



THE UNIVERSITY of MISSISSIPPI

School of Journalism and New Media

5-Year Equity-in-Action Plan

INTRODUCTION

MESSAGE FROM DEAN

The School of Journalism and New Media has long embraced the idea that diversity, equity, and inclusion are essential elements of any university education, especially for those who will one day work as journalists, integrated marketed communications practitioners, or in any media-related profession.

This plan governs the work of staff and faculty who instruct and support students seeking a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and the Bachelor of Science in Integrated Marketing Communications. It is designed to be a living document as our understanding of what it means to be inclusive, equitable, and diverse continues to evolve.

We reiterate our values in this area with a statement included in the syllabus for every course we offer: “The School is committed to diversity in the classroom, in its publications, personnel and in its various organizations and components. Faculty and staff recognize that the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of their colleagues and students are best served through respect toward gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture and other personal characteristics. In addition, the School is committed to taking a leadership position that calls for promoting a commitment to diversity in and out of the classroom and in the practice of journalism and integrated marketing communications.”

The mission of the School of Journalism and New Media is to lead and excel in the education of a diverse body of students in our programs. The plan detailed in this document will guide us as we strive to succeed in this critical mission.

Dr. Andrea Hickerson, Ph.D.
Dean/Professor

MESSAGE FROM DIVERSITY LIAISON

By cultivating genuine humility, curiosity, and a desire to learn, in the School of Journalism and New Media we teach students to be observant, to ask respectful questions, and to be good listeners. It is our desire to help students understand that we all have biases that need to be identified so that we can be prepared and open to have those misconceptions corrected. It is absolutely no good being a keen observer if your own cultural conditioning causes you to misinterpret what you are seeing or hearing.

Dr. Marquita Smith, Ed.D.
Assistant Dean for Graduate Programs

GUIDING STATEMENTS, ETC. W/ DIVISION/COLLEGE

The mission of the School of Journalism and New Media is to lead and excel in the education of a diverse body of students in journalism and integrated marketing communications. Grounded in truth, freedom of expression, responsibility, and integrity, the faculty and staff will:

1. Prepare students to succeed in an ever-changing, integrated, and global media landscape.
2. Encourage research and creative work to add to the body of knowledge and to serve the journalism and communication professions.

PATHWAYS TO EQUITY: University of Mississippi Institutional Diversity, Equity, And Inclusion Strategic Plan

The University of Mississippi (UM) continues its commitment to excellence and making a positive difference in society through higher education. **Pathways to Equity** stands as our institutional guide post for addressing and advancing our institutional mission through centering diversity, equity, and inclusion. Our complex institutional history coupled with our rich culture of student, faculty, and staff striving for inclusive change has led us to the solidification of this institutional plan. **Pathways to Equity** works in concert with **Flagship Forward** to leverage university-wide, college/school level, and departmental transformative initiatives that cultivates a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus.

With Pathways to Equity, the University of Mississippi aspires to achieve the following statements by the conclusion of this plan:

- A. The University of Mississippi consistently and comprehensively articulates diversity, equity and inclusion as essential in fulfilling the mission, vision and values of the institution.
- B. The University of Mississippi is organizationally and culturally equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to continue advancing diversity, equity and inclusion.
- C. A campus climate is fostered that ensures all individuals are valued and supported, and feel a sense of belonging at the University of Mississippi.
- D. The University of Mississippi demonstrates decreases in disparities across underrepresented groups in the enrollment, retention and graduation rate at undergraduate and graduate levels.
- E. The number of underrepresented groups employed at the University of Mississippi is increased to reflect a talented and diverse workforce at all organizational levels, especially tenure-track faculty, managerial positions and executive leadership positions.

Guiding Principles

The development of this plan requires us to address individual, social, organizational and systemic factors that create and sustain inequities that prevent all members of our community from fully participating and thriving at the University of Mississippi. As we embark on this journey together, we must commit to the following shared principles:

1. **Equity-mindedness**¹ – We embrace the institutional responsibility and agency to actively address the challenges and disparate outcomes at all levels of our community. This requires us to be data informed and

¹ Bensimon, E. M., Dowd, A. C., Witham, K. (2016). Five principles for enacting equity by design. Diversity and Democracy, The Equity Imperative. Winter 2016, Volume 19, No 1.

connect best and promising practices to generate high-impact change for underserved groups in our community.

2. **Institutional Accountability** – We must ensure efforts outlined throughout Pathways to Equity are acknowledged in the established systems of recognition, performance and accountability. It is vital that we work to account for the advancement of these goals in our ideas of success, merit and reward. Further, we must account for, honor and recognize faculty, staff, administrators and students in their commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.
3. **Transparency** – In our execution of Pathways to Equity, our success is predicated on a highly accessible and collaborative process that actively involves university stakeholders to work as meaningful partners. To that end, we will consistently, publicly and broadly share our intended actions, goals and measurable impacts of this plan.
4. **Innovation** – Actualizing diversity, equity and inclusion will require us to deeply examine and rethink our policies, practices and procedures at the University of Mississippi. Each unit and individual across campus is invited to offer thoughts, ideas and perspectives as we thoughtfully consider ways to make our institution more equitable and inclusive through an intersectional lens. This disposition of robust inquiry and evidence-based imagination will create a community of learning, growth and development as we collectively engage in this complex work.
5. **Alignment of Critical Resources** – During this planning process, we have navigated a global health pandemic that has shown the vulnerabilities in our systems that disparately affect underserved and under-resourced communities. As we continue to navigate these unprecedented times, we must not falter in our commitment to creating a more diverse, equitable and inclusive community. We must recognize that our commitment to equity is more important than ever.

OVERARCHING GOALS

The following goals represent the University of Mississippi’s commitment to the advancement of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). These **overarching goals** represent interconnected priorities that are applicable to UM broadly, from our comprehensive divisions down to individual teams. We aim to have all units see meaningful alignment of these goals with their work. We will ensure UM embraces the transformative nature of diversity, equity and inclusion across all levels of the institution, addressing challenges to DEI at every corner of our institution by combining contextual understanding with internal and external expertise.

I. Advance Institutional Capacity for Equity

Infrastructure, Information, Systems, Education, and Processes

II. Cultivate a Diverse and Equitable Community

Recruiting, Retaining, Advancing, and Succeeding

III. Foster an Inclusive Campus Climate

Support, Value, and Belonging

COLLEGE/SCHOOL/DIVISION 5-YEAR EQUITY-IN-ACTION PLAN

OVERVIEW OF DIVISION/COLLEGE EQUITY IN ACTION PLAN

STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. – Maya Angelou

Premise One – Inclusive Campus Climate

The University of Mississippi defines campus climate as “the atmospheres in all corners of campus (residence halls, classrooms, the dean’s office, etc.) that create feelings of inclusion and support to succeed or instead foster the opposite.” In the Pathways to Equity Plan, inclusion is defined as “actively and intentionally creating a welcoming campus where all individuals feel they have a supportive and affirming space to learn, grow and engage.” As such, climate and inclusion are largely perceptual; what one perceives as an open or inclusive space may be perceived by others as exclusive or otherwise interpret the climate as unsupportive of one or more aspects of their identity. Consequently, the work of creating an inclusive campus climate must balance a focus on the structures and policies under the direct control of the School of Journalism and New Media along with a recognition that its faculty, staff, and students play an important part in creating the kind of place where all feel welcomed.

In its ideal state, the School of Journalism and New Media is center for work and study in which all experience:

- the freedom to express themselves to others who listen with curiosity;
- the ability to deliberate and discuss complex ideas without fear of being censored or maligned;
- an environment that encourages, welcomes, and nurtures diverse viewpoints that sometimes complement while at other times appear incommensurable; and
- unity of purpose alongside diversity of passion, talent, identity, and/or positionality.

A. Actions

1. The Committee, with guidance from administration, will seek internal and/or external expertise to evaluate the current infrastructure in relation to creating, maintaining, and reinforcing a climate of inclusion in the School.
2. The faculty and staff will actively communicate a climate of openness and mutual respect in individual and group encounters, through School signage and publications, and via administrative transparency.
3. When recruiting, hiring, and retaining faculty, staff, and students, as well as when inviting guests (e.g., speakers, outside teaching evaluators), the School will prioritize candidates that best support, value, and engage the intersectional identities of every member of the School.

B. Metrics

1. Beginning with data collected as part of the University’s Campus Climate Study, the Committee will include in its annual reports relevant numeric and narrative data on School climate as experienced by faculty, staff, and students.
2. In its annual report, the Committee will submit recommendations for (a) conversation norms and other dialogue structures to guide official School meetings, (b) language and imagery that signals inclusion/exclusion to particular identities and perspectives for consideration when crafting messages for internal and external stakeholders, and (c) new policies and/or changes to existing policy to ensure administrative transparency.

3. The Committee’s annual reports will include data on how faculty, staff, students, and invited guests represent the wide range of identities and perspectives within the School. Those data will include, but are not limited to, demographic markers of diversity as well as specific areas of academic and professional expertise.

Full-Time Faculty Demographics

<i>AY 22-23</i>	Fall	Spring
<i>Male</i>	16	16
<i>Female</i>	17	17
<i>Minority</i>	8	8
<i>Non-minority</i>	25	25

Data show full-time faculty demographics for the specified academic year.

Adjunct Faculty Demographics

<i>AY 22-23</i>	Fall	Spring
<i>Male</i>	20	20
<i>Female</i>	14	14
<i>Minority</i>	3	3
<i>Non-minority</i>	31	31

Data show adjunct faculty demographics for the specified academic year.

It contributes greatly towards a man's moral and intellectual health, to be brought into habits of companionship with individuals unlike himself, who care little for his pursuits, and whose sphere and abilities he must go out of himself to appreciate. — Nathaniel Hawthorne in The Scarlet Letter

Premise Two – Student Recruitment and Retention

The study of Journalism and Integrated Marketing Communications at the flagship public university in Mississippi will become stronger as the demographic balance of resident students approaches or exceeds University and State totals and the demographic balance of nonresident students approaches or exceeds national totals with international students as an additional strengthening component.

A (1). Actions (Recruitment)

1. While recognizing that recruitment is an essential service for all faculty and staff, the School will maintain at least one-half faculty or staff position for recruitment.
2. The School will prepare appropriate materials and staff on-campus recruiting events and schedule family visits with faculty members or deans.
3. The School will design and maintain welcoming and detailed recruiting messages in digital spaces, including but not limited to, its website.
4. The School will prepare and send mailings to all regional high school counselors with information about school programs, scholarships, and career opportunities.
5. The School will celebrate and supply to prospective students information about top internships, awards, and employment of recent alumni.
6. The School will partner with the University on its minority-targeted recruiting efforts and events.
7. The School will continue to employ an executive director for the Mississippi Scholastic Press Association and support that person’s outreach to and support for public and private schools in

the region as well as the director’s membership in and travel to regional and national conferences that include recruiting opportunities.

8. The School will encourage alumni to recommend prospective students, especially minority students, and will initiate and continue correspondence with prospective students identified by alumni, by the University’s regional recruiters or otherwise brought to the attention of the School.
9. The School will work with counselors and others at community colleges, including through the University’s regional campuses located at community colleges, to publicize programs and opportunities of the School, especially to nontraditional students.
10. The School will maintain contact and provide the University’s international student recruiting office detailed information on graduate programs.
11. Faculty, as they are available, will support the work of the Mississippi Scholastic Press Association, speak at student conferences related to the School’s academic program, and develop relationships with high school counselors and teachers.
12. When asked by employers for internship or employment recommendations, faculty and staff will offer diverse pools of candidates.

A(2). Actions (Retention)

1. The School will communicate with each student identified after mid-term each full semester by the Provost as “at-risk” due to failing grades, offering assistance in the indicated form, usually tutoring or counseling.
2. The School will work with the Provost who identifies students in each six-year cohort who have not completed their degrees by initiating contact and offering assistance, including alternate pathways.
3. Faculty and staff advisers will offer truthful but encouraging messages in meetings with their assigned advisees each semester.
4. The School will encourage and participate with the University in alternative degree pathways in the Complete to Compete and other programs.

B(1). Metrics (Recruitment)

1. Annual reports will note faculty or staff member(s) serving in positions where recruiting is in the position description and include sample recruiting materials.
2. Annual reports will include a synopsis of Mississippi Scholastic Press achievements during the relevant academic year as well as at least two regional schools that had not previously been contacted or visited for recruitment.
3. Annual reports will chart and track demographics. Additional charts will display the same demographics according to the most recent U.S. Census for (1) Mississippi and (2) the United States.

<u>Undergraduate Students (AY 2022-23)</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>SOJNM</u>	<u>University</u>
<i>American Indian/Alaska Native</i>	2	2	.24%	0.3%
<i>Asian</i>	5	14	1.14%	2.1%
<i>Black/African American</i>	62	56	7.08%	12.5%
<i>Hispanic/Latino (any race)</i>	23	56	4.74%	4.4%
<i>Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</i>	1	1	.12%	0.1%
<i>Two or more races</i>	9	22	1.86%	2.4%
<i>Other race</i>	4	7	.66%	0.8%

<i>White</i>	299	1100	83.87	74.7
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<u>Service Area</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>US</u>
<i>American Indian/Alaska Native</i>	.6%	1.3%
<i>Asian</i>	1.1%	6.1%
<i>Black/African American</i>	38%	13.6%
<i>Hispanic/Latino (any race)</i>	3.5%	18.9%
<i>Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</i>	.3%	.3%
<i>Two or more races</i>	1.4%	2.9%
<i>Other race</i>	NR	NR
<i>White</i>	58.8%	75.8%

Movement toward increasing demographic balance will reflect positively on the actions taken; the greater the movement the greater the validation of school strengthening. Movement away from balance will trigger an analysis and, as needed, a revision of the action components.

B(2). Metrics (Retention)

1. If identified as eligible for the Compete to Complete program, guidance will be provided to enable former students to achieve undergraduate degrees. The Assistant Dean for Student Services will be responsible for ensuring this occurs.
2. The Diversity Committee’s annual reports will track four-, five-, and six-year cohorts for retention to graduation. Exceeding University percentages for all students and minorities will be satisfactory. A trend showing a narrowing of the gap between minority and non-minority retention will be deemed satisfactory. A widening gap will trigger a review toward improvement of the actions.

School of Journalism and New Media Retention & Graduation

	<u>UM</u>		<u>SOJNM</u>	
	<i>All</i>	<i>Minority</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Minority</i>
Retention %				
<i>To Yr 2</i>	86.4%	85.2%	76.1%	IMC 85.85% Jour 88.46%
<i>To Yr 3</i>	90.6%	75.6%	78.5%	IMC 81.60% Jour 76.92%
<i>To Yr 4</i>	90.8%	63.5%	78.5%	IMC 78.30% Jour 69.23%
Graduation Rate				
<i>4 Years</i>	62.9%	50%	51.2%	46.40%
<i>5 Years</i>	71.4%	64.3%	56.9%	57.10%
<i>6 Years</i>	72.9%	64.3%	57.7%	57.10%

University retention is, on average 6.3% lower for minority students compared to all students. For graduation rates, the slope is steeper: 13% lower, on average, for minority students compared to all students. The data reflected is the most recent available.

Creating a culture of inclusion is not an optional exercise; it is the indispensable precondition enables us to capitalize on our diverse skills, perspectives and experiences so that we can better advance the fundamental research and education mission of MIT.
 – Dr. Susan Hockfield, 16th president, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Premise Three – Faculty and Staff Recruitment and Retention

Selection of faculty and staff with diverse backgrounds and experiences is a testament to respect for individuals, to freedom of expression and, importantly, mirrors the values of the school to the public as well as students as they prepare to become effective professionals in a global marketplace.

A. Actions

1. All search postings will expressly encourage applicants from diverse groups, including women and minorities.
2. All search committees will include chairs and members with a wide range of diversity.
3. Search postings will be placed in traditional and nontraditional forums and will remain open to attract a diverse pool of qualified applicants.
4. School faculty and staff will be supported in attending conferences and events that optimize opportunities to meet with and recruit potential faculty and staff colleagues.

B. Metrics

1. The Dean’s Office will provide the Diversity Committee with the demographic breakdown of full-time faculty and staff on an annual basis. Meeting or exceeding university averages will be considered satisfactory. Not meeting or exceeding university averages will trigger a review to improve/intensify actions. The Diversity Committee will report results of their analysis and any recommendations at a faculty meeting and in committee meeting minutes.
2. The Dean’s Office will assign mentors to each new staff or faculty hire to assist the new member’s assimilation into the school and campus communities.

SOJNM Faculty Compared to University

<i>Fall 2022</i>	SOJNM	University
<i>Male</i>	49.5%	52.8%
<i>Female</i>	51.5%	47.2%
<i>Minority</i>	24%	17.74%
<i>Non-minority</i>	76%	78.26%

SOJNM Staff Compared to University

<i>Fall 2022</i>	SOJNM	University
<i>Male</i>	50%	44%

<i>Female</i>	50%	56%
<i>Minority</i>	50%	30%
<i>Non-minority</i>	50%	70%

Movement toward increasing demographic balance will reflect positively on the actions taken; the greater the movement, the greater the validation of School strengthening. Movement away from balance will trigger an analysis and, as needed, a revision of the action components.

Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid. - Albert Einstein

Premise Four – Curriculum

One significance of incorporating the values of diversity, equity and inclusion in education is that it gives students the opportunity to examine their own social and cultural biases, break down those biases, and widen their perspectives. Another, as recognized by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, is simultaneously promoting outcomes for all students that employers and society need, such as complex thinking skills, the ability to work across difference, increased civic participation and decreased prejudice and discrimination.

A. Actions

1. Course syllabuses in the School will include statements affirming the School's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in academic settings as in all others.
2. Faculty will work intentionally with the support of IT and other assets to assure that all course materials and course participation is accessible to all students.
3. The School will continue funding and support for organizations and groups that advance diversity, including but not limited to, military veterans, Allies, the student chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists (UMABJ) and the International Student Association.
4. Students will be advised of and encouraged to participate in Study Abroad and other conferences, programs, and events that widen perspectives.
5. The School will continue to offer courses such as The Press and the South, Digital Media Diversity, and others in the Social Justice specialization that center on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

B. Metrics

1. The Dean's Office will select a random sample of syllabuses each year to ensure statements affirming the School's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion are present.
2. The Committee will poll faculty annually for examples of course content and assignments purposed to increase awareness of diversity, equity and inclusion and attach the results to the Committee's annual report.
3. The Committee's annual report will list regularly scheduled or special topics courses or School-sponsored events related specifically to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Research is an expression of faith in the possibility of progress. The drive that leads scholars to study a topic has to include the belief that new things can be discovered, that newer can be better, and that greater depth of understanding is achievable. Research, especially academic research, is a form of optimism about the human condition. - Henry Rosovsky

Premise Five – Research and Scholarship

Taken together, University faculty constitute the world's largest assemblage people wholly dedicated to lifelong learning. Gathering facts, analyzing findings, and sharing results is the recipe for awareness and/or knowledge creation and is an essential duty of tenured and tenure-track faculty; these activities are also encouraged for all fulltime instructors.

A. Actions

1. Faculty will be supported in selecting, attending, and presenting at regional and national events and conferences related to improving education in diversity, equity, and inclusion and afterward conversing with and sharing materials with their colleagues in the School.
2. Faculty will be supported in selecting diversity, equity, and inclusion in media or marketing in their research programs.
3. Faculty will be encouraged to participate in collaborative research projects with diverse groups of colleagues in the School of Journalism and New Media or nationally.

B. Metrics

1. The Diversity Committee will poll faculty annually for examples of participation in professional development events, meetings or conferences related to improving education in diversity, equity, and inclusion.
2. The Diversity Committee will poll faculty annually for examples of individual or collaborative research (in progress or published) by faculty into issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion

***Diversity is being invited to the party; Inclusion is being asked to dance.* - Verna Myers**
Premise Six – Outreach and Service

Our vision of outreach consists of a thriving partnership between faculty, staff, and students. But we also serve the people and communities of Mississippi. In this vision, the people and their communities routinely make effective use of the School's resources to serve their communication needs and help them solve their problems and improve the quality of their lives.

A. Actions

1. The School will support faculty, staff, and student membership in campus, regional, and national organizations specifically dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion as well as attendance and participation in events held by the organizations.
2. The School will create events or serve as a volunteer or named sponsor for events on campus or elsewhere that recognize and share the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
3. The School will support and cover underrepresented communities in our local and regional communities.

B. Metrics

1. The School will review memberships in organizations specifically dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion as well as any leadership positions held in those organizations by faculty or staff.
2. Each year, the School will create or sponsor at least one event that hat recognizes and shares the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
3. The School will document outreach opportunities that engage underrepresented communities and report out in the annual report.

Area(s) Responsible: *The Dean, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Diversity Liaison for the School of Journalism and New Media will take the lead in ensuring that our governance reflects our plan.*

Resources Statement: We have sufficient campus data from IREP, and internal documents to assess and review our work.