

The Diversity Statement and Washington College
A “How-To” Guide for Faculty
Diversity Committee
2019

Our ethos: The Diversity Statement (shorter version)

We, the students, faculty, staff, and Board of Visitors and Governors of Washington College, 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 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.*

Guide to Include the Diversity Statement
as a Washington College Faculty Member

Disseminate

- 1) Include the diversity statement (preferably the shorter version) in your syllabi, to set the tone of your class ethos (non-discriminatory, empowering, civil). You can also include the statement in your email signature.
- 2) Devote a moment in class at the beginning of each semester to unpack the statement so everyone knows and understand our ethos and behavior expectations. Do not expect that students understand the terms or that they have been exposed to these ideas or to possible discriminatory situations.
- 3) Get acquainted with preferred names instead of the legal names of your students and allow them at the beginning of the semester to identify themselves by their preferred pronouns.
- 4) Diversify your syllabi. Assess diversity in your syllabi: How many women, non-white, LGBTQ, up-and-rising, or international scholars, among other minority groups, are represented in your syllabi vis-à-vis our historical standard (white privileged men). If your field has a predominantly white men standard, devote time in your class to discuss the lack of diversity in your field.
- 5) Advocate for the inclusion of a diversity, inclusion, equity, and social justice curricular requirement in our institution.
- 6) Learn how to identify and manage diversity-related teaching moments that can also be considered challenging or difficult situations. The CTL is continuously training us and offering written and experiential opportunities to learn about these moments. Get ahold of a set of strategies to face these situations and practice them when needed. Allow yourself to make mistakes but acknowledge them publicly and communicate that this is a process for you, too. Reiterate your commitment to pursue our shared goal. Practice makes perfect.

- 7) Allow students and colleagues (both faculty and staff) to challenge ideas and to disagree by setting the tone of disagreement as civil at all times.
- 8) Model ethical behavior by calling out injustice when needed in a civil tone and by clearly setting the limits between disagreement, freedom of speech, and hate speech (exclusion, demeaning or marginalization of individuals or groups).
- 9) Communicate effectively our shared ethos with members of the Chestertown community members, business partners, parents, and alumni.

Keep on Learning

- 10) Get trained in Safe Space to interact successfully with LGBTQ students. Continue learning by attending campus trainings on diversity or by teaching yourself about diversity-related issues on your campus, on your profession, and on your community.
- 11) Get informed about campus and off-campus support for students whose socioeconomic statuses or other identity markers (like different abilities) can prevent them to succeed equally as standard students. Provide students with campus support like the Writing and Quantitative Skills Centers, and with the Offices of Academic Skills and Disability Access. Offer support to students and advisees.
- 12) Try to understand and advocate for students, faculty, and staff whose physical or neurological abilities are different from the standard. Provide students with fair accommodations.
- 13) Check routinely your own bias (use our self-assessment questionnaire on the website). Be aware of your epistemic privilege as a faculty member.
- 14) Provide the College with your input by filling regularly the campus climate survey when needed (on the website).
- 15) Get outside of your comfort zone by exposing yourself to people who has different backgrounds than yours: a different nationality, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender expression, religion, or educational level—among other identity markers.

Spread the love

- 16) Reach out to people who may need mentoring (faculty, students, or staff) in navigating our campus culture. Do not assume that they are not struggling. Provide mentoring or ensure that diverse hires have enough mentoring to succeed in our campus.
- 17) Try to sustain a campus culture of horizontal power and collaboration. When you fail, acknowledge failure and communicate both the failure and your will to amend it and move forward.
- 18) Engage in a practice of diversity-minded hiring when participating in faculty hiring. Get trained in Unconscious Bias Hire Training. When in hiring committees, acknowledge your biases and address them. Try as strong as you can to hire diverse candidates in your field and advocate on their behalf if they are good scholars. Create pipelines with graduate institutions in order to diversify our faculty. Try as much as you can to alleviate the hurdles that a diverse hire can have in their initial acclimatization in our campus. Be honest about it.
- 19) Ensure that members from underrepresented groups are part of leadership positions and/or decision-making processes. Ensure that they are well represented across campus and not only in the usual places where they are normally represented. Advocate on their behalf if needed, and after consultation. Learn to be an ally.
- 20) Conduct ethical business when bringing speakers, and engaging with business or individuals.

- 21) Ensure that your initiatives, programs, events, and speakers are aligned to our ethos and further equity, equality, and social justice.
- 22) Support initiatives, programs, and events that aim to increase diversity, equity, and social justice: the Goldstein Program for Women in Public Affairs, the Starr Center Immigration Speaker Series, etc. Sponsor, promote, and attend their events, ask students to attend their events and be exposed to diversity-related scholarship and advocacy.
- 23) Engage with the Chestertown community and your own local community, if wanted, in furthering issues of equity, equality, inclusiveness, diversity, and social justice.

Appendix

What is *diversity*?

Diversity is a *human asset*. It signifies that any significant difference that distinguishes one individual from another is considered a *human quality to be treasured* and to be included in the social thread, instead of being considered a hurdle for human interaction and comprehension. Embracing diversity means sometimes a drastic shift on values and mindsets.¹

Diversity can be primary or secondary.² Primary diversity is foundational to the individual's identity, often anchored in visible features such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, age, or disability. Secondary diversity encompasses less visible characteristics and adds complexity to the ways in which individuals see themselves or are being seen in society. Secondary identity markers can be and are not limited to religion, educational level, cultural or geographical backgrounds, or political beliefs. Diversity can also be approached as individual and group diversity.

Diversity Vocabulary

- *Identity Markers*: characteristics used to identify a person as possessing a particular identity. They are complex and intersectional.
- *Equity*: making sure that each individual has the necessary to be successful.
- *Equality*: treating everyone in the same way, free of bias and/or discrimination.
- *Social Justice*: fair and just relations between the individual and society.
- *Inclusiveness*: including many different types of people and treating them fairly.
- *Privilege*: a set of advantages, immunities, or benefits given to individuals or groups of people who could fit into a specific social group.
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How *diversity* looks like?

A diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment is an environment where the social relations between the society and the individuals are planned to be, experienced, and perceived as *just and fair for all of them and not just a few*. This environment counts with members of underrepresented groups moving towards more and more representation. Their voices and agendas are *part of the decision-making*.³ They hold leadership positions and further the goal of equity for all. The gap between disenfranchisement and empowerment is progressively diminished. This environment is always a work-in-progress where negotiation takes place in order to better adjust their shared common goals. A diverse environment's goal proposes a better social equilibrium and furthers *a sense of both individual and social well-being*. In a diverse space there is the everyday enactment and guarantee of human rights.

Why *diversity* matters?

- It is *magnetic*, it generates role models who at their turn generate more and more diversity-embracing individuals. It improves student-professor, staff-professor, and professor-

¹ Taken from the Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2017. Wentling, R. and Palma-Rivas, N. *Diversity in the Workforce: A Literature Review*, 1997.

² Loden, M. and Rosener J., *Workforce America! Managing Employee Diversity as a Vital Resource*, 1991.

³ Aguirre, A. and Martinez R. "Leadership Practices and Diversity in Higher Education. Transitional and Transformational Frameworks, *The Journal of Leadership Studies* 8.3 (536-42), 2002.

professor relationships.⁴ It eases collaboration. It improves campus climate and people's morale. It improves people's sense of belonging (and thus our student and talent retention)⁵. Diverse students and professors who have found a diversity-supported environment have experienced less hurdles in their academic performance.

- It is *productive*, it brings creativity and innovation to your classroom. Putting at work diverse viewpoints that stem from diverse backgrounds uncover new paths in problem-solving and analysis. Diverse students and colleagues push us to think outside the box.⁶ Novel ways of thinking and working positively impacts our local, regional, and global spaces.
- It is *pragmatic*, it faces proactively the demographic changes in our nation and our globalized world.⁷ Instead of fearing difference, difference is an asset in the making of a more equitable and just future.

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.

⁴ Clayton-Pederson, A. et al. *Making a Real Difference with Diversity: A Guide to Institutional Change*. 2007.

⁵ Thomas, R. "From Affirmative Action to Affirming Diversity," *Harvard Business Review* 68.2 (1071-17), 2002. Turner, C. *Diversifying the Faculty: A Guidebook for Search Committees*, AACU, 2002. Turner, C. "Faculty of Color in the Academe: What 20 years of Literature Tells Us," *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 1.3 (139-168), 2008.

⁶ Phillip, S. K. "How Diversity Makes Us Smarter," *Scientific American*, October 2014. McLeod et al, "Ethnic Diversity and Creativity in Small Groups," *Small Group Research* 27.248, 1996. Bassett-Jones, N. "The Paradox of Diversity Management, Creativity, and Innovation," *Creative and Innovation Management* 14.2 (169-75), 2005.

⁷ Aronson, D. "Managing the Diversity Revolution," *CRJ* 6.46, 2002. Edelman, L., et al. "Diversity Rhetoric and the Managerialization of Law," *American Journal of Sociology* 106.6 (15891-641), 2001.