



Pursuing Inclusive Excellence

A Five-Year Strategic Plan for
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

(2023-2028)

Stephens



Washington College's mission is to challenge and inspire emerging citizen leaders to discover lives of purpose and passion. Preparing our students to be citizen leaders in the twenty-first century requires fostering their intellectual and social development so they are equipped to engage with people from a variety of backgrounds and with ideas and viewpoints that differ from their own. The Bipartisan Policy Center's Task Force on Campus Free Expression notes that preparing students to be "independent thinkers who can tolerate contrary viewpoints and work constructively with those with whom they have principled disagreements" is a key mission of higher education.¹ Supporting and maintaining an inclusive campus is essential to this mission.

The College is committed to educational excellence and thus understands that in order for this to be achieved it needs to ensure that valuing diversity, broadly defined, exists at the core of the College's mission. In other words, it must pursue inclusive excellence. But as the Diversity Committee has noted, "Being diverse is not enough, if social relations are not fair and if only a few individuals can be successful."² Thus our pursuit of inclusive excellence is driven by our commitment to make excellence inclusive.

This pursuit of inclusive excellence is driven by demographical data that indicates needs and opportunities for Washington College to increase the diversity of its campus. For example:

- » 65% of our matriculated students are White
- » 24% of our matriculated students are African American, Native American, Hispanic, and/or Asian.
- » 77% of our full-time faculty are White
- » 22% of our full-time faculty are African American, Hispanic, or Asian
- » 70% of our staff are White
- » 27% of our staff are African American, Hispanic, or Asian.³

Ethnicity is one aspect of diversity, but it isn't the only lens through which we are pursuing inclusive excellence. 93% of students, 99% of faculty, and 97% of staff respondents to the 2022 Campus Climate Survey agreed that "Learning about and interacting with people with different backgrounds is a very important part of an undergraduate education." Thus, as our Diversity Statement notes, we endeavor to be an institution where people of a wide variety of identities, backgrounds, and life experiences can study, work, and thrive.

Washington College will advance five key goals in its pursuit of inclusive excellence:

1. Work to make the campus culture, climate, and civic engagement efforts more inclusive and informed.
2. Encourage our students, faculty, and staff to engage in inclusive teaching, research, scholarship, and creative work.
3. Increase the diversity of students, staff, faculty, and the Board of Visitors and Governors.
4. Support the well-being of all campus constituents who have been underserved.
5. Ensure that our facilities, internal policies, public facing information, and experiential learning opportunities are accessible and equitable.

1. Bipartisan Policy Center. "Campus Free Expression: A New Roadmap." November 2021. p. 6.

2. Washington College Diversity Committee. "Recommendations for the Making of the Diversity Strategic Plan." April 2020.

3. Student and faculty data are reported in the *Washington College Fact Book 2022-2023*. Staff data, as of November 1, 2022, has been provided by the Office of Human Resources and Office of Institutional Research.

About Our Process

Our strategic diversity planning process has undergone a number of iterations. It's important to note the role that students have played in advocating for a sustained institutional commitment to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion at the College. For example, in November 2019, students issued a call to action and petitioned the administration for increased transparency around Title IX cases. In February 2020, Black Student Union members and allies lead a protest in response to a series of racial harassment incidents on campus. This protest was followed in March 2020 with a "Letter of Grievances and Demands to Washington College."

In May 2020, President Kurt Landgraf outlined commitments to actions the College would take to address the "core concerns related to diversity that underline[d] recent events."⁴ The Diversity Committee developed and shared its "Recommendations for the Making of the Diversity Strategic Plan" in April 2020. In Spring 2021, Interim President Wayne Powell tasked the Diversity Committee chair with establishing a task force to draft a Strategic Diversity Plan. Members of this task force included:

Carese Bates, Director of Intercultural Affairs and Diversity Committee co-chair
 Carolyn Burton, Director of Human Resources
 Claire Hansen, Diversity Liaison to the Board of Visitors and Governors
 Flavio Hickel, Assistant Professor of Political Science
 Jon McCollum, Professor of Music and Planning Committee co-chair
 Emerald Stacy, Assistant Professor of Mathematics and Diversity Committee co-chair
 Christine Wade, Professor of Political Science and Planning Committee member

This task force drafted the plan during the Spring 2021 semester and sought input from the campus community via a series of open forums in Fall 2021. Further revisions were made by the Diversity Committee before the plan was submitted to President Mike Sosulski in December 2021. At that time, the members of the Diversity Committee included:

Carese Bates, Co-Chair and Director of Intercultural Affairs
 Carolyn Burton, Director of Human Resources
 Esmeralda Chavez Jimenez '24, Student Representative
 Evan Clayton, Coordinator of Campus Recreation
 Sarah Conlin, Assistant Professor of Psychology
 Alex Crabtree, Disability Access Specialist
 Nicolas Garcia, Assistant Professor of Sociology
 Nali Gowon '23, Student Representative
 Mariama Keita '23, Student Representative
 Rebeca Moreno-Orama, Associate Dean for International Education
 Alisha Mosley, Staff Representative
 Emerald Stacy, Co-Chair and Assistant Professor of Mathematics

During the Spring 2022 semester, the President's Cabinet, the Ad Hoc Diversity Committee of the Board of Visitors and Governors, and members of the Washington College History Project offered consultation and feedback on the plan draft, which became the basis for this document, "Pursuing Inclusive Excellence: A Five-Year Strategic Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion."

During the Fall 2022 semester all WC students, faculty, staff and BVG members were provided online access to the plan drafts. VP for Planning & Policy and Chief of Staff Vic Sensenig and Association Provost Alisha Knight held open forums and collected additional feedback and input from campus stakeholders via Qualtrics forms. The final draft was disseminated in January 2023 and votes to endorse the plan were conducted at respective student, faculty, staff and BVG meetings in February 2023.

4. Kurt Landgraf, "Town Hall Follow-up," email communication, March 5, 2020.

All College stakeholders have a role to play in implementing WC's vision for inclusive excellence. As with all strategic plans, this one must be monitored and evaluated in order to be effective. The President's office will monitor the progress and success of the strategic goals along with the quality of these initiatives and efforts.

Definitions of Key Terms

Accessibility refers to the extent to which a facility is readily approachable and usable by individuals with disabilities, particularly such areas as the residence halls, classrooms, and public areas.

Belonging refers to an individual's sense of connectedness to organizations and institutions they are involved in. When individuals have a sense of belonging, they feel accepted, respected, included, and supported by others within the organization or institution. Belonging is an important predictor of student well-being, engagement, and success. It is also an important factor in employee engagement, performance, and retention.

Diversity refers to the wide variety of shared and different personal and group characteristics among human beings. It includes all aspects of human difference, and each person is a unique combination of those aspects. It is an essential educational issue—an integral element of the college experience that enriches the learning, personal development, and career success of all students. Diversity is a human issue that embraces and benefits all people; it is not a code word that stands for "some" people.

Equality describes a situation in which all people within a specific social setting have the same status in certain respects, including civil rights, freedom of speech, property rights and equal access to certain social goods and services.

Equity is the guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all students, faculty, and staff, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. It takes into consideration the fact that the social identifiers (race, gender, socioeconomic status, etc.) affect equality and acknowledges that different people will have different needs in order to have the same access to opportunities. In an equitable environment, an individual or a group would be given what was needed to give them equal advantage, which would not necessarily be equal to what others were receiving.

Inclusion refers to the kind of active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity that cultivates an environment where any individual or group can feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued. It assumes that a diverse environment is essential but not sufficient.

Inclusive Excellence is a framework developed by the Association of American Colleges & Universities that recognizes diversity, equity, inclusion and educational excellence are intertwined. The College's success depends on how well it values, engages, includes, and supports the diversity of its constituents, which includes students, faculty, staff, alumni, board members and community partners.

Social Justice is a broad term for action intended to create genuine equality, fairness, and respect among peoples. It challenges injustice, affords equitable access to resources, and affirms and appreciates our differences as members of the Washington College community.

Underrepresented groups who have been denied access and/or suffered past institutional discrimination in the United States. This is revealed by an imbalance in the representation of different groups in common pursuits such as education, jobs, and housing, resulting in marginalization for some groups and individuals and not for others, relative to the number of individuals who are members of the population involved.

Underserved populations are ones that are disadvantaged in relation to other groups because of structural or societal obstacles and disparities, including with regard to accessibility to education. Underserved students are those who have been traditionally excluded from full participation in society and its institutions, primarily on the basis of race and color.

Diversity Statement

We, the students, faculty, staff, and Board of Visitors and Governors of Washington College, welcome, invite, value, and support a diverse community of individuals. We strive to create a place where all can study, work, and thrive. We believe in the worth, dignity, and safety of human beings of all races, ethnicities, nationalities, gender identities and/or expressions, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, cultural backgrounds, cognitive or physical abilities, emotional and behavioral characteristics, ages, and educational levels. In the pursuit of academic excellence, we endeavor to be a community made up of people from a variety of backgrounds with differing perspectives, life experiences, religious, philosophical, and political beliefs, lifestyles, and ideologies.

We pledge to create a respectful and supportive environment for collaboration, empathy, and the building of meaningful relationships among members of Washington College. We commit to fostering a more equitable, inclusive, and engaged community that embraces all the complexity that each person brings to campus.

- » We will empower all members to contribute ideas, ask questions, contest assumptions, and revise points of view through civil debate.
- » We will confront and challenge attempts to dehumanize others through prejudiced attitudes, behaviors, and practices that exclude, demean, or marginalize any individual or group.
- » We will encourage alumni, parents, visitors, guests, and the wider community to respect and embrace the values and behaviors that we embody.

Our promise is to cultivate a continuous desire and ability to understand and meaningfully engage with different perspectives and experiences, including those of historically underrepresented and marginalized groups. We seek to contribute to the full intellectual and emotional development of every person and to the enrichment of our local, regional, national, and global communities.

GOAL 1: Work to make the campus culture, climate, and civic engagement efforts more inclusive and informed. Washington College is committed to becoming a more welcoming and inclusive institution that is invested in building a supportive environment for all of its members and building stronger relationships within our surrounding communities.

Action 1: Make our community engagement more equitable and inclusive.

Step 1 Increase engagement with alumni from marginalized backgrounds to celebrate/elevate identity-based accomplishments.

Purview: Intercultural Affairs, Alumni Relations, Career Center, Student Government Association, Academic Affairs, Global Education Office, C.V. Starr Center, Center for Environment and Society, Rose O'Neill Literary House

Step 2 Create a cross-departmental initiative to engage with members of the Chestertown and Eastern Shore community

Purview: Academic Affairs, Global Education Office, the Miller Director of Civic Engagement, Student Government Association, Student Events Board, Office of Student Engagement

Step 3 Review and assess our current purchasing and procurement practices and create a formal Supplier Diversity Policy that advances the College's commitment to diversity as it pertains to businesses and vendors owned by underrepresented community members.

Purview: Finance and Administration





Action 2: Provide learning experiences beyond the curriculum and professional development enabling all students, faculty, staff, and board members to understand the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion at Washington College and beyond.

Step 1 Require basic, *annual* training on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging for faculty, staff, board members and students. Evaluate and offer additional education and training tools to promote DEIB on an annual basis.

Purview: Board of Visitors and Governors, Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, and Human Resources

Action 3: Implement regular data collection, assessment, and reporting of the college's progress toward achieving its diversity, equity, and inclusion goals.

Step 1 Report bias incidents and alleged Title IX violations to the campus community at the end of each semester.

Purview: Bias Education Response Team (BERT) and Title IX Coordinator

Step 2 Conduct an annual Campus Climate Survey to help assess the College's progress on campus diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

Purview: Associate Provost for Diversity and Inclusion, Institutional Research

Step 3 Build and maintain an institutional accountability dashboard that will help the college monitor and report its progress on campus diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

Purview: Associate Provost for Diversity and Inclusion, Institutional Research

Step 4 Prepare and deliver to the Board and campus community an annual report of the College's progress towards achieving the strategic goals outlined in this plan.

Purview: the President

Washington College

Goal 2: Encourage our students, faculty, and staff to engage in inclusive teaching, research, scholarship, and creative work. Washington College students, faculty, and staff need meaningful opportunities to develop and express a deep understanding of the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in order to sustain a respectful and supportive environment for collaboration, empathy, and relationship building.

Action 1: Support course development, experiential research, and projects with minority-owned businesses, researchers, organizations, etc.

Step 1 Establish standard operation procedures and a referral network of businesses, researchers, and organizations for collaborations, internship placement, and speaking engagements.

Purview: Career Center, Alumni Relations, Provost's Office

Step 2 Solicit funding to support outreach, promotion, and development of experiential research efforts.

Purview: Advancement and Provost's Office

Step 3 Increase funding to support experiential teaching and learning (i.e., summer abroad and internships).

Purview: Career Center and Provost's Office

Action 2: Investigate the incorporation of faculty contributions to DEI-related projects into the Advisory Committee on Tenure and Promotion's annual review of faculty teaching, service, and scholarship.

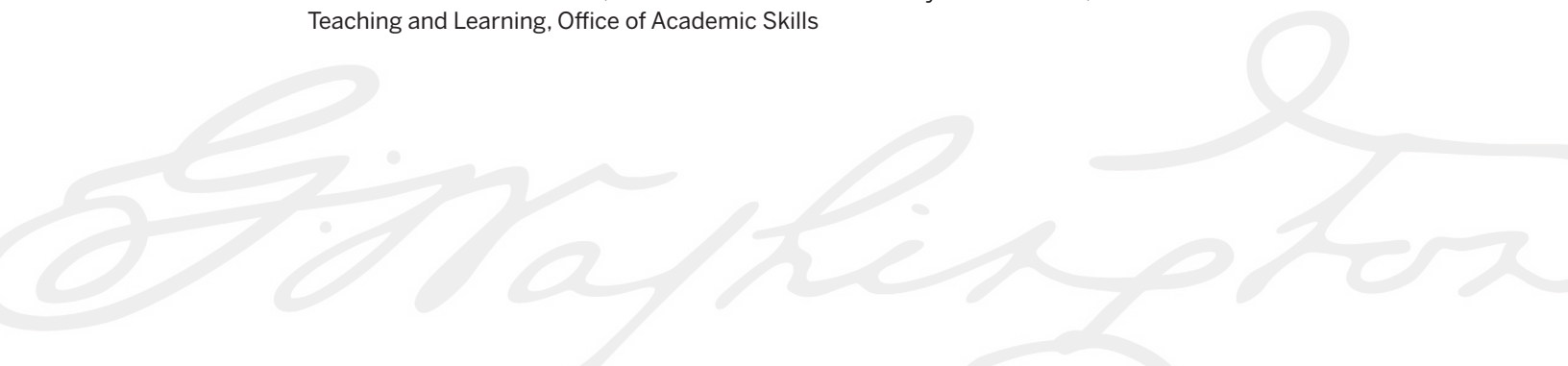
Purview: Faculty Council and Provost's Office

Action 3. Complete the development and implementation of a Diversity Learning Requirement that was initiated by the Curriculum Committee I.D.E.A. working group in Fall 2021.

Purview: Academic Affairs

Action 4. Organize and sponsor regular professional development retreats to support faculty and staff development and coordination focused on inclusive pedagogy, accessibility, and accommodations in the classroom.

Purview: Human Resources, Associate Provost for Diversity and Inclusion, Cromwell Center for Teaching and Learning, Office of Academic Skills



Goal 3: Increase the diversity of students, staff, faculty, and BVG. Washington College is committed to student recruitment and employee hiring practices that are consistent with our endeavor to be a community of diverse individuals. Furthermore, we seek to recruit and retain employees and board members who reflect the diversity found in our student population and communities we serve. Recruiting and retaining more underrepresented students, faculty, staff, and board members will support our commitment to foster a welcoming and inclusive campus environment.

Action 1: Assess and enhance the recruitment and retention of students from underrepresented communities.

Step 1 Conduct an analysis and adopt best practices to improve the recruitment of underrepresented students.

Purview: Enrollment Management

Step 2 Conduct an analysis and adopt best practices to improve the retention of underrepresented students.

Purview: Enrollment Management, Office of Student Achievement and Success, Retention Working Group

Step 3 Secure funding to increase the Washington Scholars Program Endowment Fund and the staffing needed to support at least 20 students, as intended when the program was established.

Purview: Advancement, Enrollment Management

Action 2. Assess and enhance the recruitment, hiring and retention of faculty, staff, and Board members from underrepresented communities.

Step 1 Create an EEO/Diversity advocate position in Human Resources and update and enforce the College's Affirmative Action policy.

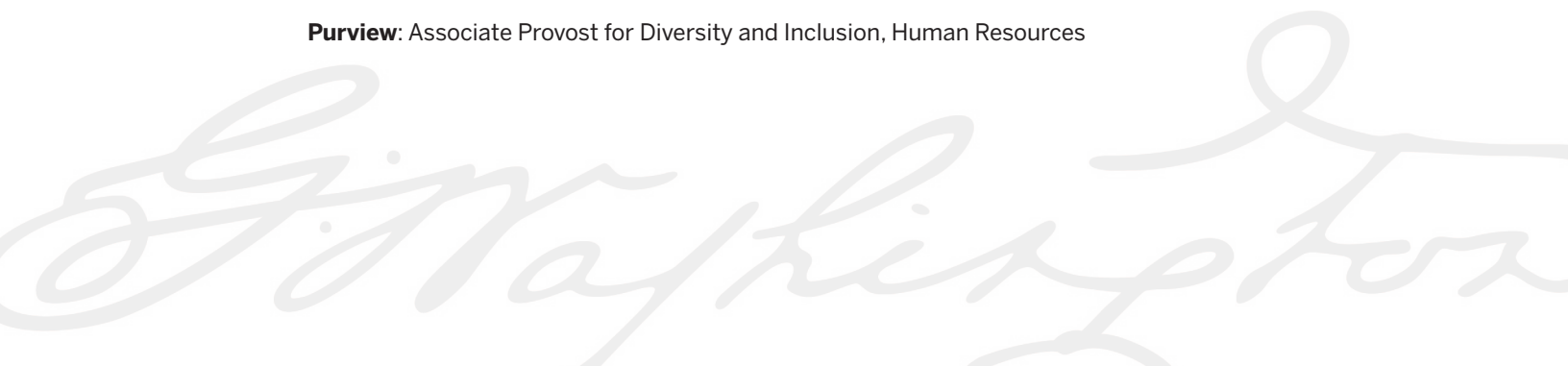
Purview: Human Resources

Step 2 Conduct an annual analysis and adopt best practices for recruiting and retaining board members from underrepresented communities.

Purview: BVG and President's Office

Step 3 Develop a search advocate program and require training on inclusive hiring practices for all hiring managers and search committee members.

Purview: Associate Provost for Diversity and Inclusion, Human Resources



Goal 4: Support the well-being of all campus constituents who have been underserved. Our Wellness Advocacy Coaches and the Wellness Social Media Interns have enhanced mental health support on campus, but there is more work to be done. Furthermore, in terms of equity, we recognize the need to support students whose socioeconomic condition limits their access to educational resources needed for success.

Action 1: Bolster mental health supports for students by completing the implementation of Mental Health Working Group recommendations from April 2021 MHWG Report (including, but not limited to: comprehensive campaign to promote mental health supports, increase access and modes of counseling services, incorporate substance abuse and recovery offerings, etc.).

Purview: Counseling Services

Action 2: Institute identity-based mentorship opportunities for students, faculty, and staff

Step 1 Create and support an identity-based mentorship program for students.

Purview: Career Services, Academic Affairs, and Student Affairs

Step 2 Become an institutional member to the National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity, which would provide faculty with mentoring and support to achieve teaching excellence and scholarly productivity while maintaining healthy professional relationships and work-life balance.

Purview: Provost's Office

Step 3 Create and support an identity-based mentorship program for staff.

Purview: Staff Council and Human Resources

Action 3: Conduct an audit to determine and provide support to meet the essential needs of students with financial hardship.

Step 1 Establish resources to meet the educational resource needs (including technology and required books and materials) of students with financial hardship.

Purview: Academic Affairs, Academic Technology, Information Technology Partner

Step 2 Establish resources to meet the nutritional needs of students with financial hardship.

Purview: Student Affairs

Step 3 Establish resources to meet the housing, nutritional, and transportation needs of students with financial hardship.

Purview: Student Affairs

Goal 5: Ensure that our facilities, internal policies, public facing information, and experiential learning opportunities are accessible and equitable. An increasing number of people need assistive technology or accommodations to navigate Washington College’s physical and digital spaces. The College recognizes the diversity of disabilities, from temporary to invisible, and we are committed to addressing accessibility issues and increase access to our educational opportunities.

Action 1: Adopt best practices for improving information access.

Step 1 Develop procedure for translating public-facing materials into other languages

Purview: Enrollment Management and Marketing and Communications

Step 2 Ensure that the College website is accessible for blind and visually impaired users.

Purview: Marketing and Communications

Step 3 Increase awareness and communication of policies through a centrally located hub that is accessible by all faculty, staff, and students.

Purview: Marketing and Communications and Human Resources

Action 2: Conduct an annual accessibility audit of all campus facilities (walkways, doorways, curb cuts, etc.) and adopt best practices to improve accessibility of campus facilities.

Purview: Buildings and Grounds, Human Resources, and Disability Access Specialist

Action 3: Making experiential learning and co-curricular opportunities accessible and known.

Purview: Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Marketing and Communications





Chestertown, Maryland

www.washcoll.edu

