

## **A Message from Dean Gerken on the 2019 DEI Committee Report**

May 2021

In March of 2016, a Diversity & Inclusion Committee proposed over 60 recommendations to help foster a more inclusive community. When I began my Deanship in the summer of 2017, the [Committee's report](#) was an important touchstone as I shaped my administrative priorities. I am proud of the time, energy, and resources that so many members of this community devoted to ensure that many of these goals are being accomplished.

Notable among the institutional shifts that followed the 2016 report has been significantly increasing the diversity of our student body. During the 10 years prior to the report's issuance, on average students of color constituted roughly 32 percent of the class. In the wake of the report, we admitted the five most diverse classes in our history. The last five incoming classes have included approximately 50 percent students of color and over 50 percent women. In addition, these classes have included around 25 percent first generation professionals and more than 10 percent of students who are the first in their families to graduate from college. In order to support this remarkable group of students, the Law School has worked to augment financial aid, enhance student support, and diversify the iconography in our buildings. We also launched "The Courtyard," a mentoring platform that to date enlists over 20 percent of our living alumni to be available to support all members of our student and alumni communities.

We have also taken steps to increase the diversity of our faculty. Since 2016, Yale Law School has tripled the number of Black and Latinx non-clinical faculty. On the clinical side — of the nine full-time clinical faculty at the Law School, four are people of color, four are women, and three are women of color. Since 2016, five of the seven faculty members hired have come from historically underrepresented groups, and the three appointments we've made jointly with other schools have been women or people of color. Overall, faculty of color constitute more than a quarter of the faculty. We have much more work to do on faculty hiring, but I am encouraged by the substantial progress we have made since the 2016 report.

The 2016 report also set forth two measures of accountability to continue forward momentum: embedding support for DEI initiatives within the administrative structure, and establishing a commitment by the Dean to reconvene the Committee to review institutional progress towards these goals. On the first, the Law School has a dedicated administrator to support DEI initiatives in admissions, student affairs, alumni engagement, and my own office. In accordance with the second, I convened a Diversity & Inclusion Committee in 2019 to evaluate our progress. The new report not only evaluates the Law School's progress on the 60 recommendations made in 2016, but identifies a new set of priorities for the Law School going forward. These recommendations focus on the students, staff, and the Law School's relationship to New Haven.

The progress reported on by the Committee report, and the steps that we have taken since, are the beginning of a much longer process and institutional commitment to these efforts. I am

confident that our community will continue to embrace the principles that fuel this vital work and advance the changes that are urgently needed.

Heather Gerken