

## A Diversity and Inclusion Plan, 2016-2021

There Is a Home for  
You at Ferris State  
University



## Preface

Woodbridge Nathan Ferris, the founder of our institution, is credited with saying, “My plea in Michigan—and it will be my plea to the last breath I draw, and the last word I speak—is education for all children, all men, and all women of Michigan, all the people in all our states all the time.” This was his vision; it is our mandate.

We value diversity. We recognize that the myriad of ways in which we differ—our races, our ethnicities, our genders, our gender identities, our sexual orientations, our ages, our social classes, our physical abilities, our faiths and ethical values systems, our national origins, and our political beliefs—offer a richness that enhances the university.

We value inclusion, meaning, proactive behaviors that make each person feel welcome and empowered—those who are rich, those who are middle-class, and those who are poor; people of all religions and people with no religion; people of all colors and histories and people who are a mixture of many; conservatives, moderates, liberals; people of all genders and sexual orientations; people with physical, mental, and emotional challenges who choose to study at our campuses and online; and people who learn in traditional ways and people who don’t. An inclusive Ferris is a community where all those people and others believe that the University belongs to them as much as it belongs to others. This is the Ferris we are creating.



## Introduction and Background

In President David Eisler's speech, "A Vision for Ferris and Its Future," given on April 15, 2004, the President stated:

"Our society is one that is global, connected, and diverse and our efforts must help foster understanding, tolerance, and acceptance of differences in ethnicity, culture, religion, preference and abilities. We must look within and honestly assess how we are fulfilling our role as an academy that both values and embraces diversity as it relates to students, faculty, staff, curriculum and values. As part of this commitment we need to reexamine our approaches to the recruitment and retention of faculty, staff and students, and determine how we can create a truly diverse campus. In short we must become the model we hope our students will become."

In January 2007, the Ferris State University Diversity Office was created and David Pilgrim, a Professor of Sociology, was hired as Chief Diversity Officer—now, Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion. That same month, Dr. Pilgrim established a university-wide Diversity Planning Committee (DPC) charged with creating a well-thought out and realistic plan to guide Ferris State University's diversity efforts. On March 21, 2008, the plan produced by the DPC was presented before and approved by the Ferris State University Board of Trustees.

The University's Diversity Plan had four major goals: 1) Create a university that is welcoming to diverse populations; 2) Recruit, retain, and graduate a diverse student population; 3) Hire and retain a diverse workforce; and 4) Create environments for student learning that are inclusive of and sensitive to diverse student populations.

## Assessment of Current Environment

Each year, from 2008-2013, the Diversity and Inclusion Office produced an annual assessment document (*Diversity at Ferris*) which monitored the university's progress toward implementing the initiatives in the original diversity plan.<sup>1</sup> By the end of 2013, it was apparent that there had been progress toward implementing many of the

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<sup>1</sup> To see the *Diversity at Ferris* reports, visit <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/president/DiversityOffice/reports.htm>.

initiatives in the original plan—and, this progress created new challenges and opportunities. For example, the number of students who self-identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, International, or Hispanic/Latino increased from 12.431 percent in 2007 to 15.114 percent in 2013. And, if students who identified as Two or More Races were included,<sup>2</sup> then the percentage of students from underrepresented groups rose to 17.82 percent in 2013.<sup>3</sup> This represented a significant change in the demographics of the Ferris student body and became one of the



compelling reasons for creating a new plan—one that went beyond a focus on increasing the number of students, for example, to a plan that identifies strategies to make sure that all student groups are welcome and that there are academic and social resources in place to increase the likelihood that students are successful.

A team composed of scholars from Ibis Consulting Group and Creative Diversity Solutions was hired to perform a diversity audit at Ferris during the 2014-2015 academic year. The audit consisted of interviews, focus groups, a climate survey, and a review of University data. The Report of Findings and Recommendations produced by the auditors is available at

<http://ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/president/DiversityOffice/pdf/FerrisAuditReportfinal060315.pdf>.

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<sup>2</sup> The category Two or More Races was not tracked by Ferris until 2009.

<sup>3</sup> In 2014 the number of students self-identifying as being in one of the underrepresented groups increased to 18.75 percent.

The audit report was useful to the Diversity and Inclusion Planning Work Group which prepared this document, *There Is a Home for You at Ferris State University: A Diversity and Inclusion Plan, 2015-2020*.

## Timeline for Developing Diversity and Inclusion Plan

March 2014	Ibis Consulting Group and Creative Diversity Solutions hired to perform a diversity audit at Ferris.
July-Sept. 2014	Ibis Consulting Group and Creative Diversity Solutions receive documents from the University (e.g. Diversity at Ferris reports, Strategic Plan, Fact book, and various dignity policies).
October 7, 2014	Consultants from Ibis Consulting Group and Creative Diversity Solutions met with a cross-divisional group to discuss the survey process.
December 3-4, 2014	Consultants from Ibis Consulting Group and Creative Diversity conduct one-to-one interviews and focus groups on campus.
February 18-19, 2015	Consultants from Ibis Consulting Group and Creative Diversity conduct one-to-one interviews and focus groups on campus.
March 16-April 3, 2015	All students, faculty, and staff invited to complete the Diversity and Inclusion Climate Survey.
April 2015	A cross-divisional team assembled to assist the Diversity and Inclusion Office with drafting the Diversity and Inclusion Plan.
June 4, 2015	Consultants from Ibis Consulting Group and Creative Diversity return to the University to discuss the survey's findings with a cross-divisional group and other interested people.
August-November 2015	A series of campus-wide meetings held to discuss the survey's results and the creation of the diversity and inclusion plan.
November-Dec. 2015	Diversity and Inclusion Plan created.

## Diversity and Inclusion Planning Work Group

Although the Diversity and Inclusion Office had the primary responsibility for writing the new Diversity and Inclusion Plan, the plan was created through the intense work of the Diversity and Inclusion Planning Work Group. The members of that workgroup were:

Matthew Adeyanju, Dean of the College of Health Professions  
 Julie Alexander, Educational Counselor, Educational Counseling & Disability Services  
 Tony Baker, Professor, Sociology  
 Mike Berghoef, Professor, Social Work  
 Peter Bradley, Director, Honors Program  
 Sandy Britton, Dean of Student Success, Kendall College of Art and Design  
 Tracy Busch, Assistant Professor, History  
 Natalia Carvalho-Pinto, Advisor, College of Health Professions  
 Matt Chaney, Director, Office of Multicultural Student Services  
 Leigha Compson, University Career Programs Specialist  
 Jessica Cruz, Executive Director, Center for Latin@ Studies  
 Samri Dave, International Student Organization  
 Donna Ewigleben, Extended & International Operations  
 Kemi Fadayomi, Professor, Biology  
 Jody Gardei, Manager, Staff Center for Training & Development  
 Sandy Gholston, Manager, News Services/Social Media  
 Thomas Gladney III, Student Government Representative  
 Greg Gogolin, Professor, Accounting, Finance & Information Systems  
 Tamie Grunow, Associate Vice President, Human Resources  
 Scott Herron, Professor, Biology  
 Franklin Hughes, Media Specialist, Diversity and Inclusion Office  
 Jimmie Joseph, Assistant Professor, Accounting, Finance & Information Systems  
 Melissa Klinger, President, Panhellenic Council  
 Sheila MacEachron, Associate Professor, Nuclear Medicine Technology  
 Brooke Moore, Coordinator of First-Year Seminars  
 Vivian Nazar, Professor, Accounting, Finance & Information Systems  
 Matt Olovson, Director of Equal Opportunity/Staff Attorney  
 Lisa Ortiz, Assistant Director of Residential Programs and Services  
 Tamira Owens, Student President, Black Greek Council  
 Victor Piercey, Associate Professor, Mathematics  
 David Pilgrim, Vice President, Diversity and Inclusion  
 Bill Potter, Associate Provost, Retention and Student Success  
 Piram Prakasam, Executive Director, Office of International Education  
 Fran Rosen, Librarian/Associate Professor  
 Kristen Salomonson, Dean, Enrollment Services  
 Todd Stanislav, Director, Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning  
 Mischelle Stone, Associate Professor, Social Work  
 Patty Terryn, Administrative Assistant, Diversity and Inclusion Office  
 Spence Tower, Associate Professor, Management Department  
 Thong Tran, International Student Organization  
 Michael Wade, Assistant Director, Office of Multicultural Student Services  
 Leroy Wright, Dean of Student Life

## Definition of Diversity

Diversity is the range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, and political beliefs.



## Definition of Inclusion

Inclusion is involvement and empowerment, where the inherent worth and dignity of all people are recognized. An inclusive university promotes and sustains a sense of belonging; it values and practices respect for the talents, beliefs, backgrounds, and ways of living of its members.

## Progress

In 2012 Ferris State University's continuing efforts to strengthen diversity and inclusion on campus received national recognition from *INSIGHT Into Diversity* magazine. The award is designed for colleges, universities and school systems that showcase top-notch efforts and successes in diversity and inclusion among its community of students, faculty, staff and vendors. Ferris was noted for rebuilding the Jim Crow Museum, creating the Center for Latin@ Studies, increasing the number of international students, and its work with the Tuition Incentive Program. In the years since receiving the award the University has continued to implement initiatives that move the University toward becoming a truly diverse and inclusive institution and community. The Diversity and Inclusion Planning Work Group acknowledges the importance of the following initiatives and encourages the University to continue—and in some instances—expand the work.

- A. Employ aggressive recruitment efforts to recruit students from historically underrepresented groups.
- B. Redouble efforts to increase diversity in the Honors Program, with the goal of having the Honors Program mirror the diversity of the eligible student population.
- C. Continue to evaluate courses with high D-W-F rates and work to improve student success through changes in pedagogy and other measures, such as support services, class size, remedial or preparatory classes, summer institutes, and relationships with secondary schools.
- D. Continue to allocate funding to advertise in publications widely read by underrepresented groups.
- E. Have search chairpersons meet with either the Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion or Director of Equal Opportunity *early* in search process.
- F. Strengthen existing collaborations and build new partnerships with the communities that surround Ferris campuses.



## Recommendations

*There is a Home for You at Ferris State University* is a diversity and inclusion plan created by many people at the University. The initiatives in this document grew out of a yearlong assessment which included 1) a diversity audit conducted by Ibis Consulting; 2) the deliberations of a university-wide planning group; and, 3) discussions between the Diversity and Inclusion Office and individuals and groups at the University. It is a living document. When opportunities for new initiatives arise, those opportunities should be seized. Individual recommendations listed in this plan will be implemented as soon as possible; the entire plan will be implemented by May 31, 2021.

The members of the Diversity and Inclusion Planning Work Group are mindful that all universities are charged with the responsibility of being good stewards of their human and financial resources. For this reason the Work Group sought to identify and offer many recommendations that focus on *changing the way we work* rather than ones that require large financial expenditures. Nevertheless, it is the consensus belief of the Work Group that the commitment to transforming into a truly diverse and inclusive university must include a commitment to funding new initiatives and staff positions—particularly, additional staffing in those areas of the University that do much of the diversity and inclusion work. As the University continues to diversify, this need for additional staffing will become more acute.

### **Goal 1: Create a University that is respectful of differences and civil toward people who are different**

Diversity is embedded in much of the daily functioning of the institution. A great deal of work has been done to ensure that members of the university community are educated about the challenges and opportunities of building and maintaining a truly diverse and inclusive institution. However, the diversity audit found that members of the community experience Ferris differently. A significant number of persons from underrepresented groups, persons not from the United States, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQ persons expressed that they feel less welcome at the university. In addition, when asked to list the "top two challenges for promoting diversity and inclusion at Ferris," students, faculty, and staff all listed as number one: "Creating more opportunities for interaction among people from different identity groups." Another

challenge, "Promoting understanding and skills to relate to people who are different," was also highly ranked.

- A. Offer "Respectful Workplace" program to all faculty and staff.
- B. Provide diversity and anti-bias training annually for Residence Advisors, Student Government, and leaders of Registered Student Organizations.
- C. Institute ongoing university-wide climate studies to frame and direct future action on diversity and inclusion.
- D. Make faculty and staff more aware of accommodations for students and employees who are religious and individuals with disabilities.
- E. Identify best practices for handling food in ways inclusive of medical, religious, ethnic, and philosophical concerns.
- F. Investigate the need for and logistics of relocating the Educational Counseling and Disabilities Services Office.
- G. Designate some single-stall restrooms as gender neutral.
- H. Display art with diversity and inclusion themes across the campus.
- I. Investigate current support for mothers (faculty, staff, and students) who are nursing and identify space and resources for a lactation room.

## **Goal 2: Build and maintain an infrastructure that supports diversity and promotes inclusion**

During the diversity audit many people expressed their feeling that "this is a different Ferris," that Ferris has become much more diverse and inclusive over the past several years. The University should be proud of this progress. But there is also a broad recognition that to continue to move forward and to meet new challenges, Ferris must develop an institutional infrastructure to sustain diversity and inclusion work. The entire Ferris community is charged to support diversity and promote inclusion; within that individual members contribute in many ways. Strengthening leadership, communication, accountability and opportunities for collaboration will strengthen diversity and inclusion work across all Ferris campuses.

- A. Establish a university-wide Diversity and Inclusion Work Group to sustain diversity and inclusion initiatives and support the implementation of the diversity and inclusion plan.
- B. Establish a Multicultural Student Advisory Group to provide informal counsel to the Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion on various issues affecting the undergraduate experience. This group acts as a sounding board, provides constructive feedback, and identifies issues needing attention.
- C. Reallocate a faculty member to the Diversity and Inclusion Office (DIO) to serve as a liaison to that Office and the diversity work teams in divisions and colleges.
- D. Each division should designate a person to work with the DIO Office. This person should be a part of that division's diversity work team.
- E. Designate spaces for individuals to pray, contemplate, meditate.
- F. Create an LGBTQ Resource Center.
- G. Enhance the physical and technological infrastructure to provide accessibility for all University members.

### **Goal 3: Recruit, retain, and graduate a diverse student population**

There has been a significant racial and ethnic diversification of the Ferris student body in the past 8 years. The number of students who identify as one of the racial and ethnic groups that we count has increased by 1,310 since 2007. They are now at least 20.38 percent of the student body. We are challenged to sustain these numbers and to augment our efforts to support these students. These efforts will enhance the experiences of all members of the Ferris community.

- A. High-quality training will be provided for professionals who work in Student Services and in other areas of the university that focus on students.
- B. Establish and market processes and resources for translation of key marketing materials into Spanish (print and online). Explore other critical language/translation needs.
- C. Create a Center of Academic Literacies.

- D. In each college someone should be charged with monitoring the achievement gaps in the college.
- E. Strengthen the academic resources in the Office of Multicultural Student Services (OMSS) and foster a stronger collaboration between OMSS, colleges, and faculty to create intentional learning opportunities for students.
- F. Assess the academic and social needs of homeless students enrolled at the University.

#### **Goal 4: Recruit, employ, and retain a diverse workforce**

Hiring and retaining a diverse workforce remains one of the most difficult diversity-related challenges at the University. The University often ranks at or near the bottom among the state's 15 public 4-year institutions in this area. Ferris has made a modest amount of progress; however, greater headway will result from this goal being seen as a major priority throughout the institution.

- A. Develop a clear and consistent message to faculty, staff, and administration that having a diverse workforce is an institutional priority and that efforts to create and maintain an inclusive campus community include faculty, staff, and administrators as well as students.
- B. Have divisions, in cooperation with the Diversity and Inclusion Office, develop plans for increasing diversity of workforce.
- C. In each division someone should be designated who is charged with monitoring diversity in employment pools and hires.
- D. Develop a University-wide mechanism for the sharing and coordinating of effective recruiting strategies and best practices, focused on underrepresented faculty and staff.
- E. Evaluate current support efforts specifically focused on underrepresented faculty and staff, and add mechanisms as needed (e.g. targeted orientation and onboarding programming, mentoring, and Affinity Groups, etc.).
- F. Find and create opportunities for career advancement and professional development of women and members of underrepresented groups who are

employed as Ferris State University faculty and staff, such as succession planning, job shadowing, interim appointments, and mentoring.

- G. Establish mentoring and other support systems for faculty in tenure process, particularly faculty from underrepresented groups.

### **Goal 5: Improve inclusivity by incorporating diversity and inclusion in significant ways in teaching, learning, and research**

A faculty member teaching at Ferris in 2015 is greeted by a student body that looks very different from the student body in 2007. This faculty member is more likely to notice students of color, Muslim students, and LGBTQ students, and is also more likely to understand that there are many other differences that are not visible. Faculty must be encouraged, given learning opportunities, and provided with adequate resources to improve inclusivity in their classes and in their scholarly work.

- A. Host State of Michigan Equity in the Classroom Conference in 2017.
- B. Host an Institute to teach faculty and staff how to implement a Difficult Dialogues program.
- C. Develop an online resource to share successful inclusive teaching and assessment strategies.
- D. Create a Diversity and Inclusion Certificate program which will create opportunities for faculty and staff to explore topics related to diversity and inclusion.
- E. Develop applied research opportunities in collaboration with university partners to provide meaningful undergraduate research opportunities based in diverse communities.

### **Goal 6: Build upon existing partnerships and create new partnerships that enhance the University's commitment to and work with diverse populations**

Collaboration is one of the university's core values, and developing and growing partnerships is a key component of the university's mission. These partnerships are part of creating a truly diverse and inclusive university. They provide faculty, staff, and

students with the opportunity to engage with different communities, and they bring people from those communities to Ferris. They make it possible for Ferris to work with others to support student success across the state, at all of our campuses and within all of our cohorts.

- A. Enhance partnerships with local organizations to provide information and community resource materials to new faculty, administrators, and staff that may address the needs of potential employees (e.g., employment opportunities in region for spouse/partner, housing, religious organizations, social integration in the region).
- B. Collaborate with Grand Rapids area universities to provide student services, such as financial aid advising, social service supports, financial supports, mentoring, access to on-line resources for summer courses, re-admission advising, and other services as needed to area youth.
- C. Develop meaningful relationships with tribal nations, tribal community colleges, and other tribal and Indigenous organizations in Michigan and the greater Great Lakes region to determine how we can best collaborate.
- D. Develop an Academic Center for Rural Health to address underserved populations while providing educational opportunities.
- E. Create ways to intentionally bring students, including students from underrepresented groups and international students, and local community people together.

## Final Words

Diversity is not a problem to be solved but rather an opportunity to be pursued. And, this only occurs when diversity is paired with a commitment to inclusion. The future of Ferris is intricately connected to its will and efforts to infuse diversity and inclusion throughout the institution in university-wide plans, in divisional plans, and in the plans produced by academic colleges and departments.

The initiatives in this plan will be addressed, but the work of transforming an institution's culture is constant and continual, evolving but never ending. There will be vehicles for sustained dialogue about diversity and inclusion, and, there will be systems in place for information-sharing, assessment, and accountability. The implementation of the initiatives in this plan will not, in and of itself, lead to a meaningful and permanent change to the culture of the University—that will only occur when individuals and groups recognize the extent to which their lives are enriched by living in a community that has made diversity and inclusion a high priority.

