

# **Diversity Plan for Northwestern Oklahoma State University 2016-2021**

## **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 members of the university community about key diversity initiatives and strategic directions.

A dynamic diversity program is an essential dimension of Northwestern's pursuit of excellence. As the world continues to change, the Northwestern community has responded with a proactive approach for promoting diversity 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 program involves continuous experimentation, assessment, and innovation. Specifically, Northwestern defines and embraces diversity in the following manner:

One of Northwestern's Core Values focuses on diversity and states that "Northwestern will respect the individual rights of all persons". Northwestern values the differences of every individual; promotes the expression of differing opinions and beliefs; appreciates the culture and backgrounds of each person; and treats every individual with respect.

Diversity is the presence and valued participation of individuals who differ and are similar by characteristics including 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 guides the institutional climate academically, socially, individually, and economically. The Northwestern community considers diversity as an indispensable component of academic and personal excellence. Northwestern embraces the concept that a diverse learning environment fosters a rich civic learning and engagement process which prepares individuals for success in an evolving global environment.

## **Institutional Strategic Directives: Diversity Engagement in the Broader Plan**

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

## **Institutional Diversity Goals**

The Diversity Committee, as part of its charge to enhance and address issues of diversity within the institutional framework, has established a set of goals which will drive specific diversity related initiatives for the coming four years. These goals include the following:

- Improve and support underrepresented groups at Northwestern's multi-campus system through technology, quality communications, supportive services and programs, and removal of barriers to access and affordability;
- Work to support the number of qualified minority staff and faculty campus-wide;
- Provide opportunity in each administrative and academic unit to engage students and to educate faculty and staff about issues of globalization and human diversity;
- Improve the institution's ability to accurately track the changing demographic characteristics of students, faculty and staff.

## **Institutional Diversity Initiatives**

The Diversity Committee has established a set of overarching initiatives which will drive the implementation of diversity opportunities for the coming five years as well as assist with assessment of diversity related strategies. 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;
- 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;
- Design and populate an institutional Diversity website to report data analysis, programs, and policies related to diversity at NWOSU;

- Create a faculty and staff online training program to insure 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;
- Provide an annual Diversity Training Workshop to promote faculty and staff development;
- Improve institutional effectiveness in regard to data capture and analysis across academic and administrative units;
- Improve communications among and between academic and administrative units for the purposes of disseminating and explaining aggregated data collection;
- Continue to recognize faculty and staff contributions to diversity each year as part of the faculty and staff recognition ceremony.