

University of Mary Washington: 2024 Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion Plan Report

The University of Mary Washington is pleased to share our report on the progress made within in our 2024 Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion Plan. To meet **Goal 1, Access and Success**, our **Objective 1, was to recruit, retain, and graduate underserved students**. We have accomplished this through funding received from the Pell Initiative in Virginia, which is sponsored by SCHEV. Funding was granted to institutions to increase Pell eligible students in college. To date we have secured over 5 million dollars which will be used to provide targeted and specialized outreach to eligible prospective students, to educate them about the financial aid process, and to virtually introduce them to students who have navigated similar life circumstances and persisted. Upon enrollment students are invited to participate in the Student Transition Access and Retention Services program which provides a pre-first year, for credit, academic summer bridge experience, customized advising and support throughout their entire college experience, a financial aid advisor who has been trained to handle any circumstances they may encounter, career support from staff, and social support from peers. There is also a targeted campaign to regain any Pell eligible students that have stopped out, which recently led to 16% of those students returning. We are also preparing to launch a partnership with regionally targeted high schools to build pre-college access opportunities.

Similarly, we have also been able to make good progress on **Objective 2: To increase campus accessibility** by implementing a plan for capital improvements to address campus accessibility issues. Thus far, our completed projects include: a new accessible entry lift in the Goolrick Hall Swimming Pool and the Hegmann Family Tennis Center Accessible Sidewalk project. Presently we are working to repair pavers along our main pedestrian throughway, Campus Walk for ease of navigation. We are in the design phase of the Battleground Athletic Complex (BAC) accessible restrooms construction and field spectator accessibility. We are also in the design phase of pending construction on our Westmoreland and Bushnell Residence Halls to create accessible rooms, elevators and ramps. Soon we will begin the bid process for similar projects in the Ball and Madison residence halls.

To meet **our second goal of maintaining a Welcoming and Respectful Culture** we initiated **Objective 1, celebrating our ASPIRE Community Values**. We have developed and implemented a plan to bring our core values (Accountability, Scholarship, Personal and Institutional Integrity, Inclusive Excellence, Respect and Civility, and Engagement) to life as a fundamental aspect of the student experience. During New Student Orientation, every student is introduced to our community values. The values are reinforced visually through postings in all classrooms, offices, common spaces, and through flags bearing the values on Campus Walk. They are discussed during university programming and in the classroom. And, they are celebrated annually during our campus tradition of ASPIRE Week. Created 4 years ago by an alumna and former SGA President, Ms. Jaylyn Long, ASPIRE Week highlights a different value in the acronym each day and involves every office and entity on campus, community partners, current students and employees, alumni, and friends of Mary Washington.

In support of **Objective 2, cultivating free speech and expression resources**, we are working to create an interdisciplinary program with curricular and co-curricular opportunities for participation focused on civil discourse and debate to support the free exchange of ideas and diverse perspectives. We are also providing training for students, faculty, and staff in having difficult conversations across differences. Since 2022, UMW has participated in a collaboration

between SCHEV and the Constructive Dialogue Institute that provides online modules to equip students to discuss complex and divisive topics, civilly. At UMW, all incoming new students, as well as many current student leaders, complete the modules. New students participate in interactive sessions that reflect on the material which are led by faculty and returning student leaders. Faculty and staff were also offered a series of training opportunities this spring and summer on the Perspectives modules and its content. In addition to this, campus administrators have been attending trainings to become informed on the Braver Angels debate model. A debate will be hosted on campus this upcoming academic year as a part of the VA250 celebrations.

To respond to **Goal 3, State Agency DOI Infrastructure & Training**, our first **Objective was to bolster mental health and well-being resources** through resource development, programming, and training. The University recently created the position of Associate Vice President for Health and Wellness (AVP) who will focus on developing a comprehensive, strategic focus on health and wellbeing for all community members, including students, faculty, and staff. The Talley Center for Counseling Services, the Student Health Center, Campus Recreation, and the Center for Prevention and Education will report to the AVP. Also, in summer 2024, the Dean of Students office launched an inaugural summer program for incoming neurodivergent first-year students called Soft Landings.

Finally, to meet **Objective 2: Continued focus on campus safety**, we maintained connections among UMW Police and students, faculty, and staff through convening regular meetings of the Community Advisory Board (CAB) that emphasizes community policing principles and the significance of safety to a vibrant campus life. Additionally, at the start of the fall 2024 semester, UMW Police Chief Mike Hall presented about campus safety to the entire faculty, showing campus safety videos and explaining the many campus safety resources. We have also invested in new security cameras and emergency blue light stations around campus to serve our campus community. As we prepare for a new academic year, we look forward to our plan to make continued progress on these goals and objectives that will guide us in the year to come.