

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 Herbert College of Agriculture

Increase enrollment of underrepresented students within the Herbert College of Agriculture. Hire a new Recruitment Coordinator (Spring 2022) who will collaborate with the UTIA DEI Director to focus on expanding recruitment efforts to reach a broader audience of students across Tennessee (partnering with schools, community organizations, college readiness programs, etc.). Re-examine the college's marketing and recruitment resources (website, brochures, videos) to promote greater visibility, access, and awareness. Use recruitment and yield data provided through the Office of Admissions to assess the success of our recruitment endeavors.

Enhance the college's high school outreach endeavors through a new Jr. MANRRS Program. Collaborate with Knox County Schools, Austin-East High School (a Flagship School), and Project GRAD to launch the state's first Jr. MANRRS (Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences) chapter for historically underrepresented high school students interested in agricultural sciences and natural resources (Spring 2022). Assess for program participation, student/campus engagement, and pathway statistics between Austin-East High School and the University of Tennessee.

Create agricultural education and pathway programs through Extension and 4-H Honor Clubs. Collaborate with Tennessee 4-H Youth Development to implement hands-on learning opportunities regarding leadership development, college readiness, and cultural competency with honor clubs and summer camps throughout the state of Tennessee (launched Fall 2021). Assess via student engagement statistics through the state, potential pathway statistics, and student satisfaction/surveys from workshops and programs.

Provide faculty and staff members with guidance, programming, and support to create a welcoming, inclusive, and supportive departmental climate. Work with department chairs, departmental DEI committee chairs, and faculty/staff members to implement cultural competency training opportunities, along with departmental programs, initiatives, recruitment strategies, research opportunities, and student initiatives to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (Spring 2022). Utilize department-based environmental DEI surveys, engagement/participation statistics, and annual evaluations to assess for DEI engagement and implementation.

Provide graduate student programming in cultural competency and inclusive academic and professional development. Collaborate with AgResearch to host optional monthly professional development training opportunities for graduate students focusing on various aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion (Spring 2022). Assess workshop satisfaction through participation, evaluations, and skill development surveys.