
Resource Guide:

Departmental Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging Committees

1. Development

Mission statement:

A Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DIB) committee is a standing committee with a clear mission and charge to target and enhance the equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging within a department. The committee's mission should align with the core values of the FAS, and specifically, your department.

Example:

The Fine Arts Diversity Committee (FADC) supports and collaborates with the College of Fine Arts (COFA) units in the design and implementation of strategies that advance diversity. By actively establishing and fostering a culture of inclusivity throughout the college community, the committee assists in the development of recruitment and retention strategies for underrepresented students, faculty and staff; provides forums for mutual respect, an appreciation of differences, and cross-cultural understandings; and prepares our community for a changing global society.¹

Harvard's Five Core Values:

1. Respect the rights, differences, and dignity of others
2. Demonstrate honesty and integrity in all dealings
3. Pursue excellence conscientiously in one's work
4. Be accountable for actions and conduct in the community
5. Cultivate bonds and bridges that enable all to grow with and learn from one another

¹ Fine Arts Diversity Committee – College of Fine Arts, The University of Texas at Austin.

Department DIB analysis and reflection:

For lasting institutional change, it is imperative to assess the current climate of the department. Collect and analyze current data or conduct a self-assessment. The Committee should work to actively engage all stakeholders in the department.

Vision and goal setting:

Your goals may change over time as the community's needs shift. Climate surveys serve as a valuable resource to identify goals. The committee's goals may take the form of process-oriented goals² and/or project initiative goals.³

Goals should include, but are not limited to:

- Identifying and engaging all stakeholders
- Proactively identifying problems and areas of concern
- Ensuring service balance within the committee
- Advising the Chair on DIB-related issues
- Initiation of and assistance with the implementation of DIB initiatives
- Aligning the department's climate, policies, and actions with the University's values on diversity, inclusion, and belonging

2. Membership, Structure, and Facilitation

As you establish and develop your Committee, consider the dynamics of working across power and privilege. A strong DIB Committee includes representation from all constituencies — undergraduates, graduates, post-docs, staff, and faculty — and works both to acknowledge and address power imbalances.

For example, colleagues and students of color may struggle with impostor syndrome⁴, rooted in the lack of access to power and privilege in academia. Students may hesitate to speak candidly due to fear of retaliation from faculty or mentors. All Committee members must acknowledge their privilege and positionality. Accountability is crucial. Utilize development opportunities that focus on self-awareness and navigating difficult conversations.

² Process-oriented goals focus on promoting members' personal and interpersonal growth as advocates and allies for diversity, inclusion, and belonging

³ Project initiative goals seek to be action components to develop initiatives to promote equity and inclusion within the department and community.

⁴ The Imposter Syndrome, sometimes known as the Imposter Phenomenon or IP, can be defined as a collection of feelings of inadequacy, particularly around one's academic or professional abilities. The feelings persist even in the face of information, which indicates the person's validity and successes. This is because the Imposter Syndrome is experienced internally as chronic self-doubt, anxiety, and low self-esteem.

Additional considerations:

- Be very clear about what the committee is and what it isn't: DIB committees should not be solely responsible for creating initiatives, sustaining DIB engagement, or monitoring compliance with DIB policies and goals. DIB is your entire department's responsibility. The FAS ODIB is an additional resource and consultative partner to support you in addressing unmet needs within your department.
- Clarify the resources available to support your DIB committee.
- Your structure may look different than other DIB committees — develop a structure that works for your department.
- Consider the faculty to student ratio of the committee membership
- Smaller working groups may be useful for focusing on specific goals, initiatives, or areas of concern
- DIB work is tiring, and often falls to members of marginalized groups. Avoid overburdening — consider a policy of rotating membership and establish norms that facilitate flexibility.
- Identify and rotate additional roles (i.e., timekeeping, note-taking)
- Fostering a safe space is crucial for trust and validation, particularly for those holding marginalized identities.
- Ensure that the members of the committee have developed a shared understanding of terms and goals.
- Checks and balances make for fair, effective DIB committees. Consider a leadership structure that helps facilitate this (i.e., select two co-chairs from different constituent groups).
- Identify the recurrence and length of meetings.
- Designate time for members to express their specific interests regarding DIB.
- Committee members should practice and train in facilitating and navigating difficult conversations.
- Establish community agreements and group norms.

Community Agreements:

- Listen for understanding
- If you are offended, say so and why
- You can disagree but don't personalize
- Speak for yourself, not others (speak your truth)
- Step up, step back or share "airtime"
- Expect and accept a lack of closure
- Draw your own boundaries and respect each other's
- Silence is okay
- Share responsibility for the quality of the discussion.
- Confidentiality: it's okay to share ideas and themes, but not what individuals say.
- Prepare
- Be present. Turn off cell phones.

3. Initiatives

DIB committees should focus on initiatives that serve the department’s main area of concerns. Committees should consider two types of initiatives: “low-hanging fruit” and aspirational. The chart below includes suggestions for a variety of different initiatives.

Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foster collaboration• Assess who is performing promotable and non-promotable service
Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examine departmental policies, procedures, and practices• Identify and/or sponsor learning opportunities that provide constituents with an understanding of current challenges, resources, and best practices• Conduct diversity audits of seminar speaker line-ups and programming• Publicize diversity statement definition on webpage• Diversity panel
Curricula	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include diversity statements in syllabi• Include inclusive citation requirements in assignment rubrics• Support undergraduate outreach to promote engagement in experiential learning
Faculty and Staff Hiring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Utilize implicit bias training• Require applicants to demonstrate their commitment to diversity
Graduate Admissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Publicize affinity groups on webpage• Partner with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)• Partner with tribal colleges and universities
Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish office hours, staffed by committee members, for anyone who would like to discuss DIB-related issues or ideas• Partner with other committees to examine intradepartmental mechanism (e.i., graduate student recruitment, faculty searches, curricula)

4. Implementation and Action Plans

Implementation plans can serve as a roadmap towards your department's goals. A good implementation plan clearly details:

- Overall responsibility and leadership for the initiative as a whole as well as for each goal and deliverable
- Coordinated timeline that locates the strategies to reach short- and long-term goals
- Mechanisms for remaining flexible and responsive to change (i.e., regular progress checks)
- Communication strategy to share implementation plans and their progress

Example:

Initiative: Build cultural competence and establish inclusive decision-making practices within the department

Project Leads: Committee co-chairs

Action items: Cultural awareness and competency training, team-building exercises, ongoing dialogue regarding diversity and inclusion with DIB Committee one on one as well as during team meetings.

Timeframe: Cultural awareness and competency training: within 6 months; team-building exercises: monthly meetings; ongoing dialogue: as needed and ongoing during member interactions and meetings.

5. Measure and Report Outcomes

It is imperative to measure the results of DIB initiatives that have been implemented. Outcomes such as increased representation of identified groups and improved climate survey scores should be captured. Other measurements, such as improved staff and student retention, and public recognition, such as awards or social media accolades, can also indicate how a department is performing in its DIB initiatives. Although some efforts may seem intangible, there are measures that can indicate the success levels of such action items. For example, if DIB training is implemented to increase retention, participant retention can be tracked over time, and participants can be surveyed to determine if training was a factor, and how much so, in their continued employment.

The results of the initiatives should be communicated at all stakeholders to demonstrate the value to the department. Communication tools can include infographics for senior leadership meetings and public affairs, memos to staff, and outward facing for potential candidates.

6. Communication Plan

The results of the initiatives should be communicated at all levels to demonstrate the return on investment and value-add to the department. The committee should identify different stakeholders and customize messages to inform, educate, engage or empower as appropriate. People vary in how they understand messages, and it is important for each person to receive an ongoing stream of communications about the initiatives. The communication plan should incorporate presentations and all available media, including social media. Newsletters, intranet, and e-mail can also be successful communication tools. The Committee should use metrics and success stories to connect the DIB efforts to its own goals and strategic plan.

Faculty	Staff	Student
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Town Halls• Department meetings• Annual reports• Visiting Committee Reports• Facilitated focus groups• Newsletters from the Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Memos• Newsletters• Department meetings• Facilitated focus groups• Newsletters from the Dean• Retreats and professional development opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Town Halls• Social media• Facilitated focus groups• Student-led groups• Website• Newsletters from the Dean

7. Review and Adjust

DIB initiatives are not static – an ongoing review of the climate and a response to changing needs is necessary. The Committee must establish procedures for periodic review of DIB initiatives and goals. After a DIB initiative has been implemented for a period of time, constituents should be surveyed regarding their perceptions of the Committee’s efforts. Periodically, an organization may need to return to step 1 (development) and collect data to refocus its DIB program.

Committees should execute mid-point and final reviews throughout the implementation of strategic plans. Mid-point reviews are held to share progress updates, new partnerships, collaborations, and tools, and to make any revisions needed in your plan in order to reach your goals. These reviews should be used to communicate to your stakeholders on the Committee’s approach to critical issues and advancing the department.

Final reviews should be held at the end of the strategic plan. This can take form of a peer review panel hosted by the department chair, divisional chair, or FAS ODIB. The outcomes of the reviews should be used to launch the next round of strategic planning.