

Converse College Diversity Strategic Plan

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Mission Statement

With the support of the Office of the President and the Board of Trustees, the mission of the Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC) of Converse College is to work collaboratively to advocate for, promote, enhance, and support diversity within the College's community. Through the Core Values of the College—Excellence, Integrity, Exploration, Diversity, Respect, Community, and Progress—we aim to foster an inclusive, safe, and vibrant campus community. We create new programming, support established programming, and generate policy in pursuit of these goals.

Diversity Statement:

Diversity and inclusion are integral to the educational mission of Converse College. As a community, we commit to recognize, include, and value the inherent worth and dignity of each person equally; foster sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourage and support everyone to strive to reach their own potential. The institution recognizes that these experiences are crucial for developing the requisite skills to thrive as a member of a pluralistic society and as a responsible global citizen.

In pursuit of its goal of inclusive excellence, the College actively seeks to attract and support students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds and life experiences, including but not limited to: race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic and/or socio-linguistic background, cognitive ability, physical ability, religion and spirituality, value system, national origin, immigration or refugee status, and veteran status.

Converse College believes that diversity among its members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life. The College strives toward cultural fluency.

Based on extensive consultation with campus and community stakeholders, and an investigation of best practices and policies at Converse College and other comparable institutions, the plan sets the course for institutional change through the following strategies.

Goal 1: Defining and establishing DAC as a known committee and resource on campus by promoting goals for diversity, equity, and inclusion for the College through active outreach to the campus community.

Strategy 1: Publish Converse College's Strategic Plan for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in accessible and visible spaces.

Strategy 2: In the Diversity Advisory Committee, establish the range of the mandate: communities of color, queer community, differently-abled, interfaith, international and regional linguistic identities, etc.

Assessment: Maintain representation on the committee from diverse populations from various departments and establish a pipeline of student leaders/representatives to this committee.

Strategy 3: Develop ways to recognize individuals and groups that show a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Assessment: Include in the annual assessment for faculty and staff a metric on their support of diversity and inclusion, including in hiring, retention, support of students, and curricula development.

Assessment: Develop and maintain robust accountability systems through departmental strategic plans and assessment tools for equity, inclusion, and diversity, and the campus systems to support them.

Assessment: Continue to recognize those whose contributions support diversity, inclusion, and equity.

Strategy 4: Develop a competitive grant program that allows faculty and staff to apply for funds to support professional development in the areas of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Assessment: Bi-annually, the DAC will identify and support at least one high visibility campus-wide event that promotes discussion of a diversity-related topic.

Strategy 5: Develop effective communication strategies to share programs, initiatives, successes, and setbacks toward equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Assessment: Schedule open and inclusive meetings for students to allow the DAC to conduct systematic fact-finding regarding key issues of diversity.

Assessment: Conduct campus climate surveys every two years, or as deemed necessary by the DAC. Review, share, and revise plans based on data obtained to ensure transparency, address issues, and reinforce positive results.

Goal 2: Recruit, retain, and graduate a diverse student body and address the need to increase access to higher education for historically underrepresented populations and economically disadvantaged students.

Strategy 1: Investigate the possibility of a study-travel scholarship specifically for students in underrepresented populations and economically disadvantaged students.

Assessment: Increase the amount of need-based and scholarship aid available to economically disadvantaged students.

Strategy 2: Develop a summer bridge program for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and underfunded school systems to increase their college readiness and chances of success.

Strategy 3: Develop and maintain a Converse College Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion web page to provide students in underrepresented populations access to resources that promote their success.

- Scholarship and Fellowship Opportunities
- Clubs and Organizations
- Events calendar for upcoming Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion events
- Digital form where students can submit concerns to be discussed by the DAC in monthly open meetings

Assessment: Make a public web page for students and determine how many students visit and utilize the resources.

Assessment: Make visible support programs that provide opportunities for the institution's underrepresented and underserved (specifically Pell-eligible) students.

Strategy 4: The Office of Institutional Research will enhance retention data collection to assess factors related to the retention and graduation rates of students (disaggregated by gender, race/ethnicity, and Pell grant recipients), including the impact of participation in Academic Services programs.

Assessment: Increases in the enrollment, retention, and graduation rates of students from underrepresented groups, at undergraduate and graduate levels.

Assessment: Increase mechanisms that continue to engage underrepresented populations including diversity spotlights of success.

Assessment: Develop mentorship programs and activities that engage underrepresented populations with current students.

Goal 3: Recruit and retain a diverse faculty and staff while addressing the need to increase access to professionals that resemble the community population, including underrepresented populations.

Strategy 1: Increase the recruitment of underrepresented faculty and staff and advance their progression through the faculty ranks and staff promotions.

Assessment: Increased representation and retention of faculty and staff from underrepresented groups at all ranks.

Strategy 2: Review, evaluate, and provide recommended changes to our recruitment and hiring practices, processes, and policies to ensure that they are equitable and inclusive.

Assessment: Devote leadership and resources to sustain and enhance equity, inclusion, and diversity through the integration of a Senior Diversity Officer in the recruitment and hiring process.

Strategy 3: Increase the retention of diverse faculty and staff.

Assessment: Monitor attrition rates; continue diversity initiative for retention; continue best practices for mentoring, academic, and career support ensuring talent is nurtured in all forms.

Assessment: Develop and implement new community-based educational mechanisms to promote and advance educational equity and career aspirations of all groups.

Strategy 3: The College will conduct proactive national searches to identify candidates from underrepresented populations for faculty and administrative positions whose qualifications include openness to diverse viewpoints and a commitment to advancing an inclusive culture.

Assessment: Highlight and publicize efforts to grow diversity within our workforce. Diverse applicant and hiring pools for all faculty searches.

Strategy 4: Continue a recruitment process that engages Human Resources to guide searches to use broad search criteria, to review the pool of candidates for diversity, to search for additional candidates if the pool is not diverse, and to encourage the search committee to interview a qualified candidate if that candidate would add diversity to Converse.

Assessment: Increases in the diversity of the candidate pool and of the finalists of candidates interviewed.

Strategy 5: The College will support career development efforts, with the goal of moving more underrepresented-group faculty members up the academic ranks. The College will monitor and ensure equitable salary and promotion for underrepresented groups in faculty positions.

Assessment: Increases in the number and proportion of faculty from underrepresented groups in tenured and tenure-track positions.

Goal 4: Develop and/or strengthen external relationships with the greater Upstate community in order to define and establish Converse College as a home of diversity and inclusion.

Strategy 1: Establish and re-establish strategic relationships with colleges, communities, and leaders.

Strategy 2: Engage college leaders with organizations and community leaders focused on equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Strategy 3: Identify and establish external diversity and inclusion training opportunities with local external organizations.

Goal 5: Facilitate mentorships that bring the greater Upstate community onto campus and build bridges with that community to support the underrepresented populations in our community.

Strategy 1: Partner with Career Services to identify diverse external partnerships for academic service, learning, and internships.

Assessment: Track the number of such partnerships and the involvement of members of the Converse community in the same.

Strategy 2: Examine opportunities for personal and professional networking for underrepresented groups within the Upstate area.

Strategy 3: Encourage outreach to community businesses owned by underrepresented individuals for purposes of provided goods and services to Converse.

Assessment: Track the number and percent of businesses with whom Converse contracts that are owned by underrepresented individuals.

Goal 6: Promote a welcoming campus climate that supports students of underserved and/or underrepresented populations.

Strategy 1: Develop and implement a training curriculum that will include mandatory and optional training for the campus community to engage in topics surrounding equity, diversity and inclusion.

Assessment: New employees - Ensure 90-day evaluation process is completed to gauge the experience of newly hired underrepresented employees.

Assessment: Reinforce with faculty and staff the importance of positive student interactions in the classroom, workplace, living spaces to foster a healthy campus climate.

Goal 6.1: Create and promote opportunities for growth and development.

Strategy 1: Amplify advertisements and communication for all diversity-centered programming

Strategy 2: Ensure the presence of institutional environments and course development that enhance learning and appreciation for the full range of diversity.

Strategy 3: Create inclusivity across our campus populations with programming for specific underrepresented groups on campus.

Assessment: Establish an international student support system.

Assessment: Establish support systems for athletes.

Assessment: Establish support systems for other specific groups as determined.

Goal 6.2: Create and promote opportunities that improve the quality of life on campus.

Strategy: Improve accessibility on campus for all students, faculty, staff, and guests.

Assessment: Locate places on campus that are regular accessibility issues for the above demographics and set aside resources to make them meet ADA standards.

Goal 6.3: Create and promote opportunities for advocacy of underrepresented and underserved student populations.

Strategy: Create opportunities and avenues for making students' voices heard by developing strategies for student outreach to gain feedback, ideas, and experiences from students on what in our community needs to be addressed.

Assessment: Hold monthly DAC Table Talk Meetings that will occur every first Tuesday of the month in Gee to engage students and faculty by discussing the current plans and conversations regarding diversity and to answer any of their questions with what was discussed in the meeting.

Strategy: Administer a campus climate survey within the second year of the Strategic Plan for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, and every three years thereafter.

Goal 7: Establish mechanisms for reporting and bringing awareness of incidents of bias, hate, discrimination, and harassment matters.

Strategy 1: Begin by removing these incidents from CIVITAS. 80.9% of current students would not report issues related to discrimination and bias while only 19.1% would.

Assessment: Implement and endorse a policy similar to or in conjunction with the Title IX policy regarding issues of discrimination and bias for the campus community.

Strategy 2: Improve mechanisms for reporting and bringing awareness of incidents of bias, hate, discrimination, and harassment.

Assessment: To have centralized access to policies, procedures, resources and reporting mechanisms surrounding bullying, bias, discrimination, and harassment.

Strategy 3: If not included in the above-referenced policy for discrimination, separately endorse a position or team on campus to address discrimination and bias issues that also builds a positive and reliable reputation as a consistent and supportive resource to underrepresented student populations

Assessment: Establish a Bias Incident and Prevention Response Team that focuses on prevention, resource referrals, and investigation of bias incidents and hate crimes.

The above content was derived from the Diversity Plans of the universities listed below.

- UNC Charlotte
- University of Kentucky
- Penn State
- University of Wisconsin
- University of Michigan
- UC Berkeley