Inclusive Excellence
Considering each level and aspect
of Missouri State University’s Long Range Planning process

Diversity as defined by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U): Individual differences (e.g., personality, learning styles, and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations) that can be engaged in the service of learning.

Inclusive Excellence The AAC&U commissioned a series of reports (Bauman, et al, 2005; Milem, et al, 2005; Williams, et al, 2005) designed to assist higher education institutions in their efforts to move from “diversity as an isolated initiative to diversity as a catalyst for educational excellence.” In this vein, the papers lay out the rationale, empirical support, and strategies for developing policies and action toward an educational environment that moves beyond strictly compositional approaches to the task of effectively preparing all students for the complex and diverse world they will enter.

Rationale:

- Within the Inclusive Excellence Change Model, “diversity is a key component of a comprehensive strategy for achieving institutional excellence—which includes, but is not limited to, the academic excellence of all students in attendance and concerted efforts to educate all students to succeed in a diverse society and equip them with sophisticated intercultural skills” (Williams, et al., p. 3).
- Campus communities that are more racially and ethnically diverse tend to create more richly varied educational experiences that enhance students’ learning and better prepare them for participation in a democratic society. (Milem, 2005, p.6)
- Milem discusses the educational benefits of incorporating diversity and prioritizing campus engagement with ideas, conversations, and experiences that engage differences promotes all students’ learning and development.
- Individuals who study and discuss issues related to race and ethnicity in their academic courses and interact with a diverse set of peers in college are better prepared for life in an increasingly complex and diverse society. (p.13)
- Ideally, the institution’s commitment to diversity should permeate policy in all areas of institutional life. A step in signaling an institution-wide commitment to diversity is for the top campus leadership to issue statements of support, purpose, and action. (p.23)
- In order to enhance complex thinking, Inclusive Excellence efforts stress the importance of offering a social and intellectual atmosphere different from the students’ own to facilitate cognitive and identity development.
- Williams (2005) cites the University of Michigan Fortune 500 Amicus Brief from 1999, “Diversity in higher education is therefore a compelling government interest not only because of its positive effects on the educational environment itself, but also because of the crucial role diversity in higher education plays in preparing students to be the community leaders this country needs in business, law, and all other pursuits that affect the public interest” (p. 8).
The definition consists of four primary elements:

1. **A focus on student intellectual and social development.** Academically, it means offering the best possible course of study for the context in which the education is offered.

2. **A purposeful development and utilization of organizational resources to enhance student learning.** Organizationally, it means establishing an environment that challenges each student to achieve academically at high levels and each member of the campus to contribute to learning and knowledge development.

3. **Attention to the cultural differences learners bring to the educational experience and that enhance the enterprise.**

4. **A welcoming community that engages all of its diversity in the service of student and organizational learning.**

### Table 3. Inclusive Excellence Scorecard

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<tr>
<th>IE Area</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sample Indicators</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access and Equity</td>
<td>The compositional number and success levels of historically underrepresented students, faculty, and staff in higher education</td>
<td>▪ Number of students, faculty, and staff members of color at the institution&lt;br&gt;▪ Number of tenured women faculty in engineering&lt;br&gt;▪ Number of male students in nursing&lt;br&gt;▪ Number of historically underrepresented students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields</td>
<td>Bensimon et al. 2004; Hurtado, et al. 1999; Smith et al. 1997</td>
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<td>Diversity in the Formal and Informal Curriculum</td>
<td>Diversity content in the courses, programs, and experiences across the various academic programs and in the social dimensions of the campus environment</td>
<td>▪ Courses related to intercultural, international, and multicultural topics&lt;br&gt;▪ Campus centers, institutes, and departments dedicated to exploring intercultural, international, and multicultural topics&lt;br&gt;▪ Articles, monographs, lectures, and new knowledge that is produced around issues of diversity</td>
<td>Smith et al. 1997</td>
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<td>Campus Climate</td>
<td>The development of a psychological and behavioral climate supportive of all students</td>
<td>▪ Incidents of harassment based on race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation&lt;br&gt;▪ Attitudes toward members of diverse groups&lt;br&gt;▪ Feelings of belonging among ethnically and racially diverse groups on campus&lt;br&gt;▪ Intergroup relations and behaviors on campus</td>
<td>Smith et al. 1997; Hurtado et al. 1999</td>
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<td>Student Learning and Development</td>
<td>The acquisition of content knowledge about diverse groups and cultures and the development of cognitive complexity</td>
<td>▪ Acquisition of knowledge about diverse groups and cultures&lt;br&gt;▪ Greater cognitive and social development derived from experiences in diverse learning environments&lt;br&gt;▪ Enhanced sense of ethnic, racial, and cultural identity for all students</td>
<td>Gurin et al. 2002</td>
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1. Missouri State’s economic interest is best served by a proactive plan for responding to changing national, state, and regional demographics. According to the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education’s Policy Alert (2005), “Given the changing demographics of the nation’s workforce over the next two decades, the current educational disparities among racial/ethnic groups are projected to lead to a decline in the educational level of the U.S. workforce as a whole. This drop in the levels of education completed would in turn result in a decrease in personal income per capita among Americans.”

2. Increased revenue will come from more students. The largest untapped student population is in the demographic of diverse students, who historically participate in higher education at a lower rate than dominant culture high school graduates. “Unless there are major departures from the status quo, the projected demographic shifts suggest that college participation rates might decline, particularly in states where there are projected increases in the numbers of low- income and black and Hispanic students” (College Board “Impact of Demographic Changes on Higher Education”, 2005, p. 7)

3. We are a Public Affairs Institution, having defined this through the three components of Ethical Leadership, Community Engagement, and Cultural Competence. Without a comprehensive effort to respond to challenges identified in our own climate survey and the Voices of Diversity study, we are not fulfilling our own charge of Cultural Competence, which makes the other two components unattainable.

4. The City of Springfield and the Chamber of Commerce have both identified Diversity in long range planning and areas of focus. Missouri State University can and should (with respect to the Public Affairs Mission) have a leadership role in diversity training, recruitment, and retention as we prepare future leaders for the changing world they will enter.

5. Need for campus coordination in diversity efforts. Historically, our campus efforts to train administrators, faculty and staff in diversity related matters have been diluted and less effective due to fragmentation. The AAC&U “Inclusive Excellence” series identifies the following needs:
   a. Enact diversity in intentional ways that enhance students’ intercultural competency, cognitive complexity, and ability to work in diverse groups (Milem, et al.)
   b. Address equity in academic achievement for all students, with particular attention paid to groups historically underrepresented in higher education (Bauman et al.)
   c. Engage entire campus community in conceiving of, carrying out, and assessing a comprehensive process to enact diverse learning environments (Williams et al.)

6. The structure provided by a Chief Diversity Officer will enhance effectiveness, not duplicate efforts. The most effective way to achieve the diversity goals set forth by the Board of Governors is through a concerted effort of a Chief Diversity Officer. There are three models historically used for diversity efforts in higher education: First, the Affirmative Action and
Equity Model (on our campus handled by the Office for Equity and Diversity), second the Multicultural Model (on our campus Multicultural Student Services), and the Academic Diversity Model (represented by fragmented efforts of various committees and individuals). According to Williams & Clowney (Strategic Planning for Diversity and Organizational Change, 2007), the role of the CDO is to be “the hub of an institution’s diversity capabilities, and optimally designed CDO roles should influence diversity across each of the three diversity models, not just one or two.” Without this leadership, campus diversity projects often become the second, third, and fourth priorities of overcommitted faculty, staff, and students serving on diversity committees and task forces.

7. While our student recruitment and retention efforts seem to be meeting with success, we are lagging in recruitment and retention of diverse administrators, faculty and staff. As pointed out in the Business Case for Diversity and Inclusion, “Recruiting, retaining, and promoting diverse employees is critical to a corporation's success in this evolving marketplace. These efforts must be carefully planned, nurtured, and measured to ensure success.” And further, to properly train our students for competitive entry into the national workforce, our own ability to demonstrate an inclusive and excellent campus environment will be crucial: “Emerging markets for new customers, suppliers, and talent drive the requirement for new competencies in dealing with the issues of diversity and inclusion. This is not only an issue for global multi-national companies but also for companies seeking to further develop their opportunities in the U.S. domestic market.”

**Universal Design**

Our campus is striving to create a paradigm shift in our thinking about disability. We are in the process of reframing disability from a negative medical malady to a positive individual difference and promoting disability pride. As our University moves toward a model of Inclusive excellence we must embrace disability as a part of diversity and value it as an integral part of life. This action should be implemented through universal design which is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. The intent is to simply life for everyone by making our learning environments, programs, policies and procedures to be more usable by as many people as possible at little or no extra cost. Universal design is good design that benefits all people; not just for those who have disabilities.

Today’s college student population is increasingly diverse in educational background, age, gender, culture, ability, and primary language. Traditional means of meeting the learning needs of a diverse student population have significant limitations. If we sincerely value diversity, we must consider and proactively plan for a diverse campus
community. Universal design is about creating inclusive, equitable, welcoming environments for everyone. Implementing this systemic change leads to the following benefits for all:

- Anticipating a variety of needs within a diverse community, leading us to embrace the notion of diversity as an essential element.
- The focus will shift from compliance and non-discrimination to an emphasis on inclusive teaching and learning.
- Provides the planning and delivery of instruction as well as evaluation that embraces diversity in learners without compromising academic standards.
- A framework for faculty to use when designing/revising instruction to be responsive to diverse student learners.
- Reduces the need to provide special accommodations and retrofits to learning environments.
- Infuses course content that broadens our conceptualizations of diversity.
- Enhances the learning of students through collaborative learning.
- Implements instructional strategies that address all learning styles.
- An approach to teaching that consists of the proactive design and use of inclusive instructional strategies that benefits a broad range of learners.

When a universal design approach is applied to our University, the notion of diversity as an essential element of our work will be embraced through the proactive design of our learning environments and programs. This should lead to the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty, students, staff and guests of the University.
References


