



## **Next steps: Post SALA EDI town hall**

To the SALA community,

As we had too many questions to answer adequately in the Town Hall on 23 July 2020, we have attempted to answer those questions here. The questions have been reorganized into categories and sometimes grouped to avoid repetition. If you feel that a question you asked has not been adequately answered, please reach out to Sara Stevens (sstevens@sala.ubc.ca) or Ron Kellett (rkellett@sala.ubc.ca) so that we can address your concern. The EDI Committee will be organizing conversations with many groups within SALA in the coming months. Please watch out for those opportunities.

### **EDI Committee**

**Q: How willing is SALA to explicitly admit and acknowledge that systemic racism, sexism and power inequalities exist within architecture and design disciplines and by extension design education? If SALA is willing, which I think it is based on the Town Hall and the response to the letter, how is SALA planning to do this (i.e. statement on website, acknowledgement, in classes, etc.).**

A: SALA admits and acknowledges that systemic racism, sexism and power inequalities exist within architecture and design disciplines and in design education. The Open Letter to the School Community from Ron Kellett has been on the SALA landing page since 3 July 2020; this was only the first step in acknowledging systemic racism. To address these interrelated challenges, SALA feels it is important to make changes to our school's governance, curriculum, outreach, committee structures, student involvement in governance, academic infrastructure, alumni relations, recruiting, and hiring. The EDI Committee's work will be accessible through the SALA website via the Student Resource Blog launching soon, and will consider how transparency and accountability are important aspects of the changes we will make.

**Q: Could you please go through each item listed in the open letter sent to SALA in July? Please explain which requests are being met, and which the school is unable to meet and why.**

A: This is a big task, and the EDI Committee is currently working on this. The EDI Committee has committed to update the SALA community on their efforts at the end of Term 1 and Term 2 of the coming school year so that the work is transparent and so that the school is held accountable.

**Q: Will SALA provide ethics/EDI training for SALA faculty/staff?**

A: The school has committed to training all faculty and staff (and offering an option for students as well) on matters of equity, diversity, and inclusion. It will occur early in fall term.

**Q: Are there professional diversity consultants hired to help with the restructuring of the school to ensure that concerns are heard and implemented?**

A: The EDI Committee is looking into this for at least two purposes: one to evaluate where we are with EDI issues (so something like an EDI audit of the school, which would include ongoing accountability/benchmarking to measure progress) and two, to lead EDI training for faculty and staff. The intent is to schedule such a training for early in the fall term.

**Q: Can you speak to faculty who are not in attendance and may not agree with the need for equity? Will diversity and inclusion training be mandatory for all faculty/staff?**

A: The EDI training will be for all faculty and staff. The panelists at the town hall were only a portion of those who were present (many were attendees and thus not visible to other attendees). At the SALA retreat session held 16 June and dedicated to addressing the 11 June letter, there was universal support among SALA faculty for increasing equity and inclusion in the school.

**Q: How committed do you feel that all faculty are in recognizing their own biases and willingness to do something about it? Will faculty personally coach their colleagues in conversations and call out problematic behaviour as it happens?**

A: The letter and our ongoing response has helped all SALA faculty see that our own biases and failure to address anti-racism in the school are deep-seated problems that require ongoing work. We will ask that the EDI training that faculty and staff do in the fall address how to stop problematic behavior and how to coach others to do the same.

**Q: What diversity statistics are reported by the school through leadership channels, and if so, are those statistics and the university's overall statistics made available publicly?**

A: We have very little data on the racial demographics of the school, as UBC relies on self-reporting for its employees and students. UBC's demographic data is only shared in aggregate and not at the SALA level. The EDI Committee will be working with Applied Science Associate Dean of EDI Sheryl Staub-French to learn more as part of our EDI audit of SALA.

**Q: Why is the EDI Committee not constituted of a more diverse group of people?**

**Q: Who is on the EDI Committee? Is it people on this panel? If so, why are you deflecting so many questions to them and why aren't there more BIPOC?**

A: The EDI Committee is chaired by Assistant Professor Sara Stevens, and members include Associate Professor John Bass, staff member Adriana Ermi-Sprung, and Associate Professor Inge Roecker, in addition to four student positions which student leadership allocated to FaFa, NOMAS, architecture, and landscape architecture. Faculty whose appointments include service work are assigned to one committee each year even when their interests, talents, and perspective might be relevant to multiple committees. The EDI Committee welcomes input, participation, and leadership from faculty, staff, and students who identify as Indigenous, Black, and/or People of Colour (IBPOC)<sup>1</sup> and hopes to develop durable channels for that communication; however, we do not wish to put undue burden on IBPOC faculty or students to perform that labor or lead the changes to the school should they choose not to.

**Q: Is SALA considering or planning to reach out to BIPOC students specifically to hear about their experiences and challenges at the School? Other schools in the US have done this and it seems like a meaningful step.**

A: Yes, thank you for this excellent suggestion. The EDI Committee is making plans to do this soon.

**Q: Any plans to fund NOMAS/FaFa, or will they keep research for the school for free?**

A: All SALA student groups can be funded for recurring funding or for special projects through the Alma Mater Society (AMS); AMS channels funds from student fees for this purpose. Within SALA, we encourage NOMAS and FaFa and students from those groups to apply for SALA's student experience funds, as other funding does not currently exist. We welcome NOMAS and FaFa's participation in the school and will do our best to provide them with support; as a first step, the Student Affairs Committee will plan to revise their evaluation criteria for the Student Experience Funds in order to prioritize projects that benefit IBPOC students and center IBPOC perspectives.

**Q: Is the support that you rely on from students who identify as BIPOC paid support to help you restructure the school?**

A: We recognize that making the changes that SALA needs to make will rely on the emotional (and intellectual) labour of IBPOC students. Currently, the student governance roles are organized by students and are not paid positions. The EDI Committee will explore ways to support IBPOC student participation and would welcome further input on this question if there are models we could consider for this.

**Q: As a "BIPOC" and current student, I found that the letter written by the "broader student community" didn't accurately reflect my experience at SALA. I have been**

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<sup>1</sup> For SALA's context, we feel that putting Indigenous/First Peoples first makes sense, and follows a practice already established at UBC (see IBPOC Connections at the UBC Equity & Inclusion Office and Santa Ono's July 2020 Letter to the Community).

fortunate to have had a very positive experience at SALA and feel like students (who are alumni and also mostly white) co-opted the BIPOC platform to speak on my behalf.

A: Thank you for sharing this perspective. The EDI Committee will consult widely with the student body to ensure that we hear from many perspectives, and will not assume that only one perspective exists.

**Q: If the EDI Committee is to truly champion BIPOC issues, will there be concrete "quotas" in place to ensure students of colour will be present at the table to actually be a part of the decision-making process that forwards their needs? (Which seems absurd but seemingly necessary?)**

A: This is an important question, as representation matters, and including BIPOC perspectives and lived experiences in decision-making matters. For now we are relying on student leadership to nominate members to the EDI Committee from NOMAS and FaFa. The EDI Committee will consider this moving forward, and will also work on how to make such a policy transparent and accountable. Alumni involvement in the committee will also be an important component of ensuring proper representation, support, and accountability.

**Q: Is renaming the Lasserre Building on any committee's agenda?**

**Q: Hi, in relation to the question about Lassere, will there be a way moving forward to honour Douglas Cardinal as one of the few existing Indigenous architects to have gone through SALA to reconcile his poor experience with Lassere? Maybe there has already been work done that students aren't aware of? Thank you.**

A: We have been looking to find a way to honour Mr. Cardinal since November 2019, and given that the history here involves a living individual's personal experiences and a very long passage of time, we do not feel it is appropriate to share this effort yet with a wider audience. We look forward to finding a way for SALA to reconcile with Mr. Cardinal, and will invite students and alums to participate in these efforts when the moment is right. Renaming the building is an issue we understand to be of great concern to our students, and the EDI Committee will work with students to advocate for meaningful change.

**Q: What kind of philosophical-based approach changes will the school be implementing to their work culture?**

**Q: I am going to direct my line of questioning toward the use of language in SALAs EDI initiatives. First of all, what does it mean to be equitable, diverse, and inclusive? And what is our framework for equality? Are we trapped by or operating within a losing logic for bringing about real change, a kind of logic that recalls Luce Irigaray's simple question, "Equal to what?" If we don't bring about real structural changes, extending beyond the ad hoc solutions of diversity and inclusivity training, are we not bringing people into a system that is as misogynist and racist as before? I mean, in a very real sense, what are our benchmarks for making structural changes? Are the extents of**

change we are attempting to bring about limited by "best practice" solutions? To quote Wendy Brown, how do we make sure that we aren't "sending decision making and resource provision down a pipeline of power and authority," a devolution of tangible power practices?

**Q: Likewise, what does it mean to sit at "the school's highest level of governance"? Does the use of the word "governance" not have the very distinct capacity to decenter and disperse organizing powers by making the processes of rule more abstract and elusive?**

A: Thank you for this important comment and set of questions. SALA Council and the EDI Committee will discuss the theoretical foundations to working on anti-racism and anti-colonialism and the wider push to reduce barriers and be inclusive. We have avoided the term equality for exactly the reasons you cite, and have heard from some in our community that perhaps a language of anti-racism and anti-colonialism might be a better fit. At the same time, we have heard from students and alumni about a range of issues intersecting those particular lenses, and have opted for EDI language to also mirror UBC's larger approach as a starting point. As for "governance," the EDI Committee will prioritize transparency and accountability, and welcome suggestions on these topics. Understanding where power lies is a first step to making change; therefore, communicating how the school works and the process for making change is work SALA Council and the EDI Committee commits to doing.

### Curriculum

**Q: Hi, as a first year BDes student, I was wondering what changes first years will see in the program in relation to diversity education?**

A: For the short term, the faculty teaching in the program have been asked to look at their respective courses and consider how the material can include more diverse voices and methods. One course in particular, DES 231: Site Analysis and Planning, has been rebooted for the undergrads and will draw on the instructor's experience working with Indigenous communities to teach the understanding of site design from multiple perspectives. Students can also seek out electives in other departments to broaden their perspective, for example in courses offered through the First Nations and Indigenous Studies department (<https://fnis.arts.ubc.ca/current-students/courses/>) In the longer term, SALA's Curriculum Committee will be working on lasting policy changes to the programs to address the lack of diversity education in the core courses. This work will be guided in part by the advice of SALA's Indigenous Content Steering Committee.

**Q: Regarding the curriculum, will there be changes implemented in the 2020/21 academic year, especially in the history and theory courses? (other than the Indigenous Research Methods course)**

A: Yes. The history/theory courses will include learning outcomes related to anti-racism and anti-colonialism. The same will be true for the professional practice courses. Going forward, the Curriculum Committee, working with the EDI Committee, will address how

these changes can become policy to ensure that such content is applied in all the courses where it is relevant, that it is consistent across programs and from year to year, and to make sure such changes satisfy our own standards rather than simply meet the minimum requirements of the programs' accrediting organizations.

**Q: Are there any plans in diversifying critics for studio reviews?**

A: Yes, we see this as a continuation of work underway. A few years ago, SALA undertook a study to better understand who was invited to studio reviews. While this study primarily focused on gender balance, significant actions have been taken to ensure a diversity of voices (gender, ethnicity, and lived experiences) are invited for studio reviews. In February 2020, FaFa provided a document with a list of suggested local reviewers. The EDI Committee together with the Curriculum Committee will expand upon this list, and to embed this concern within ongoing policy rather than relying on individual instructors to 'opt in' to diversifying critics.

**Q: What barriers have prevented SALA from compensating guest critics in the past? Has the faculty discussed how these barriers could be overcome, as part of the greater strategy of achieving diversity among review panels?**

A: Like most design schools in Canada, for external critics (those not based in Vancouver who travel here for final reviews), SALA covers expenses related to travel and accommodations. The EDI Committee will work with the Curriculum Committee to better understand if there are any specific barriers that hinder local critics to participate in reviews and guest lectures, and subsequently to develop mechanisms to overcome these barriers.

**Q: Are there any plans to address ableism and accessibility in the curriculum of the program?**

A: Yes. Addressing ableism and accessibility, as topics to be addressed in course content, will be overseen by the Curriculum Committee. Issues around accessibility, when in regards to any student's ability to succeed in the program, is overseen by the Centre for Accessibility: <https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/centre-for-accessibility> Similarly, the academic concession policy can also be a resource for students facing challenges related to physical or mental health or unexpected situations: <https://students.ubc.ca/enrolment/academic-learning-resources/academic-concessions>

**Q: What topics/ questions related to diversity and the current discussions around it would the SALA faculty be interested in seeing incorporated into student's work? (i.e. what are relevant areas that have been highlighted in recent movements that you are most excited to see incorporated into and experimented with in ongoing design work throughout the semester)**

A: There are many topics and discussions that are of interest to both faculty and our students, including climate justice, indigenization & decolonization, and how the pandemic

is changing cities and landscapes. Many of these topics find their way into our history/theory courses, vertical studios, and seminars. SALA is also working on longer term integration of this content in the way curricula are organized. To give an example: Aligned with UBC's Strategic Plan and UBC's Indigenous Strategic Plan, <https://indigenous.ubc.ca/indigenous-engagement/indigenous-strategic-plan/>, in 2017, SALA established an Indigenous Content Steering Committee. This committee includes faculty, alumni, and design professionals. The committee has developed principles and actions for the integration of Indigenous content into all SALA design programs. Adoption and implementation of these principles and actions will be discussed in the Fall of 2020.

**Q: Hi, I'm in first year BDES, and am wondering, in what ways can architects and designers address issues relating to hostile design/architecture? In what ways are we responsible for creating a dialogue with clients relating to these issues, and how do we communicate why these design decisions might be problematic?**

A: Great question. Designers working in the built environment are responsible to be advocates for justice and equity in all aspects of our work. Sometimes this means that we have to educate our clients; sometimes this means that we have to walk away from work; and sometimes this means that we need to come up with innovative ways to involve with and consult with the people who will be the users of our designs.

### **After You're In: Barriers to Participation/Success in Programs**

**Q: Can you name any specific accessibility alternatives/solutions you have implemented in regards to student's accessibility issues while attending school? Not just learning about how to design for accessibility, but how are you teaching and accommodating those students who need accessible learning alternatives.**

A: SALA faculty regularly make accommodation for students who need alternative arrangements for exams or assignments, such as extending deadlines or providing additional time on exams. UBC has a framework for such accommodations. As should be listed on SALA syllabi, students with accessibility-related issues are advised to reach out to UBC's Centre for Accessibility: <https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/centre-for-accessibility>. The Centre for Accessibility works closely with SALA faculty to assure appropriate actions are undertaken to remove barriers for students with disabilities and ongoing medical conditions (for physical or mental health).

**Q: As an invisibly disabled person whose health took a very, very bad turn for a semester. I was treated very generously and kindly by faculty. Particularly Blair Satterfield's 'new normal' studio and Greg Johnson. Thank you.**

A: Thank you for sharing this comment. UBC policy on Academic Accommodations and the Centre for Accessibility are the foundations for providing flexibility in courses. SALA seeks to have a culture that goes beyond the minimum expectations so that all students can succeed.

**Q: How will you better support international students of colour? And those with language barriers?**

A: We recognize that international students comprise a significant contingent of our IBPOC students, and the racism they have faced is unacceptable. We will work to remove barriers that international IBPOC students face, whether as language learners or otherwise. The experience of international students at SALA has been a lively discussion in planning the online courses for the fall as we work to ensure inclusivity in the school. SALA strives to create an environment where international students of colour can thrive.

**Q: Can you create a shared resource library where alumni can donate studio supplies to be used by those who cannot afford them?**

A: Yes, the Student Affairs Committee and the Outreach Committee will work on this together. We have discussed setting up a SALA Alumni LinkedIn group, and such a group might be a venue for communicating this need, and collecting and storing materials. This would ideally be led by student groups. ARCHUS has expressed interest in assisting with this.

**Q: Can you remove the computer requirement from course outlines? This means PWDs cannot get government funded computers.**

A: We were not aware of this. We would welcome more information about this. Please contact Tara Deans at [tdeans@sala.ubc.ca](mailto:tdeans@sala.ubc.ca). In the meantime, the Student Affairs Committee will ask the Office for Accessibility for more information about this issue.

**Q: Will there be any course content offered online permanently, to not only respond to COVID, but to help reduce barriers to students?**

**Q: Would SALA continue with online initiatives similar to Design Discovery post-COVID in order to continue to make this education more internationally accessible?**

A: At the moment we have not discussed this possibility in detail, but the question has come up. We will task the Curriculum Committee to address this coming year.

### **Who Gets In: Hiring / admissions / scholarships**

**Q: Can you ensure that outside help will be provided when faculty decide on admissions and scholarships?**

A: It is not clear what the question means by "outside help," so this answer will address the transparency and accountability of the processes for admissions and scholarship decisions. Currently graduate admissions committees are comprised of faculty. Since it receives many times the number of applications as other programs, the BDes admission committee also includes students who are employed to help with the process. SALA Council will consider adding students to admissions committees with a particular lens on EDI in evaluating applications, both to improve transparency and increase the focus on EDI. Overall, the admissions process is limited in its ability to weigh diversity because the

applicants' race and ethnicity are not consistently included in their application packages. We rely on self-identification. SALA is working to increase the support we can offer IBPOC students who self-identify, and working with professional communities to establish more scholarship and work opportunities for IBPOC students. UBC has robust programs for Indigenous students who self-identify, and bursaries to support those students. SALA Council will work this year to revise policies related to how SALA decides on scholarships and awards.

**Q: The BDES program has a funded scholarship for one Indigenous student, are other scholarships/ bursaries in the works for BIPOC and those who need financial help?**

A: Yes. The School is always seeking new funding sources for SALA awards. Most SALA awards and scholarships come from donors outside the university. Most are merit-based and must comply with the wishes of the donors. Most undergraduate scholarships and bursaries at UBC are handled through the Office of Enrollment Services. See an extensive list of scholarship options. Bursaries are need-based.

<https://students.ubc.ca/enrolment/finances/awards-scholarships-bursaries>. The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral studies lists information about graduate level fellowships and scholarships <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/scholarships-awards-funding>. Numerous SALA students each year apply for and receive merit-based SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarships (Canadians or Permanent residents). Further resources for Indigenous students can be found at <http://indigenous.ubc.ca> and <https://students.ubc.ca/enrolment/finances/awards-scholarships-bursaries/awards-indigenous>.

**Q: Will lived experiences be prioritized over academic credentials when hiring faculty?**

A: SALA will change its recruiting, hiring, and retention practices in order to increase IBPOC representation in future hires, working with UBC's EDI leadership to do so. Faculty positions come in different forms, some of which we have more direct control over (adjunct and sessional) and others which sit within larger systems. Tenure-track faculty hiring, for example, is embedded in an academic personnel process regulated by UBC and larger academic norms. We already follow UBC and Applied Science's best practices for recruitment and hiring: having faculty go through EDI training that includes implicit bias training, and addressing the latest social science research on faculty hiring processes in order to be in the best position to make offers to candidates that represent marginalized groups. At this time we have no open tenure track positions; however the school recognizes that IBPOC representation on the faculty is critical. SALA commits to improving these practices, with input from the EDI Committee with increased support from Applied Science Associate Dean of EDI, Sheryl Staub-French.

### **Student affairs**

The Town Hall attendees raised numerous questions related to students who have experienced racism, discrimination, "problematic power-based things," harassment or

sexual harassment and what measures SALA proposes for (1) a clear reporting structure for concerns or complaints and (2) a more transparent mediation process that can also maintain confidentiality where needed. We have combined and edited these complex questions to differentiate and respond to the issues they raised.

**Q: How does SALA define acceptable behavior and relationships between students and instructors?**

A: UBC has clear policies on respectful environments (i.e. anti-bullying and anti-harassment) and prohibited relationships (sexual misconduct policy) and SALA is required to abide by these terms. Grievances must follow these terms. SALA commits to elevating awareness of these policies among faculty and instructors and to requiring all faculty to go through training in the coming year to review their terms. Regarding respectful environments, UBC Policy #SC7 [https://universitycounsel-2015.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2019/08/Discrimination-Policy\\_SC7.pdf](https://universitycounsel-2015.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2019/08/Discrimination-Policy_SC7.pdf) addresses Discrimination, while The Respectful Environment Statement addresses harassment and bullying that is not discriminatory in nature. <https://bullyingandharassment.ubc.ca/> Regarding sexual misconduct, the intent of the university policy is “to support all members of the UBC community who are affected by sexual misconduct, to provide a central site for information regarding the resources and options available to those affected by sexual misconduct, to create and make available programs and resources to educate its community on the prevention of sexual misconduct, and to provide a process to respond to and investigate allegations of sexual misconduct.” The university defines the terms and policies under the newly updated (1 July 2020) UBC Sexual Misconduct Policy #SC17 [https://universitycounsel.ubc.ca/files/2020/06/Sexual-Misconduct-Policy\\_SC17.pdf](https://universitycounsel.ubc.ca/files/2020/06/Sexual-Misconduct-Policy_SC17.pdf) The policy states “Sexual or intimate relationships between individuals ... where there is a supervisory role or where an individual has influence over a student’s current or future academic activities, working conditions, or career advancement are Prohibited Relationships.” Should a student ever feel they have experienced sexual misconduct, they should report it to the UBC Sexual Violence and Response Office <https://svpro.ubc.ca/>. Also see: <https://svpro.ubc.ca/report-options/>.

**Q: What pathways to report concerns such as these currently exist?**

A: UBC has explicit policies which are available on the following websites: <https://academic.ubc.ca/support-resources/ubc-policies-guidelines> and <https://universitycounsel.ubc.ca/board-of-governors-policies-procedures-rules-and-guidelines/>, covering Discrimination and Harassment; the Student Code of Conduct; Scholarly Integrity; Investigations and more. Associated with each policy are guidelines for investigative procedures. The general principle is that any issues of misconduct, harassment, discrimination etc. should be reported to the program Chair or the School Director. If the complainant is not comfortable reporting incidents within the School they should go to the Office of the Ombudsperson for Students (<https://ombudsoffice.ubc.ca/>). We will add links to the policies and the Office of the

Ombudsperson to the Student Resource Blog. By utilizing the services of the Office of the Ombudsperson, complaint procedures and mediation can be as private and secure as the policies allow.

SALA commits to doing a better job of communicating those policies and procedures and the contact persons at UBC to all students so that there is no ambiguity. The Student Affairs Committee will also work with students in the coming year to understand if and where there are shortcomings, and make proposals for changes where needed or advocate within the university for changes or added support where needed.

**Q: Are there any plans to make student governance/clubs more approachable for BIPOC and students with disabilities within SALA? (more of a cultural change, rather than specifically programmatic as it is "technically" open to everyone. Student leadership roles seem to attract a not-so-diverse group of students).**

A: As the SALA student groups are self-governing, this should be addressed by the student groups. The Student Affairs Committee will add this as an agenda item to a Student Executive Committee meeting to encourage discussion and to see how the school could better support creating a more inclusive student governance.