Race, Diversity and Access Update: 2021/2

The Race, Diversity and Access Working Group reported to the Governing Body (GB) in Michaelmas 2020. As stated in the review of actions published in Trinity Term 2021, in taking forward the actions arising from that work, the College’s aim is to ensure that considerations of race, diversity and access are fully embedded across its activities and its governance. In order to do this most effectively, it is primarily using the existing arrangements of individual officer responsibilities and committees, covering all aspects of College life and reporting to the Governing Body, as opposed to continuing with a separate working group. The GB agreed that the Equalities Committee should conduct a light touch annual stock take of this work by means of an open session at its meeting in the 6th Week of Hilary Term. The first open session was held in Hilary Term 2022 and received an early draft of this note.

This note is not an exhaustive account of the relevant actions over the last year.

Tackling Under-Representation

The College has changed the standard wording for advertisements for academic posts and College staff, to make it clearer that it welcomes applications from groups currently under-represented. It checks whether panels are diverse and, because it is not possible for panels routinely to represent all those currently under-represented in the relevant field, it ensures that panels actively note their duty to consider matters of diversity, including race. Where possible, academic posts are advertised directly to groups under-represented in the discipline, by circulation to specific networks. The College commissioned a statistical expert to help it rigorously interpret information about student applications.

In one area, that of Graduate studentships, the College bid to join two schemes that are designed to tackle specific areas of under-representation. The College co-funded and offered up to four graduate scholarships in association with the University of Oxford’s Black Academic Futures programme, and was delighted to be successful in filling all four places for 2022. In collaboration with the Blavatnik School, also funded and successfully appointed a graduate student for the MSt in Public Policy, under the Commonwealth Shared Scholarship scheme.

Awareness Raising, and the College’s Intellectual Life

In Michaelmas Term 2021 a number of Queen’s staff took part in a half-day workshop focused on raising awareness of racial discrimination and promoting inclusion. The sessions were an opportunity for reflection, action, and transformation and were designed and delivered by a specialist facilitator, Advance HE. The intent of the workshop was to create a space for dialogue and provide time to explore what it means to promote inclusivity, foster an environment where everyone feels welcome, and challenge prejudice.

Following scheduling problems associated with planned workshops for students, and discussions with Advance HE, the JCR and MCR decided to develop anti-racism training as part of Freshers’ week 2022.
With JCR and MCR Officers’ support, the Provost convened meetings to provide opportunities for students of colour to share their experiences of the College, in 8th week of Hilary Term and in 5th week of Trinity Term.

In Michaelmas Term the Library curated an exhibition in the Upper Library: ‘Africa Answers Back: Prince Nyabongo at The Queen’s College’, which explored how the College was experienced by a Ugandan postgraduate student between the wars. Minority Ethnic reps organised the Black History Month Library Tour. The College’s “Dining Right” exhibition (Hilary Term) included an account by Chiang Yee, a Chinese emigrant, visiting the Dining Hall in the 1940s. The Library continues to broaden the selection of fiction authors in the General Collection, and this consideration will feed into the Collection Development Review.

In Michaelmas Term Minority Ethnic reps organised the Confluence formal, sponsored by Professor Meleisa Ono-George. This had an excellent turn out, helping to represent and celebrate people of ethnic minorities in College. In December the JCR also organised and International and Minority Ethnics restaurant event.

The Sustainable Food at Queen’s initiative prompted the creation of an extended list of cultural and religious events to be celebrated by special meals during the year, and the kitchen now provides halal meat options in Hall.

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