

## The University of Minnesota's Equity and Diversity Vision Framework

### Vision Implementation Summary

November 2011

#### **Reimagining Equity and Diversity: A Framework for Transforming the University of Minnesota** Executive Summary

“We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” —*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

As the magnitude and complexity of diversity have grown in Minnesota, belief in the “power of broadened perspectives” has moved the University to rededicate itself to equity and diversity as both a practical and an ethical imperative. With the onset of the Strategic Positioning process, the University reaffirmed the importance of diversity as a core value and undertook a critical self-examination of its approach to equity and diversity. This process led to the establishment of the Task Force on Diversity, and then to the repositioning of the Office for Equity and Diversity.

The findings and recommendations of the Task Force on Diversity—in particular, the assertion that diversity is “inextricably” linked to excellence—are supported by comprehensive research that reveals extensive advantages and benefits at educational institutions where equity and diversity are core values. The dynamic cultural and intellectual transactions that occur at the intersections of diverse perspectives and knowledge systems spur the kind of questioning and innovative thinking that advance and even *define* discovery and scholarly excellence.

#### **Diversity as a Driving Force**

In proposing a transformational framework, we are defining diversity as not only a driving force but also a *necessary condition* for excellence. We are saying that excellence is truly achievable *only* in an environment that fully supports engagement with diverse cultures and perspectives. An academy of the highest stature, as measured against ideals of both academic excellence and social justice, is one in which excellence and diversity are inextricably intertwined—not ‘either-or,’ but ‘both-and.’

In the end, what we envision is an institution where equity and diversity are woven into the work and the lives of every student, faculty, and staff member. As core institutional values, equity and diversity will infuse and inform thinking, policies, and practices throughout the University—from mission statements to strategic plans to admissions to hiring, promotion, and tenure.



Transformed by diversity, our University will be looked to by institutions and organizations around the world for its unequivocal commitment to social justice; its equitable and transparent recruitment, hiring, and promotion policies and practices; its welcoming and respectful climate; its affirmation and support of the multiple identities of faculty, staff, and students; its innovative, culturally infused curricula and pedagogies; its engagement with diverse communities throughout the state; and its dedication to developing and rewarding the intellectual, creative, professional, and community achievements of its diverse faculty, students, staff, and alumni.

### **Integrative Vision, Shared Responsibility**

To achieve the transformation we aspire to, we must recognize that *all of our access and diversity goals, values, and practices are interconnected and interdependent*, and that we *all* share the responsibility for equity and diversity.

The University of Minnesota is already a leader in this integrative thinking. President Kaler has committed to *leading a University that understands that diversity is critical to achieving excellence*. He has also positioned the institution's chief diversity officer as a member of his senior leadership group.

Moreover, the infrastructure of the Office for Equity and Diversity is designed to support integrated, collaborative equity and diversity work. It includes the following units and offices; the Office for Business and Community Economic Development; Disability Services; the Office for Diversity in Graduate Education, the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action; the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Ally Programs Office; the Institute for Equity, Diversity and Advocacy, the Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence; and the Women's Center. This integrative infrastructure underscores the University's commitment to equity and diversity both administratively and academically and advances the University's capacity for national leadership.

In the same way that the strategic planning processes exhort us to re-imagine everything we think we know about the University of Minnesota, the framework presented here asks that we re-imagine everything we think we know about equity and diversity. It asks us to re-imagine *a University transformed by diversity*.

Much good equity and diversity work is already underway at the University, but it will come to full fruition only as part of an integrated and comprehensive effort. The time has come for us to focus our efforts on strategic, mission-driven work at the local level so that the University is able to truly leverage the transformative power of equity and diversity.



## Core Values and a New Model for Change

Seven core values inform and drive our transformational work on equity and diversity. These values are applicable to the work of every campus, college, department, and administrative unit. They underlie and infuse every facet of teaching, research, and outreach, and day-to-day life at the University of Minnesota: Social Justice, Excellence, System-wide Collaboration, Community Engagement, Accountability, Sustainability, and Transformation.

Building on these core values, we have identified eight priority areas for initial focus and attention. The Office for Equity and Diversity will guide the implementation of these action items. Yet no single office can accomplish this work alone. We must link expertise and resources and align efforts across colleges, departments, and units on all of the University's campuses.

We will call upon the knowledge and expertise of the units within the Office for Equity and Diversity, as well as of collegiate and administrative units across the system, each with specific knowledge and understanding of its own constituencies. The plan will thus serve both as an institutional framework for action and as a kind of dynamic, evolving organism that can be shaped, adapted, and applied as appropriate within each unit and across all campuses.

## Eight Priority Areas for Action

1. **Develop leadership capacity** around equity and diversity work across the system.
2. **Improve campus climate** for diverse students, faculty, staff, and visitors.
3. **Support and strengthen** University-wide pre-collegiate programs and community outreach efforts.
4. **Engage internal and external communities** in reimagining strategies for achieving the University's retention and success goals for diverse students.
5. **Engage internal and external communities** in reimagining programs that support the recruitment, retention, and success of diverse faculty and staff.
6. **Engage faculty in reimagining** curriculum, pedagogy, and research to insure inclusivity and accessibility throughout the academic enterprise.
7. **Support institutional assessment, accountability, and collaboration** through the use of innovative metrics, technologies and communication tools.
8. **Engage University alumni, donors, and other community partners and stakeholders** in achieving equity and diversity goals.



## Vision Implementation

What is meant by “equity and diversity?” Who and what is involved in this work? How do we do the work? And whose responsibility is it? These are the questions addressed through the University of Minnesota’s Equity and Diversity Vision Framework. Because we must envision where the University can be in order to create a strategic plan for moving our institution forward, the University’s Office for Equity and Diversity (OED) created a vision framework. OED is now in the third phase of implementation of this vision.

In order to **achieve excellence as an institution**, the University must ensure that every student, faculty, and staff member has the opportunity to **achieve excellence**—to be the best student, faculty, and staff member they can be.

The University of Minnesota has a responsibility to serve, support, and partner with **people and communities facing social, cultural, economic, physical, and attitudinal barriers** to education and jobs, to promotion and advancement, and to the highest levels of achievement and success. We also have a responsibility to address fundamental issues of **bias, discrimination, and exclusion**.

Engaging with diverse and dynamic ideas, worldviews, situations, and communities is **absolutely necessary for achieving excellence**. The work of equity and diversity can only be achieved at an institutional level if every part of that institution engages in this work. Thus, *equity and diversity is everybody’s everyday work*.

### Implementation Phase I 2008 – 2009

#### ***Foundational period of broadening our understanding of equity and diversity work***

- **Executive Team meetings** Fall 2008  
OED met with every member of the President’s Executive Team individually, including all chancellors.
- **Executive Team Work Session** November 2008  
OED met with executive team as a group, facilitated small group discussions in engaged process.
- **Meetings with Deans** January – June 2009  
OED met with every dean and chancellor, gathered feedback about support and resources needed as well as barriers faced.
- **Board of Regents meeting** February 2009  
OED shared the University’s Equity and Diversity Vision Framework and the progress of Phase I of implementation.
- **OED realigned existing resources** Spring – Fall 2009  
Developed Reallocation of Capacity Plan, aligned resources to meet needs identified by academic leaders; including Educational Needs Assessment resulting in programming realignment; Innovative Equity and Diversity Advocacy Grant Program established to support local equity and diversity efforts.



## Implementation Phase II January 2009 – June 2011

### ***Building capacity across the University system***

- **Met with President and senior leaders** November 2009  
Shared progress from Phase I; discussed Phase II plans
- **Second set of Dean Meetings** January – August 2010  
Follow-up meetings, more specific focus on communication and educational content.
- **Realigned existing resources** Summer – Fall 2010  
Focused on needs required for the vision work and the needs articulated in consultation process. Determined internal OED work needed to be completed in order to support this strategic work.
- **Held inaugural *Partners in Change Summit on the UMTC*** Spring 2010  
Engaged faculty, staff and students in day long series of workshops where promising practices were highlighted and shared.
- **Initiated office wide strategic planning process to engage paradigmatic shift in approach to support for local strategic mission driven equity and diversity goals**  
OED leadership facilitated office wide examination of mission, vision, goals and addressed need for staffing change to be able to support strategic engagement at the local academic level.
- **Board of Regents meeting** December 2010  
Shared the progress of Phase II of vision implementation and proposed a new way of moving forward. Obtained feedback and Board approval for shift in focus.
- **Realigned existing resources** December 2010 – present  
Changed staff positions, hired for several new positions, fine-tuned areas of focus in OED. Changes have been underway since spring 2011.
- **Engaged in OED-wide Strategic Planning Process** July 2010 – June 2011  
Prepared for the next phase of vision implementation. Bring staff together in new way of working. Identified four strategic arenas: *Communication, Education, Evaluation, and Leadership*.

## Implementation Phase III July 2011 – present

### ***Achieving excellence and demonstrating leadership through strategic work done at local academic levels***

- **Equity and Diversity Academic Strategic Team**  
OED is working directly with academic units to develop and implement mission-driven strategic equity and diversity goals in support of excellence and success in their local environments.