

Inclusive Excellence at Northwest from Dr. Mallett

Hello, Bearcats,

With great excitement, the Northwest Inclusive Excellence Action Plan is complete. Through this plan, strategic objectives and action steps will guide Northwest to become the inclusive and equitable campus community we envision.

The action plan defines why inclusive excellence grounded in principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice matters. Inclusive excellence promotes greater student access and success, employee satisfaction and retention, and a strong sense of belonging between our graduates and Northwest. Inclusive excellence is a vital component of a diverse and equitable campus community that celebrates diversity of thought and fosters an inclusive campus community.

The Northwest Inclusive Excellence Action Plan is organized to align with our “Adventure 2030” strategic plan. It has two primary initiatives, calling on the Northwest campus community to:

1. Create and foster an inclusive environment
2. Create and foster an inclusive environment where employees are engaged, empowered, and valued.

These initiatives are ambitious but attainable. Success will require collaboration, and progress will require new and revised systems, policies, practices and institutional norms to ensure accountability throughout the Northwest campus. We will use quantitative and qualitative methods to measure success. Finally, we will communicate our progress and accomplishments to the Northwest and Maryville communities.

Together, we will continue to make diversity and inclusion a cornerstone of a Northwest education that prepares our students to live and work in an ever-changing global society. While 2022 continues to pose great challenges throughout the landscape of higher education, I am confident that, together, the Northwest community will create a path to an inclusive, equitable, and bright future.

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Assistant Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion

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Inclusive Excellence Action Plan Mission and Vision

The actions outlined in the Inclusive Excellence Action Plan are closely aligned with Northwest’s central mission of focusing on student success – every student, every day.”

Mission: Northwest is committed to inclusive excellence and achieving the benefits of diversity through inclusive practices, policies, curricula and programs that lead to a welcoming, respectful, supportive and affirming environment, especially for those who are from domestic underrepresented or historically underrepresented groups.

Vision: Northwest will be recognized for its commitment to diversity and inclusion defined by creative approaches to inclusive pedagogy, educational programming, implementing holistic recruitment and communication strategies, supporting students and focusing on continuous assessment.

Institutional Goals

Northwest has committed to closing equity gaps in retention, persistence and graduation among domestic underrepresented students and first-generation college students. The following chart shows the Northwest goals as they relate to closing the equity gap that exists among domestic underrepresented and first-generation college students.

	AY 2021	AY 2022	AY 2025	AY 2028	AY 2030
First-Generation	Current Gap to Overall	Near Term Goal	Mid Term Goal	Long Term Goal	Target
Retention	-5.16%	-4.50%	-3.00%	-1.00%	0.00%
Persistence Fall-to-Spring	-1.98%	-1.75%	-1.00%	-0.50%	0.00%
Persistence Spring-to-Fall	-2.00%	-1.75%	-1.00%	-0.50%	0.00%
Graduation	-6.02%	-6.00%	-5.00%	-2.50%	0.00%
	AY 2021	AY 2022	AY 2025	AY 2028	AY 2030
Domestic Underrepresented	Current Gap to Overall	Near Term Goal	Mid Term Goal	Long Term Goal	Target
Retention	-11.68%	-10.50%	-6.50%	-2.50%	0.00%
Persistence Fall-to-Spring	-4.42%	-4.00%	-2.50%	-1.00%	0.00%
Persistence Spring-to-Fall	-6.57%	-6.00%	-3.50%	-1.50%	0.00%
Graduation	-14.65%	-14.00%	-11.00%	-6.00%	0.00%

These goals were created through Northwest’s involvement with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU). These goals will help guide the Inclusive Excellence Action Plan and help Northwest measure the effectiveness of actions created through its plan.

Inclusive Excellence Action Plan Glossary of Terms

Access: A freedom or ability to obtain or make use of something.

Adverse impact: A disparity in selection for hiring or promotion that disadvantages individuals of a particular race, sex or ethnic group.

Ally: A person from one identity group who speaks out or takes action in support of individuals from another identity group.

Bias: A preference for or against an individual or group that interferes with or influences fair judgement.

Cultural competence: The ability to interact effectively with people of diverse backgrounds and different identity groups by being sensitive, appreciative, respectful and responsive to beliefs, practices and cultural needs that are different from your own.

Discrimination: Unfavorable or unfair treatment of an individual or group based on identity labels such as race, ethnicity, skin color, religion, age, gender, physical or mental ability, sexual orientation or gender identity.

Disparity: A noticeable and usually significant difference between various identifying factors.

Diversity: All aspects of human difference, social identities and social group differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, language, religion, disability, military or veteran status, and political perspective. *Adopted from the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)*

Domestic underrepresented groups: Groups who have been denied access and/or suffered institutional discrimination in the United States and, according to the Census and other federal measuring tools, include Black, Asian, Hispanics or Latino/a/x/Chicanos, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and two or more races. This is revealed by an imbalance in the representation of different groups in common pursuits such as education, jobs and housing, resulting in the marginalization for some groups and individuals and not for others, relative to the number of people who are members of the population involved.

Equity: Equity refers to fair and just practices and policies that ensure all campus community members can thrive. At Northwest, equity refers to addressing the compliance and legal regulations that guide the university. The regulations include Title VI, Title IX, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other safety and protections put in place to provide institutional accountability.

Gender: A social construct about the roles, behaviors and actions men and women perform in a society. The attitudes, customs and values associated with gender are learned and not something we are innately born with.

Gender identity: How a person defines and conceptualizes their own gender. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

Gender neutral: An idea that policies, language and other social institutions should avoid distinguishing roles according to people's sex or gender.

Historically underrepresented groups: A group whose percentage of the population in a given group is lower than their percentage of the population in the United States. These groups may include adult learners, international students, veterans, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+, different religious groups, and different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Implicit Bias: The assumptions, stereotypes and unintentional actions (positive or negative) we make toward others based on identity labels such as race, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation or ability.

Inclusion: The active, intentional and ongoing engagement with diversity in curriculum, co-curriculum and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural and geographical) where individuals might connect, increase awareness, content knowledge and emphatic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions. *Adopted from AAC&U*

Inclusive Excellence: Inclusive Excellence is the recognition that Northwest's success is dependent on how well the institution values, engages and includes the diversity of its community members, including its students, employees, alumni, friends and affiliates. *Adopted from AAC&U*

Institutional racism: A combination of systems and factors that are grounded in the history of laws and institutions founded in whiteness, exist in the institutional policies and take place in interpersonal communication and behaviors (e.g. slurs, bullying, offensive language).

Intersectionality: The idea that people whose individual identities overlap with a number of marginalized groups experience resulting in multiple threats of discrimination.

LGBTQ+ An inclusive acronym covering people of all genders and sexualities. The letters mean: lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer. The plus sign covers the different subjects like allies, pansexual, androgynous and polyamorous.

Microaggressions: The everyday slights, put-downs and insults that marginalize people in their daily interactions.

Non-binary: A person who does not identify exclusively as a man or woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman.

Non-resident: International students who are on-ground or exchange students holding a non-immigrant visa, also referred to as IPEDS International.

Oppression: A system of mistreatment and exploitation where a dominant group benefits (socially, economically, or politically) at the expense of marginalized groups.

Racism: The marginalization, oppression and discrimination against domestic underrepresented based on socially constructed racial hierarchy that privileges white people.

Sense of belonging:- A feeling of openness that allows a person to feel like a valued member of a community while maintaining their individuality and experiencing a sense of connection and support.

Sex: A label assigned to an individual at birth based on medical factors.

Sexuality: A person's identity in relation to the gender or genders to which they are typically attracted.

Sexual orientation: How an individual defines their emotional, physical and/or romantic attractions.

Social justice: Justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities and privileges within a society.

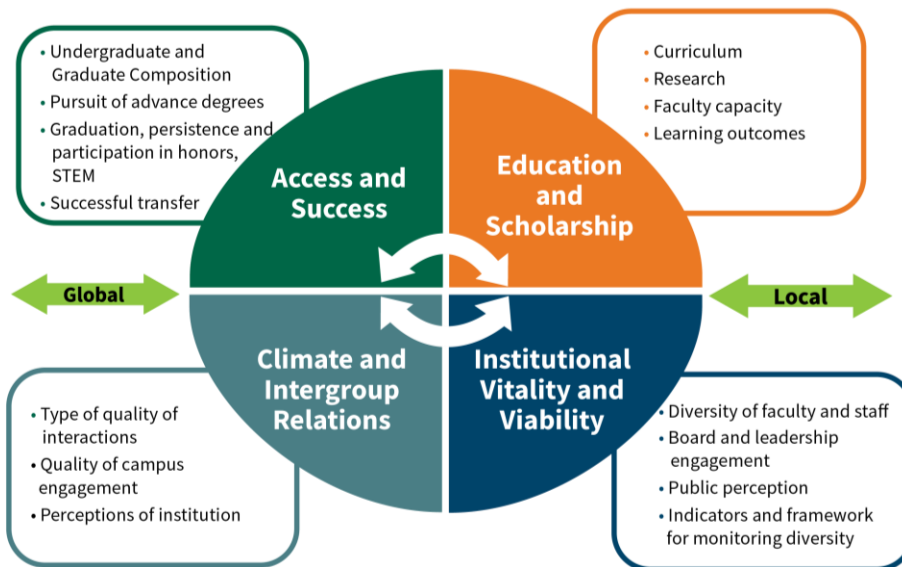
Underrepresented: A group includes individuals (African American/Black, Asian, Hispanic, American Indian, and multiracial) plus first-generation students and low-income students. In specific instances, other groups may be considered underrepresented. For example, in a traditionally female discipline, males may be considered underrepresented.

Underserved: Communities or groups of people who face additional barriers to access due to race, ethnicity, national origin, disability, gender, age or sexual orientation.

Xenophobia: Dislike of or bias against people who are considered “strangers” or foreigners.

Inclusive Excellence Framework

The Inclusive Excellence Framework is designed to provide guidance as we operationalize Northwest's commitment to diversity and inclusion. Driven by our core values, this framework give us a clear roadmap as we build a campus culture of accountability and will help support the progress of diversity and inclusion work at Northwest.



Investment, Benefits and Metrics

Investment

The implementation of the Inclusive Excellence Action Plan and the associated action items will require time and effort by many. As Northwest continues to analyze the budget, reallocation of existing resources will be important to identifying funding for new initiatives associated with the implementation of the Inclusive Excellence Action Plan.

Benefits

The benefits of the Inclusive Excellence Action Plan will include improvements in:

- Student sense of belonging
- Student success
- Recruitment
- Retention
- Financial gains
- Academic quality
- Co-curricular involvement
- Employee satisfaction

The goal of the Inclusive Excellence Action Plan is to enhance the student experience, which will subsequently increase student satisfaction and success, contributing to our recruitment and retention efforts, leading to a positive fiscal impact at Northwest. Also, the action plan's curricular goal will positively influence academic quality, it expands co-curricular involvement and cultural competency outcomes, which will best prepare our students for the workforce. Finally, the actions in the plan have the potential to influence employee satisfaction through engagement, empowerment and valuing. All outcomes will enhance the student and employee experience and positively influence the Northwest campus and community.

Metrics

To measure our progress, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion is working closely with the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (IRE) to identify metrics and develop transparent reporting processes.

A top priority among our action items will be our work with IRE to develop a comprehensive set of metrics to quantify the impact of the Inclusive Excellence Action Plan's action items. One such metric is developing a comprehensive benchmarking tool that will allow Northwest to compare outcomes related to graduation, retention and equity gaps with state and Peer 36 institutions.

During the 2022-2023 academic year, we will develop an Inclusive Excellence dashboard that will serve as a reporting tool on progress made on action items related to the plan's strategic initiatives.

Implementation

The assistant vice president of diversity and inclusion in consultation with the Inclusive Excellence Action Team and approval from the Northwest Leadership Team (NLT) will prioritize and set a timeline for the plan's objectives and action items.

- Annually identify high-priority objectives and action items for implementation.
- Establish realistic timelines and metrics for implementing high-priority objectives and action items.
- Work with the provost and NLT to identify financial resources to fund initiatives related to high priority objectives and action items.

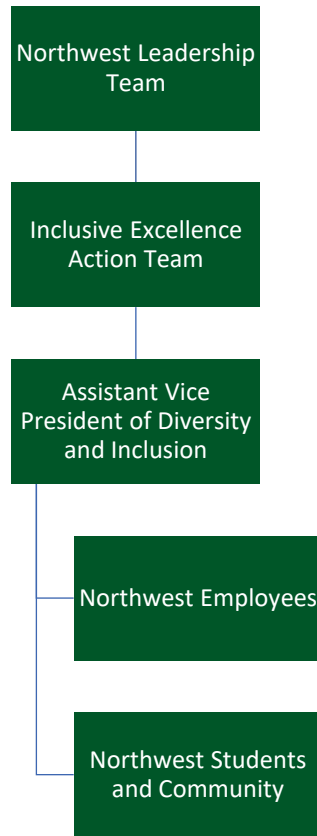
The assistant vice president of diversity and inclusion will monitor implementation of the action plan and report annually on the plan's progress.

- The assistant vice president of diversity and inclusion will annually report on the progress of the action plan to the NLT and Board of Regents
- An annual progress report will be posted on the Office of Diversity and Inclusion website and released to the Northwest community.

The Inclusive Excellence Action Plan will be modified periodically based on emerging and current issues and updated every five (5) years.

- Members of the Inclusive Excellence Action team will have opportunities to make changes to the plan during monthly meetings.

- The Inclusive Excellence Action team will complete a review and update the plan no less than every five years.



Educational Benefits of Inclusive Excellence Action Plan

Diverse Community

A campus community with students from diverse backgrounds allows students to have the opportunity to engage with others with different life experiences and different beliefs and opinions. This creates an environment that values civility and diversity of thought. Also, this environment is similar to the diverse communities in which Northwest graduates will live and work after graduation. This socialization has been shown to have strong effects on critical thinking and reasoning, perspective taking and life-long openness to diversity of thought. The outcomes in the action plan should also create an enhanced intellectual and social self, enhanced cultural awareness and appreciation, stronger leadership skills, and a longer commitment to racial understanding.

Inclusive Learning

From a curricular perspective, incorporating inclusive pedagogy in the classroom may enhance a student's motivation to reduce personal biases and create a desire to take action in support of inclusion and social justice. By utilizing inclusive pedagogy, faculty honor and celebrate differences in the classroom while engaging in different approaches to teaching and student engagement. Inclusive learning is best achieved through strategies that provide intentional classroom learning experiences and engage inclusive pedagogical practices.

Campus Climate

Peterson and Spencer (1990) define campus climate as a multifaceted term that includes attitudes and behaviors across three dimensions: objective, perceived and psychological. Research suggests a close connection between campus climate and student outcomes, indicating that a negative campus climate has adverse effects on the retention and persistence of students from various identities. To create and sustain an inclusive campus community, leadership must embrace diversity of thought from students and employees and create accountability through campus policies, practices and expectations that reflect best practices.

Climate and Job Satisfaction for Employees

The connection expectations and demands in the workforce, relationships with co-workers, job satisfaction, campus climate and recruitment and retention of diverse faculty have been documented. However, research related to the job satisfaction of employees in higher education is lacking. The prioritization Northwest takes in addressing employee satisfaction and campus climate is pertinent in Northwest's diversity and inclusion efforts and the overall success of the inclusive excellence action plan.

Northwest Inclusive Excellence Action Plan

Diversity and inclusion are connected to one another. Without inclusion, the benefits of diversity – an increase in understanding, improvement in performance, enhanced innovation and sense of belonging and satisfaction – will not be realized. Northwest is committed to create a community in which civility is valued and individual identity is treated with respect and diversity of thought is highly encouraged.

The actions outlined below in the Northwest Inclusive Excellence Action Plan will show this commitment through focused action, supported by clear transparent communication about our progress. We realize we must continue to “Listen, Align and Act,” and this process is a marathon not a sprint. Northwest is committed to the work and effort needed to accomplish the actions and goals of this action plan.

Strategic Initiative 2.2: Foster inclusive campus and community environments

SO, 2.2.1. Utilize best strategies and practices to enhance the retention, persistence, and completion of undergraduate and graduate students from historically underrepresented communities.

- Establish a robust peer mentoring program within academic units to support students from historically underrepresented populations.
- Allocate resources for existing and new programs and services that enhance the retention and graduation rates for students from historically underrepresented populations. (i.e. Bridge Program)
- Enhance retention of underrepresented students by facilitating discussions to reflect on factors that enhance and hinder the overall student experience. Implement suggested actions to enhance departmental, campus and community experiences.

SO, 2.2.2. Incorporate practices to increase opportunities for cultural competency and understanding for all students.

- Develop learning events within academic units that have an expanded approach on diversity and inclusion themes.
- Require that all first-year students enrolled in University Seminar will complete an online diversity and inclusion training.
- Coordinate opportunities for the Northwest community to participate in respectful dialogue that will engage students in a variety of perspectives.

SO, 2.2.3. Identify and address historical and current institutional barriers.

- Establish a regular schedule for conducting campus climate surveys for employees and students to assess needs and concerns of diversity and inclusion at Northwest.
- Appoint the Office of Diversity and Inclusion as the central location for all diversity and inclusion-related reports.
- Complete an institutional policy review through which policies are evaluated, revised and communicated to ensure diversity and inclusion is fully considered and incorporated.

SO, 2.2.4. Examine and ensure physical spaces on campus to enhance sense of belonging of all students on campus.

- Ensure campus facilities are accessible and safe by participating in an annual tour of campus facilities to review accessibility needs.
- Conduct an analysis of public/common spaces to create a visually welcoming and inclusive environment on campus.
- Create a plan to incorporate gender-neutral bathrooms on the Northwest campus.

SO, 2.2.5. Utilize student success data to identify and mitigate the equity gaps in achievement between majority and underrepresented students in retention, graduation, leadership opportunities and disaggregated student learning outcome assessment data.

- Partner with Faculty Senate to examine classroom climate and provide recommendations regarding classroom climate and inclusive pedagogy.
- Utilize recommendations for AACU Every Learner, Every Where to review support structures to ensure digital access is not a barrier to academic success.
- Identify and celebrate student success and progress of historically underrepresented students.

SO, 2.2.6. Foster communication and data driven decisions by maintaining a centralized, institutional-wide dashboard of data and metrics related to diversity and inclusion goals and objectives.

- Create an annual report on the progress made on the Inclusive Excellence Action Plan.
- Utilize the University dashboard and 4 UPs to provide updates on outcomes associated with the Inclusive Excellence Action Plan.
- Provide clear, transparent guidelines to report incidents within Bearcat Equity that outline consequences for acts of discrimination and bias based on race and/or identity.

Strategic Initiative 3.1.: Create and foster an inclusive environment where faculty and staff are engaged, empowered, and valued.

SO, 3.1.1 Allocate time and commitment to implement diversity and inclusion training for all Northwest employees.

- Develop and require diversity and inclusion training for all Northwest employees, Board of Regents, and Foundation and Alumni board members annually.
- Train employees to lead students in a productive conversation around discrimination, bias, how to be an ally and issues of race.
- Reestablish the Social Justice Institute for employees that will be offered on an annual basis.

SO, 3.1.2. Incorporate best practices to increase opportunities in cultural competency and understanding for all employees.

- Provide regular communication to employees regarding support services and resources for handling incidents of bias, harassment and discrimination on and off campus.
- Share Northwest campus climate survey results to increase transparency while identifying areas of growth and improvement.

- Establish a Campus Climate Advisory Team that provides guidance and support for all diversity and inclusion related concerns.

SO, 3.1.3. Incorporate strategies to increase understanding in employee training, onboarding, and other policies that allow all employees to thrive and succeed.

- Require a diversity statement prompt response be completed for all supervisory-level positions.
- Enhance the current onboarding program for all new employees that includes transparent and consistent messages about the importance of diversity and inclusion at Northwest.
- Establish a mentoring program that acclimates employees to their departments and the institution while providing opportunities for professional development and growth opportunities.

SO, 3.1.4. Use effective strategies and practices to retain diverse Northwest employees from historically underrepresented communities and international countries.

- Conduct “stay interviews” with underrepresented Northwest employees to identify reasons for staying and/or leaving Northwest. Use the findings to prioritize and address factors affecting the retention of underrepresented Northwest employees.
- Develop metrics to assess faculty retention, turnover and advancement across all faculty tracks and share metrics and trends with the Northwest community on an annual basis.
- Examine the salaries of faculty, staff, and administrators to ensure equitable pay based on market value.

SO, 3.1.5. Identify and mitigate gaps between majority and underrepresented employees in retention, tenure and promotion, post-tenure review, professional and leadership opportunities and recognition.

- Examine the tenure and promotion processes to identify and address potential biases.
- Review the merit given to research, service, and teaching and ensure that historically underrepresented faculty do not have additional roadblocks in teaching, including student interactions, class evaluations, and/or complaints.
- Evaluate current professional development opportunities for employees.
- Review current Northwest awards program for students and employees and ensure selection committee participates in diversity awareness training to ensure an unbiased review of applicants.

SO, 3.1.6. Create a transparent and sustainable organizational structure that fosters a diverse and inclusive environment for all.

- Conduct a review of the representation of historically underrepresented employees on ELT, SLT and NLT positions and benchmark the findings against Peer 36 institutions.
- Incorporate diversity awareness training for all new supervisors and annually for ELT, SLT and NLT members.
- Enhance the Northwest Bearcat Equity program to provide guidance and support for swift and effective responses to bias and discrimination.

SO, 3.1.7. Address affirming ways to acknowledge cultural and gender taxation in employees and students.

- Incorporate diversity and inclusion as a performance dimension within the annual performance appraisal process for administrative and professional staff.
- Take steps to ensure students and employees from diverse backgrounds are not expected to handle all diversity and inclusion issues.
- Develop and facilitate programming to discuss and mitigate the psychological, physiological, cultural and emotional experiences of underrepresented employees and students.