

Statement of Purpose

The University of Tennessee Board of Trustees adopted the following statement on diversity on October 23, 2020:

One of the principal missions of The University of Tennessee is to provide quality educational opportunities for the people of this state. One measure of the quality of an educational experience is the extent to which it enables the recipient to compete and be productive in society and contribute to the quality of life. The Board of Trustees recognizes that diversity in the educational environment, including an outstanding and diverse student body, faculty, staff, and alumni, and an environment conducive to learning, adds value to the educational experience and the degree earned. Interacting with people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives augments the curricular experience and affords every student the opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to be a productive and contributing citizen of this state and nation, capable of competing in a global society. Thus, diversity is fundamental to a sound twenty-first century education. The Board affirms the educational value of a diverse and fully inclusive campus community, one that is enriched by persons of different backgrounds, points of view, cultures, socioeconomic status, and other diverse characteristics. The Board expects the University to engage in a variety of initiatives to advance diversity in all aspects of University life.

Consistent with the Board's statement on diversity, the strategic vision of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville as approved by the Board includes a goal of developing and sustaining a nurturing university culture where diversity and community are enduring sources of strength. We are committed to creating inclusive learning and work environments where civility, accountability, cultural competency, and equitable access are hallmarks of the UT Knoxville community. We value and affirm differences in race, culture, world views, beliefs, identities, and abilities. These efforts are indispensable to attracting and retaining the students, faculty, and staff whose energy and commitment fulfill our mission. The strategic vision goal includes to implement, advance, and evolve diversity action plan goals, sharing progress and continuing to solicit feedback and input. The purpose of our long-term diversity action plan goals, listed below, is to meet the UT Board's expectations and accomplish UT Knoxville's strategic vision.

Long-term diversity action plan goals

- Goal 1: Create and sustain a welcoming, supportive, and inclusive campus climate that allows for respectful interaction and viewpoint diversity.
- Goal 2: Attract and retain greater numbers of individuals from historically underrepresented populations into faculty, staff, and administrative positions (particularly department heads, directors, deans, and vice chancellors).
- Goal 3: Attract, retain, and graduate increasing numbers of undergraduate and graduate students from historically underrepresented populations and international students.
- Goal 4: Develop and strengthen partnerships with diverse communities in Tennessee and globally.
- Goal 5: Prepare undergraduate and graduate students to work and to serve in a diverse world by affording them the opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to be a productive and contributing citizen of this state and nation and capable of competing in a global society.

2022 Priorities for the College of Architecture and Design

Lower Financial Barriers for Students.

Many design-related courses have material costs that present students with financial barriers beyond published tuition and fees. Our goal is to develop strategies to make design education more accessible to all students in the college. Establish a comprehensive process that makes actual course costs more visible in each degree program and disseminate the results to CoAD faculty, staff, students, and stakeholders. Meet with donors to create scholarships and general funding to assist students who have demonstrated need.

Develop a Vertically Integrated Mentoring Structure for Students.

Increasing a sense of belonging among students will increase the likelihood that they are successful. The college will develop stronger mentoring networks that vertically integrate entering students with more advanced peer mentors, while also integrating recent alumni and emerging professionals from allied design professions. Our goal is both to strengthen the accessibility all students have to many forms of professional practice and to build a strong community of support and encouragement. Audit existing mentoring programs, identifying ways to strengthen them. Host two events per semester to engage new students with continuing students. Host one event per semester that integrates professionals with students.

Cultivate a Welcoming Teaching/Learning Culture Among Faculty.

Our goal is to improve teaching and learning by making course content and pedagogical delivery more inclusive to multiple viewpoints. This will further enable students to graduate as competitive and productive individuals who can contribute positively to the quality of life in their communities. By actively engaging professional development programming, faculty will be better equipped to cultivate social and cultural intelligence among students. Encourage faculty to obtain the Inclusive Teaching Certificate coordinated by Teaching and Learning Innovation, with the goal of having one third of the faculty participate.