

Framework for Inclusion & Equity

FRAMEWORK FOR **Inclusion & Equity**



**GRAND VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY®**



Charge of the Division of Inclusion & Equity

In its policies, the Board of Trustees of Grand Valley State University charges the Division of Inclusion and Equity to direct diversity planning for the university, address equity issues in collaboration with other divisions and units, and support the vision and mission of the university by providing leadership and services. The division will provide leadership to the university through a divisional strategic plan. The Division of Inclusion and Equity supports GVSU in being the model for equity and inclusion among public, comprehensive regional universities in the nation.

Everyone has a stake in these efforts.

While the Division of Inclusion and Equity takes a leadership role in advancing this framework through its divisional strategic plan, the participation of the entire campus is essential to its success. Everyone has a stake in this work— equity and inclusion makes each member of our community better and is fundamental to what it means to be a Laker.

Inclusion & Equity

At Grand Valley, equity and inclusion are integral to its mission to empower learners in their **pursuits, professions, and purpose**, and to enrich society through excellent teaching, **active scholarship, advancement of equity, and public service**.

Grand Valley's commitment to equity and inclusion is visible across the university and guided by its values of **inquiry, inclusive and equitable community, innovation, integrity, and international perspectives**. Grand Valley is committed to building a culture of educational equity through Reach Higher 2025, embracing its role as a leader in urgently advancing equity for all learners, serving as a catalyst toward a more just and sustainable world, and working to eliminate disparities and obstacles for student success, especially those that have historically been along lines of color, race, socioeconomic status, sex/gender, including gender identity and expression, and sexual orientation.

Reach Higher 2025 Commitment: Build a Culture of Educational Equity

We embrace our role as a leader in urgently advancing equity for all learners. Together, we ensure that our community serves as a catalyst toward a more just and sustainable world – on our campuses and beyond. We work to eliminate disparities and obstacles for student success, especially those who have historically been along lines of color, race, socioeconomic status, sex/gender including gender identity and expression, and sexual orientation. (Reach Higher 2025)

Our Strategy

At Grand Valley, we center equity and inclusion for a more diverse learning community. We will achieve this through:

- Removing systemic barriers to educational access, retention, and persistence;
- Developing and establishing university policies, practices, systems, and culture that demonstrate our institutional accountability to diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and total well-being for all community members;

- Recruiting, empowering, and retaining a diverse student body, faculty, and staff;
- Appropriately acknowledging GVSU exists on the land of the Anishinaabe peoples—the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Bodéwadmi —and commits to increasing the visibility of Anishinaabe people among its students, faculty, and staff; its curriculum; and its cultural programming;
- Incorporating environmental, human, and economic factors toward global and societal vitality that advance beyond our current award-winning sustainable practices.

Valuing an Inclusive & Equitable Community

The division will foster and sustain a sense of belonging, promote diversity and respect, and address systemic issues that impact outcomes for those who have been historically excluded from higher education. Inclusion and equity are experienced through our physical campuses and in digital environments, as well as our interpersonal, institutional, and community engagements.

International Perspectives

Support people, planet, and prosperity. We think and act on a global basis. Our efforts at supporting the well-being of individuals, groups, and ecosystems are important locally, nationally, and globally—all of which are interconnected and interdependent.

Our Vision

Grand Valley's Vision is to **prepare globally minded citizens for the future they face and the communities they shape**. Our community of educators create and employ innovative approaches to liberal education and professional programs that center on and prepare students **for a lifetime of continual learning and growth**.

The university's commitment to liberal arts education is strengthened by providing a welcoming environment where all members of the Grand Valley community can safely and proudly be their authentic selves with equitable opportunity for success. Grand Valley strives to foster a healthy and diverse environment where all members of the community act with integrity, communicate respectfully, and accept responsibility for their words and actions. Authentic personal relationships and a spirit of community matter at Grand Valley.

Grand Valley intends to be a national model for equity and inclusion in higher education, not only by implementing and innovating evidenced-based best practices and responding to regional and national trends but also by contributing to local and national discourse on the responsibility of higher education to provide equity and inclusion to all students, faculty, and staff. Grand Valley aspires to embody the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit of our region, thus becoming recognized as the practiced model and resource for equity and inclusion in West Michigan.

Commitment to Diversity, Inclusion, Equity & Social Justice

DIVERSITY

Diversity refers to the presence of 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. Diversity, in all its forms, is at the heart of Grand Valley's mission to provide a liberal education that will help shape lives, professions, and societies.

Diversity is affirmed and celebrated at GVSU and in the community as a necessary intellectual asset and institutional resource. Grand Valley believes it has a responsibility to serve all members of our community through a coordinated equity and inclusion strategy.

INCLUSION

Inclusion refers to GVSU's support for the success and engagement of all students, faculty, staff and campus visitors in creating a healthy and affirming climate. 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. Grand Valley is committed to the advancement of inclusion — the act of creating environments where individuals feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued.



EQUITY

Equity is a guiding principle at GVSU. It refers to the guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for students, faculty, and staff at every stage of educational and career development. Grand Valley acknowledges that there are historically underserved and underrepresented populations. Every effort is made to identify and eliminate barriers preventing their full participation.

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 the transformation of lives, professions, and societies.

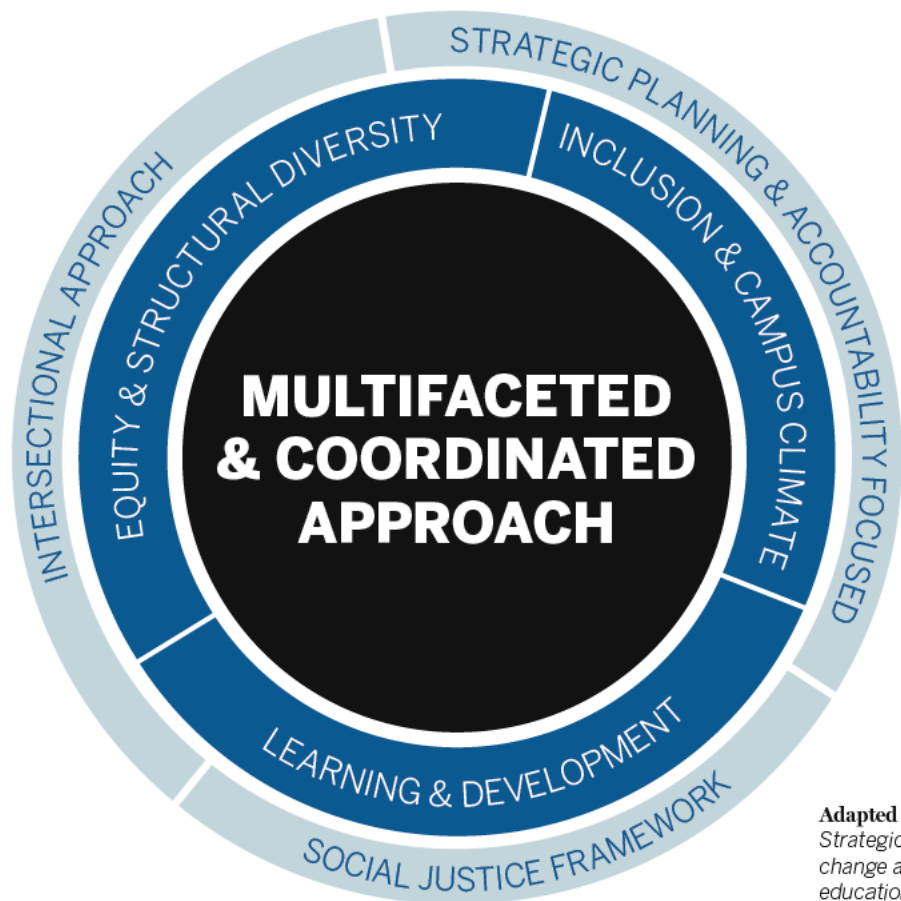


Strategic Planning & Accountability

An organized strategy that focuses on diversity, inclusion, and equity, solidly grounded in a foundation of social justice, drives the next phase of the university's work. Looking forward, Grand Valley's commitment includes sustaining institutional efforts to ensure that equity is embedded across the campus, and ingrained in all functions, decision making, and planning. Grand Valley will also redouble efforts to eliminate inequities and advance access while continuing to create a campus climate that is welcoming and inclusive for all.

A social justice foundation motivates the increased intellectual depth that is crucial for solving societal challenges. It also contributes to the mechanisms and advocacy that are necessary to ensure access and support for all at GVSU. This plan will also support university efforts to:

- Further position GVSU as the national model for equity and inclusion among public, regional comprehensive universities.
- Operationalize Reach Higher 2025, and guide strategic planning for the Division of Inclusion and Equity.
- Develop communications and outreach content to support cohesive messaging for internal and external engagement.



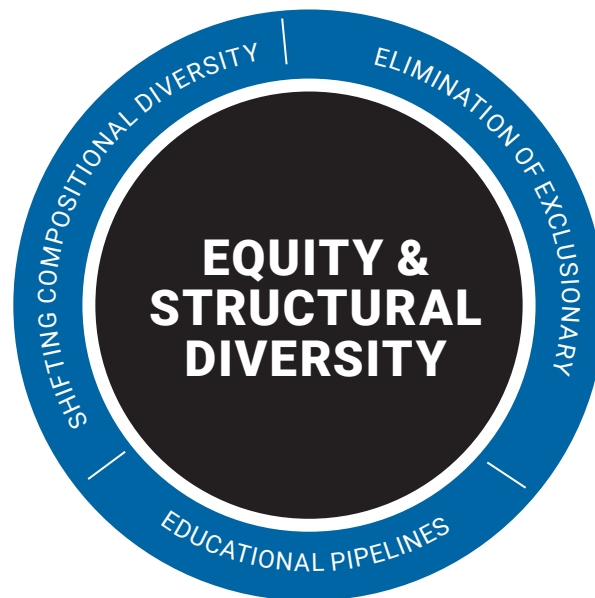
Grand Valley is a large and complex institution, with 22,000 undergraduate and graduate students, 3,100 faculty and staff members, and nearly 140,000 alumni.

In addition, the university partners with countless community members, organizations, business, and other institutions across the world. A multifaceted and coordinated approach to inclusion and equity seeks to engage GVSU in activities related to faculty members, students, prospective students, staff members, administrators, trustees, alumni, and external community members.

In the next phase of this commitment, Grand Valley seeks to organize its efforts to advance equity and inclusion in three broad areas:

1. Equity and structural diversity
2. Inclusion and campus climate
3. Learning and development

In each of these broad areas, an intersectional social justice lens, strategic planning, and accountability are central organizing frameworks.



1. Equity & Structural Diversity

How does GVSU eliminate exclusionary barriers and support the educational pipeline? Grand Valley seeks to recruit and retain students, faculty members, and staff members who more accurately reflect the diversity of West Michigan. As a public institution, GVSU can shape the educational pipeline by supporting equity in education for K–12 students, increasing college-readiness and college eligibility, promoting the success of students through undergraduate graduation, and encouraging the pursuit of graduate degrees at equitable rates. The following are the areas of focus within equity and structural diversity:

- Recruitment and Retention (students, faculty, and staff)
- Advancing civil rights of students, faculty, and staff
- Nondiscrimination and Compliance
- Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity
- Gender equity and Title IX

Relevant Objectives in Reach Higher 2025 and Division of Inclusion and Equity KPIs include:

- Increase the diversity of employees through expanding candidate pools.
- Increase the diversity of students through expanding outreach and applicant pools.
- Eliminate retention and graduation disparities based on race and income.
- Reduce the experiences of any exclusionary or hostile conduct or behavior that has interfered with their ability to live, learn, or work at GVSU (campus climate metric).
- Reduce employees who indicate they have observed unfair or unjust employment practices at GVSU (campus climate metric).
- Increase internal promotions, and intentionally develop pathways for diverse employees.



2. Inclusion & Campus Climate

Grand Valley desires to sustain an institutional climate that allows all members of the community to thrive and seeks to eliminate incidents of bias and discrimination on campus. Understanding the impact of the external environment on campus climate, Grand Valley strives to be a voice of progress and an advocate of social justice for and within the broader community. In an effort to better understand the experiences and perceptions of the campus community and to promote openness and accountability, Grand Valley prioritizes the collection of campus climate and diversity-related data. It commits to developing sustained action plans to respond to findings. It considers relationships with diverse external communities and strives to develop compelling messages and initiatives that resonate with those communities. Areas of focus include:

- Climate Assessment
- Education and Response to Campus Climate Concerns
- Student, Faculty, Staff Achievement and Success

Relevant Objectives in Reach Higher 2025 and Division of Inclusion and Equity KPIs include:

- Increase personal sense of belonging and community for students, faculty, and staff (campus climate metric).
- Increase the likelihood of students to recommend GVSU to other students, family members, or others (NPS metric).
- Increase the percentage of students, faculty, and staff who indicate being comfortable or very comfortable with the institutional climate at GVSU (campus climate metric).



3. Learning & Development

How does GVSU ensure that university expertise related to equity and inclusion is relevant and innovative? How does GVSU support the community's continual development of greater self-awareness, knowledge, and skills required for the advancement of equity and inclusion? Social justice education is a life-long learning process. Areas of focus within learning and development include:

- Curriculum and Instruction
- Research and Inquiry
- Leadership Development
- Inclusion and Equity Institute
- Support of learning and development for external community/partners

**Relevant Objectives
in Reach Higher
2025 and Division
of Inclusion and
Equity KPIs include:**

- All employees participate in diversity, equity, and inclusion training to build skills and abilities to foster inclusion and equity.



Social Justice Framework

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.



Intersectional Approach

GVSU's multifaceted and coordinated framework for equity and inclusion considers and affirms the role of multiple identities with relationship to various social contexts and interlocking systems of power, privilege, and oppression in shaping experiences of our community members. The university's efforts broadly consider complex experiences and needs through multiple dimensions of identity, particularly marginalized identities, including:

- Age
- Disability status/varying abilities
- First generation status
- Gender
- Gender identity and expression
- International status and national or geographic origin
- Race and ethnicity
- Religion and faith/spirituality
- Sexual orientation
- Socio-economic status
- Veteran/Military status

While intentional focus on intersectionality is central to the university's framework, community and identity-specific efforts are necessary until full equality is realized. These efforts acknowledge important nuances within diverse communities and identities and allow for strategic attention that advances the work more broadly.



Strategic Planning & Accountability Focused

Strategic planning focuses on creating measurable ways inclusion and equity can support the strategic direction, goals, and objectives of the university. The strategic direction for GVSU is articulated in Reach Higher 2025 and lived throughout divisions, colleges, and units. Although all academic and administrative units contextualize goals and key performance metrics, all goals should advance the commitments of Reach Higher 2025. To ensure the success of Grand Valley's commitment to building a culture of educational equity, accountability is key.

Efforts should include opportunities to review progress and articulate course-corrections, if necessary. While efforts should be broadly shared across campus, accountability partners should be identified to ensure timely progress. Accountability helps to ensure that "everyone is on board" and actively engaged in the equity and inclusion process. At GVSU, the Division of Inclusion and Equity is charged with supporting and advancing the university's strategic framework for equity and inclusion.

