

# JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY TASK FORCE ON RACIAL EQUITY

## AWARENESS & COMMUNICATIONS WORKING GROUP

### WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

Cheryl Beverly - Learning, Technology & Leadership Education, College of Ed.

Alysia Davis - Director of Student Engagement, Honors College

Barbara Hetzel - Associate Director, Title IX Office

Manal Jamal - Political Science

Angela Johnson Russell - Alumna

Chloe Mitchell - Student

Xaiver Williams - Student

Kerri Wilson – Admissions

**Working Group Recommendation Champion: Xaiver Williams**

**Recommendation Title: Required Faculty Syllabi Statement on DEI & Access**

### Problem Statement/Issue

In 2019, the (JMU) Faculty Senate passed a motion to recommend a Diversity and Inclusivity Statement for faculty members to add to their syllabi. The statement submitted by the Faculty Senate is as follows:

*James Madison University is a community dedicated to diversity and inclusivity. As faculty, we believe that learning environments should support a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, experiences, and identities. We invite you to share anything with us that might help create a more inclusive and welcoming learning environment.*

Over the past year, members of the JMU community have recognized the need for racial equity improvements to be ingrained in every aspect of our university. As a public higher education institution, JMU can ensure students have access to learn in a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment so that they help actualize the mission and vision of their university.

If this is an endeavor the university intends to pursue actively, it must be evident in the classroom, as this is where students engage most earnestly as members of the JMU community. **Currently, there is no requirement that faculty members' syllabi include any statement regarding discrimination, racial equity, diversity, equity, inclusion, or access.**

### Recommendation:

The expectation of a diverse, equitable, inclusive and accessible learning environment should be set forth at the beginning of every academic semester by faculty members in their syllabi. Additionally, it should be reviewed during the first week of classes as a shared agreement between faculty and students.

**The Awareness & Communication Working Group recommends that the provost and members of Academic Affairs create and require all faculty members to include a DEI&A (diversity, equity, inclusion & access) syllabi statement at the beginning of the Spring 2022 semester that should be reviewed and updated thereafter.** The review should occur annually to ensure that it is culturally competent and reflects the mission and vision of the [Task Force on Racial Equity](#) and James Madison University as a whole. [Included](#) in that statement should be a list of university resources to help bring awareness to the offices and departments available to assist students if they believe a violation of the faculty member's statement has occurred.

See page 2 for Recommendation continued, Rationale and Success Measures

## WORKING GROUP LEADERSHIP



Charles May,  
Leadership Council



Silvia Garcia Romero,  
WG CC



Khalil Garriott,  
WG CC

The 2019 statement passed by the Faculty Senate currently serves only as an optional recommendation for faculty to include in their syllabi. It's time to take that a step further and require a statement in every faculty member's syllabus for each academic semester. This will help the university in its pursuit of its vision of being the national model for the engaged university: engaged with ideas and with the world.

### Rationale

- One of the most pivotal ways to acknowledge JMU's commitment to racial equity is through the classroom. The role of the Awareness & Communication Working Group is *to strategize messaging about JMU's commitment to, and work for, racial equity—and how the university contributes to greater social change—by focusing on collaboration, as well as striving toward systemic solutions and making outcome-oriented recommendations.* By requiring a statement to be included in all course syllabi, this tangible and action-driven recommendation will help students understand the university's commitment to racial equity which will ultimately contribute to goal of ensuring that the university cultivates a campus climate that is inclusive and equitable. It also will provide opportunities for students to hold faculty and the university as a whole [accountable](#).

[Universities around the nation](#) (linked example is a list of examples collected by Clemson University) have acknowledged the importance of including a diversity and inclusion syllabus [statement](#).

JMU students are asked to play close attention to each course's syllabus. Therefore, this is a great opportunity to also have a DEI&A (diversity, equity, inclusion & access) syllabi statement that holds the JMU faculty accountable for providing a diverse, equitable, inclusive and accessible space for all [students](#). We recommend that the Division of Academic Affairs (specifically, each Academic Unit Head) holds their faculty members accountable for including this in the classroom experience. This can be a topic of discussion between the Working Group co-champ and the Implementation co-champ.

### Success:

The following are measures of success for this recommendation:

- Students are aware of the expectation that faculty members have to create a diverse and inclusive classroom for all students.
- Students are able to identify contact information for support services if they believe an issue around a failure of diversity or inclusivity, discrimination or racism has happened on campus.
- **Faculty members are aware of their roles in supporting JMU's efforts toward racial equity.**
- In the Fall 2021 semester, AAAD is partnering with JMU X-Labs on the team-taught course, [“The Antiracist Gen Ed Project.”](#) Many faculty partners across campus will be supporting this project. A diverse team of professors from across campus and multiple disciplines will critique the syllabi of yesterday and shape the courses of tomorrow. To that end, a measure of success for this recommendation is to collaborate with this team-taught course to ensure the new syllabus statement is part of that curriculum for review and suggested [revisions](#).
- We encourage instructors who attended this recent webinar on [Integrating Trauma-Informed Pedagogy Into the Classroom](#) to integrate the equity-minded teaching principles they learned. If they didn't attend, they can contact workshop facilitator [Cara Meixner](#) for follow-ups. Also, we suggest instructors read this post by the Center for Faculty Innovation on [Handling Difficult Moments in Class](#) to be prepared for the inevitable tough moments that will happen.