

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.

University Libraries: Dean's Diversity Priorities

1. Develop an equitable library collection access strategy to deepen and extend the university's connection to Tennesseans and the world. Arrive at a unified understanding as an organization of our philosophy of access and develop a coordinated strategy for implementing that understanding in our processes and engaging, educating, and leading the campus on this issue.

Action Items:

- a) Develop a communication plan for strategic messaging to campus partners that brings context around access issues and introduces appropriate elements of the framework we develop to a larger University audience.
- b) Consultant will lead two focus groups to assess elements of the communication strategy in order to identify gaps or barriers.
- c) Consultant will work with Libraries to identify barriers related to the to-be-developed framework and possible strategies for overcoming those barriers.

Metrics / Outcomes:

- a) Assess communications strategy and communicate results of assessment to Libraries.
- b) Create and distribute a barriers and solutions report or presentation early to mid Fall 2022
- c) Resource access statistics will be collected and reported annually to track progress
- d) Creation of a web-based guide that connects library users to local and diverse collections

2. Apply inclusive language and accessibility standards to content and services available through the library's online presence to remove structural impediments to attracting and retaining students and employees.

Action Items:

- a) Require and apply accessibility standards to ensure that our web presence meets standards for providing a user-friendly experience regardless of ability
- b) Conduct an audit of [Research Guides](#), ensuring they reflect a diversity of abilities, topics, perspectives, and scholars
- c) Verify 3rd party vendors accessibility standard when acquiring and licensing new content / implement alternate access plans for resources with concerns

Metrics / Outcomes:

- a) Document that electronic resources meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA level standards; Information will be shared with the whole library
- b) A successful audit will result in the creation of a best practices document and training for librarians creating new guides as well as improvements to public-facing guides
- c) Hire accessibility coordinator to work with Libraries and University to establish and apply best practices for accessibility of licensed library resources

3. Preserve important materials from underrepresented organizations and community archives to support research outcomes that lead to the creation of a just, prosperous, and sustainable future.

Action Items:

- a) Develop partnerships with organizations and community archives of under-represented groups who may need assistance in preservation or long-term maintenance of digital collections whether that entails archiving with Special Collections or providing information on how to archive their own material so that it is preserved regardless of where it is archived.
- b) Create Memos of Understanding (MOUs) about material ownership, access, etc.
- c) Host digital exhibitions and collections with partners to tell a more complete story of TN

Metrics / Outcomes:

- a) Track number of contacts made with local and regional groups or associations representing and/or advocating for diverse and underrepresented communities and report through annual process
- b) Track MOUs established and report through annual process
- c) Track number of exhibits and collections and report annually

4. Provide inclusive training, consulting, and learning formats that are responsive to the needs of learners with considerations for what this means in both in-person and online venues.

Action Items:

- a) Inventory existing programs on campus and beyond (TLI, ACRL, LIS Pedagogy Community of Practice)
- b) Conduct survey and needs assessment of the Libraries; identify potential speakers and collaborators for 2020-2021
- c) Map out schedule and affiliated resources (Canvas site, LibGuide); ensure all content has learning outcomes for assessment purposes
- d) Lead training and offer resources; end of semester assessment

Metrics / Outcomes:

- a) Produce inventory document and share with libraries
- b) Assessment data (pre and post)
- c) Creation of training and guide
- d) Number of participants