

Office of the Vice President for Communications

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan | FY 2025

Strategic Plan Overview

Introduction:

The President's Charge states:

From being one of the first universities to admit women in 1870 to our historic defense of race conscious admission policies at the U.S. Supreme Court in 2003, the University of Michigan has had a fierce and longstanding commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. This commitment rests upon our recognition of the history in the United States of racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination as well as our understanding that our progress as an institution of higher learning will be enhanced with a vibrant community of people from many backgrounds.

The Office of the Vice President for Communications (OVPC) plays a pivotal role in conveying both the ethos of U-M and information about its achievements and contributions. The commitment to engage and convey differing perspectives is a key underpinning of our work. Within OVPC, this strategic plan will advance that commitment, ensure that we live the principles ourselves, and guide us as we seek to operate at maximum effectiveness as we continue our journey in the university's third century.

OVPC is committed to a continued increase in diversity, equity and inclusion in our recruitment, retention and employee success programs within the division.

Additionally, OVPC's central communications role compels us to develop templates, metrics and best practices for ourselves and the university community. These tools will enhance our capacity to advance and advise on items of institutional and leadership priority in service to the campus community and beyond.

OVPC is committed to meeting its complex set of internal and external responsibilities with a mindful and forward-looking vision, persistence and hard work.

Goals [Diversity Equity & Inclusion]:

Diversity – We commit to increasing diversity, which is expressed in myriad forms, including race and ethnicity, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, language, culture, national origin, religious commitments, age, (dis)ability status, and political perspective.

Equity – We commit to working actively to challenge and respond to bias, harassment, and discrimination. We are committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, height, weight, or veteran status.

Inclusion – We commit to pursuing deliberate efforts to ensure that our campus is a place where differences are welcomed, different perspectives are respectfully heard and where every individual feels a sense of belonging and inclusion. We know that by building a critical mass of diverse groups on campus and creating a vibrant climate of inclusiveness, we can more effectively leverage the resources of diversity to advance our collective capabilities.

Rationale [Mission, Vision, Values]:

The Office of the Vice President for Communications provides a wide range of communication expertise and services for the campus community in support of the advancement of U-M's reputation locally, nationally and internationally. From helping recruit the next generation of Wolverines to providing media coverage of our faculty's latest research discoveries to building our brand around the world, we partner with departments on all three U-M campuses to develop and share the Michigan story.

We seek to build a staff that is both itself broadly diverse and prepared to serve the diverse populations that comprise the University community, and a work culture that understands and celebrates differences. These actions will boost creativity and the exchange of ideas, and will ensure we are prepared to advance the university's standing among the world's great institutions of higher education, to carry forward leadership's priorities, and to draw the best students, faculty and staff who will significantly impact our complex world.

Key Strategies & Constituencies*:

OVPC staff members are the main constituency of this plan. Except where specified, the plan pertains to all OVPC staff, including Michigan Radio. Our DEI team, supported by senior leadership, has identified strategic objectives to further university-wide goals for DEI. These have been aggregated into the three distal objectives determined by the university. Each of these strategic objectives is accompanied by metrics that will be tracked over time, as well as descriptions of single- and, in some cases, multiple-year actions OVPC will take to accomplish those objectives.

A secondary constituency of this plan is the university community, as well as the greater public at large. These constituencies are due to OVPC's central role in communicating on behalf of the university to these audiences.

**All strategic objectives and related actions will be pursued in accordance with the law and*

University policy.

Implementation Highlights and Planning Process Used

Planning Lead(s):

Christopher Billick, Digital Strategy
Hanna Quinlan, Office of Public Affairs

Planning Team:

OVPC DEI committee includes:

Christopher Billick

Hanna Quinlan

Steve Culver

Liza Mondro

Kerri Pepperman

Morgan Sherburne

Samantha Stante

Implementation Highlights and Planning Process Summary:

The 2.0 implementation process was conducted by the OVPC Planning Team, which meets monthly. The team considers activities and practices, and input received from the community. DEI is represented at the senior leadership table and well supported internally throughout the unit, and externally through our unit's work output. We are continuing with all of our goals and objectives from year one.

Focus of OVPC's DEI 2.0 plan: **INTERNAL** and **EXTERNAL** responsibilities with a mindful and forward-looking vision, persistence and hard work.

During Year 1 and in preparation for our Year 2 plan, our OVPC DEI Planning Team met monthly to work on goals, discuss progress and gather input.

Highlights from Year 1 include conducting an all-staff DEI event at UMMA as well as DEI related activities at an day long all-staff retreat. Our DEI newsletter spotlighted new team members, promoted the plan, as well as provided well-being resources and events. We encourage participation in all university-wide DEI events.

In addition to centrally sponsored activities, local departments also held DEI and wellness events. For example Michigan Public and Michigan Creative were very active in conducting more than a dozen events. UMSocial/Digital Strategy conducted monthly wellness events and activities open to all Ruthven staff member.

As a staff-only unit that is not student facing, our only constituencies are staff. Of course as Communications our work does touch all university constituencies.

Data and Analysis: Key Findings

Summary of Data:

Since Fall of 2018, the demographic data for OVPC has been substantially similar. The Staff by Underrepresented Minority (URM) metric has continued to fluctuate between 10 and 11 staff members and our gender breakdown has fluctuated between 53-56 male staff and 83-90 female staff. Our Race/Ethnicity numbers for groups that can be reported (5 or more staff) has also been consistent. We see an increase in Asian staff to 6 and a reduction in White staff to 117 and no change in African American staff. Other demographics fall below the minimum number for reporting disaggregation. Our age demographics have been largely consistent as well, with a modest decrease in the 20-29 age bracket.

Key Findings, Themes and Recommendations:

While reviewing the campus climate survey results, it was important to understand that the surveys were given during the two different time periods to provide a comparison of campus members' climate perceptions at the beginning and end of the DEI 1.0. As such, responses to the surveys at the different time points did not come from the same individuals.

While overall progress at U-M is certainly desirable, it was crucial for our unit to see what is happening at a local work unit level. Based on the 2021 survey results compared to 2016 survey, professional growth was an area that stuck out as needing attention, especially for women and BIPOC. A feeling of belonging decreased across the board, which raised the question on how our unit can address retention rates and a sense of belonging at work.

Data collected also showed our unit was slightly below the U-M all staff totals for satisfied/very satisfied with DEI progress within the unit. For example, 45.5 percent of staff who identified as BIPOC responded with neutral satisfaction for DEI progress in our unit; while 52.1 percent of white OVPC staff members responded satisfied/very satisfied with our progress, with a higher percentage of men vs. women.

In addition, the climate survey collected mental and physical well-being data in 2021 that was not part of the 2016 survey. Survey results showed 85.8 percent of staff selected their own mental health during the time of the survey as somewhat affected/effected a great deal by COVID-19, as well as nearly 33 percent of staff responded as somewhat affected/effected a great deal by their financial situation during COVID-19.

As we continue to discuss staff retention and staying competitive as a workplace, this is just one example that plays into the broader conversation of what we can do and better yet what conversations can we have with our staff and co-workers on their overall satisfaction, well being, professional growth, increasing staff diversity, etc. and what resources we can provide.

OVPC staff observations/feedback from overview of the campus climate survey results:

- A need for a more defined process during hiring to recruit a broadly diverse set of candidates. The recommendation is to have the unit make a more concerted and strategic effort to engage broadly diverse talent pools when hiring for new positions and promoting internal opportunities for advancement.

- Identify clear pathways for professional growth.
- Makes great strides in promoting DEI through mental health support, inclusion strategies and work-life improvements.
- Continue to prove a strong work/life balance environment, flexibility to continue to adjust hybrid options.
- Continue to have conversations at unit and senior levels around staff retention and how our division can stay competitive as a workplace with the goal to reach high employment satisfaction levels in the next campus climate survey.

Strategic Objectives, Measures of Success and Action Plans*

Introduction:

The OVPC plan covers our staff primarily, as well as the greater University community. The strategic objectives needed to further the university-wide goals of diversity, equity and inclusion have been aggregated into three distal objectives determined by the University. Each of these strategic objectives is accompanied by metrics that will be tracked over time, as well as descriptions of single and multiple year actions we will take to accomplish those objectives. For additional detail on assignments, timelines and accountabilities, see the Action Planning Table.

**All strategic objectives and related actions will be pursued in accordance with the law and University policy.*

PEOPLE (Recruit, Retain & Develop a Diverse Community)

Strategies and action items for **People** are designed to bolster and extend the work of all units by introducing effective programs and procedures aimed at recruiting, retaining, and supporting a diverse campus community. DEI-related recruitment and retention efforts across campus reflect the varied needs and goals of specific units and groups.

Strategic Objective 1:

To achieve an applicant pool that is broadly diverse.

Constituencies: Staff

Metrics:

- We will measure the number of non-traditional recruitment channels used.
- We will track the percentage of staff who complete conflict resolution training.

Actions:

1. Seek new and non-traditional avenues to reach potential new hires.
2. Locate regional and national publications/jobs boards to advertise positions and establish a unit-wide best practice.
3. Work with HR to create job postings that follow best practices for inclusion.
4. Use a more rigorous interviewing format that ensures that all applicants are asked the same

- questions (with time for follow-up) and collect a rating from each interviewer afterward.
5. Ensure welcoming attitudes to broadly diverse applicants and staff.
 6. Encourage staff to socialize job opportunities in their professional networks.
 7. Engage with other university staff outside our unit to share good leads and learn other practices.

Primary DEI Goal: Diversity

Strategic Objective 2:

Retain a broadly diverse and talented staff. Create an equitable and inclusive workplace in which all employees feel valued and heard.

Constituencies: Staff

Metrics:

- We will track our average length of employment for staff.
- We will track the results of an annual employee engagement survey.

Actions:

1. Equity review and funding: Building on our 1.0 OVPC Compensation Philosophy, ensure that the unit has requested sufficient budget for periodic equity reviews and adjustments. Engage with central HR to audit staff salaries and identify staff that are candidates for equity adjustments.
2. Employee engagement survey: develop employee survey as part of the annual review process. This will gauge employee overall engagement and provide an opportunity to evaluate leadership.
3. Professional growth support: Encourage staff to socialize professional development opportunities, provide training and networking opportunities through OVPC DEI's newsletter and continuation of the mentorship program launched in DEI 1.0.
4. Create a more open environment between management and staff. Provide opportunities for junior staff to practice leadership skills. Recommit to an open-door management policy and schedule manager open-office hours.
5. Promote the university Pathways for Conflict Resolution to all staff annually. Make clear to unit leadership the expectations and resources around dealing with conflict in the workplace.

PROCESS (Create an Equitable and Inclusive Campus Climate)

Strategies and action items for **Process** are designed to support and strengthen the development of policies, procedures, and practices that create an inclusive and equitable campus climate and encourage a culture of belonging in which every member of our community can grow and thrive.

Strategic Objective 1:

Develop a framework for mitigating bias in communications. This framework will state guiding principles and establish an objective framework for evaluating our words, platforms and use of technology. The goal is to have an objective set of criteria that will be used to ensure we are being as unbiased as possible in our communications.

Constituencies: Students, Faculty and Staff

Metrics:

- Track progress toward creation of framework.
- Track use of framework.

Actions:

1. Form a working group to lead creation of framework.
2. Gather input from OVPC staff as well as input from OGC.
3. Publish framework on Handbook website.

Primary DEI Goal: Equity and Inclusion

PRODUCTS (Support Innovative and Inclusive Teaching, Research, and Service)

Strategies and action items for **Products** are designed to integrate DEI solutions into our educational program offerings and teaching methodology, and to ensure scholarly research on diversity, equity and inclusion, and the scholars who produce it, are valued and supported.

Strategic Objective 1:

Continue accessibility work: OVPC will place an increased effort behind accessibility for websites, digital media and print. We will continue to utilize expertise in ITS, ECRT, and internally to check compliance and improve accessibility as new tools and techniques have become available. Our goal is to advocate for integrated accessibility in all communications and advocate for a transition from a solely compliance-based approach.

Constituencies: Students, Faculty and Staff

Metrics:

- Track the reviews and report on mitigation steps needed.
- Track distribution of guidance materials.
- Report physical space finding to OVPC leadership.

Actions:

1. Conduct ADA review of all websites, digital and print resources.
2. Develop best practices guides and advocate centrally for adoption with other units that we support.
3. Conduct a review of our physical spaces.

Primary DEI Goal: Equity and Inclusion

Strategic Objective 2:

To help support the creation of a climate that supports free speech, academic freedom and DEI.

Constituencies: Students, Faculty and Staff

Metrics:

- To better communicate and promote the university's commitment to free speech and expression, we must track how our U-M community engages with misconceptions related to free speech issues on campus.
- Track progress toward creation of a free speech framework.
- Track promotional communication materials and use of framework.

Actions:

1. Conduct best practice research on how we can help our community better understand what a

commitment to free speech means.

2. Review what the university is already sharing in regard to the topic of free speech (such as this [key issues](#) page). Determine what needs to be updated, revised, and added to make it more engaging to a wider audience, shareable across platforms, and responsive to our community's needs / misconceptions regarding free speech and expression.
3. Create an internal marketing campaign to uphold the U-M brand that supports free speech as essential to advancing DEI (public statements, social media engagement, media interviews, produce and promote op-eds, President's monthly community videos, etc).
4. Collaborate with ODEI and other campus partners to develop "statement" guidelines in order to promote the ways the university already supports free speech.
5. Use our university-wide communications to model good ways to talk about the things we disagree with and how we disagree with them.

Primary DEI Goal: Equity and Inclusion

Goal-related Metrics – Unit Measures Tracked Over Time

University wide Metrics:

With regard to the three goals of the Strategic Plan, the university will track and publish overall metrics relating to the three goals. Items under discussion for these university-wide, goal-related metrics:

Staff

Demographic Composition:

- Headcount
- Race/ethnicity
- Sex
- Age (Generation cohort)

Climate Survey Indicators (sample indicators listed below):

- Satisfaction with unit climate/environment in work unit
- Assessment of semantic aspects of the general climate in work unit
- Assessment of semantic aspects of the DEI climate in work unit
- Feeling valued in work unit
- Feeling of belongingness in work unit
- Assessment of work unit commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Perceptions of equal opportunity for success in work unit
- Feeling able to perform up to full potential in work unit
- Feelings of professional growth in work unit
- Feelings of discrimination in work unit

Unit Metrics:

- Diversity: Diversity of staff.
- Equity: Number of equity adjustments and results of annual equity reviews.
- Inclusion: Results of U-M climate measures of our staff. Results of annual employee

engagement survey.

Action Planning Tables with Details and Accountabilities

PEOPLE (*Recruitment, Retention & Development*)

Key Constituency	Strategic Objective	Associated Metrics	Detailed Actions Plan (measurable,specific)	Group/person accountable
Staff	To achieve an applicant pool that is broadly diverse.	<p>We will measure the number of non-traditional recruitment channels used.</p> <p>We will track the percentage of staff who complete conflict resolution training.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seek new and non-traditional avenues to reach potential new hires. 2. Locate regional and national publications/jobs boards to advertise positions and establish a unit-wide best practice. 3. Work with HR to create job postings that follow best practices for inclusion. 4. Use a more rigorous interviewing format that ensures that all applicants are asked the same questions (with time for follow-up) and collect a rating from each interviewer afterward. 5. Ensure welcoming attitudes to broadly diverse applicants and staff. 6. Encourage staff to socialize job opportunities in their professional networks. 7. Engage with other university staff outside our unit to share good leads and learn other practices. 	OVPC Senior Staff
Staff	Retain a diverse and talented staff. Create an equitable and inclusive workplace in which all employees feel valued and heard.	<p>We will track our average length of employment for staff.</p> <p>We will track the results of an annual employee engagement survey.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Equity review and funding: Building on our 1.0 OVPC Compensation Philosophy, ensure that the unit has requested sufficient budget for periodic equity reviews and adjustments. Engage with central HR to audit staff salaries and identify staff that are candidates for equity adjustments. 2. Employee engagement survey: develop employee survey as part of the annual review 	OVPC Senior Staff

			<p>process. This will gauge employee overall engagement and provide an opportunity to evaluate leadership.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Professional growth support: Encourage staff to socialize professional development opportunities, provide training and networking opportunities through OVPC DEI's newsletter and continuation of the mentorship program launched in DEI 1.0. 4. Create a more open environment between management and staff. Provide opportunities for junior staff to practice leadership skills. Recommit to an open-door management policy and schedule manager open-office hours. 5. Promote the university Pathways for Conflict Resolution to all staff annually. Make clear to unit leadership the expectations and resources around dealing with conflict in the workplace. 	
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PROCESS (*Promoting & Equitable & Inclusive Community*)

Key Constituency	Strategic Objective	Associated Metrics	Detailed Actions Plan (measurable,specific)	Group/person accountable
Students, Faculty and Staff	Develop a framework for mitigating bias in communications. This framework	Track progress toward creation of framework. Track use of framework.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Form a working group to lead creation of framework. 2. Gather input from OVPC staff as well as input from OGC. 3. Publish framework on Handbook website. 	OVPC Senior Staff + Framework working group

	<p>will state guiding principles and establish an objective framework for evaluating our words, platforms and use of technology. The goal is to have an objective set of criteria that will be used to ensure we are being as unbiased as possible in our communications.</p>			
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PRODUCTS (*Education, Scholarship & Service*)

Key Constituency	Strategic Objective	Associated Metrics	Detailed Actions Plan (measurable,specific)	Group/person accountable
Students, Faculty and Staff	Continue accessibility work: OVPC will place an increased effort behind accessibility for websites, digital media and print.	Track the reviews and report on mitigation steps needed. Track distribution of guidance materials.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct ADA review of all websites, digital and print resources. 2. Develop best practices guides and advocate centrally for adoption with other units that we support. 3. Conduct a review of our physical spaces. 	OVPC Senior Staff + Working group

	<p>We will continue to utilize expertise in ITS, ECRT, and internally to check compliance and improve accessibility as new tools and techniques have become available. Our goal is to advocate for integrated accessibility in all communications and advocate for a transition from a solely compliance-based approach.</p>	<p>Report physical space finding to OVPC leadership.</p>		
<p>Students, Faculty and Staff</p>	<p>To help support the creation of a climate that supports free speech, academic freedom and DEI.</p>	<p>To better communicate and promote the university's commitment to free speech and expression, we must track how our U-M community engages with misconceptions related to free speech issues on campus.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct best practice research on how we can help our community better understand what a commitment to free speech means. 2. Review what the university is already sharing in regard to the topic of free speech (such as this key issues page). Determine what needs to be updated, revised, and added to make it more engaging to a wider audience, shareable across platforms, and responsive to our community's needs / misconceptions regarding free speech and expression. 3. Create an internal marketing campaign to uphold the U-M brand that supports free speech as 	<p>OVPC Senior Staff + OVPC subject matter practitioners</p>

		<p>Track progress toward creation of a free speech framework.</p> <p>Track promotional communication materials and use of framework.</p>	<p>essential to advancing DEI (public statements, social media engagement, media interviews, produce and promote op-eds, President's monthly community videos, etc).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Collaborate with ODEI and other campus partners to develop "statement" guidelines in order to promote the ways the university already supports free speech. 5. Use our university-wide communications to model good ways to talk about the things we disagree with and how we disagree with them. 	
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Plans for Supporting, Tracking and Updating the Strategic Plan

The OVPC DEI working team was formed to support, track and update OVPC's strategic plan. The team includes members from various OVPC's departments, recruited by Christopher Billick and Hanna Quinlan, and meeting monthly. A final evaluation of metrics and accomplishments against the plan, as well as recommendations and adjustments will be presented to the Senior Staff beginning in April.