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Academy Recommendations on State Department Diversity and Inclusion

Washington, D.C. – In an era of global competition, the United States must leverage all of its strategic assets, including all of its people, for continued prosperity and security. Unlike many other nations, the United States enjoys an extraordinary amalgam of languages, cultures, backgrounds and perspectives to project its interests across the globe. Yet, it is not using these assets in conducting its diplomacy. Moreover, the current debate on racial justice and inequality underlines the moral imperative of equal representation in all our public institutions, including the Department of State. America needs to harness the skills and capacities of its diverse population to conduct successfully the robust diplomacy needed to protect its interest and promote its values.

As noted in the GAO report of January 2020, and in many other studies, the State Department falls well short in removing barriers to equal opportunity in its ranks. While the Department has expanded recruitment from across US populations and has pledged to increase the intake of Pickering and Rangel Fellows which bring outstanding diverse officers to the Foreign Service, the senior ranks of the Foreign Service are less representative than they were 20 years ago. This represents a failure of leadership and talent management. The Academy strongly believes that, through improvements in performance management including mechanisms to hold people accountable for fostering diversity and inclusion, we can begin to see a more diverse Foreign Service at all ranks. Without the skills and talents of a diverse workforce, the U.S. will not succeed in meeting the intensified global challenges to its interests and values in the 21st century.

The Academy welcomes the Department's new 2020-2022 Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan and recognizes the efforts made by many dedicated employees in this effort. The Plan includes measures we believe are important, such as a centralized and more carefully analyzed exit survey program to assess why people are leaving the Department, a pilot program for gender neutral anonymous meritorious service increase nominations, the requirement for unconscious bias training in leadership courses, the inclusion of diverse representation on promotion boards, an increase in the number of Pickering and Rangel Fellows and the initiation of a review of diversity and inclusion language in the performance evaluation process.

We believe, however, that much more needs to be done at this critical juncture. Building on the five general recommendations made in our press release of June 9, 2020, the Academy proposes that the Department take the following specific steps to foster a climate of inclusion, increase accountability and transform the US diplomatic service to a more competitive service truly representing the nation:

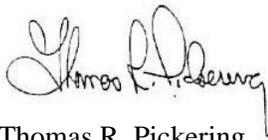
Strengthening American Diplomacy

1. Establish a Senior level (Assistant Secretary level or above) Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer (CDIO) reporting directly to the Secretary of State to be his/her principal advisor on diversity and inclusion. Provide adequate budget, staffing and IT support to enable the office to a) coordinate across the Department including with the Office of Civil Rights and the Bureau for Global Talent Management; and b) quickly collect and produce data including regular public reports on D&I efforts, including those related to demographic data on assignments, promotions, professional training and awards. Include the CDIO as a voting member of the D and DCM committees to ensure fair representation of minorities and women in senior assignments.
2. Require a DAS in each Bureau and the DCM at posts to be responsible for D&I in coordination with CDIO to: 1) identify and sponsor rising diverse talent in their bureaus and corresponding posts in the field and 2) establish specific annual goals and targets on diversity and inclusion in assignments, training and awards.
3. Add the advancement of diversity and inclusion to the core precepts in the evaluation process of Foreign Service Officers. For promotion to the rank of FS1 and above, include the added requirement to participate in a program to formally sponsor a rising female or minority officer, as developed by the CDIO office.
4. Based on the results of the pilot project with Meritorious Step Increases, explore the use of gender/ethnic neutral anonymous procedures by promotion panels. Ensure continued representation for women and minorities on all promotion panels.
5. Amend the selection criteria for Senior Performance Pay and for Presidential Awards to require demonstrated and significant advancement of diversity and inclusion.
6. Establish a mandatory 360 review process for all assignments for all supervisory officers to include specific language to request responses on the officer's record of actively promoting diversity and inclusion. Ensure that responses are anonymous to protect reviewers from retaliation.
7. Strengthen accountability measures for supervisors and managers who discriminate, to include vetting of promotion lists, short lists and assignments against documented cases of a pattern of microaggression, callousness and/or bullying of staff.
8. Require that Bureaus, the DCM and the D Committees report, on a semi-yearly basis, to the Secretary via the CDIO, the demographic data on all candidates, both career and non-career, considered and those chosen for DAS, DCM, PO, POLAD, COM and other key positions.
9. Expand the information included in the Certificates of Competency required for all Ambassadors, both career and non-career, per Section 304 of the Foreign Service Act to include an assessment of the nominee's track record in advancing diversity and inclusion.
10. Establish an internal certificate of competency for DAS/DCM/PO and other senior positions to include an assessment of leadership skills in promoting diversity and inclusion to be reviewed by the DG and the CDIO and submitted to the relevant assignment selection committees.
11. Convene a group of senior FSOs who began their careers as Pickering and Rangel Fellows, to develop proposals on how to address current internal misperceptions about the Fellowship program, for rapid implementation by the DG and/or the CDIO.
12. Maintain the 50 percent increase in the annual number of Pickering and Rangel Fellows and continue strong recruitment efforts through the Department's national talent acquisition platform to broaden the diversity of entry level officers.

13. Ensure that the assessor teams in the Board of Examiners have participants from underrepresented communities.

The Academy of Diplomacy recognizes that the Department also faces challenges in diversifying its Civil Service employees and invites it to consider some of the recommendations above which may be applicable.

The Academy of Diplomacy looks forward to working with the Department, AFSA, employee affinity groups and associations, as well as Congress, in this necessary strengthening of the U.S. Foreign Service.



Thomas R. Pickering
AAD Chairman



Ronald E. Neumann
AAD President

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