

University of Maryland School of Public Policy Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Strategic Plan (October 2023)

Mission

The University of Maryland School of Public Policy (SPP) is committed to developing diverse and innovative leaders in the art and science of policy and governance; advancing the frontiers of applied interdisciplinary knowledge; and promoting local, state, national, and global public good.¹

Commitment

To achieve our mission, SPP commits to advancing a vibrant and thriving culture that embraces the core values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) and respect for the human dignity of all people. As part of our commitment, we acknowledge that these values are fundamental to our identity, fundamental to our decision-making and practices, and, most importantly, how we invest in our students, faculty, and staff to advance our mission.

We commit to building a diverse and inclusive community that centers on belonging as a central aspect of community membership at SPP. We commit to ongoing self-reflection and engagement with one another to promote a culture of accountability that fosters alignment between our mission, vision, and actions. We commit to fostering an environment that all can access, where all feel valued and respected, and our unique experiences and perspectives are welcomed and celebrated.

We commit to building a socially just and equitable world by developing solutions to diverse and complex public problems. This commitment includes incorporating historically marginalized and underrepresented voices often left out of policy discourse and debate. We commit to advancing interdisciplinary scholarship and research agendas that engage questions of equity and inclusion. Finally, we commit to developing civically engaged, fearless leaders that will employ and amplify these core values to advance the public good.

Vision

SPP will be a leader in supporting and advancing the role of public institutions to elevate powerful and innovative initiatives that address our most challenging public problems, both local, national and global. We will prioritize DEIB to ensure excellence in teaching, research,

¹ This language of this mission comes from the [UMD SPP Strategic Plan](#).

and service. We will emphasize our DEIB values as core to our identity to foster an authentic culture of concern for others, promote transformative leadership for all, and inspire our community members to thrive at their fullest potential.

SPP DEIB Progress and Next Steps

In the last five years, SPP has made DEIB a core aspect of our school identity.² As we have grown and learned as a community, we have embraced intersectionality, antiracism, and accessibility as critical frameworks that inform our efforts. We affirm that our language connected to historically underrepresented and marginalized communities is inclusive of race, gender, LGBTQ plus identity, religion, age, first-generation background, veteran status, ability, nationality, and immigrant background. We also acknowledge that how we approach DEIB will continue to expand as our community grows and changes. Our capacity to promote the public good and produce civically engaged leaders is intertwined with how the school incorporates these values into our work. Through critical engagement and participation across all levels of our community, SPP has made tremendous strides with respect to diversifying faculty, staff, and students, and developing DEIB-focused initiatives, expanding school curriculum, and establishing community norms related to DEIB.³ The school has also cultivated multiple DEIB resources via deliberative committees and administrative roles that are now part of our school operations⁴. These committees and roles have been instrumental in shaping the school's growth and approach to DEIB.

To see our DEIB efforts expand and become self-sustaining, all parts of the SPP community must engage in regular reflection about our individual capacity to authentically participate in this work and our willingness to address identified gaps between our stated goals and actions. A lens toward inclusion and belonging partnered with strong leadership is foundational to seeing DEIB values become fully embedded within our identity and reflected in our accomplishments as a community in the long-term.

Guiding Principles

SPP's approach to DEIB is informed by the following principles⁵:

1. **Reimagine Learning:** Promote an inclusive climate and culture that affirms the unique differences of our community members and cultivate connections and experiences that allow us to learn from each other.

² See Appendix A

³ See Appendix B

⁴ See Appendix C

⁵ The "Guiding Principles" and "Our Plan" sections from the University of Maryland's strategic plan, [Fearlessly Forward: In Pursuit of Excellence and Impact for the Public Good](#) informed the DEIB guiding principles developed by the School of Public Policy.

2. **Take on Humanity’s Grand Challenges:** Advance inclusive excellence in teaching, research and service and support individual and collective capacity to advance the public good.
3. **Partner to Advance the Public Good:** Integrate and embed DEIB values into our organizational structure, practices, policies, decision-making, and cultivation of relationships within and beyond our community.
4. **Invest in People and Communities:** Foster belonging through investing in community members and cultivating a culture of respect that upholds transparency, honesty, and integrity, and accountability.

Goals and Actions to Implement in Support of SPP DEIB Guiding Principles

Goal #1: *Advance inclusive excellence.*

Description: Inclusive excellence incorporates the perspective that DEIB values must be built holistically into our decision making, processes, patterns of evaluation, and in our organizational structure. The school’s ability to advance its vision is connected to our ability to attract, develop, and retain talented faculty, staff, and students and our capacity to advance equity and accessibility based on the needs of the school community. Thus, how we prioritize diversity of perspectives and experiences, build an equitable and inclusive climate, and foster a sense of belonging among our communities informs how we grow and thrive as a whole. SPP must develop inclusive models of leadership and promote awareness that exemplifies and amplifies the significance of DEIB as a central aspect of the School’s identity. The School will take steps to ensure that diverse voices are represented and reflected in our pursuit of inclusive excellence.

To advance inclusive excellence, we recommend the following actions for implementation:

- Provide the SPP community with access to diverse resources that advance shared understanding and identification of inclusive excellence in connection with our DEIB values across the school community.
- Employ a DEIB lens within decision-making, school-relevant policies, and evaluate and amend practices that do not align with our values and vision.
- Ensure that our physical spaces within SPP are inclusive and accessible to all.
- Attract, recruit, develop, and retain diverse faculty, staff, and students from historically underrepresented and marginalized communities.⁶
- Provide culturally responsive professional development of UMD faculty and staff.
- Provide advancement and leadership opportunities for historically underrepresented and marginalized communities.
- Identify, initiate, and support opportunities for collaboration (in service to SPP constituencies) across school units that promote trust and strengthen a sense of community.

⁶ Each of these diverse communities will require their own set of specific actions and implementation steps to address. See Appendix D for additional details. Please note that SPP is expected to incorporate the University’s [TerrapinSTRONG](#) values into our current onboarding for new students and employees.

- Every three years, engage community feedback regarding DEIB and respond effectively to any such concerns.
- Develop and utilize metrics that track progress on SPP goals, actions, and implementation plans.

Goal #2: Invest in capacity building (knowledge, skills, abilities, processes, and resources) around diversity, equity, and inclusion among faculty, staff, students, and school leadership that integrates DEIB values within and across units at SPP.

Description: SPP will take all necessary steps to ensure that all community members across all areas of the school (i.e., Dean’s Office, Academic and Student Affairs, Faculty Affairs, External Relations and Development, Finance and Personnel, Office of Executive Programs, the Institute for Public Leadership, and all SPP Centers and Institutes) are aware of, understand, and have the capacity to meet the school’s commitment and vision for DEIB. Developing these resources will facilitate the advancement of SPP’s DEIB goals.

To expand capacity of faculty, staff, student, and leadership, we recommend the following actions for implementation:

- Provide diversity, equity, and inclusion onboarding, continuing education, and incentives for faculty and teaching assistants around implementing inclusive pedagogy and fostering inclusive classroom environments.
- Incentivize, promote, and support scholarship around domestic and global diversity-themed research.⁷
- Provide diversity, equity, and inclusion training at onboarding and continuing education and incentives that advance and enhance the professional development of SPP staff.
- Prepare students for a knowledge-based, global economy by expanding and enhancing curriculum content, by infusing diversity into courses, providing high-impact learning and research experiences focused on diversity curriculum content for undergraduates and graduate students.
- Improve student onboarding and support around DEIB to strengthen undergraduate and graduate involvement in school governance.
- Provide ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion education for school leadership relevant to their roles and responsibilities.
- Empower and incentivize relevant units of the school to develop priorities and plans for annual assessment, evaluation, and budgeting connected to DEIB-related goals and actions.

Goal #3: Maintain and enhance community expectations around respectful conduct and engagement for faculty, staff, and students and promote a system of accountability.

Description: The School has established a set of [community expectations](#) to promote a culture of respect and concern among SPP community members that upholds our commitment to DEIB. Part of establishing and maintaining a culture of respect also requires that SPP actively takes

⁷ See Appendix D for specific recommendations. This language was taken from the equity scorecard draft developed by UMD Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

steps to ensure that all community members are knowledgeable about our community expectations and will hold themselves accountable to them.

To support awareness of community expectations for respectful engagement and accountability between faculty, staff, students, we recommend the following actions for implementation:

- Ensure students, faculty and staff are educated about SPP's DEIB strategic plan and how it connects with broader University initiatives (i.e., TerrapinSTRONG).
- Utilize onboarding, governance meetings, and other convenings of SPP communities to ensure that the school community is aware of our community expectations.
- Provide resources to address concerns that arise if those expectations are not upheld.
- Develop a collaborative plan to assess and respond to concerns regarding violations of community expectations based upon the source and level of concern.
- Develop initiatives within each unit of the School that invite community members to engage with one another, build connections, and increase trust within and across SPP units.

Goal #4: Expand how we use our platforms as a school of public policy to strengthen existing partnerships while seeking to build new opportunities for collaboration and engagement.

Description: As SPP expands its work related to DEIB, it is critical that we demonstrate how our engagement and practices related to DEIB distinguish us as a school of public policy to relevant internal and external constituencies (i.e., SPP community, University, local, regional, national organizations, government institutions, public officials, employers, donors, and alumni). Our approach to messaging, and investments in current and new diverse partnerships represent ongoing opportunities for SPP to demonstrate how DEIB uniquely informs our identity and impact as a school community. It also informs the quality of relationships we build within our school, partnerships across the University, and outside of the University. This will shape the scope of our reach as a community, which we seek to expand. We should build upon existing plans to engage with diverse constituencies about how the School is engaging in diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging work.

To improve how we represent SPP's distinct identity and contributions to diverse constituencies, we recommend the following actions for implementation:

- Develop stronger relationships with local and regional institutions and organizations, employers, and alumni, particularly in proximity to UMD College Park.
- Provide dedicated resources around marketing and communications that support programming and curricular initiatives that elevate DEIB.
- Expand prospects for fundraising that connect with faculty scholarship and areas of expertise that support DEIB.
- Expand our approach to celebrating DEIB through events and programming, the School's website, and in the School's print communications and social media campaigns.
- Continue to strengthen and expand alumni relationships, especially alumni from underrepresented communities.

Goal #5: *Invest in and build DEIB work at a scale appropriate to the growing needs and resources of the School for sustainable change and success.*

Description: To advance inclusive excellence that strengthens the School's capacity to reflect our values and achieve our goals, the School must be able to make updates to organizational structure, processes, financial resources, and investments in human capital.

To expand investments in DEIB, we recommend the following actions for implementation:

- Continue to assess the scope and authority of the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer role and efficacy of resources allocated to meet school goals that align with school principles related to DEIB.
- Develop and utilize metrics that track progress on SPP goals, actions, and implementation plans.
- Clarify expectations and responsibilities of all leadership roles and DEIB related committees at SPP (i.e., Faculty Diversity Committee, DEIB Taskforce) in connection with advancing and implementing DEIB.
- Develop opportunities that identify how collaboration and teamwork within and across SPP units critically advance DEIB goals and actions.