Southern University and A&M College
Department of Mass Communication
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan 2024-2029
Created and Adopted 2024

Introduction

The Southern University Department of Mass Communication values the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) amongst its faculty, staff and students. However, the ongoing discussions in both the nation and the state of Louisiana regarding the removal of DEI initiatives in higher education may have a huge impact on the unit's future plans. Nonetheless, both the university and the department press forward in its efforts to ensure that students and faculty are treated fairly and have equal access to all opportunities and resources regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identification, disability, socio-economic status, or national identity. Since the unit's last accreditation visit in 2018, there are three levels of support/efforts that have emerged towards achieving a more inclusive environment: Level one: The university has created an office aimed at ensuring the education and training of both faculty and students regarding the topic—The Office of Community Outreach and Inclusion (COI) under the umbrella of the Division of Student Affairs. Since 2021, the office of COI has provided workshops and/or speakers regarding the topics of diversity and inclusion. Level two: The College of Humanities and Interdisciplinary Studies (COHIS) which houses the Department of Mass Communication (amongst others) created a Diversity and Inclusion Committee in 2022 overseen by the Associate Dean. Level three includes the newly adopted diversity plan by The Department of Mass Communication. Through these three levels, led by a partnership with the university and its college, the department of Mass Communication is poised to launch the following diversity and inclusion plan:

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Plan for the Department of Mass Communication
I. Introduction
A. Purpose

The purpose of this Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Plan is to guide the Department of Mass Communication in creating a more inclusive, diverse, and equitable environment for all students, faculty, and staff. By committing to continuous improvement, this plan seeks to ensure that the department provides an environment where all individuals can thrive, contribute, and succeed.

B. Vision

The Department of Mass Communication envisions a community where diversity is not only celebrated but embedded in all aspects of our academic and professional programs. We aim to create an environment where every student, faculty, and staff member feels valued, supported, and empowered to engage with diverse ideas and experiences.

C. Guiding Principles

- **Equity**: Ensuring fair access, opportunities, and outcomes for all.
- **Inclusion**: Creating a welcoming, supportive environment for individuals from all backgrounds.
- **Accountability**: Using data and continuous feedback to measure progress and make informed adjustments.

- **Collaboration**: Engaging all Southern University members in DEI efforts through shared responsibility.

II. Organizational Commitment and Leadership

A. Leadership and Governance

- **DEI Leadership**: The **Mass Communication chair**, in collaboration with the College Dean and The Office of Community Outreach and Inclusion (COI), is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this plan.
- **DEI Compliance Officer**: A **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Compliance Officer** will be established to advise on DEI policies, monitor progress, and ensure accountability.
- **Annual DEI Report**: A **DEI Annual Report** will be created to track and communicate the Department's progress toward DEI goals.

B. Data Collection and Monitoring

Data is crucial for assessing the current state of diversity within the Department and ensuring that DEI initiatives are effective. The Department will gather both qualitative and quantitative data to track progress and guide decision-making.

Data Collection Goals:

1. **Demographic Data**: Collect and analyze data on the race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, disability status, and other characteristics of students, faculty, and staff.
2. **Climate Surveys**: Administer regular surveys to assess the campus climate, student experiences with inclusivity, and perceptions of barriers or discrimination.
3. **Retention and Graduation Data**: Track retention and graduation rates for underrepresented student groups and analyze outcomes by demographic categories.
4. **Program Effectiveness**: Collect feedback on DEI-related programs, workshops, and initiatives to assess their impact and identify areas for improvement.

III. Goals and Objectives

1. **Increase Recruitment of Diverse Students**
   - **Action**: Launch recruitment campaigns targeting non minorities, LGBTQIA+, and disabled students.
   - **Data Collection**: Track demographic data for applicants and enrollments.
   - **Metrics**: Increase enrollment of underrepresented students by 10% over the next three years.
2. **Enhance Student Retention and Success**
   - **Action**: Implement retention programs that provide mentoring, academic support, and career guidance for underrepresented students.
   - **Data Collection**: Track retention and academic progress by demographic group.
   - **Metrics**: Improve the retention rate of underrepresented students by 5% within two years.
3. **Increase Faculty and Staff Diversity**
   - **Action**: Increase efforts to recruit, hire, and retain diverse faculty and staff through targeted outreach and support.

- Data Collection: Track the diversity of applicants and hires for faculty and staff positions.
- Metrics: Increase the representation of underrepresented faculty and staff by 5% in the next three years.
4. **Create a More Inclusive Curriculum**
    - **Action**: Audit and revise the curriculum to include diverse perspectives and voices in mass communication courses.
    - **Data Collection**: Review syllabi and course offerings to assess diversity of content.
    - **Metrics**: Ensure that at least 50% of core courses include diversity-focused content.

IV. Action Strategies

A. Recruitment and Outreach
- Partner with local high schools, community colleges, and organizations that serve underrepresented communities to build pathways into the College of Mass Communication.
- Provide scholarships and financial aid targeted toward underrepresented groups.
- Attend recruitment fairs and conferences that focus on diversity and inclusion in higher education and media.

B. Retention and Support Programs
- Develop mentorship programs pairing students from underrepresented groups with faculty or industry professionals.
- Offer academic support such as tutoring, writing assistance, and career counseling tailored to the needs of diverse students.
- Create student resource centers and safe spaces that focus on mental health and wellness for underrepresented groups.

C. Faculty and Staff Development
- Provide DEI training for faculty and staff on inclusive teaching, cultural competency, and best practices in supporting diverse students.
- Establish pathways that recognize DEI contributions.
- Offer professional development opportunities that enable faculty and staff to develop culturally responsive curricula and inclusive classroom practices.

D. Curriculum and Pedagogy
- Ensure that all faculty members integrate DEI principles into their teaching materials and classroom practices.
- Expand course offerings that focus on media representations of diverse groups, media ethics, and social justice.
- Regularly evaluate and update the curriculum to reflect emerging issues in diversity, equity, and inclusion in the media landscape.

E. Campus Climate and Engagement
- Host DEI-focused events, panels, and speakers to raise awareness of issues affecting marginalized communities in the media.

- Create a forum for open dialogue on DEI issues, allowing students, faculty, and staff to engage in discussions on race, gender, social justice, and media representation.
- Establish student organizations focused on promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in media production and practice.

V. Data Collection and Evaluation Plan

A. Data Collection Methods

1. **Demographic Data**:
   - **What to Collect**: Race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, socioeconomic status, and other key demographics for students, faculty, and staff.
   - **How to Collect**: Data will be gathered during the application process for students and on hiring forms for faculty/staff.
   - **Frequency**: Annually for students; ongoing during hiring and at key touchpoints for faculty and staff.

2. **Campus Climate and Student Experience Surveys**:
   - **What to Collect**: Student perceptions of inclusivity, experiences with discrimination, access to resources, and satisfaction with DEI programs.
   - **How to Collect**: Anonymous online surveys and focus groups for students, faculty, and staff.
   - **Frequency**: Bi-annual campus-wide surveys, supplemented by focus groups every year.

3. **Retention and Graduation Rates**:
   - **What to Collect**: Retention and graduation data by race, ethnicity, gender, and other demographic categories.
   - **How to Collect**: Institutional research teams will analyze existing student data.
   - **Frequency**: Annual reporting.

4. **Program Effectiveness Feedback**:
   - **What to Collect**: Feedback on the effectiveness of DEI initiatives, workshops, events, and student support programs.
   - **How to Collect**: Surveys and interviews with participants in DEI-related programs.
   - **Frequency**: Post-event surveys and annual evaluations.

5. **Faculty and Staff Diversity**:
   - **What to Collect**: Demographic information on applicants, hires, promotions, and faculty/student interactions.
   - **How to Collect**: Human Resources data and annual faculty/staff surveys.
   - **Frequency**: Annual reporting.

VI. Accountability and Reporting

A. DEI Leadership and Compliance Officer/Committee

- The DEI Leadership Committee will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the plan, tracking progress, and providing regular updates to the College leadership.

B. Annual DEI Report

- The **annual DEI report** will summarize the outcomes of data collection efforts, assess progress toward goals, and propose adjustments to strategies as necessary.

C. Continuous Improvement
- Based on feedback and data, the DEI Committee will recommend changes to the plan, ensuring it remains dynamic and responsive to the needs of the Department.

Southern University's Americans with Disabilities Policy
https://www.subr.edu/assets/sus/officecompliance/policies/Americans-with-Disabilities-Act-Policy---9-16-23.pdf
https://www.sus.edu/page/americans-with-disabilities-act

Notice of Non-Discrimination
https://www.sus.edu/page/southern-university-notice-of-nondiscrimation

Sexual Harassment Policy
https://www.sus.edu/assets/sus/officecompliance/policies/Power-Based-Violence-Sexual-Misconduct-Policy-8-19-23.pdf