Executive Memorandum No. 34

Policy on Diversity, Access, Inclusion, and Equity

1. Policy Purpose

To promote the benefits of a diverse and inclusive system through the integration of diversity, access, inclusion, and equity strategies, activities, and procedures in the University’s core operations. All supporting policy strategies, activities, and procedures are:

- In accordance with federal and state law and policies adopted by the Board of Regents;
- To guide the institution in the successful adoption of a shared policy to drive organizational success and outcomes;
- Intended to support the University's basic values of diversity, inclusion, access, and equity;
- In alignment with academic leadership’s identified key characteristic of a great university: “Diversity is promoted and encouraged”; and
- Intended to provide a baseline and are not intended to replace comprehensive Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) strategic plans on the University of Nebraska campuses.

2. Definitions

All definitions for diversity, inclusion, access and equity, and equity-mindedness are modeled after the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) inclusive excellence core principles and definitions.

**Diversity/Diverse** – individual differences (e.g., personality, learning styles, and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, intersectionality, country of origin, and ability as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations).

**Inclusion** – the active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diverse staff, administrators, and candidates in recruitment, hiring, professional development, and all additional ways that the organization would engage with these individuals—in ways that increase awareness, visibility, contractual knowledge, and empathetic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions.

**Access and Equity** – the creation of opportunities for historically underrepresented populations to have equal access to and participation in employment, professional development, advancement, and succession opportunities that are capable of closing any attainment gap in professional success.
Equity-Mindedness – a demonstrated awareness of and willingness to address equity issues among institutional leadership, administrators, faculty, and staff.

3. Policy Goals

The goals of this policy are to:
- Foster innovation and creativity through a greater variety of problem-solving approaches, perspectives, and ideas brought by a diverse and inclusive campus environment;
- Competitively position the University as an employer of choice;
- Foster access to support the University’s statutory mission to be fully representative of all segments of the population of Nebraska;
- Foster an environment of inclusiveness;
- Employ best practices to attract diverse students, faculty, staff, and administrative leaders;
- Ensure that services are in place to support the retention of a diverse campus;
- Create a workforce reflective of the community and student population serviced; and
- Improve the retention of diverse staff and administrators.

4. Policy Scope

The following individuals share primary responsibility for implementing this policy:
- All system and campus leadership (e.g., President, Chancellors, Vice Presidents, Chief Academic Officers, Student Affairs Officers, D&I Officers, and Enrollment Managers).

5. Policy Implementation

a. Leadership

- Each campus and the Office of the President will appoint a D&I Officer. This does not preclude campuses from sharing the services of a D&I Officer.

  o The Office of the President D&I Officer will:
    - Be a senior member of the Office of the President;
    - Work closely with stakeholders across the University of Nebraska System, including but not limited to, Chief Academic Officers, Student Affairs Officers, Human Resources Directors, to evaluate inclusiveness and implement best practices related to diversity, equity, and inclusion; and
    - Support the University-wide network of D&I Officers in collaboration with the President to address University-wide D&I priorities.

  o The Campus D&I Officers will:
    - Be senior members of the campus administration, reporting directly to the Chancellor or Chief Academic Officer;
    - Work collaboratively with offices across campus including, but not limited to, the Offices of Academic Affairs, Human Resources, Enrollment Management, and Admissions, to evaluate inclusiveness and implement best practices related to diversity, equity, and

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inclusion in such areas as the recruitment and retention of students, and faculty, staff, and administrative hires; and

- Serve as part of the University-wide network of D&I Officers to support the University’s overall diversity priorities: (1) Student Recruitment and Retention; (2) Non-Faculty Recruitment and Retention; (3) Faculty Recruitment and Retention/Promotion and Tenure; (4) Campus Climate; and (5) Supplier Diversity.

b. Strategic Planning

- The Office of the President and each campus will develop and implement strategic diversity and inclusion plans that include strategies which run parallel to the University-wide D&I priorities (e.g., campus strategic enrollment management plans should include strategies to address diverse student recruitment and retention).

- Campus plans will build on existing efforts and include:
  - Campus commitments for diversity and inclusion;
  - Campus principles guiding the development and implementation of the D&I plan;
  - Student Recruitment Strategy – a student recruitment strategy that includes programs and activities that will enable the campus to enroll a student population that is increasingly representative of the diversity of its primary service region and the state as a whole;
  - Student Retention and Completion Strategy – a student retention and completion strategy that strives to increase the rate of completion for all students and close any gaps in the completion rates of students from any group when compared with the average campus completion rate and to address the challenges of students in transition (such as transfer, stop-out, international student acclimation); placement of recruitment and retention efforts is at the discretion of the campuses and may take place at the department or unit level;
  - Administrative, Faculty, and Staff Recruitment and Retention Strategy – an administrative, faculty, and staff recruitment and retention strategy that continuously improves campus efforts to increase diversity and inclusion in the following areas:
    - Recruitment, development of the prospect pool, and hiring decision-making for campus administrators, faculty, and staff. Plans should address the unique challenges of dual career couples/trailing spouse or partner relocation and ensure that candidates have the opportunity to articulate any possessed knowledge of diversity and inclusion and/or any relevance it may have in the context of higher education or concerning University strategic planning, goals, and strategies.
    - Implementation of best-practice mentoring plans and strategies tailored to the needs of diverse campus groups of faculty and staff; and
    - With support from the Office of the President, the introduction or expansion of cultural competency programming as a central aspect of the orientation program for new employees and as a regular program for all continuing employees.

- The Office of the President plan will build on existing efforts and include:
  - University-wide priorities and commitments for D&I;

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o The use of Inclusive Excellence guiding principles for the development and implementation of the D&I plan;

o A recruitment and retention strategy that includes efforts to increase diversity and inclusion in recruitment, hiring prospect pool development, and hiring decision-making; attention to the unique challenges of dual career couples/trailing partner or spouse relocation; and the implementation of best-practice mentoring plans and strategies tailored to the needs of diverse groups; and

o Cultural competency programming as a central aspect of orientation for new employees and as a regular program for all continuing employees.

c. Campus Evaluation
   • Plans will include an evaluation component to ensure that the campus is meeting its diversity and inclusion commitments and that activities designed within the overall plan are achieving their intended outcomes. The evaluation system should be aligned with the campus planning and resource allocation processes to ensure that required improvements in the diversity and inclusion plan are incorporated in the revision of the academic and financial plans.

d. Office of the President Evaluation
   • An evaluation component that ensures that the Office of the President is meeting its diversity and inclusion commitments and that activities designed within the plan are achieving their intended outcomes and that the Office of the President is providing appropriate support and guidance to campuses to assist them in advancing University-wide D&I goals. The evaluation system should be aligned to the Office of the President planning and resource allocation processes to ensure that required improvements in the diversity and inclusion plan are incorporated in the revision of the academic and financial plans.

e. Recruitment
   • The Office of the President and campuses will inquire about a search firm’s success in assuring diverse candidate pools and require the search firm to provide information about the diversity of the firm’s staff and its success rate in placing diverse candidates prior to entering into a contract with such firm.

f. D&I Professional Development
   • The Office of the President will provide resources and tools for cultural competency training. Supplemental resources and support for D&I development will be provided to campus senior leadership teams, faculty, and staff, as needed.

g. Climate Report
   • The Office of the President will administer a Climate Study to evaluate efforts to address the priorities and advance the goals and intent of its respective diversity and inclusion plans.
   • Questions on surveys administered or procured by the Office of the President will be reviewed by the President or his/her designee to ensure that questions are free from bias and provide necessary information to support diversity priorities and goals.

6. Policy Adherence

Adoption of this policy will prompt a review of University policies and practices throughout the University. To the extent that such other policies and practices conflict with this policy,
this policy shall take precedence, and such other policies and practices shall be interpreted in a manner to resolve the conflict in favor of this policy.

The President and Chancellors—in collaboration with the Office of the President D&I Officer and in consultation with the campus D&I Officers—will determine the phased implementation efforts and University-wide rollout and identify human and financial resources devoted to the policy’s implementation.

Dated this 10th day of February, 2022.

Reference: Revised February 10, 2022
August 16, 2019

Ted Carter, President

AAC&U’s vision, practice, and guiding principles are designed to help colleges and universities integrate diversity, equity, and educational quality efforts into their missions and institutional operations.

This policy was composed following a review of works by AAC&U, institutional colleagues, University of Nebraska System and campus peers, and related professional organizations, along with ideas and approaches wholly original to the University of Nebraska System.