

West Virginia University
The Student Assembly - Student Government Association
Assembly Proclamation: AP-2025-04-03
**AN ASSEMBLY PROCLAMATION TO DECLARE SUPPORT FOR
DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION ON THE WVU CAMPUS AND
THE DIVISION OF CAMPUS ENGAGEMENT AND COMPLIANCE**

Short Title:	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Support
Author(s):	Rozaireo Jones, College Senator (CCAM) Olivia E. Robinson, College Senator (Eberly)
Sponsor(s):	Ella Mehring, College Senator (CAHS) Shelby Davis, Senator Molly Meeker, Senator Gabriella Selders, College Senator (HSC) Andrew Indomenico, Senator Colin Street, Senator Kaelen Armstrong, College Senator (Statler) Denzel Duvert, College Senator (HSC) Andrew O'Neal, Senator Matthew Olivero, President Pro Tempore Tris Silva, College Senator (Eberly) Thomas Giggenbach, College Senator (Davis) Elise Vuiller, Senator
Contributor(s):	Logan Pierce, Legislative Affairs Officer
Committee Endorsement:	Community and Governmental Relations Steering Committee
First Reading Date:	4/2/2025
Second Reading Date:	N/A-Intent to Fast-Track
Date of Approval:	4/2/2025

Presidential Signature:



Whereas, the West Virginia University (WVU) mission statement reads, "[we] commit to creating a diverse and inclusive culture that advances education, healthcare, and prosperity for all by providing access and opportunity;" and,¹

Whereas, The West Virginia University Student Government Association's (WVU SGA) vision statement reads "[w]e, the students of West Virginia University, desire to preserve within our University...an atmosphere that helps to foster an open exchange of ideas with civil discussion, inquiry, and self-expression to help ensure that the personal freedoms and general welfare of the students within our University are protected;" and,²

Whereas, The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines "diversity" as, "the condition of having or being composed of differing elements, *especially*: the inclusion of people of different races;" and,³

Whereas, The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines "equity" as, "fairness or justice in the way people are treated; *often, specifically*, freedom from disparities in the way people of different races, genders, etc. are treated;" and,⁴

Whereas, The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines "inclusion" as "the act or practice of including and accommodating people who have historically been excluded (as because of their race, gender, sexuality, or ability);" and,⁵

Whereas, The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" as, "a set of values and related policies and practices focused on establishing a group

¹ [WVU Mission Statement](#)

² [SGA Vision Statement](#)

³ [Merriam-Webster 'Diversity'](#)

⁴ [Merriam-Webster 'Equity'](#)

⁵ [Merriam-Webster 'Inclusion'](#)

culture of equitable and inclusive treatment and on attracting and retaining a diverse group of participants, including people who have historically been excluded or discriminated against;” and,⁶

Whereas, The WVU student body is made up of students from all 55 counties in West Virginia, all 50 states in the U.S., and 90 countries around the world. 52% of students are out-of-state, 48% are in-state, and 830 are international students; and,⁷

Whereas, As of 2022, the WVU student body demographics are as follows: 79% of WVU students are white, 5% are two or more races, 4% are Hispanic or Latino, and 3% are Black or African American; and,⁸

Whereas, At least 124 out of the 450+ clubs on the WVU campus definitionally fall under the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion umbrella; and,⁹

Whereas, In Fall 2023, 22% of WVU students received the financial need-based Pell Grant per year, given to students who demonstrate great financial need; and,¹⁰

Whereas, 23% of the WVU student population identifies as a First-Generation college student; and,¹¹

Whereas, To rid WVU students from historically excluded groups of the opportunities of equity and inclusion would deny them Equal Protection under the law; and,

Whereas, Diversity initiatives have directly resulted in an increase of minorities on college campuses, a place where they have been historically excluded; and,¹²

Whereas, Studies on engagement with diversity find that “such engagement was consistently linked with reductions in racial bias, a key component of promoting a healthy and positive climate”; and,¹³

⁶ [Merriam-Webster ‘Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion’](#)

⁷ [WVU FAQ’s, “How diverse is your student body?”](#)

⁸ [DataUSA: West Virginia University](#)

⁹ [WVU Engage “Organizations”](#)

¹⁰ [U.S. News: A World Report - Education, “West Virginia University Student Life”](#)

¹¹ [WVU Scale Funder: “First-Generation Student Success Fund”](#)

¹² [USC Race and Equity Center, “Truths About DEI On College Campuses”](#)

¹³ [USC Race and Equity Center, “Truths About DEI On College Campuses”](#)

Whereas, Interactions with people of diverse racial backgrounds is linked with a “greater sense of belonging and inclusion” for college students; and,¹⁴

Whereas, No professional, credible research study has concluded that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives place people into two categories: privileged or oppressed - i.e., Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs do not paint one race as inherently bad or good¹⁵; and,

Whereas, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion trainings have never been mandated or required for WVU Employees; and,

Whereas, Since 1978, admissions quotas have been illegal in the United States (Regents vs Bakke)¹⁶. Since 2023, it has been illegal for universities to use race-based affirmative action programs in college admissions¹⁷. WVU has not been following quota practices and does not grant preferential treatment in admissions on the basis of race, sex, gender, or sexual orientation. These words are not mentioned even once in the WVU Board of Governors Rules for Undergraduate Admissions¹⁸; and,

Whereas, In the Supreme Court ruling that ended Affirmative Action in undergraduate admissions, Students for Fair Admissions vs. President and Fellows of Harvard College, the Court maintained that the goal of attaining diversity on college campuses is “commendable” and “worthy”¹⁹; and,

Whereas, In the same ruling, the Court recognizes that an individual’s racial background can provide them with a “unique ability ... [to] contribute to the university;” and,²⁰

Whereas, The Division of Campus Engagement and Compliance, though not a simple

¹⁴ [USC Race and Equity Center, “Truths About DEI On College Campuses”](#)

¹⁵ [USC Race and Equity Center, “Truths About DEI On College Campuses.” “DEI Myths vs. Facts”](#)

¹⁶ [Oyez, “Regents of the University of California v. Bakke”](#)

¹⁷ [Oyez, “Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College”](#)

¹⁸ [West Virginia University Board of Governors Rule 2.3 - “Undergraduate Admissions”](#)

¹⁹ [Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College, Supreme Court of the United States “Opinion of the Court”](#)

²⁰ [Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College | 600 U.S. ____ \(2023\) | Justia U.S. Supreme Court Center](#)

rebranding of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, remains committed to ensuring the rules of both Title IX and the Americans with Disabilities Act are executed on the WVU campus; and,

Therefore, be it proclaimed by the Student Assembly of West Virginia University:

Section 1: WVU SGA remains committed to the ideals of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and will continue to implement these ideals in our work as elected representatives of the student body; and,

Section 2: WVU SGA supports the new Division of Campus Engagement and Compliance and looks forward to continuing to work with them to ensure each and every Mountaineer is seen and feels they belong on the WVU campus; and,

Section 3: Upon passage and approval of this legislation, this legislation shall be forwarded to the mandates below:

Mandates:

G. Corey Farris, Dean of Students
Dr. Thanh Le, Director, Student Engagement and Leadership (Advisor)
University President E. Gordon Gee
Incoming University President Michael T. Benson
Daily Athenaeum
Charlie Long, Student Body President
Abigail Browning, Student Body Vice President
Haley Orcutt, Executive Secretary
Meshea L. Poore, Esq., Vice President for Campus Engagement and Compliance
Travis Mollohan, Associate Vice President of Government Relations and Collaboration
ACLU West Virginia
WV Office of the Governor Patrick Morrissey
Office of the House Speaker Roger Hanshaw
Office of the Senate President Randy E. Smith
The Office of John Williams, House Representative, WV Legislature

APPENDIX A: OPEN LETTER FROM THE AUTHORS

To whom it may concern,

In an interview on Jan. 16th, 2025, with WCHS Eyewitness News, Governor Patrick Morrisey stated, “When people throw out the term D.E.I., what they’re trying to do is to get preferential treatment for their groups, their special causes, their pet projects. That’s not the way the world operates, as the Governor of West Virginia, I have to make sure that all people are treated with respect... that’s the point of the Equal Protection Clause... Everyone’s treated the same under the law, whether that means we’re recruiting people, we’re retaining people, we’re doing programs but we don’t want quotas. We don’t want special privileges or preferences for these groups. I think West Virginians absolutely agree with that concept.”

According to [Harvard Business Publishing](#), Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training, guidelines, and standards do not give preferential treatment to any groups or causes. Therefore, the framing that groups are receiving “special treatment” is wrong. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is not just beneficial to institutions of higher learning, but it’s also popular among the customers of these

institutions. [51%](#) of Americans share a favorable opinion of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, with [83%](#) of Gen-Z job applicants agreeing that “a company’s commitment to diversity and inclusion is important when choosing an employer.”

—The Students of West Virginia University Are No Different—

“DEI is crucial for the creation of positive student experiences and a sense of belonging for the campus community at WVU. Without the programs supported by DEI initiatives on campus, my experience as a lesbian woman would have suffered. My health and safety as an LGBTQ+ student wanting to belong, and my political science education have all been supported by the strong diversity and inclusion programs at WVU.”

—Susie Risk, Class of 2025, Political Science and Economics Major—

“D.E.I. initiatives ensure the participation and inclusion of marginalized groups who would be otherwise unable to contribute to the professional world. Removing D.E.I initiatives does not equal the playing ground- it destroys the crucial support beams for communities to have a standing chance in a society that would overlook them. Without D.E.I., students, faculty, and future generations would lose funding, voice, and opportunity to not only better themselves but the greater state of West Virginia. DEI assists marginalized groups such as low-income, black, Hispanic, lgbtq+, Asian, and every other group or entity that is disproportionately represented

and funded due to the nation we live in. We must preserve DEI and assure the young people of this state that they are seen, not overlooked.”

–Malachi Davis, Class of 2026, Psychology Major–

“As a Black student here at WVU, DEI has played a vital role in my college experience. Living on the Quad allowed me to build genuine bonds with a diverse group of peers and my involvement with the NAACP, BSU, and Center for Black Culture has truly strengthened my connection with other Black and Brown students around campus. These organizations have given me a space to share my voice, forge deep relationships, and connect with others who understand what it’s like to be a minority on campus. I truly can’t imagine how my college experience would be if DEI weren’t there.”

–Joshua Ingram, Class of 2026, Major in Multidisciplinary Studies–

“DEI has shaped my college experience in ways I never anticipated. Growing up as a Black woman in a predominantly white rural area, I often felt isolated and wanted a sense of belonging. With this in mind, I sought clubs and organizations that reflected my identity. One of my best decisions was applying to live on the Quad, as it surrounded me with a supportive friend group that helped me thrive in an environment where I often felt out of place. Additionally, joining organizations like the Black Student Union (BSU) and 100 Black Women has further improved my college journey. These communities have facilitated community and empowerment, where individuals uplift one another and create safe spaces. The impact of DEI initiatives has

enhanced my social life and encouraged me to embrace my identity boldly and unapologetically.”

–Léandra Hastings, Class of 2028, Major in Biochemistry–

“D.E.I. is not a force that separates us, instead, it’s something that unifies everyone together. If it were not for the DEI office, I wouldn’t have felt like I had a purpose on campus. Being a diversity ambassador has allowed me to feel like I have an outlet. People who share the same like-minded goals and believe in equity for every person on campus. It has led me to realize my worth and the value that I have as a student at WVU.”

–Cheyenne Torres, Class of 2027, Majors in Art Therapy and Psychology–

“DEI initiatives at WVU have allowed me to find spaces of community in student organizations like the National Society for Black Engineers and 100 Black Women. Moreover, to be equally considered for my campus job as an RA.”

–Danayi Simoye, Class of 2026, Major in Engineering Technology–

“While our WVU campus may reflect a limited diversity in its student body, the commitment to DEI ensures that we create an environment where every individual feels valued, respected, and

empowered to thrive.

For a campus with little diversity, prioritizing DEI is even more important to addressing these gaps, building bridges, and preparing for a future that values representation and equality.

Outreach programs to underrepresented communities, scholarships for marginalized students, and workshops on cultural competence should be staples on all campuses.

Diversity in all forms, whether cultural, socioeconomic, or intellectual, enriches the educational experience, broadens perspectives, and fosters innovation.”

–Anonymous West Virginia University Student–

“It’s kinda lonely, you know? Going to class and looking around the room, then noticing you are the only one in there. Whether it’s being in a class of 150 or the only one out of 20, it still feels lonely. I sit in a class where there are no seats left empty, except the seats next to me. I try not to get in my head about it, but sometimes I think to myself, where’s the diversity, where’s the equity, and where’s the inclusion?”

DEI means to me that all types of people are met with opportunities to succeed and grow in life. However, these opportunities will allow for a level playing field for everyone. Because, whether it’s based on class, gender, race, or ability, not everyone is able to start from the same place. It also means opening up to and learning from people who have completely different experiences. Without DEI, people are left susceptible to only one way of thinking. DEI challenges people, allows for creativity, and builds real bonds past our differences. As a black woman, I strive to learn and to grow by challenging my beliefs

and being open to different experiences and people, so I can contribute to the diversity, equity, and inclusion where all people are seen and valued.”

–Lyric Fowler, Class of 2025, Psychology Major–

DEI is extremely important for campus communities, as many students, especially new ones, can find not only resources but mentors through the department that help them to find their voice and place on campus. There are too many students from marginalized communities, first-generation students, etc, who have no other support to help guide them through the extremely overwhelming experience of starting college. DEI can help such students find their confidence to not only do well in school but also excel as leaders as well.

–Emma Davis, Class of 2027, Political Science and Philosophy–

“As a queer student, diversity, equity, and inclusion programming at West Virginia University introduced me to resources on campus that have been instrumental to my success. The spaces, lectures, and programs curated by the Center for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion allowed for me to be in community with my LGBTQ+ classmates and let me know I was welcome on a campus hours away from home. While DEI programming does not address all the issues marginalized students face on campus, it is a critical step

toward futures where all students have an equal chance to succeed in and out of the classroom, and we should be deeply concerned about the conditions under which it is been targeted for removal.”

—**Sophie Slaughter**, Class of 2026, Major in History and Women's and Gender Studies—

The range of voices quoted above is a few out of the sea of support that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion has on the WVU campus. In a time when our nation faces some of its worst political polarization, ensuring a safe and accommodating environment for every student is crucial. Particularly in a state like West Virginia, which continually ranks among the bottom states for its education system. The removal of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion only furthers that divide and harms the communities of our state in a time when they are already faced with so many challenges. While we know this will not change the minds of those making decisions on these matters, it does not change the fact that the Student Government Association of West Virginia University will continue the mission of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and work to foster a safe and accommodating atmosphere for all students on the WVU campus.

West Virginia is one of three states that have seen a decrease in overall population since 2010. We have scholarships dedicated to keeping young people here because we're hemorrhaging youthful energy and passion. Despite this, young people are and will continue to leave West Virginia. It's about time that we start asking why.

Best,

College Senator Rozaireo Jones and College Senator Olivia E. Robinson

-
