversity Work written by Kimberly Ridley and Ralph Wales

2014

- 36% overall students of color

- Diversity Committee begins work on addressing the “Eight Action Steps” plan noted above. This includes study on creating a Gender and Sexuality Alliance in 6th - 8th grade. A recommendation to do so is presented to the Board in June 2015
- A second step in the “Eight Action Steps” that the Diversity Committee works on is to determine an approach to address the financial barriers in the After School Programs
- Partnering with Brown University, Gordon hosts a two day symposium in February 2015 entitled, “Unpacking Race: An Essential Conversation in Schools and Homes”

2015

- 40% overall students of color
- Kim Ridley’s title is changed to Assistant Head of School
- A Gender and Sexuality Awareness group is piloted in 6th - 8th grade
- Changes made to After School Programs include (*need language about what was changed*)
- Board announces a three-year, 2.5% tuition increase while research into a new tuition model is conducted

2016

- 42% overall students of color
- Head of School, Ralph Wales announces his departure after a 24-year tenure
- Dr. Jennifer Bryan works with the full faculty in October and comes back in April to work with Early Childhood and Lower School divisions and the Board on “Supporting Transgender Children and Their Families”
- The Safe Schools Task Force is formed to research and develop guidelines and policies to support transgender and gender fluid students
- Board approves moving to the Family Individualized Tuition (FIT) model which is more predictable and equitable than the use of Financial Aid. The term “financial aid” is removed from admission materials

2017

- 42% overall students of color
- All single-stall restrooms are relabeled “All Gender Restroom”
- Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum comes to Gordon for a public forum in recognition of the 20th anniversary of her book, “Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?” Over 300 people attend from all over New England
- Dr. Noni Thomas López is hired to be the next Head of School
- Spring 2018 Common Ground is extended to Kindergarten and Young Kindergarten

2018

- 44% overall students of color
- Dr. Noni Thomas López begins her tenure. She is the first African-American Head of School. The administration is 50% persons of color
- The Safe Schools Task Force continues work on “Policies and Procedures for a Gender Safe School” to be presented to the Board by the end of the school year