

**UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION AND STUDENT SUCCESS UNITS**  
**Strategic Plan for Inclusive Excellence for AY 2020-22**  
**March 24, 2021**

**Overview**

This strategic plan for diversity, inclusion, and equity represents the collective priorities, strategies, and metrics for Undergraduate Education and Student Success Units (UESS) within the portfolio of the Senior Associate Vice Chancellor and Dean of Undergraduate Education. These units include the following:

- Center for Academic Success and Transition (CAST)
- Undergraduate Education Programs (ACE, Transfer, & Learning Communities)
- Military and Veteran Success Center (MVSC)
- Career Services (including Undergraduate Research and National Fellowships)
- University Academic Advising (including Explore Center)
- The University Honors Program
- The William H. Thompson Scholars Learning Community
- Center for Transformative Teaching

Our collective priority across UESS units is to engage UNL scholars from matriculation through graduation with programs, experiences, and resources that support their diverse needs, backgrounds, and educational goals. This work is guided by the following principles:

- The University of Nebraska-Lincoln admits scholars for success. When we admit scholars, we demonstrate our belief that they will succeed in completing their degrees.
- We aspire to inclusive educational excellence activated by a culture of high expectations for learning, belonging, and engagement.
- Faculty who develop and teach the curriculum and the professional staff who help scholars navigate it are central to the leadership and implementation of any success strategy.
- Our degree programs prioritize high impact practices within curricular and co-curricular experiences to ensure all scholars have equitable opportunities and resources to succeed.
- Our strategies must honor the diverse and unique learning contexts for scholars across different colleges and programs and target interventions to meet specific scholars' needs.
- We continually review data regarding who is (and is not) succeeding in classes, programs, and degree pathways to eliminate equity gaps in scholars' achievement and ensure success for all.

Because many UESS units are specifically designed to support scholars from under-represented low-income, first generation, and ethnic and cultural backgrounds, it is especially critical for UESS leadership to prioritize issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity. Our three collective priorities for this strategic plan from AY 2020-2022 include: 1) Scholar Retention and Engagement, 2) Staff Recruitment and Development, and 3) Faculty Engagement and Development.

### **Priority Area One: Scholar Retention & Engagement**

Every year UESS units interact directly with thousands of scholars through transition and engagement programs including academic advising, career development, undergraduate research, honors experiential learning, general education courses, and scholarship and learning communities. Because we are so “front facing” with scholars, it is critical that our programs strive for inclusive excellence in every interaction. As the N2025 Strategic Plan outlines, we commit to inclusive excellence by reducing inequities in retention and graduation across student populations and increasing overall retention and graduation rates of students from underrepresented groups. In particular, we prioritize addressing historical inequities.

**Goal 1:** Embed developmentally appropriate learning opportunities that model inclusive excellence and support scholars’ diverse identities and backgrounds across our programs and services.

**Goal 2:** Increase participation by underrepresented first generation, ethnic minority, and low-income scholars in programs and high-impact practices supported by our units.

#### **Strategies**

- Develop joint Inclusive Excellence programming and increase collaboration across UESS units on scholar retention and engagement activities and initiatives
- Embed topics on diversity and inclusion within UESS programs (e.g. residential curriculum, peer connection seminars, NSE testimonials, CTT modules, etc.).
- Develop unit processes to increase participation in UESS programs by underrepresented scholars (e.g. tailored Gilman or UCARE invites, honors recruitment of 1<sup>st</sup> semester scholars, etc.).
- Recruit underrepresented scholars for employment and career development within UESS units
- Create programs specifically for underrepresented scholars including first-generation, ethnic minority, international, women veterans, LGBTQA+, etc.
- Commit to flexibly meeting the needs of every student where they are rather than where we are, including utilizing online engagement tools and resources as appropriate.

#### **Metrics**

- a) Units will annually report on the inclusive excellence learning opportunities they provide to scholars.
- b) Units will annually report on demographics of scholars’ participation in programs and employment.

- c) Units will increase participation rates of underrepresented low-income, first generation, and ethnic minority scholars within their programs year over year.

## **Priority Area Two: Staff Recruitment & Development**

Collectively, UESS units employ 70+ managerial professionals and nearly 100 graduate and undergraduate scholars who serve as teaching assistants, peer mentors, learning assistants, and interns. UESS staff and student leaders provide the bulk of programs designed to support first year scholars' orientation and transition. Thus, it is critical that UESS staff and scholar leaders are equipped with the intercultural competencies, skills, and knowledge required to support all scholars' diverse needs and that they model and practice inclusive excellence through every interaction.

**Goal 1:** Recruit staff who represent the diversity of our scholars' identities, backgrounds, and experiences through proactive and intentional hiring processes.

**Goal 2:** Prioritize professional development for staff and scholars that builds intercultural competencies, enables participants to practice inclusive excellence, and fosters ethical, responsible, and collaborative teams.

### **Strategies**

- Prioritize candidates' experiences with diversity, inclusion, and equity in all stages of hiring processes, including job descriptions, interview questions, public presentations, etc.
- Require staff to participate in at least one annual development experience around inclusive excellence topics.
- Require staff to self-assess their contributions to inclusive excellence goals via annual review processes.
- Embed inclusive excellence topics in all scholar trainings for leadership and employment within UESS units.
- Utilize current campus resources and UNL-qualified administrators to provide coaching and/or assess competencies
- Promote staff and student participation in existing campus events and activities related to inclusive excellence including guest speakers, lectures, and workshops

### **Metrics**

- a) Units will develop and use common interview questions to assess candidates' experiences with diversity, inclusion, and equity by September 2020.
- b) Units will annually report on staff hires made within preceding year and describe the strategies they used through the hiring process in efforts to achieve goal 1.
- c) Units will annually report percentage of staff and student members' participation in inclusive excellence programs.
- d) Units will include questions, reflections, and/or conversations on inclusive excellence in annual review process.
- e) Units will annually report on inclusive excellence programs they provide scholars for leadership and employment and participation rates within them.

### **Priority Area Three: Faculty Engagement, Collaboration, and Development**

UESS units collaborate with faculty across the undergraduate academic colleges in support of inclusive excellence, providing programs, data, and resources that equip faculty to develop informed and nuanced understandings about scholars' diverse experiences in curricular and co-curricular contexts.

**Goal 1:** Provide faculty resources and tools they can use to enhance curricular and co-curricular engagement and promote degree completion for all undergraduate scholars.

#### **Strategies**

- Share institutional data and narratives with faculty and staff to improve understanding of equity for undergraduate scholars' retention, persistence, and degree completion rates across demographic groups (through workshops, data briefs, etc.).
- Provide university resources that support faculty in developing rich curricular and co-curricular experiences for scholars (e.g. CTT institutes, FYRE programming, New Faculty workshops, etc.).

#### **Metrics**

- a) UESS leadership will hold faculty workshops to share data on undergraduate scholars' curricular and co-curricular experiences each semester.
- b) UESS units will report on faculty programs they provide in support of inclusive excellence topics, including participation rates.

### **Operational Process and Timeline**

To operationalize this plan, the UESS Directors will work in collaboration with a cross-unit implementation committee of between six to eight self-nominated staff members from across all UESS units. The implementation committee will meet twice each semester during the academic year to

- Support and/or lead unit efforts to engage with the UESS strategic plan and, where appropriate, make recommendations to UESS leadership regarding additional unit level goals and strategies;
- Develop a working document for each team to use in documenting how they are working to implement the UESS plan;
- Develop a formal process for teams to monitor and share their progress towards UESS goals.

In addition, the UESS leadership will collaboratively hold an annual professional development activity focused on inclusive excellence topics for all UESS staff to build a sense of shared community and collective understanding of how all STT units are needed in support to accomplish the goals of the UESS plan.