

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 Communication & Information

1. Create a college-level administrative position to champion, direct, and evaluate CCI's diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. Launch internal search in spring semester 2022. Use annual evaluation process to assess success of person selected to fill the role.
2. Assess the current state of representation among current students and recent graduates in CCI and devise appropriate benchmarks for increasing representation among historically underrepresented populations and international students. Appoint administrative fellow to lead data collection and benchmarking in spring semester 2022 as part of college-wide strategic planning process. Use data provided by OIRA to assess state of representation and set appropriate benchmarks.
3. Ensure that Schools regularly review their curriculum to ensure that they are preparing students to serve in a diverse world and to be a productive and contributing citizen of this state and nation and capable of competing in a global society. Ask Schools to conduct a review during fall semester 2022, in line with preparation for accreditation review. Curriculum revisions and accreditation self-study documents will permit an assessment of this work.
4. Continue to develop a partnership with Fulton High School, a UT Flagship School, to expose high school students to opportunities in CCI via CCI faculty/staff visits to Fulton, summer programs at UTK, and other initiatives. CCI leadership will continue conversations with teachers from Fulton High School during Spring 2022 and Fall 2022. The number of faculty/staff visits to Fulton and student visits to CCI will permit an initial assessment of this new initiative.