



# A MORE **INCLUSIVE** TU

*Advancing Equity and Diversity*

Diversity Strategic Plan **2020-25**

**TU** TOWSON  
UNIVERSITY

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SECTION 1

# Introduction

| DIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN |

## Our Pledge

### To All Members of the Towson University Community:

We are pleased to share the strategic plan for diversity and inclusion. This plan provides a critical piece of the roadmap for the future of Towson University as we enter our 155th year. The completion of this plan has taken place during a time where the nation is addressing and focusing on the issues of institutional and systemic racism, inequality and social justice using an anti-racist lens. This plan is designed to meet TU's aspiration to become a more inclusive and equitable institution of distinction.

We know and are proud of the fact that TU is already one of the most diverse higher education institutions in the nation and is staunchly committed to building an inclusive, equitable and diverse campus community. Since 2016, diversity, equity and inclusion have been at the forefront of our mission as we strive to become an institution of inclusive excellence.

This plan, *A More Inclusive TU: Advancing Equity and Diversity*, represents the next phase in our pursuit of being recognized as a distinguished public institution that advances equitable access, inclusive learning and engagement in a diverse community. The goals outlined in this document, along with our vision and collective voice for change, will provide a pathway to achieving this goal. This plan is consistent with our university-wide strategic plan, building upon our most important goals.

It should be acknowledged that this plan does not represent the sum total of all that we are and all that we need to do or will do. Conversations with more than 250 members of the campus revealed the numerous programs, activities, initiatives and efforts already underway that are shaping and changing TU. These conversations also revealed the need to continue to address and remove structural inequities. In order to focus our efforts and resource them appropriately, we have limited the number of initiatives, programs and efforts elevated herein. The goal of this plan builds upon the investments and intentions made by many members of the campus to create positive change.

Lastly, as a community we must hold ourselves accountable for the change we seek to realize. We will assess our progress, adjust to the results, listen to new ideas and continue to facilitate frank conversations about issues on our campus.

Thank you for working to create a more inclusive and equitable Towson University.



Leah Cox, Ph.D.

*Vice President, Inclusion  
and Institutional Equity*



Kim Schatzel, Ph.D.

*President*

## Welcome to TU

Towson University is one of the most diverse higher education institutions in the nation. TU is staunchly committed to building a campus community that embraces a wide spectrum of human and academic experiences. With that in mind, Towson University is **intentionally engaged** in proactively transforming the culture and climate of the university to reflect the changing society in which we study, live and work.

This strategic plan is grounded firmly in the belief that **TU's ongoing success is dependent on our capacity to shift perspectives and approaches and strategically place diversity, equity and inclusion at the core of our mission** through academic programs and environment, leadership and mentoring, community engagement, day-to-day decision-making, interpersonal relationships, collaborations and organizational culture. This document, *A More Inclusive TU: Advancing Equity and Diversity*, seeks to advance Towson University as a nationally recognized leader in diversity, equity and inclusion within the higher education sector. The success of this plan requires every member of our community to actively contribute in its implementation.

Towson University has historically measured its diversity using key demographic data such as race, gender, ethnicity, sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression, religion, national origin, ability, political affiliation, military or veteran status and socioeconomic background. We also recognize that differences in beliefs, values and ideologies are a part of the greater concept of diversity. Focusing solely on diversity doesn't acknowledge the importance of an equitable, inclusive

and supportive environment where historically marginalized, underrepresented and underserved members of our community can succeed. It is imperative we make an intentional commitment to explore and support new strategies that will enable every member of the TU community to thrive and reach their fullest potential.

The Diversity Strategic Plan Task Force ("task force") convened in December 2018 and was charged with articulating recommendations to President Kim Schatzel for a bold vision and implementation plan for diversity, equity and inclusion at TU over the next five years. The eight Presidential Priorities<sup>1</sup>, the university's Diversity Initiatives Progress Report<sup>2</sup> and this document build a comprehensive strategy for inclusive excellence at TU and are a collective outgrowth of the president's core values, strategic diversity actions and deep commitment to inclusion and equity. The Towson University of today is not the Towson State College of years ago. TU is poised and equipped to take on this opportunity to implement a bold strategic plan to create a more diverse, equitable and inclusive institution where all feel welcome, valued and supported to succeed.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.towson.edu/about/administration/president/priorities/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.towson.edu/inclusionequity/diversity/diversity-progress.html>



## Our Vision

This document provides a vision for the institution that clearly and deliberately maps a progressive plan that advances inclusive excellence while implementing and maintaining a focus on equity. We clarify our working definitions of **inclusive excellence** and TU's **equity toolkit** along with our other key terms: **diversity**, **equity** and **inclusion**.

We can't assume nor expect all members of our community to understand our institution's history or make sense of it in the same way. In fact, we recognize reconciliation is an ongoing process and must acknowledge a diversity of perspectives on and lived experiences with any singular moment in time. In developing this five-year strategic plan, the Towson University leadership looks to strengthen its commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion across our institution while also acknowledging that this work has its roots in a past rich with complex stories of success, pain, accomplishment, struggle and, ultimately, hope that TU will continue to move forward with a reconciled and more inclusive history.

This report presents information on the current state of Towson University in terms of diversity, equity and inclusion and puts forth recommendations based on quantitative and qualitative data from constituents across the institution. The development of the plan was informed by an inclusive strategic planning process.<sup>3</sup> Over a 15-month period the task force engaged hundreds of students, staff, faculty, alumni and community partners.

We convened working groups, held campus forums, provided presentations and asked participants to share, both in person and online, their ideas and dreams for TU's mission and strategic priorities related to diversity, equity and inclusion.

A number of other system and campus initiatives and reports complemented the task force's work, including TU's overall Strategic Planning process; the Middle States Commission on Higher Education Self Study process at TU and innovative initiatives such as the one created with a \$1 million grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute spearheaded by Jess & Mildred Fisher College of Science & Mathematics faculty Laura Gough and Matthew Hemm.

We referred to the work of other institutions of higher education<sup>4</sup>, leading organizations in equity and inclusion metrics, prominent scholars in the field of diversity in higher education and reports produced by such entities as the American Council on Education, the Harvard Business Review and the Race and Equity Center at The University of Southern California.

<sup>3</sup> Williams, D. A. (2013). *Strategic Diversity Leadership*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

<sup>4</sup> We reviewed and benefitted from comparable plans from the University of California, Davis; University of North Carolina and Virginia Commonwealth University among others.

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This work has its roots in a past rich with complex stories of success, pain, accomplishment, struggle and, ultimately, hope that TU will continue to move forward with a reconciled and more inclusive history.”

**TABLE 1 / KEY EVENTS TIMELINE**

2018	<b>SEPT.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invitations from university president to serve on More Inclusive TU: Diversity Strategic Plan Task Force</li> <li>• Charge letter and goals provided</li> </ul>
	<b>OCT.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning and readiness launch of task force</li> </ul>
	<b>DEC.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First monthly meeting of the task force</li> </ul>
2019	<b>MAR.–SEPT.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data collection across the community</li> </ul>
	<b>SEPT.–OCT.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data analysis and coding</li> </ul>
	<b>DEC.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Task force working meeting 2020</li> </ul>
2020	<b>JAN.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Task force meeting—first draft compiled</li> </ul>
	<b>FEB.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft presented to the task force, vetted and revised</li> </ul>
	<b>MAR.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft presented to the university president and provost</li> </ul>
	<b>APR.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final revisions</li> </ul>
	<b>ONGOING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Track and assess progress</li> </ul>



Please visit the plan's companion website, <https://www.towson.edu/inclusionequity/diversity-strategic-plan.html>, for additional resources, appendices, progress reports and other updates and an online feedback form. We also welcome your feedback at [inclusion@towson.edu](mailto:inclusion@towson.edu)



“

**TU is not stuck and is moving forward. I think the past at Towson University is what is helping to propel us forward.**

ASIAN FACULTY &  
STAFF ASSOCIATION  
FOCUS GROUP

## ***Our Plan***

The publication of this plan marks the end to an envisioning process and begins the incremental implementation of this important work that will assure lasting change. Only by **engaging** at college, department and unit levels can strategies be prioritized, translated or adapted into relevant and consequential activities. The implementation of this plan is dynamic and will continually evolve; data will be reviewed each year to support decision-making and organizational change. The plan provides **actionable timelines**, **responsible parties** and **metrics** to help assess our advancement of diversity, equity and inclusion in the short and long term.





SECTION 2

**Key Terms and Concepts**

| DIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN |

# Key Terms

## Diversity

Diversity is variety or difference within a collective. It is not an individual characteristic: A person is not diverse, but a group, team, office, community or other collective can be diverse.

While discussions around diversity often focus on race, it is crucial to consistently take a fuller and more complex view of the wide range of variety in our campus community, including but not limited to:

- Ability status
- Age
- Ancestry
- Body size
- Citizenship status
- Economic status
- Educational status
- Employment status
- Ethnicity
- Food security
- Gender identity
- Gender expression
- Housing security
- Incarceration experience
- Language
- Marital/partnership status
- Military/veteran status
- National origin
- Neurodiversity
- Political affiliation
- Pregnancy/reproductive status
- Race/racial identity
- Religious affiliation/spiritual practice
- Sex assigned at birth
- Sexual identity



**KEEP  
IN MIND**

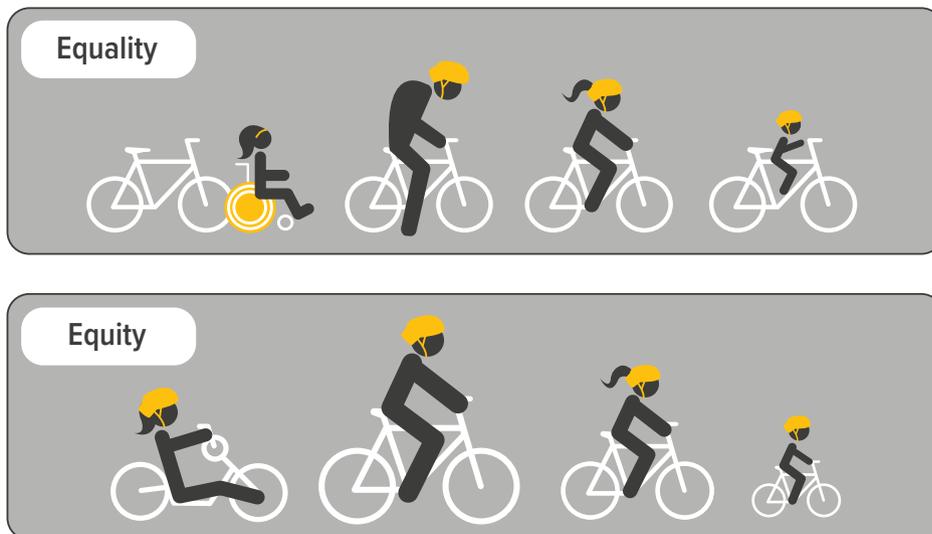
This plan relies on a common understanding that diversity, equity and inclusion are related terms, but they are not interchangeable. One of the foundations for the success of this plan is for the TU community to consistently and accurately use and distinguish between them.

## Equity

Equity refers to fairness in access, treatment and opportunity. Equity is NOT the same as equality.

Equality implies sameness, two or more members of a community being identical or having identical identities, cultures and experiences. Equity requires we regularly examine what supports and resources our diverse communities and populations need to have the opportunity to achieve our stated goals and outcomes (SEE FIGURE 1). Ongoing efforts to strive for equity may, in fact, appear to some as treating people or groups differently. Putting equity into practice requires a shift of perspective from an external focus on individuals and communities (achievement gap) to an internal focus on our institution and its policies, practices and programs (opportunity gap).

FIGURE 1 / DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN EQUALITY AND EQUITY (COURTESY OF THE ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION)<sup>5</sup>



“

I have worked here for 11 years, and we have a long way to go, but I also see TU working hard and am encouraged by that. I see the change in students.

STAFF/FACULTY FOCUS GROUP ON RETENTION

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/infographics/visualizing-health-equity.html>

## Inclusion

Inclusion refers to active participation and contribution by all members of a community and is NOT an automatic result of diversity.

A department, organization, college, team, division or other unit may be diverse while still not necessarily fostering inclusion, as depicted in **FIGURE 2** below.

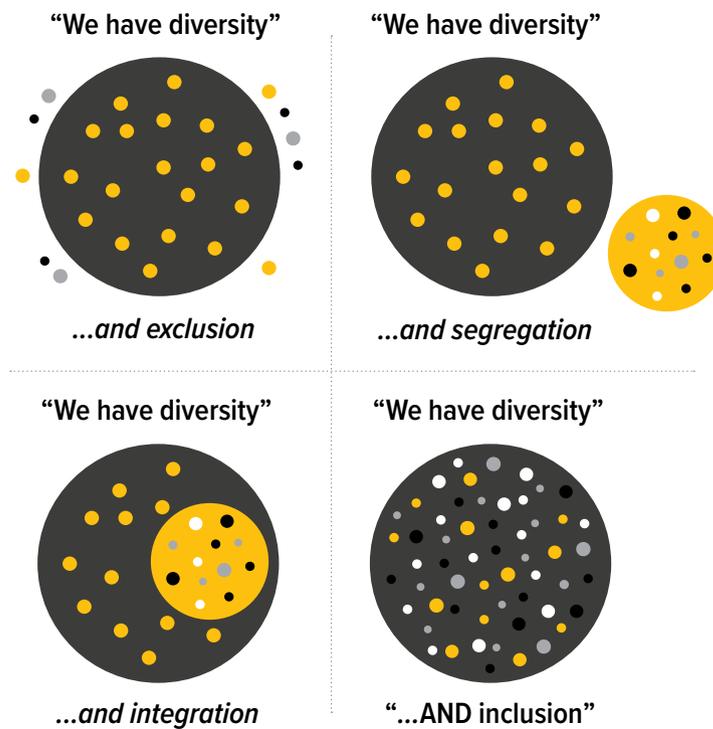
It is crucial to distinguish between and accurately use our key terms of diversity, equity and inclusion. Remembering these terms and ideas are different means we need to regularly assess whether all of them have been achieved at every level (e.g., team, organization, department, unit, college, division). The simultaneous presence of all three fosters a TU culture grounded in belonging and fairness (**SEE FIGURE 3**).



**KEEP  
IN MIND**

**Having diversity does  
not guarantee also  
having inclusion.**

**FIGURE 2 / THE PRESENCE OF DIVERSITY DOES NOT GUARANTEE THE PRESENCE OF INCLUSION.**



## Inclusive Excellence

Inclusive excellence is often defined as a range of concepts ranging from a mindset, to a planning process, to a framework, to a goal, to a vision.

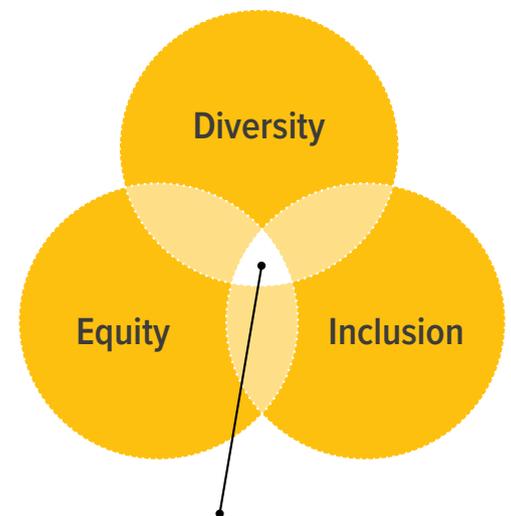
In prioritizing it as a central component of this plan, we needed to start with its core definition as used within higher education and then adapt it to TU's specific needs and vision. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) change model for inclusive excellence<sup>6</sup> proposes four primary elements:

- **Focus on student intellectual and social development**
- **Purposeful development and utilization of resources to enhance student learning**
- **Attention to cultural difference**
- **Welcoming community**

Their newly released vision statement of excellence in undergraduate education is grounded specifically in equity and inclusion and stresses two priorities: 1) *the what and why* of undergraduate learning and 2) the importance of helping *all* students achieve those. Inclusive excellence takes direct aim at educational disparities and patterns of systemic disadvantage—especially those resulting from historical and contemporary effects of racism.<sup>7</sup>

Our commitment to inclusive excellence does not focus solely on outcomes but also the process, which must be highly collaborative and equipped to engage thoughtfully and respectfully in challenging conversations.

FIGURE 3 / STRIVING FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION



### Belonging:

Our community engages each member's full potential, creativity, innovation and resilience thrive and our beliefs and values are integrated.

<sup>6</sup> Williams, D. A., Berger, J. B., & McClendon, S. A. (2005). *Toward a Model of Inclusive Excellence and Change in Postsecondary Institutions*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

<sup>7</sup> Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2020). *What Liberal Education Looks Like: What it is, Who it's for, & Where it Happens*. Washington, DC.

## Equity Toolkit

TU's equity toolkit is a collection of resources and guides for calling attention to patterns of inequity linked to one or more social identity markers.

Think of social identity markers as the conscious and unconscious ways we view each other with perceived or actual status based on the wide range of diversity. This toolkit should be applied in many ways at the institution:

- **Communities and cultures (groups, networks, traditions)**
- **Climate (classroom, academic department, division/department/unit)**
- **Mission (teaching, research and scholarship, outreach)**
- **Policies, practices, procedures**
- **Collaborations with internal and external constituencies**

TU's equity toolkit is a foundational resource for implementing this plan. It recognizes that everyone does not have access to the same opportunities, and it is important to identify and address inequities by removing systemic barriers and accommodating differences. The ultimate goal of the toolkit is to support an intentional, university-wide process where each division, college, department or unit can embark upon an ongoing process that identifies new opportunities to support TU's transformation to a campus community where people from diverse backgrounds can participate fully, thrive and contribute at TU. The implementation process typically begins from a university-wide foundation of guiding/reflection questions followed by additional prompts specific to any office, department, division or other area of work within the university. In early stages, consider the following as a guide:

- **What is the current norm, practice or tradition?**
- **Whose interests are being served? Whose interests are being underserved?**
- **Which individuals or groups are currently equipped and empowered to make decisions?**
- **What assumptions need to be critically re-examined?**
- **What mechanisms do we use or can we implement to assess equity and inclusion in our work regularly?**
- **What is the most appropriate next step?**
- **What are the risks if we do nothing? What will the impact be if equity toolkit resources are not implemented in this case?**

The challenge of identifying, educating, motivating and measuring progress in each of these elements has guided our strategies, timelines and action plan. We lay out in a separate section below the specific guidelines that ground this plan in inclusive excellence and equity.

“

**I enjoy having the opportunity to collaborate across offices to connect students with resources they might need.**

**STAFF/FACULTY FOCUS  
GROUP ON RETENTION**

## ***Diversity Strategic Plan Objective***

Our task force goes further to frame inclusive excellence at TU as an **ongoing commitment to build our capacity to embed diversity, equity and inclusion in everything we do; to assess regularly; and to adapt.** This strategic plan calls for a commitment to inclusive excellence and equity. Our ongoing success is dependent on centering equity as a key component of this work, and it will set TU apart nationally.





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SECTION 3

**Our Past, Present  
and Progress**

| DIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN |

## Where We Are Now

In the past 50 years Towson University has experienced demographic shifts in both size and diversity (SEE FIGURE 4). This **growth** has led to the creation of new programs, majors, positions and development of policies and plans that have helped lead TU to achieve important **milestones in diversity and inclusion** that set us apart at the state and national levels.

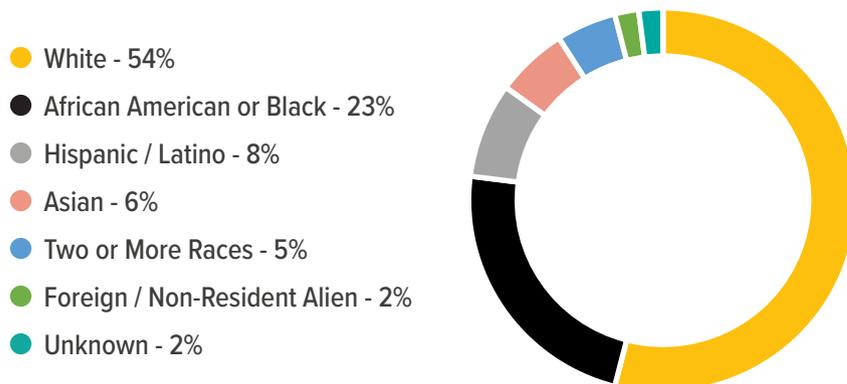
### Demographics

In the 2019 “Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac,” Towson University was among the **top 15 four-year public institutions in the nation** in “Colleges with the Greatest Percentage Gains and Losses in the Number of Black Students, 2010 to 2017<sup>8</sup>.” Further, from 2010–2018, the proportion of racial/ethnic minority students increased 19%<sup>9</sup>, **the largest increase at any Maryland public institution and the largest among any Maryland institution with 500 or more students**<sup>10</sup>.



**MORE THAN 42% OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS REPORTED AS STUDENTS OF COLOR.**

FIGURE 4 / IN FALL 2018 THE OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH REPORTED 19,818 STUDENTS AT TU

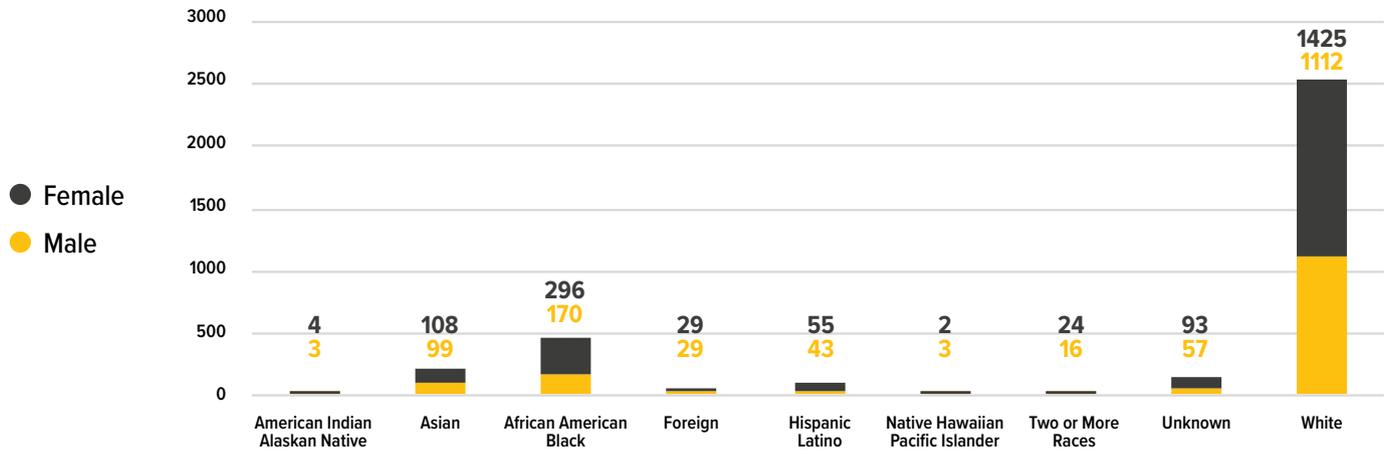


<sup>8</sup> Towson University saw a 64.7% increase in Black enrollment from 2010–2017

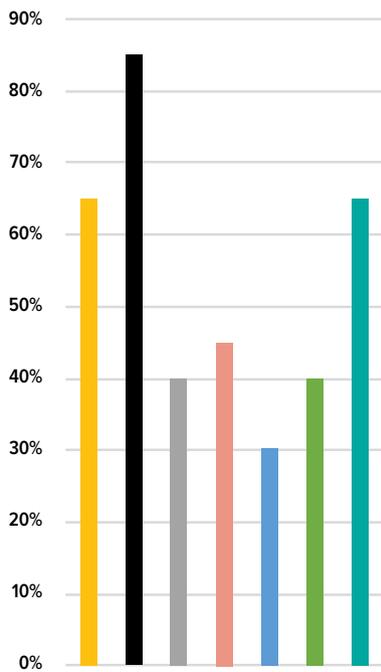
<sup>9</sup> The proportion of racial/ethnic minority students in overall head count enrollment increased from 21% in fall 2010 to 40% in fall 2018.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Education, *National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)*, 2010 and 2018 Fall Enrollments, Retrieved on March 4, 2020.

**FIGURE 5 // RACE/ETHNICITY AND GENDER OF ALL TOWSON UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES 2018**



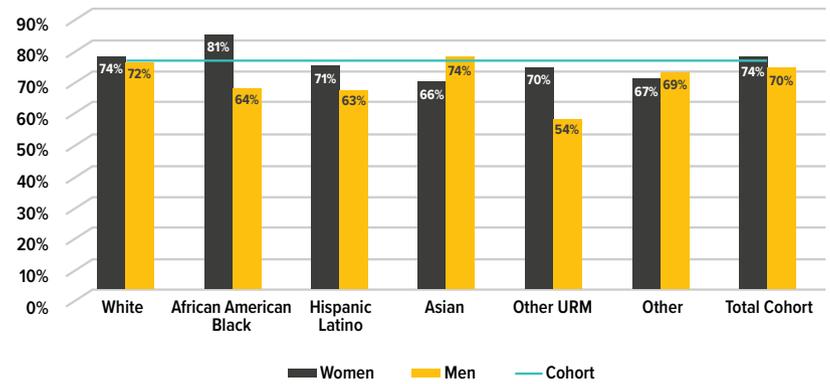
**FIGURE 6 // SIX-YEAR GRADUATION RATES - RACE/ETHNICITY**



- White - 73% (1660)
- African American / Black - 77% (306)
- Hispanic / Latino - 68% (127)
- Asian - 69% (123)
- Other URM - 66% (87)
- Other - 68% (157)
- Total Cohort - 73%

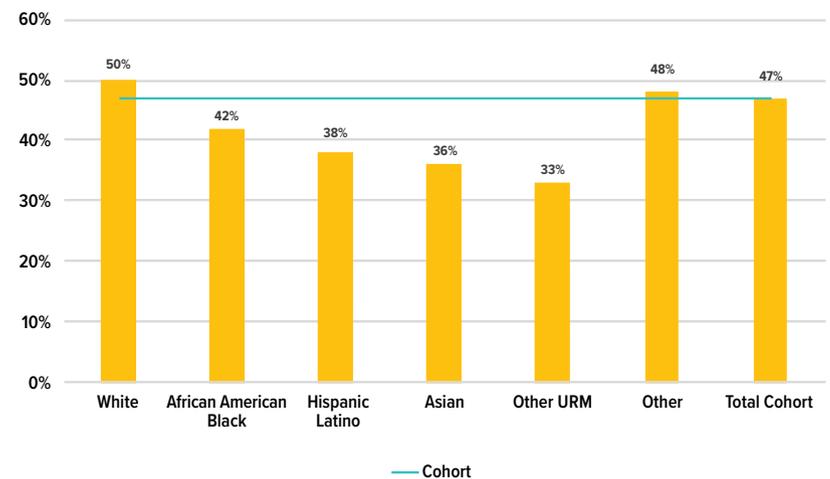
The most recent graduation rate (fall 2012 cohort) is 73%. This rate has been increasing steadily from around 59% in 1998 to at or above 70% for the past four years. In the last two years, there has not been an achievement gap for African American students. Hispanic/Latinx and Asian students have also been very close to the overall rate. However, there are some differences when we look at gender and four-year rates.

**FIGURE 7 // SIX-YEAR GRADUATION RATES OF FIRST-TIME STUDENTS - RACE/ETHNICITY/GENDER**



In the majority of cases, men did not achieve the same level of success as women from the same racial/ethnic group. Also, Asian men were the only male group to meet or exceed the overall graduation rate. Another area of concern is the gap at four years.

**FIGURE 8 // FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATES OF FIRST-TIME STUDENTS - RACE/ETHNICITY**



While most racial/ethnic groups of students caught up, or came close, to the overall graduation rate of six years, there were noticeably larger gaps when looking at the four-year rates. Again, this is the same group of students, the fall 2012 cohort, measured in summer 2016.

## Graduation Rates

Although many public universities continue to struggle to address demonstrable gaps between racial and ethnic groups in student learning, Towson University has much of which to be proud. The term achievement gap alludes to outputs, including the unequal or inequitable distribution of educational results. Learning gaps are the disparities between actual learning and expected learning for students<sup>11</sup> and can be the result of achievement gaps. **Unlike many institutions across the country, TU does not have a demonstrative racial achievement or learning gap even in the face of the increasing enrollment of racial minorities.** Of particular note: while the national six-year graduation rate is 43%, it is 73% for all TU students and for African American TU students, it is 77%.<sup>12</sup>

Our commitment to equitable access to and support for a TU education continues to extend beyond race and ethnicity and prioritizes all historically underserved student populations—grounded in the more expansive way we define diversity above. In fact, through the implementation of our equity toolkit resources, the conversations shift from a sole focus on individual student performance—achievement and learning gaps—to a more complex examination of systemic, structural and institutional barriers and the ways in which TU can further transform our policies, procedures and practices—opportunity gaps—that prioritize inclusive excellence and equity.

## Strategic Diversity and Inclusion Leadership

In 2017 President Kim Schatzel created the Office of Inclusion & Institutional Equity (OIIE) and the position of vice president of inclusion & institutional equity. This key role established a vision of creating a more inclusive TU, positioning OIIE as a hub that intentionally works collaboratively across all divisions and rejecting conventional notions of working exclusively in silos.

“

**At TU there are a lot of opportunities, and, speaking as a deaf individual, there have always been plenty of opportunities for me and the people I identify with.**

**UNIVERSITY ACCESSIBILITY  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
FOCUS GROUP**

<sup>11</sup> Coleman, J. S., Campbell, E. Q., Hobson, C. J., McParland, J., Mood, A. M., Weinfeld, F. D., et al. (1966). *Equality of educational opportunity*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

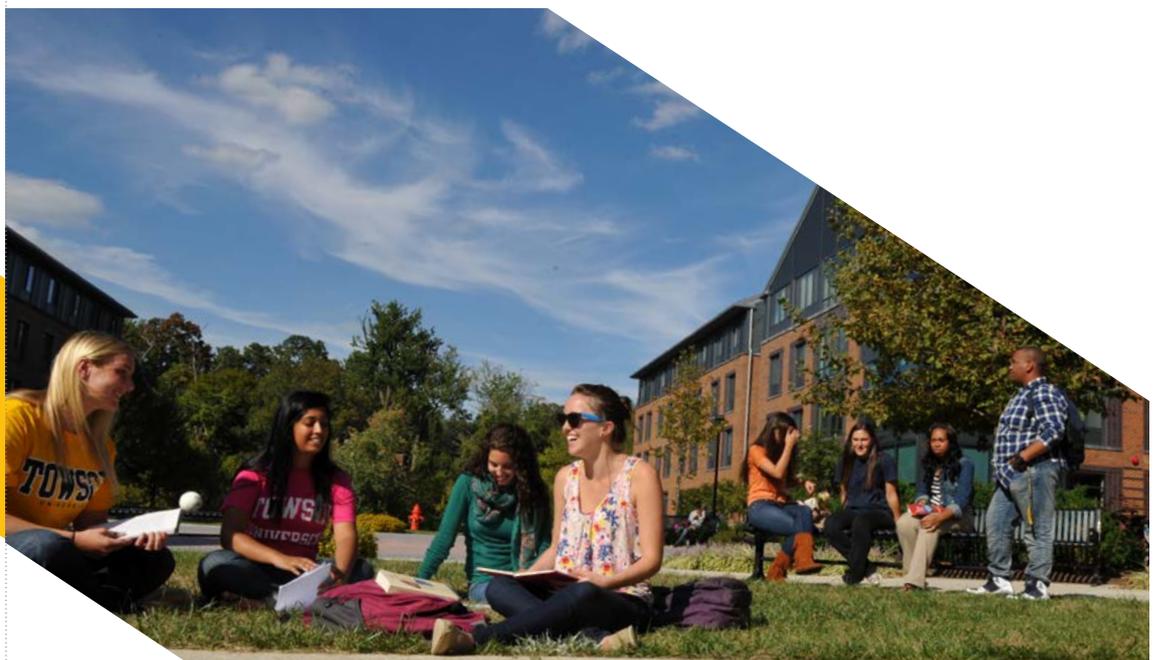
<sup>12</sup> IPEDS 2012 Cohort

## Milestones

In the past 50 years TU has supported programs and offices that have integrated the campus and supported underrepresented students in their academic pursuits. The Center for Student Diversity—formally known as the Office of Minority Affairs, Office of Multicultural Student Life and Office of Diversity Resources—was established in 1969 to facilitate the access and integration of Black students into the university and advocate on their behalf. Soon after, the Black Student Union also was founded. The center now provides advocacy, support, mentoring and programming for diverse students across the campus.

## Diversity and Inclusion Faculty Fellows

Academic Affairs has instituted initiatives to support faculty in further developing inclusive classrooms and diverse research agendas. For example, in 2014 TU's Diversity and Inclusion Faculty Fellows program was established to support TU faculty who are already engaged or interested in the development or redesign of courses for major or core curriculum, curricular practices to support inclusive classroom environments, research and teaching projects, pedagogy and research toolkits, scholar–practitioner collaborations and/or building collaborations to enhance diversity and inclusion.





SECTION 4

**Strategic Plan Methods**

| DIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN |

# Strategic Plan Methods

## The Charge

In late September 2018, President Kim Schatzel provided a charge and goals for the task force. This initiated an institution-wide planning process that sought input from the entire campus community, including students, faculty, staff, administrators and alumni. The year-long process employed a social justice framework and solicited feedback from across the campus as well as intentionally seeking voices who are often overshadowed—ultimately striving for the representation of all entities who are integral to the work of providing a world-class education through a holistic experience.

The task force was charged by President Schatzel with four primary questions:

- **How do we further promote the president’s Model for Campus Diversity?**
- **What is the climate on campus related to diversity and inclusion, and how is it experienced by individuals and members of the community?**
- **What is needed to recruit and retain a diverse faculty, senior administration and student population?**
- **How do we further cultivate a culturally responsive campus where all community members feel a sense of belonging?**

Priority areas included: **education and scholarship, recruitment, retention and campus climate.**



## Data Collection

From March through September 2019, all stakeholders in the TU community were invited via the following methods to participate in the data collection process:

- The task force website
- TU news article
- The task force video
- The task force web page online feedback form
- The task force email account, [inclusion@towson.edu](mailto:inclusion@towson.edu)

In an effort to include many voices across the Towson University community, the task force scheduled data collection opportunities based on the aforementioned priority areas, TU affiliations and intentional focus groups, which were identified in response to the earlier data collection to ensure representation of all communities and populations. A total of 278 people participated in the focus groups.

TU stakeholders were able to participate in:

- Focus groups moderated by a team of two facilitators
- One-on-one interviews with a designee from OIIE
- Anonymous online submissions via the OIIE website

## Data Analysis and Coding

From September through October 2019, a nine-member task force coding subcommittee of students, faculty, staff and administrators reviewed the raw data, identified patterns of concerns and determined common language.

The coding process included:

- Reflecting and acknowledging one's own personal biases
- Accessing the raw data as organized by the four priority areas
- Drafting a list of major themes and patterns of belief
- Noting unexpected themes, words and responses

“

**If we want to change the culture, we need training, new policies and to say we are starting in a place that acknowledges the issues at hand and [the importance of] being proactive.**

LGBTQ+ FACULTY & STAFF  
ASSOCIATION FOCUS GROUP

## Outcomes

As a result of this process, three major themes emerged as a launching point for decisions concerning proposed goals, initiatives and actions.

- **Work climate**
- **Exclusion/inclusion**
- **Initiatives and programs**

An overarching theme of **mentoring** cut across all other areas.

## *Implementation Guidelines for Equity and Inclusive Excellence*

The task force reviewed sample diversity plans from other institutions, national best practices for strategic diversity leadership in higher education and the most recent institutional data in order to identify current and cutting-edge approaches, knowing that our history propels Towson University to invoke a radical culture shift with bold and measurable actions that are both aspirational and actionable.

The American Council on Education's (ACE) 2018 report, "Speaking Truth and Acting with Integrity: Confronting Challenges of Campus Racial Climate," offers a useful framework for campus capacity building and resiliency, specifically in response to racial tensions on campuses.



The ACE report finds “high diversity and inclusion capacity<sup>13</sup>” schools pursue the following priorities:

- **Strong diversity plans, mission statements and guiding values for diversity and inclusion work**
- **Leaders exhibiting knowledge of diversity and inclusion practices and research**
- **Leaders working to build trust and respect across stakeholder groups**
- **Investment in continual learning, education and training at all levels**
- **Regular assessment of campus progress with feedback loops**
- **Active disruption of oppressive practices and systems**
- **Opportunities and support provided to marginalized communities**
- **Value placed on individuals/units that provide diversity and inclusion leadership on campus**

This strategic plan considers how these priorities can be implemented beyond just race and culminates in a series of overarching, evidenced-based goals with corresponding action items and specific and measurable steps laid out to help transform TU as well as the unit(s) responsible for implementation.

By centering equity along with inclusion and diversity at the core of TU’s mission, this plan goes even further by relying on newer research (Chun & Feagin, 2020) that rethinks higher education diversity frameworks and offers specific leadership strategies for implementation such as:

- **Conducting an institutional diversity audit**
- **Establishing top-level strategies and expected outcomes based on equity, diversity and inclusion principles**
- **Calling out the difficult issues**
- **Proactively addressing underrepresentation of nondominant faculty**
- **Monitoring institutional processes for equitable outcomes**
- **Investing in systematic and sustained diversity education**
- **Creating an institutional safety net of resources and support**
- **Assessing the impact of admissions criteria and financial aid on underrepresented students**
- **Critically evaluating faculty workload models**
- **Conducting research on demographic changes and inclusion.<sup>14</sup>**

These guidelines taken together serve as the foundation for the specific action items included in this plan.

<sup>13</sup> The ACE Report identifies three categories of institutions: low, moderate and high diversity and inclusion capacity.

<sup>14</sup> Chun, E. B., & Feagin, J. R. (2020). *Rethinking Diversity Frameworks in Higher Education*. New York: Routledge.

“

**Institutions demonstrating high levels of capacity for [diversity and inclusion] work to include racial incidents and campus racial climate have moved beyond the rhetoric of diversity to investing significant resources and time in developing a strategic plan for diversity and inclusion.”**

AMERICAN COUNCIL  
ON EDUCATION (ACE)

## Working with Urgency and Patience

In the development of this plan, we realize the entire university must work with urgency yet exercise patience regarding outcomes. Given this balanced perspective, TU will continue to measure short-term action items while anticipating long-term results. Towson University leadership will draw on simple, clear metrics to determine **progress** on goals and action items.

### Our Approach

The following approach to measuring progress from the University of California, Davis (2017)<sup>15</sup> was used to determine measurement, timelines and responsible units:

- **Create multidimensional benchmarks to track real progress, facilitate data-driven decision-making and support the Presidential Priorities**
- **Disaggregate demographic data to better identify populations that need attention**
- **Show trends over time**
- **Support benchmarking against peers where valid and useful**
- **Reflect, as much as possible, the current ways we understand ourselves individually, our university and our world**
- **Tell the story of diversity, equity and inclusion at Towson University by dispelling myths, highlighting data and advancing critical strategies**
- **Provide enough flexibility for bold, innovative ideas for which no current benchmark exists**

Specific oversight responsibilities will be assigned throughout the university, especially within divisions, colleges and departments to encourage campus support for this progress and evolution of the TU culture. Recognizing that inclusive excellence has been typically measured by scorecard tools<sup>16</sup> (Williams, 2005), this plan relies on applying our definition of inclusive excellence along with our equity toolkit. A robust and adept equity and inclusion measurement and assessment working group will prompt and support campus-wide measurement, reporting and monitoring.

<sup>15</sup> University of California, Davis. (2017). *Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Vision*. University of California, Davis Institutional Diversity.

<sup>16</sup> Williams, D. A., Berger, J., & McClendon, S. (2005). *Toward a model of inclusive excellence and change in higher education*. Washington, DC: AAC&U.

## Strategic Measurement and Assessment Questions

The task force developed assessment questions that spanned the institution. For students, we have considered categories of ethnicity, race, gender identity, gender expression, sexual identity, ability status, military/veteran status, age, income, national origin, citizenship status, educational attainment of parents, food security, housing security and residency status. For our employees, we considered educational level, rank, salary, duration of employment, citizenship and nation of earned degree(s). We also examined our current and aspirational peers for their strategic priorities and actions related to diversity, equity and inclusion.

### STUDENTS

- Are certain colleges/schools/majors more welcoming to diversity than others?
- What colleges/schools/majors are growing, and is that growth sufficient to make an impact on needed shifts in demographics?
- What relationships exist between our diversity and degree completion rates, including time to degree? Are underrepresented or disadvantaged undergraduate students falling out of the pipeline to graduation? If so, where?
- Are graduate and professional students falling out of the pipeline to degree completion? If so, where?
- Where are native born, underrepresented graduate students in their field coming from?
- How can we make the social and academic environments more conducive to emotionally and physically healthy, insightful, aware and successful students?

### WORKFORCE

- Are we experiencing diversity across all positions? Are certain positions and classifications more diverse than others?
- How are demographics changing in colleges and departments? Are the changes significant enough to make a sufficient impact on demographics of faculty and staff?
- Are colleges and departments retaining student employees, faculty and staff, and is that sufficient to make an impact on demographics?
- What can retention rates, turnover rates, duration of hire, vacancy rate and turnover quotients tell us about who is leaving and when?

“

**There are people who have taken a special interest in elevating me, and, once I start to get burned out, I am given the opportunity to move up or grow in professional development.**

LATINX FACULTY & STAFF  
ASSOCIATION FOCUS GROUP

- Where are opportunities for providing greater stability in the workforce, particularly among underrepresented or historically marginalized groups?
- Who is advancing and being promoted more quickly? Are there differences in who receives tenure and in what positions?
- How equitably are financial resources distributed in terms of salary, benefits and professional development support?

#### ***PEER BENCHMARKING***

- How does Towson University compare to institutions in the University System of Maryland and peer institutions across the country in terms of strategic diversity, equity and inclusion goals and initiatives?





SECTION 5

**Strategic Plan  
Action Items**

| DIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN |

# Action Items

## Four Overarching Goals:

- 1 EDUCATION AND SCHOLARSHIP:** Provide ongoing teaching, learning, research and service opportunities to prepare and support students, alumni, current and retired staff and faculty to address diversity, equity and inclusion issues in disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields and all areas of work at Towson University.
- 2 RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND SUCCESS:** Create or revise protocols, policies, procedures and practices that create a pipeline for high-caliber students, staff and faculty to join, stay and succeed at Towson University. This pipeline includes strategic recruitment, innovative retention methods and measured academic and professional success.
- 3 CAMPUS CLIMATE:** Cultivate a sustainable and inclusive community where all members from all backgrounds, identities, abilities and life experiences are welcomed, valued and supported.
- 4 EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT:** Implement systematic processes and protocols—grounded in inclusive excellence and equity—for regular data collection to report progress on education and scholarship; recruitment, retention and success; and campus climate.



# Diversity Strategic Plan Action Items

## EDUCATION AND SCHOLARSHIP

Provide ongoing teaching, learning, research and service opportunities to prepare and support students, staff and faculty to address diversity, equity and inclusion issues in disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields and all areas of work at Towson University.

### Goals and Responsible Units

	All Units
<p><b>1.1:</b> Increase the ongoing university support for staff and faculty professional development that prioritizes diversity, equity and inclusion.</p>	
<p><b>1.1.1:</b> Mandatory interactive education and training for all staff and faculty on hate/bias, cultural intelligence, unconscious bias, anti-racism and other anti-oppression concepts.</p>	<p>Inclusion &amp; Institutional Equity Human Resources Academic Affairs</p>
<p><b>1.1.2:</b> Provide ongoing professional development opportunities, conferences and workshops to develop and improve skills and knowledge on best practices in inclusive excellence specific to each discipline, profession or area of scholarship.</p>	<p>Academic Affairs Human Resources Inclusion &amp; Institutional Equity</p>
<p><b>1.1.3:</b> Provide annual professional development training on unconscious bias for members of search, hiring, promotion/tenure and award selection committees.</p>	<p>Academic Affairs Human Resources Inclusion &amp; Institutional Equity</p>
<p><b>1.1.4:</b> Continue to develop the Target of Opportunity Program to identify and hire faculty of exceptional merit and promise from underrepresented groups.</p>	<p>Academic Affairs Inclusion &amp; Institutional Equity</p>

# Diversity Strategic Plan Action Items

## EDUCATION AND SCHOLARSHIP

Provide ongoing teaching, learning, research and service opportunities to prepare and support students, staff and faculty to address diversity, inclusion and equity issues in disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields and all areas of work at Towson University.

### Goals and Responsible Units

	All Units
<p><b>1.2:</b> Increase diversity-rich learning experiences that raise all students' self-awareness and cultural intelligence and increase understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion, while encouraging engagement in the greater community.</p>	
<p><b>1.2.1:</b> Identify and support development of curricular programs and course offerings on diversity, inclusion and equity.</p>	<p>Student Affairs Academic Affairs Inclusion &amp; Institutional Equity</p>
<p><b>1.2.2:</b> Increase the number of diverse participants through centralization of services related to mentorship and leadership.</p>	<p>Academic Affairs Student Affairs Inclusion &amp; Institutional Equity</p>
<p><b>1.2.3:</b> Increase student participation in faculty scholarship related to diversity, equity and inclusion.</p>	<p>Academic Affairs Inclusion &amp; Institutional Equity Student Affairs</p>
<p><b>1.2.4:</b> Mandatory interactive education and training for all students on hate/bias, cultural intelligence, unconscious bias, anti-racism and other anti-oppression concepts.</p>	<p>Inclusion &amp; Institutional Equity Student Affairs Student Government Association</p>

# Diversity Strategic Plan Action Items

## EDUCATION AND SCHOLARSHIP

Provide ongoing teaching, learning, research and service opportunities to prepare and support students, staff and faculty to address diversity, equity and inclusion issues in disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields and all areas of work at Towson University.

### Goals and Responsible Units

**1.3:** Develop resources for faculty to learn, use and evaluate inclusive teaching practices and scholarly research.

All Units

**1.3.1:** Expand new faculty onboarding to include ongoing sessions addressing topics related to diversity, equity and inclusion in the classroom. Present inclusive classroom strategies to engage all students in discussions, projects, internships and externships.

Academic Affairs  
Inclusion & Institutional Equity

**1.3.2:** Provide the Creating an Inclusive Classroom series of developmental workshops for faculty each term to focus on responding to challenging diversity, equity and inclusion classroom issues and discussions.

Academic Affairs  
Inclusion & Institutional Equity

**1.3.3:** Provide professional development opportunities focusing on success for all members of the campus (students, faculty and staff). Trainings must ensure access for all members of the TU community with inclusive and culturally relevant information and knowledge.

Inclusion & Institutional Equity  
Academic Affairs  
Human Resources  
Student Affairs

# Diversity Strategic Plan Action Items

## RECRUITMENT, RETENTION and SUCCESS

Create and revise protocols, policies, procedures and practices that create a pipeline for high-caliber students, staff and faculty to join, stay and succeed at Towson University. This pipeline includes strategic recruitment, innovative onboarding and retention methods and measured academic and professional success.

### Goals and Responsible Units

	All Units
<p><b>2.1:</b> Identify and seal leaks in the recruiting and hiring pipeline while fostering an inclusive TU environment that encourages students, staff and faculty to stay and flourish.</p>	
<p><b>2.1.1:</b> Establish and implement student, staff and faculty recruitment plans that are innovative, nontraditional and capitalize on the Baltimore metropolitan area.</p>	<p>Human Resources Colleges University Admissions</p>
<p><b>2.1.2:</b> Establish and execute cluster hiring policies (including funding) to improve the presence of underrepresented faculty across academic departments that have historically struggled with diverse applicant pools.</p>	<p>Office of the Provost Colleges Administration &amp; Finance Human Resources</p>
<p><b>2.1.3:</b> Establish graduate assistantships, teaching assistantships, fellowships and other USM partnership programs (including funding) that create a homegrown pipeline for underrepresented populations from graduate school to the professoriate across the DC/MD/VA region.</p>	<p>Office of Graduate Studies/ Graduate Student Admissions Office of the Provost Administration &amp; Finance</p>
<p><b>2.1.4:</b> Foster a culture of ongoing professional development consistent with best practices in diversity, equity and inclusion.</p>	<p>President's Cabinet</p>

# Diversity Strategic Plan Action Items

## RECRUITMENT, RETENTION and SUCCESS

Create and revise protocols, policies, procedures and practices that create a pipeline for high-caliber students, staff and faculty to join, stay and succeed at Towson University. This pipeline includes strategic recruitment, innovative onboarding and retention methods and measured academic and professional success.

### Goals and Responsible Units

	All Units
<p><b>2.2:</b> Build and sustain a campus-wide infrastructure for inclusive mentoring of students, staff and faculty as a core value of the campus community.</p>	
<p><b>2.2.1:</b> Conduct an audit of current mentoring programs for students, staff and faculty.</p>	<p>Student Affairs Human Resources Academic Affairs FACET</p>
<p><b>2.2.2:</b> Create a Community of Practice for faculty mentoring under the auspices of FACET, which will highlight on-campus best practices in ongoing faculty mentoring.</p>	<p>Office of the Provost FACET</p>
<p><b>2.2.3:</b> Provide training and professional development for mentors of students, staff and faculty.</p>	<p>Student Affairs Human Resources Academic Affairs FACET</p>
<p><b>2.2.4:</b> Provide training, structure and space for the ongoing mentoring of students, staff and faculty who are underrepresented on campus generally and underrepresented in their professional fields specifically.</p>	<p>Student Affairs Human Resources Academic Affairs FACET</p>

# Diversity Strategic Plan Action Items

## RECRUITMENT, RETENTION and SUCCESS

Create and revise protocols, policies, procedures and practices that create a pipeline for high-caliber students, staff and faculty to join, stay and succeed at Towson University. This pipeline includes strategic recruitment, innovative onboarding and retention methods and measured academic and professional success.

### Goals and Responsible Units

<p><b>2.3:</b> Review current programs, policies and practices that foster a culture of inclusion and equity for students, staff and faculty.</p>	<p>All Units</p>
<p><b>2.3.1:</b> Identify invisible/uncompensated labor of staff and faculty through a transparent process that documents current experiences on an office, department or divisional level.</p>	<p>Human Resources Academic Affairs Strategic Partnerships &amp; Applied Research</p>
<p><b>2.3.2:</b> Identify solutions for invisible/uncompensated labor of staff and faculty by proactively providing incentives to include professional development opportunities and supervisor endorsement.</p>	<p>President’s Cabinet Department Chairs</p>
<p><b>2.3.3:</b> Create a communication plan that ensures all students, staff and faculty are aware of campus-wide opportunities.</p>	<p>University Marketing &amp; Communications</p>
<p><b>2.3.4:</b> Create collaborative programs across the DC/MD/VA region to increase campus exposure to underrepresented populations.</p>	<p>Student Affairs Human Resources Academic Affairs</p>

# Diversity Strategic Plan Action Items

## RECRUITMENT, RETENTION and SUCCESS

Create and revise protocols, policies, procedures and practices that create a pipeline for high-caliber students, staff and faculty to join, stay and succeed at Towson University. This pipeline includes strategic recruitment, innovative onboarding and retention methods and measured academic and professional success.

### Goals and Responsible Units

**2.4:** Increase the number of staff and faculty from historically underrepresented groups by 2025.

All Units

**2.4.1:** Develop a plan for diversification and inclusion before authorization of staff and faculty hires.

Human Resources  
Academic Affairs  
Inclusion & Institutional Equity



# Diversity Strategic Plan Action Items

## CAMPUS CLIMATE

Cultivate a sustainable and inclusive community where all members from all backgrounds, identities, abilities and life experiences are welcomed, valued and supported.

### Goals and Responsible Units

	All Units
<p><b>3.1:</b> Cultivate a community at TU where our diverse backgrounds, experiences, identities and perspectives enhance our pursuit of equity and inclusion.</p>	
<p><b>3.1.1:</b> Provide robust and intentional onboarding grounded in diversity, equity and inclusion:</p> <p><b>3.1.1.1:</b> New students, staff and faculty understand TU's commitment and key terms, policies, resources and expectations around diversity, equity and inclusion.</p>	<p>Inclusion &amp; Institutional Equity</p> <p>Student Affairs Human Resources Academic Affairs</p>
<p><b>3.1.1.2:</b> Provide intentionally created onboarding for chairs, managers, supervisors and leaders in new supervisory roles.</p>	<p>Human Resources Academic Affairs</p>
<p><b>3.1.1.3:</b> Provide information, training and support for the development and engagement of alumni affinity groups and donors.</p>	<p>University Advancement</p>
<p><b>3.1.1.4:</b> Provide information, training and support for the development and engagement of community partners.</p>	<p>Strategic Partnerships and Applied Research Student Affairs</p>

# Diversity Strategic Plan Action Items

## CAMPUS CLIMATE

Cultivate a sustainable and inclusive community where all members from all backgrounds, identities, abilities and life experiences are welcomed, valued and supported.

### Goals and Responsible Units

<p><b>3.1.2:</b> Foster a spirit of collaboration across units.</p> <p><b>3.1.2.1:</b> Explore incentives for creating and maintaining collaborations across units.</p>	<p>President’s Cabinet Inclusion &amp; Institutional Equity</p>
<p><b>3.1.2.2:</b> Provide information, training and support for the development and engagement of community partners.</p>	<p>Strategic Partnerships and Applied Research Student Affairs</p>
<p><b>3.1.3:</b> Regularly assess practices, procedures and policies through the equity toolkit.</p>	<p>All units</p>
<p><b>3.1.4:</b> Intentionally plan for monitoring and assessing needs and climate at all levels and in all units.</p>	<p>Inclusion &amp; Institutional Equity Human Resources Academic Affairs All units</p>
<p><b>3.1.5:</b> Institutionalize efforts, such as the president’s Unearthing the History of Diversity at TU project, to collect and maintain the inclusive and reconciled history of institutional and community diversity, equity and inclusion.</p>	<p>Inclusion &amp; Institutional Equity Special Collections &amp; University Archives Academic Affairs</p>

# Diversity Strategic Plan Action Items

## CAMPUS CLIMATE

Cultivate a sustainable and inclusive community where all members from all backgrounds, identities, abilities and life experiences are welcomed, valued and supported.

### Goals and Responsible Units

<p><b>3.2:</b> Cultivate a learning and working community, a hub of opportunities where students, staff and faculty feel included, respected, supported, valued and able to participate, contribute and thrive at TU.</p>	<p>All Units</p>
<p><b>3.2.1:</b> Provide interactive, dynamic, culturally responsive and robust professional development and training opportunities that address university priorities for equity and inclusion for all students, staff and faculty.</p>	<p>Inclusion &amp; Institutional Equity Student Affairs Human Resources Academic Affairs</p>
<p><b>3.2.2:</b> Provide ongoing leadership training for department chairs and supervisors, with a focus on office climate, campus climate and culture, inclusive leadership and creating success plans for staff and faculty from diverse backgrounds.</p>	<p>Inclusion &amp; Institutional Equity Human Resources Academic Affairs Student Affairs</p>
<p><b>3.2.3:</b> Provide support for participation in professional development and volunteer opportunities with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion.</p>	<p>All units</p>

# Diversity Strategic Plan Action Items

## CAMPUS CLIMATE

Cultivate a sustainable and inclusive community where all members from all backgrounds, identities, abilities and life experiences are welcomed, valued and supported.

### Goals and Responsible Units

**3.3:** Continue to improve and create buildings and facilities that are welcoming, accessible and inclusive for all people and cultures.

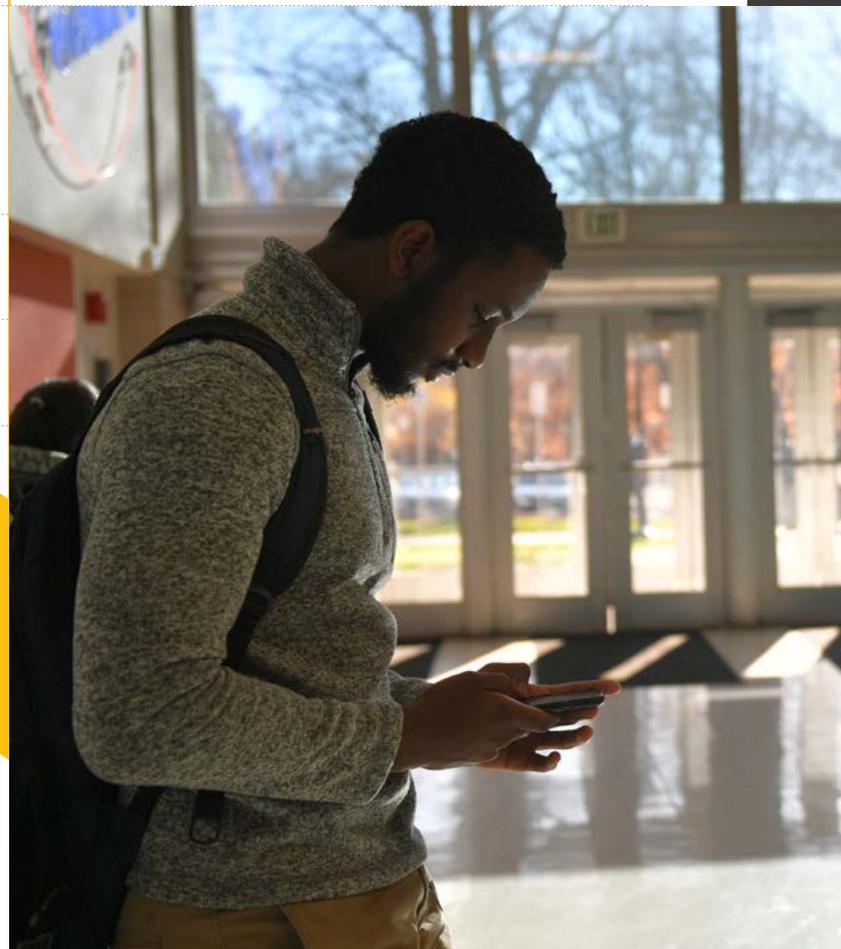
Administration and Finance  
Inclusion & Institutional Equity

**3.3.1:** Evaluate facilities for students, staff, faculty and visitors. Revise plans for creating more inclusive and equitable facilities. Foster collaboration and shared responsibility for advocating for a welcoming campus.

**3.3.2:** Accessibility: Regularly assess the campus environment for accessibility.

**3.3.3:** Safety: Regularly assess campus grounds and facilities.

**3.3.4:** Culturally responsive spaces: Regularly assess the availability of dedicated and multipurpose facilities inclusive of identities and cultures.



# Diversity Strategic Plan Action Items

## EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Implement systematic processes and protocols—grounded in inclusive excellence and equity—for data collection to report progress on education and scholarship; recruitment, retention and success; and campus climate.

### Goals and Responsible Units

**4.1:** Develop an Equity and Inclusion Measurement & Assessment Working Group and charge it with timely and ongoing campus-wide measurement, reporting and monitoring of inclusive excellence and equity and alignment with university assessment plans.

All Units

**4.2:** Develop systematic plan for conducting climate studies for students, staff, faculty, alumni and community partners.

Inclusion & Institutional Equity  
Academic Affairs  
All units

**4.3:** Create a centralized hub for diversity, equity and inclusion assessment efforts, including internal assessments as well as TU participation in regional/national studies.

Inclusion & Institutional Equity  
Academic Affairs  
All units



# Acknowledgements

President Kim Schatzel, Ph.D.

## A More Inclusive TU: Diversity Strategic Plan Task Force

**Jennifer Ballengee, Ph.D.**

Professor, Department of English  
Chair, Academic Senate

*College of Liberal Arts*

**Nate Barker**

Employee & Labor Relations Manager,  
Office of Human Resources

*Administration and Finance*

**Ziad Bentahar, Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor, Department  
of Foreign Languages

*College of Liberal Arts*

**Amanda Burnham, M.F.A.**

Professor, Department of Art + Design,  
Art History, Art Education

*College of Fine Arts & Communication*

**Tim Bibo Jr.**

Director, Office of Institutional Research

*Academic Affairs*

**Brenda Conley, Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor, Department  
of Instructional Leadership &  
Professional Development

*College of Education*

**Leah Cox, Ph.D.**

Vice President of Inclusion  
& Institutional Equity

*Office of Inclusion & Institutional Equity*

**Robert Giordani**

Associate Vice President for Enrollment  
Management and Registrar

*Office of the Provost*

**Shaunna Payne Gold, Ed.D.**

Assistant Provost for Diversity and  
Inclusion for Academic Affairs

*Office of the Provost*

**Col. Charles “Joe” Herring**

Chief of Police

Director, Office of Public Safety

*Administration and Finance*

**Brian Jara**

Coordinator of Diversity  
Trainings & Initiatives

*Office of Inclusion & Institutional Equity*

**Felicity Knox**

Library Associate, Special Collections  
and University Archives

*Albert S. Cook Library*

**Khouri Lassiter**

Director of Diversity & Inclusion

*Student Government Association 2019-2020*

**Matthew Lenno**

Assistant Vice President, Campus Life

*Student Affairs*

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**Gilda Martinez-Alba, Ed.D.**  
Professor & Assistant Dean  
*College of Education*

**Alison McCartney, Ph.D.**  
Professor, Department of  
Political Science  
Faculty Director, Honors College  
*College of Liberal Arts*

**Cpt. Woodrow Myers**  
University Police, Office of Public Safety  
*Administration and Finance*

**Stephen Rosenfeld**  
Director of Alumni Communication  
and Recognition  
*University Advancement*

**Ardys Russakis**  
Senior Strategist, BTU  
and Anchor Initiatives  
*Strategic Partnerships & Applied Research*

**Lisa Simmons**  
Lecturer, Business Excellence Program  
*College of Business & Economics*

**Antwaine Smith**  
Senior Assistant Athletic Director  
*Athletics*

**Wendy Whitner, M.P.H, Ph.D.**  
Clinical Assistant Professor,  
Department of Health Sciences  
*College of Health Professions*

**Mia Williams**  
Graduate Student  
*Graduate Student Association 2019-2020*

**Donn Worgs, Ph.D.**  
Professor, Department of Political Science  
*College of Liberal Arts*

### **TASK FORCE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT:**

**Paul Schuler**  
Executive Administrative Assistant  
*Office of Inclusion & Institutional Equity*

### **TASK FORCE FACILITATOR:**

**Kathleen Case**  
Case Leadership Institute, LLC

### **TASK FORCE MEMBERS NO LONGER AT TOWSON UNIVERSITY, WITH FORMER AFFILIATIONS:**

**Joel Bolling**  
*Student Affairs and Office of  
Inclusion & Institutional Equity*

**Laura Clapper**  
*University Marketing & Communications*

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**Diversity Strategic Plan | 2020–25**

Office of Inclusion  
& Institutional Equity

8000 York Road  
Towson, MD 21252-0001

[https://www.towson.edu/inclusionequity/  
diversity-strategic-plan.html](https://www.towson.edu/inclusionequity/diversity-strategic-plan.html)

[inclusion@towson.edu](mailto:inclusion@towson.edu)