

Mansfield University

Strategic Plan for

Diversity & Inclusion



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Introduction

Mansfield University of Pennsylvania is a small, public university located in rural, northcentral Pennsylvania. It has a history of proclaiming the value of education for diverse groups of people. In 1857, one of the university's founders, Simon B. Elliott (1912), declared that our institution should "strive to make education universal, that the rich and the poor, the child of those who have power and place, and of those who tread the lowly paths of life, shall receive alike the blessings of education. And invite equally and alike, without distinction of sex, or color, or race, or creed, or party, the children of all who may desire to participate in the opportunities here offered. That is the highest purpose for which Mansfield may be praised." Mr. Elliott's definition of diversity met his needs at the time, but Mansfield University's contemporary context is different than it was 1857. While Mr. Elliott's declaration served as the foundational vision for what Mansfield was to be then, contemporarily we know of the value not only that education brings to diverse groups of people, but also of the irreplaceable value that those diverse perspectives bring to opportunities for learning (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2014). As members of the institution of higher education, with learning as our charge, we quite literally cannot afford to neglect fostering an experience for students that prioritizes inclusion and celebrates diversity in order to leverage the indispensable value these practices have in producing the highest quality of learning possible.

Further, while recognizing there are pockets of excellence at Mansfield University regarding practicing inclusion and celebrating diversity, research tells us there will always be room for improvement (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2014). With this in mind, we seek to prioritize areas for improvement?

The purpose of this strategic plan is to help Mansfield further actualize those benefits in the future.

The Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Planning Committee has developed a working strategic plan of four goals with respective objectives and initiatives for each. Our intention is for Mansfield University to use the following principles, taken from the text *Creating Multicultural Change on Campus* by Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2014), to guide the deliberate execution of our strategic goals over the next several years:

- A higher quality of learning takes place when diverse perspectives are present and valued as opposed to learning that takes place in a mono-cultural environment. We must purposefully focus on fostering inclusion, as well as preventing exclusion, of all to actualize this benefit.
- Everyone on our campus is responsible for developing multicultural competence at the individual, group, and institutional levels. It is not the responsibility of one person, office, or department.
- Organizational change toward our vision as a more multi-culturally competent organization requires consistent, diversity-and-inclusion-positive messaging from a member or members of Mansfield University's Cabinet. This is necessary for constituents to be aware of our commitment to these ideals, as an institution, from the tops ranks of our leadership.
- Increasing structural diversity (numbers of students, faculty, and staff from diverse groups) needs to be a priority, but cannot happen without simultaneously attending to any existing diversity and inclusion-related needs or issues that exist on our campus.

It is through this lens that we ask you - a member of our campus community - to join in the process of creating a future for Mansfield University that embodies inclusion and leverages the matchless value that diverse perspectives bring to our classrooms and workspaces. Ultimately, we recognize that not every person, group, or division will begin this process at the same place. We ask that you meet this effort where you are, and for all members of our community to intentionally set aside preconceived ideas, join this process with an open mind, and help use this strategic planning process to brighten Mansfield's future.



Mansfield University Mission & Purpose

Offering dynamic programs in the arts and humanities, natural and social sciences, and professional studies, Mansfield University of Pennsylvania prepares our students for successful lives and careers. As an inclusive public institution, Mansfield University provides our students with a welcoming environment, individualized attention, and meaningful opportunities to learn and grow within and beyond the classroom. Through the Mansfield experience, our students develop the knowledge, skills, and character necessary to achieve their educational and career goals.

Mansfield University Vision

Mansfield University will be the leading higher education institution in the region.

We will strive to:

- » Provide students with the richest possible educational experience in a supportive environment.
- » Nurture the whole student through an inclusive, diverse, and welcoming community.
- » Develop academic programs that meet the needs of regional, state, and global communities.
- » Collaborate with other educational institutions to achieve mutual goals and expand student opportunities.

Creation of the Diversity & Inclusion Strategic Plan

In October 2017, Dr. John Ulrich, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, invited employees interested in discussing diversity and inclusion on our campus to attend open meetings. He asked the groups to reconstitute Mansfield University's Diversity and Inclusion Committee and revise our institution's diversity plan, which the President's Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion created under our old strategic plan. The group selected chairs from the ranks of students, faculty, and staff to guide the charge. Chairs continued to meet during the spring 2018 semester. In preparation for revising the plan, committee members spent the summer of 2018 reading *Creating Multicultural Change on Campus* by Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2014). After reading the book, the group began revising the diversity plan using principles from the text and the MU 2020 Strategic Plan as frameworks – a process which took the entire fall 2018 and part of the spring 2019 to complete. Finally, in a culminating effort to ensure Mansfield University students' voices were represented as a significant part of the document, the Diversity and Inclusion Committee held seven meetings with approximately eighty students to gather their perspectives on diversity and inclusion related issues on our campus. Student input from this engaging process was organized into the final draft of Mansfield's Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan which was submitted to the cabinet at the end of the spring 2019 semester.

Diversity Goals

The committee's diversity goals are outlined to directly coincide with the MU2020 Strategic Plan.

Goal 1: Student Success

Objective 1.1: Establish, increase, and improve programs and services in order to meet the needs of a diverse student population.

- » Initiative 1.1.1: Assess and evaluate all academic programs in the context of diversity, inclusion and multicultural competency. Use this assessment as a benchmark for future courses and restructuring existing programs.
- » Initiative 1.1.2: Evaluate courses to determine if they reflect the diverse needs of our student body, including, but not limited to, online students, commuter students, working students and students with disabilities.
- » Initiative 1.1.3: Reassess physical classrooms and support services to ensure that all students have equitable access.
- » Initiative 1.1.4: Inventory faculty use of varied instructional formats and offer training in more hands-on learning opportunities.



Action Items:

- » Reassess the general education global component.
- » Emphasize social justice and diversity themes in first-year seminars and other introductory courses.
- » Reassess the General Education component titled University and Diversity of Humanity to increase the number of courses with multicultural or other diversity-related themes.
- » Increase the number of diverse students who participate in high impact practices such as service learning, research, internships, and hands-on learning.
- » Increase exposure to cultural difference through stateside educational opportunities and study abroad by providing financial incentives.
- » Expand collections of demographic identification on student opinion surveys and course evaluations.
- » Make sure online students have the same opportunities as other students. Consider advising, library resources, student services, etc.
- » Increase pedagogical approaches that vary instructional formats and offer hands-on learning.
- » Fill the position of Minority Mentor in the Department of Academic and Human Development.

Goal 2: Resource Management

Objective 2.1: Assess student enrollment and retention with regard to diversity and inclusion on campus.

- » Initiative 2.1.1: Increase the overall diversity of our student population including but not limited to race, ethnicity, age, gender, veteran status, socioeconomic background, and first-generation status by expanding marketing resources and reducing affordability barriers for diverse student populations.
- » Initiative 2.1.2: Increase retention of diverse groups.
- » Initiative 2.1.3: Grow the number of International students on campus and provide the necessary on-campus support.

Action Items

- » Make regular efforts to increase retention and gather input directly from student voices, interpret that input, and make appropriate resource-management decisions.
- » Increase marketing resources for recruiting diverse students and employees.
- » Identify scholarships or sources of scholarship money for diverse populations of students and track its impact.
- » Target marketing of opportunities for diverse populations and track the results.



Objective 2.2: Provide resources to support diversity and inclusion on campus.

- » Initiative 2.2.1: Using a variety of techniques provide multicultural and diversity programming on campus with tracked participation.
- » Initiative 2.2.2 Identify campus partners that have funding for diversity initiatives and programs.
- » Initiative 2.2.2: Demonstrate accountability to inclusive best practices in the University's financial decisions.

Action Items:

- » Ensure that physical spaces on campus are safe and welcoming to all of our diverse populations. Create a specific physical space on campus to accommodate diverse populations in their religious and cultural practices.
- » Use the diversity and inclusion team to create ongoing workshops for employees, to continue their growth/education on these topics. Offer a blocked time (at the same time) once per month so all faculty/staff can plan to attend (ex: 1st Thursday of each month from 10-noon, workshop offered).
- » Start a planning team with those individuals to identify programs needed and pool resources to offer better programs on campus.
- » Provide monetary support for diversity and inclusion related activities, track increased spending with participation.
- » Rejoin the State System's Fredrick Douglass Initiative.



Goal 3: Strategic Engagement

Objective 3.1: Attract and retain a diverse work force.

- » Initiative 3.1.1: Increase the diversity of the faculty and staff.
- » Initiative 3.1.2: Define and develop goals for work force participation in trainings or events focusing on diversity and inclusion, multi-cultural competency and best practices for both.
- » Initiative 3.1.3: Include diversity and inclusion criteria into performance evaluations, tenure and promotion for all employees.

Action Items:

- » Advertise faculty and staff positions to attract a diverse workforce.
- » Provide professional development on culturally competent teaching and advising practices.
- » Have questions and analysis in the interview process that emphasizes multicultural competencies.
- » An annual award that recognizes employees who exemplify the University's commitment to Diversity and Inclusion.
- » Amend exit interview process to include questions regarding diversity and campus climate.
- » Contact current and/or former employees from under-represented groups to obtain information on decisions to stay/leave MU in an effort to build on positives and address negatives.
- » Develop diversity expectations and evaluations. Explain how diversity training and continual development benefit the individual, as well as the campus community as a whole.
- » Explore the possibility of showing progress toward diversity goals as part of the annual review process so that all employees are acting as agents of organizational diversity.
- » Create and support opportunities for employees to attend and/or host diversity training programs and ensure that the programs are multicultural in content and values.
- » Advertise MU in Equal Opportunity Magazine and other appropriate publications.





Objective 3.2: Build stronger community relations.

- » Initiative 3.2.1: Expand local community outreach through service learning and volunteering to build trust between the regional community and diverse student populations.

Action Items:

- » Emphasize and track community involvement in the life of the university and embrace relationships with organizations in the area.
- » Partner with businesses and community agencies to research “real world” production and service issues.
- » Increase opportunities for diverse populations in the community and on campus to interact.
- » Engage the community in multicultural events on campus and track their participation.
- » Work with the local government and local businesses to create combined events.
- » Promote programming, including concerts, bus trips, speakers, etc., in local marketing campaigns to encourage community participation.
- » Reinststitute the Center for Lifelong Learning to provide educational opportunities to the community.
- » Expand career services to promote local businesses by connecting students/alumni looking for internships and other work experiences. Host career fairs that are open to the public.
- » Establish degree requirements for community service. Industry standard ranges from 40-90 hours of unpaid service required to earn a four-year degree.
- » Establish a mentoring program for students to connect with diverse communities and in local schools.
- » Collaborate with student groups to develop a Diversity Summit for outreach to local high schools.
- » Expand local community outreach through service learning and volunteering to build trust between the regional community and diverse student populations.
 - » Institute Spring/Fall cleanup days (to coincide with Mansfield Borough cleanup days) in which members of the campus community assist the local community with yard work and general seasonal cleanup.
 - » Create a community service website that advertises upcoming community service efforts/events. Members of the community can also post when they need assistance for specific projects.

Objective 3.3: Foster an overall atmosphere of respect for cultural, social and personal differences.

- » Initiative 3.3.1: Create a standing committee to address diversity and inclusion issues on campus, using this document as a guideline.
- » Initiative 3.3.3: Increase awareness and protection for students, faculty and staff who have been negatively affected by bias on campus.

Action Items:

- » Include action items relevant to diversity & inclusion plans in assessment and departmental reports.
- » Promote intercultural competence for employees and students.
- » Create an empathetic environment for all employees and students. Create lists of diverse individuals in the community who can assist students with diversity issues. Language experts come to mind, but people with other backgrounds might apply.
- » Charge this committee to do a yearly assessment of the Diversity and Inclusion Mission and Plan.
- » Provide a system of anonymous reporting for incidents involving bias.
- » Develop a set of best practices regarding diversity and inclusion.
- » Seek opportunities to promote unity among intercultural groups.



Objective 3.4: Assessment of all diversity and inclusion initiatives.

- » Initiative 3.4.1: All Diversity & Inclusion committee initiatives and action items should be assessed cyclically.

Action Items:

- » Develop matrices to organize the relationships among assessments at all levels of the institution.
- » Identify and communicate assessment timelines and accountability roles throughout the institution.
- » Develop, implement, and document policies and procedures for tracking and monitoring the strategic plan to ensure that key performance indicators exist, are measurable, and have baselines and benchmarks.
- » Improve accountability for the assessment of diversity and inclusion activities





References

Elliot, S.B. (1912). Statement of diversity – Mansfield University. Retrieved from <http://catalog.mansfield.edu/content.php?catoid=19&navoid=370>

Pope, R. L., Reynolds, A. L., & Mueller, J. A. (2014). Creating multicultural change on campus. San Francisco, CA, US: Jossey-Bass.

