“If this is our moment, what shall we do?”

I. Our charge:

“...we need to be cognizant of both the many dimensions of diversity richly represented here,...and the complex way in which those dimensions intersect within an individual, and across the tapestry of our community”

“Diversity must be ‘unpacked’ as a nuanced construct of modern life and social experience, and then its multi-faceted impact recognized as an enormous asset to scholarship, pedagogy, civic life, and community well-being.” (Rutgers University-Newark Strategic Plan 2014, p. 32)

- Rutgers University-Newark has a remarkable opportunity to become a leader not only because of the demographic diversity of its student body, but as a leader in the practice of diversity in higher education. We are already doing many things well, but implementing our strategic plan calls us to move forward with a self-conscious and innovative strategy for leveraging diversity for the years to come. We have the opportunity, as the strategic plan says, to be “the place where excellence embraces diversity” (p. 39).
- To do this, we can build on successful strategies developed here and at other leading universities. The work of the Diversity Action Group has led us to see our task as one of innovation and integration. There are places and parts of our mission as a university where we need to increase our diversity, and there are places where we need to leverage our diversity.

II. Key Concepts

- **Diversity, and Leveraging Diversity**

  We have discussed the concept of diversity in a very broad way. When we are identified as the “most diverse research university,” this is primarily a focus on identity diversity, and especially on visible identity diversity. Diversity of all kinds is valuable, but we wanted to be careful not to narrow our vision of diversity, but rather to think of it in the broadest way as possible, so that we could really imagine how to leverage our diversity. So we have included:

  **Demographic diversity:**

  We are proud of the many ways that Rutgers University-Newark brings many different people from many different backgrounds and experiences together to engage in the mission of a public university for the twenty-first century. Our demographic diversity includes race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, gender, class, sexual orientation, language, ability. This demographic diversity has many benefits, including:

  - When experts and peers are ‘visible,’ diversity improves student outcomes (also for faculty and staff)
  - Broad exposure to diverse people improves social/emotional competence, providing students with post-degree advantages in a global market
  - The experience of engaging in learning, teaching, and producing knowledge together across our many differences and similarities enhances our competence as citizens of democracy.
When there is exposure to diversity of narratives, empathy, acceptance, engagement and participation is increased across and between many borders.

**Cognitive diversity:**
This becomes reflected in the wide range of knowledge and learning that happens across the colleges, schools, and university community. Among the many benefits of cognitive diversity, it expands our minds, increases our creativity and knowledge, and enhances innovation. By focusing on this element of diversity, it allows us to focus on the benefits, including:

- Broader based knowledge and exposure to interdisciplinary discourse to further enhance student rigor in academic excellence.
- Create better understandings of classroom practices of faculty across all disciplines and better assists us in the overall teaching process as an institution of higher education.
- Allow students to reach broader fields to create better critical thinking skills as well as enhance their intellectual interconnectivity.

**Building the “architecture of full participation”**
We have been influenced in our work by a framework developed by Susan Sturm, John Saltmarsh, Tim Eatman, and Adam Bush with the idea of building “an architecture of full participation”. This point has been made by many others who work on diversity: when the work of diversity is assigned to a particular office or entity or group of people, or when it exists in separate programs or pockets at an institution, the work might make small pockets of change, but it does not change the entire institution. The idea of an architecture of full participation sees the work of doing diversity well in higher education as requiring that the mission of diversity as excellence/excellence as diversity is deeply connected to all aspects of the mission of the university. We see this as especially true of the mission of public universities such as Rutgers University-Newark, which from its beginning has served as an “engines of social opportunity”. “Full participation” emphasizes the public purposes of higher education, and requires deep, intentional, and abiding change in the culture of higher educational institutions. This is what the Rutgers University-Newark strategic plan calls us to do.

- Using the language of “building an architecture” here is quite intentional and deliberate. An architecture of full participation requires careful and self-conscious design and constant assessment of successes and failures/points for revision. It will be crucial to build assessment and processes of continuing engagement into the architecture of full participation in leveraging diversity. Our proposals should build in at least some basic ideas about assessing success and reevaluating programs and processes.

- Thinking through doing diversity at Rutgers University-Newark requires us to look at the institution from a framework similar to that of constitutional design, or in the language of the “full participation” literature, as architects. Leveraging diversity will require an architecture that supports the changes that we suggest in this document. Building full participation requires reimagining the institutional structure of the university so that it builds doing diversity more deeply and seamlessly into its mission.

- Diversity cannot be leveraged in an institution that does diversity work in a piecemeal fashion. Diversity work must be incorporated into every facet of the work of the university. We will never be done with the work of leveraging diversity. That, in fact, is a deep reason why it is the most important work that we can do as a university, with a mission deepening knowledge in every sense.
Most of the institutions in view in the “full participation” literature have much more demographically homogeneous student bodies and staff than RU-Newark. This means that RU-N has the opportunity to bring innovative strategies to the idea of what full participation means.

Given this, how should we build our architecture of full participation? How do we build best practices in leveraging diversity? How do we attend to the places where we are not achieving our mission of doing diversity well, where we need to increase diversity?

An important point to be understood in building this architecture of full participation is that leveraging diversity is difficult, and can create conflict and misunderstanding. A commitment to the architecture of full participation will require that our diversity work take this fact of diversity work into account. This will be crucial to all of the priority activities.

III. Priority Action Items

1. Appoint a Chancellor’s Office Level Diversity & Excellence individual
Responsibility for implementing the initiatives in this plan and ensuring the implementation of the architecture of full participation throughout the university on an ongoing basis will rely on the creation of this position. This position should be supported by an advisory council of faculty, staff, and students from throughout the university who can help to ensure the work of leveraging diversity continues.

All major initiatives at the university should be vetted by this position and the Diversity Advisory Council for their impact on leveraging and increasing diversity at the university. We are thinking here of requirements for environmental impact statements, or of Institutional Review Boards. The key point is that everything that the university does may work to leverage and increase diversity, or may have a negative effect on leveraging diversity. We foresee this position as of a master strategist that uses diversity to advance excellence.

2. Creation of a 21st Century Multicultural Center
With the intentionality and the spirit of inclusion and equity, we suggest the creation of a state-of-art Multicultural Center on campus that can be responsive to both demographic and cognitive diversity. This center aims to reimagine ways in which to leverage our diversity on campus, as well as create a cultural and programmatic hub for a multitude of diversity and social justice topics. The Multicultural Center should also be considered a hub for resources and support for the various diverse needs of our Rutgers University - Newark Community, such as “know your rights” information for students, and legal resources for undocumented communities. This center should change the traditional approach that often leads to isolation of students, staff and faculty of diverse backgrounds, but to truly be a comprehensive vision of what Leveraging Diversity could look like on our university. We recommend this Multicultural Center be potentially incorporated into the campus Master Plan as well as the Honors Living Learning Community plans.

3. Building an Institutional Architecture of community engagement
We recognize that the Anchor Mission Action Group has a set of initiatives in this respect, but again drawing on the literature or the “architecture of full participation”, we believe that the work of community engagement needs to be connected to the curriculum, to research, to student life, to alumni relations, and to all aspects of the university. This community engagement work should enhance and leverage the diversity/excellence mission of the
university. The maintenance and evolution of this architecture is to be considered as part of the responsibilities of the **Diversity & Excellence individual** described in point 1 above.

4. **Leveraging and increasing the diversity of faculty, graduate students, undergraduate students, staff, and administrators.**
Growing a more effective pathway to higher education, including to diversifying the faculty, students, and staff of higher education, by

*Increasing* the diversity of faculty. We must do more to recruit the future diverse faculty and support their development and success by identifying students early on and supporting them through graduate education and beyond. Important here will be creating incentives for faculty, through recognition of community engaged and public scholarship, as well as the recognition of mentoring and other activities. Tenure and promotion need to acknowledge that diversity also means “diverse” paths to excellence thus non-traditional members of the community are welcome as they strengthen the institution at large.

*Increasing* the diversity of our graduate students and post-docs. Recruiting and supporting diverse graduate students. Recruiting our undergraduate students to graduate programs and to careers in higher education. Graduate and undergraduate programs throughout the university should provide further commitment, encouragement, and support for undergraduates to begin thinking about and planning for a graduate program. For example, the implementation of combined BA/MA or BS/MS programs at the university over the last several years has provided students who might not previously have considered completing a master’s degree the opportunity to pursue graduate study.

*Leveraging* the diversity of our staff. The Staffing for a New Mission action group has many proposals that will further this goal; but we want to particularly note the proposals for mentoring and career development that are in keeping with the goals of leveraging the diversity of staff. We need to make efforts to incorporate members of the staff in the decision making process of the institution as they are often our first line of engagement with students and community.

There are many models for increasing the diversity of the faculty and of graduate students and post-docs. One successful model is the Faculty Equity and Inclusion project at U Mass-Amherst. There are also existing or new initiatives that can be enhanced through the full participation model so that their work is connected to the overall mission of the university, such as Newark City of Learning Collaborative, the Newark Schools Initiative, and the Honors Living and Learning Community. It is also clear that encouraging the recognition of the scholarship of community engagement can help to recruit and retain a diverse faculty. We also encourage the university to look at the possibility of cluster hires/recruitment and cohort support for all places in the “pipeline”.

5. **Increasing and Leveraging the diversity of our curriculum and pedagogy**
This is the heart of a university, and we became convinced through our discussions with one another, and in our conversation with John Saltmarsh, that this must be a central goal. Some aspects of this priority action item might be accomplished immediately; others will require a longer process of discussion among faculty, students, staff, and community partners.

How does our pedagogy, across units, roles, and disciplines/inter-disciplines, increase or leverage diversity? How does it engage students, faculty, staff, and community to address the challenges of the contemporary world? How can this be done more effectively, and how can we
continue to discuss and assess our pedagogy of full participation? Enhancing current community engagement with pre-K to 12 schools by integrating these initiatives into the curriculum, engaging undergraduate and graduate students, as well as staff and faculty. For example, increasing engagement with the Newark Schools Initiative across the university.

- Transdisciplinarity: Co-taught courses with not just faculty—but also community partners, staff, local business owners as co-instructors.
- A certificate program for diversity competencies; building a leadership for social justice program across all schools and colleges, and possibly a requirement for graduation.
- Flipped committees: Student representatives to faculty governance entities.
- Student organizations: Include an intentional plan to involve the Student Life and Leadership Office and integrate student organizations with the curricular side of student learning.
- Enhance curricula in cultural diversity in specific majors as well as universal core requirements. (Some existing examples: Women’s and Gender Studies, AAAS, Lusophone Studies, LGBTQ studies for specific programs)
- Curriculum transformation project: Identify faculty to lead such a project, develop a pedagogical/teaching excellence project with best practices for faculty who seek to enhance their teaching by integrating cultural diversity in their courses.
- Distinguish a community engagement requirement in the curriculum as a requirement for graduation, in the same way that say a “Writing Intensive” requirement be listed.

6. Mentoring for staff, faculty, students, administrators
We need to build and sustain the architecture for mentoring all constituents, and by all constituents. The cohort model of mentoring with new faculty groups has proven successful at other universities. This creates a cohort of faculty as researching, teaching, and learning community. A focus area could be in particularly in relation to our community engaged scholarship and mission.

Staff need enhanced opportunities for professional development, including development in relation to addressing the challenges of a diverse work environment. Staff also need recognition of their skills and competencies, and opportunities for advancement that might be enhanced by HR resources for staff development in relation to diversity.

Mentoring of students: We have established systems of academic mentoring throughout the university, although they are handled somewhat differently in different colleges. It is key for students that effective academic mentoring occurs in the appropriate departments and offices for their area of study. However, in keeping with the other goals of this report, the university should consider how to more effectively mentor students throughout their studies, from recruitment through post-docs.

Faculty development: Enhanced resources for faculty to develop competencies and pedagogies to address challenges and benefits of our diverse student body in the classroom.
Employee Resources Groups: Support should continue and be enhanced for employee resource groups, as they serve an important function for mentoring, staff and faculty development, and for addressing unique needs.

Teaching excellence: those who teach at Rutgers University-Newark need support to continuously improve their teaching effectiveness, especially teaching in the diverse classroom, best practices, places to support innovations in teaching and protection for faculty who do this from negative evaluations.

7. Leveraging and Increasing Language Diversity: Establishment of Center of Language Resources

The “Lives in Translation” Project that grew out of the strategic planning meetings is an excellent opportunity to leverage our language diversity. This should involve partnerships across the university and provide internships and other community engagement opportunities for students, faculty, and staff.

- Making materials, announcements, notifications, available in Spanish as well as in English.
- Make free language learning opportunities available to faculty, staff, students, community. For example, make “lingua franca” learning opportunities available to staff during their work hours.
- Attention to use of acronyms/names that assume common knowledge.
- Better attention to language diversity in the classroom and to culturally relevant learning and pedagogy.
- Better attention to availability of information from the university website for different language communities.
- Offer translation services to the greater city of Newark to anchor our institution to leverage our language diversity.

8. Assessing our policies and our progress: Rutgers University-Newark Diversity Assessment

Rutgers Inventory of Best Practices in Diversity: the university should develop a toolkit for assessing effective strategies for diversity in higher education.

If diversity, writ large, is our “destination” it is important that we have a way to chart our progress; to determine what approaches have proven most successful, what problems require greater attention, what unexpected opportunities exist, and which ones can be better developed, which populations have been best served and which require more help. The Rutgers University at Newark Diversity Assessment (RUNDA) would address these needs; it would be the navigational device that would help us locate where we stand at any given time regarding our diversity aspirations, would help us define our directions, and would gauge our rate of progress toward these destinations. This tool will also serve to follow the impact that our diversity strategy may have on our role as anchor institution including our institutional excellence and engaged scholarship.

The RUNDA would not be a single instrument, but rather an assessment process. RUNDA would include a set of inter-related measures using different modalities, designed to capture the various types of diversity, at the various venues in which diversity exists as part of our pursues of institutional excellence. It is therefore an ambitious project in its own right that will require successful integration of the various communities comprising Rutgers/Newark, including staff, students, faculty, and members of the local community. Once fully established, RUNDA may
provide a model for diversity assessment nation-wide. (Action group members Kent Harber, Jerome Williams, and Arturo E. Osorio are working on this)

We recommend that the Chancellor Level Diversity Officer suggested in Priority Action Item #1 monitor and be in charge of this task.

We also recommend that Rutgers University-Newark should do an audit of all policies and procedures with the above discussion of diversity in mind.

9. ADA Compliance
This is a case where we need to increase our diversity by making the university more accessible in all ways. Some of this will involve removing barriers (physical and procedural), some will involve creating new ways to be inclusive for students, faculty, staff, and community members. Some suggestions include:

- Map of accessible buildings, classrooms, bathrooms, & office spaces, and a plan for making more spaces accessible, including provision of ramps and enlarged elevators where needed.
- Real-Time coordination when elevators are not functioning, as well (app?)
- Travel/transit systems should attend to ADA needs including accessible and frequent bus services.
- More awareness of available services (post as a message on Blackboard, can be incorporated into syllabi, collaboration on outreach events, New Student Orientation). This includes information about provisions for readers for those with visual impairments.
- Reduce stigma (including internalized) – culture change
- Reduce time delay from time of registration to accommodations granted (streamline paperwork)
- Wish list includes: ADA Designated Technology labs; on-campus ADA Testing Facility (many students are referred to NB and have to schedule 4 visits with a long waiting list, plus the fee is as high as $250); more accessible furniture
- Assistance in obtaining necessary documentation (some are discouraged and are lost in this process)
- Focus groups & surveys of current participants in ADA Services for needs assessment

10. National/International Marketing Campaign of “Our World, Our Story”
We should leverage our diversity that US World and News measures us and use that to our fullest advantage. Not only to display our #1 Diversity Status, but to create our story through the documentation of our students, staff and faculty that enrich the experiences of Rutgers University – Newark. This allows us to

- Market to K-12 populations around the country to attract students that seek out diversity as a main decision factor for college enrollment.
- Allows faculty and staff across the country to understand our presence and commitment to diversity and will future assist in the recruitment efforts to attract talented professionals.
- Increase the diversity of the faculty that we recruit
- Focuses on the learning that our current students gain, and allows graduates to better articulate the value in excellence of diversity.
- Further solidifies Rutgers University – Newark as the standard of diversity, and allows us to gain institutional confidence in the subject.
Further information available here: https://www.cns.umass.edu/faculty/equity-and-inclusion