



Winsor’s Newest Chair Honors the Value and Importance of Diversity

BY MASLEN WARD '16

There is no better person, educator, or friend than Julian K. Braxton to hold the inaugural Bezan Chair for Community and Inclusion, honoring Diane Bezan’s legacy. It was Bezan, after all, who originally persuaded Braxton to overcome his misgivings about teaching at a girls’ school and to join Winsor.

“She said, ‘Julian, just come visit,’ and I came to visit the next week,” Mr. Braxton recalled at the December 9 ceremony that installed him as the Bezan Chair. “That was in 1999, and I’ve been here ever since.”

He recalled finding the community just as Bezan, then the Upper School director, described it, one “full of love, passion, and grace.”

Together, they served on the small subcommittee that wrote Winsor’s Principles of Diversity in 2003. The next year, Mr. Braxton was named as the school’s second director of diversity.

Mr. Braxton’s title has since evolved, to director of community and multicultural affairs and now to director of community and inclusion. Though, he added, “At the core of all three titles, it’s really about belonging.”

Belonging was a value that also defined Ms. Bezan’s tenure with Winsor. She came to the school in 1975 as a part-time math teacher, and colleagues soon recognized her extraordinary talent as an educator. Her role within the school grew, including as a faculty representative to the Search Committee that chose Carolynn McClintock

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— ALLAN BEZAN, IN 2011

Peter as Winsor’s sixth head of school. Ms. Bezan would become Upper School director and, later, associate director of the school.

In 1998, before she recruited Mr. Braxton as a history teacher, Ms. Bezan wrote, “As we work to create an inclusive community, we renew our commitment to build and support a diverse school. The faculty needs to reflect the broader community in order to embrace the true richness of diversity.”

The Bezan Chair now stands as a permanently endowed commitment to this vision for a more diverse and inclusive Winsor, one where everyone feels as though they belong. The Bezan Chair was made possible through the generosity of Diane and her beloved husband, Allan Bezan. Ms. Bezan stepped away from Winsor for health reasons in 2005; she passed away on January 15, 2007.

“Planning for Winsor’s support seems the most natural thing to do—a way of giving back and enriching as many lives as I can,” Allan wrote in 2011. “Winsor is special! To be part of Winsor’s success in any way, no matter how small, is a reward in itself and I hope honors the memory of my dear wife.”

The ceremony celebrating Mr. Braxton’s installation and the inception of the Bezan Chair drew 140 people. It concluded with a panel discussion that brought together Head of School Sarah Pelmas with her predecessors Carolyn Peter and Rachel Friis Stettler to discuss the work to support diversity, equity, and inclusion at Winsor over their collective 35 years leading the school. Fittingly, the moderator for this memorable conversation was the guest of honor, Mr. Braxton.

The panel gave everyone in the audience the opportunity to observe from Mr. Braxton what anyone who spends time in his office already knows: The way he asks questions, listens to the answers, transforms his beliefs through dialogue, and shares these moments of transformation embody his way of communicating to every student and colleague that they belong at Winsor. **W**



1: Director of Community and Inclusion Julian K. Braxton sits in the Bezan Chair, which Head of School Sarah Pelmas presented during assembly in January 2023. 2–3: Ms. Pelmas and Mr. Braxton at the Bezan Chair celebration in December 2022. 4–5: Mr. Braxton moderates a panel with Ms. Pelmas and former Heads of School Rachel Friis Stettler (2004–2016) and Carolyn McClintock Peter (1988–2004) at the Bezan Chair celebration. 6: (L to R): Hailey Fuchs '16, Mr. Braxton, Maslen Ward '16, Anshi Moreno Jimenez '15, and Evan Joy McLaurin '12 pose for a selfie at the Bezan Chair celebration.