



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

Department of Communication DEI Committee Directive

2021-2024 Strategic Plan

DEI Committee Members 2021:

Committee Chair: Melody Fisher

Committee Members: Heesook Choi, Terri Hernandez, Melanie Loehwing, Wendy Roussin, Holli Seitz, and Matthew Webb

DEI Committee Members 2023:

Committee Chair: Melody Fisher

Committee Members: Victoria Bailey, Heesook Choi, Meaghan Gordon, Terri Hernandez, John Nicholson, and Wendy Roussin

Drafted: May 6, 2021

Adopted: August 15, 2021- Diversity Statement

Updated: August 22, 2023- Plan

Adopted: September 22, 2023

Diversity Statement

The Department of Communication is committed to fostering an environment that values and affirms diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Diversity is embracing a broad range of characteristics, which include, but are not limited to, race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, physical ability, neurodiversity, age, socio-economic status, religious beliefs and spirituality, and political affiliation and ideology.

Equity is ensuring fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all individuals while striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.

Inclusion is offering a safe and welcoming environment that empowers all individuals to express themselves through the art and science of communication.

Strategic Priorities

Formalizing the Importance and Role of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion within the Department of Communication

Goal #1: To establish a diversity, equity and inclusion committee with clear bylaws and

directives to ensure DEI efforts remain a sustainable focus within the department.

- ❖ Action 1: Establish a baseline of the department's existing DEI strengths and weaknesses via a self-assessment and draft an outline describing the department's current efforts and commitments to DEI *by August 2021 as measured by including this baseline commitment in the ACEJMC accreditation application.* - Completed 10/8/2020
- ❖ Action 2: Establish bylaws for the committee that specifically focus on (1) the time commitment and logistics of rotation of faculty members on the committee, (2) standards regarding representation of all rank and concentration, (3) DEI committee members' charge expectations, and (4) other relevant standards. – Completed 5/6/2021.
- ❖ Action 3: Establish bylaws for the committee that specifically focus on adding student representation to the DEI committee and students' role, commitment, etc. while serving on the committee *by December 2024.*
- ❖ Action 4: Establish a regular and systematic way to conduct climate analyses and target audience (i.e., faculty, staff, student, alumni, and advisory board) assessments of the department's DEI efforts *by September, 2024 as measured by the creation and dissemination of a target audience (i.e., faculty, staff, student, alumni, and advisory board) assessment.*

Goal #2: To address and make specific tangible recommendations to improve departmental issues identified in regularly conducted self-assessments of DEI efforts within the department.

- ❖ Action 1: Evaluate and recommend changes to the department's mission statement and core values to be more reflective of the department's commitment to DEI *by May 2023 as measured by the department's adoption of the recommendations via its website and other documents.* - Completed Summer, 2021
- ❖ Action 2: Evaluate and recommend changes to the department's internal and external communication to be more reflective to the department's commitment to DEI (e.g., language, digital accessibility) *by December 2024 as measured by a faculty, staff, student, alumni, and advisory board survey.*
- ❖ Action 3: Create DEI-focused departmental standards for a variety of procedures; including, but not limited to, curriculum, event planning standards (e.g., , assisted listening devices, accessibility, etc.), ensuring equal student worker/intern representation, establishing fair/equitable allocation standards of department support (e.g., disparities of salary, teaching/research/service funds, travel funding, access to technology, classroom and office space, course releases, scheduling priorities, promotional efforts, etc.), etc. *by December 2024 as measured by the department's adoption of the DEI- focused standards.*

Diversifying the Faculty/staff and Encouraging an Inclusive and Equitable Faculty Experience

Goal #1: To create, implement, and consistently evaluate efforts to improve the diversity of the department's faculty/staff.

- ❖ Action 1: Create protocols for all hiring committees to adhere to during the recruitment, interviewing, and hiring process (e.g., including a trained diversity advocate to sit on each search committee, appropriate language to use to ensure appropriate accommodations are met – transportation, hotel, meals, on-campus scheduling, etc., position announcements, rubrics for application, video conferencing, and on-campus assessments, student assessments, interview questions, etc.) *by August 2024 as measured by the department's approval and adoption of this Faculty Hiring Committee Protocols.*
- ❖ Action 2: Create a description of the diversity advocate charge *by August 2024 as measured by the department's approval of this advocate charge description and added to the department's Faculty Hiring Committee Protocols.*
- ❖ Action 3: Create a DEI-focused standard boilerplate describing the expectations for new faculty, which will be required in all new faculty position announcements *by May 2023 as measured by the department's adoption of the boilerplate in its faculty position ads. Completed Fall 2022.*

Goal #2: To create, implement, and consistently evaluate efforts to improve an inclusive and equitable faculty experience with a specific focus on faculty/staff retention via creating a supportive climate.

- ❖ Action 1: Establish one meeting or session in the opening retreat or in one faculty meeting that is focused on DEI efforts. – *Retreat completed May, 2021. DEI efforts are reported in each faculty meeting.*
- ❖ Action 2: Identify professional development, including grants for DEI efforts (e.g., DEI trainings) incentives; resources to support DEI needs *by December 2023 as measured by the diversity committee compiling a list of internal and external DEI resources.- DEI resources made available September, 2023 and accessible through Teams folder.*
- ❖ Action 3: Assess current faculty climate, perceptions, and experiences relating to DEI to record benchmark information to guide future improvements *by August, 2024 as measured by its dissemination and analysis.*
- ❖ Action 4: Committee members to serve as impartial advocates for colleagues who experience issues of insensitivity, exclusion, and disrespect *by August 2024 as measured by the diversity committee receiving training on campus and compiling existing resources and contact information.*
- ❖ Action 5: Review the P&T document to plan revisions that recognize and value DEI-related service, scholarship, and teaching *by May 2024 as measured by the department's formation of a subcommittee to study the existing P&T standards and propose revisions.*

Diversifying the Student Body and Encourage an Inclusive and Equitable Student Experience

Goal #1: To create, implement, and consistently evaluate efforts to improve the diversity of the department's student body.

- ❖ *Action 1: Make recommendations to departmental recruiting committee to engage students from underrepresented group at community colleges through campus visits and special events by September 2023 as measured by the submission of a formal report to the recruitment committee. Completed. Sent letter to recruitment committee March, 2023.*
- ❖ *Action 2: Make recommendation to the departmental recruiting committee to utilize pre-established student organizations and events (e.g., MSU Speech and Debate Council, MSU summer camps) to engage underrepresented students by September 2023 as measured by the submission of a formal report to the recruitment committee.- Completed. Sent letter to recruitment committee March, 2023.*
- ❖ *Action 3: Make recommendations to departmental recruiting committee to engage high school students from underrepresented groups by September 2023 as measured by the submission of a formal report to the recruitment committee. – Completed. Sent letter to recruitment committee March, 2023.*

Goal #2: To create, implement, and consistently evaluate efforts to improve an inclusive and equitable student experience with a specific focus on student retention via creating a supportive climate.

- ❖ *Action 1: Assess current student climate, perceptions, and experiences relating to DEI to record benchmark information to guide future improvements by December 2024 as measured by its dissemination and analysis.*
- ❖ *Action 2: Identify professional organizations that are targeted towards connecting and empowering underrepresented students within the mass communication profession to connect our students with mentors and contemplate creating a student-led chapter in the department by December 2024 as measured by the submission of a formal report.*
- ❖ *Action 3: Identify funds for student development initiatives, including grants for DEI efforts, incentives toward student support and retention, and resources to support student experiences by October 2023 as measured by the diversity committee compiling a list of internal and external DEI resources. Completed. DEI resources made available September, 2023 and accessible through Teams folder*