

Sociology Department Statement on Inclusive Excellence

original 2016, updated August 2020

Deeply entrenched structural, cultural, and institutional systems have resulted in the accumulation of advantages for some members of the university community at the expense of others. This exclusion is particularly salient in the cases of African Americans, Native Americans, Latinxs, people of low socio-economic status, and women, who have a long history of being excluded from and marginalized within institutions of higher education. This legacy stands in opposition to our commitment to inclusive excellence.

In 2016, The Sociology Department's Inclusive Excellence Development Committee drew on numerous sources of data in crafting our Inclusive Excellence statement: responses to an anonymous, open-ended survey in which all department faculty, staff, and graduate students were invited to comment on the key inclusive excellence themes; input from three two-hour discussion groups in which all department members were invited to discuss the key inclusive excellence themes and drafts of this document; results of a 2015 Sociology Department Graduate Student Collective social climate survey; results from the 2014 CU campus-wide graduate student social climate survey; and written comments on multiple drafts of this document, on which all department members were invited to comment. This document does not reflect all input we received; rather, it reflects the most common answers to the three questions that the university asked us to pose.

"How does your unit define excellence?"

Our department conceives of excellence according to multiple criteria; some are indications of how we fare relative to other sociology departments, while others are not.

- 1) National and local recognition with regard to research and teaching. This includes a) having an excellent reputation for faculty and the department within and beyond academia, which includes communities relevant to specific sub-disciplines within and beyond the academy; b) the on-time successful graduation of our undergraduate and graduate students with strong training in sociology; c) regular and reciprocated communication of research findings to the local Boulder community and other interested parties; and d) regular publication of research in leading and other appropriate academic outlets and regular support of research through extramural support mechanisms.
- 2) Research and teaching that are innovative, creative, span many areas of expertise, help to address significant societal problems, and intentionally incorporate the perspectives of diverse scholars.
- 3) A shared sense of community and supportive climate within the department, including a) respect and appreciation for a diversity of faculty, students, career goals, interests, and skills; b) a clearly defined means to air and redress grievances; and c) professional behavior and collegiality.

"How does your unit define inclusion?"

Our department feels that being inclusive requires many things:

- 1) Respect, celebrate, and otherwise support different research methods, teaching approaches, areas of study, and career paths.
- 2) Actively cultivate diversity in demographic backgrounds (racial, ethnic, social class, and other differences) among faculty, students, and staff. Seek out and appreciate diverse perspectives, and help provide the financial resources needed to retain graduate students and faculty from diverse backgrounds.
- 3) Respect, value, and create a safe environment for diversity in identities, life experiences, and family compositions. All individuals feel safe to discuss concerns with confidence, that they will be heard and respected, and that they will receive thoughtful advice on how to address their concerns.
- 4) Being friendly and welcoming to department members, undergraduate students, prospective graduate

students, and external actors. Making one another feel appreciated in the workplace and beyond.

- 5) Maintain transparency in decision-making while also respecting privacy and confidentiality.
- 6) Ensure equal access to opportunities and information about important decisions, where appropriate (e.g., teaching assignments, research opportunities, grant application assistance, and summer funding).

“How does your unit define the values and behaviors associated with inclusive excellence?”

As stated in CU’s Inclusion, Diversity and Excellence in Academic Plans, we cannot be truly excellent unless we can guarantee access, equity, opportunity, and advancement to students, faculty, and staff who have experienced systematic disadvantage based on their societal status. Making excellence inclusive is an active, intentional process that engages with inclusivity in the classroom, research, and administrative activities. It requires not only acknowledging discrimination but also identifying and building effective practices to address it. In that vein, the Department of Sociology commits to identifying, challenging and removing barriers to inclusion within our department.¹ We seek to promote inclusive excellence by means of the following goals and practices:

- 1) Respecting, celebrating, and otherwise supporting different research methods, teaching approaches, areas of study, and career paths.
- 2) Securing resources for and making a commitment to increasing the recruitment, hiring/admission, and retention of diverse faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, and staff.
- 3) Becoming allies for one another in establishing an environment in which we all feel safe to respectfully disagree, express a diversity of opinions, and express grievances.
- 4) Supporting a department culture in which all department members feel empowered to speak up if colleagues (including faculty and students) behave in unprofessional or alienating ways. Holding ourselves and one another to high standards.
- 5) Recognizing that faculty and graduate student instructors can (and should continue to) make our teaching more inclusive, and implementing practices which do so;
- 6) Acknowledging that not all students currently have equal opportunity to succeed. Eliminating inequalities in opportunities among groups of students with regard to mentoring, research opportunities, funding, professionalization, and other issues. Creating additional opportunities for students from underrepresented or disadvantaged groups or identities to reduce those disparities;
- 7) Continuing to strengthen our mentoring of students from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds or identities;
- 8) Eliminating barriers to information about policies, procedures, and opportunities (e.g., with regard to scholarships, trainings, academic deadlines, and funding) so all students have access to such information.
- 9) Eliminating inequalities in opportunities among groups of students with regard to mentoring, research opportunities, funding, professionalization, and other issues. Acknowledging that not all students currently have equal opportunity to succeed. Creating additional opportunities for students from marginalized groups to reduce those disparities.
- 10) Encouraging faculty to be approachable to students seeking enhanced mentoring, and rewarding faculty who do so.
- 11) Committing to inclusive excellence and the periodic assessment of efforts in that direction. Recognizing that vigilance in evaluating progress toward inclusive excellence is everyone’s responsibility, and also that no one is

¹ In formulating this summary and definition of inclusive excellence for our unit, we drew on four sources: 1) CU’s definition (<https://www.colorado.edu/odece/diversity-plan/campus-definition-inclusive-excellence>); 2) the sociology department’s 2016 report on inclusive excellence (Appendix A); 3) the 2019 University of Colorado Inclusion, Diversity and Excellence in Academics (IDEA) plan (<https://www.colorado.edu/odece/diversity-plan/inclusion-diversity-and-excellence-academics-idea-plan>) and 4) diversity statements from peer sociology departments (e.g. University of Washington).

immune from the problems and consequences of exclusion.

- 12) Making an ongoing commitment to working toward inclusive excellence and regularly assessing such efforts. Recognizing that vigilance in evaluating progress toward inclusive excellence is everyone's responsibility, and also that no one is immune from the problems and consequences of exclusion.
- 13) Additionally, making a commitment to identifying and addressing systemic (as well as isolated) problems associated with our teaching, research, and service missions. Such problems could include failing to recognize the support needs of our underrepresented or marginalized student population, overburdening faculty of color with service obligations, failing to address diversity-related compensation inequities, and other problems indicative of inequitable treatment and expectations.
- 14) Identifying and implementing specific strategies for implementing the ideas in this statement.

