



Southern Association of Colleges and Schools  
Commission on Colleges  
1866 Southern Lane  
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

### A Position Statement

SACSCOC supports and encourages the leadership role of its institutions in promoting and sustaining diversity, equity and inclusion in all arenas of higher education. Through its own activities, SACSCOC seeks to model inclusion on its Board of Trustees, on its staff, on its peer evaluation teams, and through its training and professional development, including a multiplicity of perspectives that represent the whole of the SACSCOC membership. While no single SACSCOC standard speaks to diversity, equity and inclusion, opportunities are available throughout the standards to showcase efforts and to engage in thoughtful reflection, evaluation, and planning to support the diversity of all students, faculty, and staff.

By creating and sustaining an equitable and inclusive institutional culture, colleges and universities can foster a community in which all members can be respected and appreciated for their differences, and in which all learners can be engaged to reach their full potential. Promoting diversity, equity and inclusion is an opportunity for institutions to recruit students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities; to support them, adapt teaching methods and use technology to meet their needs and break down barriers to learning; and to successfully guide, mentor, retain, and graduate them. Equally important is the opportunity to recruit a diverse faculty and staff that reflects the larger society.

Many SACSCOC member institutions have committed to inclusive institutional environments through strategic planning and evaluation processes, and are implementing related strategies such as:

- Engaging in thoughtful discussions on campus regarding what diversity, equity and inclusion mean and look like within the context of the institution's mission;
- Promoting diversity as part of the institutional mission;
- Dedicating staff to advocate for and lead diversity initiatives (e.g. Chief Diversity Officer, Office of Diversity or Multicultural Affairs);
- Offering learning opportunities to explore diversity, and develop a sensitivity to, and an appreciation of, differences;
- Promoting support services tailored to support various student constituencies;
- Establishing mentoring programs to support students from traditionally underrepresented groups;

**Diversity** - variety or differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, age, sex/gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, culture, religious beliefs, political views, family status, educational background, profession, and socioeconomic status

**Equity** – process of ensuring freedom from bias or favoritism such that all individuals can achieve their full potential; a measure of achievement, fairness, and opportunity for all in education

**Inclusion** – process of improving participation for all, including those who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, economics, or any other status or difference.

- Designating positive spaces in which students and institutional constituents can feel welcome, affirmed, and secure;
- Ensuring that all marketing materials reflect a diverse campus community;
- Providing curricular and co-curricular multicultural programming and events;
- Identifying and nurturing diversity in defining and measuring student achievement; and
- Disaggregating retention, graduation\*, and other institutional data to identify and address barriers to equal opportunities that support student achievement more effectively.

Strategies and definitions may and should vary to meet unique institutional needs and missions. While there are no specific benchmarks regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts for SACSCOC member institutions, all are encouraged to continue to regularly engage in thoughtful discussions about diversity, to intentionally cultivate and sustain inclusive and equitable processes, and to implement strategies to create and maintain respectful and supportive learning environments in which to learn and work.

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*\*Standard 8.1 (Student achievement) expects that institutions will disaggregate graduation rate data by gender, ethnic, socioeconomic, and/or other student population characteristics in order that institutions implement strategies for improvement.*

**Document History**

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