

Executive Summary - GSU Diversity Strategic Plan 2011-2016



This Executive Summary provides a context for Georgia State University's Diversity Strategic Plan (DSP). The DSP represents the blueprint of commitment within the Georgia State University community to be an inclusive environment which embraces many points of view and protects the free exchange of divergent opinions. With broad agreement from President Mark P. Becker and Provost Risa I. Palm, and from faculty, students and staff, we have resolved to "become a national model for diversity in higher education, where all combinations of gender, race, and ethnicity succeed at high rates."

Georgia State University (GSU) is a globally engaged research institution located in an international city characterized by diversity. *The overarching goal of Georgia State University as it enters its second century is to be recognized as a dynamic academic community where teaching and research combine to produce leaders and create solutions to conquer the challenges of the 21st century.* This requires bold and innovative thinking that utilizes our diversity. The Diversity Strategic Plan (DSP) defines diversity for the University and outlines four strategic goals and corresponding initiatives to leverage GSU's inherent diverse population and supports the mission and strategic direction of the University.

For the purpose of this DSP, the definition of diversity historically used by the University has been broadened beyond those that are federally protected (race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, veteran status, and disability) to include sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, and socioeconomic class. Diversity encompasses the representation, inclusion and engagement of these populations and protects the free exchange of divergent opinions within the campus community.

Goals and Objectives

The overarching goal of the DSP is to build and sustain the representativeness, inclusiveness and engagement of our diverse constituent groups (student body, faculty, and staff) and to support the inclusiveness and engagement of students, faculty and staff with disabilities.

Goal 1 – Student Diversity: The University's objectives pertaining to student diversity are to provide meaningful educational experiences and interactions among a diverse undergraduate and graduate student body. We seek to support a University environment that values diversity and promotes intercultural growth for students. We will provide targeted programming and training which allows undergraduate and graduate students opportunities to develop intercultural skills and maturity. The current array of diversity-related services and programs will be enhanced as necessary to better serve underrepresented populations.

Goal 2 – Faculty Diversity: Our interest in preserving and increasing our numbers of diverse faculty is linked to the intellectual mission of the University to provide the best possible education for all students. Faculty diversity is educationally relevant because it motivates students to incorporate different considerations, sensibilities, and lines of reasoning, which

augment their analytical abilities. A diverse faculty supports the research culture of the institution and enhances the University's relevance to the local and global community. Diverse faculty and administrators contribute different perspectives to the University administration and assist in the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty, strengthen the professional lives of those faculty here through greater opportunities for mentoring, and reinforce student perceptions of diversity. Having faculty members from a wide variety of groups helps ensure that students are exposed to varied perspectives, which will prepare them to succeed in an increasingly diverse workforce.

Goal 3 – Staff Diversity: Diversity among staff and administrators at Georgia State University is essential to the operational success of the university, as well as to the achievement of the university's academic mission. Cultivating a work force of individuals with different backgrounds, perspectives, life experiences and ideologies enhances the university's ability to meet the needs of and provide services to an increasingly diverse student body. Implementing targeted initiatives to provide opportunities across all levels for advancement, mentoring and professional development to a diverse workforce leads to increased staff retention and productivity. Recruiting, promoting and supporting a critical mass of diverse staff and administrators contributes to the personal and professional lives of everyone at the university.

Goal 4 – Disability Diversity: The University has engaged in an ongoing effort to be accessible to those with disabilities. It has created institution-wide policies and procedures consistent with federal law pertaining to students and employees with disabilities. These policies and procedures include the Office of Disability Services New Student Services Guidelines, the ADA Employee Accommodation Policy and Procedures, the GSU Accessibility Map, and the Web Accessibility Policy. The ADA Amendments Act of 2008 significantly expanded the definition of "disabled," and has resulted in a larger number of individuals eligible for services.

The University's objective pertaining to disability diversity is to create an inclusive campus climate for those with disabilities by improving institutional and educational access through the principle of Universal Design, in adherence with Board of Regents policies and both state and federal laws. Universal Design in education seeks to create a campus environment in buildings, curricular materials, and communications that is usable by all members of the institutional community. Universal Design offers a proactive approach that takes into account the full range of possible disabilities that our faculty, students, and staff may present, and will make our University truly accessible for them.

The Diversity Strategic Plan 2011-2016 is a "living document" developed with the specific intent to be reviewed and modified according to the needs of the Georgia State University community. It serves as a structure for developing and sustaining an inclusive climate for our culturally diverse learning community.