

Diversity at Syracuse: An Open-ended Commitment

Syracuse University is a microcosm of today's world, enrolling representatives of most races and ethnic groups found in the United States and more than 2,000 international students from 100 countries. This is not by chance.

The University embraces diversity as one of its core values and enjoys a reputation for being an institution where disparate groups among its students, faculty, and staff come together as one community of scholars to learn from each other and to prepare for a world that every day grows increasingly more intricate and interconnected.

Diversity has been a part of the University's fiber from its very beginning. Syracuse educated the first African American woman to become a physician, never had quotas for Catholics or Jews when that was a common practice, and admitted Japanese-American students during World War II. Our commitment to diversity is, in part, a matter of upholding that tradition.

Diversity at Syracuse, however, goes beyond tradition. Cultural, ethnic, intellectual, and racial diversity has been adopted as pedagogical policy because of the richness such diversity brings to the educational environment. Academic research on the subject has been indisputably clear: Diversity within a campus community has far-ranging and significant educational benefits for everyone. As the world becomes more culturally and ethnically heterogeneous, the lessons of diversity grow increasingly relevant, helping students develop and appreciate a variety of cultural and intellectual perspectives. Students in diverse learning environments learn more, have higher levels of satisfaction, and tend to become more engaged in community life both on and off campus.

For the most part, discussion about diversity at SU has centered on issues of race and ethnicity. Now, the Graduate School, in association with the University

Senate Committee on LGBT issues and the LGBT Resource Center, is proactively extending that discussion to include diversity of sexual and gender identity.

Only recently has social discourse opened itself to frank discussion on the subject of sexual and gender identity and the issues facing those who do not conform to traditionally recognized cultural norms. The term *heteronormativity*, which you will encounter repeatedly as you use this guide, describes an ideology based on definitions of what it means to be a woman or a man that exclude and discriminate against a significant minority population. Society as a whole must come to terms with heteronormativity and related social and cultural issues. However, as a leading academic institution—and in particular one that has been at the vanguard of social justice—it is incumbent on us to engage these issues, introduce them into our classroom discussions and lead the way to a more harmonious society based on acceptance, understanding, and inclusion.

An integral part of the Syracuse experience and a cornerstone of the Academic Plan, diversity expands and redefines knowledge within the academy as it prepares our graduates for success in an increasingly diverse and interdependent world. Whether that preparation involves developing and appreciating a variety of intellectual perspectives, acquiring personal skills in order to manage future social and civic responsibilities, or refining professional tools to put to work in pursuing one's career, diversity is an ever-present imperative. As members of the Syracuse University teaching community, I encourage you to embrace the goals of diversity wholeheartedly—a good place to start is by absorbing the lessons in this resource guide. Only by working together in this cause will Syracuse remain a place where diversity flourishes and where all people are accepted and respected.

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