

**KENDALL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN OF FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY  
REPORT on DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION  
FOR THE *DIVERSITY AT FERRIS ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020***

**INTRODUCTION**

Kendall College of Art and Design of Ferris State University (KCAD) is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion and works to provide an environment that is welcoming to diverse populations; a curriculum that reflects cultural diversity; as well as diversity in expression; and programming that is inclusive and innovative in its content, intent, and ideas. KCAD's approach to diversity is to reach inward to the KCAD community and curriculum, while reaching outward with community outreach, industry partnerships, and programming.

**What actions were taken to address/implement initiatives that are in the current diversity and inclusion plan?**

One of the standing committees of the KCAD Senate is the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (DEI). The charge is to "Identify KCAD's challenges and strengths in achieving and relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Recommend structures, initiatives, and policies relevant to supporting, educating, and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. Monitor and report on diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives." KCAD seeks to develop community and industry partnerships and sponsorships that connect the college to the City of Grand Rapids and the diverse communities of West Michigan.

The DEI Committee this academic year worked on a number of initiatives. This included a student survey conducted in January 2020 that had 67 student, 2 faculty, and 2 staff members respond. The findings indicate that KCAD students believe that the most important issues of diversity are race/racism, then LGBTQ+, followed by socio-economic class. The sample also suggested that the KCAD community is best at addressing issues relevant to the LGBTQ+ community, but requires significant work addressing issues of class. The cultural climate has shifted since the survey was conducted, and KCAD recognizes that there is work to be done around racial equity on our campus and in the community. Supporting these findings, the DEI has worked with Ferris State University's LGBTQ+ Resource Center and developed and shared with the KCAD community guidelines outlined how to best ask students about their names and gender pronouns and how to handle situations of misnaming and misgendering with students. KCAD also worked with the FSU LGBTQ+ Resource Center to participate in the 2020 Lavender Graduation ceremony. This was originally planned to be hosted at KCAD, but was moved to a remote delivery, impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The DEI Committee also brought forward the need to designate gender neutral restrooms on campus. The facilities team has been doing the research and has made recommendations. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, this initiative will continue into the 2020-2021 academic year.

These actions support the current *Ferris State University Diversity and Inclusion Plan* goal of building and maintaining an infrastructure that supports diversity and promotes inclusion.

The KCAD Fed Galleries worked in partnership with the Ferris State University's Museum of Sexist Objects (MoSO) and held the show, *Selling Sexism*. Alongside these objects from the MoSO collection, five contemporary artists work examined and questioned the outcomes of sexist attitudes and actions within their own practices. Whether the focus is power, faith, race, or queerness, each artist grapples with the complexities and nuances of sexist tropes to challenge the politics of gender. This show was integrated into the curriculum in Cultural Studies, Art History, Sculpture and Functional Arts, Drawing, and Collaborative Design courses. This exhibition ran from November 5, 2019 – January 25, 2020 and hosted 979 visitors.

The UICA held two shows in the spring of 2020 that explored the current experience of black men and women in America. The first show, *Translating Valence* propagates ideas regarding black masculinity that lie in conjunction with, and opposition to, widely held historical and stereotypical beliefs. The complementary show, *A Beautiful Struggle* explored the integration of Black feminist and Afrofuturist ideas. *A Beautiful Struggle* was supported with a National Endowment for the Arts grant that was matched by the Frey Foundation, Steelcase, and the Wege Foundation. The exhibition dates for these shows were impacted with the building closure on March 16, related to the COVID 19 pandemic, but these shows demonstrate the commitment to celebrate diversity in the arts by the UICA and the Grand Rapids community.

At the beginning of the spring 2020 semester, faculty were welcomed to a training, *Creating an Accessible Syllabus*, led by the Ferris State University Staff center. Later that same day, a presentation and facilitated conversation was held with the KCAD Director of Counseling and Disability Services on identifying at risk students and best practices on working with student accommodations. This was an overview and identified processes and resources to support our students and our faculty. Bringing this awareness to the KCAD community is an effort to bring equity to our population by understanding our resources and how and when to use them.

These actions support the current *Ferris State University Diversity and Inclusion Plan* goal of creating a university that is respectful of differences and civil towards people who are different.

In the fall of 2019, KCAD continued the partnership with SiteStudio and worked with KCAD Industrial Design students, Herman Miller professionals, and Grand Rapids Public School children at Southwest Community Campus to use design thinking to create a solution for a play area for the Children's Healing Center. A second project was completed in the spring 2020 semester to design a playground for the children at the Southwest Community Campus school. This initiative exposes the design process and opportunities to an underrepresented population through a hands-on, student-lead design that is then brought to life and realized as a solution.

Wege Prize 2020 brought together critical minds from across the globe to collaboratively design and propose a product, service, business/nonprofit organization, or other solution to a wicked problem that can help transition from a linear economic model to a circular economic model.

This year's competition saw 29 teams from 25 different countries participate. Transdisciplinary teams of five students pitched ideas and competed for \$30,000 in prize monies. With the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Executive Order to Stay Home, Stay Safe in Michigan, this year's Wege Prize went to a completely remote delivery for the final presentations and judging. This effort substantially reduced the carbon footprint of the competition, as teams and judges have traditionally traveled to Grand Rapids in the past years. The live stream event had 710 unique viewers from 23 countries. The ability to share in this event across the globe, and address wicked problems regional to the students is an impactful learning experience and the opportunity for students to learn from each other around the globe is a unique opportunity.

These actions support the current *Ferris State University Diversity and Inclusion Plan* goal of building upon existing partnerships and creating new partnerships that enhance the University's commitment to and work with diverse populations.

**What are the major diversity and inclusion challenges KCAD is facing? And what needs to be done to address those challenges?**

An education in art or design has traditionally been perceived as a privilege. This is the opportunity to be a part of a cultural shift that will be led by creative thinkers. Design is about making things better. Improving process, product, function, and experience. Fine art is the visual narrative of our humanity. KCAD has the opportunity to promote and celebrate the diverse response and connection to our world. In order to do this effectively, the experiences and knowledge from the community at large will be brought in to advise and inform policy, procedure, and practice at KCAD.

KCAD is committed to listening and learning from our students. We are committed to exploring and promoting diverse perspectives in our community. The next academic year will see change in our programming, opportunities, and culture as we support the shift to a more just and equitable future.