

iSCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the iSchool is to expand human capabilities by connecting people, information, and technology. The faculty and staff of the iSchool are committed to preparing students to be leaders in the information field, advancing knowledge, and using information to solve problems faced by individuals and organizations. Together, the faculty, staff, and students of the iSchool impact research and the information profession through our scholarship, rigorous education opportunities, and commitment to service that advances science, improves professional practice and contributes both to communities in which we live and more broadly to society.

OUR VALUES

Our shared values guide the culture, curriculum, and decision making at the iSchool.

Excellence

We are a student-centered institution committed to learning and intellectual diversity. As a community of scholars and practitioners, we pursue research and teaching excellence through the development, integration, and application of knowledge.

Discovery and Innovation

We value discovery and innovation to advance the information fields. We identify new opportunities, respond creatively to emerging issues, and lead our fields through partnerships and learning communities.

Integrity

As information professionals, we uphold intellectual honesty and responsibility. We carefully consider the implications of our actions, taking fairness and equity into consideration. We contribute to and promote the highest standards for the ethical use of information and technology.

Diversity and Inclusion

We strive for diversity in our community and celebrate differences. We embrace a multiplicity of voices to address social and technical challenges through interdisciplinary analysis and solutions.

Global Citizenship and Engagement

We enable our iSchool community to participate actively as global citizens working to advance the common good. We have a responsibility to inform and improve society and to influence policy through pedagogy, research, and advocacy.

INTRODUCTION

The 2020-2021 academic year was tumultuous due to two major national and international events: the COVID-19 pandemic and social justice protests and developments that traumatized the country. The pandemic forced the entire nation to move to remote operations for all economic activity, and universities were no exception. While Syracuse University was able to keep its doors open to students who felt comfortable taking socially distanced and masked classes, the campus was, for the most part, empty. The pandemic precluded any large in-person event. From an inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) perspective, online offerings were both an opportunity and a challenge. They were an opportunity because they led to collaborations among units that may not have been possible under normal circumstances; they facilitated the participation of students, staff, and faculty outside of Syracuse and made it easy for invited speakers to join us online for seminars. We nonetheless recognize that the lack of in-person events limited our ability to engage in more extended, less formal interactions and prevented us from getting to know each other more deeply and enhance our sense of empathy for people who are different from us.

This annual report presents the initiatives that took place this year and recommendations for moving forward. The report is organized according to the six goals of the IDEA strategic plan.

GOAL I: The iSchool community is culturally aware and takes meaningful actions to eliminate biases and to support the inclusion of all its members.

The strategies pertaining to these goals centered on awareness, but they also involved structural initiatives concerning governance and research.

IDEA conversations. Every month, the iSchool sponsored IDEA-related events supporting diversity and inclusion. These events were often held in collaboration with the Whitman School of Management.

iSchool iDEA Forum. The iSchool was the lead institution organizing the iSchool IDEA Forum—a whole day of online panels dedicated to IDEA issues in the information field. The Forum involved thirteen universities and attracted 300 registrants, with 150 participants active at any given point in the event.

The iSchool introduced FriDEA late in the academic year, a weekly email posting that was sent to the entire iSchool community. It included short summaries of materials for enhancing our community's awareness of IDEA. The weekly email also included a short reflection about a current event and links to upcoming iSchool and university events.

Shout-outs. We introduced weekly shout-outs to highlight the contributions that particular faculty and staff members bring to the iSchool. The emails, in turn, drew more accolades by way of email responses from people who have had the opportunity to interact with our iSchool members and appreciate their professionalism and dedication. We sent 45 shout-outs this academic year; the first ones were done by the SAD-IDEA officer, and the subsequent 25 were submitted by members of the community.

Governance. The iSchool includes students and staff on most of its committees.

Research Days. Once a year, the iSchool holds Research Days, which allow students and faculty to present their research through posters. This year the event was held virtually and it showcases the diversity of research being done by our community.

Staff climate. We did not pursue the initiative concerning the staff's feelings of inclusion within the iSchool. Because the university commissioned a climate survey, the expectation was that each school would get its report. We expected the survey to help inform us about any initiatives that need to be

taken in relation to the staff. As of this writing, the university has received the results from the climate survey, but individual units have not received their reports.

GOAL S: Students are knowledgeable about IDEA and uphold the iSchool's values. They engage and lead IDEA-related events that foster a supportive and welcoming environment

The central theme of this goal is the awareness component of IDEA initiatives. Both student groups and the IDEA Committee were involved in the organization of events designed to meet this goal.

BLISTS Conference. The Black and Latinx Information Science and Technology Society (BLISTS) organized several events inviting alumni for its members and for their inaugural nationwide conference. The event organizers invited students from thirteen information Schools, and on one of its panels, the program featured three IDEA officers - from the iSchools at Berkeley and Rutgers and the iSchool at Syracuse. The keynote speaker for the event was one of BLISTS founders, Jason Mills.

Dialog circles. Other events that allowed the community to interact, albeit online, was the first dialog circle that allowed faculty, staff, and students to talk about identity issues in the course of a five-week program. The topics included race and identity, privilege, and biases, and the participants considered personal action strategies that would help with our progress towards a more inclusive school.

Informal meetings. The iSchool organized several gatherings after significant events such as the 2020 elections and the Chauvin trial, including a gathering to support students from India when the country was experiencing a high number of infections. These gatherings did not attract many participants; therefore, we think we should consider alternative activities.

Proposal for guidelines to address discriminatory incidents. The IDEA Committee worked on a proposal to help faculty, staff, and students address incidents related to discrimination, in order to repair the harm that the incident may have caused and to encourage dialog and reconciliation to occur. The guidelines are to be discussed by the faculty and approved, until the point when the university issues official guidelines.

GOAL D: The doctoral program provides ample opportunities to learn and engage in research for a diverse student population. It cultivates a supportive and inclusive environment.

Mentoring guidelines for faculty and doctoral students. The Doctoral Subcommittee completed several objectives through a single initiative. The IDEA Officer and doctoral students prepared guidelines that include recommendations for the onboarding of new students, strategies for faculty mentoring, and advice to doctoral students to help them navigate their interactions with faculty members.

GOAL F: The iSchool attracts faculty from diverse backgrounds and values, respects and highlights their teaching, research, and practice contributions. It supports its faculty through equitable service and compensation.

Diversity of faculty. The iSchool put in place several initiatives to attract diverse faculty. We created a list of doctoral students and assistant professors at other universities in areas of interest to the iSchool. The faculty in charge of searches used this list to invite prospects directly to apply for our open positions.

IDEA training for hiring. Faculty responsible for hiring received training about bias. This is the second time the faculty has received training. The first occasion was two years ago, and because of the many faculty the iSchool was hiring this academic year, the training was repeated as a reminder of the potential biases we may implicitly act on.

Appreciation of the diversity of research at the iSchool: At the beginning of the Spring, the iSchool's Editorial Board decided to start collecting statistics about the stories featured on our site. The objective was to ensure that the material included a diversity of voices. Here are some relevant statistics about this initiative:

- Total stories published on our site: 261 from 2017-2021 50 published in 2021
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- Stories from students from underrepresented communities: eight of the 15 student stories published in 2021 are from students from underrepresented communities.
 - Stories from faculty from diverse background #0 of 5 faculty stories from 2021
 - Stories about diversity and inclusion in general: 14 stories touching on diversity and inclusion, not necessarily including profiles on diverse student/faculty.

Fairness in student assessment of faculty. Research has found that women and faculty of color tend to receive lower student evaluations. In this effort, we explored some strategies that may reduce such biases. A paper by Peterson et al. (2019) reported that including a brief statement about bias in student evaluations helped to mitigate this problem. The iSchool did not institute this policy because the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment is working on a short video similar to [one produced by McGill](#). The objective is for students at SU to receive this video when they are asked to complete the course feedback form.

Fairness in pay. The Senior Associate Dean for IDEA initiatives was a member of the University's Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Faculty Salary Equity. The iSchool has been waiting for this report to design its internal policies regarding pay equity, taking the report into consideration.

GOAL SSC: Career Services and Experiential Learning (CaSEL) at the iSchool provide opportunities for all our students (residential and online) to succeed, ensuring that the diversity of their disciplines is represented in our events. There is a robust infrastructure to support first-generation and other URM students facing challenges navigating university requirements.

Expanded services and events for students in our different programs. Under the leadership of the Associate Dean for Career Services and Experiential Learning (CaSEL), the iSchool expanded career events for students in all our programs. These events were aimed at alleviating the perception of LIS students that they were not getting enough career support for their field. A specific effort was initiated to engage LIS students, employers, and alumni, focused on the unique characteristics of this student and

employer population. Megan Oakleaf is serving as a liaison between CaSEL and the LIS professional and student community, advising on the inclusion of faculty, staff, students, and alumni into career services and engagement planning. CaSEL collaborated with Megan and LISSA to offer the first successful workshops and discussions with LIS students.

CaSEL data. CaSEL has started to analyze each of its services in order to support and improve the areas of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility. They have identified career fairs, alumni engagement, and profession-based student organizations as the first phase of this specific enhancement and are developing plans for events that will target under-represented populations for the 2021-2022 academic year.

CaSEL is studying specific not-for-profit organizations, career conferences, and career fairs for students of underrepresented minority groups, and they are reaching out to these organizations to develop formal engagement agreements.

GOAL C: Each of the iSchool programs includes learning outcomes, materials, and assessment that reflect iSchool values, which include taking into consideration inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility.

Syllabus audit. The iSchool strives to include class materials and resources that reflect the diversity of our student body. Under this goal, faculty are invited to conduct syllabus audits and develop assignments that include the consideration of IDEA as a component.

Diversity of speakers. Beyond the classroom, we wish to be aware of diversity and inclusion when organizing panels, inviting speakers, or taking students off campus to explore content issues, taking into consideration IDEA and structural obstacles that prevent certain communities from thriving in our information society.

Assessment. To ensure that IDEA considerations are part of the school's curriculum effort, we will incorporate it into our assessments of our undergraduate and master's programs.
