

LIVING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

VCU School of Nursing Diversity and Inclusion Plan for Action

INTRODUCTION

The Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) School of Nursing (SON) is committed to ensuring diversity and inclusion among our students, staff and faculty. As a community of scholars and lifelong learners, we value diversity in its many forms and believe that a diverse and inclusive community makes for a better working and learning environment. We are committed to achieving meaningful and intentional diversity and inclusion in nursing education, research, scholarship, practice and service.

President Michael Rao reaffirmed VCU's commitment to the long-standing core values and principles of equity, inclusion and fairness that define, guide and unite us (email 2/23/2017). The SON embraces the framework from the VCU [2017-2022 Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Action Plan and Report to the University](#) which list four themes as guiding structures for academic and administrative units. These themes are:

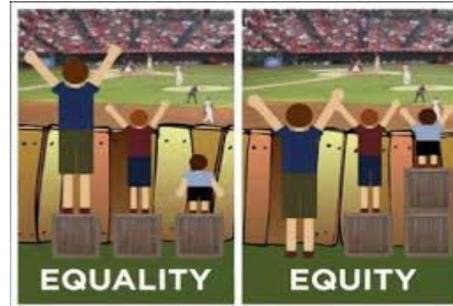
- Institutional commitment
- Climate and intergroup relations
- Recruitment, retention and success
- Education, scholarship and research

Furthermore, the SON endorses the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) [Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity in Academic Nursing Position Statement](#) and adopts the AACN definitions of diversity, inclusion and equity, realizing that some areas of diversity require more attention in certain settings and periods of time.

Diversity: “references a broad range of individual, population, and social characteristics, including but not limited to age; sex; race; ethnicity; sexual orientation; gender identity; family structures; geographic locations; national origin; immigrants and refugees; language; physical, functional, and learning abilities; religious beliefs; and socioeconomic status” (AACN, 2017 pg. 1).

Inclusion: “represents environmental and organizational cultures in which faculty, students, staff, and administrators with diverse characteristics thrive. Inclusive environments require intentionality and embrace differences, not merely tolerate them” (AACN, 2017 pg. 1).

Equity: “the ability to recognize the differences in the resources or knowledge needed to allow individuals to fully participate in society, including access to higher education, with the goal of overcoming obstacles to ensure fairness”.



Adapted from Craig Froehle, 2012

Simply put, diversity is the *stuff* and inclusion is *what makes the stuff work*. Equity goes beyond equality and includes principles of justice.

GOALS

The SON embraces the following goals related to diversity and inclusion. As a community, we strive to:

1. Create an environment where diversity and inclusion is craved, welcomed, and embraced.
2. Identify key aspects of diversity and inclusion to work toward as a SON community.
3. Individually and collectively, become more educated on issues related to diversity, inclusion, and equity and how our own bias or lack of understanding influences our thoughts and behaviors.

While we recognize and value the many aspects of diversity such as age, race, gender, disability, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, disability status, political beliefs, economic status, geographical background, culture and thought, the focus of our efforts will be in the following two areas:

- Climate, Culture, and Community: Create and support a diverse and inclusive student, staff and faculty community.

Every organization has a culture which represents what it believes and why. The culture is often unwritten and goes beyond the mission, vision and values that are written. Therefore, the establishment of a culture of diversity and inclusive must be *intentional*. Increasingly, there is more evidence for the business case for diversity and inclusion which leads to organizational change and excellence (Tapia, 2017). The VCU SON is part of a larger organization/business and as such, diversity and inclusion are not just the *right* things to do they are the *smart* things to do.

- The SON Academic Experience: Create opportunities for curricula, courses, content, and pedagogy to support diversity.

The academic enterprise is at the core of institutions of higher learning. VCUSON is committed to being a leader in addressing and expanding diversity and inclusion in the educational mission. Towards this end, we will work to assure a rich academic environment that addresses issues related to diversity and inclusion in what we teach and how we teach it. The NLN refers to the need to utilize inclusive pedagogies which are more student-centered and will lead to better student engagement. These pedagogies are *intentional* in addressing “the diversity of cultures, academic skills, language backgrounds, learning styles, and academic preparation levels among students today.”

Further, we are committed to preparing a diverse nursing workforce. The National League for Nursing (NLN) identifies workforce diversity (race, ethnicity and gender) as critical issues to be addressed by schools of nursing. Other important considerations include addressing disparities related to LGBTQ community, nurses with disabilities and the need to prepare nurses to deliver culturally competent care.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation I

The Dean shall appoint a Diversity and Inclusion Council to oversee the diversity goals of the SON. The new council replaces the Committee for Cultural Action and has enhanced responsibilities. The overall accountability should rest with the Dean or her designee. A new council will reset and refocus on intentional activities to facilitate building the desired climate and community for the SON. Thus, the council will plan, sponsor and inform activities related to diversity and inclusion. The council will review the plan on an annual basis and submit an annual report on its activities to the Dean.

Recommendation II

The SON should examine policies (e.g. admissions), standards, marketing and practices to assure that these reflect a commitment towards diversity and inclusion.

Recommendation III

Continue to require, support (and evaluate) faculty and staff development in the areas related to diversity and inclusion such as bias*, privilege*, poverty, civility, supporting success etc. (*These are not inherently bad, everyone has bias and some privileges. The key is knowing how these might influence your decision-making and behaviors in

less than optimal ways.) The development activities should be incorporated in the annual work plan and evaluation.

Recommendation IV

Support faculty development in the areas of inclusive pedagogies, strategies for teaching diverse students, understanding health disparities, social determinants of health, and health equity. Additionally, support enhanced awareness of the cultural factors that affect health, and recognizing one's own biases, assumptions and stereotypes related to human differences.

Recommendation V

Use the NLN Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit (2016) as a guide for evaluating and enhancing diversity and inclusion in the academic mission, leadership, faculty, students, staff and curricula and to assist in devising an inclusive curriculum and establishing community partnerships that support diversity, equity, and inclusion.

References

American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2017). *Diversity, inclusion, and equity in Academic Nursing: AACN position statement*. Washington, DC. Author.

<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/media-relations/AACN-Position-Statement-Diversity-Inclusion.pdf>

National League for Nursing. (2016). *NLN diversity & inclusion toolkit*. Washington, DC: Author.

<http://www.nln.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/diversity-toolkit.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

Tapia, A. T. (2016). *The inclusion paradox: The Obama era and the transformation of global diversity*, (3rd ed.) USA. Korn Ferry Institute.