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A Treatise on Diversity in a Dominant Culture University

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Abstract

The authors examine progress in strengthening the Diversity agenda in a school of education within a private Christian university. This agenda is informed by external academic accrediting organizations and principles of social justice congruent with the historical roots of the university. Special emphasis is placed on the unique challenges of confronting how privilege manifests itself in seemingly homogeneous environments. The ultimate goal of the authors is to promote moving beyond cosmetic compliance with accreditation obligations towards a metabolized second order change reflecting internal paradigm shifts in which social justice is a central motivating factor in one's vocation.

Keywords: Christian, diversity, education, marginalization, privilege, social justice, university.

The following treatise examines the unique challenges of George Fox University's School of Education diversity agenda. The authors present an overview of the identifying features of the school, characterized by its dominant cultural identities as Christian and predominantly Caucasian. The reflection concludes with an acknowledgement of the challenges ahead, and a prelude to case examples offered in a second article chronicling the ongoing work.

Contextual Setting: History, Mission, and Challenges

George Fox University is an evangelical Christian university within the Quaker tradition. The location of the main campus is in a rural setting 20 miles outside of Portland, Oregon, which is home to its largest regional campus. The US-Pacific Northwest is predominantly Caucasian, as are the majority of students and employees. The traditional undergraduate programs primarily serve students professing a Christian faith; many of these students identify with evangelical conservative faith communities. The School of Education (SOE), along with other university graduate and undergraduate programs, serves traditional and adult learners regardless of creed.

Religion is a contextual variable that can be the source of both privilege and marginalization. The complexity of a faith-based university requires acknowledgement, even while it is beyond the scope of this paper to unpack in depth. At George Fox, employees are not required to be Quaker, but must be professing Christians within the tradition of their choice. While employees are required to sign a statement of faith and a community life-style agreement, theological diversity exists.

The Northwest Yearly Meeting of Friends owns the University; its mission is related but differs from a church. According to Richard John Neuhaus (1996),

A Christian university is not a church, but is part of the church's mission. A church has many tasks, including worship, evangelizing, catechesis, and works of mercy.

All these tasks may be pursued within a university, but the university's specific task is discovering and transmitting the truth and cultivating the life of the mind. If the life of the mind is not understood as an integral part of Christian discipleship and mission, the term “Christian university” is indeed, as some claim, an oxymoron.

While a Christian university is not a church, it is from the church and serves the church by enabling the church to serve the world more fully.

Our theological diversity as expressed in denominational creeds and practices, as well as differentiating how a Christian university differs from a church, adds to the richness of the environment and increases its complexity. It is here where our evangelical Quaker identity offers structure and direction. Most noticeable is how we are influenced by Quaker history regarding matters of racial and ethnic diversity. This heritage—rich and prophetic—also includes actions by early Quakers that were at times “misguided and flawed” (*Theology of Diversity*, George Fox University Diversity Committee, 2012). As members of an evangelical institution arising from this complex heritage, we are inspired by examples of courage and chastened by the need for grace as we fall short of fully living in the light of truth.

Among the aspects of Quaker theology that guide our processes, George Fox (1624-1691) stressed that God’s light was universally available to all people, regardless of their religious, cultural, or national background. Accordingly, the early Quakers acknowledged the light of Christ in all peoples and valued the full and equal humanity of

all persons. They understood that every person has the equal potential of a right relationship with God and is worthy of love and respect.

History and Mission of the University

The community of George Fox University has long believed that it exists to be of service to the world. The University's current mission statement reads, "George Fox University, a Christ-centered community, prepares students spiritually, academically, and professionally to think with clarity, act with integrity, and serve with passion" (George Fox University Mission Statement, 2012). In the list of core values, one finds two values that add detail to this mission statement:

Engaging Globally and Connecting Culturally: We value worldwide experiential learning aimed at understanding and improving the human condition. We desire to connect genuinely with people from diverse cultures both locally and globally through relationships and reciprocal teaching and learning.

Promoting Peace, Justice, and Care of the Earth: Jesus Christ calls us to be peacemakers, to serve the poor, and to engage our world responsibly. We are a community that actively creates peace, promotes justice, and cares for the earth. (George Fox University Website, 2012)

The university website proclaims the George Fox community to be globally engaged; since its founding, George Fox has encouraged its students to seek ways to make their faith relevant in the world. Commitment to outreach, study abroad and addressing the social justice issues of this day has helped to create a learning environment that emphasizes global awareness and engagement. *U.S. News & World Report* ranks George Fox among the top 50 out of approximately 1,400 accredited colleges and

universities in the nation for the percentage of students studying abroad. Graduate and undergraduate service trips continue to address complex social justice concerns in Africa, India, Brazil, Ukraine, and Romania (George Fox University Website, 2012).

University-Sponsored Diversity Committee

In order to deepen conversations and understanding of George Fox University's commitment to diversity, the university-wide Diversity Committee has embarked on a process to develop a *Theology of Diversity*, addressing racial and ethnic diversity from a biblical perspective. This stance undergirds the desire to serve others with grace and humility. The current draft of this white paper states,

God's people are called to live amid the tension between unity and diversity.

When followers of Jesus Christ retreat into racial and ethnic enclaves, the Body of Christ is fractured and cannot thrive in fulfilling God's mission in the world.

When, on the other hand, it seeks unity through uniformity, it does so by means of the dominant culture's oppression of non-dominant culture(s). The former is unhealthy homogeneity by means of isolation; that latter is the same by means of imperialism. We succeed in living amid the tension between unity and diversity by honoring the uniqueness each other's race and ethnicity, and by discovering the ways in which we complement and enrich each other as Christ's Body, in which all manner of culture is ultimately subsumed under the lordship of Jesus Christ. (George Fox University Diversity Committee, 2012)

Diversity as an Organizing Principle in the School of Education

In response to both an accreditation review and the biblical call for justice, the School of Education (SOE) at George Fox University established the diversity committee

charged with drafting the SOE Diversity Document (See Appendix A.). Its intent is to create a clear and unequivocal declaration of the SOE's commitment to equity and justice as reflected in the University's mission, and professional ethics and law, while providing guidance to the SOE in its work.

During the past three years, the SOE Diversity committee developed and formalized the document while engaging each other, university administration, and school colleagues in deeper dialogue concerning its foundational purpose to nurture second order encounter and change, not just cosmetic compliance with the call for equity and justice. Thus, the implementation of the document co-occurred with its formulation as each of us engaged in personal reflection and encounter as a prerequisite to assessing our work with students and the broader community. These conversations have been deeply personal, and at times challenging, mirroring processes we strive to replicate in the classroom.

Personnel in the School of Education also attend to justice and diversity in beliefs and actions. The School's *Conceptual Framework* summarizes its aims this way: "The School of Education prepares professionals who think critically, transform practice, and promote justice" (School of Education Website, 2012). As a framework was designed for action, the committee created a diversity document to guide engagement in the communities where the School serves. The preamble to this document states,

[T]he SOE routinely evaluates its effectiveness in identifying and responding to inequities that undermine human relationships and functioning within our university, the professions in which we serve, and the greater community. The *2012 Diversity Document* reflects our ongoing self-assessment and commitment

to reducing barriers that inhibit full and equal partnership within our various communities. It is both confessional and aspirational, a living document open to further modification as we continue to learn and change as a result of engaging in enduring reciprocating relationships with those who might otherwise be unseen or unheard. (School of Education Diversity Committee, 2012)

Working together to develop frameworks, guiding principles, and plans of action provides a venue for difficult conversations to occur in a safe place inside the SOE community. This safety does not always transfer into other spaces inside or outside the university; honest caring dialogue and curiosity about the experience of other are universal challenges. The SOE seeks to engage in these difficult relational processes to be part of a solution within our university, in the classroom, and in our external professional and familial communities.

Diversity Agendas in Christian Higher Education

Educational institutions often find matters of diversity particularly challenging. Understanding and celebrating diversity as well as creating an environment where matters of oppression and social justice are deeply explored and understood are complex and difficult. In Christian academic institutions, religious perspectives add to the existing complication surrounding diversity issues. Theological questions about cultural diversity involve differing views on the nature, authority and meaning of sacred writings. Interpreting ancient writings in the context of current understandings of social science has produced considerable conflict within Christendom. Questions about the meaning and place of Christian authority are significant. Additionally, the scope, meaning, and application of doctrinal orthodoxy provide ongoing challenges. And finally, the

opportunity for immediate connection and commentary via social media has made it much easier for these challenging conversations to become mainstream, giving leverage for marginalized groups to advocate for their concerns in Christian institutions.

George Fox University, a member of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU), is not an exception. A recent article suggests that colleges and universities who are CCCU institutions are making progress described as “steady gains” (Scheller, 2012) in effectively dealing with diversity issues, at least in addressing racial concerns. The article reports on a sampling of nine CCCU schools’ diversity workers (among the schools that have designated diversity officials) chronicling their efforts and experiences. The article addresses only racial/ethnic diversity concerns, avoiding other challenges such as gender and sexual orientation. A careful reading of the article reveals the gains to be very small (3% increase in students of color) and ongoing problems with authentic diversity. One diversity official from a CCCU school asserted that students of color complained that, “They felt like Christian campuses wanted color, they wanted cosmetic diversity, but not authentic diversity” (Scheller, 2012, p. 6). The article’s conclusion seems very optimistic given the mixed content of those interviews.

Additionally, the very small sample (8% of CCCU schools) chosen from schools with designated diversity officials makes any inference about the whole CCCU very suspect. Another diversity officer asserted that changing the systemic nature of racism in small Christian colleges is very difficult. He called the system wealthy, established, strong historically, and very Christian. He suggested that changing the system would be akin to “turning the Titanic. [It] is going to take a long time and its going to be real slow” (Scheller, 2012, p. 7).

These challenges suggest many questions about the presence and state of diversity work at affiliate schools. We focus in this section on the presence of published diversity content at affiliate schools and ask the following questions: Is diversity an intentional focus of the college/university? Is diversity language embedded in the school's identity? Are matters of diversity easily engaged by accessing affiliates' on-line content? Are there academic programs that feature diversity issues and concerns? Does a review of the affiliates' news content (administration news/student newspaper) reveal a community conversation addressing matters of diversity and social justice? And finally, how does George Fox University compare to other relatively small Christian Colleges in its published engagement with concerns and activity around diversity?

To answer these questions, we turn our attention to the 116 North American member colleges and universities that make up the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) (cccu.org). The CCCU is an international association of intentionally Christian colleges and universities, which includes 69 affiliate institutions in 25 countries as well as those in the U.S. and Canada. The U.S. affiliates represent a particular segment of the United States' 900 religiously affiliated colleges and universities. Among the 116 North American affiliates, there are 27 different affiliations/denominations represented. Members must meet qualifying criteria. Membership requires a strong commitment to Christ-centered higher education; location in the U.S. or Canada; full regional accreditation; broad curricula rooted in the arts and sciences; and only Christians hired for all full-time faculty and administrative positions. The CCCU is headquartered in Washington, DC. It offers advocacy services for members as well as academic study programs in Latin America, the Middle East, China,

India, Australia and the United States. The CCCU's mission is "To advance the cause of Christ-centered education and to help our institutions transform lives by faithfully relating scholarship and service to biblical truth" (cccu.org., n.d.).

The website of each North American affiliate of the CCCU was viewed to assess the member's published content as a sign of engagement with issues surrounding diversity. No judgment of content was attempted. Rather, the site was assessed as to whether or not diversity content was present. During a visit to each website, several questions guided the assessment. First, how difficult is it to find the words 'diversity,' 'cultural competence' or 'cross cultural' in the institution's definition of itself? Histories, self-descriptions, and mission and value statements were used to answer this question. Second, how easy is it to find the university's current understanding and engagement of diversity issues? For this question, the internal search engine of each institution provided data. Third, a search of departments, academic programs, majors, minors, or certificates for academic concentrations in diversity studies provided further information about the institution. Finally, recent official university posts (within the past year) of current events and concerns as well as online student newspapers to see if diversity-related topics were present concluded the gathering of data.

In almost two-thirds of affiliates' (63.7%) online content, no mention of diversity, cultural competence, or cross-cultural concerns appears in the affiliates' identity content (history, mission, vision, values). In addition, another 13.7% of affiliates included some diversity content, but it was difficult to find. Just over 4% of affiliates published diversity content which was easy to find. Almost 20% (18.1 %) of affiliates have diversity content embedded in their self-descriptions. Thus, nearly 80 % of affiliates

make little or no mention of diversity in their self-descriptions. This suggests that matters of diversity are not a high priority in institutions' descriptions of themselves, at least in their online content.

Looking deeper into institutional content, one finds much more conversation around diversity. The use of each affiliate's internal search engine reveals 56.9% of the affiliates yielded significant diversity content. In an additional 20% of affiliates, diversity content was present but difficult to find. In the remaining 23% of affiliates, the internal search yielded nothing about diversity. Thus nearly 80% of affiliates have accessible online content about diversity.

The search for academic programs in diversity, cultural competence, or cross culture studies reveals the 57% of affiliates had departments, programs, majors, minors, or certificates in diversity. This suggests that a little over half of affiliates have diversity concerns directly addressed in their academic programs.

A review of affiliates' administrative self-published content in current news and events reveals that 69% had no diversity related content published in the last year. In student newspapers, 83% revealed no content around diversity in the last year. This suggests that at least in published content, affiliates largely do not engage or discuss diversity issues in official university publications, with such conversations being even more limited in student newspapers.

To summarize, CCCU affiliates generally do not engage diversity issues in their published self-identity. However, nearly four out five affiliates publish content about diversity in their non-identity online content. Three out of five affiliates have specific

academic programs in diversity studies. Finally, diversity content in institutional news and student newspapers is unusual, more so in student newspapers.

In comparison to the rest of our affiliates, George Fox University appears to have one of the highest scores for engaging diversity issues. Diversity concerns are embedded in Fox's self-description. Conversations about diversity are present and easy to find by searching with Fox's internal search engine. Fox does offer academic programs in diversity studies, along with almost 2/3 of affiliates. And finally, Fox's university news content reveals diversity concerns and conversations to be present and common including in its student newspaper, a relatively rare occurrence with only 17% of student newspapers engaging diversity issues in print. Overall, George Fox University appears to engage in matters of diversity online more than most other CCCU affiliates.

Certainly, there could be many reasons why such content was or was not present on the sites of other CCCU affiliates. For example, several schools scored high simply because they were very aggressive in promoting an anti-gay agenda. They were very thorough in assuring that their online content clearly expressed their views. Other Christian schools had a very robust mission to evangelize the world and their cross-cultural studies majors were prominent in their online advertising and communication. Such schools would score fairly high in this study method but one might question their commitment to diversity for its own sake. Regarding George Fox University's relatively high scores, much of our diversity content online has to do with the recent conversation about sexual orientation. This does not necessarily mean that George Fox University is more committed than other CCCU institutions to diversity as it relates to equity and

social justice, just that the institution talks about it online more than other affiliate schools at this time.

Multi-Level Concern Regarding LGBTQ Issues & University Faith Statement

Recently, events in CCCU institutions and in the political landscape have significantly raised the volume on conversations regarding Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) issues. Within Christian universities, student and alumni LGBTQ support groups have galvanized the call for acknowledgement as full participants in their faith communities. Meanwhile, in the public arena, state and national legal battles over same-sex marriage continue to move forward. These events have pushed the University into the national spotlight due to our statement of faith and lifestyle standards reflecting our evangelical heritage of belief in heterosexual marriage. These events have increased local speculation that the SOE cannot effectively prepare its candidates to competently serve public school children and their families.

These challenges provide an opportunity for the SOE to engage in discourse surrounding concepts such as heterosexual privilege and faith-based doctrines regarding sexual behavior while recognizing the diversity of faith backgrounds, the dynamic nature of faith journeys, and the cultural and historical factors that create and perpetuate bias and mistrust on all sides. Ethical mandates and national professional standards require equity and respect for all people; the SOE graduates education professionals who uphold those standards without hesitation. Our self-examination includes listening carefully to those who suspect that a Christian institution cannot act with justice when it comes to all types of diversity based on deeply held beliefs regarding some issues, such as human sexuality. It is our responsibility to evaluate, monitor, and communicate to those

concerned persons that treating others in a biased manner due to differing beliefs is an affront to basic Christian principles, which include the directive to act justly.

The SOE and all Christian institutions urgently need to publically address these concerns. However, we recognize that we have little history of first addressing the range of opinions and concerns within our university. Therefore, the Diversity committee is currently initiating a dialogue process in the SOE, the outcomes which are not yet ready for review. In preparation for our dialogues, we engaged in a series of conversations with university administrators and faculty members regarding their thoughts about these recent events.

Fear, Confusion, and Lack of Consensus

With the goal of better understanding how George Fox University was addressing the LGBTQ issue, university administrators were interviewed to clarify the current stance of the administration and the board, and the faculty's ability to freely discuss LGBTQ issues without fear of institutional disciplinary measures. Additional information was also gathered through dialogue and semi-formal focus groups with university faculty colleagues. After open and productive conversations with these participants, all of whom recognized the emotional and spiritual expense associated with these difficult conversations, three themes emerged: fear, confusion, and lack of consensus.

Fear. In an evangelical Christian institution, homosexuality represents an area of great consternation. Like most others in the CCCU, George Fox has definitive faith and lifestyle statements. As public attention placed George Fox University in a negative spotlight for its position on sexuality and marriage, many employees feared their jobs would be at stake if they voiced anything deviating from or contrary to the faith

statement. This was especially salient to faculty who routinely must address these issues in the classroom.

Administrative clarification addressed the differences between engaging students in exploring multiple arguments on the topic as opposed to actively advocating for a position contrary to University positions. While employees may fear negative consequences for formulating different answers to these questions, administrative discussions stressed being aware of the multiple stakeholders of a University. In addition to employees and students, how are we required to be mindful of the Board of Trustees and Donors, each with their own varying opinions on these issues?

Even in private settings, there was evidence of reticence and ambivalence by faculty members to voice their opinion on the topic lest they be perceived as being too liberal or, on the other hand, too conservative. In an environment where there is no broad understanding of where people stand on the issue, the topic of same-sex marriage and LGBTQ issues were handled cautiously with many of the faculty members closely guarding their personal views. “Would I be seen as too conservative or ‘primitive’ in my view of the issue? Am I alone on my view of marriage being broader than one man and one woman?” These and other unsettled questions were felt in many of the discussions on the topic of sexual orientation at the university.

Confusion. Along with fear, confusion surrounding the issue of homosexuality continues to challenge our thinking and our faith. What is the biblical understanding of homosexuality? Is the Bible able to shed light on this contentious issue? Within the Christian community, members may answer that differently, as each have their own set of biblical texts or interpretation methods to support their views, along with the recognition

that God speaks to followers in diverse ways, all of which can cause discomfort and confusion. Some feel that the Bible is clear on the topic of homosexuality as running contrary to biblical principles, whereas others view the Bible as being somewhat ambiguous on the topic, along the lines of many biblical laws, regulations, and customs (e.g., polygamy, slavery, and women being silent in the church gathering) that are selectively applied and followed in past and current church practices.

Lack of consensus. The last theme, lack of consensus, is born of fear and confusion, but highlights the wide spectrum of thought amongst Christians regarding LGBTQ issues. This lack of agreement is a microcosm of the wider discussion in the Christian community where those who support same-sex unions, legally and/or within their faith community, are in opposition to those who see biblical marriage as being that of a union between one man and one woman. Some faculty members wonder how the University might embrace the idea of “theological diversity,” an acknowledgement that within the Christian community there can be an acceptance of varying understandings of “the mind of God” without having one’s faith being called into question.

Such debate lends itself to a simple question: If we acknowledge theological diversity as it manifests in worship practice or personal spiritual rituals, must we not acknowledge theological diversity as it relates to issues of inclusion or marriage customs? Differing opinions in the community itself can magnify the strife we feel in the conversations if we enter therein with the goal of changing minds as opposed to respecting another viewpoint. If views and minds of the faculty differ from those of the administration and the board, can we still live and work within the Christian family? Is

agreeing to disagree an option? These ideas are thoughtfully captured by Walter Wink (1999):

We in the church need to get our priorities straight. We have not reached a consensus about who is right on the issue of homosexuality. But what is clear, utterly clear, is that we are commanded to love one another. Love not just gay sisters and brothers who are often sitting beside us, acknowledged or not, in church, but all of us who are involved in this debate. These are issues about which we must painfully agree to disagree. (p. 49)

School of Education Response

Issues of social justice and equity inevitably challenge deeply held worldviews and beliefs, not exclusively but most poignantly expressed in the current LGBTQ debate. Difference of opinion on matters of the application of faith to lifestyle issues will always differ, providing the SOE an opportunity to embody embrace of one another amidst this fear and confusion. We may passionately disagree, but we consciously choose to respect our colleagues on all sides of the debate. Many religious and secular institutions struggle to employ “rules of engagement” where varying views are heard and respected without condemnation or questioning another’s skills, abilities, or faith commitment. As we move forward this coming year with intentional dialogue, we hope to increase our depth of understanding regarding how to help faith-based universities meaningfully co-exist amidst rapidly changing social mores while building trust with the greater community regarding our commitment to equity and social justice.

The process of promoting paradigm shifts in our understanding of privilege may ultimately require faith-based institutions to look within our own traditions for voices of

reason that invite us to stand in support of one another despite difference. One thing we know for certain, we stand united in our commitment to justice and equity, and invite continuing dialogue so that we promote awareness of privilege, reduce prejudice, and create acceptance, even while we are challenged with the same.

Conclusion

The Diversity Committee is charged with the responsibility to formalize our School's guiding blueprint for promoting equity and justice, and then support its ongoing implementation. Our primary agenda is to help dominant culture members understand the pervasive and damaging impact of privilege. Until we find a way to acknowledge and discuss our places of privilege and marginalization, we cannot create an honest Diversity agenda. Rather, we risk only promoting cosmetic change, not deep paradigm shifts signaling a commitment to a consistent ethic of care. This article represents the first in a series intending to chronicle our progress in this endeavor.

Every dominant group has barriers to understanding its access and use of privilege. The primary identities of race, gender, and sexual orientation each present its own challenges. But it is perhaps the contextual variable of religion that introduces the greatest layer of complexity. How can we commit to justice and equity on some issues, such as race, but not others, such as sexual orientation? Is that what we are doing when we affirm doctrinal statements regarding sexual ethics? How might our answers to those questions expose a limited understanding or misapplication of privilege and justice, or merely cultural ambiguity regarding how to hold religious beliefs in pluralistic religious and secular environments? How might honest inventories be thwarted by the systemic nature of privilege that defines which conversations are permissible? And how might

those pushing for these conversations need to clarify within themselves and their audience a common ground of respect for the various meanings and potential outcomes attached to those conversations?

This series acknowledges that our faith orientation may be both our greatest strength and greatest challenge in our ongoing diversity work. Many faith communities are at a crossroads, committed to standing on the side of the oppressed and marginalized but conflicted about how that might look. The systemic nature of privilege and rapidly changing social contexts may further muddle how religious institutions identify a caring and just response. Often, the dialogue tends to focus primarily on issues of race, and the development of cultural competence (Singleton & Linton, 2005). We historically struggle in our depth of conversations pertaining to sexual orientation, socioeconomic justice, and gender bias. The SOE is committed to engaging both faith-based and secular communities in dialogue regarding these challenges as a reflection of our commitment to social justice and equity.

This initial article in our series identifies our diversity agenda, contextual setting, and the complexity of our challenge. In Bearden, et al., 2012, we offer examples representative of the SOE's commitment to address privilege in a culturally relevant manner that is respectful of deeply held beliefs and traditions. Continuing work is needed to deepen the dialogue about our diversity challenges among the SOE faculty, and to gather data measuring our Diversity Agenda outcomes.

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Appendix A

SOE DIVERSITY DOCUMENT

PREAMBLE TO 2012 DOCUMENT:

The School of Education (SOE) at George Fox University is a Christ-centered community committed to preparing professionals who think critically, transform practice, and promote justice. As co-learners in our endeavor to act justly, embrace mercy, and walk humbly with our God, we view social engagement as a reflection of our faith as articulated in our University's Quaker heritage. Because we are human, our knowledge is incomplete. It is through the inclusion and experience of others from diverse points of view that we often begin to see truths previously unseen or marginalized.

To that end, the SOE routinely evaluates its effectiveness in identifying and responding to inequities that undermine human relationships and functioning within our university, the professions in which we serve, and the greater community. The 2012 Diversity Document reflects our ongoing self-assessment and commitment to reducing barriers that inhibit full and equal partnership within our various communities. It is both confessional and aspirational, a living document open to further modification as we continue to learn and change as a result of engaging in enduring reciprocating relationships with those who might otherwise be unseen or unheard.

SOE DIVERSITY STATEMENT: Through intentional acts and processes grounded in equity and social justice, the School of Education works toward inclusive educational excellence by creating a learning environment that maximizes the personal, academic, professional, and spiritual potential of all people. To further our ongoing efforts in this area, the SOE has identified eight objectives for our diversity work:

1. **CULTURE AND CLIMATE:** The SOE seeks to embody the heart of an inclusive educational community as we promote the values of equity and social justice. We expect students, staff, and faculty to ideologically and behaviorally demonstrate principles of learning and openness in a community where such behaviors and ideals originate from a spirit of compassion and humility.
2. **CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION:** The curriculum, instructional resources, and pedagogical strategies used within the SOE seek to maximize the learning potential of all students. Curriculum will include multiple perspectives grounded in equity and social justice, with intentionality in incorporating the perspectives of historically marginalized and/or underrepresented groups. Instructional resources and pedagogical strategies will exemplify inclusive educational excellence to promote students' acquisition of knowledge and informed practice.
3. **FACULTY/STAFF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION:** The SOE is purposeful in attracting, supporting, retaining, and providing access to substantive opportunities for success to faculty and staff from historically marginalized and/or underrepresented groups in the departments within the School of Education. SOE intentionally provides access to frameworks and operational value systems, which require critical thinking about human diversity, thus allowing all faculty to promote justice within the SOE and the greater university.
4. **STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION:** The SOE is intentional in attracting, supporting, retaining, and providing opportunities for students from historically marginalized and/or underrepresented groups to have access to, and achieve success in the departments within the School of Education. The SOE actively seeks students who desire to enter into significant

conversations regarding human diversity and looks to promote the achievement and full potential of all students in the SOE and the greater university.

5. **PRACTICUMS, INTERNSHIPS, AND FIELD EXPERIENCES:** The practicums, internships, and field experiences offered in the SOE are designed to increase the cultural competence of our students and will include providing services to historically marginalized and/or underrepresented communities. When partnering with communities, the SOE recognizes the site as the expert regarding its needs and culture. We stand in relationship with our sites as learners and collaborators, as all communities bring their own unique perspective and expertise to accomplish the agreed upon goals.
6. **FACULTY AND STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** The faculty and staff in the SOE are intentional in acquiring knowledge, skills, and dispositions to assist our practice in advancing the personal, academic, and professional potential of all people in an equitable and just manner. Our learning and practice will include attention to groups that have been historically marginalized and/or underrepresented.
7. **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** The SOE's responsibility to community engagement is reflected in our commitment to be a learning environment and active participant in promoting an equitable, socially just, and inclusive society. In partnership with our university colleagues and the larger academic and social milieu, the SOE embraces dialogue, invites collaborations, and offers ideas in advocating for social change.
8. **SCHOLARSHIP:** Diversity scholarship in the SOE intentionally promotes equity and social justice. In addition, it addresses issues related to, and/or from the perspective of, historically marginalized and underrepresented groups. The intent of our scholarly activity is to increase awareness and understanding behind unjust and inequitable educational patterns and to offer meaningful solutions to bring about equity and social justice for all people.