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# **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION PHASE ONE INSTALLMENT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF LAW'S STRATEGIC PLAN**

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## **DEI Values**

Michigan State University College of Law traces its history back to 1891. A woman and an African American male in the first two graduating classes exemplified the Law College's commitment to offering a quality legal education to people from diverse backgrounds.

In 1995, the Law College affiliated with Michigan State University, providing students with access to a wealth of resources while preserving the school's student-centric culture. In August of 2020, the Law College integrated into the University, and it now exists as a constituent college embracing the opportunities that come from being part of a Big Ten university.

Our values include dedication to achieving excellence in all endeavors, providing educational opportunities to students of diverse backgrounds, and fulfilling our responsibility to respond to the challenges of a rapidly changing society. We strive, as a central component of our mission, to accept, appreciate, and achieve diversity, equity, and inclusion. In furtherance of this mission, the Law College is committed to the bold creation and preservation of an environment that honors multicultural identities; supports trauma-informed equity; celebrates diversity; achieves inclusion; and strengthens access for students, faculty, staff, and the community.

## **Michigan State University DEI Goals and Commitments**

The Law College adopts and builds upon Michigan State University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion goal and objectives as described in the MSU 2030 Strategic Plan. Specifically, the Law College is committed to the goal of becoming a national leader in increasing diversity, promoting inclusion, ensuring equity, and eliminating disparities on the MSU campus and beyond. To achieve this goal, the Law College also commits to the following objectives adopted by MSU:

### Objective 1

Recruit and support the success of a more diverse student body: Recruit, retain and graduate a diverse student body and eliminate disparities in the Law College's graduation rates.

### Objective 2

Dramatically increase Law College faculty who make significant contributions to advancing social justice and ethics, ensuring equity, addressing disparities, and empowering communities through scholarship and engaged research.

### Objective 3

Recruit, retain and expand career development for staff from diverse backgrounds.

### Objective 4

Provide a world-class academic environment that integrates DEI in teaching, research, and service.

### Objective 5

Increase proactive engagement with historically underrepresented and underserved communities based on partnerships informed by shared goals and mutual learning.

In addition, the Law College is committed to embracing the MSU Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Report and Plan, including its goals of increasing diversity, ensuring equity, promoting inclusion, and enhancing outreach and engagement. As noted in that Plan, diversity, equity, and inclusion – collectively known as DEI – must be foundational for all Michigan State University (MSU) does. DEI must be central to the University's mission and we need to begin by recognizing that MSU occupies the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary Lands of the Anishinaabeg – the Three Fires Confederacy of Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples. The University resides on Land ceded in the 1819 Treaty of Saginaw. We believe that a culture embracing DEI is instrumental to all that Michigan State University aspires to be and hopes to accomplish. We believe a culture that embraces DEI is essential to Michigan State University and is deeply woven into its land-grant mission and vision, while recognizing the inequitable history of the Morrill Act and the disproportionate impacts of public education in the US. To properly move MSU towards the aspirational aims of DEI, we

must recognize the significant struggles and accomplishments over the years by those working to make MSU a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive institution. At the same time, we must be realistic and acknowledge the ways that the University has not fully attained its aspirational goals of being diverse, equitable, and inclusive. These definitions are intended to serve as a mechanism to ensure that MSU upholds diversity, equity, and inclusion at all institutional levels. These definitions, and the actions they engender, position MSU within a larger movement towards social justice.

**DIVERSITY** represents our varied collective and individual identities and differences. We recognize that diversity is a central component of inclusive excellence in research, teaching, service, and outreach and engagement. We are committed to engaging, understanding, promoting, and fostering a variety of perspectives. We affirm our similarities and value our differences. We uphold that to truly be excellent, a university must support diversity.

**EQUITY** goes beyond fair treatment, opportunity, and access to information and resources for all, although these are crucial to the success of the university. Rather, equity can only be achieved in an environment built on respect and dignity that acknowledges historic and contemporary injustices. We are committed to intentionally and actively redressing barriers, challenging discrimination and bias, and institutionalizing access and resources that address historical and contemporary social inequalities.

**INCLUSION** actively invites all to contribute and participate. In the face of extensive differential power, we strive to create balance. Every person's voice is valuable, and no one person is expected to represent an entire community. We are committed to an open environment and campus where students, alumni, staff, faculty, and community voices are equally respected and contribute to the overall institutional mission.

By understanding the intersectional nature of diversity, equity, and inclusion, we will use these definitions to actively transform Michigan State University into the institution we aspire it to be.

### **Law College DEI Commitments**

Central to our mission, we strive to provide a rigorous education program that prepares a diverse community of students to be national and international leaders in private legal practice, business and industry, government service, and legal education. We are committed to aligning with the University's MSU 2030 Strategic Plan; the MSU Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Report and Plan; and the MSU Relationship Violence &

Sexual Misconduct Plan. Moreover, we seek to enhance the student, faculty, and staff experience so that every member of the Law College community is supported to succeed in a culture that values a diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment. Below we list Michigan State University's four DEI goals and the Law College's strategic priorities in pursuit of these goals.

***Goal 1: Significantly and measurably expand the diversity of our students, faculty, and staff.***

**Priorities:**

- 1.1 Advance our efforts to further recruit, retain, and support the success of students, faculty, and staff who reflect the multicultural, multiracial, and multi-perspective world in which we live, embodying a rich diversity of identities, backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints.
- 1.2 Provide structural building space that serves a culturally diverse student body.
- 1.3 Increase support for diversity, equity, and inclusion events and programs.
- 1.4 Adopt policies and processes that empower students, faculty, and staff to raise issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion and that provide helpful feedback and resources, including through the formation of a bias incident response process.
- 1.5 Support and retain our skilled and hard-working faculty and staff by encouraging them to share their unique perspectives, expressing appreciation for their contributions, offering opportunities for career development and community building, and treating everyone kindly and fairly.

***Goal 2: Ensure equity by providing an educational environment that empowers students, faculty, and staff to perform at their highest level.***

**Priorities:**

- 2.1 Embrace anti-racism, the practice of actively identifying and opposing racism, as a core value for teaching and learning.
- 2.2 Promote greater equity for historically underrepresented and underserved groups within the University and those groups that have been historic targets of discrimination.
- 2.3 Ensure fair and inclusive access to our facilities, programs, curriculum,

resources, and services.

2.4 Revise, create, and implement policies and practices that advance equity in all aspects of our mission.

2.5 Provide exceptional academic and career counseling support that focuses on disparities in retention, learning outcomes, graduation rates, bar passage, and employment.

***Goal 3: Promote inclusion through active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with the diversity represented by students, faculty, and staff.***

**Priorities:**

3.1 Enhance programming for students, faculty, and staff on bias, cross cultural competency, and racism.

3.2 Educate students, faculty, and staff on relationship violence, sexual misconduct prevention, and trauma-informed educational practices to promote a safe and supportive environment.

3.3 Improve student, faculty, and staff comprehension of and sensitivity to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

3.4 Expand upon and continue to offer classes, seminars, and other programs that incorporate values of diversity, equity, and inclusion, including anti-racism.

3.5 Encourage faculty to include a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and racial justice in their syllabi.

3.6 Develop community-building events.

3.7 Provide resources to support first-generation law students to help them navigate their unique challenges.

3.8 Cultivate an inclusive community with policies, programming, and tools that support, promote, and strengthen the success, well-being, mental health, and belonging of all students, faculty, and staff, dedicating resources to help them thrive.

***Goal 4: Expand the Law College’s outreach and engagement in teaching, service, and research by addressing community issues in a collaborative and reciprocal way that applies faculty and staff expertise and deeply engages students and community partners.***

**Priorities:**

- 4.1 Expand upon and continue to support our clinics, centers, and programs that are working actively toward advancing racial and social justice.
- 4.2 Continue to dedicate resources for and support the work of faculty and staff who focus on matters involving racial and social justice.
- 4.3 Recognize, support, amplify, and reward diversity-related service by students, faculty, and staff in the legal academy, university, and beyond.
- 4.4 Increase programming of topical academic seminars and presentations on matters involving racial and social justice.
- 4.5 Engage diverse alumni and promote their increased participation and leadership in MSU’s and the Law College’s associations and boards.
- 4.6 Partner with MSU, the legal profession, and the community on efforts related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- 4.7 Continue to grow the Law College’s teaching, scholarship, and service in Indigenous law, and build greater collaborations with Native nations, organizations, and people in Michigan and across the United States.

### **Next Steps**

As we develop the Phase Two DEI Installment, we will seek additional input from students, faculty, and staff, including historically underrepresented and underserved groups within the University, and those groups that have been historical targets of discrimination. We will audit and review objective and anecdotal data. The Phase Two Installment will provide a charge on implementation and define the metrics of success.