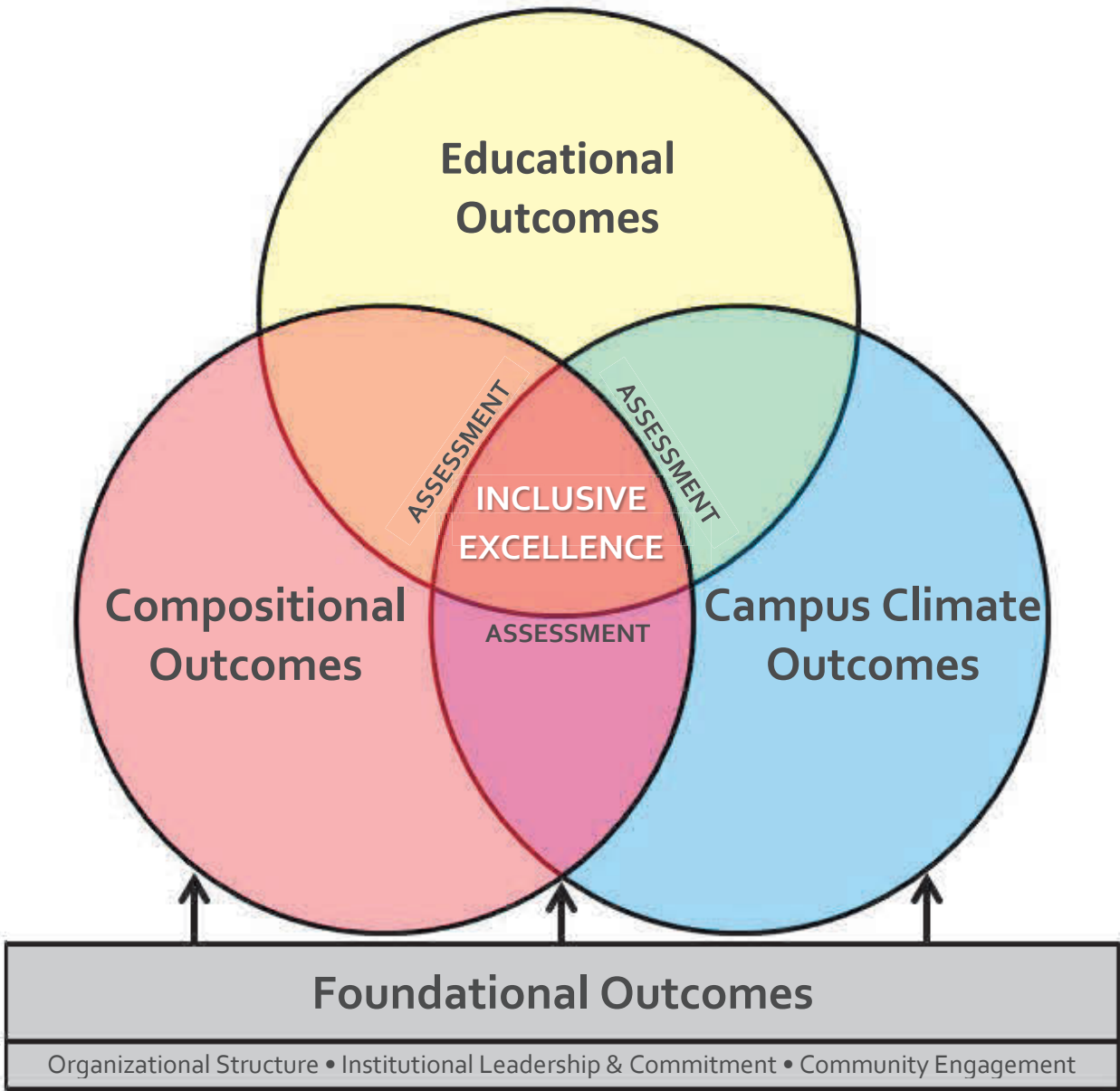


Journeying Toward Reconciliation Together

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE 2021-2022

- THEMES OF THE PLAN**
1. Foundational Outcomes
 2. Compositional Outcomes
 3. Campus Climate Outcomes
 4. Educational Outcomes



Journeying Toward Reconciliation Together

(THEMES & GOALS)

THEME ONE — Foundational Outcomes

The purpose of foundational outcomes is to systematize a sustainable, mission-driven infrastructure committed to diversity and inclusive excellence.

Goal: **Develop and implement appropriate structures including procedures, processes, policies, resources, and assessment that intentionally drive decision making around diversity and inclusive excellence.**

THEME TWO — Compositional Outcomes

The purpose of compositional outcomes is to recruit, retain, and develop a community of students, faculty, staff and administrators who help facilitate the University's commitment to diversity and inclusive excellence.

Goal: **Implement and assess recruitment and retention strategies to increase rates of domestic and international diversity of both undergraduate and graduate students.**

Goal: **Implement and assess strategies to effectively recruit, hire, and retain employees from historically underrepresented populations.**

THEME THREE — Campus Climate Outcomes

The purpose of campus climate outcomes is to nurture the capacity of members of the University community to create and sustain a campus environment that is healthy and welcoming for all.

Goal: **Promote a campus climate marked by a commitment to diversity, inclusive excellence, and reconciliation in which all members of the University feel a sense of belonging.**

THEME FOUR — Educational Outcomes

The purpose of educational outcomes is to advance the development of an innovative and sustainable educational program that enables and equips educators, co-curricular educators, staff and students to critically and compassionately embrace diversity and inclusive excellence.

Goal: **The University will develop educational programs, as well as provide support for teaching, scholarship, and institutional service in ways that promote diversity, inclusive excellence, and cultural intelligence.**

Messiah University Foundations and the Idea of Inclusive Excellence

Messiah University's commitment to diversity and inclusion 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.” Over the past several years we have made serious efforts to engage the notion of *inclusive excellence* which rests on the belief that the long-unquestioned tradition of pursuing academic excellence in institutions of higher education needs to practice inclusiveness, lest its fruits benefit the privileged few. Consequently, we have tried to leverage diversity as a key ingredient in various aspects of the college's functioning.¹ Yet, much more needs to be done if we are to graduate from being an institution with pockets of inclusive excellence to one where it is hardwired throughout the institution.² Moving forward, new frameworks that ensure this systematic build up for inclusive excellence need to be considered.³ Moving in this direction with all our available resources promises to be the thrust of this installment of the diversity strategic plan.

... [the University's efforts to pursue diversity and inclusion] should be further developed so as to indicate how a diverse Messiah University would change all aspects of community life and learning, as well as the business model of the University, and indicate how the changes engendered by a diverse campus community find their foundation in the university's mission.

—*Final Report of the Evaluation Team for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education* (March 2013), p. 10.

In the end, coming to terms with our Christian commitment to diversity and inclusion rests on this realization: *It is only in a pluralized world that we can collectively imagine a just one.* This calls for growing mindfulness, on our part as an institution, about those who have limited or no access to our “vineyard” or educational community.⁴ Can we as an institution imagine ourselves as not just bringing educators, employees, and students who can succeed but also return back to the crossroads and bring in those who have limited or no access to the institution? Such a concern for access which serves the cause of equity and justice would be factored into our financial modeling, institutional planning, and allocation of resources. It is only through this exercise that we live fully into the plurality of Christ's kingdom in a manner that establishes *both* intercultural understanding *and* reconciliation. Such work does not come without a cost that might be institutional, professional, and personal. Time, energy and treasure are not the only resources that are expended in such an effort. Rather, the cost might be also measured in terms of a more considered and measured pursuit of one's vocation that is sacrificial in order to be inclusive—a cost that is at once, social, cultural, and theological as well. This inner emptying we are being constantly called to pursue is what allows us to give room so that God and our diverse neighbors can enter our lives. And we cannot afford to be dismayed by the cost it takes us to be reconciled to God and our neighbors. We have to abandon our respective locations in Egypt, come together, cross our Red Seas and then journey towards this new Promised Land.⁵ This must become our

¹Diversity is a broad and evolving concept defined as the presence and participation of people who differ. Diversity includes interrelated dimensions of human identity such as race, ethnicity, gender, biological sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, nationality, citizenship, religious affiliation, and mental and physical abilities. Diversity encompasses complex differences and similarities in perspectives, identities, and points of view among members of an institution as well as among individuals who make up the wider community.

² See William T. Lewis, “Inclusion: Diversity Reconsidered From Islands of Excellence to Integrated Inclusive Excellence” (Unpublished paper, 2009).

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shared vision of common destiny. We seek nothing short of the creation of what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called the “beloved community” where we are fully reconciled and integrated with God and with each other, in the midst of our differences.

The imperative to pursue diversity and inclusive excellence, which is essential to fulfilling our educational mission, rests on two broad and interdependent foundations—our commitments to Christian faithfulness and academic excellence.

Christian Faithfulness

At Messiah University, the impetus for the pursuit of diversity comes from our understanding of (1) God’s work in creation, (2) God’s vision of community, and (3) the ministry of reconciliation as articulated in Scripture. The Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament illustrate the stories of persons and communities reconciled with God as well as with each other.

God’s Work in Creation. The theological notion of the *imago dei* grounds our commitment to diversity. In Genesis One, God “created humanity in God’s own image” and declares this creation to be “very good.” Our shared belief that every individual has value because “each person is created in the image of God,” serves to remind us about each individual’s worth that is matched by the diversity that defines our shared humanity.⁶ However, culture, power, and history have intervened to silence and marginalize countless fellow humans leaving our world broken and unreconciled. Our faithful engagement of diversity compels us to create a world that is equitable and inclusive of all creation irrespective of differences in physical traits, ethnicity, culture, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, religion, political ideology, age, ability/disability, and socioeconomic class.

God’s Vision for Community. We understand the church to be the “body of Christ.”⁷ We realize the body has many different parts which are all essential to the whole. As the body of Christ, we “voluntarily share our lives with each other, we care for each other, we rejoice and suffer together, we worship together, and we offer counsel to each other . . .”⁸ As a Christian community, we are called to be compassionate toward—to suffer with—those who have been disadvantaged by prejudice and systemic oppression. We are called to counsel each other toward wholeness in our attitudes and relationships, including correcting the distorted views of others and ourselves that we have inherited from an unjust society.

The “ultimate goal of every Christian community should be to help us live more faithfully as disciples of Christ.”⁹ Jesus Christ is our model for addressing inequity in the Church and in the world. In Christ, God has taken the initiative to dismantle the barriers that humans have used to separate. Speaking to the divisions between the Greeks and Jewish people that plagued the early church, the Letter to the Ephesians (2:14) affirms that Jesus Christ “has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.” In Colossians 3:10–11, the Gospel message declares that “we are renewed in knowledge” according to the image of our creator and that such renewal is realized in the conviction that “there is no longer Greek and Jew . . . but Christ is all, and in all.” As a Christian community, we are called to dismantle walls of prejudice and oppression and be agents of healing in our broken world.

Practicing God’s Ministry of Reconciliation . Central to the Gospel is reconciling individuals with God and each other.¹⁰ Reconciliation implies an “ethic of repairing the world”; this ethic of repair involves

⁶Messiah University. “Foundational Values,” *University Catalog*. (Grantham, PA. Messiah University, 2010): 6–7. See also Anne Carr. “The New Vision of Feminist Theology: Method.” In *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective*, ed. Catherine Mowry LaCugna, (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1993): 5–30.

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the intentional and demanding work of dismantling systems and practices that dehumanize and “perpetuate suffering and brokenness in relationships” together with the reconstruction of new structures and practices that are “informed by a radical submission to God’s call for love, justice, and righteousness.”¹¹

The Prophets of the Old Testament repeatedly call us to labor on behalf of justice. We are to let “justice roll on like a river” (Amos 5:24). The Lord requires us “to act justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God” (Micah 6:8). These prophetic Scriptures beckon us to engage fully in the struggle for justice, which includes the hard work of correcting individual attitudes as well as dismantling social structures that perpetuate misunderstanding and oppression. Restoring justice involves actively building bridges of and pathways to understanding and wholeness.

According to 2 Corinthians 5: 17–19, God calls us to be the ministers of reconciliation in both the personal and social realms: “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new! All this from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.” We are called to be vessels of reconciliation with the full understanding that our calling requires personal sacrifice. Confident of our calling, however, we seek to build bridges of understanding across chasms of prejudice and oppression. Where injustice has distorted perspectives and relationships, caused suffering and pain, we endeavor to bring healing in ways that restore the dignity of each person and renew the *shalom* of our community.¹²

Practicing God’s ministry of reconciliation is inextricably linked with God’s call to justice. God has called us to “share the redeeming Gospel of Jesus with those around us, to build bridges of understanding and peace across dividing lines” and “to work for justice, wherever injustice pervades.”¹³ As John W. De Gruchy asserts, reconciliation finds its fullest expression in the “restoration of justice, whether that has to do with our justification by God, the renewal of interpersonal relations, or the transformation of society.”¹⁴ As N.T. Wright affirms, “those who follow Jesus are committed, as he taught us to pray, to God’s will being done ‘on earth as it is in heaven.’ And that means that God’s passion for justice must become ours, too.”¹⁵ The close connections between spiritual formation and inclusive excellence have never appeared so mutually intertwined.

Ultimately, our mission and identity at Messiah University 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. The Christian community is called to practice the ministry of reconciliation by breaking down walls that separate and healing the brokenness of creation; the hope of this ministry is that the Christian community will come together as a new creation and, in doing so, offer a radical model for the world. As we consider the foundations of Christian spiritual formation and inclusive excellence in relationship to what is required to fulfill our calling as a distinct Christian academic community, may we remain ever mindful of these ultimate aims and our hope for the future.

—Eldon Fry, Former Campus Pastor, Messiah University,
Inclusive Excellence and Spiritual Formation, unpublished paper, pp. 1–2.

Making Academic Excellence Inclusive

As an institution of higher learning, Messiah University takes seriously its commitment to academic excellence. An academically excellent institution intentionally acts to fulfill its mission, including advancing

¹¹Lawrence Burnley, Eldon Fry, Douglas Jacobsen, Kim Phipps, and David Weaver-Zercher. “Educational Commitment to Reconciliation,” (Grantham, PA: Messiah University, 2009): 2.

¹² See Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Educating for Shalom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).

¹³Messiah University. “Foundational Values,” *University Catalog*. (Grantham, PA: Messiah University, 2010): 6–7.

¹⁴ John W. De Gruchy. *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002): 2.

¹⁵N.T. Wright. *Simply Christian, Why Christianity Makes Sense*. (San Francisco, CA: HarperSan Francisco, 2006).

mission in light of social, historical, and cultural contexts. Essentially, academic excellence demands that we know who we are and comprehend our distinctive contribution to the world. Excellence further suggests that we focus resources and energies around this specific mission. Teaching students to be “servants, leaders, and reconcilers” in our world today is central to our mission and dictates our vision for academic excellence.

Academic excellence also necessitates inclusiveness. An educational institution cannot truly be excellent if it does not draw upon the full range of humanity, giving underserved students and employees access to its educational programs and employment opportunities.¹⁶ Moreover, how colleges address diversity is a matter of educational significance.¹⁷ The notion of inclusive excellence speaks to the reality that diversity is central to educational mission. Inclusive excellence then becomes an “active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity” in interpersonal relationships, in the curriculum, in the cocurriculum, and in the communities with which individuals may connect.”¹⁸ Inclusive excellence describes an institutional environment that “links diversity and excellence by intentionally engaging diversity for the educational benefit of all students”¹⁹.

Education for Holistic Development. Inclusive excellence involves offering an educational program that meaningfully engages diversity as an intellectual and interpersonal phenomenon. We must engage diversity in ways that increase “awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions”.²⁰ This means preparing students to fully engage the world in which they will live. In this world, individuals will interact with a wide array of local and global communities and experience abundant connections to diverse intellectual, social, cultural, economic, and geographical contexts. We must, then, prepare graduates who can successfully navigate this global diversity, including critical engagement of its inequities in order to become agents of reconciliation in our world.

Another aspect of holistic development is intercultural competency, which is achieved by first comprehending the influence of one’s own social context and nurturing a sense of humility. This self-understanding provides a foundation from which to understand the culture of others as well as gain appreciation for the role of the social context in shaping the other’s identity and experience. As such, intercultural competency serves the common good. Toward this end, Martha Nussbaum argues that education must not only “promote the human development of students” but also must “promote in students an understanding of the goals of human development for all.”²¹ Students must not only mature intellectually, socially, and spiritually but also must be nurtured in the conviction that all human beings have the capacity for growth and contribution to the world.

As an extension of this commitment to holistic development, inclusive excellence is “attentive to the cultural differences learners bring to the educational experience and that enhance the enterprise.”²² ***Diversity is an asset in the educational community that can and must be engaged in the learning process.*** Individual differences (e.g. learning styles and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g. gender, cultural/ethnic, national, religious affiliation; socioeconomic class, ability status, and country of origin) are

¹⁶ The term “underserved” students includes the following: historically-underrepresented minority, first generation, transfer and low-income students. See Jayne E. Brownell & Lynn E. Swaner, *Five High-Impact Practices: Research on Learning Outcomes, Completion, and Quality* (Washington D.C.: AAC&U, 2010), pp. 2–3.

¹⁷ Mitchell J. Chang. “Preservation or Transformation: Where’s the Real Educational Discourse on Diversity?” *The Review of Higher Education* 25:2. (Winter 2002): 125–140.

¹⁸ Association of American Colleges and Universities, “Making Excellence Inclusive,” www.aacu.org/inclusive_excellence/index.cfm.

¹⁹ Carmen Coustaut. “A Vision for Diversity: A Vision for Excellence.” *All Things Academic* 8:2. (September 2007):4.

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²¹ Martha Nussbaum, “Education for Profit, Education for Freedom.” *Liberal Education*. (Summer 2009): 8.

²² Jeff Milem, Mitchell J. Chang, and Anthony L. Antonio. *Making Diversity Work on Campus: A Research-Based Perspective*. (Washington D.C.: American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2005): vi.

part of our identities. We do not discard our group affiliations or the social contexts that have shaped us when we enter the learning environment. If education is to draw out the fullness of human potential, the full range of each person's distinctiveness must be engaged. Inclusive excellence is attentive to individual differences, but extends beyond the individual to the community itself. Inclusive excellence as an educational construct emphasizes that *all* students benefit from engaging diversity—promising the development of wholesome human relationships and deepening intellectual engagement. Engaging diversity equips graduates to be agents of renewal in our society and, in doing so, advances our institutional mission.

A Community of Hospitality. Inclusive excellence fully engages and transforms the community and its members. Inclusive excellence pursues a “welcoming community” that engages diversity on behalf of each student’s education as well as organizational learning. Within and beyond the educational program, the ethos and environment of the institution itself must reflect hospitality to diversity.

Hospitality means being attentive to demographics of the community. The composition of the college community impacts its ability to deliver an excellent education. The relationship between demographic composition and learning outcomes is significant; there is a clear correlation between the educational potential of an institution and the diverse composition of its student body, faculty, administrators, and staff. Students are more likely to engage with individuals from different backgrounds in proportion to the compositional diversity of the college campus.²³ When we have student and educator demographics that reflect the diverse world with which God has entrusted us, the learning community is strengthened. Indeed, demographics matter. Compositional diversity matters not only to personal relationships but also to intellectual engagement.

The composition of a community in terms of diversity impacts the achievement of learning outcomes for *all* members of the campus community. Increasing compositional diversity leads to a “broader collection of thoughts, ideas, and opinions held by the student body” and this, in turn, increases the likelihood that each and every student will engage a “wider range of perspectives on a particular issue.”²⁴ We all have something to lose when diversity is not present; we all have something important to gain when diversity is present and fully engaged in the learning process. Students learn better in the presence of diversity, among their peers, in the faculty, and in academic content; diversity equips students to engage a variety of perspectives.

Education for Transformation. Our educational mission demands that we equip students with the requisite abilities and attitudes to fulfill their responsibilities as servants, leaders, and reconcilers in a diverse world. Fulfilling this vision depends upon educators who not only comprehend the individual and community implications of diversity but who are also well equipped to prepare and deliver academic content that helps students discern and act. Students must learn to see the world as it is, with all of its flaws, and to understand the conditions that have led to inequity. At the same time, an education for transformation teaches students to see the world for what it can become and to respond as people of hope. Ultimately, students must be taught to see their own gifts and potential to be change-agents that help bend the “arc of the moral universe towards justice.”²⁵

Engaging Diversity: Our Christian and Educational Calling

Diversity is both a theological and educational mandate. Fulfilling our educational mission in the 21st century requires us to engage diversity in a manner that fully prepares students for “service, leadership, and

²³ Mitchell J. Chang. “Does Racial Diversity Matter? “The educational impact of a racially diverse undergraduate population.” *Journal of College Student Development* 40(4). (1999): 377–95.

²⁴ Milem, Chang, and Antonio (2005): 7.

²⁵ Martin Luther King, Jr. *Letter from Birmingham Jail* (1963). The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute. http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/resources/article/annotated_letter_from_birmingham/

reconciliation” in church and society. Our commitments to Christian faithfulness and academic excellence provide inspiration for the challenging work of reconciliation and justice. Taken together, our theological and academic commitments compel us to better understand diversity itself and to equip students to recognize injustice and be agents of transformation.

While essential to fulfilling our mission, diversity must also be understood within our institutional context. Inclusive excellence and reconciliation are extensions of our mission but are also properly understood in light of our mission and identity. As a particular Christian academic community, Messiah does not equally affirm all beliefs or behaviors. All educators and administrators are expected to affirm the Apostle’s Creed and to abide by the Community Covenant. 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”²⁶ and acting in ways that “respect gender, cultural, and ethnic diversity,”²⁷ they also call for the evaluation of cultural values and ethical traditions in light of the biblical witness. Similarly, while we encourage understanding of and engagement with diverse religious perspectives, 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 student 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*.

²⁶Messiah University. “University-Wide Educational Objectives,” *University Catalog*. (Grantham, PA. Messiah University 2010).

²⁷Ibid.

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According to 2 Corinthians 5: 17–19, God calls us to be the ministers of reconciliation in both the personal and social realms: “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new! All this from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.” We are called to be vessels of reconciliation with the full understanding that our calling requires personal sacrifice. Confident of our calling, however, we seek to build bridges of understanding across chasms of prejudice and oppression. Where injustice has distorted perspectives and relationships, caused suffering and pain, we endeavor to bring healing in ways that restore the dignity of each person and renew the *shalom* of our community.¹²

Practicing God’s ministry of reconciliation is inextricably linked with God’s call to justice. God has called us to “share the redeeming Gospel of Jesus with those around us, to build bridges of understanding and peace across dividing lines” and “to work for justice, wherever injustice pervades.”¹³ As John W. De Gruchy asserts, reconciliation finds its fullest expression in the “restoration of justice, whether that has to do with our justification by God, the renewal of interpersonal relations, or the transformation of society.”¹⁴ As N.T. Wright affirms, “those who follow Jesus are committed, as he taught us to pray, to God’s will being done ‘on earth as it is in heaven.’ And that means that God’s passion for justice must become ours, too.”¹⁵ The close connections between spiritual formation and inclusive excellence have never appeared so mutually intertwined.

Ultimately, our mission and identity at Messiah University 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. The Christian community is called to practice the ministry of reconciliation by breaking down walls that separate and healing the brokenness of creation; the hope of this ministry is that the Christian community will come together as a new creation and, in doing so, offer a radical model for the world. As we consider the foundations of Christian spiritual formation and inclusive excellence in relationship to what is required to fulfill our calling as a distinct Christian academic community, may we remain ever mindful of these ultimate aims and our hope for the future.

—Eldon Fry, Former Campus Pastor, Messiah University,
Inclusive Excellence and Spiritual Formation, unpublished paper, pp. 1–2.

Making Academic Excellence Inclusive

As an institution of higher learning, Messiah University takes seriously its commitment to academic excellence. An academically excellent institution intentionally acts to fulfill its mission, including advancing

¹¹Lawrence Burnley, Eldon Fry, Douglas Jacobsen, Kim Phipps, and David Weaver-Zercher. “Educational Commitment to Reconciliation,” (Grantham, PA: Messiah University, 2009): 2.

¹² See Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Educating for Shalom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).

¹³Messiah University. “Foundational Values,” *University Catalog*. (Grantham, PA: Messiah University, 2010): 6–7.

¹⁴ John W. De Gruchy. *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002): 2.

¹⁵N.T. Wright. *Simply Christian, Why Christianity Makes Sense*. (San Francisco, CA: HarperSan Francisco, 2006).

mission in light of social, historical, and cultural contexts. Essentially, academic excellence demands that we know who we are and comprehend our distinctive contribution to the world. Excellence further suggests that we focus resources and energies around this specific mission. Teaching students to be “servants, leaders, and reconcilers” in our world today is central to our mission and dictates our vision for academic excellence.

Academic excellence also necessitates inclusiveness. An educational institution cannot truly be excellent if it does not draw upon the full range of humanity, giving underserved students and employees access to its educational programs and employment opportunities.¹⁶ Moreover, how colleges address diversity is a matter of educational significance.¹⁷ The notion of inclusive excellence speaks to the reality that diversity is central to educational mission. Inclusive excellence then becomes an “active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity” in interpersonal relationships, in the curriculum, in the cocurriculum, and in the communities with which individuals may connect.”¹⁸ Inclusive excellence describes an institutional environment that “links diversity and excellence by intentionally engaging diversity for the educational benefit of all students”¹⁹.

Education for Holistic Development. Inclusive excellence involves offering an educational program that meaningfully engages diversity as an intellectual and interpersonal phenomenon. We must engage diversity in ways that increase “awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions”.²⁰ This means preparing students to fully engage the world in which they will live. In this world, individuals will interact with a wide array of local and global communities and experience abundant connections to diverse intellectual, social, cultural, economic, and geographical contexts. We must, then, prepare graduates who can successfully navigate this global diversity, including critical engagement of its inequities in order to become agents of reconciliation in our world.

Another aspect of holistic development is intercultural competency, which is achieved by first comprehending the influence of one’s own social context and nurturing a sense of humility. This self-understanding provides a foundation from which to understand the culture of others as well as gain appreciation for the role of the social context in shaping the other’s identity and experience. As such, intercultural competency serves the common good. Toward this end, Martha Nussbaum argues that education must not only “promote the human development of students” but also must “promote in students an understanding of the goals of human development for all.”²¹ Students must not only mature intellectually, socially, and spiritually but also must be nurtured in the conviction that all human beings have the capacity for growth and contribution to the world.

As an extension of this commitment to holistic development, inclusive excellence is “attentive to the cultural differences learners bring to the educational experience and that enhance the enterprise.”²² ***Diversity is an asset in the educational community that can and must be engaged in the learning process.*** Individual differences (e.g. learning styles and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g. gender, cultural/ethnic, national, religious affiliation; socioeconomic class, ability status, and country of origin) are

¹⁶ The term “underserved” students includes the following: historically-underrepresented minority, first generation, transfer and low-income students. See Jayne E. Brownell & Lynn E. Swaner, *Five High-Impact Practices: Research on Learning Outcomes, Completion, and Quality* (Washington D.C.: AAC&U, 2010), pp. 2–3.

¹⁷ Mitchell J. Chang. “Preservation or Transformation: Where’s the Real Educational Discourse on Diversity?” *The Review of Higher Education* 25:2. (Winter 2002): 125–140.

¹⁸ Association of American Colleges and Universities, “Making Excellence Inclusive,” www.aacu.org/inclusive_excellence/index.cfm.

¹⁹ Carmen Coustaut. “A Vision for Diversity: A Vision for Excellence.” *All Things Academic* 8:2. (September 2007):4.

²⁰ Association of American Colleges and Universities, “Making Excellence Inclusive,” www.aacu.org/inclusive_excellence/index.cfm.

²¹ Martha Nussbaum, “Education for Profit, Education for Freedom.” *Liberal Education*. (Summer 2009): 8.

²² Jeff Milem, Mitchell J. Chang, and Anthony L. Antonio. *Making Diversity Work on Campus: A Research-Based Perspective*. (Washington D.C.: American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2005): vi.

part of our identities. We do not discard our group affiliations or the social contexts that have shaped us when we enter the learning environment. If education is to draw out the fullness of human potential, the full range of each person's distinctiveness must be engaged. Inclusive excellence is attentive to individual differences, but extends beyond the individual to the community itself. Inclusive excellence as an educational construct emphasizes that *all* students benefit from engaging diversity—promising the development of wholesome human relationships and deepening intellectual engagement. Engaging diversity equips graduates to be agents of renewal in our society and, in doing so, advances our institutional mission.

A Community of Hospitality. Inclusive excellence fully engages and transforms the community and its members. Inclusive excellence pursues a “welcoming community” that engages diversity on behalf of each student’s education as well as organizational learning. Within and beyond the educational program, the ethos and environment of the institution itself must reflect hospitality to diversity.

Hospitality means being attentive to demographics of the community. The composition of the college community impacts its ability to deliver an excellent education. The relationship between demographic composition and learning outcomes is significant; there is a clear correlation between the educational potential of an institution and the diverse composition of its student body, faculty, administrators, and staff. Students are more likely to engage with individuals from different backgrounds in proportion to the compositional diversity of the college campus.²³ When we have student and educator demographics that reflect the diverse world with which God has entrusted us, the learning community is strengthened. Indeed, demographics matter. Compositional diversity matters not only to personal relationships but also to intellectual engagement.

The composition of a community in terms of diversity impacts the achievement of learning outcomes for *all* members of the campus community. Increasing compositional diversity leads to a “broader collection of thoughts, ideas, and opinions held by the student body” and this, in turn, increases the likelihood that each and every student will engage a “wider range of perspectives on a particular issue.”²⁴ We all have something to lose when diversity is not present; we all have something important to gain when diversity is present and fully engaged in the learning process. Students learn better in the presence of diversity, among their peers, in the faculty, and in academic content; diversity equips students to engage a variety of perspectives.

Education for Transformation. Our educational mission demands that we equip students with the requisite abilities and attitudes to fulfill their responsibilities as servants, leaders, and reconcilers in a diverse world. Fulfilling this vision depends upon educators who not only comprehend the individual and community implications of diversity but who are also well equipped to prepare and deliver academic content that helps students discern and act. Students must learn to see the world as it is, with all of its flaws, and to understand the conditions that have led to inequity. At the same time, an education for transformation teaches students to see the world for what it can become and to respond as people of hope. Ultimately, students must be taught to see their own gifts and potential to be change-agents that help bend the “arc of the moral universe towards justice.”²⁵

Engaging Diversity: Our Christian and Educational Calling

Diversity is both a theological and educational mandate. Fulfilling our educational mission in the 21st century requires us to engage diversity in a manner that fully prepares students for “service, leadership, and

²³ Mitchell J. Chang. “Does Racial Diversity Matter? “The educational impact of a racially diverse undergraduate population.” *Journal of College Student Development* 40(4). (1999): 377–95.

²⁴ Milem, Chang, and Antonio (2005): 7.

²⁵ Martin Luther King, Jr. *Letter from Birmingham Jail* (1963). The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute. http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/resources/article/annotated_letter_from_birmingham/

reconciliation” in church and society. Our commitments to Christian faithfulness and academic excellence provide inspiration for the challenging work of reconciliation and justice. Taken together, our theological and academic commitments compel us to better understand diversity itself and to equip students to recognize injustice and be agents of transformation.

While essential to fulfilling our mission, diversity must also be understood within our institutional context. Inclusive excellence and reconciliation are extensions of our mission but are also properly understood in light of our mission and identity. As a particular Christian academic community, Messiah does not equally affirm all beliefs or behaviors. All educators and administrators are expected to affirm the Apostle’s Creed and to abide by the Community Covenant. 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”²⁶ and acting in ways that “respect gender, cultural, and ethnic diversity,”²⁷ they also call for the evaluation of cultural values and ethical traditions in light of the biblical witness. Similarly, while we encourage understanding of and engagement with diverse religious perspectives, 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 student 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*.

²⁶Messiah University. “University-Wide Educational Objectives,” *University Catalog*. (Grantham, PA. Messiah University 2010).

²⁷Ibid.