



The Benefits of Diversity

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The City University of New York has long been guided by the principles of diversity and inclusion. These principles are interwoven into its mission and bolstered by empirical results of studies showing that diversity is essential to educational excellence. Diversity enables American society, and the academy in particular, to maintain intellectual leadership by harnessing the innovative capacity of the nation's entire talent pool. (*Beyond Bias and Barriers*, National Academy of Sciences 2006)

Educating and employing members of all segments of the nation's rapidly changing population is imperative to developing an educated workforce with the values, culture, and perspectives to provide solutions to pressing local, state, national, and international problems. (Grant-Thomas and Orfield 2009)

What are diversity and inclusion?

Diversity denotes an understanding of difference that includes many dimensions, including race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, age, national origin, socioeconomic status, and other characteristics of social identity. These interconnected differences serve as sources of knowledge, encourage new research, and contribute to the University's capacity to address societal issues, create new curricular areas, and develop new paths for engagement with external communities. (*CUNY Master Plan 2004-2008*)

Inclusion is the creation of a climate where all feel valued and appreciated, where there is meaningful interaction among groups, and where diverse groups participate in academic and administrative decision making, and barriers to inclusion—whether policies, practices, or systems—are identified and addressed. An inclusive environment embraces diversity's multi-faceted dimensions and allows students, faculty, and staff to thrive. (Brooklyn College *Diversity and Inclusion Plan 2008-2012*)

Diversity creates opportunities to engage in difficult dialogues about challenging issues—a central tenet of the academic experience. Findings document that students who interacted with racially and ethnically diverse peers both informally and within the classroom showed the greatest “engagement in active thinking, growth in intellectual engagement and motivation, and growth in intellectual and academic skills.” (Fine and Handelsman 2010)

Research supporting the benefits of diversity and inclusion offers a compelling reason for continuing efforts to increase diversity and foster an environment that allows all members of the University community to thrive. Sustaining and enhancing a culture of diversity and inclusion enables CUNY to capitalize on a multitude of skills, perspectives, and experiences in order to better advance its mission of research, teaching, and service. A diverse and inclusive environment results in a University community composed of members who are more thoughtful scholars; more effective collaborators; more creative teachers; and more efficient work teams. It also ensures that CUNY's students are prepared for a global and interconnected marketplace.

To learn more about CUNY's Faculty Diversity Action Plan, please visit www.cuny.edu/diversityactionplan.