**Our Commitment to Diversity**

**Department of Philosophy and Religion**

**Philosophy Program Diversity Statement**

We are a program that supports diversity in the rigorous discussion of contemporary and historical philosophical ideas, concepts, arguments, and theories. Our research reflects a systematic and critical inquiry into diverse viewpoints and philosophical issues. In our teaching and intellectual engagement, we strive to include students of all socio-economic backgrounds, abilities, races, ethnicities, sexualities, gender identities, ages, political affiliations, nationalities as well as religious beliefs and non-beliefs. Our pedagogy strives to include voices of philosophers, scholars, and thinkers from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Reflecting our university, we are committed to creating a learning community that values equality of opportunity, as well as academic freedom of thought and speech, challenges prejudice, and emphasizes rational argument.

**Religion Program Diversity Statement**The study of human difference is essential to the study of religion. As scholars of religion, we are trained to engage with beliefs and experiences that differ from our own. We are also trained to analyze how our beliefs and experiences are shaped by our varying contexts: the groups we belong to, the bodies we inhabit, and the landscapes we call home. Because all learning in the humanities is relational, we are trained to reflect on ourselves, to investigate how our own backgrounds and assumptions influence how we understand others, and how our research impacts our communities. These key practices of our discipline make us better scholars. They also instill in us an attitude of care, empathy, and respect for others.

As a Religion program, we believe that academic excellence thrives within a socially and intellectually inclusive environment. We work to create empowering learning experiences for students of diverse abilities, racial and cultural identities, political views, socio-economic backgrounds, ages, sexual orientations, and expressions of gender. In our curriculum offerings, we are making efforts to increase the visibility of groups who have often been underrepresented in the study of religion in the U.S., especially people of African, Latin American, and indigenous heritages. We are also continually diversifying our syllabi in order to include the experiences of people who do not fit neatly into the categories our field has inherited, such as military veterans and people who identify as "spiritual but not religious.” We welcome students from any religious tradition, or none, and we affirm that religious people can be exemplary scholars without compromising their personal convictions and commitments.

In our classrooms, we actively model the kinds of learning communities that we hope our graduates will create in the world beyond JMU. Our work isn't finished, and we are still learning.