



Arkansas Tech University

Strategic Plan for Inclusive Excellence

Phase I (2019-2020) and Phase II (2021-2024)

Introduction

Since 1909, Arkansas Tech University (ATU) has continued to preserve its founding technical traditions while transforming into a leading teaching institution that yields high-achieving graduates who go on to serve their communities, regions, country, and the world in various capacities. As the third largest institution of higher learning in Arkansas as well as ranking first in the state for social mobility efforts for its students, ATU prides itself on putting a quality education within reach of all students.

ATU's faculty and staff have a passion for affording students the realization of obtaining a college degree. However, obtaining a college degree is more than going to classes and doing homework. A sense of belonging and college completion are also influenced by what students, faculty, and staff experience both inside and outside the classroom. We recognize that diversity and inclusion initiatives are pivotal for the recruitment and retention of underrepresented students, faculty, and staff. Therefore, we will convey a message of inclusive excellence in all forms.

We are also intentional to align this strategic plan for inclusive excellence (SPIE) with the University's Strategic Plan Goal 1.8: "develop and implement a diversity and inclusion plan to include all stakeholders on campus."

This strategic plan for inclusive excellence will also support the Higher Learning Commission Criterion 1.C and its sub-criteria 1.C.2 and 1.C.3: “The institution provides opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world, as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves” (1.C). “The institution’s processes and activities demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations” (1.C.2). “The institution fosters a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff, and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives” (1.C.3).

Vision Statement

ATU’s mission statement declares “Arkansas Tech University is dedicated to student success, access, and excellence as a responsive campus community providing opportunities for progressive intellectual development and civic engagement.” To support the mission of ATU, we are proactive in our vision to parallel the strategic plan for inclusive excellence with the mission of the university.

The vision for inclusive excellence at Arkansas Tech University is to be the premier institution of higher learning in Arkansas with regard to diversity and inclusion, known for our excellence in providing a welcoming environment for all communities and cultures, developing programs of support for those in disenfranchised and marginalized communities, and creating a campus culture that exposes the entire community to the full spectrum of multiculturalism.

Preliminary Work

From March through May 2019, ATU’s Diversity Committee for the Strategic Plan on Inclusive Excellence, under the leadership of Dr. David Blanks, divided into sub-committees to conduct campus climate research within three groups of primary stakeholders, who also comprise the first three of our four focus areas: 1. Students; 2. Faculty; 3. Staff; and 4. The overall university community. We thank Dr. Blanks for his leadership as he guided the Diversity Committee through data collection, which identified several themes of the strengths, barriers, and opportunities to advance inclusive excellence. Progress must be made at all levels if we are to achieve the vision for inclusive excellence. Recruitment and retention efforts of underrepresented students are reflected within the Department of Diversity and Inclusion’s (DDI) [Retention Plan](#), and it heavily influences some of the criteria decided on for this strategic plan’s focus area of students.

Under the leadership of Dr. Danielle Brooks, committee members reviewed diversity strategic plans of other institutions, including peer institutions. Just as Nealy and McNair (2013) identified high-impact practices for retaining underserved student groups (emphasized in DDI’s Retention Plan), the Diversity Committee targeted and benchmarked evidence-based action items for the recruitment and retention of underrepresented students, faculty, and staff.

Guiding Principles

The Diversity Committee identified four overarching guiding principles that meet the specific needs of our institution's stakeholders. Each task within the strategic plan for each focus area aligns with at least one of the four overarching guiding principles. These guiding principles include the following:

- 1. Provide access and equity.**
- 2. Increase diversity learning throughout overall curricula.**
- 3. Create a visibly inclusive campus.**
- 4. Increase diversity learning for faculty, staff, and administration.**

Underrepresented and Marginalized Groups Identified

ATU is sincere in our efforts to include and work on the behalf of all stakeholders (students, faculty, and staff) who belong to any underserved identity. We also recognize and value the intersectionality of underserved identities. Our focus areas consist of the following underrepresented and marginalized student, faculty, and staff populations:

- Ethnically diverse persons
- Racially diverse persons
- Religiously diverse persons
- Agnostics
- Atheists
- People with disabilities
- Student-veterans and military-connected students
- First-generation college students
- Persons from low socioeconomic backgrounds
- Women
- Gender non-conforming persons
- LGBTQ+ community members
- Adopted and/or foster care students

Breakdown of Strategic Plan for Inclusive Excellence

We realize that our primary stakeholders are our greatest assets. Our students, faculty, and staff have laid the foundation for this plan. The following objectives and goals align with our four guiding principles to advance inclusive excellence at ATU. Tasks are grouped into focus areas by the populations being influenced by the achievement of the tasks.

Due to the primary need, urgency, resources, and timeframes for specific projects within the plan, tasks have been divided into two phases both with specific timelines. Tasks and objectives identified for Phase I to be completed by the year 2020 include the following:

Phase I Objectives	Task	Units Responsible	Guiding Principles	Goal Achievement
1	Conduct an audit of the university website that examines diverse representation of all identities.	University Marketing & Communication	Create a visibly inclusive campus	Audit completed of the university website to examine diverse representation of all identities.
2	Implement the Department of Diversity and Inclusion Retention Plan that focuses on high-impact practices, student engagement, and outreach to at-risk students.	DDI	Provide access and equity	The Department of Diversity and Inclusion Retention Plan implemented focused on high-impact practices, student engagement, and outreach to at-risk students.
3	Explore existing facilities on campus for potential gender-neutral bathrooms.	Facilities Management DDI Accessibility Committee	Create a visibly inclusive campus	Examination completed and proposal developed for potential gender-neutral bathrooms.
4	Increase targeted recruitment of diverse faculty and staff	Human Resources	Provide access and equity;	Increased targeted recruitment of diverse faculty and staff yields

	members by advertising and promoting positions with well-known groups and publications that focus on marginalized groups. (i.e. Black Doctoral Network, American College Personnel Association for LGBT Awareness, etc.)		Create a visibly inclusive campus	an increase in the number of diverse applicants for faculty and staff positions.
5	Develop inclusion awareness education for new employees during the onboarding process.	Human Resources	Increase diversity learning for faculty, staff and administration	Inclusion awareness education training developed for new employees.
6	Ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion education reaches the Ozark Campus through the appointment of an Ozark campus representative to the Equity and Diversity Committee.	Equity and Diversity Committee Ozark Chancellor	Increase diversity learning for faculty, staff and administration	A representative from the Ozark campus is appointed to serve on the Equity and Diversity Committee.

Below are recommendations for the Equity and Diversity Committee to consider for implementation for a second phase of the Strategic Plan for Inclusive Excellence with a proposed completion of tasks by the year 2024.

Student Focus Area	Task	Units Responsible	Guiding Principles	Goal Achievement
1.1	Encourage diverse faculty to advise underrepresented student organizations.	Academic Departments Campus Life DDI	Create a visibly inclusive campus; Provide access and equity	Diverse faculty are encouraged to advise student organizations.
1.2	Review communication efforts that reinforce a welcoming and inclusive campus community.	University Marketing & Communication Athletics	Provide access and equity	Communication efforts reviewed and appropriate changes implemented, as necessary, to reinforce a welcoming and inclusive campus community.
1.3	Review admission application for inclusivity of all identities.	Admissions	Create a visibly inclusive campus; Provide access and equity	Admissions application reviewed and appropriate changes implemented as determined to ensure inclusivity of all student identities.
1.4	Explore expansion opportunities for culturally based fraternities and sororities.	DDI Campus Life – Fraternity and Sorority Life	Create a visibly inclusive campus	Expansion opportunities explored for culturally based fraternities and sororities.
1.5	Explore spaces on campus for a potential Multicultural Center.	DDI	Create a visibly inclusive campus	Proposal developed to consider space for a potential Multicultural Center.

1.6	Examine academic and enrollment partnerships with two-year minority-serving institutions in the state of Arkansas to advance transfer sending and transfer receptivity.	Academic Affairs Enrollment Management	Provide access and equity.	Academic and enrollment partnerships examined with two-year minority-serving institutions in the state of Arkansas to advance transfer sending and transfer receptivity.
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Faculty Focus Area	Task	Units Responsible	Guiding Principles	Goal Achievement
2.1	Create minority faculty-to-student mentorships to provide an inclusive climate and support mechanism for incoming and existing minority students.	Admissions Academic Affairs Minority Faculty Groups	Provide access and equity	Minority faculty-to-student mentorship groups created to provide an inclusive climate and support mechanism for incoming and existing minority students.
2.2	Encourage diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice content throughout existing and potential curricula in both undergraduate and graduate-level programs.	Academic Affairs	Increase diversity learning throughout overall curricula	Diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice content encouraged throughout existing curricula and potential new curricula explored to be developed.
2.3	Create and encourage annual assessment strategies for cultural competency implementation in the classroom.	Assessment & Institutional Effectiveness Academic Affairs	Increase diversity learning throughout overall curricula; Increase diversity learning for faculty, staff and administration	Annual assessment strategies are developed and encouraged to be utilized to successfully measure cultural competency implementation in the classroom.

Staff Focus Area	Task	Units Responsible	Guiding Principles	Goal Achievement
3.1	Create a Climate Response Team that responds appropriately and in a timely manner to insensitive incidents on campus.	Human Resources	Provide access and equity	Climate Response Team created to respond appropriately and in a timely manner to insensitive incidents on campus.
3.2	Create a survey for the exploration of employee-to-employee affinity groups for faculty and staff members on both campuses	Human Resources	Provide access and equity; Create a visibly inclusive campus	Survey conducted and affinity groups established for employee-to-employee affinity groups for faculty and staff members on both campuses.

University Community Focus Area	Task	Units Responsible	Guiding Principles	Goal Achievement
4.1	Create and implement a diversity and inclusion annual training program that is encouraged for students, faculty, staff, and administrators for both campuses.	Academic Affairs DDI Human Resources	Increase diversity learning for faculty, staff and administration; Provide access and equity	Annual diversity and inclusion training created and implemented that is encouraged for students, faculty, staff, and administrators for both campuses.
4.2	Create and implement an online diversity and inclusion annual training program that is encouraged for all remote and adjunct faculty, staff, and administrators at both campuses.	Academic Affairs Human Resources	Increase diversity learning for faculty, staff and administration; Provide access and equity	Online diversity and inclusion training created and implemented that is encouraged for all remote and adjunct faculty, staff, and administrators at both campuses.
4.3	Implement a University-wide standard for main website and affiliated websites (ATUAlumni.com, ArkansasTechSports.com, etc.) that ensures accessibility for individuals with varying disabilities.	Office of Information Systems University Marketing & Communication	Provide access and equity	University-wide standard implemented for main website and affiliated websites (ATUAlumni.com, ArkansasTechSports.com, etc.) that ensures accessibility for individuals with varying disabilities.
4.4	Create and implement a mentoring/leadership program for minority populations for faculty,	Academic Affairs Human Resources	Increase diversity learning for faculty, staff and administration;	Mentoring/leadership program for minority populations created and implemented that is encouraged for students,

	staff, and administrators for both campuses.		Provide access and equity	faculty, staff, and administrators for both campuses.
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Committee Members

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