

SAMPLE WORKING DEFINITIONSⁱ
FOR
DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION DISCUSSIONS

DIVERSITY—Individual differences (e.g., personality, learning styles, and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations).

INCLUSION—The active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity—in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect—in ways that increase awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions.

EQUITY-MINDEDNESS—A demonstrated awareness of and willingness to:

- address equity issues among institutional leaders, faculty, staff and students;
- take stock of the contradictions between the ideals of democratic education and the social, institutional and individual practices, as well as policies, expectations and unspoken rules, that contribute to persistent inequalities in outcomes among different groups; and
- acknowledge the socio-historical context of exclusionary practices, racism and the effect of power asymmetries on opportunities and outcomes for those who are underserved, underrepresented or marginalized.

EQUITY (STUDENT FOCUS)—The creation of opportunities for historically underserved and underrepresented populations to have equal access to and participate in educational programs that are capable of closing the achievement gaps in student success and completion.

EQUITY (EMPLOYEE FOCUS)—The creation of opportunities for historically underserved and underrepresented populations of employees (faculty and staff) to have equal access to professional growth opportunities and resource networks that are capable of closing the demographic disparities in leadership roles in all spheres of institutional functioning.

CULTURE—An integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that is both a result of, and integral to, the human capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations (Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary).

CULTURAL COMPETENCE—The state of having and applying knowledge and skill in four areas:

- awareness of one’s own cultural worldview;
- recognition of one’s attitude toward cultural differences;
- realization of different cultural practices and worldviews; and
- thoughtfulness in cross-cultural interaction.

Over an extended period of time individuals and organizations develop the wisdom and capability to:

- examine critically how cultural worldviews influence perceptions of power, dominance and inequity; and
- behave honorable within the complex dynamics of differences and commonalities among humans, groups and systems.

ⁱ These sample definitions have been adapted from the published works of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, University of Southern California Center for Urban Education and Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary, and, if adopted, should be given attribution.