



# Diversity and Inclusion Plan

## Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City

### Introduction

Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City (OSU-OKC) is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment in which faculty, staff, and students learn and work. The institution’s priorities in the areas of diversity and inclusion include creating a hospitable campus environment that is welcoming to students, employees and the community; to nurture an atmosphere of civility and respect for the differences that lead to inclusiveness rather than marginalization; and to facilitate meaningful dialogue leading to actions that inspire sustained introspection and change.

The campus has developed the following Diversity and Inclusion Plan in recognition that diversity is not a problem to be solved but rather an opportunity to be pursued, and it represents the next step in the campus’s pursuit of achieving inclusive excellence. It is understood that exposure to diverse individuals and beliefs unlocks the possibilities for students to contribute to and thrive in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. A campus culture that fosters and supports diversity and inclusion is essential for an effective engagement with the surrounding community and multi-cultural region.

It is important to note that this plan is for the entire campus community and therefore, should not be viewed as limited to any particular group. Transforming the campus is a shared responsibility and efforts in diversity and inclusion will reflect this concept.



## Definitions of Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity – which celebrates similarities as well as differences - is the combined strength of the abilities, cultures/ethnicities, experiences, genders, religions, and talents each of us brings to OSU-OKC and our supporting policies, such as affirmative action and equal opportunity, are the cornerstones of the diversity plan.

Diversity, however, is broader than the traditional categories of age, disability, gender, gender identity, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, and veteran status. It also encompasses socioeconomic status, family background, language, the level of academic preparedness, learning style, and even the different communities from which our students, faculty, and staff hail.

Inclusion is appreciating and respecting those distinctive characteristics each member of the campus community adds to our institution. Inclusion goes beyond numerical diversity. Real inclusion is the creation of a climate where all stakeholders feel valued and appreciated, where diverse groups participate in academic and administrative decision making, where barriers to inclusion, whether policy, practice or systemic, are identified and addressed, and where equitable opportunities abound. This inclusive environment allows students, faculty and staff to thrive.

## Strategic Plan and Direction for Diversity and Inclusion Plan

Diversity and inclusion are embedded in the priorities of the Strategic Plan and are a focus in our ongoing work of the institution at all levels. The Mission Statement also demonstrates OSU-OKC's commitment to diversity:

“Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City provides industry-relevant higher education for a diverse student population through innovative technology and experienced



faculty and staff; leading to personal growth, graduation, and employment that supports the needs of a multi-cultural region.”

As part of the Mission package, the campus has established a **Core Value** for diversity that states, “We respect others and value diverse opinions, freedom of expression, and ethnic and cultural backgrounds.” The campus **Philosophy** also emphasizes that each person should be treated with dignity and respect, afforded equal opportunity to acquire a complete educational experience, given an opportunity to discover and develop their special aptitudes and insights, and provided an opportunity to equip themselves for a fulfilling life and responsible citizenship in a world characterized by change.

Additionally, the campus has adopted the following Equal Opportunity (EEO) Statement: *Oklahoma State University, as an equal opportunity employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding non-discrimination and affirmative action. Oklahoma State University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all individuals and does not discriminate based on race, religion, age, sex, color, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, disability, or veteran status with regard to employment, educational programs and activities, and/or admissions.*

The goals of the plan, as outlined in the next section, tie these pieces together to create the direction for diversity activities and inclusion practices across campus.

## Role of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee and Diversity Office

The Diversity and Inclusion Committee assists in the development of plans, strategies, and initiatives to encourage increased diversity and inclusion on



campus. The Committee views diversity from a very broad perspective and is charged with developing recommendations to create a campus atmosphere of respect and encouragement for people of diverse backgrounds; increase diversity in the student body; and increase diversity among the faculty and staff. The Diversity Office will be the central hub for campus-wide diversity and inclusion activities. The Diversity Office and the Diversity and Inclusion Committee will be partners in the further development and tracking of progress on the campus' diversity and inclusion goals.

Additionally, the OSU-OKC campus Diversity and Inclusion Committee has adopted the following Oklahoma State University (OSU) Diversity Statement to guide their work: *Oklahoma State University is a land-grant institution committed to excellence in diversity and inclusion. We strive to maintain a welcoming and inclusive environment that appreciates and values all members of the University community. We define diversity as engagement in meaningful actions, behaviors, and conversations that reflect a commitment to recognizing, understanding, and respecting the differences among students, faculty, staff, and visitors throughout the OSU system. We do not condone acts, behavior, language, or symbols that represent or reflect intolerance or discrimination. OSU is dedicated to cultivating and enriching the competitive advantages that diversity and inclusion provide all members of the University community. We identify diversity as a quality of life issue, as well as an important economic driver for the prosperity and well-being of the state, nation, and world.*

## Goals of the Diversity and Inclusion Plan

The goals of the Diversity and Inclusion plan facilitates intentional, reflective activities that advance the campus' pursuit of diversity and inclusivity, and includes the following:

1. Engage the entire campus community in meaningful dialogues and actions that lead to introspection and change and weave the principles of diversity and inclusion into all aspects of college life and day-to-day campus operations.
2. Identify challenges to creating a diverse and inclusive environment, propose solutions to overcome those challenges, and measure our progress at all levels of the campus infrastructure.
3. To support the goals outlined in the College's Strategic Plan.

This last goal is of particular importance because we, as an institution, internalize that diversity and inclusion are central to achieving the priorities of the Strategic Plan which includes ensuring a student-oriented campus, enhancing academic quality through quality faculty and staff, and being a model citizen in our community.

The three goals delineated above will be achieved by implementing changes that cover the categories of: increasing the employee and student diversity to be more reflective of our community, creating an inclusive campus environment, and incorporating the principles of diversity and inclusion into the classroom and curriculum. By standing up this focused attention to diversity alongside the guiding principles of student success, employee excellence, and community relevance, the campus embraces the provision of industry-relevant higher education which supports the needs of our multi-cultural region.

### Category 1: Increase employee and student diversity

Racial, ethnic and gender identities/expressions, socioeconomic backgrounds, disabilities, and personal experiences and aspirations contribute to a learning environment enriched through the diversity of opinions and beliefs. Each employee and student has their own story to tell which breathes life and color to the campus. Recruiting and retaining members of underrepresented groups to fill faculty



and staff positions continues to be a priority. Recruiting and retaining students that represent the traditional, broadly defined, and evolving facets of diversity is also a priority that the campus continues to fulfill.

## Category 2: Creating an inclusive campus environment

To fully realize the potential of every employee and student the campus continues to be a welcoming and supportive place for all that is bolstered through its diverse body. Flexible, accessible, and supportive learning environments empower students to reach their full academic potential and aid them in becoming global citizens. Faculty teach in an environment that affords them the opportunity to be creative, effective, and socially and culturally aware. Staff works in an environment that utilizes their skills and abilities and allows them to develop new ones. Faculty and staff receive ongoing training in various diversity and inclusion topics and are actively engaged to be part of a team. Service offices and campus support units remain aware of and sensitive to the individual needs, abilities, socioeconomic/cultural backgrounds and communication styles of each student. Campus Life leaders continue their role in coordinating activities, programs, and learning experiences that promote interpersonal communication and appreciation of diverse perspectives to complement academic curriculum and the institution's unique role in the community. Through this holistic culture of campus support, students and employees are empowered to share their stories, hopes, dreams, and to reach out to each other. Each constituent group adds to the whole; emphasizing students' and employees' identities as global citizens.

## Category 3: Incorporate principles of diversity and inclusion into the classroom and the curriculum



A welcoming classroom climate and the infusion of diversity and inclusion principles into the curriculum are crucial to the success of the institutional commitment to transform itself. Attention to diversity and inclusion in campus conversations increases awareness, encouraging faculty to see diversity and inclusion to enrich the classroom environment and assures an equitable learning experience for all students.

This plan demonstrates OSU-OKC's deepening commitment to diversity and inclusion in both curricular and co-curricular activities and campus support services in policy and in practice, and in the ways that individual representatives of the campus community conduct themselves.

## Metrics and Reporting

To enhance learning and accountability across the campus, metrics that represent important factors in assessing progress toward the goals of the plan will be used. Data will be collected campus wide on an annual basis with a summary report of findings to follow. This data may be collected from institutional/internal sources, survey data, or a combination thereof and will be used to prompt the institution to review its progress toward goals, as well as to use outcome data to improve services and programs on campus.

As the campus begins to live the tenets of its new mission, vision and principles, each individual employee will be empowered to identify goals and metrics that will make up the substance of the plan and its reporting. This results in the diversity and inclusion plan, metric identification, and evaluation growing organically; giving individual ownership, versus being a mandate from campus administration.

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