

**A Call to Action:
Strategic Plan for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Belonging
at Central Michigan University
2023 – 2028**

PHASE ONE: 2023-2024



OFFICE FOR
**INSTITUTIONAL
DIVERSITY, EQUITY,
& INCLUSION**

CENTRAL MICHIGAN
UNIVERSITY

Introduction

Sapientia, Virtus, Amicitia — wisdom, virtue, and friendship are the words that have graced our seal since 1892. From the time of its founding, Central Michigan University has sought to provide quality, in-depth educational opportunities to those that would otherwise lack access. Embedded within the ideals of wisdom, virtue, and friendship, CMU opened its doors to diverse communities since its inception. Today, we aim to expand upon past diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and belonging (DEIJB) efforts to truly meet the nuanced needs of our students, alumni, partners, and community. Given contemporary sociopolitical contexts across the globe, it is imperative that we remain proactive in upholding our responsibility to actualize social justice and belonging as an institution of higher education. Through the work of countless institutional partners and students, this plan provides specific strategies for successfully advancing our commitment to cultivating a rich, inclusive learning environment that prioritizes belonging and social action.

At Central Michigan University, diversity is the ability to demonstrate representation of an array of identities, backgrounds, perspectives, and talents. **Diversity** work seeks to lessen homogeneity to strengthen communities, environments, and ecosystems. Diversity offers choice, options, and more equitable representation across curricula, teaching, policy, and practice. It also nurtures innovation, creativity, and a richness of experience. In turn, **equity** is a mindfulness towards ensuring that the opportunities and resources made readily available to all, are also cultivated and shared in a manner that takes context, nuance, and specificity into account.

Inclusion is the act of operationalizing diversity to ensure communities, departments, and units provide equitable opportunities for engagement to a diverse population. Diversity offers a seat at the table; inclusion ensures everyone at the table feels heard and valued. On college campuses, inclusion can emerge in the form of financial equity (e.g., opportunities for financial aid, grant funding for minoritized scholars, properly financing diversity initiatives), social diversity (e.g., relationships/mentorships built across identity, clubs and organizations providing open-access membership, affinity groups for faculty, staff, and students, sustained dialogue initiatives), curricular diversity (e.g., inclusion of critical methodologies, the use of intentional dialogue techniques, studies led by researchers of diverse backgrounds, course readings curated with purpose, the use of universal design in the classroom), and structural diversity (e.g., audio/visual accessibility, spiritual space, room décor, intentional displays in the library, gender inclusive restrooms, space for nursing caretakers, and accessible offerings that are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA]).

Justice seeks to remedy inequities which stem from systemic oppression and other social issues. From policy implementation to procedural reviews, justice targets bias, discrimination, and stratifications with intentionality and offers corrective action. It involves reflexivity, interrogation, and a willingness to invest in holistic improvements. At CMU, justice is diversity, equity, and inclusion put into practice.

Belonging makes considerations for how individuals experience day-to-day interactions with campus and the surrounding community, paying specific attention to those who are most vulnerable within the community. These considerations disrupt policy, practice, and procedures that target or exclude populations, and offers multifaceted support which takes a diverse range of needs into account. We strive for a campus culture where everyone is welcomed and appreciated. We endeavor to achieve these goals through the cultivation of more inclusive practice, curricula, teaching, programs, and policies to ensure a sense of security and belonging throughout campus.

Finally, for the purposes of this document, use of the term **minority** considers continued experiences with marginalization and oppression, even in instances where a historically underserved community reaches a numerical majority (Chase, Dowd, Bordoloi Pazich, & Bensimon, 2014).

Active engagement in DEIJB allows CMU to nurture a holistic learning environment, rich with different experiences, ideas, and modalities for involvement. Pluralistic learning and research generate a stronger appreciation for difference and fosters the open exchange of ideas and inspiration, as well as new access points for collaboration. The full implementation of diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and belonging at CMU would demonstrate a commitment to social change by affording traditionally underserved populations with a quality education, preparing all students to serve as global citizens, improving the statistical underrepresentation of minoritized folx in critical fields of study, and utilizing cutting-edge research to address societal needs.

Articulation of Goals

This plan centers three primary goals. Each goal is organized by three priorities to make them accessible, realistic, and achievable.

1. Equalize Graduation Rates

- a. Enhance opportunities for holistic development and socialization among Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) students.
- b. Decrease stratifications persisting between White students and BIPOC students.
- c. Reduce curricular/co-curricular challenges contributing to gaps in BIPOC student graduation rates.

2. Diversify Faculty and Staff

- a. Attract, recruit, and hire diverse faculty and staff.
- b. Increase faculty and staff understanding of contexts related to diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and belonging.
- c. Sustain diversity and equity amongst faculty and staff across units.

3. Foster a More Inclusive Community

- a. Embed a focus on DEIJB within CMU's mission, core strategies, and operations.
- b. Create a culture that allows all to thrive.
- c. Cultivate an inclusive, welcoming community off-campus.

EQUALIZE GRADUATION RATES

Goal 1.1: Enhance Opportunities for Holistic, Intersectional Development and Socialization Among BIPOC Students.

Objective: Remove or reduce barriers for BIPOC students to engage in growth and development on and off campus.

Strategies/Tasks:

- **Explore opportunities to expand pathway programs focused on transitioning BIPOC/First-Generation students to campus and throughout their next four years.**
 - Examine how existing initiatives could be restructured to provide additional support to intentional pathway interventions.
- Design and implement structured mentoring and socialization programs.
- Review capital plan to enable structural diversity in future planning.

Expected Outcomes:

- Increased availability of holistic development and socialization opportunities for BIPOC students.
- Improved demonstration of structural diversity on and off campus.
- Increased engagement among BIPOC students in educational opportunities available on and off campus.
- Increased feelings of inclusion, belonging, and representation.

Goal 1.2: Decrease Stratifications Persisting Between White Students and Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) Students

Objective: Identify and address financial barriers that prohibit BIPOC students from graduating within 4 years.

Strategies/Tasks:

- Analyze potential financial disparities disproportionately impacting BIPOC students.

Expected Outcomes:

- Identification of barriers prohibiting BIPOC students from graduating within 4 years.
- Established social justice approach to eliminating barriers to student success.
- Increased access among BIPOC students to resources contributing to student success.
- Decreased gaps in graduation rates between White students and BIPOC students.
- Advancement of CMU's commitment to demonstrating rigor, relevance, and excellence.

Goal 1.3: Reduce Curricular/Co-Curricular Challenges Contributing to Gaps in BIPOC Student Graduation Rates

Objective: Encourage use of inclusive practice and teaching strategies that support BIPOC student access, persistence, and graduation.

Strategies/Tasks:

- See Goal 3.2 (2023-2024) regarding identifying/implementing culturally responsive assessment tool.

Expected Outcomes:

- Decreased curricular/co-curricular challenges contributing to gaps in BIPOC student graduation rates.
- Increased awareness of culturally informed pedagogy and praxis among faculty and staff.
- Increased implementation of culturally informed pedagogy and praxis.
- Increased feelings of inclusion and belonging among BIPOC students.

DIVERSIFY FACULTY & STAFF

Goal 2.1: Attract, Recruit, and Hire Diverse Faculty & Staff

Objective: Enhance recruitment and onboarding processes to nurture a sense of community and belonging.

Strategies/Tasks:

- Explore how to incorporate Diversity Advocate (DA) training into staff hiring processes.
- Expand existing Diversity Advocate training across disciplines and functional areas for faculty searches.
- Each university department/unit explore and recommend ways to improve departmental new employee onboarding and socialization processes to nurture a sense of community and belonging.

Expected Outcomes:

- Increased number of minority-identified faculty and staff across units.
- Enhanced institutionalization of culturally significant recruitment and retention techniques.
- Enhanced feelings of inclusion and belonging.
- Enhanced student experience, particularly in the areas of curricular, pedagogical, and praxis development, as well as representation.

Goal 2.2: Retain Diverse Faculty and Staff

Objective: Sustain diversity amongst faculty and staff across units.

Strategies/Tasks:

- Explore and recommend pathway programs to prepare current faculty and staff for leadership positions.
- Establish/re-establish affinity associations.

Expected Outcomes:

- Sustained diversification of faculty and staff across units.
- Enhanced student experience, particularly in the areas of curricular, pedagogical, and praxis development, as well as representation.
- Enhanced feelings of inclusion and belonging.
- Advancement of CMU's commitment to demonstrating rigor, relevance, and excellence.

Goal 2.3: Advance Central Michigan University's Commitment as an Equitable and Inclusive Community

Objective: Increase faculty and staff understanding of contexts related to diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and belonging.

Strategies/Tasks:

- Develop comprehensive DEIJB professional development using diverse modalities to support faculty and staff participation.
- Design protocols to measure impact of faculty/staff learning upon the student experience.
- Consider an appropriate form of recognition to encourage faculty and staff attendance (e.g., certificate that could be included in RPT materials for faculty or something similar for staff to demonstrate their increased competence in this area).

Expected Outcomes:

- Increased faculty and staff understanding of contexts related to diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and belonging.
- Enhanced awareness of historical and contemporary DEIJB concepts and contexts.
- Improved campus climate and culture.
- Decreased instances of discrimination and harm caused by university personnel.

FOSTER A MORE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

Goal 3.1: Embed Focus on DEIJB within CMU’s Mission, Core Strategies, and Operations

Objective: Create and sustain an organizational environment that acknowledges and celebrates diversity and employs inclusive practices throughout its daily operations. This dimension refers to the objectives and strategies that enable the institution to create a supportive climate, where differing perspectives and experiences are valued.

Strategies/Tasks:

- Develop centralized structure for units to promote DEIJB-specific community engagement.
- Explore professional development opportunities that will enhance Board of Trustees/Administrative/Senior Officer proficiency related to DEIJB issues.

Expected Outcomes:

- Increased focus on DEIJB within CMU’s mission, core strategies, and operations.
- Institutionalized commitment to accomplishing CMU’s DEIJB objectives.
- Institutionalized accountability for accomplishing CMU’s DEIJB objectives.
- Enhanced DEIJB skill sets among CMU leadership.

Goal 3.2: Cultivate an inclusive and psychologically safe educational environment.

Objective: Institute consistent climate review and assessment practices.

Strategies/Tasks:

- Finalize selection of culturally significant assessment instrument.

Expected Outcomes:

- Increased feelings of safety.
- Increased feelings of inclusion and belonging.
- Decreased instances of retaliation, intimidation, and harassment.

Goal 3.3: Cultivate an Inclusive, Welcoming Community Off-Campus

Objective: Engage the City of Mount Pleasant, Isabella County, Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribal citizens, Detroit, Southfield, Troy, Lansing, Grand Rapids, Fort Belvoir, Lansing Community College, Macomb Community College, Northwestern Michigan College, and community organizations to surface and discuss DEIJB needs.

Strategies/Tasks:

- Work alongside community partners to explore contemporary DEIJB needs.

- Review CMU capital plan in alignment with the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe and other community-level capital plans to enable structural diversity in future planning.

Expected Outcomes:

- Increased collaboration with community partners in attending to DEIJB needs.
- Increased engagement among BIPOC students in educational opportunities available on and off campus.
- Increased feelings of inclusion, belonging, and representation.