american
institute for
conservation

PRESERVING CULTURAL Heritage

(t) 202.452.9545
(f) 202.452.9328

AIC Board Strategic Plan for Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in AIC Leadership

Introduction

The American Institute for Conservation (AIC) Board is committed to fostering a diverse, inclusive, and welcoming environment where members from all backgrounds can thrive. We believe this is essential to our core mission of supporting conservation professionals in their work to preserve cultural heritage. A broadly diverse membership benefits the development and exchange of ideas by increasing the variety of perspectives, promoting cross-racial and -cultural understanding, and repairing harmful cultural heritage conservation policies and practices. These beliefs are supported by an increasingly large body of evidence-based research in the social sciences, education, and humanities.

Since its incorporation in 1972, AIC has been a predominantly white organization that reflects the homogeneity of the conservation discipline as it has developed in the United States (U.S.). As a U.S.-based member organization, our vision for AIC's future is that it will be an association whose membership and leadership more closely reflects that of the U.S. workforce. We also strive for AIC to be a welcoming association that provides opportunities, supports involvement, and encourages leadership for conservation professionals from around the world.

The goal of this plan is to identify areas of work and stepwise actions that will increase diversity in our organization's leadership. Expanding leadership diversity cannot occur without further increasing the diversity of our membership and dedicating significant attention and effort to improving organizational culture and opportunity for members. We believe that a dedicated focus should be placed on recruiting and retaining diverse leaders at every level within the organization, from member leaders in committees to members of the board. To this end, many of the action areas outlined within this plan are organization-wide and require close collaboration with F/AIC staff.

Community, diversity, equity, inclusion, and access are among our organization's most important principles. This plan, detailed below, serves as a means through which we can affirm and take action to uphold these values.

Background and Demographics

Commonly defined factors of diversity include race and cultural affinity, gender and sexual identity, and disability status. We believe these are extremely important, both within AIC membership and as reflected in AIC leadership. Among these, racial diversity is of special concern for AIC, due to the conservation profession's roots in harmful, racist museum collecting and stewardship practices. We are convinced that racial diversity is a crucial component of a

broadly diverse conservation workforce, an intellectually and culturally rich professional community, and an innovative leadership team.

Responses to a 2022 FAIC Compensation Survey, however, demonstrate a field that is far from racially diverse, with 88% of respondents identifying as white. Roughly 7% of respondents identified as Asian or Asian American and 5% as Latinx. The next two largest racial groups represented were Native Alaskans / First Nations / Indigenous or Native Americans and Black or African Americans, each at 0.9% of respondents (AIC/FAIC 2022: 17). In contrast, in 2021 the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported a national workforce that was 77% white, 18% Latinx, 13% Black, 7% Asian, and 1% Native American (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2023a).

Based on the 2022 Compensation Survey, the AIC membership also lacks gender diversity, with 84% of respondents identifying as female, 14% as male, and 1% as non-binary (AIC/FAIC 2022: 17). United States labor force statistics from 2021, meanwhile, identify the U.S. workforce as 56% female (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2023b). Non-binary individuals make up a small share of the workforce, yet multiple studies have shown that they face disproportionate levels of discrimination at work (Davidson 2016; Thoroughgood, Sawyer, and Webster 2020; Baboolall and Zucker 2021). We believe that a professional community that values gender diversity and strives for gender equity is important.

The 2021 Accessibility in Conservation survey report provided baseline data on disabilities and accessibility in the field of cultural heritage conservation. Nearly 30% of respondents identified as having a disability or disabilities; the majority indicated having invisible disabilities (including psychological and chronic health conditions) while a small percentage of respondents identified as having visible disabilities (AIC 2022: 2). These numbers reflect a significant percentage of the conservation workforce and they correspond to data on disability among the national population (CDC 2023). The survey analysis and report identified areas for improvement for both FAIC and AIC to become more welcoming to members with disabilities.

In addition to the factors already mentioned, socio-economic background, geographic location, career stage, institutional or business affiliation, professional expertise or specialty, and previous leadership experience–for AIC and/or related organizations–are important factors to consider when choosing leaders to represent AIC and advance its work.

Summary of Past Efforts

In 2016, the AIC Board appointed an Equity and Inclusion Working Group (EIWG) to draft a *Statement on Equity and Inclusion* (accepted by the AIC Board of Directors in April of 2017) and to investigate avenues to further equity and inclusion in the organization. The EIWG report, "Recommendations for Advancing Equity and Inclusion in the American Institute for Conservation," provides an essential road map for future progress. In 2017, upon the acceptance of this report, the AIC Board created the AIC Equity and Inclusion Committee (EIC), formalizing a commitment to address issues of equity and inclusion within the organization and

the field of conservation at large. Since its founding, EIC has played a key role in the development of organizational policies and programmatic review and has created invaluable programming and projects, often in collaboration with other networks, committees, and members. This Diversity Plan is a direct outcome of recommendations from the EIWG and EIC.

Current Action Areas

1. Data on AIC Membership, Leadership, Staff, & Program Participants:

Short-term (Fall 2023-Fall 2024):

- Identify characteristics that we do not have information on (e.g., workplace settings, disabilities, accessibility accommodations, racial and gender identity), and on which we want to collect data, for the following groups:
    - General membership
    - Volunteer leadership
    - AIC Board members
    - F/AIC staff
    - Annual meeting speakers/presenters
    - Stipend recipients
- Identify from whom, how, and how often to collect data, with sensitivity and transparency

Mid-term (Fall 2024-December 2025):

- Communicate the rationale for data collection and explain data usage to AIC members and program participants
- Identify who will have access to the data collected
- Begin collecting data
- Set goals for using the collected data to make improvements in recruitment, nomination, review, and other processes

2. Member Services, Events, & Programming

Short-term (Fall 2023-Fall 2024):

- Examine AIC member online community culture
    - Solicit input from members about their use and experiences of the AIC member online community to determine the degree to which members feel they are treated with respect and that differences and a diversity of perspectives are valued on the online community
    - Review Member Community Code of Conduct and identify necessary revisions to ensure discoverability as well as alignment with EIC recommendations and proposed changes to the AIC Code of Ethics
- Increase transparency about annual meeting planning
    - Share past annual meeting site selection decision-making with members
- Improve communication about resources for people with disabilities
    - Clearly communicate resources available/provided for people with disabilities in all programming and explore flexible funding in the annual budget to support additional resources
- Integrate DEIA efforts into member programming

- ○ Commit to funding annual programming that supports DEIA efforts, including hiring consultants to provide DEIA training and funding member-proposed programming/initiatives that align with AIC's DEIA goals
- ○ Consider the Member Engagement Committee's speaker series and how to leverage these efforts to support programming
- Multilingual offerings
  - ○ Initiate discussion amongst AIC leadership to better understand multilingual needs and efforts, including translation efforts

Mid-term/Long-term (Fall 2024-December 2025 and beyond, as applicable):

- Improve AIC member community culture
  - ○ Based on member feedback, implement changes to support a more welcoming online community experience
- Improve resources for people with disabilities
  - ○ Work with F/AIC staff to ensure an accessibility audit for both organizations takes place in next 2 years, including evaluating ADA compliance on the AIC website and member community
  - ○ Establish a baseline of accessibility for all events and workshops, including a checklist for all organizers and hosts of F/AIC events
- Improve access to fee-based member programming
  - ○ Work with EIC to review the AIC Event and Program Planning Guide and to recommend edits.
  - ○ Identify needs for programs on DEIA topics
  - ○ Work with FAIC to review existing and identify new sources of financial support for members of underrepresented groups
- Multilingual efforts
  - ○ Centralize and set organizational goals to help groups prioritize translation efforts

3. Governance

Short-term (Fall 2023-Fall 2024):

- Working with staff, develop a DEIA checklist to examine and improve:
  - ○ Membership application process and forms;
  - ○ Board position descriptions;
  - ○ Leadership nomination and recruitment processes; (nomination committee)
  - ○ Review volunteer applications;
  - ○ Annual meeting abstract submission, review, and acceptance;
  - ○ Stipend award process;
  - ○ Award nominations process;
  - ○ Professional membership designation process;
  - ○ Committee, network, task force, working group charges.

Mid-term (Fall 2024-December 2025):

- Review recent changes to AIC's Bylaws to evaluate their effectiveness in expanding access to leadership positions

4. Leadership

Short-term (Fall 2023-Fall 2024):

- Develop clear recruitment messaging, based on this plan's vision statement, for AIC's board and other leadership positions
- Create a guide for the Nominating Committee to use when seeking and recruiting candidates for AIC Board service; share applicable components of this with AIC's Internal Advisory Group for use by nominating committees for other leadership positions
- Develop, host, and evaluate recruitment activities for leadership positions
- Review board position descriptions to include DEIA considerations and an expectation to serve as informal mentors to potential future leaders
- Develop connections between board members and ECPN

Mid-term/Long-term (Fall 2024-December 2025):

- Establish DEIA standards for our organization and ensure board and staff accountability
  - Establish DEI standards for recruiting/hiring (staff and volunteer leadership)
  - Advocate for salary transparency; including for F/AIC staff
  - Encourage self-nomination for leadership roles
- Improve onboarding for new AIC Board members, ensuring policies and practices are clear (reimbursement, etc.)

5. Public Awareness, Engagement, & Advocacy

Short-term (Fall 2023-Fall 2024):

- Identify potential partnerships with organizations, associations, and AIC members to strengthen and improve DEIA efforts (use the EIWG report as guidance)
  - Regularly share information with members about existing partnerships and activities

Mid-term/Long-term (Fall 2024-December 2025 and beyond, as applicable):
- Seek partnerships with other organizations that might help us improve our DEIA efforts
- Seek partnerships and engagement with underserved AIC members and/or AIC members that work closely with or are part of underserved communities

Conclusion

Cultural heritage conservation policy and practice must advance and change significantly to move beyond its damaging past practices. To make the leap from aspiration to action in reparative work, we need a diverse, innovative workforce and creative, energetic leaders with varied knowledge, perspectives, and experience. This plan is one tool to help us build toward this goal.

With special thanks for the tireless efforts of the EIC, AIC has made progress in advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and access (DEIA) initiatives within and beyond our organization. Significantly more work and investment are, however, required to achieve a broadly diverse community of cultural heritage conservation practitioners and leaders.

The AIC Board is deeply committed to the plan of action detailed herein. Creating a culture of belonging where diverse individuals thrive, new perspectives are shared openly, and opportunities to partner and collaborate are strengthened is key to the future success of AIC and crucial for the preservation of our shared cultural heritage. In coordination with F/AIC staff, we will be prioritizing this work alongside the implementation of our 2023-25 strategic plan, and AIC members can expect annual updates at the member business meetings.

References Cited

AIC. 2022. "Accessibility in Conservation: Survey Results." Washington, DC: American Institute for Conservation.

AIC/FAIC. 2022. "2022 AIC/FAIC Conservation Compensation Research Overview Report." Washington, DC: Foundation for Advancement in Conservation.

Baboolall, David, and Jill Zucker. 2021. "Being Transgender at Work." *McKinsey Quarterly*, November, 18.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2023, "Disability Impacts All of Us." http://dhds.cdc.gov

Davidson, Skylar. 2016. "Gender Inequality: Nonbinary Transgender People in the Workplace." Edited by Jamie Halsall. *Cogent Social Sciences* 2 (1): 1236511.

Thoroughgood, Christian N., Katina B. Sawyer, and Jennica R. Webster. 2020. "Creating a Trans-Inclusive Workplace." *Harvard Business Review* 98 (2): 114–23.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2023a. "Labor force characteristics by race and ethnicity, 2021." 1100. https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/race-and-ethnicity/2021/home.htm

—-. 2023b. "Women in the labor force: a databook." 1103. https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/womens-databook/2022/home.htm

September 8, 2023