

# **SIGDOC Anti-Racist and Inclusion Consulting Recommendation Report**

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## **Summary Statement**

The following recommendation report was written in response to a request by the SIGDOC Executive Committee for consultation on developing sustainable and actionable anti-racist and inclusive practices that aligned with and made visible SIGDOC's organizational commitment to justice-centered operations. After an initial discussion with SIGDOC's Executive Committee members and after reviewing SIGDOC organizational documents (including SIGDOC Bylaws and SIGDOC's June 2020 Official Statement in Response to Injustice), we (Drs. Garcia de Mueller, Sackey, and Jones) brainstormed and collaborated in order to identify productive approaches for re-envisioning SIGDOC operation. We specifically sought ways to integrate explicit anti-racist and inclusive practices by focusing on current and ongoing SIGDOC member perceptions and revisions to the SIGDOC Bylaws.

## **Opportunity Statement**

In an effort to develop and implement anti-racist and inclusive organizational practices that guide the work and operation of SIGDOC, we have reviewed the SIGDOC bylaws for possibilities that allow the organization to make its social justice commitments visible and sustainable. In this report, we define anti-racist organizational practices as a conglomeration of process, procedures, actions, and activities that resist and reject racism and white supremacy. Inclusive practices, in the context of this report, include both strategies and actions that ensure, enable, and encourage an organizational focus on equity, justice, and accessibility. Anti-racist and inclusive practices must be fundamental to and integrated into an organization's mission and purpose and thus cannot be implemented *ad hoc* or on an "as needed" basis. It is with this consideration in mind that we identified approaches and possible opportunities that helps SIGDOC to envision ways to integrate inclusive and anti-racist practices into its organizational operations.

## **Recommendations**

We present the following recommendations to the SIGDOC Executive Committee (EC). The purpose of these recommendations are two-fold. First, we recommend a survey in order to gauge members' perceptions of SIGDOC as an anti-racist and inclusive organization and to identify members' suggestions for practical ways tha SIGDOC can emphasize its anti-racist and inclusive commitments. Second, we identified a few ways that SIGDOC's Bylaws can be revised to incorporate anti-racist and inclusive practices into the organization's operations, processes, and procedures.

### ***Recommendation 1: Survey of SIGDOC Membership***

We recommend that SIGDOC Executive Committee survey members in order to find out how the members experience SIGDOC (as an organization) and also in order to identify possible opportunities for SIGDOC to build and expand on anti-racist and inclusive organization practcies that are already in place. This survey also provides a practical way for members to answer

SIGDOC EC's call from June 2020 which noted that SIGDOC was "actively seeking people who are interested in engaging with SIGDOC to work on [these] anti-racist and justice initiatives."<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 presents a draft of a SIGDOC member survey that includes a range of questions that ask members about experiences with SIGDOC and future opportunities for the organization. We provide this draft as a starting point for SIGDOC EC. The survey can be used as is or modified by SIGDOC EC to address specific needs or points of interest.

In addition to providing a draft of the SIGDOC member survey, we offer the following suggestions for conducting the survey, analyzing the data, and implementing changes based on the survey results.

- It may be wise to distribute the survey during or immediately following the SIGDOC annual conference while members are focused on contributing to or engaging with SIGDOC.
- Alternatively, the survey could also be distributed to members during an election cycle (again, while member engagement with the organization is high).
- We recommend that results from the survey be shared with the entire SIGDOC EC.
- We recommend that SIGDOC EC coordinate with the SIGDOC Access Chair in order to brainstorm ideas for improvement or implement necessary changes based on survey data results.
- We recommend that the member survey be repeated in subsequent years in order to compare annual results and track improvements in the organization. Results can be shared annually with the SIGDOC EC.

In addition to the survey draft that we have offered in Appendix 1, there are other resources that the EC might find useful and may choose to implement instead. These sources include other types of surveys and questions in order to gauge member perceptions of organizational inclusion and diversity. For example:

- Talenx: <https://talenx.io/2020/06/29/diversity-inclusion-survey-questions/>)
- Culture Amp: <https://www.cultureamp.com/blog/5-diversity-and-inclusion-questions-to-use-at-your-company>
- SHRM: <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/hr-forms/pages/diversitysurveys.aspx>

### ***Recommendation 2: Revision of Bylaws***

We reviewed the SIGDOC Bylaws in order to identify opportunities for integrating anti-racist and inclusive practices into the processes, procedures, and operations of the organization. Initially, we found that the bylaws are quite vague and that leadership interpretation of the bylaws in the future could potentially present problems and leave room for resistance to (or even refusal to) consider issues of racial equity, justice, accessibility, and inclusivity. In an attempt to avoid potential future problems, we recommend that SIGDOC embed specific moments where the

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<sup>1</sup> Richards, D., Read, S., Youngblood, S., Rose, E., & Ross, D. G. (2020). Official statement from SIGDOC: A response to injustice. *Communication Design Quarterly Review*, 8(2), 4-5.

organization can make clear a dedication to anti-racism and inclusivity by removing the assumption that all scholars, leaders, and members will interpret and enact the bylaws in just and equitable ways. In their current iteration, the by-laws and the policies are malleable. This sounds cynical, but we are convinced that work toward racial equity and inclusion must be proactive, rather than reactive. Further, this work must be integrated with an organization's operation in order to be sustained. Finally, any effort toward anti-racist practices or initiatives must be concrete and clear. These revisions will make these initiatives sustainable despite leadership changes.

**a) Article 2: Purpose**

- i) The purpose section of the SIGDOC bylaws details services and activities that the organization will include in regard to educational, scientific, and technical contexts. We suggest that SIGDOC might consider including in the organization's purpose a focus on inclusion and anti-racist practices. This might ensure that SIGDOC's commitment to anti-racist and inclusive practices are inextricably tied to SIGDOC's purpose and the services that SIGDOC offers. To achieve this, SIGDOC might revise its stated purpose in the bylaws to read: "SIGDOC is organized and will be operated exclusively for educational, scientific, and technical purposes in its speciality. SIGDOC is committed to engaging in anti-racist and inclusive practices within its speciality and in every service that it offers. Its services include:"
- ii) In addition to revising the purpose statement, SIGDOC might also revise how a few of the services that the organization offers are worded/presented in the bylaws. For instance, item ii under Purpose might be revised to read "organizing inclusive and accessible sessions at conferences of the ACM." Similarly, item iii under Purpose might be revised to read "sponsoring inclusive and accessible conferences, symposia, and workshops." SIGDOC also might note that working groups (item iv) are inclusive and accessible.
- iii) SIGDOC might add a dedicated item to the purpose statement that articulates the organization's commitment to racial equity, justice, and inclusion. This item can mirror (or be similar to) language that SIGDOC used in its June 2020 statement and response to racial injustice. This clear articulation of the organization's commitments in the Purpose section of the bylaws would foreground that SIGDOC understands that work toward racial equity and inclusion is inextricably linked to the goals of the organization.

**b) Article 9: The Board/Access Chair**

- i) The SIGDOC board already includes an Access Chair. We recommend that the SIGDOC EC create a position of Access Chair that is a permanent part of the EC itself. This will allow the Access Chair to have voting capacities and more involvement with SIGDOC operational

decisions in order to encourage the EC's consistent and sustained commitments to anti-racist practices and inclusion. This Access Chair could be appointed or elected, though elected might be most productive and give members an opportunity to engage with the organization and be sure that the Access Chair represents the racial equity and inclusion needs of the organization's membership.

- ii) The parameters for the duties and responsibilities of the Access Chair position should be clearly described and articulated to include an anti-racist and inclusive focus and a scholar/practitioner member should have demonstrable experience in anti-racist and inclusion work and should be committed to enacting justice-centered practices within the organization. The Access Chair can also be responsible for an annual member perception survey and follow up actions based on annual survey data (see Recommendation 1 above).
- iii) Since SIGDOC has already committed to and allocated a \$2,000 permanent budgetary line for justice centered initiatives, we recommend that the stewardship of this budgetary line fall under the purview of the Access Chair (as a permanent position of the SIGDOC issue) which will ensure sustainability and provide SIGDOC EC with a "point person" for future funded justice-centered initiatives that are funded by this SIGDOC allocation.
- iv) Finally, we recommend a number of ways that the \$2,000 budgetary line item for justice centered initiatives might be applied (with the Access Chair as steward of this budget item). These possibilities include: an annual award of \$2,000 to a marginalized or multiply-marginalized graduate student to be used for individual research projects, \$2,000 worth of registration waivers that fund marginalized or multiply marginalized graduate student(s) attendance at the annual SIGDOC conference, \$2,000 honorarium for a local community partner or group to speak or present anti-racist, inclusive, community-based work at the annual SIGDOC conference, or a \$2,000 award for best annual justice-oriented publication in CDQ. The Access Chair would then coordinate and facilitate any necessary CFPs, applications, or awards or selection committees. It would be left to the SIGDOC EC to decide which appropriation of the \$2,000 budgetary item would be most feasible and sustainable for the organization. We recommend that the EC be consistent in how the \$2,000 is allocated each year.

**c) Article 11: Records and Reports**

- i) We recommend the annual report include updates on membership demographic, data collected on member perception of the organization in regards to race, racism, and inclusion, and an assessment of the organization's efforts towards anti-racism and inclusion.

- ii) Closing reports on conferences and symposia should include an assessment of the event in terms of racism, racial equity, anti-racism and inclusion. This data and evidence should be collected via feedback from an anonymous survey about the conference sent post event.
- iii) This data can also be reviewed by the Access Chair in order to inform future action for the organization.
- iv) If the EC sees fit, this data can be shared widely with SIGDOC membership.

**d) Article 12: Elections**

- i) While the entry on elections outlines when elections should be held and who can vote in elections, this section does not explicitly address who can run for positions in SIGDOC. We recommend SIGDOC include language that not only emphasizes recruiting a diverse pool of candidates, but also presents a pathway for recruitment. Part of this process also entails reviewing the current recruitment process. This means that SIGDOC should also consider reviewing public calls for nomination and assess what nominees these calls are likely to draw based upon their design. SIGDOC may find it necessary to solicit nominees (including self nominations) directly from marginalized and/or multiply marginalized scholars, in addition to considering how and where calls for nomination are distributed and posted by the organization.

**Future Work**

These recommendations present SIGDOC a way forward to begin sustained and consistent action around racial equity and inclusion within the organization. We hope that an annual member survey, along with a permanent role for an Access Chair position on the EC will help ensure that there is a sustained focus on anti-racist and inclusive practices. Finally, we also see fruitful possibilities for how the \$2,000 budget line item might be used in actionable and meaningful ways.

It was our pleasure to review the SIGDOC documents and procedures and we hope that you find our recommendations useful. We ask that the \$2,000 consulting fee for this work be appropriated to fund a marginalized or multiply marginalized graduate student interested in attending the next annual SIGDOC conference.

Respectfully submitted,  
Drs. Garcia de Mueller, Sackey, and Jones

## **Appendix 1: Draft of Survey of SIGDOC Membership**

This purpose of this survey is to identify opportunities to foreground anti-racist and inclusive goals and objectives for ACM SIGDOC. This survey asks members about their experiences with SIGDOC. In addition, this survey will also ask members about anti-racist and inclusive practices that they would like to see implemented by SIGDOC.

### **Part 1. Demographic Information**

1. Are you a member of SIGDOC?
2. What is your professional/institutional role? (For example: I am an assistant professor at a 2-year community college).
3. What is your demographic positionality? You may include as much information or as little as you like. (For example: I am a cis het, African American woman, and first-generation academic).

### **Part 2. SIGDOC Community**

1. I feel welcomed as a part of the SIGDOC community.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

2. I feel that SIGDOC is an inclusive organization.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

3. I feel that SIGDOC presents opportunities to engage with and be included in the organization.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

- I am aware and understand efforts that SIGDOC is making to improve inclusivity within its community.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**Part 3: SIGDOC Diversity and Inclusivity as Important to the Organization**

SIGDOC is committed to anti-racist and inclusive organizational practices. Would you agree that we are meeting this goal in the following areas:

**Conference Theme**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**Presenters at the Conference**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**Keynote Speakers**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**Conference Accessibility**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**Leadership Positions**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**CDQ Publications**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

- Please elaborate on your responses from above. For example, please help us understand how we either are or are not meeting our goals in the areas indicated in the previous question. [Open-ended response]
- Is there a reason why you did not attend a SIGDOC conference in the past or will not attend in the future? [Open-ended response]

**Part 3. Opportunities for SIGDOC**

Please let us know if there are specific things that SIGDOC could do to improve inclusivity and better meet the needs of our members.