Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

We actively create and continuously invest in building an inclusive and equitable environment where every member of our community feels like they belong and has access to the resources they need to thrive.

Full Recommendation

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Seven cross-campus working groups composed of over 200 faculty, staff, students and community members were formed to address our institutional key priorities—Academic Excellence, Community Building, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), Research and Creative Scholarship, Sustainability, Internationalization and Well-being.

Numerous campus engagement activities were conducted by the seven key priority working groups during spring 2022, with over 450 registrations across the 18 themed listening sessions centered around the seven priorities. In addition, over 350 student survey responses were received that answered specific priority questions from a student lens. Next, the working groups began analyzing data and incorporating community feedback as they worked toward identifying, developing and recommending achievable, metric-based goals that centered around these seven key priorities.

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) working group was charged with evaluating the state of DEI on our campus, determining how WMU can better represent, serve and empower all members of our community, and identifying structures that create barriers to achieving our institutional goals and fulfilling our core purpose.

After a multiple-step review process, the following is their submitted recommendation, which includes possible strategies and metrics that were essential in informing the goals and objectives. Further, they serve as a starting point for prioritization and refinement of institutional initiatives as the strategic plan moves into implementation. In addition, if available, the Strengths, Opportunities, Aspiration and Results (SOAR) summary reports, as well spring 2022 process reports, are attached as unedited appendices to provide further clarity and context.

Finally, this work could not have been completed without our dedicated community members who shared their time, expertise and commitment to improving our institution as they built these recommendations. Working group contributors are recognized in full at the end of this document.

Recommendation

Context: We strive for a transformed, just community.

Goal: We actively create and continuously invest in building an inclusive and equitable environment where every member of our community feels like they belong and has access to the resources they need to thrive.

DEI Objective 1: University leadership shall adopt policies, delegate authority to lead, prioritize issues and provide economic support related to diversity, inclusion, equity and justice that are proportional to campus demographics.

Objective 1 Possible Strategies:

- Leadership will intentionally include, collaborate with and be guided by those impacted by changes in policies, procedures and resource allocation.
- Leadership shall actively engage with and support the campus community by recognizing faculty, staff and student accomplishments in DEI.
  - Offer seed grants and strategic investment funding for research on DEI-related topics to faculty and staff.
  - Create a DEI publication (website, email newsletter, etc.) to recognize and showcase the community engagement activities and accomplishments of our faculty, staff, students and administrators.
- Ensure that every member of our community feels a sense of belonging at WMU by integrating inclusion and equity into teaching, research, programming and services.
  - Establish a mentorship program between employees and students from historically underrepresented groups to help support student retention.
  - Develop new programs to increase engagement for parents and supporters of first-generation students.
  - Create identity-based groups to foster feelings of acceptance and connection for underrepresented students.
  - Expand Cross Cultural Centers spaces, programs, and services to cultivate a sense of belonging for all individuals at WMU.
  - Evaluate our diversity-focused departments, programs and services in order to develop a comprehensive and integrated infrastructure for supporting and advocating for underrepresented students.
  - Assess campus engagement with DEI efforts and effectiveness of strategies through regularly conducted climate surveys.

Objective 1 Possible Metrics:

- By 2026, include a set of 'sense of belonging' questions in climate surveys conducted at the beginning and end of academic years and create a baseline measure to compare changes from year to year.

- o Using this data, develop a cumulative report to compare DEI efforts (2022 vs. 2026) across faculty, staff and students.
- By 2029, assess and develop a cumulative report to compare DEI efforts (2022 vs. 2026 vs. 2029) across faculty, staff and students.
- By 2032, assess and develop a cumulative report to compare DEI efforts (2022 vs. 2026 vs. 2029 vs. 2032) across faculty, staff and students.

DEI Objective 2: Retain and graduate a diverse student body while steadily eliminating disparities in graduation rates.

Objective 2 Possible Strategies:

- Strengthen WMU's infrastructure to support a diverse environment.
    - o Establish a sequence of student experiences and learning opportunities to explore self-identity, engage across differences and promote respect for all people.
    - o Identify, promote and create programs across the university that address the needs of students related to their sense of self, specifically examining ability, age, class, ethnicity, familial status, gender, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexuality, veteran status and other facets of identity.
- Provide opportunities for individuals to participate in campus-wide trainings; oversaturate the opportunities so that it is meaningful for them.
    - o HR promotes available trainings in partnership with Institutional Equity and ODI.
    - o Develop a faculty and staff diversity program to help ensure diversity is present throughout campus at all levels of employment, foster an inclusive work environment with a welcoming climate and link faculty and staff diversity efforts to those of the broader WMU community.
    - o Establish a teaching and learning center that specializes in and deepens understanding of DEI in teaching, learning and outreach by creating opportunities for all faculty, staff, students, alumni and community members to participate in programs that enhance their ability to engage with diverse people and communities.
    - o Conduct quarterly campus-wide discussion and sharing sessions related to diversity, equity and inclusion that foster community healing.
    - o Collaborate with chief diversity officer and other campus partners to create a comprehensive training plan for faculty and staff to increase their knowledge of diversity, equity and inclusion.
    - o Expand professional development opportunities that motivate faculty and staff to strengthen their capabilities related to diversity, inclusion and social justice.
    - o Create an interdisciplinary approach to cultural awareness through relationships with academic and co-curricular partners, enacted in part by the implementation of an Inclusive Excellence Initiative.

- o Develop mentorship and early-career support programs to improve retention of faculty and staff from historically excluded groups.

- Maximize current campus resources to meet our goals.
  - o Required training for every member of the campus community (faculty, staff, administration and students) with embedded outcomes for success, e.g., an action plan with check-in points, a unified approach to identifying campus trainers and training opportunities, and paid in-service days to remove barriers to employee participation.
- Publication of honest, transparent, usable and frequently updated data that is publicly accessible and includes:
  - o Disaggregation (for example, Asian Pacific Islander Desi American disaggregated by ethnicity).
  - o Student data sets that may not show up in other data sets (incomplete, withdrawal, etc.).
  - o All domains (hiring, recruitment, retention, course completion, etc.).
- Implementation of an alternative reporting system or community listing feature to make an informal report.
  - o Empowering people who have been microaggressed against coupled with concrete accountability for actions (e.g., a professor who microaggresses a student is held accountable for doing so at the end of semester).
  - o Integrate and consolidate reporting systems currently used.
  - o Create systems of accountability for all employee groups.

Objective 2 Possible Metrics:

- By 2026:
  - o Report of demonstrable and growing financial support for ODI.
  - o Assessment of the number of regularly facilitated DEI training, workshop and event opportunities available for our campus community to attend.
  - o Record of faculty/staff collaborations with diverse RSOs.
  - o Single, unified incident reporting system and documentation of consequences and actions taken.
  - o Cumulative report of easily accessible data that shows demographics and trends in hiring, recruitment, retention, matriculation and course completion.
  - o Reports (by college) of how many and how often faculty and staff attend diversity-related training and events.
- By 2029:
  - o Cumulative report of easily accessible data that shows demographics and trends (hiring, recruitment, retention, matriculation, course completion) that can be disaggregated (APIDA, LGBTQ, Disability, etc.).
  - o Publicly accessible list of instructors who have participated in regular DEI initiatives and trainings.

DEI Objective 3: Hire and retain faculty, staff and administrators that better reflect and support the changing identities of the student population in the United States.

Objective 3 Possible Strategies:

- Cross compare exit interviews against employee engagement surveys.
- Develop and maintain consistent, transparent, and welcoming onboarding processes that provide a foundation for success for all new WMU faculty, staff and students.
- Create hiring initiatives for diverse candidates to pursue careers in higher education (faculty-track), particularly in fields where there is a lack of diversity, such as teaching post-doctoral experiences.
- Diversify upper administrative and leadership staff.
- Address faculty and staff retention (affinity groups for ERG, i.e., race, LGBTQ, etc.) by creating a community that facilitates and fosters mentorship opportunities.
- Take service-based work, such as advising student organizations with affinity, into consideration for faculty tenure to prevent burnout and encourage a culture shift that values service work.
- Allowing all employees to be able to do DEI-related work while on the clock.
- Include making a personal commitment to improving and fostering an equitable and inclusive campus environment as part of all job descriptions.
- Continuing Education Units (CEUs) are actively involved in committees/continuous learning about DEI.
- Create staff diversity hiring toolkits that provide supervisors and managers with resources to effectively incorporate DEI recruitment and retention principles.
- Implement and enforce hiring policies and protocols that include strategies known to help reduce bias.
- Develop clear accountability guidelines for faculty, staff, administration and students who cause or perpetuate bias-based harm.
- Design and implement recruitment strategies to create a "talent pipeline" that produces increased numbers of qualified and diverse faculty and staff candidates.
- Collaborate with Human Resources to expand outreach and employment opportunities that attract and retain diverse faculty and staff.

Objective 3 Possible Metrics

- By 2026:
    - New and fully functioning ERGs are available for faculty and staff.
    - Retention trends are documented and compiled as annual reports that lead to a 4-year cumulative report.
    - Established records and reports regarding taking accountability of and repercussions for perpetuating harm.

- o Implementation of functional and accessible onboarding and training processes.
        - o Cumulative report detailing which diversity hiring initiatives (such as job postings) and/or pipeline (faculty track) were enacted.
        - o Documented cross comparison of exit interviews against employee engagement surveys with recommendations to address issues.
- By 2029:
    - o Continuous support of ERGs.
    - o Documented trends of retention and research-backed implementation strategies to address retention needs.
    - o Seasoned faculty orientation programming with incentives fully established.
- By 2032:
    - o Aim for target percentages for identities

DEI Objective 4: Diversity curriculum and co-curricular touchpoints are widespread and easily accessible for all students throughout their years at WMU.

Objective 4 Possible Strategies:

- Emphasizing departmental accountability to ensure that DEI objectives are being met, including establishing minimum requirements, consequences for not meeting these standards and providing incentives for departments/units to meet them.
- WES committee charged with updating rubrics and criteria for assessments of student learning outcomes will collaborate with ODI before finalizing changes to the DEI outcome.
    - o This will occur over the duration of the strategic plan, so if the WES committee makes multiple updates over time, it will collaborate with ODI each time.
- Regularly updated public display of meeting (or not meeting) rubric requirements by unit, department and college level (similar to WMU CHHS).
- Refine and build upon existing curricula through a diversity-focused lens at all levels and for all campuses, including online.
    - o Encourage existing faculty to create new, diversity-focused curriculum, as applicable to their fields.
    - o Audit courses for DEI curriculum and/or co-curricular touchpoints and adjust as applicable.
    - o Spotlight and increase awareness about the 100+ DEI-related courses available for students to fulfill the 14 learning outcomes WES requires.

Objective 4 Possible Metrics:

- By 2026:
  - Reports by colleges of course offerings, levels (freshman, sophomore, etc.), and number of courses canceled (due to enrollment or lack of instructor).
  - Publicly accessible list of DEI courses and tracks that are regularly highlighted to increase enrollment and/or meet academic requirements.
  - Syllabus audit of DEI courses and student evaluations established.
  - Regular collaboration with multicultural student groups to review and suggest changes to courses and/or create new courses.
- By 2029:
  - External review of WES standards regarding DEI SLOs.
  - Ask deans for internal assessment reports of their colleges on DEI curriculum above and beyond WES requirements.
- By 2032:
  - Provost issues report discussing the assessment of the deans' reports regarding college-level DEI curriculum changes.

DEI Objective 5: Empower and provide resources for the VP of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to address structural systemic barriers to advance diversity[1], equity[2], inclusion[3] and justice[4] across campus.

Objective 5 Possible Strategies:

- Consolidate resources and unify DEIJ objectives by restructuring and integrating OIE, ODI and the Walker Institute into a cohesive unit.
- Hire an associate VP to help manage, coordinate and facilitate the actions of this integrated DEIJ unit.
- Collaborating with a representative from HR to assist in remediating issues and encourage professional development.
- Provide CEU opportunities for faculty, tenure track (see Objective 3).

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[1] **Diversity:** "Diversity is a fact of our community, and asks us to consider the number and composition of membership in our community according to the representation of the aspects and attributes that differentiate groups and individuals according to some of (but not only) the following: race, ethnicity, age, sex, gender, gender expression, religious belief, worldview, physical and intellectual ability, sexuality, national origin, citizenship status, political beliefs, socioeconomic status, or level of education. We define diversity as an essential fact of this community, and an ongoing goal to support and enhance." *Retrieved from* *https://wmich.edu/diversity/deivocabulary-1*

[2] **Equity:** "Equity is our commitment to continuously evaluate systems and structures to identify and remove biases in the allocation of opportunities and resources to ensure everyone is provided with what is needed for them to achieve equal outcomes." *Retrieved from https://wmich.edu/diversity/deivocabulary-1*

[3] **Inclusion:** "Inclusion means intentional actions that enable people of all different characteristics to take part in our community actively and fully. This comprises being intentional in the policy and practice of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people, and ensures they are culturally and socially accepted, welcomed, and equally engaged in the functioning of the institution. Belonging is the emotional outcome of inclusion work: the resulting sense of being a valued member of that group." *Retrieved from https://wmich.edu/diversity/deivocabulary-1*

[4] **Social Justice:** "Social justice is the belief that everyone deserves equal access to and participation in our community as well as equal economic, political, and social rights. This is the result of actions that broadly aim to share society's burdens and benefits equally among all people." *Retrieved from https://wmich.edu/diversity/deivocabulary-1*

- Better advertise equitable resources, such as getting assistance, housing options and financial aid (scholarship universe, 1 application).
- Determine strategies to streamline the communication process for events, services and courses.
- Increase engagement with student-serving departments (such as ODI) and diverse events (Signature).
- Create equitable opportunities and infrastructures to improve student access.
- Identify 2-3 research backed strategies for supporting retention and graduation for historically underserved students and take an integrated approach to implementation.
- Conduct a campus-wide DEWI initiative aimed toward all large lecture courses (those with over 75 students enrolled) to ensure equity of outcomes for diverse students.
  - Revise Elearning rubric to ensure criteria meet DEI requirements and standards (currently very broad).
  - Assess what courses are being offered by colleges and departments each year and how often classes are canceled due to enrollment.
  - Examine how is DEI being addressed within each college, addressed by IDC.
  - Ensure courses tie into students' career fields and adequately prepare them to interact with all diverse WMU campus communities.
- Actively seek and solicit perspectives from diverse staff when proposing changes in departmental, program, college and divisional procedures.
- All units will engage in a recurring, systematic review of their policies and practices to ensure equity, inclusion and justice.
  - This includes valuing and uplifting the voices of marginalized communities, actively engaging in training/development, participating in decolonization practices and deconstructing policies that sustain systematic oppression and white supremacy.
- Expand gender-inclusive policies and infrastructure throughout campus.
  - Examples include (but not limited to) publicly advertised lactation rooms (on a single web page) and access to multi-stall, barrier-free, all-gender restrooms in all new construction projects.

Objective 5 Possible Metrics:

- By 2026:
  - Report of student demographic data demonstrating who accesses grants, scholarships, and services.
  - Report and demographics of instructors who use CEU opportunities.
  - Report and demographics of student matriculation, FAFSA, employment (including on-campus limits that impact FAFSA), and debt.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Working Group Membership

Co-Chairs	
Nathan Nguyen	Office of LBGT Student Services
Participants	
Keith Hearit	School of Communication
Lofty Durham	Department of Theatre
Toni Woolfork-Barnes	WMUx
Lisah Crall	Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences
Reetha Raveendran	Division of Student Affairs
Udaya Wagle	School of Public Affairs and Administration
Kate Langan	University Libraries
Alyssa Moon	WMUx
Jessica Hermann Wilmarth	University Advancement
Selena Protacio	Department of Special Education and Literacy Studies
Kathryn Docherty	Department of Biological Sciences
Megan Grunert Kowalske	Department of Chemistry
Elizabeth Isidro	Department of Special Education and Literacy Studies
Dave Paul	Department of Philosophy
Jill Rowe	School of Interdisciplinary Health Programs
Vun Doubblestein	Multicultural Affairs for Students
Kourtney Bakalyar	Department of Psychology
Gwen Bostic	WMUx
Staci Perryman Clark	Institute for Intercultural and Anthropological Studies
Melissa Holman	Multicultural Affairs for Students
Luchara Wallace	College of Education and Human Development
Ronicka Hamilton	Center for Fostering Success
Kelsie Nimke	Intercollegiate Athletics
Michael Smith	Department of Public Safety
Scott Verduzco	Student
DeUnique Dorris	Student
Christopher Hodshire	School of Social Work
Jhauncey Jacobs	Student Financial Aid and Scholarships
Charles Poole	
Ciji Heiser	