

***Summary of Results and Implications of the
2021 Campus Listening Sessions Led by the
Presidential Advisory Council on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
(2020–2022)***

In March 2021, Baruch’s Presidential Advisory Council on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion conducted a series of listening sessions involving input from members of various affinity groups within the College community. The results of the sessions, examined through the lens of academic research, were provided to Baruch leadership to inform the College’s strategic planning process. This document provides context for the listening session initiative and summarizes key takeaways and project outcomes.

The College leadership thanks the membership of the Council for their hard work and effort in leading and executing this initiative, particularly the efforts of Dr. Cristina Balboa, Leslie Ann Hunt, and Dr. Robert Kunicki for the extensive work in synthesizing the expressed experiences of members of the College campus community that have informed this summary of the initiative.

The College leadership thanks the members of the Baruch College campus community who participated in the listening sessions for their willingness to be vulnerable and share their experiences and voice their concerns.

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Introduction

The leadership of Baruch College, an institution with a long and proud history of offering our students a transformational learning experience, is committed to ensuring that the education we deliver remains relevant, valuable, and accessible, both today and in the future. This commitment is reflected in the College's mission statement:

*“Baruch College provides an **inclusive, transformational education** in the arts and sciences, business, and public and international affairs to students from New York and around the world and creates new knowledge through scholarship and research.”*

Given that inclusivity is a lodestar of our mission, the College in 2021 undertook an ambitious effort to qualitatively analyze current policies and practices in terms of their effect on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). This work was conducted under the auspices of the President's Advisory Council on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (PACDEI), which had been formed the year prior by then-President Mitchel B. Wallerstein to advise on DEI issues. The results of this exercise have been crucial to the development of Baruch's forthcoming Five-Year Strategic Plan 2023-28, a comprehensive blueprint for the College's institutional future, but they also provide an important summation of challenges and opportunities, as well as a roadmap for immediate action to address systemic deficiencies.

Here, with an eye toward transparency and with a goal of keeping the wider College community involved in the dialogue surrounding DEI policy, planning, and progress, we summarize the rationale, approach, and outcomes of the council's work.

Background

In January 2020, President Wallerstein assembled a group of 14 staff and faculty members from across Baruch College to serve as the Presidential Advisory Council on Diversity and Inclusion. Its mandate was to advise the president and leadership on DEI issues. The council's first meeting took place in the shadow of the emerging Covid-19 pandemic.

Following that initial meeting, PACDEI, along with the rest of the world, entered uncharted territory. By February, the entire campus community found themselves in the throes of an unprecedented public health emergency. Then, in the spring and summer of 2020, the nation experienced the righteous upheaval triggered by the murders of Ahmaud Arbery in February, Breonna Taylor in March, and George Floyd in May, and numerous other incidents of racist and structural violence. The council felt and witnessed the outrage, sadness, and broad array of emotions the Baruch community experienced due to injustices perpetrated against Black and brown people in the United States, and due to the growing number of hate crimes against

Asians and Asian Americans, acts of religious bigotry, and a spike in anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-immigrant acts of violence and hate speech.

The fall of that year was a time of physical and emotional exhaustion, disconnection, and uncertainty about how we would move forward, along with a growing certainty that we could not maintain the status quo. After nearly a year of working diligently to shift all our interactions to remote ones, in order to continue to fulfill the College's mission to the extent possible while keeping safe through dangerous times, our Baruch community showed signs of overwork, disconnectedness, vulnerability, and fear.

Under these circumstances, PACDEI acutely felt its foundational charge "to engage the campus community in various ways to conceive a long-term vision for building and strengthening a culture of diversity, inclusion, and equity at Baruch." This charge was also reinforced by the first focus goal Baruch President S. David Wu, who had joined the Baruch community in July 2020, set for his cabinet ("**Focus goal one: Launch multifaceted institutional transformation to elevate and enhance equity, diversity, and inclusion**").

In response, the council chose to organize a series of focus groups, or "listening sessions," as a way to engage the College community and inform PACDEI's efforts to understand how DEI issues are experienced across the College. Objectives included leveraging the broad universe of experiences, knowledge, and expertise our community brings to campus every day and instilling a culture of listening at Baruch, both to help community members better (re)connect with each other and to help connect stakeholder experiences to practice and policy.

The Process

Created based on the practice and learning experience of a similar process at the Borough of Manhattan Community College in 2019, the Baruch College listening sessions were conducted via Zoom meetings in spring 2021. Thirty volunteers were trained to act as session facilitators and/or recorders. A total of 45 sessions, each 75 minutes in length, were scheduled to be held throughout the month of March, with more than 200 community members registering. Participants were able to register for sessions based on their position at the College (e.g., College assistants; Zicklin students), their identity markers (e.g., Black faculty, staff, or students; LGBTQ faculty, staff, or students), or a combination of both (e.g., Latino/a/x students; women faculty and staff), and were able to register for more than one session. To facilitate participant input, session size was limited to eight participants.

A full listing of scheduled listening sessions is shown in the accompanying Table.

TABLE. Baruch College Scheduled Listening Sessions

Student-Oriented Session Grouping Categories	Faculty/Staff-Oriented Session Grouping Categories
Any students	Adjunct faculty
Asian or Pacific Islander students	Any faculty or staff
Asian or Pacific Islander students (2nd session, due to interest level)	Any faculty
Biracial/multiracial students	Any staff
Black students	Asian or Pacific Islander faculty & staff
Black faculty, staff, & students*	Biracial/multiracial faculty & staff
First-generation students	Black faculty & staff
Graduate Student Assembly	Black faculty, staff, & students*
Honors students	Building and grounds
International students	Building and grounds (Spanish speakers)
Latina/o/x or Hispanic students	College assistants, CUNY Office assistants, & CUNY administrative assistants
LGBTQIA students	Faculty & staff of color
Marxe students	Faculty & staff of religious minority groups
SEEK students	Faculty & staff who are women
Student veterans**	Faculty & staff who are women (2nd session, due to interest level)
Students of color	Faculty & staff with disabilities
Students of religious minority groups	HEO Series employees
Students with disabilities	HEO Series employees with 13.3b
TEAM Baruch students	Latina/o/x or Hispanic faculty & staff
Transfer students	LGBTQIA faculty & staff
Undergraduate Student Government	Security – Public Safety
Weissman students	Tenured faculty
Zicklin students	Untenured faculty

*Single session that bridged the categories of student and faculty/staff.

**No students who identified as veterans signed up for this (or any other) listening session; thus, this specific scheduled session did not take place.

During each session, the facilitators first provided an overview of goals and definitions and then asked participants three questions:

(1) Is Baruch College an inclusive and equitable environment for all members of the College community? In what ways? In what ways is it not?

(2) How is equity or inequity experienced at Baruch College?

(3) If you were president of the College and there were no political or budgetary restraints, what is the first thing you would do to promote an equitable and inclusive College community?

The meetings were all held on Zoom, and the project team received immediate transcriptions of each event. Team members then de-identified, coded, and sorted the data into themes. De-identification involved deletion of all names, all references to specific departments, and any other words that might lead a reader to know the identity of the participant. Coding data involved closely reading the transcripts of each session, tagging relevant quotes, and summarizing the ideas from the quotes in “codes,” which were created using participants’ own words. Once the data was coded, the codes were grouped into themes.

The team of volunteers who facilitated and recorded the listening sessions, cleaned and coded the data generated from the sessions, sorted the data into themes, and ultimately wrote a detailed examination of process and outcomes was composed of people from different positions across the College, and with different identity markers and positionalities. This team structure reflects a deliberate and conscious effort to make sure that the experiences shared were treated with the utmost care and respect and were considered from multiple, diverse positions. Ensuring that their colleagues and students felt safe sharing their experiences, perceptions, and stories was the project team’s overarching goal.

Why Were Qualitative Methods Used?

Qualitative methods of information collection use open-ended questions to solicit opinions, experiences, narratives, or accounts. This approach is designed to identify initial themes or issues meriting further exploration.

There are many reasons why the PACDEI team chose to employ qualitative methods rather than a climate survey, which uses a quantitative approach. First, the Baruch community has experienced its share of surveys—and in this time of electronic community and rapid change, many had expressed experiencing survey fatigue. Moreover, some participants in the listening sessions voiced a frustration many council members had heard previously that such surveys do not result in change.

Second, climate surveys assume we know what questions to ask a population. Climate surveys, which represent a quantitative method of data gathering, often assume a finite number of answers that a population can experience. Qualitative methods help us illuminate the broad universe of experiences regarding an issue, idea, or event, but they are not intended to quantify the frequency or degree to which a given population experiences all of these emotions and issues; subsequent quantitative or survey instruments can and should explore those data patterns.

One hallmark of qualitative methods is that you “go where the data takes you.” Using qualitative methods is a great way to let a community drive what is learned from the data, based on their experiences and stories rather than any preconceived concepts or issues the research team might have. As a result, many of the themes in the findings raise issues or ideas that may not reflect the most commonly discussed issues of DEI, and some of the themes raised were new to Baruch’s DEI dialogue. The data underpinning all of these themes reflects what participants chose to share, not what the PACDEI project team thought they would share.

Objective

The objective of these listening sessions was to understand how the Baruch College community experiences diversity, equity, and inclusion, so as to better inform the College’s short- and long-range planning in pursuit of fulfilling Baruch’s stated mission.

The entire community was invited to participate in the listening sessions, but approaching this effort from the perspective of standpoint theory—which suggests that if you want a clear picture of a situation, ask those with the least amount of power in the room—the PACDEI project team’s analysis of the data generated by the sessions necessarily centers the experiences of historically excluded groups. Examining participation patterns among the disparate categorizations was itself an informative data point.

It is worth noting that participants were asked about their DEI experiences and perceptions during a time of unprecedented duress. With that in mind, although the experiences shared and the data collected demonstrate the advances that have taken place at Baruch concerning DEI, the outcomes reflected varying degrees of participant frustration with the conditions under which they were operating when the listening sessions occurred.

Listening Session Outcomes

Though all the themes revealed by the listening session data were illuminating and important, those that were most fruitful from a strategic planning standpoint were the ones that brought forward issues that relate to Baruch’s stated mission: “Baruch College provides an **inclusive, transformational education** in the arts and sciences, business, and public and international affairs to students from New York and around the world and creates new knowledge through scholarship and research.” Grouping of the designated codes resulted in the identification of 15 major themes that spoke to this mission to some degree.

The terms “inclusive” and “transformational” were key to the project team’s analysis, and they are clearly connected to social mobility, diversity, and equity. However, one of the crucial takeaways from these sessions is that while Baruch is widely praised for its role in the social mobility of its students, social mobility—and also, by implication, social justice, diversity, and equity—has been an implied rather than an explicitly stated institutional value. Baruch’s accessibility of location and tuition bring in a diverse student body, but embracing the mission of providing truly transformational and inclusive education requires adoption of a deliberately considered strategy of larger-scale student, faculty, and staff support going forward.

Another key takeaway, especially important in the wake of a period of enormous societal duress, was the need to nurture a *culture of listening* in our College community. This observation was driven home by the number and diversity of constituent groups with members who stated that this was the first time they had been asked about their DEI experiences at Baruch.

Themes and Their Relevance

Of the 15 major listening session themes identified by the project team and analyzed in detail in a summary report produced by PACDEI last summer, 5 were considered to be overarching themes that directly impacted the focal point of the effort: the College’s mission and institutional values. Those overarching themes are Organizational Culture and Observed Values; Leadership; DEI Efforts, Process, Procedures, and Outcomes; Communications and Information Asymmetries; and Student Experience. For purposes of results reporting, 7 identified themes were considered to be subthemes (4 related to Organizational Culture and Observed Values, 2 to DEI Efforts, and 1 to Student Experience). Two themes—What’s Good and Suggestions—were inextricably woven through all of the overarching themes and were integral to providing perspective on the data as a whole. The final theme, Pandemic, though arguably not (one must hope) a perpetual factor in long-range institutional strategic planning, nevertheless shed light on highly relevant stressors that have disparate and disproportionate impacts on different

members of the Baruch community, and it thus merited acknowledgment as a major theme in PACDEI's reported results (though it is not addressed separately here).

Results by Theme

Integral Theme #1: What's Good

The theme of **What's Good** was defined by the project team as things session participants cited as working well at Baruch, in response to the question: ***"Is Baruch an inclusive and equitable environment? How or how not?"*** Positive examples were generated in nearly every listening session and cut across all of the overarching themes, reflecting a high level of recognition of where the College is succeeding in creating such an environment.

Specific examples cited in the listening sessions focused on nine areas, outlined below. Each subtheme is followed by a list of some of the attributes cited by participants as evidence of the College's inclusive and equitable environment. It is important to note that these attributes were mentioned organically in response to an open-ended question.

Representation and Diversity

- Student body is seen as diverse and international
- Staff is seen as predominantly people of color
- School is consciously trying to attract more faculty of color
- Many women faculty and leaders
- Seeing "people like me" on campus and in leadership positions is inspiring
- Baruch is becoming more diverse generationally, and newly hired professors seem more from diverse backgrounds

DEI Efforts

- Laptop loan, computer lab accessibility, and free software are all helpful
- The Success Network has been a successful response to discrepancies between students of color and white students
- Listening sessions show president is interested in fostering diversity

- Cultural history months are helpful
- Location of Baruch is helpful to diversity efforts
- Schwartz Communication Institute Inclusive Pedagogy Workshop is helpful
- Being paid with a course release or stipend for DEI work makes it feel like a valued experience
- Some forms no longer require binary gender identification
- [A department's] book club on racism is a place for open conversation and learning
- Individuals in various departments work on equity

Inclusion and Belonging

- Student clubs are very inclusive and represent various groups
- Groups like CURB [Coalition to Undo Racism at Baruch] are inclusive
- Events about different cultures on campus are welcoming
- Childcare Center is good for equity
- Women's Professional Network at Baruch is a place where women leaders feel a sense of belonging
- Knowing that several coworkers are part of groups focused on DEI (CURB, Incubator) is encouraging
- New Faculty Orientation feels welcoming

Leadership and Governance

- Leadership and cabinet are starting to become more diverse
- A lot of hope that President Wu will create change and put resources on these priorities
- Some supervisors try to create community
- Some good communication and messaging on inclusion
- Deans having open forums for students on student concerns helps

Responses to Covid

- Online participation allows for broader participation
- Online community meetings helped faculty maintain community during lockdown

Staff and Faculty Experiences and Impressions

- Has a reputation for academic excellence
- Interdisciplinarity is encouraged at Baruch
- Staff is dedicated to Baruch
- Adjunct professors feel like they are focused on the students

Student Experience in the Classroom

- Professors are professional toward students
- Experiential learning helps all students, not just those with means
- Being in class with students from diverse groups helps students learn
- Black and Latino Studies major is hopeful
- Classroom experiences that deliberately incorporate diverse ethnic backgrounds help students celebrate themselves and each other
- Some professors find ways to use universal design¹

Student Experience on Campus and Beyond

- SEEK is effective at supporting students and should be expanded
- Staff are supportive and available for students, even after hours
- Starr Center is a great resource
- Success Network is helpful to students

¹ Universal design is a teaching concept focused on providing accessible and inclusive instructional approaches that meet the needs and abilities of all learners.

- Counseling Center is an essential resource and having a therapist who is a person of color can be essential to student success
- ASAP program is fantastic (but needs to serve more students)
- Student Disability Services does so much with so few resources
- Peer mentors give students confidence to join groups and become leaders themselves
- Religious clubs, observations, and celebrations on campus help students feel belonging
- Staff and faculty can be very approachable
- Office of Student Life gives student autonomy and voice in programming and projects
- Funding for student housing and food insecurities is essential to some students' success

Work-Life Balance

- Flexible work schedule helps work-life balance
- Flexibility to observe religious observation is accepted and supported

Overarching Themes

The five themes identified by PACDEI as overarching themes encompassed data about ways in which participants experienced or perceived inequity at Baruch College.

Overarching Theme #1: Organizational Culture and Observed Values

The theme of **Organizational Culture and Observed Values** encompasses values and norms that are experienced by the various segments of the Baruch community. Understanding the mission explicitly stated by the College versus the values that are implied or observed was central to PACDEI's analysis of this theme. Analysis of input from participant groups (the majority of which comprised faculty- and staff-oriented categories) revealed four subthemes that had so much data that they merited separate sections in the PACDEI report. Those subthemes, as well as a generalized summary of the issues raised within them, are as follows:

Bureaucratic and Hierarchical Culture: Participants cited examples of the ways in which people are siloed and participation in the organization is stymied, and shared a perception that power is top down. This subtheme has to do with the ways that process can hinder performance and

impact the ways in which Baruch serves its students. Overly complicated processes impede innovation and progress toward reaching goals of equity and inclusion. A bureaucratic and hierarchical culture results in an organizational climate in which needs go unmet in some areas and in which boutique solutions seek to fill in gaps in others, resulting in an uneven (inequitable) experience for members of the Baruch community. Information from within the ranks of faculty and staff has no clear or effective path to leadership, which results in institutional decisions that may not reflect the day-to-day reality of the College community.

Scarcity: Scarcity refers to the recognition that resources (money, time, staff, space) are lacking and the mindset that is created by constantly facing either real shortages of resources or a hierarchy of resource allocation that does not prioritize one's work. In scarcity mindsets, choices are made that do not align with organizational values. Moreover, the urgent nature of scarcity pushes individuals and institutions to blur boundaries between organizational functions, around individual work responsibilities, and between work-life distinctions, which can result in resentment and poor morale. All of this misaligns the working environment with Baruch's mission of providing an inclusive and transformative education, and the College's implied mission of social mobility.

Commodification of People: This subtheme reflected participant data regarding ways in which they felt helpless, ignored, or powerless and the ways that numbers and productivity are prioritized within some areas. Results touched on faculty and staff feelings of overwhelm, overutilization, and burnout and of not being valued for their contributions and strengths, as well as the negative impacts of excessive workload on faculty, staff, and the students they serve. This theme connects to the mission of inclusion and transformative educational experiences because if a member of the Baruch community—whether student, faculty, or staff member—is treated like a commodity, they will not have equity of access to the support and resources they need to succeed. Commodification has a negative impact on organizational culture and ability to respond to student and organizational needs.

Work-Life Balance: A subset of Commodification, this subtheme addressed the organizational need to create healthy boundaries between professional and personal lives. In particular, honoring the social contracts and labor agreements relating to work are difficult tasks in a culture of scarcity and commodification. Acknowledging the multiple roles people play inside and outside of work, and giving people the tools to create healthy boundaries between them, are important for creating an organizational culture where people can thrive and contribute. The fact that this subtheme manifested in listening session transcripts from faculty and staff groups that tend to have limited power and influence in conventional hierarchical structures (College assistants, CUNY Office assistants, & CUNY administrative assistants; faculty and staff who identify as women; LGBTQIA faculty & staff) speaks to its relevance as a DEI issue.

In addition to the above subthemes, the following key messages were brought into sharp focus by the observations shared by listening session participants:

Social Mobility Is an Implied Organizational Value (*this message was also a main outcome derived from the analysis of the DEI Efforts, Process, Procedures, and Outcomes theme*)

- Diversity is central to Baruch’s identity and reputation, but there is no clear way to focus job descriptions, work objectives, or measures of success on it
- Social mobility is a source of pride, but it is not being pursued by deliberate design; student financial aid, counseling, and advisory services in support of social mobility are under-resourced
- Pursuing excellence without using a lens of equity excludes the excellence of those groups who have not had the same learning opportunities as those who are privileged

Progress Requires Institutional Change

- Baruch must work to create more space and opportunity for voicing concerns and more avenues of communication that inform organizational change
- Creativity and innovation need to be championed

Overarching Theme #2: Leadership

Data pertaining to the **Leadership** theme concerns how various members of the Baruch College community interact with the College’s leadership. Because leadership is essential to any organizational culture, values, and DEI practices, a lot of the data related to leadership was coded as relating more broadly to other main themes. Data that was coded to a more narrow definition of leadership, summarized here, came from six listening session groups: Asian or Pacific Islander students, faculty and staff of color, faculty and staff with disabilities, HEO [Higher Education Officer] 13.3b-level employees, Latina/o/x or Hispanic faculty and staff, and untenured faculty.

Perceptions and issues shared in the course of those listening sessions included the following:

- Leaders who lack concern about providing staff members, particularly new and/or junior staff members, with guidance, direction, and professional development
- Inability of leaders to provide resources for staff members, particularly those in student-facing positions

- Perceived lack of concern about accommodations and accessibility issues at the College
- Lack of leadership recognition of the need for DEI training and professional development for all members of the Baruch College community
- Scarcity of Baruch College employees who are disability and accessibility resources advocates
- Leadership styles and practices that micromanage and disempower employees or that do not encourage ingenuity and innovation
- Perceived lack of appreciation for cultural differences and Baruch College’s diversity; failure to value the presence and participation of international students and under-represented students

Overarching Theme #3: DEI Efforts, Process, Procedures, and Outcomes

The theme of **DEI Efforts, Process, Procedures, and Outcomes** refers to Baruch’s current efforts in the area of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (for example, implementing policies, undertaking activities such as hirings or cultural events or trainings, and other efforts to address DEI), or efforts that are the outcome of DEI work. While providing an inclusive and transformative education for students is the focus of Baruch’s mission statement, diversity and equity (required for social mobility) are not mentioned in the mission, nor are they stated explicitly as institutional values. Social justice is likewise not a stated goal of the College. Although Baruch’s various schools, committees, and units have done remarkable work on the DEI front, alignment of resources and objectives to these values is a key step in accelerating progress and moving Baruch’s DEI work from a piecemeal to a wholistic approach.

Virtually every listening session generated data related to this major theme. Participant input broadly encompassed issues of inclusion and belonging in the College community, as well as concerns related to inequity.

The subtheme ***Inclusion and Belonging*** captured data related to instances in which people need to be brought together across groups. The facilitators defined these two terms as follows in the listening session introductions:

Inclusion is “the act of creating involvement, environments, and empowerment in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate.”²

² Definition borrowed from the University of Washington’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Glossary: <https://environment.uw.edu/about/diversity-equity-inclusion/tools-and-additional-resources/glossary-dei-concepts/>; the glossary wording has changed slightly since the

Belonging occurs when people can be accepted and supported while being authentic, as opposed to trying to fit in to other's ideas of being.³

The data relating to these two DEI-centric concepts reflected notions of community, the need to create more opportunities for people to feel connected to the College and to each other, and the importance of working across groups. Feedback pertaining specifically to issues of inclusion and belonging touched on the following topics:

- Experiences of microaggressions and implicit bias
- Meetings and gatherings not inclusive of people with disabilities
- Concealing part of one's identity; assimilation; code switching
- Feelings of tokenism and being "the only" among students, faculty, and staff
- Lack of representation among senior leaders, decision-makers, and faculty
- Diversity concentrated at the lower ranks of the organization
- Lack of clear bias response mechanisms

The data also captured comments regarding varying understandings of diversity and representation; lack of central support/resources for DEI efforts; perceived lack of commitment to DEI; trust and safety issues; and recruitment and retention.

The subtheme ***Equity/Inequity*** captured data on conditions that are unfair or unbalanced—such as resource allocation, information dissemination, or application of policies or procedures—but that are not centered in conscious bias or discrimination.

Facilitators conveyed the following definition of equity (also from the University of Washington) to session participants: "Equity is the guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all students, faculty, and staff, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically underserved and under-represented populations and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to assist equality in the provision of effective opportunities to all groups."

occurrence of Baruch's listening sessions, reflecting the ever-evolving dialogue surrounding DEI issues.

³ Definition from Brown, B. (2017). *Braving the wilderness: The quest for true belonging and the courage to stand alone*. Random House.

General perceptions of equity/inequity at Baruch touched upon the educational experience of students as well as on the experiences of faculty and staff, with participants sharing the following observations:

- Underlying student financial inequity prevents students from accessing internships, second minors, and other opportunities
- Underlying student financial inequity adds additional stress/mental load to the academic experience
- Inefficiencies in current staffing structures in Student Services/Financial Aid Office/Bursar/Registrar disproportionately affect students with impediments to navigating the bureaucratic structure (students juggling work/family responsibilities and school, students with disabilities, transfer students, etc.)
- Perceptions of pay and promotion inequity
- Inequity in access to resources for different levels of faculty and staff (e.g., physical resources, leadership planning)

Tellingly, although the two major subthemes of Inclusion and Belonging and Inequity were grouped under the DEI Efforts, Process, Procedures, and Outcomes theme, they also could have fit within the Organizational Culture and Observed Values theme. It is important to note that while inclusion is explicitly stated in Baruch's mission, equity is not. Equity is, however, implicitly essential to an inclusive and transformational education. It is the process by which Baruch can more fully achieve its mission.

Overarching Theme #4: Communications and Information Asymmetries

The **Communications and Information Asymmetries** theme focused on the ways in which individuals, units, and departments communicate and ways in which information can be accidentally or purposefully withheld. This includes when College policies and processes are not clearly understood or communicated. In order to be truly inclusive, it is important that Baruch furnish all needed information for students to fully engage in its programs and for faculty and staff to fully engage in their work.

Comments grouped within this theme were shared by almost all of the faculty/staff-oriented listening session groups and by several student-oriented groups, including groups representing historically excluded populations (e.g., students with disabilities, Latina/o/x or Hispanic students, Asian or Pacific Islander students).

Topics that arose within this theme, along with a representative sampling of pertinent comments elicited by the listening sessions, are outlined below.

Communicating With Students About Support

- Poor participation in listening sessions by students indicates a communication issue
- Need better marketing so that **all** students understand the resources and services that are potentially available to them (financial aid, accommodations and inclusion, laptop loan, special academic and support programs, etc.)
- Financial aid process needs more explaining for students
- Navigating paperwork for international students takes a lot of back-and-forth and requires a lot of time (or money, for students who go through a private actor)
- Accommodations for students are not fully understood by faculty, and registering for accommodations is its own administrative burden
- Communications in class are not adherent to universal design principles, making them inaccessible to some students
- Administrative office understaffing causes delays in prompt response to student queries

Communications and Budget Transparency

- The College budget and the individual school budgets are not transparent
- The process for acquiring needed funding for work should be clearer so that all have opportunity to access it
- Mixed messages about hiring and budget availability

Communication Asymmetries Cause Problems for Staff

- Centralization of departmental access to databases and data causes delays for staff who need to go through someone else to get the data they need to do their jobs (and causes delays and difficulties for the students they are serving)
- Email volume is overwhelming and burdensome; some forgo lunch and/or work beyond hours to respond, especially for late-arriving emails

- Frequent policy changes mean that staff can't keep up and misinformation or contradictory information is given out
- The lack of information seems to be tied with lack of participation in decision-making for staff

Communicating About DEI

- Culture change is something that happens beyond reports and marketing; thus, we need to think about DEI as a long-term process
- Equity is discussed but there is still signaling of white dominance (e.g., walls of historical photos of white men on campus; representation lacking at the dean level)
- Communication relating to societal incidents of hate crimes and racial violence seems reactive and based on individual efforts, not on institutional policy or solutions
- The College needs a reporting mechanism for complaints about racism and bias
- Baruch is good at communicating about (marketing) inclusiveness but is not fully engaging in it

Overarching Theme #5: The Student Experience

The **Student Experience** theme captured data related to students' interaction with staff, student services policies, and the co-curricular experience. Given that Baruch's mission is focused on the student experience, it is to the great credit and benefit of the College community that *every single faculty/staff-oriented listening session group* (and almost all of the student-oriented groups) shared thoughts about areas in which greater attention and focus could further enhance the student experience.

Key points related to the student experience that arose in the various listening sessions are as follows:

- Experiences of bias and exclusion in club life, in the classroom, and among peers, with no formal mechanism for addressing issues of bias
- Transfer students encounter unique challenges and do not feel adequately supported by the College
- There is a perceived hierarchy within the Baruch schools in terms of student access to resources and services

- Differential resource allocation affects the student experience; the average student does not have sufficient access to support services
- Students need access to more advisors to help them navigate college
- Students experience financial challenges with little support; many students have to work, yet College services do not accommodate working students
- Students arrive with varying levels of preparation at the undergraduate and graduate level; the SEEK program provides high-quality services but is undervalued
- International students encounter barriers and experience exclusion and discrimination
- Experiences of being “the only”; lack of representation among Black and Latinx students

Also emerging within the Student Experience theme was a subtheme relating specifically to **Curriculum and Pedagogy**; that is, issues related to what is taught or included in the College’s courses or curriculum. What is being taught and how it is being taught are central to Baruch’s mission of providing an inclusive and transformative educational experience.

Data generated from the listening sessions touched upon the following concepts related to the Curriculum and Pedagogy subtheme:

Inclusive Pedagogy: Need for diverse representation and inclusive teaching to reflect student experience and population; need to address pushback and resistance to inclusive teaching (e.g., universal design); need to build learning about other identity groups and learning about inequity into the curriculum

Structural Impediments to Learning: Intro courses are taught by adjuncts; large class sizes leave students feeling invisible; prerequisites as gatekeeping

Hidden Curriculum and Difficulty Navigating the Academic System: Students not knowing how to self-advocate, develop mentors; professional skills should be taught more

Remote Learning: Challenges of teaching and learning remotely, especially around privacy and camera use; remote learning is inequitable but has opportunities for increasing equity; not enough choice between synchronous and asynchronous learning

Integral Theme #2: Suggestions

In each listening session, the last question the participants were asked was:

If you were president of the College and there were no political or budgetary restraints, what is the first thing you would do to promote an equitable and inclusive college community?

Every listening session generated data for this category, ranging from big-picture aspirations to specific recommendations. This data, like the data produced in response to the first two questions posed in the listening sessions, was grouped under subthemes that relate to achieving Baruch's mission of providing an inclusive and transformative education and to the implied institutional values of social mobility, diversity, and equity.

Although the scope and wording of the suggestions varied from group to group, the data consistently addressed several DEI-related topics, which can be broadly summarized as follows:

- **Better alignment of organizational culture with stated as well as implicit institutional values**
- **Breaking down siloes and creating community** through active participation of College leadership; added opportunities for learning, professional development, and dialogue; improved cross-department information sharing; multidisciplinary/multifunctional events
- **De-commodification / acknowledging humanity of each person:** Increase appreciation for the value of staff contributions; prioritize humanity in all interactions; develop policies and practices that support caregivers; develop policies and practices that support professional development and that pertain to DEI and community building
- **Leadership:** Develop and implement a new vision for the future that takes the College out of scarcity and urgency and into some state of sustained normalcy; embed DEI into Baruch's institutional values at every level; have more listening sessions, with better-refined participant groups; involve the entire College community in the follow-up changes based on the listening sessions; engage more people in decision-making through focus groups; designate disability point people so that someone in each department is expert on disability issues and accommodations; foster a culture where creativity is embraced and celebrated; welcome nontraditional leadership styles
- **Addressing budget transparency and priorities:** Create a centralized fund to increase accessibility of classroom accommodations; examine all program budgets with an equity lens; increase budget transparency and clarity of purpose; make social mobility a deliberate budgetary priority
- **Enhancing the student experience:** Expand student financial, administrative, and material support; provide more support services for marginalized/under-represented students and international students; improve communication regarding the services that are available to students; foster more sensitivity toward ESL learners; implement policies/support to mitigate student wealth disparity (e.g., free Metro cards, program fee waivers); integrate faculty into the

student experience beyond the classroom; review/modify requirements for first-year students with an equity lens

- **Curriculum and pedagogy:** Integrate DEI into the degree curricula; assess schools and faculty based on success in addressing equity issues; expand curriculum and classroom materials to incorporate nonwhite history and culture; create new majors reflective of diversity (e.g., Asian studies); increase funding for student advisement, tutoring, and mentorships; incentivize faculty to enhance their pedagogical skills; make teaching more collaborative with students; expand work-study programs; increase high-impact experiences (internships, experiential learning) that position students to succeed after graduation

- **DEI policies and practices:** Improve internal and external communications relating to DEI efforts; implement faculty/staff trainings on universal design, disabilities and accommodations, implicit bias, microaggressions, etc.; better educate faculty and staff on diversity issues; ensure department chairs are well versed in DEI issues; provide safe spaces for marginalized groups to discuss and raise DEI concerns; incorporate diverse representation into alumni panels; develop DEI-centric events (e.g., disability awareness programming, career fair for Black-owned businesses, cultural/ethnic festivals); expand/fully fund Baruch's Office of Diversity, Compliance, and Equity Initiatives, and liaise every Baruch program with that office; undertake a campus climate survey for Baruch students

- **Faculty representation and retention:** Ask applicants how they will contribute to the diversity, equity, and inclusion of the College; include more people of color on hiring committees; increase hiring of faculty who represent the diversity of the student body and of the city; improve onboarding for all new faculty; conduct exit interviews of departing faculty; offer mentoring programs/support for women, first-generation faculty, etc.; apply equity lens to tenure/promotion, equally valuing publication, pedagogy, and service; convert some adjunct positions into full time to increase diversity at a decision-making level and thus better serve the student population

- **Intercultural and intra-cultural opportunities:** Facilitate more intergroup exchanges and opportunities for intercultural/cross-cultural exposure and learning, taking advantage of the diversity of the city and the College community; create more affinity and identity groups so that historically excluded groups feel safe and free to express their truth within the community

- **Creation of centers focused on marginalized groups:** Create a cultural center for celebrations and connection among identity groups; create a cultural center for Asian students; create an LGBTQ research/resource center

- **Communication:** Improve communication with the staff; have a town hall devoted to students' concerns; increase social media presence; expand ways for president to communicate with College community
- **Faculty and staff support:** Recognize and give credit for "inclusion tax" [support/service work disproportionately delegated to faculty/staff of color and other under-represented faculty/staff groups]; provide more and broader-reaching Employee Resource Groups; offer faculty housing subsidies; compensate adjuncts for course prep time; offer meetings and trainings at times that are more accessible to those who may work elsewhere during the standard business day; compensate employees for time spent in trainings on DEI issues
- **Physical spaces:** Improve the physical plant with an eye toward DEI (e.g., facilities for nursing parents; appropriate bathroom accommodations for members of the College community with disabilities, large-bodied individuals, and those who are transgender; improved lighting in library); make mobility and accessibility a priority in all building and space decisions; provide spaces that facilitate student interaction outside the classroom

Conclusions and Future Directions

The listening session exercise undertaken by PACDEI in the spring of 2021, as the College and the City struggled to process the emotional trauma inflicted by the Covid pandemic and increased incidents of violence against marginalized groups, was a vital effort in assessing the College community's perception of how and in what areas Baruch is living up to its mission and, more important, in what areas it is not.

The qualitative data generated confirmed the overarching idea that social mobility, equity, and diversity are implied institutional values that underpin Baruch's mission statement: "*Baruch College provides an **inclusive, transformational education** in the arts and sciences, business, and public and international affairs to students from New York and around the world and creates new knowledge through scholarship and research.*" PACDEI's report highlighted the College community's dedication and commitment to Baruch's mission to provide a transformative education but also stressed the importance of more purposefully and deliberately integrating implied institutional values into Baruch's mission statement and strategic plans as a means to better inform job descriptions, work objectives, and measures of success pertaining to DEI.

The thorough and clear-eyed report produced by PACDEI highlighted numerous issues for Baruch's leadership to consider for both short- and long-term strategic planning purposes. Each section of the report included a list of questions in response to the data generated from the listening sessions. Topics addressed by these questions included implementation of institutional

values; alignment of budgets with values; engagement of leadership in advancing the College's mission; delivery of transformative experiences; advancement of DEI efforts; and promotion of a culture of inclusion, support, validation, and respect.

The recognition of social mobility, equity, and diversity as implied organizational values was a constant throughout the lists of questions raised in PACDEI's report. Consequently, the report posed the following as priority questions for Baruch's leadership to consider:

- **How do we measure progress against implied institutional values? Organizational culture and progress toward the College's mission can only be measured if we are explicit in our goals and clear about the measures toward those goals.**
- **How would making our implied values explicit direct the allocation of resources, and help overcome a scarcity mindset?**
- **How would articulating an explicit theory of change for each department and unit help prioritize our explicit and implied values?**
- **How do we instill a culture of listening so that the College can benefit from the extensive internal knowledge and experience that already exists?**

The questions raised by this important report were intended to encourage reflection among College leadership and catalyze plans and strategies for DEI-focused action in better service of Baruch's mission. Baruch owes a debt of gratitude to the PACDEI team members, whose work on this effort was conducted on a volunteer basis in the midst of pandemic upheaval, and to the listening session participants, who took time and care in sharing their experiences, their knowledge, and their aspirations for our institution. The reported results have helped inform the development of the College's forthcoming Five-Year Strategic Plan, which directly and explicitly incorporates inclusion, equity, and social mobility in the Baruch mission and addresses highlighted issues through the proposed implementation of initiatives and actions centered around care and respect, active listening, and DEI support.

Now, in more broadly sharing these key questions, as well as this summary of the listening session data that prompted them, we hope to encourage the entire Baruch College community to sit with the issues, feelings, ideas, and experiences that this endeavor has brought to light, and to bring their own wide-ranging experiences and expertise to bear in shaping Baruch's legacy.

Change—even when positive—is often accompanied by a level of discomfort, and addressing the issues highlighted by PACDEI's work requires introspection and challenging emotional labor. However, it is imperative that we give these findings their due and ask ourselves what we can learn from this process. Engaging all stakeholders in recognizing areas where improvements can

and should be made and in implementing forward-looking solutions results in a stronger community and a Baruch College of which we all can be even more proud.

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*Indicates the member also served as a Listening Session Recorder and/or Facilitator;

~ Indicates the member supported the drafting of the report by contributing the creation of specific chapters; ^ Indicates the member served on the research team