

# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

## Preface

In the spirit of collective work and responsibility, the University of North Carolina Wilmington actively fosters, encourages, and promotes inclusiveness, mutual respect, acceptance and open-mindedness among students, faculty, staff, and the broader community. Diversity enhances our academic experience in that it fosters a free exchange of ideas from multiple perspectives. Diversity engenders creativity, expands our collective imagination, and, in so doing, cultivates possibility. As we acknowledge a world with injustice, we seek to create tangible spaces where people with multiple identities live free from harassment, discrimination, and marginalization.



## Guiding Principles

In identifying these guiding principles that shape our strategic planning, we acknowledge that language is inherently bound to cultural belief systems. With that in mind, we acknowledge the continual need to review and edit these guiding principles.

**We believe that all students, staff, and faculty should feel a sense of belonging to the UNCW campus and community.**

**Belonging** implies the existence of opportunities for all members of a community to establish close and safe ties that generate a sense of security, care, and affection [1]. It suggests that an individual feels valued, encouraged, and a sense of within and to a particular group or institution [2]. Our ability to connect with others can be profound, while a lack of connection can impede our ability to self-regulate our responses and increase mortality [3]. Nurturing a sense of belonging represents our need to create community and to strengthen our relationships with each other.

**We believe that institutional leadership should promote and be accountable for lasting diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.**

**Accountability** suggests a relationship between an individual and a belief, space, or group.

The term “account” suggests a compelling narrative that tells the individual’s or institution’s story. These narratives help people feel visible. More recently, accountability denotes the idea that institutions and leaders should listen and be responsive to the needs of their constituents [4]. Equally important, accountability presumes a certain level of integrity. Expectations, processes, and consequences should be clearly and honestly articulated in ways that are transparent for all stakeholders.

**We believe that creating a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive campus is a shared responsibility of every student, staff member, faculty member and leader.**

**Responsibility** includes our ability to respond [5]. In this way, responsibility is not just a matter of personal agency. It is shaped by one's circumstances as well as the rules, procedures, and belief systems that affect our interactions in the world. This understanding of responsibility connects personal agency with the institutional structures and processes that order and limit our lives. Responsibility thus rests at the intersection of personal agency and structure, the point at which our desire to change demands a creative and often collective response to transcend the limitations of institutional norms.

**We believe that students, staff, faculty and institutional leaders should represent diverse identities and perspectives.**

**Representation** suggests presence, portrayal, and participation. In a basic sense, it means that people and ideas are here and accessible, historically and currently visible. Representation allows for solidarity-building within communities that have historically been disenfranchised at the same time that it demands engagement across identities and differences. Representing requires voice; it means that we speak. It means that the needs of historically disenfranchised groups are acknowledged and considered in policies and procedures as well as physical and digital space.

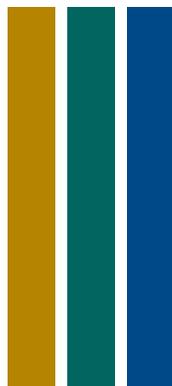
# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Definitions

**Diversity** represents the dimensions of human identity. It includes, but is not limited to, race, sex, age, color, national origin (including ethnicity), creed, religion, disability, sexual orientation, political affiliation, veteran's status, gender identity, educational disadvantage, socio-economic circumstances, language, ideology, and history of overcoming adversity.

**Equity** represents fairness and can lead to justice. While everyone may not experience equal opportunity or access, we can acknowledge that existing relationships of power can create opportunities for some while disenfranchising others. In working for equity, we create differentiated possibilities based on individual or group needs and expand accessibility to ensure inclusion for all.

**Inclusion** represents deliberate efforts to create an environment in which differences are welcomed, different perspectives are respectfully heard, and where every individual feels a sense of belonging.[6] Inclusion is reflected in an institution's curricular offerings, support services, resources, mission and vision statements, marketing, hiring practices, and all other processes that reflect the institution's commitment towards a diverse learning and workplace culture.

Reference information for the diversity, equity and inclusion guiding principles and definitions can be found at <https://uncw.edu/diversity/about/index.html>.



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