

SEBS/NJAES Diversity Action Plan

Priority Areas, Goals, and Strategies

The SEBS/NJAES Diversity Action Plan is an aspirational document that expresses our unit's values about the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion, and a tool to establish tangible, achievable goals to guide practices and policies through 2027. Data was collected from all SEBS academic units in the initial phase of this planning process in early 2021 was used, to inform the development of the New Brunswick Diversity Strategic Plan. These goals provide the framework for the SEBS/NJAES Diversity Planning using the Diversity Strategic Planning Toolkit (<https://diversity.rutgers.edu/university-plan-process>). Our Goals align with the current Rutgers-New Brunswick DEI Goals.

Definitions: The terms diversity, equity, and inclusion have been defined by the Rutgers Office of Equity and Inclusion (<https://diversity.rutgers.edu/>).

Diversity is the variety of personal experiences, values, and worldviews that arise from differences of culture and circumstance. Such differences include race, ethnicity, gender and gender identity, age, religion, language, disability status, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, geographic region, and more.

Equity is the active work to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented full participation across differences in culture and circumstance, specifically redressing the exclusion of underrepresented groups in higher education. Attention to equity involves ensuring access, opportunity, and advancement for all students, staff, and faculty in every stage of education and career development.

Inclusion is the act of creating environments in which individual and groups feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued by eliminating practices and behaviors that marginalize. An inclusive climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions so that all people can fully participate in the University's opportunities.

Justice is the repairing and restoring of individuals and communities so that all individuals and communities can live a dignified life.

Goal 1

Recruit, retain, and support a diverse community at SEBS/NJAES that addresses the needs and aspirations of faculty, students, and staff.

Our ideal state is one in which our faculty, staff, and students reflect the diverse population of New Jersey, and that all members of our Rutgers community be heard and feel supported in their ability to thrive within our community.

1.1. Create a campus climate centered on belonging, dignity, and justice that strongly supports community members who are people of color, LGBTQIA2S+, disabled, of various faiths, and from all diverse identities underrepresented from academia and STEM.

1.1.1 Task our leadership and individuals to work with the University's leadership to support changes in policies to better support individuals with different family responsibilities, cultural needs, and abilities.

1.1.2 Conduct regular faculty, student, and staff surveys to monitor concerns about racial, ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic diversity on campus and actively encourage feedback from those that belong to specific underrepresented groups e.g., LGBTQIA2S+, disabled individuals, international students, etc.

1.1.3 Expand awareness of and support for diverse religious beliefs and cultural traditions that may impact the ability to attend and participate in certain functions.

1.1.4 To improve inclusion, develop a process that enables faculty, students, and staff to report problems and submit ideas to improve inclusion to the Executive Dean and SEBS/NJAES leadership.

1.1.5 Improve accessibility in both physical and online resources.

1.2. Expand the diversity of SEBS/NJAES faculty, in all title and tenure categories, to reflect the population of New Jersey and our students, and enable faculty to thrive in teaching, scholarship, and service.

1.2.1 Support departments in the recruitment, hiring, and retention of new faculty (tenure track (TT), non-tenure track (NTT), parttime lecturers (PTL)) to increase representation reflecting the diversity of New Jersey and Rutgers' student body.

1.2.2 Require diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) statements as part of the hiring, promotion, and tenure process at all levels across SEBS/NJAES.

1.2.3 Develop supportive structures for all SEBS/NJAES faculty, and particularly new faculty, to thrive.

1.2.4 Within the University promotion and tenure policies, develop and support strategies that acknowledge, recognize, and support DEIJ activities.

1.2.5 Provide supportive structure for postdoctoral fellows and associates that provides orientation materials on contracts, healthcare options, etc., as well as ongoing career development support, grant writing support, and mentoring and promote partnership with the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (<https://postdocs.rutgers.edu/>)

1.2.6 Provide clear expectations, training, and support for organized mentorship and professional development opportunities that support SEBS/NJAES faculty at all stages of their careers to ensure their continued development and growth.

1.3. Expand SEBS/NJAES staff diversity to reflect New Jersey and support a culture of inclusivity and opportunity.

1.3.1 Establish procedures that ensure more diverse staff applicant pools.

1.3.2 Support professional talent development and a pathway to promotion and advancement to support staff retention.

1.3.3 Introduce a new SEBS/NJAES employee onboarding welcome kit and DEIJ training for new managers and supervisors.

1.4 Create a more supportive educational environment to build success for a diverse student population that reflects New Jersey.

1.4.1 Create a DEIJ-focused undergraduate recruitment plan working with SEBS and Rutgers Recruitment offices, that identifies and reduce equity gaps by introducing our school to diverse external communities, with particular attention to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), multilingual, first-generation college student, and traditionally underserved (socioeconomic) communities employing definitions from federal agencies (NIH, NSF).

1.4.2 Support efforts to improve preparedness for prospective undergraduate students intending to come to Rutgers/SEBS, particularly in math and other prerequisite courses.

1.4.3 Support a welcoming environment for transfer students, with particular support for students from underrepresented groups.

1.4.4 Increase student retention to identify and reduce equity gaps through advising services that support students and provide specific interventions during critical times of need.

1.4.5 Support networks and identify community needs and equity gaps for students from diverse and underrepresented groups in STEM and in New Jersey.

1.4.6 Increase financial support for students from underrepresented, low-income, first-generation, and vulnerable populations, while remaining fully compliant with federal and state anti-discrimination laws and regulations and Rutgers' policies.

1.4.7 Expand diversity in graduate programs, with particular focus on underrepresented populations.

Goal 2

Build capacity to engage and lead efforts to support diversity and inclusion at SEBS/NJAES

Our ideal is to integrate DEIJ practices throughout SEBS/NJAES leadership practices. It is our responsibility to develop a leadership structure that is accessible, accountable, and evolving to meet the needs of the community. Our goal is to enable leadership to address instances of inequity, and encourage belonging by creating an environment where all students, faculty, and staff feel welcome and valued.

2.1 Integrate DEIJ into Executive Leadership for the school and NJAES.

2.1.1 Create a new leadership position (Associate Dean) responsible for promoting DEIJ at SEBS and NJAES in 2022.

2.1.2 Expand responsibilities and expectations to support DEIJ initiatives for all deans, associate and assistant deans, center/institute directors, chairs, undergraduate and graduate program directors, and functional group leaders within SEBS/NJAES.

2.1.3 Identify, support and engage a Faculty Diversity Advocate (FDA) in every department to promote cultural awareness and to assist in the development of diversity programs and initiatives.

2.1.4 Develop and cultivate a culture of ownership, agency, and responsibility within our community, empowering stakeholders to share their experiences and perspectives, and to foster open dialogue and understanding. Empower all stakeholders to recognize themselves as leaders in our diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) work.

2.1.5 Update the SEBS bylaws to include NTT faculty and staff representation, as appropriate, to SEBS-wide committees.

2.1.6 Develop and celebrate recognition awards for faculty, staff, students, and alumni who have an impact on DEIJ initiatives at SEBS, in our NJAES state offices, at the university, and at the national and international and national level.

2.1.7 Integrate Diversity Action Plan metrics into annual planning for departments, as well as the SEBS and NJAES strategic plan.

2.1.8 Expand, support, and raise awareness of conflict resolution and conflict mediation pathways for faculty, staff and students, using strategies reflected in the Rutgers NB diversity plan.

2.1.9 Leadership will create clearly defined and transparent inclusive leadership expectations, competencies, and mechanisms for ongoing self-reflection and incentives for growth, i.e., annual progress reviews, leadership trainings on DEIJ ideals and best practices, annual climate surveys for faculty, staff, and students, etc.

Goal 3

Promote Inclusive Teaching and Scholarship

Our ideal state is the integration of the diversity of lived experiences and the contributions of underrepresented communities in how we teach, research, engage, promote, and study science, environmental public policy, planning, and design including community engagement and cooperative extension.

3.1 Support curriculum development and delivery that addresses various forms of learning, engagement, and a range in levels of preparedness.

3.1.1 Support inclusive pedagogy such as universal design for learning (UDL) to enable inviting and engaging learning environments for all students with varied backgrounds, learning styles, and physical and cognitive abilities.

3.1.2 Integrate technology and modalities that assist students with physical disabilities.

3.1.3 Provide faculty training and support on strategies to navigate sensitive topics and discussions in classes and advising, such as environmental justice, racism, sexism, sexual orientation and gender identity, religion, politics, anti-poverty programs, etc., and/or partner with social/humanities professors to assist in these types of discussions.

3.1.4 Familiarize faculty with the Rutgers Statement on Professional Ethics (Policy 60.5.1) and provide training on this policy using case studies.

3.1.5 Faculty members who create a hostile learning environment will be held accountable, assuring appropriate due process and full involvement of appropriate university offices.

3.2 Develop new and enhance existing curricular and extracurricular opportunities and programs to support DEIJ in course delivery, engagement, and content development.

3.2.1 Work with faculty, UPD, GPD, and the CEP to add course content to incorporate diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice frameworks into discussions within the discipline.

3.2.2 Engage with allied departments and faculty across Rutgers to expand student access to courses that broaden perspectives on diversity in the sciences. Development of cross-listed courses, co-teaching, and course offerings within majors from disciplines/faculty across Rutgers who teach DEIJ.

3.2.3 Expand, develop and deliver programs, extracurricular, and academic experiences related to climate, environmental, and health justice.

3.2.4 Expand SEBS-specific programs (EOF, George H. Cook Scholars, etc.) and integrate with Rutgers undergraduate research programs (McNair, Project SUPER, SURF, RISE, etc.) that feature scholars from underrepresented populations.

3.2.5 OAP to convene with stakeholders (employers, alumni, etc.) to discuss meanings of educational and occupational success and to discuss possible improvements to curriculum.

3.2.6 Develop programs to support visiting appointments of scholars and practitioners who advance institutional diversity goals and foster DEIJ research and discourse.

3.2.7. Support programs and curriculum to use of the School as a Living Lab along with Study Abroad to promote DEIJ

3.2.8 Enhance our intellectual community by fostering research focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in the classroom and the community

Goal 4

Serve the Public Good and Expand Sustainable and Substantive Community Engagement

As Community Engagement is a core value in our work at SEBS and NJAES, our ideal state is to develop and sustain programs that serve local communities throughout New Jersey, and to integrate feedback to assess and evolve our programs to serve diverse communities' needs and aspirations.

4.1 Increase community engagement across undergraduate and graduate education and with alumni.

4.1.1 Promote opportunities provided by student clubs.

4.1.2 Communicate opportunities for community engagement to the SEBS community.

4.1.3 Increase experienced-based learning opportunities.

4.1.4 Support opportunities for alumni to volunteer and engage with students via campus activities.

4.2 Integrate inclusive practices and support for diversity in SEBS/NJAES communications and outreach.

4.2.1 Prioritize inclusive outreach and DEIJ materials in planning materials for SEBS/NJAES communications, including newsletters, recruitment materials, annual reports, social media, and events.

4.2.2 Establish a campaign to broaden the SEBS, Cook, and NJAES story to include more historic, current, and future examples of our commitment to DEIJ activities including website development.

4.2.3 Ensure that communication products reflect the diversity of our audience and tell the stories of community members' journeys with SEBS/NJAES in a manner that encourages a sense of belonging and supports current and future SEBS/NJAES staff, faculty, students, alumni, donors, and friends.

4.2.4 Compare SEBS/NJAES inclusive communications to those produced by Big Ten peers and develop a plan to become a model for inclusive practices.

4.3. Embrace the critical role SEBS/NJAES has in fulfilling Rutgers' Land-Grant Mission and Integrate DEIJ into our Land-Grant Mission.

4.3.1 Support events, media, fieldtrips, and other opportunities that invite the larger Rutgers community to learn about the land-grant driven mission and work of NJAES and Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) both on campus and across the state.

4.3.2 Build and support collaborative partnerships across Rutgers that support other community-engagement programs across Rutgers.

4.3.3 Build on the current SEBS/NJAES infrastructure for collaborations to foster strategic partnerships with HBCU, MSI, and 1890 Land-Grant Institutions in the US and with colleges and universities in Puerto Rico and other US territories similar to our international partnerships.

4.3.4 Integrate more urban populations into our community engagement initiatives affiliated with animal and plant agriculture, youth development programs, climate change and environmental justice, and food and nutrition education.

4.3.5 Support community food access and nutrition programs that serve diverse New Jersey communities.

4.3.6 Expand access to and information about the impacts of climate change, adaptations to climate change, and food system sustainability to reach underserved and underrepresented populations.

4.3.7 Expand participation in STEM and environmental programs offered by SEBS, NJAES, and RCE 4-H Youth Development by students in underserved and underrepresented communities.

4.4 Expand inclusive and accessible practices in outreach and engagement with communities adjacent to campus and throughout the state.

4.4.1 Create presentations and programs that reflect the diversity of the state.

4.4.2 Develop assessment tools and opportunities for community feedback on outreach programs to improve their quality, usefulness, and fit within communities.

4.4.3 Implement model for DEIJ-focused grant applications, necessitating shared leadership between Rutgers faculty/staff and community representatives.

Goal 5

Refine Systems, Policies, and Procedures: Develop an Institutional Infrastructure to Drive Change

Our ideal is to build common goals across Rutgers along with a coherent structure to support the goals, incentives, and accountability measures regarding DEI. Rutgers offers a welcoming environment, but we have work to do to combat aspects of our systems that contribute to a racially imbalanced, cis-heteronormative power structure favoring white male members of our society. The ideal is to remove the burden of addressing disparities and facilitating change from the individual, and to place it on the institution to produce outcomes that eliminate barriers to underrepresented communities.

5.1. Establish an inclusive institutional structure that enables full participation and accountability.

5.1.1 Review SEBS, NJAES, and departmental bylaws to ensure inclusive representation of faculty, staff, and students from excluded or underrepresented communities on committees and voting procedures.

5.1.2 Require annual progress reports on DEI for each Dean/Office, Department, Program, and Center/Institute with metrics designed specifically for the unit.

5.1.3 Conduct biannual climate surveys for faculty, staff, and students and integrate these findings into the revision to the plan and DEI-focused programs.

5.1.4 Conduct regular review of pay equity across positions and ranks to identify and reduce equity gaps.

5.1.5 Develop communication plan that gives annual updates on diversity and inclusion efforts and progress made on goals.

5.2 Create effective and supportive pathways for reporting and resolving DEI issues, complaints, and concerns.

5.2.1 Provide clearer guidance on the school website about avenues to report problems and DEI concerns within departments, SEBS/NJAES, and the university.

5.2.2 Provide training to chairs, undergraduate program directors, graduate program directors, administrators, and all stakeholder on Title IX and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act make resources for addressing harassment and discrimination widely available.

Appendix A: Diversity Action Plan Committee

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Troy Roepke - Associate Professor, Dept. of Animal Sciences, Co-chair

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