

UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT AND STATE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

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DIVERSITY

Why Diversity and Inclusive Excellence is an Academic and Institutional Strategic Priority for the University of Vermont

“Of all the civil rights for which the world has struggled and fought for 5,000 years, the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental.” W.E.B. DuBois

The University of Vermont holds that diversity and academic excellence are inseparable. A distinguished university, particularly one that is a public land grant, must be accessible and inclusive to all who can positively contribute to and excel at the institution, regardless of individuals’ backgrounds and circumstances, including race, color, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, national and ethnic origin, socio-economic status, cultural and geographic background, veteran’s status, religious belief, age, disability, and other characteristics.

The University must prepare our students and support all members of our community to effectively function in and contribute to a complex, diverse, and evolving world. Through the tenets of respect, integrity, innovation, openness, justice, and responsibility found in *Our Common Ground*, the ideals of accessibility, inclusiveness, and academic excellence are reflected in the University’s values.

The nation’s success depends on global networks and markets, and our future security and prosperity require us to be a respected partner with cultures, countries, and communities across the globe. Research and scholarship are increasingly international and co-operative enterprises that require not only cultural awareness, but the ability to work collaboratively within diverse teams. Many of the most pressing problems our graduates will face in their lifetimes are regional or global in nature, including violence and war, disease, poverty, climate change, and intense competition for diminishing resources. An education grounded in diverse perspectives will better enable our graduates to confront and successfully resolve these and emerging problems.

Our mission as a public research university is to educate students and to create and disseminate knowledge. We also have the responsibility to prepare our students to be leaders, change agents, and global citizens. To be successful in this charge, we must educate our students about the world in which they live and help them (as well as other members of the University community) acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for successful and productive lives. Essential to achieving these goals are: having diversity among our faculty, staff and students to add intellectual and social vibrancy to the

community; cultivating a safe and respectful climate for all members of our University community; supporting the development of cultural competency; providing a curriculum that teaches critical thinking and engages learners of different multicultural perspectives across all disciplines; and having co-curricular experiences that provide community members with opportunities to engage across differences, as well as to develop and deepen critical life skills.

For these reasons, a diverse and inclusive UVM community is a compelling institutional interest that is indispensable to achieving our goal of inclusive excellence. If we are successful in this endeavor, the University of Vermont will continue to attract talented students, staff, and faculty who will not only enhance the University and local communities, but will make significant contributions to the nation and world. In sum, the success of the University's goals on promoting diversity also will advance the public good in society as the U.S. Supreme Court observed in the landmark case of *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003).

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."
Nelson Mandela

Adopted by the Board of Trustees: November 13, 2004

Revised and Adopted by the Board of Trustees: February 7, 2009

Revised and Adopted by the Board of Trustees: May 16, 2015