

Adopted by the Board of Trustees on March 6, 2019.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the Museum

Introduction

Founded in 1869, the American Museum of Natural History has a mission: “To discover, interpret, and disseminate – through scientific research and education – knowledge about human cultures, the natural world, and the universe.” The Museum welcomes roughly five million visitors annually from New York City and from around the globe, including hundreds of thousands of K–12 students and teachers who visit in school and camp groups or for special programming.

The Museum’s ambitious research agenda is guided by the work of approximately 40 curators (tenured and tenure-track faculty) and a scientific staff of about 200 in anthropology, paleontology, vertebrate and invertebrate zoology, Earth and planetary sciences, and astrophysics, and rests on a growing collection of more than 34 million specimens and artifacts that comprise a record of life on Earth. This research in turn informs and fuels Museum exhibitions and public programs, as well as a rich and growing continuum of science education offerings. The Museum employs approximately 1,000 full-time equivalent staff, including 350 union staff, and benefits from the efforts of some 1,000 volunteers.

Progress to Date and Ongoing Efforts

The Museum is committed to being a diverse and inclusive community. In recent years we began a more focused process of learning, testing, and reflecting on our work to advance and sustain this effort. We have made measurable progress in increasing the number of women and persons of color in areas of the institution where they are underrepresented, including on the Board, at senior levels of the administration, and in the curatorial ranks. Policies are in place to address sexual harassment and bullying, and all staff and graduate students receive training on these policies. In addition, almost all managers and supervisors – roughly 200 individuals – have received training on unconscious bias, and this training is underway for the entire staff. Multi-level, cross-departmental committees have been convened to address institutional issues such as visitor journey mapping, accessibility, and sustainability.

We are addressing the critical national need to build diversity in the sciences through better outreach and recruitment for our Ph.D. and undergraduate programs, as well as for those for motivated high school students. The Master of Arts in Teaching (“MAT”) program and ongoing professional development for New York City school teachers further reflect our commitment to diversity and equity in the classroom, and we are continuing to expand efforts to engage diverse participants in internships and workforce development programs that introduce them to a range of museum careers. With free admission for New York City school and camp groups, special programs for

underserved communities, support for individuals with disabilities, and other policies and practices, the Museum encourages and supports attendance by individuals and communities, including those who might not otherwise visit, focusing on the interests and needs of New Yorkers.

We are also engaged in a critical re-examination of the ways in which the Museum presents and represents non-Western cultures. The institution's 150-year history and that of its collections are embedded within the larger history of this nation, of Western imperialism, and of cultural representation by museums around the world. Our own history includes significant accomplishments in scientific research, exhibition, education, and public programs as well as, troublingly, involvement in racist and ethnocentric movements and practices. In addition, many of our cultural halls include presentations of non-Western cultures from colonialist or imperialist perspectives. These halls today lack context and do not reflect the values and perspectives of either the Museum or of current anthropological practice.

We are endeavoring to address these issues and will continue to do so over time, experimenting with different approaches, working with diverse communities, incorporating diverse voices and perspectives, and, in the process, learning what works best and is most effective. Recent and ongoing efforts include updating the Old New York diorama with new interpretation and context that highlights misrepresentations of the Lenape people, as well as developing an exhibit and video featuring diverse perspectives on New York's controversial Theodore Roosevelt statue at our front steps. In addition, we are in the process of re-envisioning and re-installing the historic Northwest Coast Hall, and the Museum's curator of North American Ethnology is collaborating with a Nuu-chah-nulth co-curator and with advisors from each of the main cultures whose material is on display.

Commitment and Vision

In March 2018, the Museum's Board of Trustees adopted the Diversity and Inclusion Statement below, which was developed through extensive staff discussion and comment as well as through the work of the senior administration.

The American Museum of Natural History is a global institution in one of the most diverse cities in the world. We are committed to building and sustaining a diverse and inclusive community, including addressing barriers to full inclusion of historically underrepresented groups. Recognizing that multiple voices and perspectives enrich our work, we embrace a broad definition of diversity and are dedicated to ensuring an environment where differences are valued and respected and where all members of our community are full and engaged participants in our mission.

The adoption of this policy formalizes and underscores diversity and inclusion as fundamental institutional values and provides a foundation for advancing our work across the institution and for our broader community.

While much has been accomplished to date, there is also much to learn and more to do. The work ahead is multi-faceted, challenging, and complex given the multiple and varied ways in which individuals interact with the Museum and with each other. Although our specific goals and strategies will evolve based on lessons learned and on our deepening understanding of best and most promising practices, our broad vision for the institution embraces the following:

- For the Museum to be recognized in New York as a leader in advancing and sustaining a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace
- For Museum staff to reflect New York's broad diversity and for staff to feel respected and valued
- For the Museum's scientific community – curators, postdoctoral and other research scientists and staff, and graduate school students – to reflect greater representation of individuals from diverse backgrounds, including groups historically underrepresented in the sciences
- For youth in the Museum's education programs to continue to be representative of New York City's student population
- For the Museum's cultural programs and exhibitions to increasingly reflect the perspectives and contributions of and attendance by New York's many cultural communities, as well as by communities from across the nation and from around the world whose cultural material is included in the collections and on display
- For the Museum to be viewed and experienced as a welcoming environment that enables visitors of all abilities and needs to enjoy its exhibitions and programs

Process

Our Diversity and Inclusion Statement and other recent progress reflect the commitments, contributions, and perspectives over the past few years of the Museum's Board, President and senior leadership, and staff from all Museum departments and at all levels of the organization. The work was also informed by an experienced DEI consulting team, Vallot Karp, that met with the President and senior leadership on several occasions to explore the meanings and implications of DEI work and to assist in developing broad institutional goals and principles.

The Museum's Human Resources (HR) Department led an information gathering process to deepen our understanding of DEI across the institution – the concerns and challenges as well as the points of accomplishment and pride. Individual interviews and group meetings involved leadership, as well as staff at multiple levels from across the institution. At the same time, a small working group from HR, the Office of the General Counsel, and Government Relations and Strategic Planning reviewed progress

to date in various areas of Museum activity and examined relevant literature on DEI in both non-profits and the corporate sector, identifying best practices.

Knowledge and Accountability

Our work is informed and reinforced by an active process of learning and assessment. Responsibility for driving change lies with senior leadership, with the day-to-day support of the Department of Human Resources and the oversight of the Board of Trustees.

Definitions

By diversity, we mean racial background, country of origin, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, veteran status, language, socio-economic status, and the full range of other factors that shape an individual's experiences, values, and perspectives. In different contexts and to address different challenges, we have focused on different dimensions of diversity, for example focusing on groups that have been historically underrepresented in the sciences, as defined by the National Science Foundation, or on persons of color as a way of thinking more broadly about racial and ethnic groups.¹ Moving forward, we will consider how best to collect, track, and analyze our data on diversity more effectively and in ways that are consistent with our goals.

By inclusion, we mean the ongoing and deliberate effort to ensure that differences are welcomed, different perspectives are heard, individuals and groups feel respected and valued, and that staff are involved and engaged in the Museum's work.

We strive to advance equity both within the Museum workplace and more broadly in society. By equity in the workplace, we mean fair treatment, appropriate access to information and resources, and opportunities for advancement as we identify and work to eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Our efforts to promote equity more broadly focus on access to the Museum and its educational opportunities and resources for underserved and underrepresented groups, with a focus on individuals and communities from New York.

Footnotes:

¹ In the sciences, the National Science Foundation's definition of historically underrepresented groups includes African Americans, Hispanics and Latinx, Native Americans, Alaska Natives, Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. Women are also underrepresented in some fields. <https://www.nsf.gov/statistics/2017/nsf17310/digest/introduction>, accessed November 15, 2018. Persons of color comprises a broader group of non-Europeans, including Asian-Americans and others. See *American Heritage Guide to Contemporary Usage and Style*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005, p. 356