Creating an Inclusive Climate Resources

While no universal solution exists to address concerns of public affairs program, it is encouraged that programs engage with these challenges more actively by taking institutional context, evolving demographics, and educational research into consideration. What works for one program may not work for another as the needs and context of programs vary; thus, it is important for programs to continuously deliberate and reflect on current and new approaches and to actively engage with stakeholders.

Inclusive Climate → Faculty Diversity → Student Diversity → Curriculum → Culturally Competent Graduate

While the inclusion of the strategies below does not constitute an endorsement by COPRA, the Commission does require programs to provide program- and mission-specific diversity plans that detail strategies to promote faculty, student, and curricular diversity and foster an overall climate of inclusiveness. The list below is not meant to be comprehensive; rather it is meant to serve as a starting point for *discussion, reflection,* **and** *evidence-based decision-making*.

Inclusiveness and Outreach

➢ Articulate the school's commitment to diversity by issuing statements of support, purpose, and action:
   o **EXAMPLES**: Click on the following links to read diversity statement examples: Colby College, University of Michigan, University of California, Los Angeles, and Johns Hopkins University.
   o **READ**: To learn more about diversity awareness and its importance, check out Kathleen Wong's article "Building Capacity for Inclusion by Working Across Differences: An Institutional and Societal Imperative."

➢ Develop a strategic plan that not only defines diversity and expected learning outcomes, but also one that focuses on the process of continuously engaging students, faculty, and staff on diversity matters:
   o **EXAMPLES**: For examples of peer program diversity plans, click here.

➢ Conduct a review of existing policies and procedures to ensure alignment with diversity goals:
   o **EXAMPLE:** The University of Washington developed *The Diversity Appraisal Process* to fulfill their goals of diversity. This initiative seeked new ways to support and sustain diversity across UW.

➢ Include a workshop on diversity and inclusion awareness for students, faculty, and staff and/or host cultural events to promote inclusiveness:
   o **EXAMPLE:** Learn about The University of Arizona's annual International Education Week celebration.

➢ Populate program webpage with stories, comments and images of students' experience in a culture of diversity, and how the opportunity to study with people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds can contribute to culture competencies.

➢ Host conversations on diversity, race and ethnicity through Brown Bags or encourage students to attend related events:
   o **EXAMPLE:** The Office of Multicultural Learning at Santa Clara University offers continuous conversations about identity and inclusion every Thursday for students. Some of the topics include mental health stigma, asexuality, and labor immigration. They also host "Perspectives Workshops" to help students gain other perspectives and build skills for multicultural competence.
   o **EXAMPLE:** The Evans School of Public Affairs established "Discussion on Diversity," a series of small potlucks for students, faculty, and staff designed to facilitate discussions on diversity issues.

➢ Provide incentives for faculty to attend cross-cultural training.

➢ Partner with other university offices, such as the Office for Inclusion and Equity, to conduct a climate assessment within the program.

➢ Establish measures that evaluate the institution's progress toward diversity, inclusion, and cultural and linguistic competence and establish responsibility for tracking data on diversity efforts.
   o **EXAMPLE:** Create a survey that measures inclusivity.
   o **READ:** Read about how Indiana University at Bloomington is addressing diversity and inclusiveness at their school. The survey includes 30 questions based on elements that encourage inclusivity and also includes questions to measure factors like demographic characteristics, student motivation, and learning outcomes.

➢ Develop open communication mechanisms that encourage feedback on climate issues.

➢ Create a chief diversity officer position that offers programming and resources for underrepresented students and that focuses on recruitment and retention of students, faculty, and staff.

➢ Build an environment where self-disclosure is welcomed and valued (e.g., establish an Allies/Safe Zone Program like the one in Texas A&M University).

➢ Establish on-campus, student-led Diversity Committees to engage members in activities that explore and identify organizational values related to diversity and inclusion:
   o **GUIDE:** The University of Florida provides a list of Cultural Competence Assessment Resources to choose from.
   o **GUIDE:** Students may also take the Equity and Diversity Quiz by EdChange.org, which illustrates how perceptions of reality are taught through media, the education system, and other sources of information. The quiz can be used as an interactive ice breaker to discuss misperceptions on race, gender, and socioeconomic class. The website also includes other quizzes on sexism and social class.

➢ Use alumni networks to establish outreach strategies.

➢ Provide accommodations for students with disabilities:
   o **EXAMPLE:** To see what kind of resources and appropriate academic adjustments are offered to students with disabilities at other institutions, click on the following links: Virginia Commonwealth University, University of Arizona, and University of Arkansas at Little Rock.
   o **GUIDE:** The United Spinal Association has a publication on Tips for Interacting with People with Disabilities.

➢ Offer on-site support to students, faculty, and staff with disabilities to ensure their access and participation in all activities and conversations. Provide allies, mentors, cultural brokers, or learning partners who can support participation in meaningful dialogue and reflection (AUCD Diversity Toolkit).

➢ Establish disability-related service projects that focus reframing society's conceptualization of disability and relocate the problem of disability:
   o **EXAMPLE:** Collaborate with international organizations, such as Action Without Borders; The European Disability Forum (EDF); The European Union Disability Strategy; Disability Net; The Disabled People's association Singapore; Japanese Society for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities (JSRPD); Mobility International USA; National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange (NCDE).

Diversity-Related Research

➢ Sponsor a faculty and student research speaker series focused on diversity-related research.

➢ Create/sustain relationships with [regional] policy, advocacy and service organizations that focus on diverse population.

➢ Leverage relations for other campuses to bring more diverse, external perspectives.

➢ Establish joint research initiatives with select municipalities on issues in diverse communities.

➢ Reward and value faculty service within the college, within our communities of professional practice, and in the regional, national, and international communities, to advance public policy issues that affect the poor, disadvantaged, and/or underserved populations.

➢ Issue press releases as appropriate to highlight emerging research, teaching, outreach, and study/faculty efforts.

COPRA looks forward to learning from its programs and continuing to build resources for programs based across the globe. If you have resources that could be of help to peer programs, please contact hamilton@naspaa.org.

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