

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Belonging (DEI-AB) Framework

Academic Affairs and Student Affairs

Drafted by: Ed Aboufadel, Andy Beachnau, Annie Bélanger, Jen Drake, Christine Rener, and Anthony Williams Jr.

Last Updated: March 24, 2021

Approved by Chris Plouff and Jenny Hall-Jones on Apr 19, 2022

Aspirational Purpose

The ASA DEI-AB framework is meant to help the Division of Academic Affairs and the Division of Student Affairs align their efforts to advance the University's commitment to educational equity as articulated in [Reach Higher 2025](#). As Divisions, we seek to create a shared understanding of a DEI-AB approach in order to help make decisions and prioritize towards intentional outcomes. We are committed to strengthening our living, learning, and working environment by recognizing and removing the barriers to full participation and providing a safe, inclusive, vibrant community for all.

We are grounded in theory to move to action by leveraging systems thinking. We, as colleagues, see ourselves as part of the DEI-AB efforts so that we may collectively foster a sense of belonging among students, staff and faculty.

Framework Grounding

The [Framework for Inclusion and Equity](#) at GVSU articulates the university's understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion. It sets the stage for the next phase of our commitment to advance diversity, inclusion, equity, and social justice. Grand Valley believes that equity and inclusion make each member of our community better and is fundamental to what it means to be a Laker.

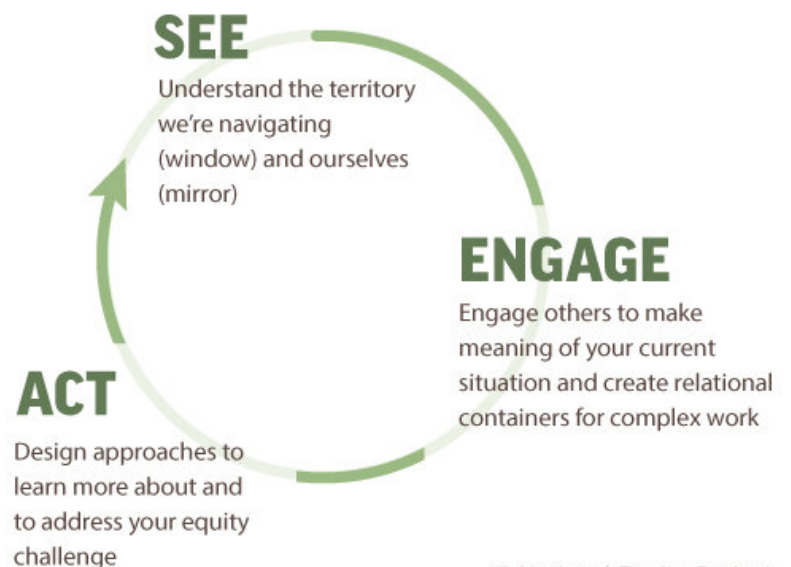
DEI-AB Values

- Anchoring in Human-Centered Culture of Care
 - We foster a culture of care.
 - We create and sustain an institution that enables rich, healthy relationships.
 - We anchor our DEI-AB work in the needs of people and seek to mitigate negative impacts of systemic inequity as well as historical and ongoing oppression.
 - We are committed to substantive, lasting improvements.
 - We intentionally listen deeply to and learn from faculty, staff and students of color and those from other underrepresented/marginalized/minoritized/oppressed groups, who have varied experiences, stories, and needs within our community.
 - We commit to restorative practices.
- Acknowledging the Work

- We value, reward, and support DEI-AB work in institutional policies¹ and practices².
- We believe that DEI-AB work is everyone’s work and integrated into our daily practices.
- We align our incentive programs with DEI-AB work.
- Collaborating for Outcomes
 - We commit to mutual success, work as a team, and celebrate others' accomplishments.
 - We actively learn with and from others.
 - We actively communicate to enhance transparency and clarity with and amongst faculty, staff, and students.
- Practicing Equity-Mindedness and Cultural Humility
 - We engage in ongoing learning and practice to advance a socially just institution.
 - We value self-reflection and continued personal and professional growth.
 - We acknowledge that understanding is only as powerful as the action that follows.
 - We commit to open, brave, and generative inquiry to use an equity lens within liberal education.
 - We appreciate and recognize the importance of cultural competence: awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills.
- Advancing Systemic Change
 - We consider institutional systems and policies that create barriers in order to dismantle them.
 - We review our processes and procedures to ensure that our lived experiences align with our espoused values towards social justice.
 - We define and communicate diversity and inclusion competencies.
 - We explore our curriculum, services, and supports to enable culturally responsive approaches and culturally competent students
 - We grow representation of faculty, staff and students of color and those from other underrepresented/marginalized/minoritized/oppressed groups.
 - Where they exist, we acknowledge our power and positional privileges and own the responsibility to use these for positive change.

Design Principles for DEI-AB Efforts

- Move to intentional, purposeful action
- Enable transparency and clarity with and within the campus community



© National Equity Project

¹ A policy is just a practice that has been formally presented as an expectation of management. Examples include embedding DEI-AB work into rewards systems and personnel processes/criteria; such as faculty/staff personnel guidelines.

² Practices are how we implement our policies as well as ways we habitually approach the way we work

- Foster accountability at division, unit, and individual levels
- Privilege collaboration among individuals and cross-unit initiatives
- Center in evolving existing practices
- Preserve what is good and dare to be great
- Ask how it will impact the most vulnerable

DEI-AB Working Definitions

The following working definitions, sourced primarily from the [GVSU Framework for Inclusion and Equity](#), are the building blocks towards social justice within the Division of Academic Affairs and the Division of Student Affairs.

Diversity

“Diversity refers to the [...] difference and variety of personal experiences, values, and worldviews that arise from differences of culture and circumstance. Such differences include race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, age, class, religion and spirituality, geographic and international, and more.”

Equity

“The guarantee of [just] treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for students, faculty, and staff at every stage of educational and career development. Equity is enabled through the active, ongoing work of identifying and eliminating barriers preventing full participation by all members of the campus community.”

Inclusion

“The act of creating an environment in which all members of a community feel welcome, safe, supported, respected, and valued. Inclusion is “the active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity — in people, in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect — in ways that increase one’s awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within value systems and institutions” (Association of American Colleges and Universities, AAC&U). Inclusion establishes an environment in which all individuals and communities are able to thrive in authentic ways. Moreover, an inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences so that all people can fully participate in the university’s opportunities.”

Social Justice

“Social justice serves as the conceptual foundation for Grand Valley’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The institution recognizes its responsibility to examine traditional power structures and to address unfair treatment of any university constituent within these structures. Moreover, Grand Valley intends to educate and empower all members of the community to think critically about systems of marginalization and

oppression. This includes a deeper understanding of privilege and the need for all in the community to work toward equity and fairness in the pursuit of transformation of lives, professions, and societies.”

Accessibility

A commitment to accessibility ensures that the University’s tools, devices, services, and environments are available to, and usable by, as many people as possible. In addition to the use of universal design, accommodations are made to support accessibility and inclusion. Grand Valley aims to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities in order to enable independence, dignity, integration, and equality of opportunity.

(Informed by Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act)

Belonging

As an outcome of the act of inclusion and equity, belonging is feeling that your authentic self is welcomed and celebrated. Belonging is full membership. Belongingness entails an unwavering commitment to not simply tolerate and respect differences but to ensure that all people are welcome and feel that they belong in the society. This is the “circle of human concern.” (John A. Powell and Stephen Menendian, “The Problem of Othering: Towards Inclusiveness and Belonging”)

Privilege

“The experience of unearned freedoms, rights, benefits, advantages, access, and/or opportunities afforded to members of a particular dominant group in society or in a specific context. “ (*Equity & Inclusion Lens Guide*, by NonProfit Association of Oregon, 2019, retrieved online at: <https://nonprofitoregon.org/sites/default/files/NAO-Equity-Lens-Guide-2019.pdf>)

Using an Equity Lens to Impact Action

This document is meant to guide action locally and collaboratively. In considering planning efforts, we suggest using an equity lens, which helps us see things from a new perspective. An equity lens is a series of questions we ask to center equity and inclusion in every aspect of our work, bringing attention to potential impacts on marginalized populations. Its purpose is to be deliberately inclusive and equitable in our decisions, processes, and outcomes. It explicitly draws attention to populations that hold non-dominant identities.

Questions to consider in bringing an equity lens to decision making:

1. What decision is being made?
 - a. What beliefs, values and assumptions (some of which will be cultural) guide how the topic is being considered?
2. Who is at the table?
 - a. Who or what informs their thinking on the issue?
 - b. Who is most affected by these decisions, and thus should be at the table?
 - c. How can they be included?
3. How is the decision being made?

- a. What participatory structures can be added to hear from more voices, to equalize participation, and elements of consensus be used?
4. What assumptions are at the foundation of the issue? Be explicit in naming these and the values and cultural bases for them.
5. What is the likely impact?
 - a. Does the policy, program, or decision improve, worsen, or make no change to existing disparities? Does it result in a systemic change that addresses institutional inequity?
 - b. Does the policy, program, or decision produce any intentional benefits or unintended consequences for the affected groups?
 - c. What is the real impact likely to be for different groups who are important to the organization?
6. What is your decision?
 - a. Based on the above responses, what are the possible revisions to the policy, program, or decision under review that could address inequity/promote equity?

(*What is an Equity Lens?* By the NonProfit Advancement Retrieved online at:

<https://www.nonprofitadvancement.org/files/2020/12/What-is-an-Equity-Lens.pdf>)

Focus Areas in Academic Affairs and Student Affairs

In order to advance a more socially just university, Academic Affairs and Student Affairs could bring particular attention to the following areas as aligned with our responsibilities and expertise:

- Academic supports, including faculty and professional advising, tutoring, and supplemental instruction
- Community engagement practices
- Curriculum and pedagogy
- Leadership and supervision
- Personnel policies and practices: faculty and staff recruitment, evaluation, development, and promotion as well as tenure and ongoing appointment
- Professional development
- Student experience and campus environment
- Student supports, including extra-curricular programming, student organizations and governance, and health and wellness supports

Appendix - Process and Consultation

In Summer 2021, Ed Aboufadel, Andy Beachnau, Annie Bélanger, Jen Drake, Christine Rener, and Anthony Williams started meeting to develop shared language and meaning as we approach inclusion work. We soon began to create a framework to move us forward as sister divisions. The aim for the group was a framework that would build on the Inclusion & Equity's framework, the work of the Network of Advisors, and ongoing efforts within AA & SA. We hoped the AA & SA framework would allow us to tie the efforts into a coherent whole across AA & SA and with the University. It sought to ensure that we consider and scaffold on the university's efforts while enabling local action towards DEI-AB. It would allow the division to create impactful change within AA & SA by providing more specific guidance towards shared and unified efforts.

In developing the framework, we conducted two rounds of consultation:

1. We consulted with the Provost's Cabinet, the University Academic Senate Equity & Inclusion Committee, the Division of Student Affairs, and the Network of Advisors leads and sub-committees' members.
 - a. We updated the framework to include a clearer aim and the concept of belonging based on this feedback.
2. We met with every college, either with their leadership group or their inclusion/equity/anti-racism group.
 - a. We updated the framework to include an equity lens and added more nuance to the values based on this feedback.

As we discussed the draft framework, we were committed to listening at scale, ensuring a variety of contact points as we moved forward. We largely found that the discussions helped us focus on developing the framework to enable college and unit action-based planning while allowing for local context and reality. Feedback was generally supportive of the framework, suggesting additions to it.