

Assessment, Year 1: Draft submitted 4/1/2024

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan 2023-2028

College of Journalism and Mass Communications

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

DEI Mission Statement

We value, respect and uplift all students, faculty and staff. We recruit and support a diverse and inclusive community. We are responsible for one another and will push back against the mistreatment of marginalized people. We are the strongest, most creative and most innovative together.

University Context

The college's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion is made in the context of the commitment by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the University of Nebraska system to foster these values. The UNL Commitment to Action recognizes that no single set of plans or actions will solve systemic oppression of traditionally marginalized populations. Rather, they represent steps toward that goal. This plan represents the college's commitment to making the journey.

Components of the Plan

The college recognizes four components for an effective and comprehensive plan to build diversity, equity and inclusion for students, staff and faculty:

- I. Developing a diverse and inclusive culture and climate*
- II. Creating an academic environment for student success*
- III. Incorporating diversity, equity and inclusion in the college curriculum*
- IV. Enhance Recruiting and Retention Efforts to Increase Diversity Faculty and Staff*

I. Developing a Diverse and Inclusive Culture and Climate

The college commits itself to welcoming and including students, staff and faculty of all races, nationalities, ethnicities, religions, genders, sexual orientations, as well as all social, political and economic ideas. In this context, inclusion means all people will be respected regardless of their background or beliefs and will have opportunities to engage fully in the life of the college.

To fulfill this commitment, the college will:

- 1. Require the DEI mission statement in all syllabuses, as part of the syllabus template. The statement will be displayed on the college website. Faculty are encouraged to direct students to read that statement and understand the importance the college attaches to it.*

2. *Develop intellectual and social programs— such as panel discussions, speakers, book clubs, and special topics or permanent classes, targeting all components of the college community, which are designed to increase the understanding of the value and benefits of diversity and inclusion.*

***Assessment:** Reported in Monday Dean’s memo and annual report. The college has created Diversity & Inclusion [Toolkit](#) to help students, staff and faculty find and employ resources.*

3. *Prioritize college travel funding requests to underwrite or otherwise support international faculty exchanges.*

***Assessment:** Global Eyewitness is endowed to support student/faculty travel abroad each year and was relaunched in 2022. Faculty seed and travel funds will be reviewed each year for global travel and projects.*

4. *Collaborate between college DEI committee and students, including RSO representatives annually to gather feedback about diversity and inclusion on ways to improve the college’s performance in those areas.*

***Assessment:** Students will provide feedback through an annual survey.*

5. *Solicit feedback from faculty and staff on the climate and atmosphere within the college surrounding DEI issues periodically each year through interpersonal, public and confidential means.*

***Assessment:** Annual climate survey distributed in spring, as well as administrative evaluations and faculty/staff meetings.*

Year 1 Assessment:

These points are evaluated in several ways: All course syllabi are reviewed by office staff for inclusion of the CoJMC DEI Mission Statement each term. We have 100 percent compliance. The college has at least two DEI-related programming options for faculty and staff each semester. One professional development program is designed for diversity each semester. In 2023, we hosted a “Diversity Roundtable,” where faculty discussed DEI assignments, and “DEI from a student perspective” where students offered their thoughts on experiences in the college. We also host a book club/media night. The college purchases the media for faculty/staff, followed by a discussion roundtable to view and discuss the topic. The college relaunched the 400-level multimedia course Global Eyewitness (JOUR490A and JOUR490B) in Fall 2022 with the first international travel trip in January 2024 when nine students traveled to Vietnam to produce news documentaries in the Mekong Delta region of the country. The college has provided up to \$2000 toward funding for international conferences and events. In May 2024, this included ICA in Australia, where two faculty members presented papers.

The college created climate surveys for faculty and staff, along with administrative evaluations to provide outlets for faculty and staff to anonymously share their views. The climate survey is

distributed to all employees, including full and part-time faculty, staff, graduate assistants and student workers.

From 2022 to 2023, we made improvements on 14 measures on the climate survey. In 2023, we had a 40 percent response rate to the survey, or 80 of 199 employees. Notably, the following areas demonstrated the greatest improvement:

- “I believe my opinions and perspectives are represented in decisions made.”
 - In 2022, 80.95% of respondents agreed with this statement, improving to 93.75% in 2023.
- “People here are open to trying new and different ways of addressing our college's challenges.”
 - In 2022, 79.37% of respondents agreed, improving to 90% in 2023.
- “The college promotes an environment of physical, mental, and social well-being.”
 - In 2022, 84.12% of respondents agreed, improving to 92.5% in 2023.

However, there were also areas where we saw a decline in agreement among respondents. While the change is not substantial, we are monitoring these areas:

- “I am satisfied with my involvement in decisions that affect my work.”
 - In 2022, 90.48% of respondents agreed, dropping to 88.75% in 2023.
- “I feel my professional development is supported and encouraged.”
 - In 2022, 92.06% of respondents agreed, dropping to 91.25% in 2023.

In addition, there was a gap in scores from staff vs. faculty in the following areas:

- “The college promotes an environment of physical, mental and social well-being.”
 - Results indicated that 95.8% of faculty agreed with this statement, compared to 75% of staff.
- “I feel my professional development is supported and encouraged.”
 - Results indicated that 91.7% of faculty agreed with this statement, compared to 83.3% of staff.
- “Leadership in the college has adequately communicated the organization's long-range goals and strategic direction.”
 - Results indicated that 100% of faculty agreed, compared to 91.7% of staff.
- “Most of the time it is safe to speak up in the college.”
 - Results indicated that 100% of staff agreed with this statement, with 85.4% of faculty in agreement with the statement.

Two statements received 100% agreement across faculty and staff:

- “I am proud to be associated with the college and university.”
- “I believe my work positively impacts the success of our students, faculty and staff.”

The first student climate survey will be distributed in spring 2024.

Students from the CoJMC Student Advisory have been added to key standing college committees for input: DEI, strategic planning, curriculum, technology and student competitions.

Based on these strategies and activities, Goal 1 was **ACHIEVED**.

II. *Creating an Academic Environment for Student Success*

Talk of promoting diversity, equity and inclusion is empty in the absence of a community that is diverse. Conscious efforts to seek students of diverse backgrounds will be necessary if the college is to build a more diverse and inclusive community. The college will increase its efforts to recruit students from traditionally marginalized communities and ensure student success.

To achieve this goal, the college will:

- 1. Work with the university's admissions office and the office of the vice chancellor for diversity to identify and recruit high school students of diverse backgrounds.
Assessment: Tracked through annual report materials. Can be reviewed year by year for comparison. Also tracked through Executive Vice Chancellor's office:
<https://executivevc.unl.edu/academic-excellence/undergraduate-analytics>*
- 2. Establish and continue partnerships with administrators and counselors from high schools in the UNL recruiting area to coordinate recruiting efforts. Goal is to have at least 30 percent recruitment efforts of marginalized or underserved students.
Assessment: Measure by number and by program year over year.*
- 3. Increase contacts with prospective students who show aptitude and interest in mass communications through existing and newly developed program, such as NHSPA workshops and Nebraska College Preparatory Academy./
Assessment: Follow-up emails should occur within a month of event to establish relationships. Recruitment officer to report in annual report.*
- 4. Monitor the progress of students from marginalized communities to support their academic efforts and enhance their chances for graduation.
Assessment: Advisors evaluate the four- and six-year graduation rates for students from underrepresented and underserved communities and academic navigator helps with focus on "at-promise" students. Reviews as part of CoJMC Student Success Plan and UNL retention plan, found here: <https://executivevc.unl.edu/academic-excellence/EVC-AnnualRetentionDocument.pdf>*
- 5. Establish a mentoring program for students, prioritizing first generation and underrepresented students, with alumni and working professionals.
Assessment: Record those as part of overall database of contacts discussed below.*

Year 1 Assessment:

The college has set up partnerships with several schools throughout Nebraska and the surrounding states with diverse populations. For example, CoJMC has a partnership with Bay High School in Lincoln where various workshops and joint curriculum are taught within the school, as well as recruitment activities. These partnerships are well established and have helped to increase our incoming freshman diversity.

In 2022-2023, the college received a grant from the Cooper Foundation to launch an after-school program at Bay High, a Lincoln Public Schools focus program that provides concentrated educational opportunities to public school students interested in digital storytelling. Associate Professor of Practice Alan Eno and Assistant Director of Recruitment Alex Fernando developed a yearlong two-day-a-week program that provides Bay High students the opportunity to participate in workshops taught by CoJMC faculty and student ambassadors and to create content for publication by Rabble Media. Additionally, the college partnered with the UNL Office of Admissions to host workshops on applying to college for Bay High students.

The college expected that these enhanced recruitment efforts would result in increases throughout the recruitment funnel. These efforts were ultimately successful, with an increase in applications (13.8%), admits (13.7%), gross deposits (20.3%) and net deposits (19.1%).

Increases throughout the funnel resulted in an increased enrollment of 5.8% at the census date. Additionally, the college saw an increase in underrepresented students, with the most significant increases in Hispanic and Latino students, which grew from 6.5% to 10.1% and multiracial students, which grew from 3.6% to 7.8%.

In addition to maintaining current partnerships, the college expanded community partnerships. Our student ambassador team now offers weekly workshops to students enrolled in the Boys and Girls Club throughout the year. The college participated in a day-long conference hosted by Class Intercom, which works with many Nebraska High Schools to manage their social media. The college is transitioning the Bay High Partnership from an afterschool program to a partnership with Bay High teachers in required journalism courses. In the program, the college works with the teacher to offer recurring hands-on media workshops as part of the required course. Additionally, the college will work with the teacher to develop a course curriculum that supports the pursuit of dual credit between Lincoln Public Schools and UNL for students enrolled in the program.

The college achieved tremendous first-, second- and third-year retention rates for undergraduate students in fall 2023. Our first-year retention rate is 91.2%, exceeded only by the College of Architecture. Our second-year rate (85.6%) and third-year rate (76.6%) led the campus rates.

In 2022-2023, the college built upon previous retention programming that resulted in campus-leading rates across the board in fall 2022. Enhancements to current programming included expanding our college success course, implementing the university's student success metrics, opting into the course outliers report and adjusting the curriculum to remove bottlenecks. Additionally, the college implemented some new initiatives to support student retention and persistence, including adding an academic navigator to the student success team and institution of an experiential learning requirement.

The college continued implementing measures to support student success, including to encourage faculty to provide feedback by week four and to encourage students to meet with their adviser each semester. In fall 2022, 97.3% of courses provided feedback by week four (the highest rate on campus) and in spring 2023, 96% of college courses did so.

The college also added an academic navigator, in partnership with the Colleges of Fine and Performing Arts and Architecture, to its student success team in fall 2022. The Academic Navigator uses available data to identify struggling students, conducts outreach to connect students to campus resources and provides one-on-one academic success coaching.

In 2022-2023, the college was the first to enroll all courses in the course outliers report, which provides live information on students who are falling behind on courses. The report allows Academic Navigators to conduct targeted outreach to struggling students.

Lastly, in the fall of 2022, new curriculum requirements went into effect that require students to engage in experiential learning in the college. Now, every student who enrolls in the college must work four to six hours a week in the Experience Lab as part of their degree requirements. In the program, they work with faculty liaisons and professional mentors in a student-led media outlet or agency.

We have not yet begun the process of mentoring for students.

Goal II is **IN PROGRESS**

III. *Incorporating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the College Curriculum*

Students who complete majors in the college should understand how incorporating diversity, equity and inclusion in mass communications strengthens businesses and communities and improves the functioning of local, state and national political institutions. The curriculum should offer students opportunities to engage with diverse groups domestically and globally.

To achieve this goal, the college will:

- 1. Create a database of speakers that faculty can access to help connect faculty to diverse alumni/professionals from underrepresented or underserved groups. For example, the college is expected to choose an annual honoree for the university's multicultural homecoming event and invite at least one other diverse college alumni to campus each semester, to participate in college events and class or public lectures.*
- 2. Engage students and faculty in the college's experiential learning programs — along with the college's marketing staff — to report on and promote the college's and university's efforts to promote diversity, equity and inclusion.*

Assessment: Annual report and summary circulated on college website. Tabulated as

part of CoJMC Student Success plan.

- 3. Provide outlets for faculty to share teaching resources or techniques that promote a better understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion or that assist in making the curriculum and/or scholarship more relevant to students of diverse backgrounds.*

Assessment: *One Faculty Innovation and Exploration will focus on diversity and inclusion each semester, sharing faculty ideas in a roundtable format.*

2023 metrics: *A student-led diversity panel entitled "Inclusive Excellence from the Student Perspective" was held on Sept. 22, 2023*

- 4. Each course shall include at least one component, such as lectures or an exercise, devoted to diversity, equity and inclusion..*

Assessment: *Review the course syllabuses to discern the types of elements related to DEI and resources in D&I toolkit. Require faculty to identify in their syllabus lectures, assignments or other components of their courses that address diversity, equity and inclusion.*

- 5. Encourage faculty to conduct research and creative activities or instruction that focus on issues of diversity, equity and inclusion and publicize such activities as part of annual reporting.*

Assessment: *The annual inclusive excellence faculty/staff award will focus in this area.*

Year 1 Assessment:

After conducting a thorough review involving faculty, students and alumni during 2021-2022, the college successfully relaunched the Global Eyewitness multimedia documentary course. This year-long course adopts a solutions journalism approach to share stories from underrepresented communities. Program leaders Chris Graves and Shoun Hill took nine students to Vietnam in January 2024, aiming to reestablish the program's international scope and impact.

Aside from the preparations for the Vietnam trip, the college also facilitated two enriching study-abroad experiences for students during the summer of 2023: JOMC 491/891 Spain: Global Sports, Media, and Entertainment, led by John Shrader, allowed students to explore Spain's dynamic media and entertainment landscape in a global sports context. The other, "England: The Monarchy and the Media," was co-led by Kelli Boling and Kelli Britten, provided students an immersive journey to the United Kingdom to examine the monarchy as a brand, specifically focusing on concerns regarding racism within the monarchy and how it derived from colonialism. These study-abroad opportunities gave students valuable cultural insights and diverse perspectives on media and society.

The college made significant strides in expanding its efforts to promote diversity and inclusivity among its student body in 2023. To achieve this goal, the college collaborated with community organizations serving underrepresented students, hosting tours and workshops to provide valuable insights into the college experience.

One such collaboration involved Upward Bound, a federally funded program that supports students from low-income families in their journey toward college entrance. The college organized workshops on June 16, 28, and 29, 2023 to offer tutoring and other essential services, empowering these students to achieve their academic aspirations.

The college also partnered with Girls, Inc., an organization that empowers young women through diverse programs and experiences. A special summer camp for Girls, Inc. took place from July 10-13, 2023, providing a nurturing environment to foster personal growth and development.

Within Digital Measures, the college tracks guest speakers and those who interact with students. Those records are being pulled to begin the process of the database of speakers. The plan is to work with some of those individuals to mentor students. We plan to create a workshop of diverse alumni to incorporate into the first-year curriculum to showcase to students those who have achieved within our majors and some of their own experiences of how that has worked for them. The college continues to participate in the UNL Multicultural Homecoming events on campus, bringing in alumni to engage with students.

Our FIE programs include at least two programs on DEI-programs each year and we created an internal website within the college to share key DEI assignments and lecture topics for faculty to use to raise awareness about such options.

As part of the college awards, CoJMC has created an inclusive excellence award for faculty/staff to provide recognition of the work being done in this area in the college.

Goal III is **IN PROGRESS**.

IV. Enhance Recruiting and Retention Efforts to Increase Diversity Faculty and Staff

The college must increase its efforts to attract and retain top-level scholars and administrators from diverse backgrounds and marginalized communities.

To achieve this goal, the college will:

- 1. Advertise openings for full- and part-time positions in ways and through channels that are likely to reach members of marginalized communities. Employ college speaker database and Office of Diversity and Inclusion for suggestions on best locations for ads. This includes recruiting at conferences such as National Associations of Black and/or Hispanic Journalists.*

***Assessment:** Gather listings for each job search to demonstrate broad reach.*

- 2. Develop a best practices model for faculty/staff job searches that focus on being inclusive and specifically targeting a broad and diverse pool of applicants.*

***Assessment:** Survey conducted in Fall 2022. DEI committee developing best practices model for completion in Fall 2023.*

- 3. Require BRIDGES training for all search committee members.*

***Assessment:** Compile a list from those completing training teach year from Office*

of Diversity & Inclusion.

- 4. Develop and cultivate individual relationships with faculty, professionals and graduate students of color for potential faculty or staff hires through guest speaker, workshop or other guest opportunities. Add these individuals to our database of sources, who can be used as potential faculty/staff recruiting agents when positions occur.*

***Assessment:** Check database listings and track how many served as resources or joined faculty.*

- 5. Recognize that faculty and staff with diverse backgrounds sometimes have increased mentoring loads because students with similar backgrounds turn to them for help and guidance. Investigate the creation of an endowment for a visiting professorship for a faculty member to focus on study and instruction related to diversity, equity and inclusion in the media.*

***Assessment:** Acknowledgement of annual reviews and promotion materials.*

Year 1 Assessment

Attracting and retaining a diverse faculty, staff, and student body committed to our values of hard work and collaborative problem-solving is a top priority for our college. To achieve this goal, we have undertaken several initiatives and programs that promote diversity and inclusion.

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee created a best practices document on faculty hires, highlighting key elements within the search process that can help recruit a diverse candidate pool and make UNL an attractive location to live. The database noted above will also be used for this process, once completed. The university requires inclusivity as an element of its faculty search training process, so all faculty members serving on search committees have that training.

The DEI committee reviewed all the wall quotes adorning Andersen Hall. This review identified several problematic quotes, either due to their content or the speaker's character. As a result, the college removed the quotes from the building during the spring of 2023.

The college prioritizes creating a welcoming and supportive culture to retain a diverse faculty and staff. Efforts include transparency in advancement processes, flexibility in work arrangements and improving salary equity. Onboarding programs for faculty and staff foster interpersonal connections, while initiatives like faculty appointment data sheets and individual meetings with staff promote transparency and career development.

Goal IV was **ACHIEVED**.