

To: Seattle Tennis Club Board
From: DEI Subcommittee
Date: January 13, 2021

Recommendations from Diversity Equity and Inclusion Subcommittee

Introduction

At the outset, we would like to express our appreciation to the Seattle Tennis Club Board for moving to create this subcommittee. Over the past few months, our committee has discussed the club's mission, history, culture and place in the larger Seattle community. The conversations have been fruitful, honest and constructive. We considered information from the initial call to action petition that was sent by a group of members in June 2020, recent changes to membership rules, experiences from people of color who had been to the club in the past, and much more.

We are optimistic that our recommendations to the Board will support the Seattle Tennis Club's mission to provide a positive social experience for its members, will make explicit the message that we are a community that does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation or any other label, and will demonstrate that we are actively committed to creating an environment where everyone feels welcome. Our recommendations provide some changes that could be immediately implemented as well as recommendations that create a platform for members to engage with the club in new ways that would broaden their overall social experience and expand the club's commitment to diversity and inclusion over time.

Subcommittee Process

We undertook this work with the following guidance from the Board about the subcommittee's goal:

While giving due weight and consideration to current members, staff and wait-list applicants, as well as honoring our existing tradition of being a family-oriented club, develop and propose a plan with action items for the Seattle Tennis Club to consider that engenders and supports diversity and equity for the membership and staff.

Although the subcommittee's process was primarily "internal," insofar as we did not engage any third-party consultants in formulating our recommendations, we did review a number of DEI-related policies and initiatives from other clubs. In addition, members of the subcommittee solicited and obtained valuable input from racially diverse non-club members in the local tennis community about their experiences with and views of the Seattle Tennis Club, as well as their DEI-related perspectives in general.

Our committee approached this work by creating general areas for growth. We then brainstormed several action items under each category. The following recommendations are the top actions items we believe will improve the Seattle Tennis Club. A brief description of each category is given to provide context for the recommended action items.

Categories & Recommendations

Culture

Culture is a key component to the Seattle Tennis Club's member experience and the subcommittee took into consideration the unique nature and size of the overall membership. We can enhance the Seattle Tennis Club's member experience while demonstrating a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion by creating a platform for members to engage in new educational experiences at the club and by highlighting ways in which members of the Seattle Tennis Club contribute to the larger community. We believe there should be a platform for education, knowledge and conversation for all those who are interested.

We believe the following recommendations would move the club in a positive direction:

- Create a section in the newsletter supporting/highlighting the DEI initiative. Possible suggestions may be "Community Action and Awareness" or "Community Corner." Articles would include important events that have happened in our region relating to racial equity, economic equality, access to education, etc. We would also periodically highlight members who are contributing to our larger Seattle community in significant ways. This section of the newsletter would also include links to educational and cultural events in the community – Town Hall events, Seattle Arts & Lectures events, etc.
- Offer a recommended reading list and links to podcasts on issues relating to equality, diversity, or cultural awareness generally.
- Increase the diversity of our lecture topics for our speaker series. Many other local private clubs (e.g. the Rainier Club, the Junior League of Seattle, etc.) are hosting more of these sorts of programs, and likely the GM can coordinate efforts with such clubs.

In the last section of the memo, we recommend that the Board revive the Communications Committee and add a DEI representative to that committee. The DEI Communications Committee member would help implement the above recommendations and provide content for the STC communications staff member for the "Community Action" or "Community Corner" section of the newsletter.

Membership

We spent a considerable amount of time contemplating how we could adjust the membership admission rules to increase diversity among the membership. As explained below, the consensus of the group was that, at this time, focusing on changes to the social membership admission policies was a more fruitful endeavor from a DEI perspective than focusing on changes to the active membership policies.

As you no doubt recall, in July 2020 the Board approved changes, recommended by the Membership Committee, to the process for applicants joining the active wait list that will potentially decrease institutional barriers to creating a more diverse membership; namely, a substantial reduction in the number of required member references each applicant must provide in order to join the active wait list. Given the fact that such changes have already been implemented and given the club's current lengthy active wait list (8-12 years) and, relatedly, the limited number of new active members admitted each year, we concluded that further changes to the active membership process at this time were not likely to result in a near-term impact on the diversity of the club, and therefore thought it best to defer consideration of any such changes to an annual Sitting DEI Committee (as proposed below).

Making adjustments to the social membership admission policies at this time, by contrast, *could* increase the diversity of the club's membership in the near term, and at the same time empower younger club members to view the STC as a place where their friends outside the club and in larger social networks are encouraged to and welcome to join. We believe that reducing the procedural barriers to joining as a social member, combined with creating new DEI-focused activities for social members to enjoy (a mandate of the DEI representative on the Activities Committee), has the potential to create tangible improvements to the club's diversity within the next two to three years (with the added benefit of generating additional revenue for the club).

With this in mind, we recommend the following changes:

- Reducing the barriers to entry for social membership by reducing the number of required references from seven to two.
- Providing that, while one of the two required references must be from an active member in good standing who has known the applicant socially for at least one year (and who otherwise complies with the existing membership criteria for proposers), the other reference could be from a *non-member* who has known the applicant socially for at least two years (with respect to this reference, following criteria parallel to the existing reference criteria for applications by new spouses/registered domestic partners).

As mentioned below, we also recommend adding at least one DEI representative to the Membership Committee to ensure that the two committees coordinate on any future membership-related DEI proposals and initiatives.

Experiences

One of the Seattle Tennis Club's greatest strengths is its location and facilities. In an increasingly crowded city, the Seattle Tennis Club is a tranquil place that gives members and visitors the opportunity to relax, socialize and play in a location that highlights the natural beauty of the Northwest. One of the challenges facing the club is a common perception by the larger Seattle community that they are not welcome to experience the club. A key focus of the subcommittee is enhancing the social membership experience, widening the opportunities for a more diverse social membership category, with the goal of encouraging such members to add their name to the active membership wait list.

Our recommendations include:

- Hosting an annual open house during the summer for social members, where each social member, along with one guest, can come enjoy all the facilities at the club for a day. (Tennis Committee agrees with recommendation)
- Inviting social members (along with their guests) to participate in the Member/Guest Tournament. (Tennis Committee agrees with recommendation)
- Tasking the Tennis committee with looking at a broader set of underserved applicants for the Jr. Tennis High-Performance program. Scott Moore would lead the program. (Tennis Committee agrees with recommendation)
- In general, creating more activities/groups that both social and active members could participate in, either on or off “campus,” for example, a hiking club, a cycling club, wine tasting outings, etc.

You will note that in the last section of this memo, we recommend adding a DEI representative to the Activities Committee. The role of the DEI Activities Committee member would be to facilitate implementation of the above recommendations and create more DEI-focused opportunities in the future.

Communications

We believe it is critically important to clearly communicate the message that the Seattle Tennis Club does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, or sexual orientation. There are several places where we could add simple, consistent and clear language along the lines of: ***“The Seattle Tennis Club does not discriminate based on race, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin or disability. We value the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of our community and provide our members access to quality experiences that support equity and diversity.”***

We recommend that consistent language should be included in the following places:

- In the mission and values statements
- On the STC website – we see a clear need to:
 - Include approved DEI language on the public webpage as well as the private (member login) webpages
 - Include on the public webpage a description of both Social and Active Categories that presents them to potential applicants in a more welcoming manner.
- In the membership application (Membership Committee approved such language in July 2020).
- In any materials relating to new staff hires.

We have included in an appendix to this document a list of links to other private clubs’ websites, which provide examples of similar DEI-related verbiage.

STC Ongoing Board, Committee and Staff Considerations

To ensure that we as a club follow through on our avowed commitment to embracing diversity, equity and inclusion, to ensure that DEI principles become part of the club's ongoing governance mechanism, and to implement the recommendations made by this subcommittee, we recommend the following:

- Have the STC Board and Nominating Committee engage in some form of DEI thought leadership event at least once a year, and add DEI training to the annual board orientation. We have included a list of DEI training consultants in the appendix.
- Appoint a DEI representative to the Membership, Activities and Communication (when it is revived) Committees to help implement recommendations made by this subcommittee.
- Form an annual Sitting DEI Committee to provide guidance and oversight of the club's DEI-related activities. Committee composition should include the DEI representatives on the Membership, Activities and Communication Committees as well as two to four additional committee members. The Sitting Committee's scope would include:
 - Coordinating with Membership Committee to recommend new ideas/policy proposals over time for increasing the overall diversity, equity and inclusiveness of the club's membership.
 - Coordinating with Activities Committee to recommend community inclusive events.
 - Coordinating with Activities and Communications Committees for recommendations around speaker series.
 - Coordinating with the newsletter director to provide content for community awareness.
 - Reviewing metrics from the Membership Manager, the Activities facilitator and other relevant parties to see if the actions of the Sitting Committee and the club's various DEI-relating initiatives are translating into growth in membership diversity and participation, and otherwise having their intended effect.
- Have staff participate in a periodic DEI workshop, consistent with best practices as determined by human resources.

Appendix

DEI language on club website examples

- <https://www.uclubpdx.com/about/diversity>
- <https://www.colonnadeclubuva.com>
- <https://www.ulcc.org/web/pages/membership>

DEI Training Resources

- Dr. Johnny Lake
[DR. LAKE - Home \(drjohnnylake.org\)](http://drjohnnylake.org)
- Leilani Lewis: Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for Advancement at the University of Washington
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/leilanilewis/>
- Michelle Majors: Principal and Lead Strategist at Majors Leadership Group, a national consulting firm dedicated to supporting nonprofit organizations in solving their office culture, internal structure and equity challenges and exploring new models for success.
<https://www.majorsleadership.com/michelle-majors>
- Katie Mooney
<https://www.diversitybestpractices.com/katie-mooney-0>