BUILDING THE FOUNDATION
2019-2021 STRATEGIC PLAN FOR A DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE U OF A
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ABOUT US

The University of Arkansas envisions a world committed to inclusivity, where diversity, equity, access and civility are valued as a part of our culture, climate and everyday lives. The University’s Office for Diversity and Inclusion strives to make this vision a reality by reinforcing inclusive excellence in everything we say and do. We have a responsibility as engaged citizens to consistently incorporate behaviors and practices that support an inclusive environment on campus, in Arkansas and everywhere.

The Office for Diversity and Inclusion strives for Inclusive Excellence, which entails total campus engagement in actively and genuinely supporting the ideals of diversity and inclusion. We believe diversity should permeate the very fabric of our educational institution.
At the University of Arkansas, we believe that diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are central to our academic and service mission. The Office for Diversity and Inclusion strives to engage the University of Arkansas community to foster a culture of inclusion and respect, where every member of the campus community is valued and successful.

This strategic plan creates a framework of goals and actions to support the office’s efforts both on the U of A campus and across the state. If we want to attract students and prepare them to succeed in the classroom and today’s global workforce, we must help them develop the skills to thrive in diverse environments. Every aspect of our work as a university, from enrollment and academic excellence to research and workforce preparation, is strengthened when we embrace diversity and inclusion.

An audit of existing DEI efforts on campus found that while the university had many robust and exciting diversity and inclusion initiatives – often explicitly part of job descriptions and evaluations – there was a lack of coordination and shared purpose. The first step in advancing the University of Arkansas’ efforts around diversity and inclusion had to be uniting and strengthening these disparate projects.

This plan was developed by the Office for Diversity and Inclusion’s core leadership teams and senior fellows, with input and guidance from several teams across campus, including Diversity and Inclusion Student Ambassadors, Faculty and Staff Champions and leadership groups focused on the five pillars: Research and Discovery; Education, Training and Support; Engagement and Outreach; Inclusive Practices; and Strategic Leadership and Supports.

These five pillars create the foundation for the Office for Diversity and Inclusion to advance its vision toward a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable campus and state.
Dr. Yvette Murphy-Erby, Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion, led an initial audit of how University of Arkansas faculty, staff and students were already tackling issues of diversity and inclusion on campus.

A team composed of senior faculty whose work on campus intersected with diversity and inclusion met to kick off the planning process. This group, the Diversity Leaders Team, was tasked with setting the priorities for the new Office for Diversity and Inclusion and identifying pathways for collaboration and cohesion of diversity and inclusion efforts on campus.

Student Diversity Ambassador and Faculty and Staff Diversity Champions volunteer teams were formed to keep their finger on the pulse of their community’s needs, raise awareness about ongoing diversity and inclusion efforts, and hold the Office for Diversity and Inclusion accountable for progress.

The Office for Diversity and Inclusion’s website launched.

First Celebrating Diversity and Inclusion in Arkansas event launched.

The U of A Board of Trustees approved the establishment of the IDEALS Institute.

Executive Director and staff of IDEALS institute hired.

IDEALS Institute up and running.
The University of Arkansas envisions a world committed to inclusivity, where diversity, equity, access and civility are valued as a part of our culture, climate and everyday lives, and the University’s Office for Diversity and Inclusion strives to make this vision a reality.

The Five Pillars advance the three outcomes of the university’s mission:

› Providing access to a comprehensive and internationally competitive public education and fostering student success across a wide spectrum of disciplines.

› Utilizing research, discovery and creative activity to improve the quality of life, develop solutions to the challenges we face and drive the state’s economy.

› Contributing service and expertise through outreach, engagement and collaboration.
PILLAR: RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY

“Many of the grants and projects we’re working on are designed to help traditionally underserved families and communities access opportunities that are otherwise not within their reach.”

DR. MARCIA SHOBE, Senior Fellow for Research and Discovery

Our Goal

To facilitate DEI research and creative endeavors by engaging in scholarship and assessment that supports our progress towards a more inclusive, diverse and equitable campus, region and state.

What We Do

The IDEALS Institute advances this work by engaging faculty and staff in innovative research related to diversity and inclusion.

Key Action Items

› Develop a clearinghouse for U of A DEI research, creative activities and publication abstracts.

› Provide support for researchers to access local and international grant opportunities related to DEI.

› Promote DEI research through trainings, research fellowships, and symposiums.

› Serve as a resource for investigators incorporating DEI considerations into their research.

› Analyze data from IDEALS Institute education and training evaluations.
PILLAR: EDUCATION, TRAINING AND SUPPORT

“When you think of the greatest inventions, you clearly see that creativity and innovation happen when you welcome differing perspectives and diversity.”

DR. ANA BRIDGES, Senior Fellow for Education, Training and Support

Our Goal

To fulfill our mission as a land-grant and flagship institution by providing inclusion, diversity and equity education, training and supports to internal and external stakeholders as the state’s hub for knowledge, training, supports and resources.

What We Do

The office will house these efforts in the IDEALS Institute as a self-sustaining entity for outreach and training to the campus community and external organizations who want to access the university’s DEI expertise, partnerships and resources.

Key Action Items

› Develop DEI-related content, curricula and training resources for the IDEALS Institute through needs assessment.

› Develop and maintain an accessible, updated resource collection of evidence-based DEI training content and research responsive to the needs of key stakeholders.

› Facilitate a network of coaches, consultants, facilitators and content experts to work with external partners.
PILLAR: ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH

“We are developing the workforce of tomorrow. The world is diverse. This isn’t just a work or service that we’re providing for Northwest Arkansas, but for the state, the country and the world.”

ANGELA MOSLEY-MONTS, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion

Our Goal

Develop strategic engagement and outreach frameworks that will build awareness in the campus community and promote best practices and collaboration with individuals, communities, businesses and other educational institutions in Arkansas communities.

What We Do

The Engagement and Outreach Team analyzes how the university engages with its community and state. It works to build awareness on campus and form reciprocal partnerships with institutions across Arkansas to integrate DEI practices into their organizations.

Key Action Items

› Increase campus engagement of underrepresented students, resource groups and alumni societies.

› Facilitate the development of business, community and nonprofit relationships that can lead to mentorship development, internship placement, resource support and increased initiatives related to DEI.

› Enhance coordination efforts with minority-serving institutions.

“The university is dedicated to the state of Arkansas and building a better and more inclusive world.”

DR. BARBARA A. LOFTON, Senior Fellow, Engagement and Outreach
PILLAR: INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

“Our Goal
To create an environment on campus where every member of the university community feels welcomed and included and has the same opportunities to be successful through equitable policies and practices.

What We Do
The Office for Diversity and Inclusion serves as a resource hub and catalyst for the university community and its leaders to develop, enhance and implement inclusive policies.

Key Action Items
› Develop resource guides and templates to support campus unit diversity and inclusion efforts, structures and practices.
› Promote strategies to encourage visibility of campus-wide inclusion.
› Build a robust network of diversity and inclusion leaders and champions to infuse diversity and inclusion efforts throughout the university community.

“Diversity and inclusion foster excellence. Inclusion energizes people because they feel like they are a part of something bigger.”

DR. ANNA ZAJICEK, Senior Fellow for Inclusive Practices
Our Goal

To foster diversity and inclusion practices across the campus community by supporting the planning and implementation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) plans for each campus unit.

What We Do

The office provides feedback and support to university departments as they create and implement individualized diversity and inclusion plans to better serve their communities, as well as develops a structure of support to sustain DEI efforts across campus.

Key Action Items

› Work with all campus units to create departmental diversity and inclusion plans specific to their division.

› Provide consultation and coaching to facilitate DEI leadership development.

› Promote a robust network of DEI leaders and champions to sustain DEI efforts at the university.

“As a university, we want to be a place where everyone can succeed, and everyone has the same opportunity to succeed. I think that represents the values of our students, faculty and staff.”

DR. JAMIE HESTEKIN, Senior Fellow for Strategic Leadership and Supports
IDEALS consists of strategic planning core teams led by fellows in our five focus areas: Research and Discovery; Education, Training and Support; Engagement and Outreach; Inclusive Practices; and Strategic Leadership and Supports.

This team, comprised of diversity leaders from various colleges and university departments, is divided into task groups focused on coordination, strategic communication and other areas that can provide support for a more diverse and inclusive campus environment. They play a big part in helping the University community stay "in the know" with access to important diversity and cultural events, resources and ways to get involved.

In the Spring of 2018, the Office for Diversity and Inclusion assembled two special teams to rally students, faculty and staff behind the university’s goals for campus diversity. Team members are dedicated to assisting the Office for Diversity and Inclusion through campus awareness, recruitment and promotion of diversity and inclusion ideals.

The University of Arkansas doesn’t work in a vacuum, especially when it comes to challenges in diversity, equity and inclusion. Our office plans to engage with external boards, groups, committees and other community efforts to promote a culture and climate reflecting diversity and inclusion — both on and off campus.
To be successful, you have to build a solid foundation for future progress. This plan serves as the foundation for the future of diversity and inclusion efforts at the University of Arkansas. It is the beginning of a journey and we are thrilled to share these first steps on what will be a long but rewarding path toward improved DEI supports and resources for the campus and the state of Arkansas. The Office for Diversity and Inclusion recognizes that we cannot do this work alone. Please stay connected and join us for opportunities to collaborate, share your ideas and be a part of the journey. If you have immediate questions or comments, please reach out to our office at dvrst@uark.edu or 479-575-3338. We are excited to build a more diverse, equitable and inclusive University of Arkansas with you.