



BELONGING: Choosing Equity and Engaging Inclusive Excellence

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND
BELONGING STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2028**

February 2024

**OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL
EQUITY & DIVERSITY**



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OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL EQUITY & DIVERSITY

1500 N. Warner St. #1019
Tacoma, WA 98416-1019

**Belonging: Choosing Equity and Engaging Inclusive Excellence
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategic Plan
2024-2028**

PREAMBLE

For approximately 20 years, the University of Puget Sound has worked diligently and strategically to address diversity, equity, and inclusion on campus. We are a campus community that values the intrinsic worth of its members, recognizes our shared qualities, and embraces our differences. Such differences and shared qualities make for a vibrant, intellectually engaging environment that challenges everyone to foster a spirit of openness leading us to grow personally and professionally.

The university's mission statement is to "develop in its students capacities for critical analysis, aesthetic appreciation, sound judgment and apt expression that will sustain a lifetime of intellectual curiosity, active inquiry, and reasoned independence. A Puget Sound education, both academic and cocurricular, encourages a rich knowledge of self and others; an appreciation of commonality and difference; the full open, and civil discussion of ideas; thoughtful moral discourse; and the integration of learning, preparing the university's graduates to meet the highest tests of democratic citizenship. Such an education seeks to liberate each person's fullest intellectual and human potential to assist in the unfolding of creative and useful lives." A critical element to facilitate this mission involves maintaining a university-wide strategic approach that integrates diversity, implements equity as a framework, and acts to promote inclusiveness in our daily operations and institutional decision-making.

Such a strategic plan delineates the path to a community in which everyone experiences a strong sense of belonging and professional and personal growth. Implementing a strategic diversity, equity, and inclusion plan invites the university community to engage fully and meaningfully in the preparation of the students so they can "meet the highest test of democratic citizenship."

In 2005, the university appointed a Diversity Planning Task Force to develop a specific diversity strategic plan. This plan began its implementation in 2006. In 2016, the university implemented a new plan, *Threshold 2022: Cultivating a Culture of Inclusive Excellence (Threshold 2022)*, which has served as the blueprint for the institutional diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives until now. Current social and cultural developments in our country and higher education require us to review this plan and make any necessary adjustments to aid the university in its mission to prepare students to face the challenges of the future, as our world becomes more diverse, more globally connected, and more complex.

This revised strategic plan, authored by members of the Diversity Advisory Council (DAC or Council), led by the Vice President for Institutional Equity & Diversity, reimagines how we prioritize and implement our institutional goals of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB). This plan, *Belonging: Choosing Equity and Engaging Inclusive Excellence*, is in full alignment with Goal 2 of the university's strategic plan, *Leadership for a Changing World*, which states our desire to enrich our learning environment through increased diversity, inclusion and access by more fully developing a welcoming learning environment through initiatives that increase and support equity, inclusion, access to, and successful graduation from Puget Sound.

The *Belonging: Choosing Equity and Engaging Inclusive Excellence* plan asks us to reimagine and realign the sites of DEIB work on campus to create synergy, transparency, communication, and accountability. The plan leads us to reconsider how we might strengthen and support existing DEIB infrastructure, training, expertise, and practices so that matters of equity are neither atomized as extracurricular nor siloed to one sector of campus, but are deliberately considered and integrated across various kinds of university work including teaching, advising, hiring, managing, learning,

counseling, assessing, researching, training, and evaluating. This newly revised and redesigned strategic plan is in clear alignment with the university's Student Success Plan which incorporates a strong equity framework. The plan also provides a clear blueprint outlining not only goals, objectives, and strategies, but includes key performance indicators that can help us assess our progress as well as a list of resources

THE PLAN'S DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

In November 2022, the Office of Institutional Equity & Diversity in collaboration with the Diversity Advisory Council initiated the process to revise and update *Threshold 2022*. The process has been grounded in the university's mission statement and core values. The Council began its work with a review of several key documents such as the university's strategic plan, *Leadership for a Changing World*, past campus climate survey data, demographic data for the past 10 years, research articles, documents from past faculty and student demands and concerns, among several others.

Following this, the Council then created four working groups, each charged with revising and updating one of the goals of the *Threshold 2022* plan. From January through April 2023, the four working groups collected further relevant information, engaged in discussion, and rewrote each goal and associated objectives. Utilizing the same framework, the working groups updated their respective goals along with the objectives and strategies needed to achieve the goal, and they also identified the key performance indicators, responsible leads for the objectives, and the timeline and resources needed to achieve the objectives or implement the strategies. In April 2023, an initial draft of the plan was shared with several constituencies in the campus community for review and feedback. The plan was also shared for feedback with the executive team of the Associated Students of the University of Puget Sound (ASUPS), and the progress of the plan was reported to the Committee on Diversity. The feedback received was then incorporated. During the summer and fall of 2023, the plan was further refined, incorporating feedback from the Committee on Diversity; key offices such as Admission, Alumni & Parent Relations, Chaplaincy, Human Resources, Student Involvement & Programming, and Technology Services; and the divisions of Academic Affairs, Enrollment, Finance & Administration, General Counsel & Risk Management, Student Affairs, and University Relations.

and timeline needed to accomplish the goals and objectives. The plan clearly illustrates that the work described here is the responsibility of all divisions, units, and departments, and it requires the commitment and diligent work of stakeholders across the university to advance these goals.

Throughout this process, the members of the Diversity Advisory Council offered their insights, research, and many hours of discussion and writing. The Council includes representatives from the Office of Human Resources; the division of Student Affairs, including the Chaplaincy, Counseling, Health & Wellness Services, and Residential Life; ASUPS and student club representatives; the division of Academic Affairs, including representatives from the Committee on Diversity, Collins Memorial Library, Race & Pedagogy Institute, and graduate faculty; and the divisions of Enrollment, University Relations, and Institutional Equity & Diversity. A full list of those who contributed to the development of this strategic plan is listed in Appendix A, and we offer our gratitude to each of them for their work on this critical project. We also thank all the faculty, students, and staff who shared insights that have informed this plan through different initiatives, projects, and demands.

In evolving our diversity strategic plan into *Belonging: Choosing Equity and Engaging Inclusive Excellence*, the Council affirmed the conceptualization of diversity, equity, and inclusion that was foundational for the previous strategic plan, *Threshold 2022*. This conceptualization is provided in Appendix B, and as part of our current work, we have updated and broadened this conceptualization to now encompass both a definition of Inclusive Excellence and a commitment to further develop a strong sense of belonging in all members of the university community.

Belonging: Choosing Equity and Engaging Inclusive Excellence Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Strategic Plan 2024-2028

GOAL ONE

Strengthen existing infrastructure, processes, and systems that advance our institutional goals of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

This ambitious goal involves examining student life, recruitment and retention; faculty and staff hiring and retention; and curriculum. The goal requires strengthening and tapping into existing expertise which requires collective creative thinking, intentional and well-designed collaboration, and integration of processes and practices.

GOAL TWO

Renew and repair relationships with diverse constituencies from Tacoma and Pierce County, building mutually beneficial relationships that further educational goals and promote democratic citizenship.

This goal asks that we revisit and renew our relationships as an institutional citizen in Tacoma and Pierce County. It asks that we create intentional opportunities to be in relationship with community partners in ways that are reciprocal, mutually beneficial, and which acknowledges past harm and duties to repair.

GOAL THREE

Create and sustain a robust community of minoritized alumni that continue a positive and engaged relationship with the university following their graduation.

This goal leads us to engage with alums from minoritized populations in purposeful and meaningful ways by connecting them with current life on campus and utilizing their experience to enrich the life of minoritized students on campus.

GOAL FOUR

Increase transparency, communication, and accountability regarding DEIB initiatives.

This goal imagines how our work around equity can be more transparent and how we hold ourselves accountable to achieve the goals and objectives of this plan. It asks that we create better communication of our progress, and consider processes for reviewing and revising what has been done.

GOAL ONE

Strengthen existing infrastructure, processes and systems that advance our institutional goals of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES
1.1 Create synergy among Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) efforts across campus.	1.1a Complete a map of current DEIB programs and initiatives.
	1.1b Redefine the charges of the Diversity Advisory Council (DAC) to include advising and supporting the Office of Institutional Equity & Diversity on the implementation of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging strategic plan.
	1.1c Review existing policies to determine what changes may need to be made to promote the success of minoritized students, faculty and staff. A DAC subcommittee will consult with appropriate policy owners.
1.2 Strengthen DEIB efforts of offices and centers that provide wellness, intercultural security, and academic support.	1.2.a Provide a framework and set of guidelines for these different units to develop their DEIB action plans and associated strategies.
	1.2.b Identify and secure resources needed for these offices and centers to execute their approved strategies.
1.3 Increase graduation, retention and enrollment rates of FTIC and minoritized students in undergraduate and graduate programs. This objective will be implemented in alignment with and support of the university's Student Success Plan.	1.3.a Strengthen operational resources and programmatic support for Tacoma Public Schools students and students in the Access and Posse programs, and strengthen the leadership development and support of student affinity groups.
	1.3.b Develop a structure for graduate students to engage regularly with the divisions of Institutional Equity and Diversity and Student Affairs in order to provide graduate students with an excellent inclusive environment.
	1.3.c Strengthen the collaboration of the divisions of Institutional Equity and Diversity, Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Academic Affairs to provide more integrated support services for students as described in the university's Student Success Plan.
	1.3.d Pursue additional financial aid sources and partnerships with organizations that support recruiting and enrollment from First Generation in College, low Socioeconomic Status (SES), and/or minoritized groups (e.g.College Horizons, Questbridge, College Success Foundation).
	1.3.e Support the continuous development of mentoring and culturally responsive teaching skills for all faculty.
	1.3.f Strengthen the current plan to recruit a diverse pool of applicants for graduate programs.
	1.3.g Strengthen the leadership development and support of student affinity groups.
1.4 Strengthen the hiring process and implement best practices to promote retention of faculty and staff from minoritized communities.	1.4.a Develop an Equity Advocate program for search committees.
	1.4.b Strengthen implicit bias training for search committees.
	1.4.c Develop and implement best practices to evolve our faculty and staff search protocols and training programs to promote equitable faculty and staff searches.
	1.4.d Develop professional development opportunities for staff that build capacity for professional mobility.

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES
1.5 Continue to develop Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion skills and knowledge of students, faculty, and staff	1.5.a Implement annual programmatic professional development opportunities focused on the development of intercultural intelligence, cultural humility, inclusive communication, and culturally responsive pedagogy.
	1.5.b Strengthen collaborations between Institutional Equity & Diversity, Human Resources, Faculty Development Center, and Race & Pedagogy Institute to implement equity, Inclusion, belonging, and antiracism training for faculty and staff.
	1.5.c Recommend and incentivize the participation of faculty and staff in the DEIB training modules available currently in the university training platform.
	1.5.d Develop and offer Intergroup Dialogue training programs for students and staff to develop skills to engage across differences in effective ways.
1.6 Strengthen curricular decolonization to create a more inclusive curriculum and decenter Western perspectives.	1.6.a Implement curricular decolonization efforts across academic departments.
	1.6.b Offer curricular decolonization training that includes representatives from all departments and establish clear measurable plans for engaging faculty.

GOAL TWO

Renew and repair relationships with diverse constituencies from Tacoma and Pierce County, building mutually beneficial relationships that further educational goals and promote democratic citizenship.

2.1 Create reciprocal, mutually beneficial opportunities for campus community members to build relationships with diverse communities.	2.1.a Develop civic engagement, partnerships, and scholarship opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to learn, volunteer, and/or work in diverse local settings to enhance their knowledge of the area's cultural groups and increase positive and effective interactions.
	2.1.b Increase university interactions and partnerships with minority organizations and minority-owned businesses in the Tacoma and Pierce County area to support such organizations and businesses and provide experiential learning opportunities for our students.
	2.1.c Create a plan to increase communication and invitation to South Sound communities to attend and participate in on-campus programs and events via general outreach, as well as direct invitation and collaboration.
	2.1.d Track and report on communication and invitation to and attendance and participation with South Sound communities aton-campus programs and events.
	2.1.e Develop resources to improve communication, relationships, and hospitality for families of Puget Sound students who are graduates of TPS, or minoritized communities.

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES
2.2 Implement the Legacies Project.	2.2.a Develop Theme Year(s) initiative focused on understanding our history and legacy as an institution to provide intellectual and cultural immersion in a particular topic across the university for one or two years (e.g., environmental justice, Indigenous rights, educational access).
	2.2.b Offer encouragement and resources for students, faculty and staff to integrate lectures, museum exhibits, music or theater performances, film and reading series, campus discussions, and more into courses and student programming.
	2.2.c Develop Legacies innovation grants and fellowships available to faculty, staff, and students to advance a special project contributing to the understanding of the Legacies' Theme Year.
	2.2.d Create permanent and rotating exhibits of Legacies projects to enrich the educational experience of the students and other members of the community.
	2.2.e Develop opportunities for the university to build partnerships that seek to repair relationships where harm has been done and support and strengthen current relationships that honor healing and repair.

GOAL THREE

Create and sustain a robust community of underrepresented and minoritized alumni that continue a positive and engaged relationship with the university following their graduation.

3.1 Increase opportunities for First Generation in college alumni and those from minoritized populations to engage with the institution and in particular with current students who are the first in their families to attend college or who are members of minoritized groups.	3.1.a Prioritize the hiring of minoritized alumni-owned vendors for events, where possible.
	3.1.b Organize alumni-student mixers and fireside chats focused on minoritized groups.
	3.1.c Recruit alumni from a variety of backgrounds to serve as mentors on the Logger Link mentoring platform.
	3.1.d Create and facilitate spaces on Logger Link for students and alumni to connect around identities or professional goals.
	3.1.e Review current recognized student clubs and organizations and identify alumni who were involved with those clubs and organizations as students and find ways to connect them. Ask student clubs and organizations to hold at least one event that connects with past alumni members.
3.2 Increase diversity of Alumni Council membership.	3.2.a Foster DEIB practices across all levels of alumni volunteer leadership. Identify members of affinity alumni groups who can serve on the Alumni Council and encourage them to do so.
3.3 Validate, reconcile with, and learn from the experiences of alumni from minoritized populations to improve the experience for current students.	3.3.a Conduct alumni attitudes survey(s) or hold focus groups to identify long-standing concerns that might impact the campus climate for current students.
	3.3.b Develop content that highlights campus and alumni stories around issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

GOAL FOUR

Increase transparency, communication, and accountability regarding DEIB initiatives.

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES
4.1 Develop and maintain a DEIB Strategic Plan dashboard.	4.1.a Partner with Technology Services and Marketing & Communications to develop a dashboard that can track our progress toward the goals.
	4.1.b Update the dashboard quarterly.
4.2 Communicate DEIB initiatives and progress regularly with internal audiences, and increase the visibility of DEIB work being done on campus.	4.2.a Make efforts to decolonize the curriculum visible to the campus community through a variety of media.
	4.2.b Establish consistent and predictable communication and responses with the campus community around DEIB issues and incidents on campus.
	4.2.c Increase visibility of DEIB strategic plan accomplishments & accountability through the sharing of this information in a variety of ways.
	4.2.d Create opportunities for members of the community to provide feedback regarding the progress of the plan's implementation, including a website link for written communications and open office hours with the VP for Institutional Equity & Diversity twice per semester.
4.3 Review and revise DEIB efforts on an ongoing basis.	4.3.a Use updates from the dashboard to revise the objectives and strategies/actions as needed.
4.4 Share individual progress towards DEIB goals.	4.4.a Develop a system to periodically share actions taken toward specific goals.
	4.4.b Identify accountability leaders across different divisions and offices who are assigned to report to the VP for Institutional Equity and Diversity progress toward DEIB goals.

APPENDICES

**Belonging: Choosing Equity and Engaging Inclusive Excellence
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2024-2028**

APPENDIX A **Participation in the Process**

The following individuals contributed over the 18-month process of developing the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging strategic plan, *Belonging: Choosing Equity and Engaging Inclusive Excellence*. These individuals were either members of the Diversity Advisory Council or were invited to participate in the working groups that reviewed, revised, and developed the goals, objectives, and strategies included in the plan.

- Robin Ajjian, Staff, Division of Enrollment, Director of Undergraduate Admission
- Tiffany Alfaro, Student
- Alexandra Betancourt, Student, Posse Scholar, and Sin Fronteras representative
- Sandra Braedt, Staff, Division of Student Affairs, Title IX Coordinator and Equal Opportunity Officer
- Kelly Brown, Staff, Division of Student Affairs, Director of Counseling, Health & Wellness Services
- Allison Cannady-Smith, Staff, Division of University Relations, Associate Vice President of Constituent Relations
- Julian Caneda-Santos, Student, Asian and Pacific Islander Student Community (APISC) and Coalition of Multiracial & Biracial Students (COMBS) representative
- Cecille Corsilles-Sy, Faculty, Division of Academic Affairs, Committee on Diversity, Graduate Faculty representative
- Khalila Fordham, Staff, Division of Student Affairs, Counseling, Health & Wellness Services, Counselor
- Alana Hentges, Staff, Office of Human Resources, Learning and Development Manager
- Lorna Hernandez Jarvis, Cabinet Member, Division of Institutional Equity & Diversity, Vice President of Institutional Equity & Diversity
- Chloe Ivy-Curwen, Student
- Jada Pelger, Staff, Division of Academic Affairs, Collins Memorial Library, Makerspace and Technology Coordinator
- Ellen Peters, Staff, Division of Academic Affairs, Associate Provost and Director of Institutional Research
- Kim Ratliff, Faculty, Division of Academic Affairs, Committee on Diversity
- Erin Ruff, Staff, Office of Human Resources, Director of Human Resources for People Experience
- Nolan Ryan, Staff, Division of University Relations, Associate Director of Alumni & Parent Relations
- Renee Simms, Faculty, Division of Academic Affairs, Race & Pedagogy Institute representative
- Doris Tinsley, Staff, Division of Institutional Equity & Diversity, Assistant Director for Access Programs
- Carolyn Weisz, Faculty, Division of Academic Affairs, Race & Pedagogy Institute representative
- Dave Wright, Staff, Division of Student Affairs, University Chaplain
- Kirby Wong, Student

APPENDIX B

Conceptualizing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Originally adopted: 2016

Updated and expanded: 2024

UNIVERSITY MISSION

The University of Puget Sound is an independent, predominantly residential undergraduate liberal arts college with selected graduate programs building effectively on a liberal arts foundation. The university, as a community of learning, maintains a strong commitment to teaching excellence, scholarly engagement, and fruitful student-faculty interaction.

The mission of the university is to develop in its students capacities for critical analysis, aesthetic appreciation, sound judgment, and apt expression that will sustain a lifetime of intellectual curiosity, active inquiry, and reasoned independence. A Puget Sound education, both academic and cocurricular, encourages a rich knowledge of self and others; an appreciation of commonality and difference; the full, open, and civil discussion of ideas; thoughtful moral discourse; and the integration of learning, preparing the university's graduates to meet the highest tests of democratic citizenship. Such an education seeks to liberate each person's fullest intellectual and human potential to assist in the unfolding of creative and useful lives.

CONCEPTUALIZING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

We at Puget Sound intentionally conceptualize and view diversity as a matter of equity and inclusion. In doing so, we aim to understand and actively respond to the ways organizational aspects of our society and of our own university often work against those principles, excluding some groups and individuals from our community while including others. The work of diversity, accordingly, seeks to account for and redress deeply embedded historical practices and legacies, forms of cultural and social representation, and institutional policies and processes that can systematically exclude groups or individuals from full participation in higher education and the considerable benefits it offers.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION VISION

We are a campus community that values the intrinsic worth of its members, recognizes our shared qualities, and embraces our differences. We make appreciation of all persons a key characteristic of this community, foster a spirit of openness and active engagement, and strive to be diverse and inclusive in every aspect of campus life. In doing so, we ensure a full educational opportunity for all who teach and learn at Puget Sound.

The University of Puget Sound is a powerful example of a community enriched by diversity in all its forms, and by the challenges and rewards that come with diverse representation, thought, and expression.

We believe that reflective, thoughtful, and respectful examination of the differing dimensions of diversity educates and empowers all who work and study here to be advocates for inclusion and equity. All members of this community share in cultivating, sustaining, and continuously developing an environment in which equity is intentionally sought and inclusiveness is practiced.

Diversity includes attention to identity characteristics such as age, disability, sex, race, ethnicity, religion/spiritual tradition, gender identity and expression, sexual identity, veteran status, job status or socioeconomic class, nation of origin, language spoken, documentation status, personal appearance and political beliefs. Diversity also includes attention to processes such as design of the curriculum, admissions policies and practices, hiring and retention practices, assessment of performance, budgeting, and any other day-to-day business decisions made within the institution.

DEFINING INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

Inclusive Excellence is conceptualized as the framework for universities to follow proposed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities in 2005. This framework invites universities to use their resources of diversity to achieve academic excellence for all students. Making Excellence Inclusive "aims to understand how higher education can coherently and comprehensively link its diversity, inclusion, and equity initiatives to its essential educational mission."¹ We will advance inclusive excellence initially by promoting culturally responsive pedagogy and decolonizing the curriculum.

FURTHER DEVELOPING A SENSE OF BELONGING

The American Psychological Association defines Belonging as the feeling of being accepted and approved by a group or by society as a whole.² Hagerty et al. (1992)³ describe a sense of belonging as "the subjective feeling that one is an integral part of their surrounding systems, including family, friends, school, work environments, communities, cultural groups, and physical places." A sense of belonging can and should exist among differences.

As an outcome of its diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, the University of Puget Sound seeks to develop a strong sense of belonging in all of the members of the campus community. We work to create an environment in which all individuals feel connected to the university, and that they are valued, and respected.

¹ Clayton-Pedersen, A., R., O'Neill, N. & McTighe Musil, C. (2005) Making Excellence Inclusive: A framework for Embedding Diversity and Inclusion into Colleges and Universities' Academic Excellence Mission. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

² See <https://dictionary.apa.org/belonging>

³ Hagerty BM, Lynch-Sauer J, Patusky KL, Bouwsema M, Collier P. Sense of belonging: a vital mental health concept. Arch Psychiatr Nurs. 1992 Jun;6(3):172-7. doi: 10.1016/0883-9417(92)90028-h. PMID: 1622293

