

**Eastern Illinois University**  
**Equity & Diversity Plan -**  
**A Framework for Advancing Inclusive Excellence for All Students**  
**January 31, 2024**

## **1. INTRODUCTION.**

Eastern Illinois University actively fosters a more diverse and equitable environment through a number of initiatives and strategies. Pursuant to P.A. 102-1046 (111 ILCS 205/9.16), the University has developed the following plan to promote equity-based student outcomes, eliminate observed structural achievement gaps, and enhance the campus experience for all learners. The following plan also outlines strategies for promoting more equitable hiring practices and enriching our campus climate for students and all employee groups.

EIU's long-standing commitment to diversity, inclusion, and student success is central to our mission:

### **EIU Mission Statement**

*Eastern Illinois University is a public comprehensive university that offers superior, accessible undergraduate and graduate education. Students learn the methods and results of free and rigorous inquiry in the arts, humanities, sciences, and professions, guided by a faculty known for its excellence in teaching, research, creative activity, and service. The University community is committed to diversity and inclusion and fosters opportunities for student-faculty scholarship and applied learning experiences within a student-centered campus culture. Throughout their education, students refine their abilities to reason and to communicate clearly so as to become responsible citizens and leaders.*

### **Vision Statement**

*Eastern Illinois University will be a premier comprehensive university, global in its reach and impact, where personal connections with faculty and staff support students' academic success.*

These principles structure and shape who we are as an institution and reflect an engrained ethic to support and advance diversity and inclusion.

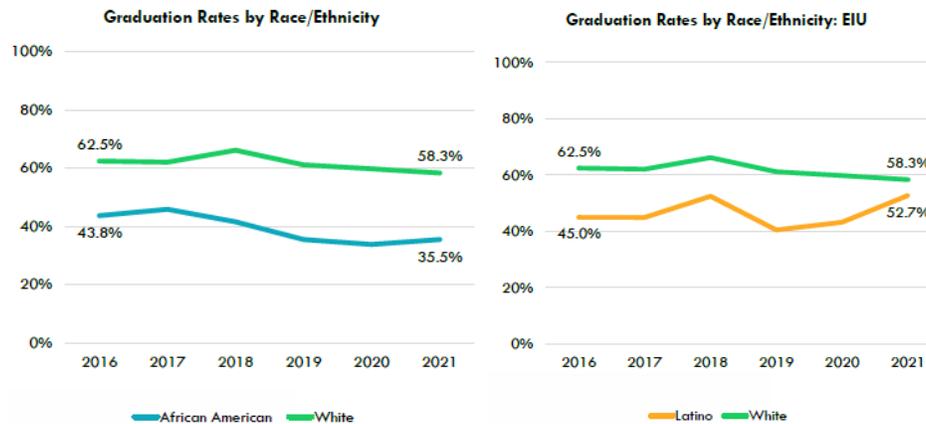
In seeking to meet our mission, and specifically address these principles, our efforts can be summarized across a number of areas, including our activities evident in our Higher Learning Commission-Quality Initiative, our related efforts to support our diverse range of students, and through our curricular revisions. These activities overlap and build upon each other toward a more diverse and inclusive environment, which also better positions students to accomplish educational goals and professional aspirations.

## 2. DATA.

Student achievement and efforts to address observed structural performance gaps at EIU is inherently data-driven and begins with understanding the socio-demographic landscape of the campus. In Fall 2023, the student demography of EIU was 54.3% White, 14.2% Latinx/Hispanic, 11.9% African American/Black, 9.9% International, 5.8% Other Underrepresented, and 3.9% Unknown. And 46% of EIU's enrolled Fall 2022 students were Pell Eligible.

Given that at-least 32% of EIU's students identify as students of color and 46% of all students are Pell-eligible, student success is a critical issue that drives our practices, policies, and curriculum. For that reason, the University pays close attention to macro- and micro-level data and has articulated an explicit goal to reduce observed achievement gaps and enhance persistence as part of all student groups as part of our institution's strategic plan known as PLAN 2028.

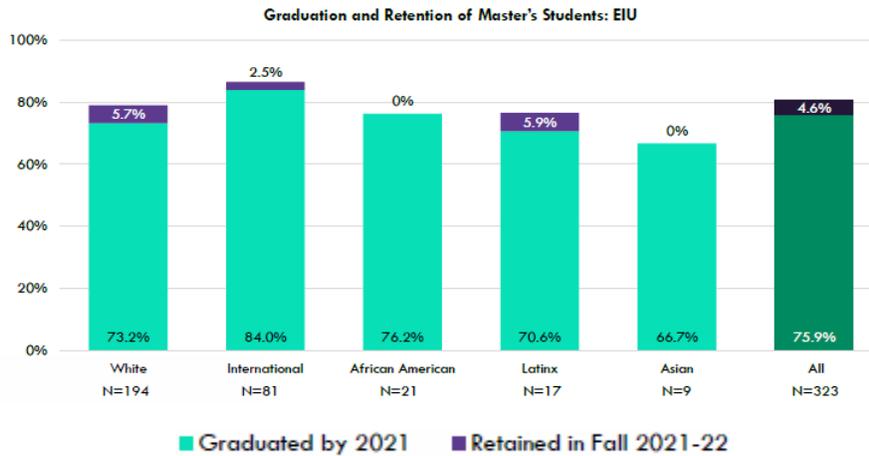
Each fall, the University leadership, in partnership with the IBHE reviews Equity-focused student outcomes data for all students. The IBHE data are shared with stakeholders across campus including the academic deans, academic advisors, Faculty Senate, and Council of Chairs. Additionally, the data are also shared with EIU's faculty "Think Tank", and the result was an exploratory analysis of student success focused on current grading practices<sup>1</sup>. The work of the "Think Tank" also coincides renewed discussions of EIU's grading system at the Faculty Senate, Council on Academic Affairs, Council on Graduate Studies, and the Student Government Association.



Source: IBHE (2023)

<sup>1</sup> See Abebe & Gillespie (2023) [https://thekeep.eiu.edu/think\\_tank\\_reports/1/](https://thekeep.eiu.edu/think_tank_reports/1/)

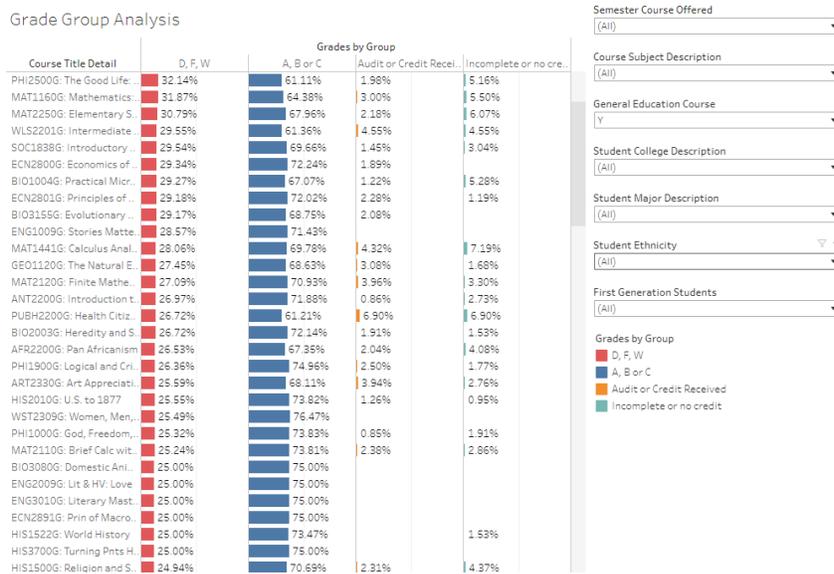
**No graduation gap between White and African American master's students at EIU.  
Small gap between White and Latinx master's students.**



Source: IBHE (2023)

In 2006, the University created the Committee on Retention Efforts known as CORE. Over the intervening years, CORE has focused on data analysis and focus has shifted from university-wide data to understanding the full range of enrollment management and student success dynamics within and between student groups. Additional information on CORE is available online at: <https://www.eiu.edu/core/>.

Additionally, CORE has heightened awareness and explored the “D, W, & F” rates of gateway courses across the curriculum to understand and eradicate observed performance gaps within and between student groups. The result has been the creation of a DWF dashboard for all courses across the University that can be analyzed based on student demographics (see below). These data have been used to inform the launch of a Spring 2023 initiative focused on course redesign that enhance inclusive excellence and student persistence.



In addition to student centered data, the University’s Office of Civil Rights presents an annual campus update on Title IX at the September meeting of the Board of Trustees. Faculty demographic data are summarized by the Office of Institution Research (OIR) and presented in an annual summary of faculty by gender, rank, and ethnicity as part of the University’s Annual Fact sheet ([https://www.eiu.edu/ir/fact\\_sheet.php](https://www.eiu.edu/ir/fact_sheet.php)). Similarly, the OIR prepares the required Agency Workforce Report (5 ILCS 410) that examines employee demography.

### 3. ASSESSING & TRANSFORMING OUR CLIMATE.

During the 2022-2023 academic year, we conducted a climate survey to evaluate campus-wide culture on a range of issues related to DEI. This data helps inform strategies for moving forward and will continue to be part of our efforts. The climate survey was coordinated by four faculty leaders—Dr. Angela Vietto, Dr. Catherine Polydore, Dr. Sace Elder, and Dr. Jeff Stowell.

The survey was sent to all students and employees with a response rate of 12.6% (n=820) and 37% (n=459), respectively.

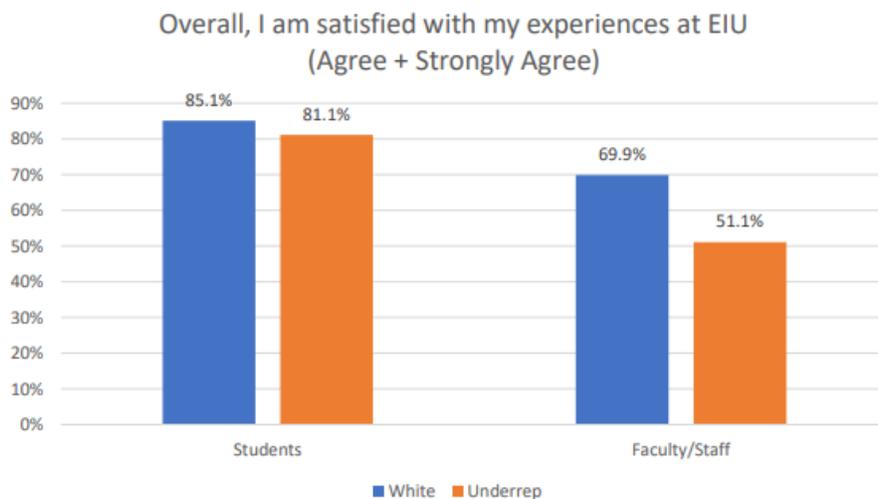
Student demographics for respondents were:

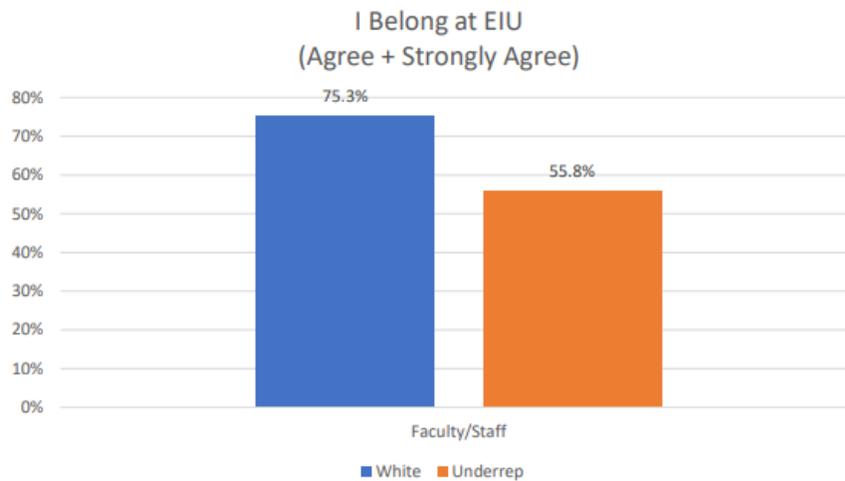
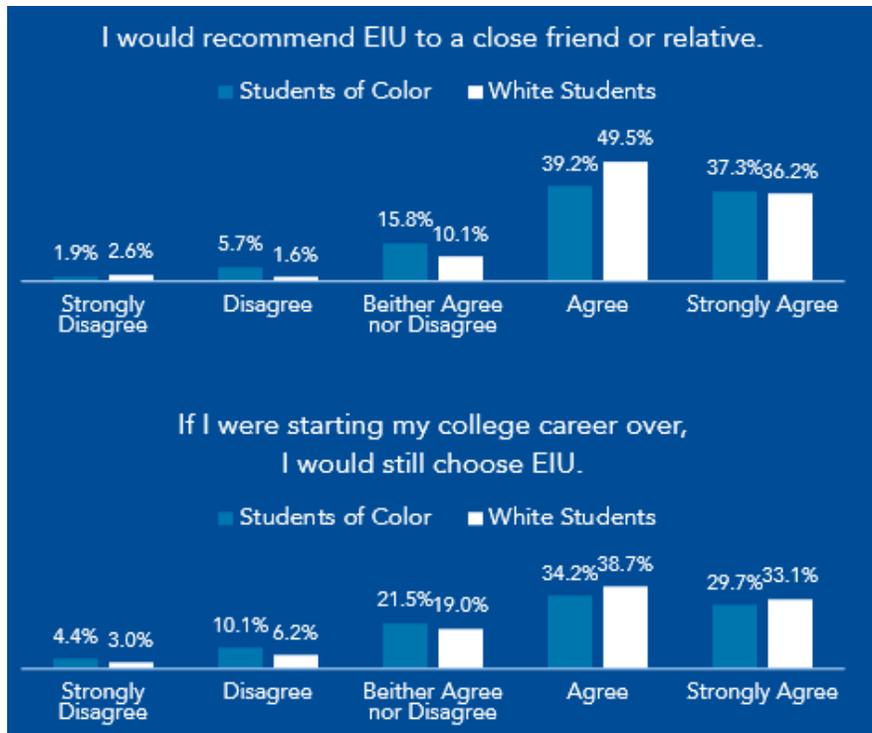
- 37.6% White
- 19.4% Underrepresented
- 42.9% Unknown

Employee respondent demographics were:

- 69.1% White
- 11.5% Underrepresented
- 19.4% Unknown

Below is an overview of summary questions related to satisfaction, belonging, and related EIU experiences. The full summary is available online at: <https://www.eiu.edu/qi/climate.php>.





In spring 2023, the campus climate survey was supplemented by the National Survey on Student Engagement’s (NSSE) thematic module on Inclusiveness & Engagement with Diversity. Using peer normed data, this optional module deploys a 27-question survey to assess the quality and richness of student curricular and co-curricular experiences relative to engaging with complex issues of diversity. The results demonstrates that EIU’s campus experience and commitment to inclusive excellence out-performs that of peer institutions on most measures based on the assessment and reflections of first-year students, as well as seniors. While there is always room for improvement, EIU’s campus experience does not perform statistically significantly below peers on any measure. The evidence demonstrates that the curriculum, as well as co-curricular programs are EIU consistent with our vision and mission for inclusive excellence.

Our NSSE survey module obtained the following results:

### **First Year Students<sup>2</sup>**

- Statistically Outperformed Peer Mean (n=9) 33%
- Exceeded Peer Mean (n=10) 37%
- Same as Peers (n=7) 26%
- Below Peer Mean (n=1) 4%
- Statistically Below Peer Mean (n=0)

### **Seniors**

- Statistically Outperformed Peer Mean (n=10) 37%
- Exceeded Peer Mean (n=5) 19%
- Same as Peers (n=9) 33%
- Below Peer Mean (n=3) 11%
- Statistically Below Peer Mean (n=0)

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<sup>2</sup> First year data are based on a minimum of 129 respondents per item with the total number of respondents being 130 participants. Senior data are based on a minimum of 153 respondents per item with the total number of respondents being 155 participants.

#### 4. STRATEGIES & PRACTICES FOR ENHANCING EQUITY.

The University has undertaken a number of strategic and intentional efforts to enhance equity across campus. The efforts include a campus-wide Quality Initiative, with the goal of expanding student support structures for underrepresented students and adding to the diversification of our campus employee base.

##### HLC Quality Initiative (QI)

Eastern Illinois University is undergoing its 10-year review through the Higher Learning Commission. Part of this process includes a “Quality Initiative;” (QI) to help diversify our workforce. At its core, our goal is to create a more diverse workforce that better reflects our student population and the state of Illinois through 36 initiatives. The full QI plan is available at: <https://www.eiu.edu/qi/>.

Our HLC-QI has a number of key priorities:

- **Hiring an Executive Director and Senior Diversity and Inclusion Officer:** This goal was accomplished in the fall semester 2023. Our SDIO will join our campus in January 2024 and build upon and identify new strategies for fostering a more diverse campus community with increasingly equitable outcomes. This position works in tandem with our Dean of Student Success, reports directly to the President, and sits on the President’s Council. The SDIO position, as well as the university president and campus community, will also be informed by a new Diversity Council.
- **Anti-bias training:** all individuals who are members of search committees for faculty, staff, and administrators are required to go through training to assist in the elimination of either explicit or implicit bias in evaluating job candidates. We have just completed the first semester of implementation and will continue with this program moving forward.
- **Diversifying Faculty in Illinois Fellowships:** This state-funded program is supported through IBHE and focuses on providing financial support of students of color who are from Illinois and seek careers in higher education. We chose to prioritize this effort within our HLC-QI and our strategic plan, PLAN 2028. In AY 2023-2024 at EIU, we are pleased to have four recipients of this fellowship. We will continue to aggressively market and support the DFI program, which benefits the state by providing significant resources to students of color to support degree completion and join the state’s workforce.

##### Student-Centered Activities and Support

Our HLC-QI efforts as well as the Illinois Board of Higher Education’s “Thriving Illinois” are advanced through a range of student support activities and initiatives that advance equity and diversity. Our Strategic Plan, “PLAN 2028”, echoes many of the HLC-QI goals, including the diversification of faculty and staff, the hiring of an SDIO, and calls for the diversification of alumni advisory boards, among other initiatives. PLAN 2028 (<https://www.eiu.edu/strategicplan/>) has two themes or pillars focused on addressing the student achievement and promoting improved equity outcomes for learners:



#### **Achieve: Achieve Success for All Learners**

ACHIEVE priorities align and invest in policies, practices, and resources that ensure every learner at EIU thrives. The ACHIEVE activities comprise a broad collection of strategic investments and student success supports. For Eastern Illinois University, ACHIEVE focuses on retention, learning outcomes, creating and maintaining active learning environments, adequate financial assistance, degree completion, career preparedness, and student wellness. ACHIEVE priorities leverage EIU's commitment to student success using a holistic array of academic and other organizational supports.



#### **Create: Create a 21st Century Campus & Culture**

CREATE priorities evidence a sustained commitment to all employees and students by cultivating belonging and creating a culture of care for all. CREATE accelerates efforts to innovate, invigorate, and reaffirm EIU's unique institutional identity. Echoing the IBHE's strategic plan, Plan 2028 advances EIU's shared values of diversity, equity, and inclusion for all students, employees, and community members. CREATE activities focus on investing in employee and learner wellness, knowledge creation, creativity, and belonging.

There are also a number of specific activities that focus on student success, which simultaneously and explicitly seek to eliminate the equity achievement gap. Notably, the Office of Inclusion & Academic Engagement<sup>3</sup> has launched targeted mentoring programs aimed at helping improve EIU students' success:

- The iSTEM Mentoring program aims to engage and support underrepresented students in the STEM fields by pairing students with both a peer and a faculty mentor.
- The FOCUS program offers one-on-one mentoring, pairing students with disabilities with peer mentors from the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations. FOCUS seeks to provide participants with the skills and support they need to achieve academic success at the college level.
- The S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring Program seeks out underrepresented male students and fosters a climate that will enhance their abilities to overcome challenges that may hinder them from graduating. Beginning in the Spring of 2023, S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring began coordinating an entire residence hall floor for both academic and social programming—including study nights and Alumni chats.
- Freshman & Transfer Connection (<https://www.eiu.edu/freshconnect/>) is new student program that serves all learners, provides peer mentoring, and partners with the instructors of EIU's University Foundations course (EIU1111), to provide academic support in the first semester.

Additional ways in which we address equity issues is through the creation of Academic Hubs, which are intended as spaces of belonging and academic enhancement. Our Hubs include the Latinx and Spanish-speaking Academic Hub, an Asian & Pacific Islander Hub, and the African American and African Diaspora

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<sup>3</sup> The Office of Inclusion & Academic Engagement result from a 2018 reconfiguration and definition of the former Office of Minority Affairs. OIAE's primary focus is on advancing equity-related student outcomes through mentoring and advancing student participation in high impact practices.

Hub in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. In the Lumpkin College of Business and Technology, we have the Hub for Leadership, Engagement, and Professionalism.

A Hub that will be developed this academic year is the family hub. It will provide support for students with young children, such that these students have spaces for their children while they make progress toward their degree. IBHE data indicates that more than 300 students, or approximately 7 percent of EIU's student population, are currently parents. The hub will be housed in Booth Library, and most importantly will include a private lactation room for families. This hub also includes an enhanced family study room so that young children can be brought to the university and be engaged. In addition, resources will also be used to enhance the collection of the Ballenger Teacher's Center, so that young children will have other books and materials to utilize while a parent is engaged in learning.

Our TRIO Student Support Services continues to directly impact our diversity and inclusion mission, given its focus on low-income students, first-generation students, or students with disabilities. EIU's TRIO program serves 175 students and works in collaboration with the Office of Inclusion and Academic Engagement to address issues that impact low-income and minority student populations.

Our annual RISE (Reaching Inclusivity for Student Excellence) conference also provides the campus community another opportunity for development and growth through its keynote speakers and research presentations devoted to the broadest possible range of DEI topics and issues.

Our Faculty Development and Innovation Center (FDIC) also intentionally fosters an inclusive teaching culture by providing pedagogical training on how best to implement inclusive teaching practices. The FDIC has formed reading groups focusing on inclusivity and has sponsored workshops focused on educating faculty on student equity issues related to learning.

### **Curricular Revisions**

All new academic programs specifically address and speak to the goals associated with THRIVE Illinois. Our most recent efforts focus directly on identifying student populations that benefit from increasingly flexible curricular options. Recently approved options include:

- The Bachelors of Applied Arts and Sciences, which allows students to utilize previous learning experiences and considerable internship opportunities toward their degree completion. Students can “earn and learn” as they make progress toward their degree. EIU has approved of new degree pathways in Applied Engineering, and Emergency Management. These degree pathways are aimed at students who opted out of traditional university pathways and provides new opportunities for degree completion.
- The Bachelor of Sciences in Health Sciences provides a range of study options for students interested in facets of the health care industry, including an option in “Diversity and Equity in Health” option.
- EIU is an active participant in the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity Act Program. Our curriculum offers degree pathways for Early Childhood Education and Human Services in collaboration with community college partners.
- Launched a first semester requirement for all new students with an incoming high school GPA below a 3.0 who are regularly admitted to enroll in EIU1111-University Foundations in Fall 2023.

## **Other Campus Initiatives**

In addition to curricular and academic innovations, EIU is also enhancing the scale and scope of student support services available to all students, as well as programs focused on meeting the needs of Pell Eligible students. For example, EIU is the recent recipient of two significant grants; one included the IBHE's "End Student Housing Insecurity" grant, which is aimed at addressing homelessness among university students. The second grant, on Mental Health on Early Action on Campus Act provides nearly \$200,000 in support for expanded mental health services including implementing an expanded stepped care approach, campus outreach programs, and pop-up mental health programs for students. Finally, EIU opened a campus food pantry in Fall 2021 to provide increased food security for all students.