

**Inclusion Council Report  
Curriculum Subcommittee  
Spring 2021**

**I. Introduction**

The curriculum subcommittee was charged with making recommendations to address inclusive excellence within university curricula. The task of taking inventory of and then making recommendations about curricula at UMBC was too large and involved a task for the time that we worked together. Instead, recognizing the wide representation from across campus on the committee, we decided to create recommendations related to areas brainstormed by subcommittee members -- pedagogy, content, and outcomes. In general, we wanted to give a high-level perspective of what areas should be included and recommendations for how that work could be carried out.

*Committee Members:*

Marcela Sarmiento Mellinger (co-chair), Social Work  
Keisha Allen (co-chair), Education  
Kindel Turner Nash, Education  
Cynthia Wagner, Biological Sciences  
Jessica Cook, Sondheim Public Affairs Scholars Program  
Susan McDonough, History  
Katy Sullivan, Library  
Jennifer Harrison, Faculty Development Center  
Meryl Cozart, SAPH  
Farah Helal, Biology and Global Studies student / Sondheim Scholar  
Josh Abrams, DOIT  
Sarah Jewett, Office of the Provost  
Paula Maust, Music  
Mona Ahmad, Graduate School

**II. Summary of the subcommittee work - paragraph describing our process**

The Curriculum subcommittee met several times in the spring semester to discuss UMBC's curricula and its diversity and inclusion content. Because the charge to conduct an inventory of where this content is currently being used and how was not something this committee could achieve with the resources we had, we chose to discuss strategies that can be used to collect this information. We also discussed how UMBC can examine pedagogy related to diversity and inclusion and the dismantling of systems of oppression. In our meetings we had rich discussion and also created a Jamboard with ideas about what needed to be included in our recommendations. A rough draft of recommendations, based on our experiences as faculty and staff, were written and feedback was provided by

committee members. After our last meeting where we discussed the drafted recommendations, edits were made and submitted to the committee a second time to elicit additional feedback.

### III. List of recommendations

As an aspect of our commitment to inclusive excellence, UMBC has been engaging in institutional work to dismantle structural racism on campus and disrupt sexual misconduct and gender-based discrimination (OEI statement on Inclusive Excellence in Action). The result of these named commitments has been the creation of various offices (Office of Equity and Inclusion), committees (Inclusion Council) and processes intended to support this work. As a committee, we believe that it is important for members of the campus community to work from a **shared vision** of what inclusive excellence means within the context of curriculum. There is a need for clear and uniform language when we talk about issues of equity and inclusion in order to create goals and outcomes that are consistent. This shared vision should include a) identification of what we value and are aspiring to achieve within our curricula (e.g. anti-racist, anti-oppressive, inclusive, diverse, inclusive excellence, etc.) and how it connects to the larger UMBC mission and vision, b) a definition of our term(s), c) and the research-based framework that will help us to operationalize our construct(s). For instance, equity pedagogy is an approach to education in which pedagogy and the classroom/university environment support students in developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for functioning within a just, democratic society (Banks & Banks, 1995). This requires an (a) understanding of and capacity to contend with systems of oppression and the ways in which these systems may impact some students before and after acceptance to attend college at UMBC; (b) ability to foster academic success, knowledge of one's own and at least one other culture, and critique Western epistemologies and understand and curricularize non-Western epistemologies through the use of culturally responsive/relevant/sustaining pedagogies (Gay, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Love, 2019; Paris & Alim, 2017). Research literature on equity-based, transformative pedagogy indicates that a pedagogy of equity should spiral throughout entire programs of study and not be located in one course (e.g. Banks & Banks, 1995; Love, 2019). The University may consider consulting professionals who have experience aligning curricula with equity and inclusion frameworks.

While university faculty enjoy a great deal of academic freedom regarding what and how they teach, it is important for us to consider both our university and social contexts to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our students and the larger community. Inclusive excellence is a stance, disposition, or way of thinking about one's work. This includes how faculty think about their discipline and how the university thinks about its overall mission and the tensions that may be created. It is the committee's recommendation that the university engage a systemic approach to evaluating and enacting an equity-based

curricular approach that influences hiring practices, the promotion process, and professional development, with the goal of aligning our commitments to inclusive excellence with how we are rewarding and recognizing faculty and others who engage in curricular work. Engaging in inclusive work creates undue pressure and faculty may be penalized by low teaching evaluations, for instance, when the work is not uplifted consistently throughout a program or department. Recognizing and rewarding this work is important. As another example, the STRIDE process aims to ensure a diverse hiring pool for faculty positions and requires departments to signal the desire for candidates whose research and teaching is inclusive. These intentions, however, may not always be included in rubrics as candidates are evaluated throughout the hiring process. We view this as an opportune time for us to address these issues given national and global resistance to oppression, but also Middle States' growing focus on issues of diversity and inclusion.

**As noted above, there is a need for clear and consistent terminology, therefore our first recommendation addresses this issue:**

### ***Recommendation***

- Collectively decide on clear and uniform language when we talk about issues of equity and inclusion in order to create goals and outcomes that are consistent.

### **Pedagogy**

This section reflects recommendations that contribute to our understanding of the teaching methods and practices that foster diversity, equity and inclusion within the classroom.

### ***Recommendations***

- Collect data on the various instructional methods faculty engage to deliver and assess course content. For example, consider:
  - Which departments are incorporating “open pedagogy” to support both the use of open educational resources (OER) and student-created or co-created knowledge (Quality Matters SRS 4.4)?
  - Which departments are designing assessments with inclusive excellence in mind?
- Work with the Center for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching to assess faculty's ability to adopt and implement anti-oppressive and transformative pedagogies (e.g. culturally responsive pedagogies), and provide professional development.
- Conduct focus groups/surveys with students to elicit their experiences in the classroom related to how equity and inclusion content is addressed in the classroom in order to determine the extent to which university faculty incorporate discussions of/approaches for dismantling systems of oppression.
- Include inclusive excellence in teaching as a criterion on faculty hiring rubrics.
- Reward inclusive pedagogy by nominating faculty for existing and/or new faculty awards and fellowships.
- Create proactive accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they receive the

accommodations for full inclusion and access to course materials.

## **Content**

This section includes recommendations relevant to delivering course curricula reflective of institutional commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

### *Recommendations*

- Collect data to examine how departments already include equity and inclusion content within the explicit and implicit curricula.
  - Consider the extent to which instructional materials amplify marginalized voices and embrace changes to longstanding practices, assumptions, and incorrect generalizations (Quality Matters SRS 4.4). Do course materials reflect diverse backgrounds and identities?
  - Survey of courses currently on the books and regularly taught.
- Evaluate the current GEP courses, paying special attention to how these requirements include content that promotes equity and inclusion. For example:
  - Review of the criteria used to give courses the Culture designation and clarify the process for approval of these courses.
  - Consider creating a GEP category that includes diversity and social justice outcomes.
  - Make sure that courses including diversity and social justice outcomes are not a “one and done” course.
- Highlight issues and content related to domestic and international inclusive excellence.
- Course syllabi should include anti-racism/discrimination language.
- Collaborate with the Center for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching to find ways to encourage instructors to see this content and teaching practices as essential, and not an “add on.”
  - Though this resource discusses diversity in research, it may be a useful starting point for professional development.  
<https://infoguides.gmu.edu/c.php?g=1080259&p=7871668>

## **Outcomes**

This section includes recommendations intended to name why inclusive curricula is necessary and the student outcomes that are achieved as a result of offering course curricula that reflect commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion.

- Clearly articulate the importance and value of inclusive curricula. For example, within our subcommittee, members shared perspectives such as:
  - The need to decenter the people and knowledges that have dominated higher education institutions to the exclusion of other people and ideas
  - To articulate how UMBC’s current mission and vision for “inclusive excellence” includes equity and culturally responsive pedagogies
  - Students gain knowledge about different cultural contexts and systems of oppression/privileging, as well as tools to address these systems
- Inventory and evaluate existing equity, diversity, and inclusion outcomes within UMBC departments and programs.

- Inventory other colleges' and universities' approaches to incorporating inclusive outcomes at the university and department-level. What steps did they take and what can we learn?
- Create a system to track and measure what students are learning regarding equity and inclusion.
- Institutional training for anti-racist/anti-oppressive should be offered for faculty and students
- Conduct an equity audit of student academic supports and resources in order to close the opportunity gap among students from under-resourced backgrounds.

### **Other**

- Recognize, celebrate, and uplift those already doing this work. UMBC can use models already in place, such as the original STRIDE program where fellows were provided training, received stipends, and had a learning community where they learned from each other and other experts about scholarship, as well as the challenges at UMBC.
- Understand the extent to which students are feeling excluded and how.
- Provide full support (funding, faculty availability, course buy-outs, etc.) for the First Year Seminar Gender-Based Harms course being proposed by the Faculty and Staff Advisory Committee (FSAC).
- Provide full support for research to be conducted for the FYS Gender-Based Harms course.
- Provide full support to programs/majors/departments that currently do this work (GWST, AFST, SOWK, etc.). Programs need to be highlighted as much as other areas, but also need to receive financial support to continue their equity and inclusion work.
- Increase visibility of programs/majors doing equity and inclusion work - advertisement, highlighted in all communications, intentional student recruitment and funding, etc.
- Provide support for programs (outside of the classroom) that continue to do equity and inclusion work (Women's Center, i3b initiatives, Center for Democracy & Civic Life, the Shriver Center, etc.)
- Compensate and recognize faculty and staff engaged in the data collection, analysis, and implementation of these recommendations.
- Institutionalize the scholarship related to this work by creating funding streams that can lead to outside funding.

### **IV. Recommended Resources**

- A group of faculty members at the University of South Carolina, Kamania Wynter-Hoyte, Gloria Boutte, Eliza Braden, Susi Long, and Meir Muller, assist colleagues in higher education and other institutions in the work of identifying and countering anti-Blackness. They can be reached at [theantiracistcollective5@gmail.com](mailto:theantiracistcollective5@gmail.com)

- Shawna Murray-Browne, LCSW-C, is a Baltimore mental health practitioner who works with organizations and mental health professionals to decolonize their practices and policies. <https://www.shawnamurraybrowne.com/work>
- Grosfoguel, R. (2013). The structure of knowledge in westernised universities: Epistemic racism/sexism and the four genocides/epistemicides. *Human Architecture: Journal of the sociology of self-knowledge*, 1(1), 73-90.

## V. **Conclusion**

We acknowledge that this is a big task for the university and for anyone being asked to do the work. Consequently, the administration needs to consider how to compensate people who are asked to carry out these recommendations (e.g. course release, summer salary, additional financial compensation for staff) to signal the university's commitment to equitable and inclusive practices.

## References

- Banks, C. A., & Banks, J. A. (1995). Equity pedagogy: An essential component of multicultural education. *Theory into practice*, 34(3), 152-158.
- Gay, G. (2017). *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 3rd.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Love, B. L. (2019). *We want to do more than survive: Abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of educational freedom*. Beacon Press.
- Paris, D., & Alim, H. S. (2014). What are we seeking to sustain through culturally sustaining pedagogy? A loving critique forward. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 85-100.