

Western Carolina University
Master of Public Affairs
Strategic Diversity Plan
Revised July 2020

One of Western Carolina University's key strategic directions is inclusive excellence, that is, a broad commitment to diversity and inclusion across campus functions including recruitment, retention, scholarship, teaching, and campus climate. Alongside this commitment, WCU's Community Vision for Inclusive Excellence states,

The diverse perspectives encountered at WCU are an important part of the preparation of students for roles as regional, national, and global leaders who contribute to the improvement of society. It is expected that members of the WCU community will not only coexist with those who are different from themselves, but also nurture respect and appreciation of those differences. We encourage civil discourse as a part of the learning enterprise, and as a campus we do not tolerate harassing or discriminating behavior that seeks to marginalize or demean members of our community.

In alignment with these university values, the Western Carolina University Master of Public Affairs program identifies diversity, equity, and inclusion as key public service values undergirding our own mission. As we work to prepare students to lead and manage in public affairs in the Western North Carolina region and beyond, we recognize that a learning environment that exemplifies these values is vital to fulfill our mission. Public servants in all sectors must learn not only to understand and appreciate diversity of gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation, but also to exhibit leadership in confronting and changing the systemic inequities that hamper the efficacy of our governance system.

Our MPA program seeks to achieve a diverse, equitable, and inclusive learning environment in the following ways:

I. Fostering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Student Recruitment

Goal: Recruit a racially, culturally, and gender diverse student body to the MPA program, and utilize recruitment practices that cultivate and support applicants from underrepresented backgrounds.

Strategy 1: Target outreach activities to alumni, friends of the program from underrepresented populations, and WCU populations such as underrepresented student groups and students in the African American Studies and Latinx Studies minors to market our program and achieve a diverse student applicant pool.

Strategy 2: Regularly contact Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) in the region like North Carolina Central University, North Carolina A and T University, Winston Salem State, and Elizabeth City State to recruit excellent minority students.

Strategy 3: Work with alumni and friends of the program that are enrolled members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) to identify excellent student candidates, and contact the Tribal Education Office, which helps connect students and also provides educational assistance to EBCI students.

Strategy 4: Consider race and ethnic background among the other measures of applicant quality included in our admissions process as we pursue the goals of preparing students to communicate and interact productively and in culturally responsive ways with a diverse and changing workforce and society at large.

Assessment Activities and Indicators for Student Recruitment:

What We Are Assessing	Assessment Activities	Performance Indicator
Outreach efforts	Maintain an annual list of recruitment contacts and activities including outreach efforts to alums from underrepresented groups, regional HBCUs, contacts with the Eastern Band, and paid advertising	At least one contact per year with (1) Minority Serving undergraduate institutions in the state, (2) the EBCI, (3) paid advertising in minority-serving publications or organizations
Applicant data tracking	Collect data on the yearly total and percentage of accepted and enrolled students on dimensions of race, gender, and veteran status.	No systematic difference between race, gender, and background of applicants and enrollees; race and gender of enrolled students that mirrors or is more diverse than the western North Carolina region.

II. Fostering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Faculty Recruitment

Goal: Recruit a racially, culturally, and gender diverse faculty nucleus and adjunct faculty to ensure that our students learn from persons of diverse backgrounds and opinions.

Strategy 1: Follow university guidelines for equal opportunity in employment as we draft and circulate job announcement and advertisements. These guidelines include placing an equal opportunity statement in every employment advertisement, giving applicants an opportunity to list their sex and ethnic backgrounds, and tracking the number of applicants who are selected for interviews that are from underrepresented backgrounds.

Strategy 2: Advertise our job listings widely where they would be likely to be seen by candidates regardless of gender orientation or minority background. This includes distributing advertisements by ad, email, and posts to listervs at PHD producing MSIs, universities known to produce PhDs from diverse backgrounds, diversity, LGBTQ, and social equity sections at NASPAA, NAPA, ASPA, and other specialized field professional associations as appropriate.

Strategy 3: Select an inclusive, talented interview pool in the initial short list, and merited candidates of diverse backgrounds to include in the interview process such as phone/video interviews or on campus visits.

Strategy 4: Create an inclusive search experience for candidates including opportunities for candidates to meet with the diverse constituencies of the program.

Strategy 5: Recruit talented practitioners of diverse backgrounds to teach as adjuncts in our program.

Assessment Activities and Indicators for Faculty Recruitment:

What We Are Assessing	Assessment Activities	Performance Indicator
Faculty diversity	Annual NASPAA data report	Faculty diversity remains the same or increases from the prior year
Job Announcement Placements	Create a list of the groups contacted to share job announcement ads, posts, or emails	Evidence of ads or other materials targeted to minority serving institutions or organizations.

Applicant Data Tracking	Report on the demographic data of our faculty applicant pool, short list, on-campus interviewees, and job offers	Applicant pools that meet or exceed expected diversity metrics from WCU human resources.
Inclusive search experience	On campus interview schedules	Job candidates on-campus interview schedules provide evidence that they had ample opportunities to meet with people who represent the diverse constituencies of the program

III. Fostering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Curriculum

Goal: Provide a curriculum that reflects the value of diversity and prepares graduates to manage, govern, and lead employees and serve the public in ways that respect diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Strategy 1: Regularly review the state of diversity in our curriculum, and work with faculty to include topics, assignments, and projects that expose our students to the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion as well as persons of diverse background and opinions.

Strategy 2: Provide faculty members access to resources such as Academic Women in Public Administration’s Diversity Literature Reference Tool https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1E-IRtMCM0UV0dcSkb3HJ_9nU35az-zXB1pXPOVqEusY/edit#gid=0, WCU Hunter Library’s Anti-Racism Research Guide <https://researchguides.wcu.edu/antiracism/Introduction> and WCU College of Education and Allied Professions’ resources for learning and teaching anti-racism <https://www.wcu.edu/WebFiles/DCResourcesonRace.pdf> to support them in deploying diverse readings and activities in their coursework.

Assessment Activities and Indicators for Curriculum:

What We Are Assessing	Assessment Activities	Performance Indicator
Program Syllabi	Annual review of course syllabi for diversity, equity, and inclusion elements	All syllabi have required and updated diversity and inclusion language as found on the most recent version of the WCU Coulter Faculty

		Commons syllabus template, and MPA nucleus faculty dedicate time during at least one meeting annually to share activities and resources that they have employed in their classrooms.
Faculty Resources	Annual survey of faculty members regarding utility of current diversity resources and future resource needs	Survey is distributed and analyzed annually; nucleus faculty make decisions based on the outcome.

IV. Fostering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Program Culture

Goal: Provide a learning environment and community that is welcoming to all and that supports the success of each individual.

Strategy 1: Regularly review the resources offered by WCU units such as the Office of Intercultural Affairs to learn about and employ those resources to benefit our program. This may include trainings, workshops, efforts to review our diversity and inclusion efforts, and perhaps additions to our curriculum in courses.

Strategy 2: Enhance the diversity of our learning environment by strategically recruiting individuals that represent the diversity of the public affairs profession as guest speakers to classes and Professional Development Series, to serve on our Advisory Board, and to participate in other events so that students can meet them and learn from them.

Strategy 3: Track student academic issues and follow up with appropriate faculty advising and guidance to resources for student success.

Strategy 4: Provide all students with a copy of the WCU MPA strategic diversity plan during the orientation process as well as an explanation of the university’s discrimination policies and reporting procedures.

Assessment Activities and Indicators for Program Culture

What We Are Assessing	Assessment Activities	Performance Indicator
Use of WCU diversity, equity, and inclusion resources	Annual survey of faculty members	The list of resources is available on the program web site and the links are clearly

	Student exit surveys	identifiable and working. Student and faculty surveys provide evidence that resources are being utilized.
Guest Speakers and Advisory Board	<p>Create a list of talented and diverse guest speakers that faculty can use for different topics. Collect data annually on the number of speakers, topics, and speaker race, gender, and/or other diverse background characteristics.</p> <p>Maintain a list of advisory board member, their organizational affiliations, and demographic characteristics.</p>	Evidence that advisory board and guest speaker lists are updated annually and that the number of speakers from diverse backgrounds meets or exceeds the demographic makeup of the region.
Academic Issues	Track student academic issues through MPA nucleus faculty meeting minutes	Every student with an identified academic issue contacted either by a nucleus faculty advisor or the MPA director and directed to appropriate resources
Dissemination of Diversity Plan and WCU policies on discrimination	Orientation checklist includes distributing digital copies of the diversity plan and policies on discrimination to students, and the web page is updated with links to current versions of these plans and policies	<p>Every MPA student receives a digital copy of the diversity plan and university policies on discrimination</p> <p>The link on the MPA webpage to these policies is clear, easy to locate, and functioning</p>