Equity and Inclusion Priorities for COVID-19

BACKGROUND:

This resource has been prepared by the Office of Equity and Inclusion with support from Campus Diversity Officers around Minnesota State. The purpose of this document is designed to assist campus leaders, faculty, students and staff in providing suggestions for areas of priority during the COVID-19 crisis to advance a supportive, positive, and inclusive campus climate.

STRATEGIES:

1. Prioritize the health, safety, and well-being of all stakeholders.
2. Be clear that racism, sexism, xenophobia and all forms of hateful or intolerant language, both in-person and online, will not be tolerated and can be addressed via Minnesota State Board Policy 1B.1 Nondiscrimination in Employment and Education Opportunity.
3. Promote the utilization of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights Discrimination Helpline as a resource for those who experience or witness bias and discrimination to report incidents. Information on the resource is below:

    > [Minnesota Department of Human Rights](#)
    > Discrimination Helpline
    > 1-833-454-0148
    > Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

4. Be inclusive and remember that everyone has different circumstances. Continue to treat everyone with respect, both in their presence and absence. Do not resort or revert to unkind discussions about people, individuals or groups who may not be in your immediate social circle.
5. Identify and respond to potential gaps in equitable access to technology and web accessibility. Work to assess student access to technology and review available resources to respond to the need.
6. Provide professional development training support for faculty to promote strategies to support online learning/remote instruction underscoring an equity lens.
7. Advocate for the needs of students from underserved and historically marginalized communities. Often students from these groups depend on our campuses for expanded needs including, but not limited to, food, housing, employment, and transportation. Prioritize these areas and consider having a process that allows access to campus food pantries and support for other basic needs.

Minnesota State is an affirmative action, equal opportunity employer and educator.

8. In consultation with the Office of Equity and Inclusion and Human Resources, observe equitable practices in virtual/remote search process to prioritize a consistent experience for all candidates minimizing the potential for bias.

9. Prioritize inclusive strategies for academic support including asynchronous delivery of instruction, utilize multiple online models for tutoring, and provide expanded access to academic advisors. In addition, promote opportunities for the use of academic support chat, virtual chat, and hotlines to advance student support.

10. Prioritize the use of equitable academic forgiveness policies including, but not limited to, the review of satisfactory academic progress, use of pass/fail grading option, extend incompletes and multiple repeat grades options.

11. Provide ongoing opportunities for employee check-in and exchange. Remember that employees may be experiencing trauma, caring for loved ones, and living/functioning with limited resources. Keep the focus on what is most important.

12. Promote access to mental health support services for students, faculty, and staff.

13. Prioritize review and check-in with state health officials/CDC and the System Office for guidance regarding protocol for access to the latest health and safety protocols.

14. Leverage student academic data to assess and support students' ability to successfully complete courses and continue their education in subsequent terms. Particular emphasis should be placed on examining and monitoring and withdrawals, failing letter grades, and reconciliation of incompletes.

15. Plan to closely monitor enrollment of students in the coming summer and fall terms to identify and actively communicate with students that have not returned in efforts to support their retention and completion.

16. Provide guidelines with an equity lens to provide refunds (full/partial) for tuition, housing, meal plan, student activities fees, parking, etc.

17. Work with Foundation and Industry Partners to provide emergency crisis scholarships for students.

18. Provide training for how our work will need to look like after COVID-19 – how will we address the disparities for underrepresented and marginalized communities that have been exacerbated due to the COVID-19 crisis.