I. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan: Overview

The University of Michigan's Background and Diversity Charge

From being one of the first universities to admit women in 1870 to our historic defense of race conscious admission policies at the U.S. Supreme Court in 2003\(^1\), the University of Michigan has had a fierce and longstanding commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). This commitment rests upon our recognition of the history in the United States of racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination as well as our understanding that our progress as an institution of higher learning will be enhanced with a vibrant community of people from many backgrounds.

At the University of Michigan, our dedication to academic excellence for the public good is inseparable from our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. It is central to our mission as an educational institution to ensure that each member of our community has full opportunity to thrive in our environment, for we believe that diversity is key to individual flourishing, educational excellence and the advancement of knowledge.

University-wide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Goals

**Diversity:** We commit to increasing diversity, which is expressed in myriad forms, including race and ethnicity, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, language, culture, national origin, religious commitments, age, (dis)ability status, and political perspective.

**Equity:** We commit to working actively to challenge and respond to bias, harassment, and discrimination. We are committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, height, weight, or veteran status.

**Inclusion:** We commit to pursuing deliberate efforts to ensure that our campus is a place where differences are welcomed, different perspectives are respectfully heard and where every individual feels a sense of belonging and inclusion. We know that by building a critical mass of diverse groups on campus and creating a vibrant climate of inclusiveness, we can more effectively leverage the resources of diversity to advance our collective capabilities.

SNRE’s Background and Rationale

From its beginnings in 1903 as the University of Michigan's Department of Forestry, the School of Natural Resources and Environment (SNRE) has been adapting to and anticipating the needs of environmental leaders. In 1950, the University of Michigan established the School of Natural Resources, one of the first schools of its kind. Fittingly, the school changed its name to the School

of Natural Resources and Environment in 1992. The school led early efforts to achieve environmental justice through research, education, and activism. The school remains a global leader in educating students to be innovative and effective stewards of the environment.

The School of Natural Resources and Environment’s overarching objective is to contribute to the protection of the Earth’s resources and the achievement of a sustainable society. Through research, teaching and outreach, faculty, staff, and students are devoted to generating knowledge and developing policies, techniques, and skills to help practitioners manage and conserve natural and environmental resources to meet the full range of human needs on a sustainable basis.

For more than a century SNRE has been committed to academic excellence and leadership in conservation and sustainability. SNRE recognizes the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in achieving these goals. Consequently, SNRE is undertaking a planning process to ensure that diversity becomes a part of our core mission from now on.

**Principles of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

The following principles guide SNRE’s efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion:

- Recognizing that one of the pillars of sustainability is social equity, each member of our community (students, alumni, faculty, and staff) should be recognized both as an individual with distinct talents, perspectives, and insights, and as a member of social groups who have benefited from or been disadvantaged by historical and contemporary inequalities;

- Our practices and policies must ensure the full inclusion and empowerment of persons who identify as members of historically disenfranchised groups, and must also cultivate among all community members shared competencies, sensitivities, and habits who are fundamental to building an equitable and inclusive school environment;

- Global environmental problems are complex problems that need diverse perspectives and approaches to arrive at effective solutions. Hence, diversity of identity, class, culture, perspective, learning style, and academic discipline should be protected and actively cultivated in our research, curricular, pedagogical, and work activities;

- Informal and professional interactions within the school or in relation to school business should enable courageous, respectful, and civil discourse across differences in opinion, perspective, identity, and power status;

- Our institutional responsibility to enact these principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion requires that each of us – individual faculty, staff, and students – contribute to an environment that supports the learning and interactions necessary for the effective, socially-just outcomes that we seek.

---

2 These principles were adapted from those outlined in the University of Michigan’s School of Education’s (2015). *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement and Strategic Plan*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan.
Goals and Actions to Support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Based on these principles, SNRE commits to, in a manner that is consistent with the law:

- Act with deliberateness and humility as we seek to respect and leverage diversity, ensure equity, and promote inclusion.
- Coordinate and implement practices that are aligned with our commitment to promoting diversity and to advancing equity and inclusion as core school priorities;
- Provide opportunities for all members of the community to learn and develop in ways that are in keeping with the school's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion;
- Develop and refine processes that seek to increase the diversity of our faculty, students, and staff;
- Establish practices and policies that make visible, discourage, and restoratively respond to acts of discrimination, harassment, or personal abuse;
- Promote generous listening and communications that assume all community members are well intentioned;
- Sensitize members of our community to the ways that seemingly innocent utterances or gestures may be experienced as insulting or demeaning by others whether or not such an effect was intentional;
- Allocate time and resources to enhancing our curriculum and pedagogical approaches to reflect and further strengthen the school's commitment to the roles of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the teaching and learning process;
- Identify systematic ways to monitor, regularly measure, and publicly document our progress in achieving our goals for diversity, equity, and inclusion;
- Examine and learn from the outcomes of our efforts and work to improve them;
- Act on our commitment to contribute to a just and sustainable society and to affirm the humanity of all persons.