

Diversity & Inclusion Commitment FAQs



Why do we need a Diversity & Inclusion Commitment?

This statement declares Great Plains IDEA's commitment to building an inclusive online environment where different types of people and different perspectives are valued. The first step in creating a more inclusive culture is to define what it is and how it looks in the alliance. This statement complements our mission and vision while being more intentional about the culture we want to create for our students, faculty, and staff. This statement is just the beginning of many conversations and will guide Great Plains IDEA as we create an action plan to show the world what we stand for and who and how we serve higher education.

Should we be more specific about what we mean by the word “diversity” and list or name the various groups of people?

Great Plains IDEA views diversity as the many differences and similarities in perspectives, identities, and experiences of our community. While diversity includes important and interrelated dimensions of human identity, we were intentional in our decision not to attempt to list all of those identities. In trying to be inclusive of all possible groups, we know we would inevitably leave someone out. In our sincere effort to be inclusive we could end up excluding.

What do we mean by “inclusive community”?

We recognize that diverse communities may not necessarily be inclusive, and inclusive communities may not look diverse. What we are committing to is an understanding that creating an inclusive community is an ongoing process of intentionally creating environments that truly value the different and diverse histories, contributions, knowledge, and experiences of all of its members. Inclusive communities create a sense of belonging, embrace differences, offer respect in words and actions, recognize areas of unconscious bias, and promote equity.

What was the process for creating this statement?

- A workgroup researched best practices for creating diversity statements while also examining our values by looking through testimonials, feedback from our content strategy work in 2018, reviewing our mission, vision, and founding principles.
- Over several weeks a draft statement came together.
- The first draft was presented to program groups, campus coordinators, and students. The workgroup made changes based on feedback and presented a second draft to different program groups, the Ag, and HS Boards, and the Cabinet.
- The Cabinet voted to approve the commitment in early November 2020.

How will we measure the success of this initiative?

Now that we have defined what inclusion is and how it looks in the alliance, our next step is to build a framework. This framework will guide our actions as we work to provide a more inclusive community and will include goals, initiatives, and outline how we will measure progress. Initiatives will include raising awareness about inclusion in the online learning space, providing resources and educational opportunities for faculty, staff, and students, and reviewing procedures to remove barriers to success.