

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 Arts and Sciences

Action Priority One: Increase the recruitment of excellent, diverse graduate students.

Action: Launch pilot fall semester 2022. College Faculty Fellows will work with departments to develop or expand relationships with similar departments at colleges/universities with a high level of diversity (broadly defined).

Measurable Outcome:

- Ask departments to share efforts to establish or expand relationships.
- Use application data provided by the Graduate School to assess success of pilot.

Action Priority Two: Develop a more welcoming environment for graduate students.

Action: Launched pilot fall semester 2021. Create peer connection groups which reach across disciplines.

Measurable Outcome: Assess success of groups and make enhancements to improve through data from satisfaction survey of participants.

Action Priority Three: Improve recruitment and search practices for staff and non-tenure track faculty to improve the diversity of our hires (broadly defined).

Action: Launch pilot fall semester 2022. Utilize STRIDE training to inform equitable hiring practices.

Measurable Outcome: Track improvements in diverse hiring pools.

Action Priority Four: Develop programming and communication strategies to create a more welcoming climate for new faculty hires.

Action: Launched pilot fall semester 2021. Faculty Fellows will create peer connection groups and mentoring matrices which reach across disciplines and bring together new faculty across the college with common interests.

Measurable Outcome: Assess success of groups and make enhancements to improve through data from satisfaction survey of participants.

Action Priority Five: Ensure students from diverse orientations and historically underrepresented populations and backgrounds are recognized as essential participants in the life of the university and society.

Action: Provide financial support for departments to develop, implement, and support professional development opportunities and programs to assist faculty and staff in learning about the multicultural world and variety of viewpoints to develop inclusive practices.

Measurable Outcome: Annual reviews will include a check that faculty and staff engaged in professional development opportunities to learn about inclusive pedagogy (TLI) or other practices (HR).