

Columbus Academy United Against Racism



Every Black student should be seen not only for the beautiful color of their skin, but for every other amazing part of them. [This moment means] standing with our affinity groups because we all have valid struggles in this day and age and need to rely on each other. I am especially thankful to the school for letting us know that we are not alone, and that they stand with us.

Olivia Pierre-Louis '21
Co-President, Black Organization of
Students and UnitedCA

Columbus Academy Stands Against Racism

"Columbus Academy believes that diversity, inclusion, equity and justice are essential to the excellence of **community**, **culture** and **curriculum**. We recognize that the pursuit of this excellence requires thoughtful, deliberate and sustained action and that the effort is critical to our educational mission."

 From Columbus Academy's <u>Statement on Diversity and Inclusion</u>, approved by Board of Trustees in 2013 **Columbus Academy Stands Against Racism.** This is not a new sentiment in our school. In fact, we have intentionally worked on diversity and inclusion since the early 1960s, but the need for us to assert our principles – to demarcate where we stand – arises from our increased recognition of the pain of racial experiences by students and families in our community just as our country's awareness of the suffering of Black lives caused by racial injustice has elevated in the last year.

The following pages present both a story and a declaration: an explanation of Columbus Academy's commitment to diversity and inclusion work and our plans to attend to our community, culture and climate, and curriculum specifically in the area of racism and more broadly in cultural competency.

We are clear. Racism holds no place here. When we are rooted in our clarity about the values lived within an exceptional educational community, we are an excellent school. Chief among those values is embracing all people from diverse backgrounds. While in all our work we consider diversity broadly to include race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, physical abilities, family composition and economic background, we will appropriately focus here — in this document — on matters of race and ethnicity.

Consistent with Columbus Academy's dedication to diversity work, the school's 2016 Strategic Vision includes "elevating students' insight into difference, ethics and character formation" as one of its five pillars. Even before the adoption of the plan in 2016, we were among the first independent schools in our state to have a full-time Director of Diversity in 2005. Today, that team is large compared to our peers nationally, and its work is guided by the Diversity and Inclusion Statement, affirmed by the Board in 2013.

This summer, through public and private conversations, we listened to students, faculty, parents and alumni about their school experiences. They expressed the urgent need for the school to make a stand in support of anti-racism, to keep doing the work and to advance our practice of caring for all members of our diverse school community.

We are compelled to tell our story, through this document, of our present efforts and our promise of a continued path towards growth, inclusion and understanding. The Columbus Academy Board of Trustees has (unanimously) voted to affirm our responsibility as a school community committed to the work described in this document and to play our part in a hopeful world free from racial injustice.

Jonathan Kass '85, P '19 '21 President, Board of Trustees Melissa Boocock Soderberg P'18 '20 Head of School



We can do all the reforms in the world. We can do all the policy changes in the world. If the heart of America is not healed, all of the changes and all the reforms will never be enough. Wherever you see an opportunity to show humanity and compassion, let's do it. And when you see it not being done, let's call it out.

Dee Moultrie P'18 '19 '21
June 11th Stand Together Against Racism Remarks

I. Our School Community

"We value diversity in all of its dimensions including but not limited to gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, physical abilities, family composition and socio-economic status. We seek to reflect multiple perspectives, backgrounds and interests in all facets of our community. We recognize that students who are exposed to and embrace diversity are better prepared to engage in a pluralistic world."

 From Columbus Academy's Statement on Diversity and Inclusion

Columbus Academy is committed to creating and welcoming a diverse community of students, families, faculty and staff. In alignment with NAIS Principles of Good Practice for Equity and Justice, our work includes efforts in admissions and the hiring and retention of administrators, teachers and staff as well as developing a sense of shared culture among our students.

Ongoing Actions

Enrolling the most talented, diverse students from Central Ohio starts with ensuring our admissions process is as inclusive as possible. In recent years, for example, we have expanded outreach to area schools to help attract more applicants who identify as students of color. To eliminate the barrier of cost in the application process, we host

preparation sessions for the Independent School Entrance Exam for students seeking admission to grades 6-12. In the 2020-21 academic year, a record-high 40% of our students identify as people of color.

We have significantly increased financial support to make a Columbus Academy education accessible. This comprehensive support includes tuition as well as class trips, participation in athletics, books and technology. In total, through philanthropic support and institutional funding, financial aid has increased 26% in the past five years to \$3.7 million in 2020-21.

Columbus Academy has long been governed by a Board of Trustees that is diverse in every regard. Of the 23 current Board members, 10 are women and 30% are people of color. The Board has been chaired by Black leaders in nine of the past 20 years. The Board of Trustees runs a comprehensive, open and selective nominating and naming process for its membership.

Having a diverse team of teachers, leaders and staff strengthens the educational experience for all of our students and is critical to ensuring equitable experiences for students of color. Academy has engaged recruitment firms to help identify and hire faculty, staff and senior administrators. In the last four years, we have hired three administrative leaders of color. For the 2020-21 school year, we filled 19 positions for teachers and staff by September 2020; **fully half of these employees are people**

of color and one-third are Black.

Since 2014, our Director of Diversity and Community Life has interviewed all finalist candidates for faculty and staff roles, helping Columbus Academy to improve the cultural competency of new faculty and staff and to elevate the importance of these skills for all.

By the Numbers: Our Academy Community

During the past decade, growth in:

Students of Color 24% to 40%

Black Students 8% to 12%

Faculty and Staff of Color 10% to 18%

Black Faculty and Staff 4% to 10%

Our diversity team has grown considerably and today includes a full-time Director, two Assistant Directors and a Student Equity Specialist in addition to Faculty Coordinators in each Division.

We ensure that Admissions Open Houses, new-family events and other gatherings for new students and families are welcoming and inclusive by changing venues and times, modifying food options and working to make presentations culturally inclusive.



Our School Community

New Actions

Our ongoing actions in admissions, hiring and leadership have increased racial diversity in our community. We commit to work that will ensure our community and our practices are equitable and inclusive. New actions we are undertaking to attract diverse students include:

- Members of the Board and school leaders will review Columbus Academy's admissions processes with regard to racial and socio-economic impacts on enrollment decisions.
- The Admissions Office is creating a parent/guardian ambassadors program to increase prospective new students of color.
- Administrators are working to expand economic access through increased resources and recruitment of families from all parts of Columbus.
- The Admissions Office will add a diversity leader to each Admissions Committee and expand racial competency training for its members.
- School leaders are expanding racial competency training for all staff members who interact with the external community including the admissions, development and business office teams.

To attract and retain more faculty and staff of color and ensure our hiring process is racially equitable and inclusive:

- We have created a two-year teacher residency fellowship for independent schools, in collaboration with The Ohio State University's College of Education. The new master's degree program includes a substantial emphasis on developing independent school teachers from under-represented **groups** and fostering equity in education. The program was set to begin in fall 2020, but has been postponed because of COVID-19 precautions. We plan to start the program in 2021.
- We are reviewing our recruitment and hiring practices to integrate emerging best practices for racial equity, and we will expand anti-bias training for all hiring managers, specifically oriented towards the recruitment, interview and selection process.

- This year, we will begin using new technical systems and approaches that ensure our talent pipeline is open and tracked year-round to help build a diverse pool of faculty and staff candidates for each open position.
- A task force of school leaders will review our practices for retention of faculty and staff of color against best practices and initiate new actions based upon the review.

To further build racial diversity in school leadership and increase school administrators' skills in racial equity:

- We will expand our use of consultants to support national searches focused on recruiting the most talented and diverse pool of applicants for all senior leadership positions."
- Beginning in summer 2020, the **Board of Trustees initiated ongoing** anti-racism education in addition to its annual cultural competency training.
- All school leaders are currently engaged in conversations and training (internal and external) on race and anti-racism.
- Beginning in 2019, all faculty and staff members are required to articulate an annual goal for developing cultural competency as part of their annual evaluations. In 2020-21, faculty and staff members are focusing their goals and development on racial competency.

In 1959, James Baldwin wrote that 'all our terrible and beautiful (American) history' would lead some to believe we are 'doomed to an unimaginable unreality... I prefer to believe that the day is coming when we will tell the truth about it - and ourselves. On that day we can call ourselves free men.' It is through the proactive efforts of the school and its community, put forth in this document, that Columbus Academy will be able to allow the truth to set us free from the limitations of human development created by racism.

> **John Exline '64** Longest-Serving Faculty Member in Columbus Academy History



African Americans are still being stereotyped as threats and as dangers to society. Why? All we want is respect and equality. That's all we've ever wanted. Is that really too much to ask?

> Kevin Reeves '22 October 13th Junior Speech

II. Our Culture and Climate

We strive to be an inclusive community in which each individual feels safe, respected and valued. In building a community that values similarities and differences among its constituents, we seek to embody in our actions and in our relations with one another the principles of equity and justice as well as Columbus Academy's core values of honesty, respect, compassion, responsibility and fairness.

 From Columbus Academy's Statement on Diversity and Inclusion

We are committed to fostering a culture that honors diverse identities. Doing so helps all Columbus Academy students thrive and develop essential cultural competencies. We recognize that our students, families and school are embedded in the broader culture, and through our policies, programs, communications and daily practices, we strive to create a school that is equitable, multicultural and consistently addresses biases.

Ongoing Actions

Elevating our community's attention to cultural issues is part of realizing our Strategic Vision goals. Our work in cultural competency infuses these practices, language and awareness into the daily life of the school. We do this in multiple ways, and we plan to enhance and embolden our efforts.

To ensure our values are integrated throughout every aspect of our school's work, the Director of Diversity and Community Life meets regularly with all major groups in the school community: the Board of Trustees, PACA (Parents' Association of Columbus Academy) leaders, Alumni Board and parent/guardian affinity groups. The Director also collaborated with the Director of Alumni Relations to engage alumni in the recently created Black

alumni affinity group and to coordinate its annual meetings and social events. And the Diversity and Community Life staff is working more directly and regularly with faculty and students in each Division, as well as extending initiatives to support under represented students and strengthen our culture.

Over the past several years, our school has **formalized an affinity and alliance group program that acknowledges identity-based inequities and affirms under-represented groups**. There are 25 student groups in the Middle and Upper Schools, a group for faculty and staff of color, four parent/guardian groups and one group for Black alumni. Trained faculty and staff are advisors and liaisons to each group. In addition to building community, our student and parent affinity groups help provide authentic cultural and educational events that enhance our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. To provide leadership and cohesion among our affinity programs, we have created "UnitedCA" groups, composed of representatives from each of these affinity groups, in the Upper School and parent/guardian programs. Our affinity groups play an important role in facilitating the mentoring program between alumni and students.

We offer robust multicultural and anti-bias programs for students, faculty, staff and parents/guardians. This includes our long-standing commitment to offer the nationally recognized Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) Project for faculty and staff and parents/guardians. This program engages participants throughout the school year in learning and exploration of diversity and justice issues. Each year we coordinate and fund students to attend the national Student Diversity Leadership Conference. In addition to programming coordinated by the Diversity and Community Life office, we also create community service opportunities that build empathy and responsibility among students, faculty and staff. And beyond direct programming that supports our culture, we have revised student events and policies – such as orientation, dances and the dress code – to be more inclusive.

The school encourages civil discourse and multiple perspectives. Diverse speakers and perspectives are provided through annual events such as the Celebration of Leadership program, Currier Lecture and graduation speakers. We have additionally brought nationally recognized speakers and events that address diversity and bias, such as Rosetta Lee, Eric Dozier, the Aminah Robinson and Columbus Crossing Borders art exhibits, and films such as Ava DuVernay's "13th" documentary. Our students gain additional insights from our engagement with major community events such as the Jefferson Series and TEDxColumbus.

Columbus Academy's Board of Trustees has historically focused on diversity issues. The Diversity Committee, created in 2005, was the precursor to the current Cultural Consciousness Committee. This committee coordinates cultural competency training

Our Culture and Climate

for the Board and hosts programs such as the "Dinner of Great Conversations" that foster inclusion by meaningfully connecting a diverse community of parents and Board members. These events provide a structure for discussing personal experiences and values in an inviting and social way, creating connections across differences among our families.

Our students lead boldly in diversity, equity and inclusion, and we admire their results in creating and employing initiatives of quality and consequence. Students do not undertake this work alone. Our joy comes from our role in coaching and mentoring their leadership, and providing resources to facilitate their vision and growth. In 2017, we collaborated with our Student Diversity Leadership Conference (SDLC) "alumni" students to create "Different Together," a statewide student diversity conference that allows our student leaders to engage high school students from around Ohio in principles they learned at SDLC. Other examples of students' efforts include anti-bias programming in assemblies and advisories as well as programs for schoolwide engagement such as our annual celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In the Upper School, students help to lead the Community Café program that fosters dialogue and understanding of differences through facilitated discussions about issues such as identity and bias. Youth-led initiatives such as these are critical to furthering a culture of respect and dignity among students, and we are committed to supporting students' interests and leadership development that supports our values.

New Actions

While we have worked to build robust programming and practices that generate equity and inclusion, we recognize our need to elevate and focus our attention on race. Among our new actions to support students and foster our values are:

- We will increase our emphasis on educating about racism and building racial competency within our ongoing work to develop cultural competence among students.
- Divisions are beginning to integrate more explicit and consistent information and education to foster racial competency and a respectful culture among students.
- We are increasing support for our affinity group program, including expansion into the Lower School as well as enhanced training for advisors and appointed leaders for the faculty/staff of color affinity groups.
- Divisional counselors are expanding wellbeing support for students of color, including increasing access to counselors of color in our referral networks.
- We are expanding an orientation program for new students of color and students new to independent schools that provides them time together before school begins to get to know campus, our community and other students of color in support of their transition to Columbus Academy.

- UnitedCA upper school students are planning new community conversations and initiatives focused on highlighting the impact of prejudice and discrimination on the identity development of students of color.
- The Deans will expand our cross-divisional peer mentorship programs to build relationships and affirm the identities of our students of color.
- The Diversity and Community Life Office and external consultants will expand work with faculty and staff to increase skills in talking with students about race and racism in developmentally appropriate ways.
- Division Heads and Deans are more explicitly integrating age-appropriate cultural competency education into orientation, back-to-school and school-year programming.

We will increase our focus on race in our work to respect and affirm the dignity of members of our community. New efforts to increase the school community's culture of equity and inclusion include:

- The Diversity and Community Life Office will create more powerful networks and relationships by expanding our alliance and affinity program to bring together Black students, parents and alumni.
- The school is developing new communications to create wider awareness of Columbus Academy's diversity efforts and to spur participation in them through a new webpage and social media devoted to diversity and equity programming.
- Our Board of Trustees and school leaders will review the school's iconography and ensure our graphic imagery represents school values and reflects our community.
- The Divisions are revising our approach to student conduct reporting and response. This work has begun by revising language in our student handbook to be clearer about discrimination and harassment against identity. We are developing better practices that encourage and support students in communicating with the school about incidents of bias. And within a framework that balances privacy and discipline, we will engage restorative justice approaches that foster student development and a culture of respect.
- The College Counseling Office is expanding and strengthening our relationships
 with organizations, programs and colleges that support students of color and
 specifically Black students. We are coordinating and promoting college visits
 from Historically Black Colleges and Universities with our students and nominating
 CA students for scholarships at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.
- School leaders will continue to use climate surveys as an important form of internal feedback and growth measurement. We plan to field our next climate survey, with increased attention on race, in 2021.



We aren't just here to unlock your academic potential, but to position you to live a life worthy of your individual callings. We are here for you. Every adult knows that in order for you to truly fulfill your calling, you need to be secure in your identity and know your worth.

Pascal Losambe, Ph.D.,
Dean of the Upper School and Special Assistant
to Head of School for Student Outreach

III. Our Curriculum

"We believe that exposure to multiple – and even sometimes competing – points of view best equips students to explore, understand and apply complex concepts, building the basis for a rigorous education. By weaving diversity into the fabric of our curriculum, we equip our students with the interpersonal and critical thinking skills that are essential to success in the complex, multicultural world in which we live."

 From Columbus Academy's Statement on Diversity and Inclusion

Columbus Academy's teachers work continuously to reimagine the content, scope and sequence of our courses and our curriculum. One of the goals is to ensure our curriculum meets Columbus Academy's highest expectations for educating students to develop cultural competency, including race competency. Professional development for faculty is robust and includes significant training in diversity, equity and inclusion.

Ongoing Actions

Formal **character-building programs are woven into courses in each Division**, teaching our students to listen for understanding, value others' ideas and lived experiences, and stand up for principles of fairness and justice. For example, the Upper School English department recognized the need to incorporate examination of important, diverse perspectives. They completely revised the curriculum to integrate diverse authors and stories, particularly people of color and women. They have also integrated innovative classes such

as the Writing in the Marketplace course, which works with community organizations that share our values and is currently partnering with a Black-owned, socially responsible business in the Short North.

In the Middle School, we emphasize content that supports students' identity development such as the seventh grade Identity Unit before reading *The Outsiders*. Students first complete exercises on identity and character, discussing what matters most about their identities, how identity differs from character and how stereotypes affect people. This is critical context and understanding not only for the book and society, but also for students' sense of selves.

In the **Lower School, we recently integrated a new literature program** that includes diverse, complex characters with stories that affirm students' identities and offer windows into differences. Lower School faculty also have been continuously revising standard curricular units such as family, heritage and history to ensure diverse representation and equitable engagement and learning for students.

Beyond our campus, Columbus Academy has broadened students' access to multicultural curricular offerings by investing in educational programs such as Global Online Academy. Through this program, students have the opportunity to take such courses as Japanese Language through Culture and Race and Society with independent school students all over the world. We also are one of eight independent schools in the School Participatory Action Research Collaborative, connected to the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education. Our students conduct youth participatory action research on topics of their choice related to identity, creating a platform for change in our community.

Columbus Academy's professional development budget for faculty and staff is among the top tier nationally for schools like ours. Our resources support regular individual and group attendance at nationally recognized trainings, including diversity. Since 2018, we have dedicated a portion of our professional development budget to increase access to the NAIS People of Color Conference (PoCC) for faculty and staff. On-campus training for all faculty and staff expanded from half days to full days in 2014 to allow expanded focus and deeper integration of our training, including multicultural and anti-bias educational practices. Annual professional development covers such issues as implicit bias, microaggressions, stereotyping, critical race consciousness, racial identity development and gender identity development. As part of their annual goal-setting, faculty members are required to define specific objectives for continuing education and skill development in cultural competency. Academy has twice been named one of the city's top workplaces by Columbus CEO magazine, in part, because of our extensive professional development.

Our Curriculum

Faculty efforts to evolve the curriculum are extensive and ongoing. In math and science, for example, our teachers have incorporated principles from their professional development to highlight the work of leading people of color and women while integrating culturally dynamic teaching practices into the curricula. The Upper School offers electives such as Moral Psychology and Philosophy, and the Middle and Upper School health curricula integrate identity development and the effects of biases on health.

New Actions

Our school's academic excellence is grounded in exceptional teachers, high expectations and a curriculum that incorporates a global perspective from leading thinkers and ideas throughout history. Providing a nationally distinguished education requires us to continuously review and evolve our curriculum and faculty's skills. As part of our curricular review process, Early Childhood-12 department members travel to peer schools nationally to examine best curricular practices in independent schools. While the National Association of Independent Schools does not provide a Principle of Good Practice for curriculum, we ground our work in best practices from experts such as James Banks, Zaretta Hammond, Louise Derman-Sparks and Teaching Tolerance. New actions in this area include:

- As a part of our ongoing curriculum work on Strategic Vision Goal #2, we will develop an Early Childhood-Grade 12 framework of standards for racial competency. These standards will guide integration of racial competency throughout our academic experience and support enduring evolution of the curriculum over time. It will also serve as a model for our broad curricular integration on cultural competency.
- We are strengthening our professional development for faculty and staff by adding new training components on race competency. In August 2020, we conducted six sessions on race and identity, following new required summer-reading for all faculty and staff on race and racism. Enhanced faculty and staff programs will continue throughout the academic year and include modules on active-bystander and racial-bias training.
- Our teachers and department chairs have begun a comprehensive review of our full
 curriculum, examining courses in every grade level through the framework of our
 Strategic Vision's intentions for students' cultural competency. This major effort
 will establish outcomes for cultural competency that are specific and measurable.

Examples include:

- The History Department's extensive assessment, addressing the representation of cultures and race—particularly in U.S. history—across all grade levels.
- Work with Lower School teachers to review our literature according to national best practices in multicultural children's literature.
- Our required ethics course for sophomores, which was revised this summer to expand teaching and learning on race and racism.

To best prepare our children to flourish in an ever-changing and pluralistic world, the entire CA community must challenge our cultural consciousness to ensure that we understand, accept and appreciate differences in color, ethnicity, identity and religious and political points of view, just like we must understand and reject biases, injustices and acts of discrimination.

Victor Thorne '92

Current Academy Parent and Former Board President

What this time has most definitely shown me is something I have already known: we live in a racist world. Racism is alive and well and so close to home, so we need to fight it now more than ever... but it also shows me that I will no longer be alone in class discussions. It means I will have the support of my faculty and peers within the community. It means I will be more empowered to go out into our larger community, our city, and fight for change.

Tsega Seleshi '21
2020-21 Service Board Vice-President

I want to believe that this nation can change, that we can all change. The only way that this can happen is if enough people look and say no, not good enough.

Vaughn Armour '21 2020-21 Student Council President



Moving Forward Together

As we reflect on Columbus Academy's work to ensure that all students feel equally a part of our school community – and all receive an excellent education that prepares them for leadership in a pluralistic world – we recognize that growth and change are constants. Our educational values and principles do not waver, but to provide a distinctive, nation-leading education within that framework, we must always be evolving what we do and how we do it. Our commitment to our students, families, alumni, and faculty/staff is this: we will ardently pursue the ideals of diversity, equity and inclusion, and we welcome the partnership and insights of our community in doing so.

For more information about Columbus Academy's programs in diversity, equity and inclusion, please contact Beckett Broh, Ph.D., Director of Diversity and Community Life (<u>brohb@columbusacademy.org</u>).

Columbus Academy adheres to the National Association of Independent Schools' <u>Principles of Good Practice for Equity and Justice</u> and to our regional accrediting association's requirement to "provide an equitable, affirming, safe and just environment."

The Columbus Academy policy of diversity and inclusion began in the early 1960s when an enlightened Board of Trustees mandated that the first African American students be admitted to the school. As an eighth-grader at the old Nelson Road campus, I witnessed this truly transformational event and can speak with pride that my school did the right thing and continues to do so today.

Niles Overly '69
Former Academy Parent and Current Board Member

Leadership Team

Melissa Soderberg P'18 '20, Head of School

Erich Hunker '81, P'16 '20, Assistant Head of School for Development and External Relations

Dan Olexio P'21, Assistant Head of School for Academic Affairs

Maggie Koerner P'11 '14, Chief Financial Officer

Cory Izokaitis P'25 '29, Head of Upper School

Shaka Arnold P'24 '26 '28 '30, Head of Middle School

Mark Hansen P'19'24, Head of Lower School

John Wuorinen '80, P'12 '13 '16, Director of Admissions and Financial Aid

Beckett Broh P'24, Ph.D., Director of Diversity and Community Life

Pascal Losambe, Ph.D., Upper School Dean and Special Assistant to Head of

School for Student Outreach

Board of Trustees

Jonathan Kass '85, P'19 '21, President

Sandy Doyle-Ahern P'20 '22, Vice President

Susan S. Williams, Ph.D., Secretary

Christine Freytag P'18 '20 '22, Treasurer

Victor Thorne '92, P'27 '31, Immediate Past President

Dr. Rita Agrawal P'17 '22

Kevin Barney P'21 '27

Tanisha Lyon Brown P'20 '22

Beth Fisher P'09 '19

Ronda Gaiser P'19 '22

Matthew Harris P'22 '22

Ching-chu Hu P'25 '30 '32

Klay Huddleston P'21 '25

Karen Jennings P'22

Kevin Malhame P'28 '30

Jessica Chi Nimjee P'29 '33

Niles Overly '69

William G. Porter '74

Jennifer Salopek P'24

George Skestos '86, P'30 '31 '31 '33

Dr. Pankaj Tiwari P'22 '25

Matthew Zeiger P'25 '28

Craig Tann '92, Alumni Board Representative

Tracie Klinefelter P'22 '24, PACA Representative