Summary of Graham Scholars Diversity Town Hall Meeting

Approximately 20 scholars attended the event on December 3, 2015 and participated in discussions.

Program Curriculum

- Increase diversity of what we study. We should not solely be exposed to western ideology of the environment. Different voices and different experiences should be highlighted and discussed during seminars.
- Incorporate more exposure to grassroots sustainability efforts, including the knowledge and experience of community members into the curriculum.
- Acknowledge different understandings of sustainability among scholars, based on individual experiences.
- Support more simulation activities to challenge each other and have constructive and balanced discussions with a variety of viewpoints.
- Use time during seminars to learn from practitioners and other cohorts through well-facilitated discussions.
- Support other avenues for scholars to learn and discuss ideas with each other, outside of the program.
- Foster discussions about diversity, equity and inclusion in seminars, including examples of social justice and advocacy; and consider lessons about the lack of diversity in the field of sustainability.
- Use class time more effectively to focus on training, workshops, and building tangible skills, and consider community experts to foster discussions, and skill development activities.
- We should go through trainings on power and privilege that are woven into our curriculum.
- Allow scholars the choice of taking an environmental justice course instead of sustainability and the Campus.
- Support field trips for scholars that address the intersection of diversity and sustainability (e.g., green infrastructure methods of reducing blight and stormwater impacts in Detroit)
- Discuss social identity during the scholars’ retreat.

Coffee With Practitioners (CwP)

- Develop opportunities to have a facilitated conversation with professionals, including community members engaged in grassroots; promote a rich variety of knowledge and experience.
- Celebrate more cultures with food served.
- Foster student leadership in directing conversations; encourage instructors to listen and observe interactions.
- Foster a diverse representation of leaders from corporations, nonprofit organizations and communities with diverse populations (e.g., Detroit, Flint).

Climate around Diversity in the Program

- Foster an overall understanding and a celebration of diversity within the program.
- Develop the time and space for scholars to have dialogue about the Scholars Program through an annual town hall, and throughout the duration of the program, fostering cohort learning and knowledge exchange.
- Reach out to a diverse array of applicants and specifically different student groups, programs, and academic units.
- Increase the level of informal programming for the scholars to get to know each other.
- Work to increase the diversity of the scholars cohort.
• During recruiting, distribute opportunities to the broader community, including the Black Student Union (BSU), Semester In Detroit (SID), Community Action and Social Change (CASC), Latin American and Caribbean Studies (LACS), Afroamerican and African Studies (AAS), and communicate the importance of diversity and inclusion in the field of sustainability, which includes environmental justice.
• Facilitate opportunities for scholars to interact with a variety of cohorts, and consider a student social committee.

Program Leadership
• Seek leaders who attempt to get to know us as individuals and appreciate our experiences.
• Need for increased faculty sensitivity and training in diversity, equity and inclusion.
• Graham Scholars program viewed and treated as a valued and important program in the Graham Institute.

Program
• Increase awareness and sensitivity among instructors about gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity and other issues to foster a community of respect and inclusion.
• There’s a big disconnect between the Graham Institute’s advisory board and the scholars program.
• Seek leaders with community organizing background as seminar instructors.
• Ensure that instructors complete facilitation training to ensure that all voices are heard.
• Program leaders should have a commitment to diverse communities and connections with those communities.

Culture of Diversity at the Graham Institute
• Develop and promote a statement that acknowledges the Institute’s commitment to diversity and incorporate this into the mission of the Institute.
• Promote training on inclusivity for Graham staff, faculty, and scholars. Foster continued engagement and improvement, with measures and accountability. Consider conducting a ‘Change It Up’ session.