

Diversity Plan
School of Communication
The University of Southern Mississippi
(Adopted: April 1, 2022)

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The University of Southern Mississippi School of Communication recognizes the need to proactively address cultural diversity in the study and practice of communication. The School embraces a broad definition of diversity that includes race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, class and disability. The School is especially committed to including the voices of people and communities that have been historically under-represented at the university and in communication professions.

The School's Diversity Plan is designed to organize the School's efforts to address those issues. It is also a blueprint for a broader effort to showcase the School's diversity initiatives and to seek external support for those initiatives. The School's diverse population, coupled with the School's significant contributions to scholarship related to cultural diversity and communication, should be attractive to companies and foundations that support diversity initiatives.

The School seeks to:

- 1) offer students an inclusive curriculum that routinely and systematically addresses diversity issues related to culture and communication;
- 2) attract and graduate a population of students from diverse backgrounds that generally reflects the region's ethnic diversity;
- 3) hire and retain a diverse faculty and staff, including faculty members in tenure- and teaching-track positions;
- 4) provide students, faculty, and staff with a supportive climate for working and learning that is free of discrimination.

Diversity in the Curriculum

The School makes effort to address diversity issues in every course in varied ways, including experiential learning projects designed to expose students to diverse people and communities.

Beyond the frequent dialogue related to cultural diversity that surfaces in curricular and co-curricular activities, the School has identified courses that specifically reflect the School's efforts to "foster understanding of issues and perspectives that are inclusive in terms of gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation."

Guest speakers from diverse backgrounds are invited to classes and School events to expose students to different perspectives and issues.

Faculty and Staff Diversity

The School seeks to recruit a diverse faculty and staff from underrepresented groups. For vacant faculty and staff positions, search committee members are formally instructed on how to achieve best practices in building and considering a diverse applicant pool.

Because of the substantial population of African-American students in the School, it will specifically work to increase the number of African-American faculty and staff members.

The School will also make an effort to support the retention, progress, and success of under-represented and minority faculty and staff members.

Student Diversity

The goal of the School is to recruit and retain a student population that reflects the diversity of the region's population, and it is specifically interested in serving the region's under-resourced and African-American communities, which have been historically under-represented at the university and in communication professions.

The School will seek support for events and workshops that would bring a multicultural group of promising high school students to campus.

The School's graduate programs will recruit from undergraduate programs with substantial minority populations.

The School will encourage campus media and student organizations to have diverse staffs and ensure that campus media content reflects diverse opinions and perspectives.

Diversity Climate

The faculty and staff in the School will provide an environment that is both respectful and supportive of diverse people and viewpoints.

The School will partner with other university units to offer events and projects related to diversity; and participate in national organizations and events on the importance of diversity and inclusiveness.

Guest speakers from diverse backgrounds will be invited to the School's annual symposium, career day, and other events.

The School's Board of Advisers will include a diverse group of working professionals.