Creating a rubric for graduate admissions that includes diversity as a valued criterion can help foster a more inclusive and representative student body. Here’s how to develop a rubric that emphasizes diversity while maintaining fairness and academic rigor:

### 1. **Define Holistic Admission Goals**

* **Articulate the Program’s Commitment to Diversity**: Clearly state that diversity in academic, personal, and professional backgrounds is a priority. Emphasize the value of diverse perspectives in enhancing the program and academic community.
* **Identify Specific Diversity Metrics**: Consider broad aspects of diversity, such as race/ethnicity, socioeconomic background, life experiences, non-traditional educational paths, international experience, and fields of study. Be transparent about why these factors matter for the program’s goals.

### 2. **Select Core Admission Criteria with a Diversity Lens**

* **Establish Traditional Criteria**: Include academic and professional metrics like GPA, research experience, letters of recommendation, and relevant skills or experiences.
* **Add Diversity-Related Criteria**: Explicitly include criteria that value diversity, such as:
  + Overcoming adversity
  + Commitment to service in underrepresented communities
  + Contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts
  + Unique perspectives brought to the field or program (e.g., professional or life experiences)

### 3. **Create Scoring Descriptors for Each Criterion**

* **Develop Inclusive Scales**: For each criterion, use a scale (e.g., 1-5) with specific descriptors that acknowledge different types of valuable experience.
* **Integrate Diversity Descriptors**: Write descriptors that recognize non-traditional paths or diversity-related experiences. For example:
  + **5 (Excellent)**: Demonstrates a strong history of academic achievement, with contributions to diversity or involvement in programs supporting underrepresented groups.
  + **3 (Average)**: Shows good academic potential with some exposure to diverse environments or advocacy.
  + **1 (Poor)**: Lacks demonstrated academic achievement and has limited or no involvement in diversity-related activities.

### 4. **Weight Criteria Appropriately**

* **Balance Traditional and Diversity Criteria**: Ensure that diversity-related factors carry meaningful weight in the overall evaluation. For example, you might weight academic performance and diversity contributions equally if both are essential to the program’s mission.
* **Set Minimum Requirements**: Consider whether certain minimum academic criteria must be met to ensure that all admitted students can thrive in the program, while allowing diversity-related achievements to distinguish applicants.

### 5. **Gather Feedback from Diverse Stakeholders**

* **Engage a Variety of Perspectives**: Involve faculty, current students (including those from underrepresented backgrounds), and admissions staff in the rubric’s development.
* **Adjust for Equity**: Use feedback to ensure the rubric does not unintentionally disadvantage certain groups and that it values a range of experiences and perspectives.

### 6. **Pilot and Refine the Rubric**

* **Test the Rubric on Sample Applications**: Run a pilot review with the rubric on past applications or hypothetical cases to ensure it fairly evaluates a diverse pool.
* **Refine as Needed**: Make adjustments if the rubric favors one background or experience too heavily over others.

### 7. **Train Reviewers in Inclusive Evaluation**

* **Provide Implicit Bias Training**: Ensure that reviewers understand potential biases and how to use the rubric consistently and fairly.
* **Encourage Holistic Reviews**: Train reviewers to consider each applicant as a whole, with attention to how different aspects of diversity contribute to the program’s goals.

### 8. **Monitor and Revise Regularly**

* **Analyze Admissions Outcomes**: After each cycle, review admissions data to assess how well the rubric supported a diverse and academically strong applicant pool.
* **Solicit Feedback for Improvement**: Collect input from reviewers and newly admitted students to identify any areas for rubric enhancement.
* **Make Necessary Adjustments**: Adapt the rubric as needed to improve clarity, fairness, and alignment with diversity goals.

By following these steps, you can create an admissions rubric that both values diversity and maintains the academic integrity of the program. This approach supports a holistic evaluation process that enriches the program and the campus community.