

# Augustana College

## **Strategic Framework for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Division** 2024-2029

### **Mission of the Division of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion**

The mission of the Division of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) is to offer visionary leadership and strategic guidance for inclusive initiatives, actively participating in strategic planning, program development, and policy formulation with a dedicated focus on fostering diversity, equity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging among members of the Augustana College Community.

### **Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Higher Education**

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in a higher education institution encompasses the formulation of policies and practices aimed at ensuring that every member of the institution, including students, faculty, and staff, is provided with equitable opportunities for success and inclusion, irrespective of their backgrounds.

The sense of inclusion, value, acceptance, and connection experienced by students on campus, especially those from historically underrepresented or marginalized groups, demands our careful consideration. This approach is fundamental in the creation of a learning environment where all students can excel and flourish. It is important to note that DEI initiatives are not solely directed at students with diverse identities but also extend to students from traditionally represented groups. Exposure to a variety of policies and programs focused on diverse identities provides students with the opportunity to cultivate the skills and mindsets that employers seek, such as global competitiveness, self-awareness, and the ability to work effectively with people from different backgrounds. These attributes enable our students to become more effective global citizens upon graduation.

DEI considerations come into play throughout various aspects, including student recruitment, faculty and staff recruitment, the shaping of campus culture, the promotion of career advancement and establishment of tenure processes, examination of employment budgets, and the formulation of forward-looking institutional decisions.

## **Rooted in Faith, Committed to Justice**

At Augustana College, our commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) is not merely programmatic, it is theological. As a college of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), we are called to create a community where each person is valued as made in the image of God. Grounded in the Lutheran affirmation of the goodness of creation, the call to vocation, and the spirit of ongoing reformation, our DEIB efforts seek to transform lives, systems, and communities “so that all may belong.”

This strategic framework reflects our deeply held belief that diversity enriches education, that equity is a spiritual and structural commitment, that inclusion demands intentional design, and that justice is a lived, ongoing responsibility. It builds on the College’s Lutheran values, the mission of the DEI Division, and the community’s shared responsibility to foster transformation through grace, accountability, and love of neighbor.

### **Pillar I: Equity-Minded Learning & Leadership**

**Strategic Intent:** Cultivate leaders formed by intercultural fluency, ethical reasoning, and inclusive professionalism, hallmarks of an Augustana College education.

**Theological Grounding:** All are called to use their unique gifts to serve others. Lutheran higher education affirms that educational opportunity and leadership are not privileges, but expressions of faithful vocation.

#### **Key Strategic Initiatives:**

- Reframe general education to embed DEI-rich interdisciplinary themes, preparing students for a diverse and dynamic world.
- Advance experiential learning across student life, athletics, and Greek life with a focus on equity-centered leadership development.
- Ensure equitable access to internships and pre-professional pathways for PACE and international students, including through summer and J-term placements.
- Integrate DEI learning outcomes into academic programs to develop competencies in cultural humility, ethical collaboration, and social responsibility.
- Expand a campus-wide Inclusive Leadership Initiative that includes SLIDE, Global Mentors, PACE Mentors, Gather & Grow, and Sustained Dialogue facilitators.

- Develop an inclusive professionalism course tailored to equip underrepresented students with career readiness and confidence.

## **Pillar II: Institutional Capacity for Belonging**

**Strategic Intent:** Transform policies, structures, and cultures to foster a campus where every member can thrive with dignity and purpose.

**Theological Grounding:** Belonging is the fruit of justice and grace. Created in God's image, each person is inherently worthy of welcome, support, and community.

### **Key Strategic Initiatives:**

- Launch a campus-wide equity and policy audit to identify and eliminate structural barriers that impede underrepresented and international student success.
- Embed DEI-focused professional development into faculty and staff growth systems, co-led with Human Resources, Academic Affairs, and the Center for Engaged Learning, Teaching, and Scholarship (CELTS).
- Expand access to culturally affirming wellness resources, including multilingual counseling and enhanced English as a Second Language (ESL) and academic support services.
- Create identity-conscious pathways into shared governance for students from historically excluded communities.
- Establish and resource the Sustained Dialogue and Gather & Grow programs as signature experiences for community-building and conflict transformation.
- Introduce interfaith engagement as a key dimension of belonging, including allyship training, interfaith dialogues, and inclusive policy education.
- Partner with the Augie Mentoring Program to scale peer mentoring for international and first-generation students through Global Mentors and PACE Mentors.

## **Pillar III: Community Engagement as Equity Practice**

**Strategic Intent:** Leverage civic partnerships as a vital expression of vocation and justice, advancing mutual transformation across campus and community.

**Theological Grounding:** Justice requires action. As a Lutheran institution, Augustana College embraces the responsibility to dismantle systems that perpetuate exclusion and to serve as a bridge for collective flourishing.

**Key Strategic Initiatives:**

- Position Augustana College as a regional civic anchor by reimagining institutional boundaries through Rock Island revitalization and neighborhood partnership.
- Build public-private partnerships that extend engaged learning while addressing local community needs.
- Deepen collaborations with community-based organizations (CBOs), co-creating culturally responsive student engagement programs.
- Develop an Inclusive Leadership Certification Program in partnership with Augustana College faculty and Quad Cities businesses to promote equity-centered professional development in the region.
- Create systems to assess community impact and elevate the voices of partners, ensuring accountability and sustainability in outreach initiatives.

**Conclusion**

This framework represents Augustana College's commitment to advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging as both a strategic imperative and a faithful expression of our Lutheran identity. Guided by the principles of grace, reform, and love of neighbor, we dedicate ourselves to building a campus and a world where all may belong, not in word alone, but in structure, spirit, and shared life.