

Valparaiso University Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement

Background

Valparaiso University has a long history of being a University that strives to exemplify its Lutheran values by its commitment to diversity and inclusion. This commitment is highlighted by various diversity and inclusion trainings, the infrastructural commitment of the Associate Provost for Inclusion & Retention, the Office of Multicultural Programs (OMP), the Office of International Programs, and the continuous work of diversifying our student, faculty, and staff communities.

A critical next step in the University's progression is to solidify the University's commitment through a diversity, equity, and inclusion statement. This statement would serve as the University's guiding statement for its collaborative equity infrastructure (OIR, OIP, OMP, etc.), University policies, and targeted programs. This statement would be the foundation of the University's current Action Agenda for Promoting Racial Equity and Inclusion (2020).

Review Process

As part of the creation process for the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement, the Institutional Commitment Committee (ICC), a subcommittee of the Presidential Commission for an Inclusive Valparaiso Community's (CIVC), reviewed, revised, and strengthened previous editions of diversity statements developed by former University committees including the Diversity Concerns Committee. ICC reviewed similar statements available from more than 20 peer institutions, most of which have similar goals pertaining to diversity and inclusion. The review of peers included Drake University, Gonzaga University, Ithaca College, John Carroll University, University of Portland, and Villanova University.

Upon drafting the initial statement it was reviewed by the following entities:

- President Emeritus Heckler
- The President's Council (under President Emeritus Heckler)
- Interim President Irwin-Knott '81
- Cornell Boggs '82, Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity for the Board of Directors
- The 2020 Fall Faculty Workshop (140 faculty members in attendance)
- Re-reviewed by CIVC
- Final Review by Cornell Boggs and Interim President Irwin-Knott

Resources

As a guiding University statement, it is important that the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement be recognized and implemented at all levels of the University. As such, the spirit and language of the proposed statement must be supported by policies, values, and language found within current University documents including:

- Student Guide to University Life
- Faculty Handbook
- Staff Handbook
- General Catalog
- University website in the following sections:
 - "About"
 - Inclusion and Retention Page
 - Static Bottom Banner

Once approved, ICC envisions this statement will be visible within all University marketing and communications materials. The statement should be housed on the University website and readily

available to all community members, specifically on the Mission & Values page. The integration of this statement both internally and externally will communicate to all communities where the University stands on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Valparaiso University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement

Valparaiso University is a welcoming community, grounded in the Lutheran tradition, built on values of mutual respect, positive regard, freedom, and reliant on grace. We strive to boldly include all individuals and groups who contribute to the life of our campus in a mutually beneficial way. Difference is a strength and reason for celebration, and we affirm that we are most inclusive when we bring groups together to make decisions in collaborative, equitable ways. Our values do not support language or behavior that demeans members of our campus based on age, appearance, ethnicity, race, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, biological sex, disabilities (visible and invisible), ideological/political positions, intellectual perspective, socio-economic status, immigration status, veteran status, and national or regional origin. Actions and behaviors based on positions or perspectives that inherently marginalize, oppress, or deny full dignity to all are not tolerated. As such, we will consistently and vigilantly assess our academic and co-curricular offerings and our admissions, hiring, and promotion policies in reflection of these values.