

Policy on Equity and Inclusion

LIGS University is committed to the premise that to truly prepare students for life and work in an increasingly diverse society, postsecondary institutions must embrace diversity and equity within constitutional and legal parameters, commit to improving academic achievement for all students, create an inclusive university environment, and produce culturally competent graduates.

Definition of terms:

Culture – A distinctive pattern of beliefs and values that develop among a group of people who share the same social heritage and traditions.

Cultural Competence - An ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures.

A culturally competent individual -

- Has an awareness of one's own cultural worldview.
- Possesses knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews.
- Possesses cross-cultural skills to better interact with those from other cultures.

Diversity - People with varied human characteristics, ideas, worldviews, and backgrounds. Diversity in concept expects the creation by institutions of a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment that honors and respects those differences.

Equity - The creation of opportunities for historically underrepresented populations to have equal access to and participate in educational programs.

Guiding principles:

The vision and guiding principles of this policy address the needs of and support the success of all LIGS University community members by promoting an institutional climate of equity and inclusion.

The following principles shape the priorities that guide decisions about the promotion of diversity, equity, and inclusion:

- The recognition of diversity as a vital component of educational and economic development.
- An affirmation of the long-standing commitment to the enrollment and success of students who have not traditionally had access to higher education opportunities.

- The challenging of stereotypes and the promotion of awareness and inclusion.
- Support for community engagement, civic responsibility, and service that advance the interests of a global, diverse university community.
- Increased success for all students by enhancing rates of retention, persistence, and graduation for the total student population, regardless of location or background.
- The nurturing, training, and education of students with the ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures (i.e., cultural competence.)
- The preparation of graduates who are diverse, culturally competent, and highly educated to compete in a global economy.

Focus Areas: This Policy identifies three (3) focus areas:

1. Opportunity
2. Success
3. Impact

These are further described below with goals and strategies for each.

Opportunity = Recruitment and Enrollment of Diverse Students

Maintaining a diverse student body is an essential contribution to the educational experience of LIGS University students. Postsecondary institutions such as LIGS University have a responsibility to provide students with the opportunity to receive a rich and fulfilling educational experience that cannot be fully obtained without exposure to the different perspectives and cultures of those around them. Diversity of students, faculty members, staff, governing board, and all other stakeholder groups of a university helps to break down stereotypes. Diminishing the force of such stereotypes is a crucial part of a mission of LIGS University, which is open and available to all segments of society, including people of all races and ethnicities. As of June 2018 our students reside in 50 countries of the world scattered on 5 continents, which is a proof of success to our diversity mission. We believe that the importance of such openness is crucial especially in the context of higher education.

Benefits of a diverse student population (including but not limited to racial and ethnic diversity) include promoting cross-racial understanding, breaking down stereotypes, and promoting livelier and more enlightening discussion. A university student's diversity experience is associated with higher learning outcomes such as enhanced critical thinking skills, more involvement in community service, and a greater likelihood of retention and graduation. Efforts to prepare students to interact with and serve diverse populations in their career field upon graduation directly implicate diversity-related policies.

Success = Student Success

While maintaining a diverse student body is essential, LIGS University commits to helping those students be successful when they enroll in a university.

Several of these “success practices” are listed below:

- Common intellectual experiences such as webinars (colloquia) where our diverse students have an opportunity to meet and discuss with lecturers as well as with one another in open synchronous discussion forum.
- Learning communities and discussion boards where students are encouraged to discuss and share their knowledge and experience on course related as well as informal topics.
- Writing-intensive courses for students of all backgrounds to make sure every student has the same training in academic writing.
- Students are offered opportunities to perform sound, graduate-level research in areas that reflect their geographic, social and personal interests across a spectrum of topics relevant for a globally diverse student body.
- Diversity and global learning is represented by a richly diverse community of students, faculty, staff and leaders that is brought together in LIGS University.

Impact = Goals

LIGS University commits to setting annual goals for student success across the breadth of its student body, with an emphasis on individual performance in areas of:

- Retention
- Graduation

Strategies:

To meet the goals outlined above, LIGS University has identified strategies designed to increase student success across all student populations.

Strategies include:

- Success practices (described above).
- Individual academic advising.
- Mentoring programs.
- Alert system for student activity.
- Hiring and promotion processes that support a global faculty.
- Commitment to continuous improvement around cultural competency.

LIGS University commits to identifying and implementing strategies to promote equity and inclusion, and to monitor the community environment in order to resolve equity and inclusion issues. These strategies include:

- Grievance policies by which all community members may address and resolve equity and inclusion issues on a timely and fair basis.
- Faculty and staff hiring and development plans that support equity and inclusion.
- Opportunities for students, faculty and staff to participate in co-curricular activities on an inclusive and equal basis.