

NEWS LETTER

This is a time of big disruption. No doubt.

The systems that have defined our way of life: economic, political, health care, and education, are in a state of tremendous flux. In this time of questioning and redefining what works, it is critical that we ask how our systems can better include and serve us all.

For us, as both designers and educators, we felt compelled to focus our attention on a system we know very well - higher education, and are utilizing the design thinking process to understand the inequities faced by black and brown students, faculty, and staff in architecture and interior design education. We seek to understand, ideate, pilot test and share concepts and strategies that create a more inclusive learning environment. So where does an undertaking like this start? By asking critical questions.

How do you communicate to black and brown design students that taking control of their built environment is a necessary endeavor?

How do you begin to address the legacy of generational trauma in a meaningful way that speaks to architecture and interior design?

How can we tell our story when the education system is designed to exclude our contributions?



Last fall, design students, faculty, and staff in higher education in New York City completed surveys to prioritize the challenges we experience in design school. The results served to ignite and focus our group conversations at the **design academi-X FORUM**, a virtual workshop facilitated by thinkshift and held

on October 24, 2020. This gathering formed a steering committee to shape and define a large-scale gathering scheduled for the fall of 2021 to address these critical questions. We envision this gathering to be a hands-on experience where participants are immersed and engaged in shaping solutions (think "hackathon") that can be brought back and modified within your own academic institutions.

Please feel free to get in touch info@thinkshiftstudio.com if you would like to offer suggestions or participate in the planning of the larger conference event, and we will continue to share our insights and discoveries here as our process moves forward.

What is missing from your institution's black/brown student recruitment practices?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Local junior high and high school engagement	58.33%
Black/Brown focused grants	50.00%
Black/Brown focused junior high and high school design award:	50.00%
School or Department outreach programs	50.00%
Junior High and High School design competitions	50.00%
Black/Brown focused scholarships	41.67%
Community engagement	41.67%
Black/Brown focused student design association affiliations	33.33%

What is missing from your institution's black/brown faculty recruitment practices?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
School or Department outreach programs	75.00%
Black/Brown design professional association affiliations	75.00%
Targeted Design Community engagement	50.00%
College- or department-wide willingness to spend money to specifically target and recruit Black/Brown faculty	50.00%
Targeted recruiting efforts using headhunters	50.00%
Design Studio Jury selection of Black & Brown design professionals	33.33%

What is missing from your institution's classroom pedagogy to better meet the needs of a more diverse curriculum?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
The basics in history of non-western European culture, architecture, and interior design	84.62%
Faculty with knowledge, expertise, and/or experience in Black/Brown related subjects	69.23%
Design projects located in or for Black/Brown communities	61.54%
Project "clients" of Black/Brown ethnic background	53.85%
Faculty with knowledge of Black/Brown achievements in architecture and interior design	46.15%
Local community engagement with students on class projects	30.77%
Non-western European electives	30.77%

What is missing from your institution's black/brown administrative recruitment practices?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
College- or university-wide outreach programs	69.23%
College- or department-wide willingness to spend money to specifically target and recruit Black/Brown administrators	46.15%
College- or department-wide decision makers willingness to ensure Black/Brown administrators are interviewed and hired	46.15%
Targeted recruitment efforts using headhunters	38.46%
Targeted recruitment ads	30.77%