

SUNY Cobleskill Strategic Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan

2017-2022

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Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Mission and Vision Statements

SUNY Cobleskill's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) mission and vision statements are based on the AAC&U Inclusive Excellence Model; they build upon our current campus climate survey and incorporate elements of the action theory framework. The action theory framework for the DEI strategic plan should:

1. Align with the value and mission statements
2. Include goals and outcomes
3. Be linked to the Strategic Plan
4. Contain an assessment and accountability plan

The DEI mission and vision statements have been vetted initially through the cabinet and the Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CDEI). The Student Government Association, Faculty Governance, and the Deans, Directors, and Chairs of both the faculty and non-teaching staff will further vet the following statements.

Diversity, Equity, and, Inclusion Mission

For SUNY Cobleskill, diversity is reflected in the campus climate and how we treat individuals with varied cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, psychosocial, and demographic characteristic and attributes. Our DEI mission is to provide culture-specific and universal educational opportunities in promoting students' confidence and critical thinking skills in culturally meaningful ways as well as assist faculty and staff in developing their individual and collective cultural competency.

For SUNY Cobleskill, diversity extends beyond the legal classifications and federal regulations associated with discrimination with respect to religion, race, gender and other protected characteristics. The definition also includes community members who follow and/or identify with different cultural practices, who hold different worldviews and ideas, and who belong to groups that do not represent the cultural norm.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Vision

We recognize that diversity is a multifaceted concept. We value the impact diversity has on educational excellence, and we see it as a tool to broaden perspectives. We strive to:

1. Increase structural diversity (Access & Equity)
2. Nurture cultural awareness and understanding. (Campus Climate)
3. Broaden viewpoints; take the position of the “other” via training and programming with an eye toward developing cultural competency (Diversity in the Formal and Informal Curriculum)
4. Understand how diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies impact the brain (Learning & Development)

The DEI Strategic Plan was developed concurrently with the campus-wide development of the overall Strategic Plan of the College. While, ideally, the DEI plan would have occurred subsequent to the College Strategic Plan (CSP) publication, we were able to funnel the good work of the CSP, where diversity and inclusion are a prominent goal, to the work of the DEI Strategic Plan in order to fulfill the important SUNY diversity and inclusion directive.

Current Campus Assessment

The State University of New York College of Agriculture and Technology at Cobleskill was chartered in 1911 and opened in 1916 as the Schoharie State School of Agriculture with one building, five faculty members, and eight students—all young men desiring post-secondary education in agriculture. The college has now developed into a dynamic comprehensive college that offers bachelor and associate degrees in 53 programs in Agriculture and Natural Resources, Business, and Liberal Arts and Sciences, as well as a wide array of continuing education and professional development opportunities. SUNY Cobleskill is a leader in Applied Learning and offers small classes, excellent facilities, and a hands-on learning environment that features extensive experiential learning opportunities through internships and field experiences. In the fall of 2016, SUNY Cobleskill had 168 faculty and 2304 full-time students.

Total undergraduate enrollment: 2,304

Total Degree-Seeking Students: 2,288

Associate Degree Students: 1,030

Bachelor's Degree Students: 1,243

Certificate Students: 15

Male: 1,079 (47%)

Female: 1,225 (53%)

American Indian or Alaska Native: >1%

Asian or Pacific Islander: 2%

Black, non-Hispanic: 12%

Hispanic: 4%

Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: >1%

Non-Resident: 1%

Other and Race/ethnicity unknown:>1%

Two or more races: 10%

White, non-Hispanic: 70%

Over 65% of students live in college-owned housing and 36% live off campus or commute.

Upon her arrival as the president of SUNY Cobleskill, Dr. Marion Terenzio quickly revitalized the existing Diversity Committee, giving it a new, more robust charge and making it a part of the

campus governance. The committee's name was changed to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (DEIC). Per President Terenzio's charge, the committee conducted a campus climate survey (following the AAC&U guidelines) in April/May 2016. Altogether 887 campus members (students, faculty, and staff—roughly 1/3 of the entire campus population) participated in the survey. After careful analysis of the data, the committee published its report in April 2017.

Climate survey summary

The survey indicated that the vast majority of respondents—two-thirds or more—feel comfortable and welcome on campus, both in and outside classes. While the number of respondents expressing discomfort was relatively low, that 12% of the campus community does not feel comfortable is a concern, as all campus members should feel welcome and respected. Overall, the respondents recognized this, as 61% of all respondents indicated that the campus should do more to create an open, welcoming climate at SUNY Cobleskill.

The survey indicated specific issues that cause discomfort and/or make community members feel unwelcome. The biggest issue that emerged from the quantitative section of the survey was “disrespectful, demeaning, derogatory, or offensive comments.” Altogether 41% of respondents said they had either experienced or witnessed this kind of behavior. This finding was further reinforced by the answers in the qualitative section, where the theme of “lack of civility” emerged as the most prominent (49 comments, or 39.2% of quantitative responses).

Another substantial issue indicated in the survey was “prejudicial or biased treatment based on race/ethnicity.” Altogether 30% of respondents had either experienced or witnessed such behavior. This finding was enforced by the quantitative analysis, where “Racism/Racial Bias/Tension” emerged as one of the most prominent themes.

The third most substantial issue arising from the survey was “bullying,” with 28% of respondents saying they had either experienced or witnessed it.

The above-mentioned three categories were the most prominent, but various other kinds of prejudice are an issue on campus as well: prejudice based on physical appearance, sex, group affiliation, geographical home or regional affiliation, sexuality/gender identity, political beliefs/ideology, religion/faith, age, and economic status were all reported in substantial

numbers. Over 20% of respondents also reported either witnessing or experiencing intimidation or threats of physical violence, or physical violence as such. Some of these categories were echoed in the quantitative analysis. For example, prejudice based on “geographical home or regional affiliation,” was mirrored by a substantial number of responses coded as “City/Country conflict”.

Recommendations and steps taken

- President Terenzio and the DEIC climate survey sub-committee members held a town hall meeting with faculty, staff, and students to share the survey results with them and elicit feedback and suggestions for next steps. Dr. Grant, the chair of the committee, held a follow-up professional development workshop with faculty and staff in early June.
- The committee conducted faculty/staff and student focus groups to start the conversation about simple, positive, incremental improvements that can be made based on the data.
- Some of the areas where the committee identified a need for improvement are:
 - a) Conversations on civility across the campus.
 - b) Diversity training across the campus.
 - c) Integrate diversity and cultural competence across the college curriculum.
 - d) More intentional programming that allows for exposure to different cultures and meaningful dialogue with people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives.
- New Initiatives :
 - a) The campus created a bias protocol, which is included in the 2017-2018 College Handbook; bias training is now included both in the faculty and staff professional development workshops and in Resident Assistant training.
 - b) Diversity, equity, and inclusion feature prominently in the new strategic plan.
 - c) Increase collaboration between campus stakeholders to create programming is already increasing. For example, Student Life, CAS, and DEIC are teaming up to create a Hispanic celebration on campus. In general, various campus stakeholders are pooling resources in an effort to create opportunities for more intergroup interaction.
 - d) Residence Life instituted “Fair and Impartial” training as part of their Resident Assistant training. Similar training will be provided to faculty and staff.
 - e) Expand Safe Zone training for faculty and staff (currently required for RAs).

Follow-up:

- Communicate each semester what changes are being made/have been implemented.
- Conduct a faculty/staff/student follow up survey on progress in the identified three to four areas in spring 2018.
- Adjust future climate surveys (e.g., coding to eliminate “other” category and other wording that dilutes the data analysis) so that we can more effectively consider demographic correlations.
- Advise other stakeholders in revising their surveys to include questions that help us assess diversity, equity, and inclusion outcomes across the campus.

Assessment of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion of campus programs and offices

Academics

Several academic programs have recognized the need for courses that speak directly to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and classes such as African American Studies, Native American Studies, and World Civilizations have long been part of the Social Sciences curriculum and part of general education offerings. Programs such as Communications, Humanities, Applied Psychology, and Animal Science have courses dedicated to exploring questions of diversity; many of these courses also fulfill general education requirements and are thus available for students across the campus. Several other programs, such as Graphic Design and Agricultural business, while not devoting full courses on diversity, address the topic in the context of the fundamental courses that all majors are required to take.

It is clear, however, that not all students are necessarily exposed to serious conversations related to questions of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Moreover, several instructors have indicated that while they would be interested in including such material and conversations in their courses, they do not feel prepared to tackle the topics. Therefore, training our faculty so that they feel comfortable and prepared to address topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in their teaching is of utmost importance.

International Education

The number of international students has increased from 32 in 2013-2014 to an all-time high of 52 in fall 2017. The number of countries where the students come from has decreased, however, from the all-time high of 13 countries of origin in spring 2015 to eight in fall 2017. The decrease is partly due to wars or otherwise difficult political situations in different parts of the world; for example, the situation in Egypt has caused the number of Egyptian students to decrease. The most dramatic increase has been in the number of Chinese students. Indeed, 43 out of the 52 international students enrolled for fall 2017 are from China. The campus has also been fortunate to have a Fulbright Arabic teacher each year for several years in a row. We plan to address further recruitment of international students in our strategic enrollment management plan.

While International students mostly share classes with other SUNY Cobleskill students, a section of ENGL 101 (Composition 1) taught by a certified ESL instructor is designated for International Students to help them with their English language skills. A comprehensive ESL program on campus would, however, help the international students succeed.

The Office of International Education runs a Global Ambassadors club that both promotes international education and serves to create a friendly community for the international students. The campus is currently exploring a variety of ways to help further integrate the international students into the campus community at large.

The number of students studying abroad has similarly increased over the years. In 2015-2016, 7% of the graduating class had studied abroad, compared to only 1% in 2010-2011. One of the biggest problems in study abroad programs nation-wide is the lack of diversity among students participating in the programs. Study abroad is expensive and therefore unattainable for many students. Thanks to a SUNY Diversity Grant, EOP, and contributions from various campus stakeholders, SUNY Cobleskill was able to offer ten EOP students an opportunity to participate in a three-credit Nordic Arts and Culture study abroad experience in summer 2016. The positive impact the experience has had on the participating students serves to underscore how important it is that we can offer such transformational opportunities to *all* our students. SUNY Cobleskill continues to explore ways to extend study abroad education to as many students as possible.

Academic Support Programs

- *AccessABILITY Resources*

The number of students with disabilities served by the AccessABILITY Resources generally fluctuates between 250-300 students per academic semester. In fall 2014, the orientation model for students with disabilities was changed from a one-day orientation to a three-day summer transition program. AccessABILITY Resources has also invited speakers to discuss dyslexia and autism, and inform the college community of the challenges that students with disabilities encounter. Further training is planned to educate faculty and staff on how to help students who are on the autism spectrum.

- *Equal Opportunity Programs*

The financial and logistic burden of the middle-of-summer orientation was too great for the EOP students. To lessen the burden, the EOP program changed its orientation to occur just before the start of the fall 2017 semester. This allows the students the opportunity to work throughout the summer. This has boosted the EOP enrollment significantly. Student mentoring systems will further assist the EOP students throughout their first year.

- *ESL*

An ESL tutor is now available in the Center for Academic Support and Excellence, among other campus academic support services.

Admissions

- The Admissions Office hired a NYC recruiter three years ago. The recruitment is now strategic in terms of diversity and the efforts have been increased. The recruiter also facilitates summer camp counseling (Camp College).
- SUNY Cobleskill is establishing a Parent-Faculty Organization in NYC. Our first session will take place in December 2017 at the SUNY Welcome Center in NYC.
- The new admissions counselor will focus on recruitment in NYC and the capital area.
- An important strategy for diversifying the student body is to increase representation of women and minorities in majors where they are currently underrepresented. The campus's recent receipt of a USDA grant specifically to enhance efforts to recruit women and minorities to agricultural majors will help in developing and executing these strategies. Some of the plans already in place include:

- The Communications Office is creating a “Women and Minorities in Agriculture” brochure.
- The Admissions Office is hosting an Agriculture Day at the SUNY Welcome Center in NYC, and two bus trips specifically for prospective students from NYC who are interested in agriculture majors.
- The Admissions Office is teaming up with an alumnus to host organizational events to coordinate with Black Farmers Ag Association and Urban Farming.
- The college has teamed up with John Bowne and Mathers High Schools to come to campus to do specific engagements with them, like the Plant Equipment Rodeo.
- The PACE (Professional and Continuing Education) Office collaborates with community colleges to cater to mature students.
- The institution collaborates with SUNY to bring more KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) students to campus.

Employment

While the student body at SUNY Cobleskill has diversified quite extensively over the years, diversity remains low among employees. The most significant improvements in this regard are in the number of female faculty, which, according to the SUNY Composition of Faculty Report 2017 has increased from 32.5% in 1995-1996 to 38.7% in 2015-2016. According to the same report, “in contrast, SUNY Cobleskill’s faculty is essentially as white as it was in 1995-96...The percentage change in white faculty of two decades was 0.4% from 91.7 to 91.3 percent white.” Moreover, several faculty of color are already eligible for retirement. The lack of employee diversity is a problem of which the college is well aware and that it seeks to address in its hiring practices.

Student Affairs

With the arrival of a new Vice President for Student Affairs in June of 2016, a renewed focus on diversity and inclusion has ensued. At the opening of the 2016 academic year, the theme of “adjusting the lens” was used with the staffs to promote reviewing the good work the staff has done, with an eye toward increasing structural diversity and inclusion efforts. Collaboration between student affairs departments as well as across campus departments is also being revitalized. Workshops for the Student Affairs staff have included reviewing our programming

and training efforts, with the goal of improving and increasing our diversity and inclusion offerings, and grounding the work in appropriate assessment practices. To reinforce the importance of assessment, a daylong training with a national expert was conducted for the Student Affairs team.

To underscore the importance of diversity and inclusion, the VPSA added a category of “Agent of Change” award to its Excellence in Student Leadership Awards in spring 2017, to highlight the good work of students who are promoting diversity and inclusion. Moving forward, Student Affairs and Student Life will work with the Student Government Association on promoting diversity and inclusion in student government. Such work will include recognizing Greek organizations, which primarily consist of students of color, and which have previously been unrecognized.

Other areas of focus for diversity, equity, and inclusion include:

- Student Affairs will review policies and procedures to ensure that our processes are user-friendly and inclusive.
- The Residence Life staff has one of the most diverse staffs on campus, for both paraprofessional and professional staffs. Residence Life have increased diversity training with the Resident Assistant staff and all of the Residence Life staff have trained on the topic of bias, using the expertise of a specially trained UPD officer. Additionally, a new social justice committee has been established by and for the professional and paraprofessional staff. Nevertheless, work needs to be done to better assess concerns related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the various aspects of residential life and are being grounded in the work of the Student Affairs Division and the overall Strategic Plan of the College.
- The Student Life Center has also been intentional in its hiring practices, making sure that the diversity of the student population is reflected in the hiring. Similarly, issues of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are considered in Student Life programming. Student Life works closely with the Committee for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and other stakeholders to increase opportunities for DEI programming. Empire of Change, a club advised by the Director of the Student Life Center, has taken a leadership role in developing meaningful conversations on issues concerning social justice and inclusion.

- The Athletic Department has a new Director and there is a renewed sense of collaboration along with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion training for student athletes, which has not existed in the past.
- SUNY Cobleskill has almost doubled its enrollment of student veterans, from 41 in 2012 to 75 in 2016. The office of Veterans Affairs has created a veterans' lounge and resource center for student veterans and continues to improve student veterans' college experience.
- UPD officers have been trained in Fair and Impartial Policing. One of the UPD officers has been specially trained to offer anti-bias training to faculty, staff, students, and the local town police.

Goals, Strategies, Timelines, Measures, and Responsible Entities

Goal 1:

Ensure the campus commitment to **diversity and inclusion is clear, transparent, and evident** at the highest levels of the institution and through each office and department in each division.

Strategies for Goal 1:

- Recruit and hire a Chief Diversity Officer who reports to the President:
 - Timeline: October 2017
 - Measure: Hiring of CDO
 - Responsible: President, Cabinet
- The DEI Committee will integrate its work within the institution-wide strategic plan and provide advice and direction to the president, governance, and the CDO. It will continue to ensure, in collaboration with the CDO, that questions of diversity, equity, and inclusion are addressed at both the macro and micro level:
 - Timeline: Annual review of DEI Strategic Plan
 - Measures: Climate survey, NSSE
 - Responsible: Chair of DEIC, CDO
- Create an active marketing and communication plan to support campus and community-wide recognition of diversity and inclusion achievements:

- Timeline: January 2018; ongoing review
 - Measures: Written document created outlining plan; review of content of DEI activities
 - Responsible: Director of Marketing, CDO, DEIC
- Review the campus security and emergency plans to address diversity and inclusion-related activities and crisis:
 - Timeline: Annual review
 - Measures: Documentation of changes to emergency plans
 - Responsible: VPSA, Chief of UPD
- Review and update the Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Strategic Plan:
 - Timeline: Annual review
 - Measures: Review of all objective measures
 - Responsible: CDO, DEIC, Cabinet, President

Goal 2:

Provide increased **training and programming** for the SUNY Cobleskill community to enhance diversity and inclusion efforts, including improved cultural competency, in order to improve the campus climate.

Strategies for Goal 2:

- Host train-the-trainer programs to offer ongoing trainings on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics from year-to-year:
 - Timeline: January 2018 and ongoing
 - Measures: One training per semester (minimum)
 - Responsible: CDO, DEIC, HR
- Provide implicit bias training, bystander training, and safe zone trainings for faculty, staff, and students:
 - Timeline: Fall 2017 and ongoing
 - Measures: Pre- and post-tests of participants for each training
 - Responsible: CDO, DEIC, HR, Cabinet
- Host conversations on the campus climate for students, faculty, and staff with an eye toward moving the conversation from dialogue to action:
 - Timeline: Fall 2017 and ongoing
 - Measures: Pre- and post-surveys of participants
 - Responsible: CDO, HR, Student Affairs, Deans & Directors

- Send individuals and teams to various diversity and inclusion trainings off campus to gather new ideas to be applied on campus, as appropriate:
 - Timeline: January 2018 and ongoing
 - Measures: Number of trainings; feedback from participants
 - Responsible: CDO, DEIC, HR, Student Affairs, Deans & Directors

- Expand the diversity initiatives that expose students to different life experiences, such as film and speaker series, brown bag lunches, immersion multi-club trips, etc. For students who participate in the ALL IN (Applied Learning & Leadership Initiative) badge program, develop a fulsome diversity and inclusion experience which provides a foundation/builds upon their diversity experiences on campus and prepares them for successful post-graduation navigation of our diverse societies, regionally, nationally, and globally:
 - Timeline: January 2018 pilot
 - Measures: Rubrics
 - Responsible: VPSA, CDO

- Collaborate to more widely incorporate diversity across the curriculum:
 - Timeline: January 2018
 - Measures: TBA: In process
 - Responsible: Provost, Deans & Directors, CDO

- Build upon academic programs which connect urban and rural environments:
 - Timeline: January 2018
 - Measures: TBA: In process
 - Responsible: Provost, Deans & Directors CDO

Goal 3:

Ensure a smooth transition for the **recognition of Greek life on campus**, which predominantly consists of students of color.

Strategies for Goal 3:

- Hire a Coordinator of Civic Engagement & Orientation (CCEO) who will oversee the transition and will provide support and advice to the students and administration:
 - Timeline: August 2017
 - Measure: Hiring of CCEO
 - Responsible: AVPSA, VPSA

- Develop and implement a structure for Greek recognition, with assistance from a hired consultant who has expertise on Greek organizations and the Safety Zone Allies:
 - Timeline: 2017-2018 academic year
 - Measure: Finalized written guidelines
 - Responsible: CCEO, AVPSA, VPSA, President, Greek organizations, SGA

- Create programs to raise awareness of the Greek population and their on campus:
 - Timeline: Fall 2017 and ongoing
 - Measure: Two programs per semester; pre- and post-tests of knowledge gained
 - Responsible: CCEO, Greek organizations

Goal 4:

Achieve a balance of representation among **students and a commitment to retention and completion**, consistent with policy goals.

Strategies for Goal 4:

- Create a well-articulated enrollment management plan that increases learner-cohorts and expand pathways for students to gain credit and complete a credential:
 - Timeline: Ongoing
 - Measure: Retention rates of underrepresented groups: Fall to Spring; Fall to Fall; Two and four-year graduation rates; Completion rates for transfers
 - Responsible: CEO, Provost

- Continue and build upon outreach to urban areas in New York to provide support and education for students and their families about the College:
 - Timeline: August 2018, Every semester/summer
 - Measure: Number of students/families served and staff attending
 - Responsible: Director of Admissions, Director of CASE

- Review administrative policies across the campus examining streamlining of tasks, user-friendliness, and awareness of different population needs:
 - Timeline: Fall 2017, ongoing
 - Measure: Number of policies reviewed and adjusted
 - Responsible: Administrative Council, VPO

- Review current exit interview process to capture quantitative and qualitative data more completely for future retention initiatives:
 - Timeline: Fall 2017
 - Measure: Creation of quantitative survey; Refinement of qualitative questions
 - Responsible: Pathways Task Force, CEO, VPSA

Goal 5:

Enhance **recruitment and retention efforts of diverse faculty and staff.**

Strategies for Goal 5:

- Conduct an ongoing review of campus procedures and strategies for recruiting candidates into faculty and staff vacancies:
 - Timeline: January 2018
 - Measure: Review conducted
 - Responsible: Director of HR, VPO

- Offer trainings on recognizing implicit bias as part of preparation materials for search committees:
 - Timeline: Begin January 2018
 - Measure: Pre- and post-tests of search committee members
 - Responsible: Director of HR, CDO

- Introduce the faculty development institute to more deeply familiarize new faculty with the various offices on campus:
 - Timeline: Fall 2017
 - Measure: 85% of new faculty will participate in 90% of sessions
 - Responsible: Deans, Provost

- Create a retention strategy to assist in retaining underrepresented faculty and staff:
 - Timeline: January 2018
 - Measure: 90% retention rate of underrepresented faculty and staff measured at one, two, three year points from date of hire
 - Responsible: Director of HR

- Create a task force to cultivate civility in the workplace
 - Timeline: January 2018
 - Measure: Creation of task force and regular meetings throughout semester; measures of civility to be determined by task force for the Fall of 2018
 - Responsible: CDO, VPO, President

Summative Statement

The SUNY Cobleskill Strategic Diversity Plan establishes a clear blueprint for the college's DEI goals and strategies. Implementing this plan will ensure the commitment to diversity, inclusion, and social justice from the highest level of the institution to every program and department in the college.

The Strategic Diversity Plan is largely embedded in the new SUNY Cobleskill's Strategic Plan. The Chief Diversity Officer will review the plan annually and make sure that all campus stakeholders are fully aware of the significance of DEI for student success. SUNY Cobleskill will increase diversity training across the campus, as well as coordinate diversity programming, conversations, and otherwise increase diversity initiatives across the campus. The ALL IN badge program, beginning in January 2018, will provide a robust vehicle for enhancing diversity engagement for our students.

Recognizing the Greek Life groups and providing them advising will help integrate these groups in Student Life activities and give the students in these previously unrecognized and therefore siloed groups a voice in the campus community.

Enhanced strategies for recruitment and retention together with increased emphasis on awareness of the needs of different student populations will help SUNY Cobleskill achieve a balance of representation among students. Review of student satisfaction surveys, exit interviews, and other related surveys will ensure that we gather data in a manner that provides us the necessary information regarding DEI.

Finally, review of faculty and staff recruitment policies, practices, and strategies aims at hiring more diverse faculty. Introducing a faculty development institute will help new faculty connect with the different offices on campus. A task force to cultivate civility on campus will further enhance workplace climate for all employees.

The SUNY Cobleskill Strategic Diversity Plan 2017-2022 and the SUNY Cobleskill Strategic Development plan 2017-2022 underscore the commitment of the college's administration, faculty, and staff to diversity, equity, and inclusion. These plans will guide and assist us as we strive to educate our students to succeed in their professional as well as personal life in an increasingly complex and diverse world.