

Office of Sustainability Diversity/ Inclusivity Guide



sustainability | at the University
of Mississippi

This document was authored by Sustainability Fellow, Jade Chalkley in 2019 with the help of the staff in the Office of Sustainability Kendall McDonald and Lindsey Abernathy. Input and review was also provided by the Coordinator of Diversity Education, JuWan Robinson in the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement.

UPDATED: August 2020

Office of Sustainability Diversity Guide

The purpose of this document is to provide the Office of Sustainability staff and students with guidelines in order to advance inclusivity and diversity initiatives within sustainability at the University of Mississippi. This document is available for the public in order to ensure accountability and as a valuable resource to connect sustainability and inclusivity. Below are ways in which we aim to advance diversity and inclusion within the Office of Sustainability as well as resources that can be used individually.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 goals created in order to achieve a better and more sustainable world. The 17 Goals are interconnected and include aspects related to social, environmental, and economic problems across the globe. For the purpose of this guide we have chosen the following 7 that demonstrate the areas we will focus on in this guide.



GOAL 1: NO POVERTY Economic growth must be inclusive to provide sustainable jobs and promote equality.



GOAL 2: ZERO HUNGER The food and agriculture sector offers key solutions for development, and is central for hunger and poverty eradication.



GOAL 4: QUALITY EDUCATION Obtaining a quality education is the foundation to improving people's lives and sustainable development.



GOAL 5: GENDER EQUALITY Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.



GOAL 8: DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH Sustainable economic growth will require societies to create the conditions that allow people to have quality jobs.



GOAL 16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS Access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels.



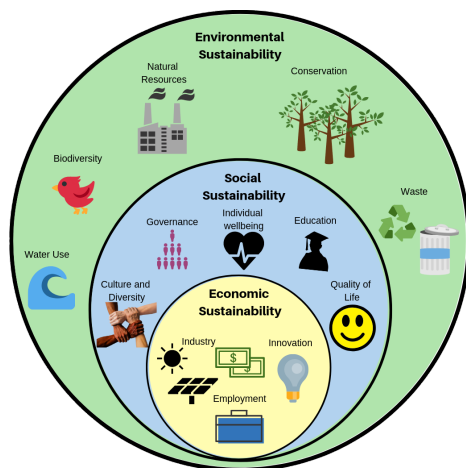
GOAL 17: PARTNERSHIPS Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

For more information about these goals or others visit <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals>

Diversity/Inclusion Statement:

“The Office of Sustainability is committed to focusing on and supporting innovative solutions to solve global problems while creating opportunities for inclusivity on the university campus. We strive to engage, empower, educate, and support faculty, staff, and students to foster the ideas of diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice within the University of Mississippi community.”

Sustainability in its most common definition means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future. This means ensuring that all people have access to safe communities, fair wages, clean air, green space, clean water, and healthy food, intergenerationally. By embracing a diverse community of voices we are better able to address sustainability challenges within vulnerable communities.



Inclusivity Practices Within Office Goals:

The Office of Sustainability incorporates actions to promote inclusion through office goals. As our office goals change and the University of Mississippi changes these action items will continuously evolve.

Goal 1: Advance sustainability at an institutional level and leverage our impact through cross-campus collaboration.



Actions that incorporate inclusion into this goal include:

Partnering with the CICCE, and Sarah Isom Center on events through avenues of funding support and communications; ensuring events are accessible; advocating for accessibility and affordable transportation in the campus planning processes; serving as a safe space for students and promoting programs that support underrepresented groups; adapting presentations to mitigate accessibility barriers.

Goal 2: Develop leaders among the university community



Actions that incorporate inclusion into this goal include:

Promoting equitable hiring processes; encouraging students to engage in campus events related to topics of equity, inclusion, culture, and justice; providing learning opportunities centered on diversity, equity, and inclusion to student staff; and assisting student leaders outside of the Office with Sustainability to reach larger more diverse audiences.

Goal 3: Increase collective knowledge around sustainability



Actions that incorporate inclusion into this goal include:

Ensure that all learning opportunities include information on diversity, equity and inclusion, history, and the connections to environmental and economic components of sustainability; collecting feedback on inclusivity for future improvement; equipping students with tools and on-campus resources; fostering growth and learning opportunities by providing brave space open-facilitated dialogues; including social sustainability concepts in all office presentations.

Indicators of success:

Below is a more detailed description of actions for Fall of 2020. Completing these actions and establishing a formal assessment process at the end of the academic year will be an indicator of success for Fall 2020-Spring 2021. These actions will be evaluated for their performance each semester.

Actions

Employee recruitment from underrepresented groups [Goal 1]

The Office of Sustainability aims to provide equal opportunity to sustainability jobs on campus. This includes encouraging a diverse applicant pool, providing entry-level opportunities, paid internship opportunities on campus, valuing inclusivity as a top priority in application processes, continually improving the workplace environment, and celebrating individual backgrounds of our staff.

In recruiting new permanent staff, the office plans to include a separate additional diversity statement on university applications starting in 2020. In hiring part-time student employees in addition to areas of sustainability, the office recruits from areas on campus that work with minority students, including the Office of International Programs, the Center for Inclusion, and Cross-Cultural Engagement(CICCE), and the Sarah Isom Center.

Employee Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training [GOAL 2]

In 2018, the Office of Sustainability began providing bias training from the CICCE to all student interns in the office as a requirement of the internship. Beginning in Fall 2019 this training was modified to be a module of the internship conducted internally by the office in which students learned bias and inclusivity content as well as its connection to sustainability work. This training, as well as the additional reading and discussion part of the module, includes a history of the environmental movement within minority groups, the cultural context of the University of Mississippi, the connections between climate disasters and disproportionate impacts, resources for students experiencing bias or discrimination, and more.

The Office of Sustainability staff completes the HR orientation courses that encompass Diversity and inclusion as a requirement including 'Title IX' and 'The Respect Advantage'. Staff are highly encouraged to also attend 'University Allies Training' once per year as well as additional diversity training from either the Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Community Engagement office or HR. All office staff are also required to read the Office Diversity Plan and be familiar with the connections between diversity/ inclusion and sustainability. The Sustainability Fellow job description includes a commitment to social justice and an evaluation of this plan.

Presentations [GOAL 1]

The Office of Sustainability aims to include social sustainability components to help increase awareness during office presentations. All presentations given by the office should include a social component that discusses the overlap between social justice issues and environmental issues. Presentations will also include resources and organizations focused on providing access and inclusive environments. Specific presentations may be tailored for diverse and unique audiences and to adapt to accessibility barriers including, courses focused on social justice, and intensive English classes with presentations that promote interaction as well as education on sustainability topics for an international audience.

Events [GOAL 3]

The Office of Sustainability aims to include social sustainability components to help increase awareness during office events. Groups, departments, and organizations that represent social justice and minority groups invited to participate in events. In addition, whenever possible the Office of Sustainability works to partner on events supporting diversity and inclusion as well as to encourage different audiences to our own events.

In 2019, examples of event partnerships include:

The Environmental Film Screening "JANE"

This Film Screening was a partnership with the Sarah Isom Center and UM's environmental studies minor in celebration of Women's History Month.

Green Week Keynote Speaker Drew Lanham

Students and faculty members at Rust College, a historically black liberal arts college, were invited as guests to meet and discuss race and involvement in conservation in Mississippi as well as attend his presentation. Partnerships for this event included Rust College, Strawberry Plains Audubon Center and UM's Environmental Studies minor.

Food Day

Organizations invited to promote inclusion and wellbeing. RebelWell and UM Food Bank attended as organizations encouraging a reduction of food insecurity as well as access to healthy food.

Opportunity [GOAL 2]

Several volunteer opportunities are offered each semester that are open to all students and are great opportunities to get connected to the office. By being involved in our office programs, students are able to gain competitive experience that is beneficial when applying to paid positions. We strive to make all volunteer opportunities as accessible as possible. Currently, the office offers transportation for volunteer opportunities in an effort to make these opportunities accessible to students without cars or personal transportation and selects volunteer sites that are wheelchair accessible when possible. The office will continue to make changes and acknowledge suggestions in our less accessible opportunities.

Additional Information

Definitions:

Sustainability

Sustainability is a multi-disciplinary, problem-solving approach to creating a social system that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations or the needs of the ecological systems in which humans exist.

Diversity

Individual differences (e.g., personality, prior knowledge, and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations). (*Making Excellence Inclusive. In Association of American Colleges & Universities. Retrieved from <https://www.aacu.org/making-excellence-inclusive>*)

Inclusion

The active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity—in the curriculum, in the curriculum, and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect—in ways that increase awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions. (*Making Excellence Inclusive*. In *Association of American Colleges & Universities*. Retrieved from <https://www.aacu.org/making-excellence-inclusive>)

Equity

The creation of opportunities for historically underserved populations to have equal access to and participate in educational programs that are capable of closing the achievement gaps in student success and completion. (*Making Excellence Inclusive*. In *Association of American Colleges & Universities*. Retrieved from <https://www.aacu.org/making-excellence-inclusive>)

Campus Resources

[Center for Inclusion and Cross Cultural Engagement](#)

The Center for Inclusion and Cross Cultural Engagement works enthusiastically to develop programs and services that support the University of Mississippi's core value of inclusiveness. The center works to foster an environment that is characterized by open and ongoing communication that deepens students' understanding of their own and others' identity, culture and heritage.

[Bias Incident Response Team](#)

The Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) is an educational, non-judicial team that provides the University of Mississippi community education, support, and appropriate resolution in response to bias-related incidents. BIRT is a voluntary process to report bias-related incidents. BIRT is not a disciplinary process and does not function in lieu of any disciplinary or complaint processes within or outside of the University.

[Sarah Isom Center for Women and Gender Studies](#)

The Sarah Isom Center for Women and Gender Studies educates about issues of gender and sexuality, promotes interdisciplinary research, and advocates for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

[Office of Global Engagement](#)

The Office of Global Engagement (OGE) is responsible for the development, promotion, and support for all global engagement activities on campus. OGE aims for a comprehensive internationalization of the university, and the development of students, faculty, and staff as global citizens.

[MPride & Allies at Ole Miss](#)

MPride & Allies aims to develop and maintain a network of informed students, faculty, and staff who can respond knowledgeably and sensitively to LGBTQ+ students' needs and who are willing to be visibly supportive of students who identify themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer. The ALLIES program seeks to empower individuals and groups with the skills and training necessary to communicate to others the commitment to creating LGBTQ+ inclusive environments, effectively putting into practice the university's core tenants of inclusion, civility, dignity, and diversity. The M-PRIDE program equips LGBTQ+ students to cultivate their authentic identities and become proud, engaged, and empowered members of the UM community.

[Student Disability Services](#)

Student Disability Services leads the university in its commitments to recognize disability as a valued aspect of diversity, to embrace access as a matter of social justice, and to design more welcoming and inclusive environments.

[Veteran & Military Services](#)

Veteran & Military Services (VMS) works to provide comprehensive resources to veterans, military, and dependents to aid in their overall success as Ole Miss students. As part of the Center for Student Success and First Year Experience, VMS assists students with certification requirements to receive VA Education Entitlements with the GI Bill®, as well as provide advice, guidance, advocacy, and outreach services for our military-connected student population.

[Division of Diversity and Community Engagement](#)

The Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (DCE) supports the mission of UM by transforming people, institutions, and communities through partnership, access, and engagement that fosters belonging, enriches learning and development, enhances research, and creates equitable opportunities for all.[JR1] DCE actualizes its mission through the fulfillment of its values of mutual respect, equity, access and opportunity, learning and development, collaboration, responsibility, and civic leadership. Established in 2017, DCE is led by Interim Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Community Engagement, Dr. Shawnboda Mead. Under the leadership of Dr. Mead, DCE provides training expertise on diversity, equity, and inclusion, actively supports the success of underrepresented faculty, staff, and graduate and undergraduate students, leverages community engagement in research, teaching and learning, and provides strategic leadership to the university.

Online Resources/ Organizations

The following are organizations and websites to learn more about the intersections of underrepresented groups and environmental concerns. This is an active document and quality resources will be added as found. To recommend a resource to include email green@olemiss.edu.

Gender/ Sexuality

OUT4S is the leading (and only) LGBTQ nonprofit dedicated to our social and physical environment, making a difference by its very existence to bridge queer identity and sustainability values. <https://out4s.org/>

This short guide by the Stonewall organization in the UK demonstrates some of the ways LGBT equality can be achieved with the 17 global sustainable development goals. <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/system/files/sdg-guide.pdf>

GLAAD article on climate change as an LGBTQ issue.
<https://www.glaad.org/amp/no-planet-b-why-climate-change-is-an-lgbtq-issue>

As a global women's advocacy organization, WEDO envisions a just world that promotes and protects human rights, gender equality and the integrity of the environment. <https://wedo.org/>

Accessibility

The relationship between digital accessibility and web content to sustainability.
<https://www.mightybytes.com/blog/digital-accessibility-series-part-one/>

UN flagship report on disability and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Disability and Development Report on the "Realization of the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities".
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/publication-disability-sdgs.html>

Racial/ Ethnic

Environmental injustices, including climate change, have a disproportionate impact on communities of color and low income communities in the United States and around the world. The NAACP ECJ Program was created to provide resources and support community leadership in addressing this human and civil rights issues.
<https://www.naacp.org/environmental-climate-justice-about/>

This Climate Justice Alliance blog post is about leadership in black communities and racism in the environmental movement.

<https://climatejusticealliance.org/black-communities-must-center-environmental-movement/>

Outdoor Afro is a national non-profit organization with leadership networks around the country. Outdoor Afro has become the nation's leading, cutting edge network that celebrates and inspires Black connections and leadership in nature.

<https://outdoorafro.com/about/>

GreenLatinos is a national non-profit organization that convenes a broad coalition of Latino leaders committed to addressing national, regional and local environmental, natural resources and conservation issues that significantly affect the health and welfare of the Latino community in the United States. <http://www.greenlatinos.org/>

The Hispanic Access foundation initiatives include programs and grassroots outreach efforts are aimed at empowering and inspiring individuals to improve themselves and their families and, in turn, strengthen their communities and their country. Many resources provided focus on aspects of sustainability and environmental stewardship. <https://hispanicaccess.org/>

The Sierra Club is the most enduring and influential grassroots environmental organization in the United States. Check out resources from their page focusing on forms of environmental justice. <https://www.sierraclub.org/people-and-justice>

Income

The World Economic Forum explains in an article why income inequality is bad for the climate.

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/income-inequality-is-bad-climate-change-action/>

The Mercy Corps explains in an article the influence of climate change in poverty

<https://www.mercycorps.org/blog/climate-change-poverty>

The Global Citizen explains in an article the links between poverty and climate

<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/climate-change-is-connected-to-poverty/>

*Visit our [youtube page](#) for a collection of video resources.

*Check out the [Office of Sustainability reading list](#) for books containing themes of inclusivity and the environment.

Timeline of renewal

Informal Assessment each semester and Formal Assessment at the end of each academic year.

Fall Semester: Informal Assessment

Spring Semester: Informal Assessment

Academic Year (Summer): Formal Assessment

Assessment Guidelines

Informal Assessment:

- Programs that were conducted around diversity/inclusion are debriefed and recorded.
- Recurring semester programs (training/ hiring practices) are evaluated to find improvements to implement.
- Areas that did well and areas that could be improved are recorded as notes.

Formal Assessment

- Notes from Informal Assessments are compiled.
- Areas for improvement for current and future programs are analysed and discussed with staff.
- Guide is reviewed in full and discussed for improvements.
- Office definitions, missions, and goals are updated as needed.
- Actions are adapted or added to fit new needs.
- Progress report is completed and added into the guide.
- Updated guide should include and align with evolving goals of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement.

*Note: The Office of Sustainability should work with the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement whenever possible when evaluating this assessment and challenges. This document should remain an active document at all times in order to allow for the integration of future plans and assessments from the university.