

## **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) Plan**

Graduate Counseling Program

Eastern Mennonite University

2024-2025

The EMU Graduate Counseling Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) Plan is reviewed for progress, completion, and improvement at EMU graduate counseling department retreats in May and August each year, along with the MCP assignments and alumni, supervisor, and employer survey data. Changes are noted in the annual evaluation report and a revised and approved DEIB plan is created for the following academic year. The 2024-2025 EMU Graduate Counseling DEIB Plan is published publicly on the EMU Graduate Counseling website.

### **Graduate Counseling DEIB Plan**

In accordance with the values and mission of EMU broadly and the EMU graduate counseling program specifically, professional counseling ethics, and 2024 CACREP standards 1.H, 1.I, 1.S, and 2.E.3, the EMU graduate counseling program regularly and systematically carries out programming planning and evaluation to both enhance student experiences of DEIB and student's capacity to apply knowledge and skills that cultivate environments, both educational and clinical, that foster DEIB for students, staff, and clients. The EMU Graduate Counseling DEIB plan includes evaluation of the program's mission statement and objectives, key performance indicators measured by mastery competency assignments, curriculum enhancement, faculty, staff, and student training and professional development opportunities, and projects that provide direct funding to support programmatic DEIB initiatives.

#### ***Graduate Counseling Mission Statement***

We strive to achieve the highest standards of training for clinical mental health counselors, emphasizing applied clinical skill and professional readiness, counselor identity formation, service to the underserved, multicultural development and awareness, social justice through advocacy, reflective self-awareness, and exploration of spirituality and values within a community environment.

#### ***Program Objective***

*#4. The EMU Graduate Counseling program cultivates a diverse learning community that values diversity, equity, inclusiveness, and belonging for students, staff and faculty by reducing barriers to recruitment, retention, and graduation.*

#### **Diversity and Underrepresented Populations**

"Diversity - We are committed to embracing persons who represent a range of backgrounds, experiences, social identities, and views that intersect in many ways. We value the uniqueness and gifts of each individual. Some examples of diverse factors include race and ethnicity, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, relationship status, socio-economic status, language, culture, place of origin, religious, spiritual, and non-religious expressions, age, educational background, and (dis)ability status" (EMU DEI Office).

### ***Identifying Underrepresented Populations***

The EMU graduate counseling program identifies underrepresented populations using definitions offered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the EMU graduate counseling program's demographic data trends, and information provided on student applications. Based on HRSA definitions and historical program data we know that some populations that are historically underrepresented in our program are:

- Black, Hispanic, Indigenous, Asian, first generation college students, students from a rural background, transgender/nonbinary students, and religious minority students
- Reflecting EMU's overall university trends, the EMU graduate counseling program has many students who identify as some denomination of Christian. However, the EMU graduate counseling program also has many students who identify as part of an underrepresented religious or spiritual group. Current (2022) religious identity trends are published by the Pew Research Center here: [Religious and spiritual minority](#).

Other factors are also important elements of diversity, such as students' sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, disability status, and cultural background. While these data are not currently collected from students, the EMU graduate counseling program still strives to cultivate awareness of these factors and works to reduce the associated barriers (e.g. all-gender restrooms). The graduate counseling program actively works to cultivate an inclusive community in which students, faculty, and staff can express their intersectional identities.

What we do:

- Collect demographic data on program applicants each year, via the graduate program application form
- Collect demographic data on applicants for open faculty/staff positions, if applicable
- Analyze demographic data related to recruitment, retention, and graduation in total and by cohort.
- Analyze demographic data during the annual department retreat in May
- Graduate Recruiters and/or faculty/staff in the EMU graduate counseling program visit:
  - Latino Student Alliance at EMU, and Latino groups at local colleges and universities;
  - Black Student Alliance at EMU, and African American student groups at local colleges and universities;
  - Asian American Pacific Islander Student Association (AAPISA) at EMU;
  - International Student Organization at EMU, and at local colleges and universities;
  - Blue Ridge Community College psychology classes;
  - EMU undergraduate classes, such as psychology and social work classes.

### **Equity and Reducing Barriers**

"Equity - We are committed to working in a relationship to identify and name what each member of our community needs to have equal access and opportunities to thrive. We will take the necessary steps to correct past, present, and future inequities. This includes removing systemic

barriers that have historically prevented full participation for marginalized groups, within both EMU and society at large” (EMU DEI Office).

What we do:

- BIPOC grant- “In celebration of their graduation, the 2022 MA in Counseling (MAC) Cohort established the MAC Grant Fund. This fund provides direct financial support to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) students studying in the MAC program.
- Grant funding from the HRSA and Lilly:
  - “Building on a \$1.28 million grant award (2017-2021), a recent \$1.01 million grant (2021-2025) from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HRSA BHWET Pro) has allowed us to expand our practicums and internships to address underserved, rural communities, the opioid crisis and integrated mental health practice in interprofessional environments. In addition to many other benefits, these grants provide \$10k in stipend support to our internship students who qualify.”
- All faculty and staff in the EMU graduate counseling program stay current on contemporary trends and resources to promote equity and reduce barriers (e.g. entire graduate counseling faculty/staff read *Inclusive Teaching: Strategies for Promoting Equity in College Classroom* (2022) by Kelley Hogan and Viji Sathy during SU23).
- Reduce academic jargon that presents a barrier to students who may be less comfortable/familiar with the academic space (Hogan & Sathy, 2022)
  - Ex: changing “Office Hours” to “Student Hours” and explicitly discussing “greet”, “meet” and “work” categories of student hours to help students connect with graduate counseling faculty.

### **Inclusiveness and Cultivating a Diverse Learning Community**

“Inclusion - We are committed to ensuring that everyone is an active participant in our community of learners and is seen for who they are. This means intentionally engaging with diversity to foster spaces where everyone can belong, both within affinity groups and across differences, recognizing cultural norms and biases, discussing issues of equity or privilege, and respecting the expression of diverse ideas” (EMU DEI Office).

Action Pieces:

- intentionally engaging with diversity to foster spaces where everyone can belong
- recognizing cultural norms and biases
- discussing issues of equity or privilege
- respecting the expression of diverse ideas

What we do

- Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)
  - As reflected in Mastery Competency Assignments in COUN 507: Professional Identity, Function, and Ethics and COUN 610: Multicultural Counseling, all students have the opportunity to take the Intercultural Development Inventory, administered by a trained evaluator (Dr. Greg Czyszczon), for personal and professional development.

- COUN 610: Advanced Multicultural class
  - The required coursework determined by the Virginia Board of Counseling includes a course in multicultural counseling. In our program, students fulfill this requirement by taking the COUN 607 Multicultural Counseling course. In spring 2021, we instituted a new course: COUN 610 Advanced Multicultural Counseling. Students are required to take the Advanced Multicultural course after taking the introductory Multicultural Counseling course.
    - “In the first semester of Multicultural Counseling, you were asked to demonstrate growing competency primarily in the developmental domains of self-awareness and client worldview; this semester, you will demonstrate increasing competency in these areas and growing competency in application of skills within the domains of the counseling relationship and counseling advocacy.”
  - And implementation of advocacy project
- Mentorship Program:
  - All incoming students are paired with a 2nd or 3rd year volunteer student mentor. A graduate counseling mentor may share with a mentee information about their own path to and through graduate school (so far), as well as provide guidance, motivation, support, and role modeling.
- Focused advising:
  - Students who are conditionally admitted or otherwise identified as needing extra support will be assigned to or may elect to join a focused advising group led by Dr. Cheree Hammond.

## **Belonging**

“Belonging - We are committed to fostering a sense of connection with each other and within the school/campus/institution/community. We work to build reciprocal relationships where everyone’s humanity and right to exist are not threatened; we strive for everyone to feel accepted, respected, loved, and value” (EMU DEI Office).

### Action Pieces

- fostering a sense of connection with each other and within the school/campus/institution/community
- build reciprocal relationships

### What we do

- Regular feedback from students during student lunch with the director (fall and spring for each cohort - 1st year and 2nd and 3rd year students) and annual surveys (alumni, supervisor, employer)
- Instituting cultural oasis
- Symbolism displayed in department and across campus (e.g. pride flag, rainbow stickers, gender neutral bathroom signs, BLM mural, hall of nations, land acknowledgment).
- Intentional in-class exercises to build safety, trust, relationships, and belonging within cohorts.