

Plan for Equity and Inclusion at St. Olaf Introduction

The St. Olaf College Plan for Equity and Inclusion has as its purpose to fulfill the “Vision for Equity and Inclusion at St. Olaf.” It aims to develop and sustain an inclusive, culturally-competent community that intentionally engages, uplifts and celebrates all diversity; removes barriers to full participation in the St. Olaf community and to a St. Olaf education; provides opportunities for students and faculty and staff members to thrive at St. Olaf; and holds all members of the St. Olaf community accountable for the realization of this plan

The plan is crafted for an institution whose members are already actively engaged in many important actions to achieve equity and inclusion. The work for equity and inclusion, as indicated by what the college is already doing, is significant. It must serve a college community that includes over 30,000 alumni as well as present and future students, staff, and faculty members. With the fullness of the St. Olaf community in mind, the plan identifies the steps that should be implemented now and provides a framework for the future.

Goals of the Plan

The plan has as its goals the ongoing education and training so that students, staff and faculty are able to work and learn together meaningfully and respectfully; the intentional cultivation of opportunities to interact with each other across difference; attention to ensuring that the institution itself is free of policies and structures that systematically disadvantage certain cohorts; development of a campus culture that helps students, staff and faculty find a place of belonging; and gathers information about how well we—as a college and as individual members of the college community—are achieving our goals.

Appendices linked at the end of the plan provide supporting information regarding the goals’ purposes and implementation. They identify the work already being done and some ways to further these efforts. We expect that all members of the college community will next identify how they will support the goals of the plan. Each appendix identifies “partners” in helping implement the plan’s goals.

How we use terms related to diversity, equity and inclusion

The Plan for Equity and Inclusion at St. Olaf adopts the definitions of [diversity, equity and inclusion](#) that appear in the “primer” on the *To Include is To Excel* website:

Diversity The wide variety of different personal and group characteristics among human beings. As a matter of institutional practice, the term also refers to the presence of historically underrepresented groups (HUGS) and to policies enabling their access to educational opportunities. The College’s commitment to an annual increase in the student body’s racial and ethnic diversity is an example of such initiatives. In higher education and non-profit organizations, a clear trend exists to distinguish policies and procedures related to diversity from other dimensions of practice, such as those of inclusion and equity. This is because it is possible

for an institution with a diverse membership to lack measures to foster the inclusion, or full acceptance and participation, of all its members. The broad consensus is that to achieve inclusion and equity, institutions need to make efforts distinct from those that ensure diversity.

Inclusion refers to acts of creating opportunities for involvement and empowerment for underrepresented groups, through which they feel respected, supported, valued, and enabled to fully participate in campus life. Beyond offering access, inclusion involves an active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity — in the curriculum, in staffing, in procedures and policies, and across all institutional units with which individuals might connect — in ways that enable them to communicate their views and share in decision making. By extension, inclusion also implies majority-group members taking the initiative to access non-majority voices in the latter’s own settings and through their own informational channels, such that they expand their understanding of relevant issues in their relationships. Consequently, and in contrast to the “additive” character of diversity, inclusive initiatives often entail a need for cultural transformation, which includes changing existing institutional practices.

Equity In education, the pursuit of equity focuses on creating the conditions for all — including those from HUGs — to achieve the same learning outcomes as members of dominant groups. Equitable practices are designed to accommodate differences in students’ learning — and not to treat all students the same. Equity differs from equality, which refers to an evenly distributed access to educational resources and opportunities. The uniform distribution of access may not address the greater needs that students of color, low income students, etc. may have, and may not compensate for the root causes of the achievement gap, so it may or may not result in equitable outcomes.

Sources for the Plan for Equity and Inclusion at St. Olaf

- College Mission and Vision
- Existing Strategic Plan
- Working Group for Equity and Inclusion report
- Demands and concerns raised by the Collective for Change on the Hill
- 1:1 discussions with members of the Council
- Community responses to the request for vision input through on-line suggestions
- In-person Council “office hours”
- Meeting with alumni
- Attending events related to diversity, equity and inclusion
- Input from many members of the community, the President’s Leadership team and other college leaders, and
- The deliberations and discussion of the members of the Council for Equity and Inclusion.