

## Messiah University Inclusive Excellence Ambassadors



### INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE AMBASSADORS

The Inclusive Excellence Ambassador (IEA) program is a professional development community open to students, staff, faculty, and administrators in which participants will be equipped to assist the college in advancing its mission of creating a campus environment marked by a sense of connectedness and belonging. By participating in professional development opportunities and engaging with colleagues and peers, an IEA becomes an empowered change-agent serving to transform the campus by identifying needs and gaps at the college as related to diversity and inclusive excellence, and offering strategies for remediation and reconciliation. While facilitating learning opportunities that further the benefits of working in an inclusively excellent department/division IEAs recognize that they too have much to learn and therefore give themselves permission to ask questions as they seek to understand issues of diversity, inclusive excellence, and reconciliation.

#### **Why are Inclusive Excellence Ambassadors needed at Messiah University?**

Messiah University's commitment to diversity and inclusive excellence draws inspiration from its mission "to educate men and women toward maturity of intellect, character and Christian faith in preparation for lives of service, leadership and reconciliation in church and society."

While essential to fulfilling our mission, diversity, inclusive excellence, and reconciliation must also be understood within our institutional context. As a Christian academic community with a historic interpretation of Scripture, Messiah does not equally affirm all beliefs or behaviors. To affirm inclusive excellence at Messiah University does not mean acceptance of all differences. While our educational objectives call for "gaining an appreciation for cultural and ethnic diversity" and acting in ways that "respect gender, cultural, and ethnic diversity," they also call for the evaluation of cultural values and ethical traditions in light of the historical biblical witness. Similarly, while we encourage understanding of and engagement with diverse religious perspectives under the umbrella of Christianity, all employees are expected to affirm basic Christian convictions. To be faithful to our mission, diverse perspectives and traditions must be understood in the context of Messiah University's distinct identity and mission.

Ultimately, our mission and identity help us to realize that diversity is not an end in and of itself. Rather, it is a means to intellectual, social, and spiritual renewal for individuals, communities, and society.

Diversity is a crucial aspect of our educational commitment to holistic development and personal transformation. Diversity is also necessary to shaping a powerful learning environment that enlarges capacity for critical thinking and cognitive complexity. Simultaneously, diversity is part of our response to the gospel; it is a means to becoming a reconciled community. Diversity is part of what it means to

celebrate the goodness of God's creation and to renew our understanding of the reality that all of humanity reflects the signature of God. Engaging diversity is an avenue to realizing God's vision for the body of Christ in our world. In this, we are called to practice the ministry of reconciliation, together bringing hope and healing, offering a radical model for the world to celebrate and embrace.

Creating a community of inclusive excellence does not just happen and it cannot be achieved by a single department, committee, or individual. IEAs serve a critical role in promoting a more comprehensive transformation that seeks to cultivate a Christ-centered, inclusively excellent culture which intentionally values people and promotes mutual understanding in community. By having IEA in each department, we can be more confident that diversity and inclusive excellence will remain in the forefront of our thinking related to professional development, programming, hiring and retention, and strategic planning.<sup>i</sup>

### **What will an Inclusive Excellence Ambassador do?**

IEAs serve the college by supporting institutional commitments to diversity, inclusive excellence, and reconciliation. These persons will serve as liaisons between the Office of Diversity Affairs and their respective units and divisions working closely with designated leadership on such matters as diversity strategic planning, facilitating dialogues and other professional development opportunities, serving on search committees, and resource development. Key responsibilities of an IEA include:

- **Champion and Advocate** – ensures that elements of diversity and inclusive excellence are being integrated into departmental programs and services where appropriate (this includes employee programs and student programs); Work with campus partners as a resource on how issues of diversity, inclusive excellence, and cultural intelligence relate to college policies and practices.
- **Collaborator** – partners with colleagues inside and outside of the department to accomplish common goals related to diversity and inclusive excellence.
- **Educator** – stays on top of and shares trends/relevant resources/data with the department
- **Vision Setter** – contributes to casting vision for where are we going in this area of our work; helps to shape strategic goals and strategies for achieving success in this area

### **How will Inclusive Excellence Ambassadors be selected?**

IEAs will be nominated by a vice-president, director, or supervisor in their respective areas or they can self-nominate with the support of a supervisor and will be invited to submit a brief application expressing their interest in serving. Ideally, there will be at least one representative from each area of the college. Terms of service will be for two academic years with the opportunity to renew for a third year. Desired characteristics of an IEA include willingness to learn, open-mindedness, flexibility, previous engagement in diversity work, commitment to strengthening their ability to engage others in dialogue, visionary, and a team player. A committee will review the applications and select the appropriate candidates.

### **How many Inclusive Excellence Ambassadors will be selected?**

IEAs will be divided into two separate cohorts-one for students and the other for employees. Student participants will be recruited in partnership with the Office of Student Success and Engagement and include a broad range of student. The Office of Diversity Affairs will attempt to collaborate on this

project with the Student Government Association via the Vice President for Diversity. Possible student representatives selected for participation include: Director of Human Rights Awareness (Agape Center), United Voices of Praise, Residence Life, Commuters, Student Career Coach, Office of Academic Accessibility, Collaboratory, Ambassadors, Sustainability, SAGE, Athletics, and Multicultural Council.

The employee cohort will include two representatives from each school (SOH, SOA, BESS, SEH, SGS), Student Success and Engagement Diversity Advocates (9), and at least one representative from all other divisions of the college. (Finance, HRC, Enrollment, Advancement, Operations, and IT.)

### **How will Inclusive Excellence Ambassadors be equipped?**

IEAs will participate in select workshops, webinars, and other programming designed to strengthen and enhance their level of confidence in crafting and delivering presentations, facilitating conversations, and advocating for issues of diversity and inclusive excellence across the college.

IEAs will partner with designated offices and committees on campus that play a key role in inclusive excellence including the Office of Diversity Affairs, Human Resources and Compliance, the Office of Academic Accessibility, Gender Concerns Committee, and the Office of Faculty Development, Teaching and Learning.

Tentative topics to be addressed in these professional development sessions include:

- Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and Leadership
- The Brain and Implicit/Unconscious Bias
- Gender and Communication
- Navigating Difficult Conversations
- Hiring/Recruiting Process
- Generations on Campus
- Harassment/Intervention Strategies/Title IX
- Accessibility & Universal Design
- Fundamentals of Inclusive Excellence
- Reconciliation Theology/Theology of Diversity and Inclusive Excellence

Additional topics will be added based on the composition of IEAs and the needs of the college. Sessions will be held at least once a month.

### **What are the benefits of this program?**

Through the use of the Cultural Intelligence (CQ) framework to analyze the university's organizational culture, IEAs will assist the campus in better understanding the impact of institutional policies and practices that create barriers to diversity and reconciliation and develop tools and strategies that foster an inclusively excellence environment within the community. Through this program, IEAs will:

- create campus-wide dialogues about diversity, inclusive excellence, and belonging that increase awareness of and respect for cultural similarities and differences.
- help move the diversity and inclusive excellence goals identified by the college in a more systemic way
- enhance collaboration across the college by serving as a resource to partner with others in professional development learning opportunities

### **When will this initiative launch?**

2020-21 Academic Year

**Who will provide oversight to this initiative?**

Vice President for Diversity Affairs

**Are Inclusive Excellence Ambassadors intended to replace any previously established initiatives?**

NO. IEAs are intended to supplement and support existing initiatives while providing a more coherent and comprehensive system of development and expansion.

---

<sup>i</sup> This statement is taken from the annual diversity strategic plan, Building Pathways: A Strategic Plan for Diversity and Inclusive Excellence at Messiah University.