

**SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
SCP-1160**

- SUBJECT:** ~~Diversity Philosophy~~Philosophy on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- REFERENCE:** The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), ~~Position Statement on Inclusion~~Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Framework for Action, September 2020 (<http://www.aacc.nche.edu>); AACC and ACCT (Association of Community College Trustees) Joint Statement of Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Excellence in Student Success and Leadership Development (<http://www.aacc.nche.edu>); and ACCT Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, June 12, 2020 (<http://www.acct.org>)
- ORIGINATION:** August 20, 1998
- EFFECTIVE:** January 15, 2021
- REVIEWED:** ~~July 14, 2020~~November 8, 2024

SECTION 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To communicate support for, and adoption of the American Association of Community Colleges' (AACC) ~~“Position Statement on Inclusion~~Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Framework for Action,” and the AACC and ACCT (Association of Community College Trustees) Joint Statement of Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Excellence in Student Success and Leadership Development, and the ACCT Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

SECTION 2. SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

- 2.1 This policy applies to all programs, processes, employees, departments, units, committees, councils, and boards associated with Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College.

SECTION 3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 Diversity – A commitment to valuing and promoting differences, similarities, and characteristics that make groups and individuals unique in an atmosphere that promotes and celebrates individual and collective achievement. Examples of these characteristics are age, cognitive style, culture, disability (mental, learning, or physical), economic background, education, ethnicity, gender identity, geographic background, language(s) spoken, marital/partnered status, physical appearance, political affiliation, race, religious beliefs, and sexual orientation.

3.1.2 Equity – Consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as women and girls, Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; persons facing discrimination or barriers on account of gender identify; members of religious minorities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

3.2.3 Inclusion – Involves empowering and leveraging diversity in the workforce and student body by enabling individuals to contribute to their fullest potential through individual development, retention, and pluralistic work and educational processes. Marginalized groups can refer to individuals or communities that are

systemically disadvantaged or excluded from mainstream social, economic, political, or cultural opportunities due to various factors such as identity, background, or status. The goal of inclusion is to ensure that these groups are not left out and have equal access to rights, resources, and opportunities.

3.4 Pluralistic Work and Educational Processes – Work/education methods practiced in participation, consideration, and respect for members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, or social groups.

3.5 Underserved Communities – Populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of “Equity.”

3.3.6 Marginalized Groups – Groups of people who are subject to discrimination and exclusion in society, often based on characteristics such as race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, people of color, LGBTQ+, indigenous peoples, or people of a lower socio-economic status.

SECTION 4. POLICY

4.1 Southern believes that community colleges provide access to a broad spectrum of quality educational opportunities and life experiences. The College values diversity as an enhancement of those experiences in its classrooms, administrative offices, and board rooms. Southern is committed to policies that promote fairness and inclusion for all in the life of the College.

4.2 Southern is committed to fostering the advancement of community colleges, in part, by applying principles of equity and diversity within its organizations and promoting these values throughout the institution. Southern will foster an environment that honors, respects, and embraces the variety of its students; will create and maintain educational environments that are safe, respectful, and responsive and that will allow the students to attain their highest potential.

4.3 As a reflection of Southern’s commitment to equity, diversity, and excellence in student success and leadership development, it strives to promote fairness and inclusion in its own policies and practices.

SECTION 5. BACKGROUND OR EXCLUSIONS

5.1 None

SECTION 6. GENERAL PROVISIONS

6.1 Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College strongly endorses the continued use of admissions guidelines and employment practices that promote broad diversity in community colleges. Southern will pursue standards and guidelines ~~which allow it to fulfill its diversity~~that allow it to fulfill its diverse missions and visions. The students we educate will help provide tomorrow’s leaders, and their college experience must demonstrate the richness and substance of our diverse, multi-cultural, and global environment. The college environment should promote understanding and appreciation of others, while encouraging students to grow as individuals.

6.2 Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College reaffirms its commitment to diversity. In accordance with this philosophy, Southern strives to continually evaluate its hiring, admissions, and financial aid policies to ensure diversity and equal access within the institution. The College strives to ensure that the results of these evaluations conform to the concept of open access - the cornerstone of the community college mission.

6.3 Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College believes that diversity is crucial to a democratic

society. Southern will encourage and enhance the fullest understanding of human rights and responsibilities and should teach the skills that allow our students to ~~effectively participate~~participate effectively in a democratic society. Southern is responsible for shaping an environment that mirrors the general culture and creates opportunities for all within the College community to interact with understanding, tolerance, and respect for others. In this way, diversity in education not only serves as a model for the world at large, but ~~it~~ also helps perpetuate social harmony for the future.

- 6.4 Southern strongly endorses the adoption of policies and procedures designed to counteract and prevent hate crimes. Hate crimes are defined herein as crimes that manifest evidence of prejudice based on race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, or ethnicity, including, where appropriate, the crimes of murder, non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, aggravated assault, simple assault, intimidation, arson, and destruction, damage or vandalism of property.
- 6.5 Southern's belief, born of experience, is that diversity in its student body, faculty, and staff is important for it to fulfill its primary mission: providing a quality education. The reasons include:
- 6.5.1 Diversity in the institution's student body and workforce enriches the educational experience. We learn from those whose experiences, beliefs, and perspectives are different from our own, and these lessons can be taught best in a richly diverse intellectual and social environment.
- 6.5.2 Diversity in the institution's student body and workforce promotes personal growth and a healthy society. Diversity challenges stereotyped preconceptions; ~~it encourages critical thinking; and it,~~ encourages critical thinking, and helps students and employees learn to communicate effectively with people of varied backgrounds.
- 6.5.3 Diversity in the student body and workforce strengthens communities and the workplace. Education within a diverse setting prepares students to become good citizens in an increasingly complex, pluralistic society; it fosters mutual respect and teamwork, and it helps build communities whose members are judged by the quality of their character and their contributions.
- 6.5.4 Diversity in the student body and workforce enhances America's economic competitiveness. Sustaining the nation's prosperity in the 21st century will require us to make effective use of the talents and abilities of all our citizens, in work settings that bring together individuals from diverse backgrounds and cultures.
- 6.6 Achieving diversity on our campuses does not require quotas. Nor does diversity warrant admission of unqualified applicants. However, the diversity we seek, ~~and the future of the nation, does~~ and the future of the nation do require that we continue to be able to reach out and make a conscious effort to build healthy and diverse learning environments appropriate for our mission. The success of higher education and the strength of our democracy ~~depend~~ depends on it.

SECTION 7. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 7.1 All employees, supervisors, committees, councils, and boards making recommendations or decisions for the institution are responsible for supporting and promoting this diversity philosophy.

SECTION 8. CANCELLATION

- 8.1 None.

SECTION 9. REVIEW STATEMENT

9.1 This policy shall be reviewed on a regular basis with a time frame for review to be determined by the President or the President’s designee. Upon such review, the President or President’s designee may recommend to the Board that the policy be amended or repealed.

SECTION 10. SIGNATURES

Board of Governors Chair **Date**

President **Date**

Attachments: None.

Distribution: Board of Governors (12 members)
www.southernwv.edu

Revision Notes: September 2000 – Reformatted policy to the MAP system.

August 2010 – Revised to reflect current AACC Position Statement on Inclusion.

July 2015 – Policy reviewed for accuracy and no modifications are needed.

July 2020 – Revised to include the AACC and ACCT Joint Statement of Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Excellence in Student Success and Leadership Development.

November 2024 – Revised to include the ACCT Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, the current AACC Framework for Action, refined definitions, and corrections to grammar.