

# Diversity Plan for Northwestern Oklahoma State University 2022-2027

## **Introduction**

Northwestern Oklahoma State University's Diversity Plan is reviewed annually. The Diversity Program at NWOSU is a critical component of all aspects of university life. The plan provides guidance to university community members about crucial diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and strategic directions.

A dynamic diversity program is essential to Northwestern's pursuit of excellence. As the ethical landscape continues to evolve, the Northwestern community has responded with a proactive approach to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion on its three campuses, as evidenced by its mission statement

"Northwestern Oklahoma State University provides quality educational and cultural opportunities to learners with diverse needs by cultivating ethical leadership and service, critical thinking, and fiscal responsibility." Furthermore, students, faculty, staff, administrators, and stakeholders realize that a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) program involves valuing individual differences in beliefs, opinions, and cultural background and treating each individual respectfully.

Diversity is the presence and valued participation of individuals who differ and are similar in various characteristics. These characteristics include race, ethnicity, age, gender identity or expression, national origin, human capacity, community affiliation, religious and spiritual identity, veteran status, sexual orientation and identity, and socio-economic status. This definition academically, socially, individually, and economically guides the institutional climate. The Northwestern community considers diversity, equity, and inclusion an indispensable component of academic and personal excellence. Northwestern embraces the concept that a diverse learning environment fosters a broad and rich civic learning and engagement process, which prepares individuals for success in an evolving global environment.

## **Institutional Strategic Directives: University-wide activities continue to encourage diversity engagement and adhere to the University's strategic directives. These activities are primarily being done or facilitated by the Department Chairs, the Departments of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness, and Student Services.**

- Faculty and staff will design and improve curricular and co-curricular program content to ensure student learning.
- Faculty and staff will ensure that advisement methods support student retention and degree completion.
- Academic programs will collate and analyze data to improve student learning, content relevancy, and advisement strategies.
- Academic programs will strengthen outreach and recruitment to underserved populations.
- Professional Development programs will ensure opportunities for continual growth for faculty and staff.

## **NWOSU's Most Relevant Strategic Plans related to the Diversity Committee's Purpose**

### **NWOSU Strategic Direction 2**

**Goal 3:** Provide an environment that fosters and embraces an appreciation for human diversity.

- Offer academic experiences and other opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse campus
- Ensure that hiring practices are inclusive and foster diversity within our faculty and staff
- Create a campus culture that is inclusive of all students and employees
- Provide learning experiences and professional development for students and employees that enhance the understanding of diversity

### **NWOSU Strategic Direction 4**

**Goal 4:** Enhance services to better meet the needs of a diverse population.

- Provide services and opportunities to support a diverse faculty and staff
- Seek opportunities to assist first-generation and low-income students
- Improve technology that will help meet ADA accommodations for students
- Identify and address the unique needs of various student populations

## **Institutional Diversity Goals**

The Diversity Committee continues to focus on enhancing and addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion issues within the institutional framework. The committee's mandate will encourage the push for goals to drive specific diversity, equity, and inclusion-related initiatives for the coming five years. These goals include the following:

- Continue to support underrepresented groups at Northwestern's multi-campus system through technology, quality communications, supportive services and programs, and the removal of barriers to access and affordability.
- Work to increase the number of qualified minority staff and faculty campus-wide;
- Provide opportunities in each administrative and academic unit to engage students and educate faculty and staff about issues of globalization and human diversity;
- Encourage all Faculty search committees to request a statement on diversity, equity, and inclusion from future faculty applicants.
- Encourage DEI practicum developmental activities to attain or recruit two to three faculty members with a DEI certification in the next five years.
- Improve the institution's ability to accurately track the changing demographic characteristics of students, faculty, and staff.
- Generate a listing reflected in future NWOSU catalogs of DEI-designated courses.

## **Institutional Diversity Initiatives**

The Diversity Committee has established a set of overarching initiatives which will drive the implementation of DEI opportunities for the coming five years. These initiatives include the following:

- Encourage campus and community partnerships that build the educational pipeline of under-represented groups;
- Support the President's Award for Student Leadership in Civic Engagement;
- Make effective use of the Scholarship Program to assist First Generation college students who attend Northwestern;
- Develop criteria for determining whether a course can be considered a DEI-designated course in the University Catalog.
- Evaluate current courses that contain DEI-related content to determine if they can be classified as DEI-designated courses in the University Catalog.
- Continue to promote an effective "Position Announcements" recruitment process to support the institution's efforts to attract a more diverse faculty and staff to the predominantly rural service region;
- Grow the faculty and staff incentive fund which supports the efforts of faculty and staff to pursue research, attend conferences, develop presentations, and design curricular changes which improve diversity awareness and engagement within the Northwestern campus community;
- Continue to update the institutional Diversity website to report data analysis, programs, and policies related to diversity at NWOSU;
- Encourage to change the name of the Diversity Committee to the DEI Committee
- Create a faculty and staff online training program to ensure year-round access to diversity training and education to all faculty and staff at their convenience as a means of encouraging inclusive excellence both in the classroom and beyond;
- Continue to provide an annual Diversity Training Workshop to promote faculty and staff development;
- Improve institutional effectiveness regarding data capture and analysis across academic and administrative units;
- Continue to recognize faculty and staff contributions to diversity each year as part of the faculty and staff recognition ceremony.