



Open Doors: Open Minds

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan

Pennsylvania Highlands Community College embraces our diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) plan, Open Doors: Open Minds, which outlines a methodology to create an inclusive, equitable, and welcoming campus. We aspire to celebrate and leverage the unique perspectives of every individual, fostering an environment where all members of our community feel respected and empowered. Through collaboration, education, and engagement, we are dedicated to breaking down barriers, challenging biases, and promoting equity across all aspects of academic and social life.

1. DEI Plan Goals

The College strives to be a campus community that:

- better recognizes and appreciates the diversity of our students, employees, and visitors,
- is inclusive in nature where all are welcome and accepted, and
- creates an environment that is equitable where all can thrive.

2. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Definitions

A common vocabulary is integral to making the College's DEI plan feel both accessible and personal.

Definition of Diversity: Human diversity is expressed across a range of differences including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, age, political beliefs, socioeconomic status, disability status, religious or ethical values, educational background, geographic origin, and veteran status.

Definition of Inclusion: As a community college and a public, open-door institution of higher education which believes in the inherent value of human diversity, it is imperative to strive for an inclusive environment for all. An inclusive college promotes and sustains a sense of belonging; it values and practices respect for the talents, beliefs, backgrounds, and ways of living of its members and fosters and expects civility even during the most difficult of times. As an employee, student, or visitor, you are welcome at Pennsylvania Highlands Community College.

Definition of Equity: Equity refers to the principle of ensuring fair and just opportunities and outcomes for all by addressing disparities in access and resources to create an inclusive and supportive environment.

Definitions were adapted (with permission) from Ferris State University's DEI Plan.



3. Methods to gather information to assess current DEI strengths and weaknesses to develop comprehensive action plans.

- **Develop and administer student and employee climate surveys:** Work with the Diversity Committee, Institutional Research, Human Resources, Academic Affairs, and Student Services to create and administer surveys to identify strength and challenge areas to provide direction on the best ways to provide additional support to students and employees.
- **Develop a data dashboard:** Work with Institutional Research, Academic Affairs, and Student Services to develop a data dashboard that will be used to gather disaggregated data on student performance (e.g., class persistence, retention, momentum, graduation, etc.) by diversity classes.

4. Use current organizational structures within the College to review the collected data (see #3 above) and to make recommendations for action and improvement.

- **Utilize Leadership Council:** Leadership Council will regularly review the data from the data dashboard and the DEI climate surveys and provide recommendations or focal points that may improve outcomes.
- **Utilize President's Cabinet:** Review the recommendations of Leadership Council to assign any necessary work, create a timeline for completion, determine metrics to ascertain goal progress, and provide funding to support the initiatives. Cabinet will create an annual budget to support initiatives.
- **Utilize the Diversity Committee, Employee Development Committee, and Student Engagement and Success Committee:** President's Cabinet may provide action items/focal points for Committees to complete based off the DEI climate surveys and Leadership Council recommendations from the Data Dashboard. The Committees will build an annual plan, with specific action items, to help address the gaps identified in climate survey or the dashboard. For each action, the plan will define responsible employees/students, an expected timeline for completion, and units of measurement. These components clarify the path to goal achievement by defining who will work on them, when actions will be completed, and how success will be measured.

5. President's Cabinet reviews DEI data and considers improvements in the following areas and directs/assigns work to complete tasks:

- **Link the DEI plan to the strategic plan.**



- **Incorporate a lens of diversity and inclusion in all policy review initiatives.**
 - **Review employee recruitment and hiring practices to ensure fair and impartial employment practices.**
 - **Review how the College’s policies, services and programs promote DEI.**
 - **Ensure and map academic offerings that “expand cultural and global awareness and cultural sensitivity” and study “values, ethics, and diverse perspectives.”**
 - *Faculty have codified “Cultural Awareness and Diverse Perspectives” as a General Education Outcome and have mapped this outcome to all courses and degree programs (effective fall, 2024).
 - **Create an integrated practice where disaggregated student assessment results are used to improve student learning outcomes, student achievement, and institutional and program level educational effectiveness.**
 - **Ensure that adequate resources are budgeted and being delivered to support DEI initiatives.**
 - **Improve Access for Diverse Students:** Examples include auditing registration holds and revising processes; offering retention grants for in-need students.
 - **Implement Guided Pathways Initiatives to Promote Student Success:** Leverage meta-majors to ease student pathways, develop degree maps, offer college-level gateway courses (see EAB’s “15 Best Practices to Erase Equity Gaps”).
 - **Inclusive Teaching Practices:** Provide resources and training to faculty on inclusive teaching methods that accommodate diverse learning styles and backgrounds.
 - **Evaluate and Expand Support for Students:** Assess and improve the process for the student alert system. Create a Coordinated Care Network across offices such as financial aid, career advising, support services, and counseling centers to easily coordinate and collaborate on appropriate next steps for student support.
6. **Document progress using a data dashboard tied to the strategic plan.**
7. **Communicate regular updates to the college community on progress and roadblocks.**
Transparency is key.