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President's Office for Social Justice

## Strategic Plan

*The Strategic Plan for Achieving Social Justice at West Virginia University*

West Virginia University, the comprehensive research land-grant institution in West Virginia, provides educational opportunity, generates and advances knowledge, conducts scholarly activity, and applies knowledge to individual and societal problems for the people of West Virginia and elsewhere. The principle that all people should have access to the benefits the University affords is fundamental. This can only be upheld in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, where the basic concepts and principles of social justice are honored. Students, faculty, staff, administrators, and stakeholders share in the responsibility and the benefits of an effective commitment to social justice values.

The principle of social justice encompasses the legal and moral obligations to promote opportunity, equality, civility, and respect for all people. The President's Office for Social Justice is charged with communicating, teaching, and promoting these principles throughout the extended academic community and society, as well as fulfilling the relevant legal standards related to civil rights and affirmative action.

West Virginia University will address contemporary issues, including violence, hatred, bigotry, prejudice, equity, rage, discrimination, harassment, and any barrier that interferes with learning, creates an undesirable work environment, or diminishes the worth of any individual. This will be achieved through education and empowerment of individuals and groups regarding issues of diversity and respect for each other's differences, while preserving legitimate rights of free speech in a democratic society.

### Vision

West Virginia University will be known for honoring the worth of every individual and sustaining an environment where all people are encouraged to achieve their full potential. This vision encompasses the following:

- West Virginia University is committed to the inclusion of all socioeconomic groups, traditional and non-traditional students, volunteers, the extended academic community, and society;
- Every campus, college, and administrative unit will continually examine itself and identify ways of assuring that a comprehensive approach to achieving social justice is attained and sustained;
- West Virginia University will act affirmatively to assure equal opportunity in employment and in delivery of programs and offerings consistent with both federal and state civil rights laws and affirmative action guidelines;
- The essential elements of character - trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and good citizenship - will transcend every element of the University;
- Students will be prepared with the principles of social justice competencies in order to function effectively in the global workplace;
- Faculty and staff will exemplify principles of social justice in fulfilling their responsibilities;
- No form of illegal discrimination or harassment will be tolerated;
- Complaints of illegal discrimination, harassment, and abuses of social justice principles will be addressed in an objective and timely manner; and,
- All people will be accountable for their actions.

### Values

The following core values establish the foundation for Social Justice at West Virginia University:

- Every person has intrinsic worth and dignity;

- Respect for law is fundamental;
- Freedom from fear is universal;
- A climate of opportunity, mutual respect, and understanding engenders a feeling that the future should be shared by all community members;
- There is an absence of discrimination and harassment based on age, color, disability, ethnic origin, marital status, pregnancy, race, religious beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, and veteran status; and,
- The rich diversity of people, their cultures, and the bonds that tie people together are appreciated and celebrated.

### ***Functions of the President's Office for Social Justice***

The President's Office for Social Justice provides central leadership for education and advocacy as well as administers the compliance and mediation programs. The Office for Social Justice reflects the institution's vision of social justice and the related values it embraces. The specific functions include:

- Providing leadership for a comprehensive education and awareness program throughout the campus community, using both formal and informal delivery methods to address the broad range of relevant issues;
- Assuring that the institution complies with all relevant federal and state laws, university policies, and requirements related to civil rights and affirmative action;
- Assuring that a professional mediation program effectively serves the campus community; and,
- Advocating throughout the institution and the state the vision and values for social justice.

Based on these functions, the following are identified as outcomes the Social Justice Office will specifically address and use as a basis for continual self-assessment of effectiveness:

- There will be broad involvement of the WVU campuses and their extended academic communities in identifying relevant issues and conducting programs to address them;
- The University will continue to evaluate, implement, and update as necessary its policies, procedures, and affirmative action plan, and monitor its progress toward meeting its goal of greater diversity within the University.
- A communication plan will be developed and utilized to consistently share and receive information from throughout the institution, stakeholders, the public, and the University's many constituents;
- There will be an effective relationship between the Social Justice Office and the regional campuses to meet their needs related to all aspects of education, compliance, mediation, and advocacy;
- There will be effective use of technology and resources to collect and manage necessary data and records as well as to provide program services as appropriate;
- The Social Justice Office will effectively and efficiently make wise use of all resources; and,
- Every request for program support or administrative action will be acted on in a timely manner.

### ***Summary***

The President's Office for Social Justice will provide opportunities for all members of the University community to increase their understanding and exercise the fullest measures of civility, dignity, and respect. The office will be the catalyst to promote and achieve an optimal environment for achieving dignity and respect and the attainment of this strategic plan.

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