



GADSDEN STATE  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Diversity Plan II  
2015-2020

## President's Message

One of the most unique features of almost any college campus in today's society is the level of acceptance of persons who may be different. Gadsden State Community College is committed to providing an academic and workplace environment in which faculty, staff, students, and guests are treated with dignity and respect.

Diversity has taken on many dimensions in higher education. Our investment in Diversity is more than the act of recruiting and celebrating ethnically themed events and holidays. We are working together to achieve a common understanding of what constitutes acceptable behavior and a shared awareness of what constitutes civility and fairness on our campuses. All members of the College community have a responsibility to make our campuses and classrooms welcoming and respectful of each other's differences and abilities.

The purpose of Diversity Plan II is to be useful and informative in furthering our continuing efforts of maintaining a climate of mutual respect among all members of our College community.

Thank you for your support of Diversity Plan II and for your continued efforts for its success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Martha G. Lavender". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Martha G. Lavender, PhD, RN, FAAN  
President

## **Position Statement of the Commission on Colleges**

Diversity is not an abstract concept; rather, it is a true picture of an ever-changing national demographic landscape that reflects every sector of society. Institutions of higher education mirror diversity through their missions, their structures, and their students, faculty, and staff.

Diversity in higher education is enriched by the distinct mission of each institution. Formal commitments to prepare students for work and interaction in the larger, global society carry with it an obligation to ensure that every student has the skills and knowledge necessary to be productive and contributing citizens of this nation. Irrespective of the skill sets students bring with them, each institution pledges to take students from where they are to the levels they need to be in order to realize their potential and their value in a democratic society.

The strength of American higher education rests with its structural diversity and the array of institutional types designed to meet the needs of any student pursuing a college or university credential. This diversity includes, but is not limited to public, private for-profit, private not-for-profit, large, small, urban, rural, technical colleges, historically black institutions, single-gender institutions, military academies, community colleges, comprehensive institutions, liberal arts colleges, and research institutions. It is within this rich diverse structure that students find the type of institution that can best support their learning endeavors.

Diversity is reflected in the student body of an institution, as well as among the faculty, staff, administrators, trustees and other stakeholder groups. It is this exposure to a myriad of cultural backgrounds that enriches the learning and teaching experience. It is this person-centered aspect of education that introduces individuals to the broader society in which higher education operates—supporting sensitivity to such differences as culture, ethnicity, race, religion, international origin, and gender that are subject to the unique mission and culture of each institution.

Diversity is an asset to higher education; promoting diversity is a challenge. It challenges institutions to ensure access (recruitment), to take measures to successfully teach (retention and graduation), to provide requisite academic support, and to adapt teaching and learning styles to meet the needs of a diverse student body. It also presents some unique opportunities for teaching, learning, service, research, professional development and overall social, economic and intellectual growth.

As an asset, its benefits are numerous. Some of the outcomes of achieving and embracing diversity in higher education are as follow:

- Assists institutions in achieving their mission;
- Sustains a quality learning environment and quality educational experience;
- Creates an inclusive learning environment that empowers students;
- Develops a work force that can contribute to the social and economic competitiveness of the country; and,
- Embraces the foundation of a democratic society.

Diversity in higher education is critical to the social and economic future of this country. Consequently, the Commission on Colleges supports the leadership role of its member institutions in promoting and sustaining diversity in all arenas of higher education.

*Adopted: Commission on Colleges, June 2008*

## **Definitions and Terms**

### **Diversity means:**

Recognizing individual differences such as race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, ability, religious beliefs, political beliefs, and other ideologies; the exploration of differences in a safe, positive and nurturing environment; and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions contained within each individual.

### **Inclusion is:**

Engaging the uniqueness of the talents, beliefs, backgrounds, capabilities and ways of living of individuals and groups when joined in a common endeavor; engaging differences to create a culture of belonging in which people are valued and honored to improve our society, world, and enterprises; respecting the uniqueness of people's different talents, beliefs, and ways of living, respecting the group identities we possess without restricting those identities; and, transcending differences by respecting these unique group identities.

**Minority**, for the purpose of this plan, is defined as:

- Racial/Ethnic minority groups consistent with legal definitions (African American, Latino/a, Asian American, etc.)
- Gender
- Gender Identity/Transgender
- Persons with Disabilities
- Sexual Orientation (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual)

**Underrepresented**, for the purpose of this plan, is defined as:

- Racial/Ethnic minority groups consistent with legal definitions (African American, Latino/a, Asian American, etc.)
- Gender
- Gender Identity/Transgender
- Persons with Disabilities
- Sexual Orientation (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual)
- Military Veterans
- Social/Economic

## **Statement on Diversity**

Gadsden State Community College strives to create an environment in which diversity and a sense of community are encouraged and supported. The College's Diversity Plan represents more than the act of celebrating ethnically themed events or holidays. It also represents the College's investment to insure that the faculty, staff, and students that make up the college community are able to work and learn in an environment that respects the importance of multiculturalism and the acceptance of differences in others.

The commitment to diversity exists throughout the mission, instructional program, and institutional and community services of Gadsden State Community College.

## **Purpose**

Gadsden State Community College was a leader among its peer institutions in developing and implementing a Diversity Plan. The Diversity Plan II further builds on the strategic plan, mission, vision, values of the College, and the success of the first Diversity Plan.

## **Diversity Goals**

Diversity Plan II includes diversity goals grouped under three broad areas: Institutional Leadership; Curricular and Co-curricular; and, Campus Climate. Each goal is followed by specific objectives and strategic initiatives believed to have the highest potential for success in reaching the goal.

### **Goal Statement 1:**

**Institutional Leadership** – Gadsden State Community College administration will provide leadership and support, as well as oversight, for all diversity and inclusion initiatives.

### **Goal Statement 2:**

**Instructional-Educational Support** – Instructional and educational support activities will incorporate diversity and inclusion into instructional materials, classroom discussions, student assignments, student activities, and college events.

### **Goal Statement 3:**

**Campus Climate** – Gadsden State Community College will be a welcoming and inclusive climate for all faculty, staff, students, and visitors; both in the classroom and the work environment.

## **GOAL STATEMENT #1:**

**Institutional Leadership** – Gadsden State Community College administration will provide leadership and support, as well as oversight, for all diversity and inclusion initiatives.

**Objective (1.1):** The President will ensure that College administrators are trained to promote diversity and inclusion.

### **Strategic Initiatives:**

- a. Encourage College administrators to take a leadership role in providing diversity and inclusion programs.
- b. Include diversity and inclusion accountability into the performance review of campus administrators.

**Objective (1.2):** Develop policies and practices to encourage common-interest groups to foster a greater understanding of diversity and inclusion.

### **Strategic Initiatives:**

- a. Identify individuals to serve as Diversity Advisors to established common-interest groups.
- b. Recognize and support common interest groups that serve the interest of faculty, staff, and students at the College.

**Objective (1.3):** The President will issue an annual status report documenting progress made toward meeting the College's diversity goals.

## **GOAL STATEMENT #2:**

**Instructional-Educational Support** – Instructional and educational support activities will incorporate diversity and inclusion into instructional materials, classroom discussions, and student assignments, activities and college events.

**Objective (2.1):** Encourage instructional and educational support units to develop models of excellence for increasing diversity and inclusion and fostering a respect for inclusiveness.

### **Strategic Initiatives:**

- a. Require that objectives for increasing diversity/inclusiveness be included in departmental Unit Strategic Plans.
- b. Assist faculty in creating a classroom climate in which all students have the opportunity to succeed.

**Objective (2.2):** Hold College administrators accountable for creating and maintaining a climate inclusive of diversity and inclusion within their offices.

**Strategic Initiative:**

- a. Include diversity and inclusion accountability into the performance review of College administrators.

**GOAL STATEMENT #3:**

**Campus Climate** – Gadsden State Community College will be a welcoming and inclusive climate for all faculty, staff, students and visitors both in the classroom and the work environment.

**Objective (3.1):** Conduct a campus climate survey to establish a baseline of understanding of diversity climate issues on campus.

**Objective (3.2):** Recruit a faculty, staff, and administration that is reflective of the communities served by the College.

**Strategic Initiatives:**

- a. Share resources with faculty of historically Black institutions and international programs.
- b. Ensure that the College conducts national searches with emphasis on developing a diversified and highly qualified applicant pool.

**Objective (3.3):** Develop and implement diversity and inclusive activities and programs designed to increase awareness of diversity and inclusion issues among students, faculty and staff at all levels.

**Strategic Initiatives:**

- a. Develop a diversity training workshop for students, faculty and staff as part of a leadership training program (e.g., Civic Engagement).
- b. Sponsor workshops for students to foster greater respect for and understanding, and valuing of individuals with different gender and sexual orientations.
- c. Include a Diversity table at Freshman Focus and other student activity events.

**Objective (3.4):** Recognize and celebrate diversity and inclusion efforts throughout the College Community.

**Strategic Initiatives:**

- a. Annually sponsor a “Champion for Diversity Award” given to an individual or unit that embodies Gadsden State Community College’s vision for diversity and inclusion.

- b. Develop an award for students or student organizations that provide inter-organizational, culturally diverse, student programs.
- c. Develop a diversity essay award for a graduating high school student enrolling in the College.
- d. Publicize a diversity calendar.

## **DIVERSITY ADVISORY COUNCILS**

The general responsibility of the Diversity Advisory Councils is to advise College administration on diversity-related issues. The Councils are also charged with:

- Be diversity advocates by promoting awareness of the College's diversity initiatives;
- Serve on ad hoc committees as needed to assist with the continued implementation of the Diversity Plan; and,
- Provide a forum for the referral of questions and recommendations relating to diversity issues.

### **The Internal Diversity Advisory Council should also:**

- Set annual goals and priorities based on Diversity Plan II;
- Be informed by data from previous reports;
- Monitor the collection of data to chart progress made on meeting diversity goals;
- Foster collaboration and coordination between the various units;
- Be responsible for updating and keeping Diversity Plan II current; and
- Submit progress reports to the President on an annual basis.

### **Internal Diversity Advisory Council 2015-2016**

Carl Byers, Director, Valley Street Campus

Kim Campbell, Activity I Director, Title III Program

Cheryl Cephus-Vickers, Associate Dean of Student Services/Director of Counseling Services

David Collins, Job Developer

Stewart Davis, Director of Physical Plant

Becky Duckett, Director of International Programs and Alabama Language Institute  
Megan Elston-Sweat, Outreach Advisor, Upward Bound Program  
Tia Freeman, Director, Veterans Upward Bound  
Whitney Hall, Student Engagement Coordinator  
Chris Isom, Public Safety Telecommunication, Program Instructor  
Pearl Owens, Director of Upward Bound Program, Ayers Campus  
Chad Steed, Coordinator, Academic and Student Support Services, Gadsden Cherokee  
Susan Tucker, Nursing Instructor, Nursing Education Program Director  
Jerri Ward, Director of Teaching and Learning Center  
Danny Wilborn, Mathematics Instructor, ADA Compliance Officer  
Eric Stringer, Community Education Liaison, Diversity Liaison, *Chair*  
Michele Bradford, Director of Legal Affairs, *ex officio*

#### **External Diversity Advisory Council 2015-2016**

Joy Ballenger, Visiting Angels  
Richard Edwards, Executive Board, NAACP  
Jenifer Grace, Executive Director, Council on Aging  
Joanne Hightower, Executive Director, United Way  
Judy Hill, Retired, Gadsden State Community College  
Thereasa Hulgen, Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce  
Tony Reddick, Coordinator, Parent/Teacher Resource Center, Gadsden City Schools  
John Reed, Alabama Department of Labor  
Marcus Reid, Assistant District Attorney, Etowah County, Calhoun county resident  
Sharon Rogers, Retired, Gadsden State Community College

Robert Turk, Retired Educator, Attalla City Schools

Bobby Welch, Executive Director, Center for Cultural Arts

Amelia Wofford, Planning and Development Officer, Quality of Life Health Services