Graduate and Professional Student Senate (GPSS) Equity Resource Guide and Toolkit

Fall 2024

GPSS

**GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL
STUDENT SENATE**

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Translate the Equity Toolkit to Your Preferred
Language : Translate

Introduction

↘ Purpose of the Toolkit

The Equity Toolkit is designed to empower graduate and professional students at the University of Washington to advocate for equity and inclusion within our community. This resource provides insights, strategies, and connections to foster a more inclusive environment for all students.

↘ Key Terms

Diversity: The presence of differences that include various characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, and disability.

Equity: Ensuring fair treatment, opportunities, and advancement for all individuals, while striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have historically led to unequal outcomes.

Inclusion: Creating environments in which any individual or group can feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued.

How to Use this Toolkit

Explore the Sections: Start by reviewing each section to understand the various aspects of equity and inclusion. Each part provides valuable insights and resources tailored for graduate and professional students.

Identify Your Needs: Reflect on the challenges you face or observe in your community. Use the toolkit to find strategies and resources that address those specific barriers.

Engage with Resources: Take advantage of the articles, videos, and external links provided throughout the toolkit. These resources offer deeper insights and practical advice.

Implement Best Practices: Apply the best practices outlined in the toolkit to your meetings, events, and interactions. Consider how you can foster inclusivity in your own spaces.

Advocate for Change: Use the advocacy strategies to speak up for yourself and others. Whether it's through individual action or collective organizing, your voice matters.

Provide Feedback: Share your experiences using this toolkit and any suggestions for improvement. Your input is crucial for keeping the toolkit relevant and effective.

Stay Informed: Check back regularly for updates and new resources as the toolkit evolves to meet the needs of the community.

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→ Understanding Equity and Inclusion

Intersectionality

"The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage". It's a tool for understanding how power and privilege are structured differently across groups of people, and how these structures shape inequality. Understanding intersectionality is crucial; various identities can intersect to create unique experiences of privilege and oppression. Awareness of these nuances can enhance our approach to equity.

In essence, however, intersectionality is "a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power." - Kimberlé Crenshaw, 2015
SOURCE: Oxford Dictionary & UNPRPD

The Importance of Equity

Equity is essential for fostering a supportive academic environment where all students can thrive. Not only does it acknowledge systemic disparities, but it also works to address them.

Accessibility

"Accessibility is the degree to which a product, device, program, service, resource, or environment is available to a given user. If a building has a wheelchair ramp leading to its main entrance, that entrance is accessible to wheelchair users. If a lecture includes sign language interpreters, that lecture is accessible to attendees who are deaf or hard of hearing and who understand sign language."
SOURCE: University of Virginia, Academic Accessibility

Resources for Further Reading
- "On the Importance of Diversity in Higher Education"
- "What is Intersectionality?"
- Intersectionality: More resources found in this link including an "Intersectionality Toolkit"
- Learn about Accessibility at the UW
- "What is Digital Accessibility?"

Identifying Barriers

01 Financial Barriers:

- High tuition costs, lack of funding, and limited access to scholarships or financial aid.
- Example: Financial Stress – A student unable to afford textbooks, housing, or essential materials may struggle academically and personally, affecting their mental health and academic performance.

02 Social Barriers:

- Isolation, microaggressions, bullying, and discrimination. Social exclusion may also arise from lack of community or support networks.
- Example: Marginalization – A first-generation student feeling isolated due to a lack of support networks in a predominantly affluent or culturally homogeneous student body. They may experience imposter syndrome or feel disconnected from others.

03 Cultural Barriers:

- Lack of representation, cultural misunderstandings, and language barriers.
- Example: Cultural Misunderstanding – An international student feeling excluded due to language barriers, unfamiliarity with local social norms, or misinterpretations of their cultural background. This could also include challenges in navigating academic expectations that differ from those in their home country.

Identifying Barriers

04   Acedemic Barriers:

- Disability status, accessibility within the institution, and historical racism within academic institutions.
- Example: Inaccessible Facilities – A student with a disability facing challenges navigating campus spaces not designed for physical accessibility, such as outdated elevators or inaccessible classrooms. Additionally, students may face difficulties in obtaining academic accommodations.
- Example: Systemic Racism – A student of color encountering implicit bias from professors or limited access to academic resources or mentorship due to the historical underrepresentation of minority groups in their field of study.

05   Mental Health Barriers:

- Mental Health Barriers
- Stigma around mental health, lack of resources, and difficulty balancing personal well-being with academic demands.
- Example: Mental Health Struggles – A student experiencing anxiety or depression due to the pressures of academic life, compounded by a lack of mental health services or difficulty accessing care because of stigma or cost.

06   Technological Barriers:

- Limited access to reliable technology or internet, or insufficient training for digital tools.
- Example: Digital Divide – A student who cannot afford a computer or has unreliable internet access, which hinders their ability to participate in online classes or complete assignments, particularly in the context of hybrid or remote learning environments.

Strategies for Advocacy

Individual Advocacy

- **Know Your Rights and Resources**
  - Familiarize yourself with your rights as a student, including policies on discrimination, harassment, and accommodations. Utilize campus resources like counseling services, cultural centers, and advocacy offices.
- **Speak Up When Needed**
  - Don't hesitate to reach out to faculty, staff, or administration to address issues you experience or witness. You could request meetings to discuss specific incidents or concerns about equity in coursework, department culture, or program policies.
- **Practice Self-Advocacy Skills**
  - Building confidence in self-advocacy takes practice. Role-play scenarios, develop responses to anticipated challenges, and seek support from trusted peers or mentors.
- **Seek Mentorship**
  - Identify mentors within and outside your department who can provide guidance on navigating challenges related to equity and inclusion. A mentor can offer strategies, encouragement, and perspectives that help build resilience.

Strategies for Advocacy

Collective Action

- **Join or Form Advocacy Groups**
  - Collaborate with students who share similar values by joining or creating student organizations, committees, or working groups dedicated to equity and inclusion.
- **Organize and Mobilize for Awareness**
  - Lead or participate in awareness campaigns, community discussions, workshops, and panels. Consider collaborating with faculty and administration to create initiatives that highlight diversity and inclusion issues, bringing them into academic and social conversations.
- **Engage in Coalition Building**
  - Partner with other organizations, both within and outside of the university, that support equity goals. Together, you can strengthen advocacy efforts, reach broader audiences, and develop a more robust support system for achieving change.
- **Encourage Allyship**
  - Encourage allies to stand with you in advocacy efforts. Engage in open conversations to raise awareness and build understanding, creating a supportive network of allies who help promote equity.

Strategies for Advocacy

Effective Communication

- **Use "I" Statements**
  - When discussing sensitive topics, use "I" statements (e.g., "I feel," "I believe") to communicate personal perspectives and avoid sounding accusatory. This helps to keep conversations constructive.
- **Active Listening**
  - Listen to understand others' experiences and viewpoints. Even if you disagree, show respect for others' perspectives, and use clarifying questions to deepen understanding.
- **Utilize Multimodal Communication**
  - Recognize that not everyone communicates in the same way. Be mindful of varying communication needs and preferences, incorporating email, text, verbal, and visual methods as appropriate.
- **Inclusive Meetings**
  - Advocate for inclusive practices in meetings, such as setting a respectful tone, providing agendas in advance, using accessible language, and inviting diverse perspectives. Ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to share and contribute.

Creating Inclusive Spaces

→ **Best Practice for Meetings and Events**

Ensure Accessibility

When choosing venues, confirm that they are accessible for people with mobility challenges. This includes ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms, and seating arrangements that accommodate assistive devices. For virtual meetings, use platforms that offer closed captions and screen reader compatibility.

Use Inclusive Language and Materials

Use language that is respectful and inclusive, avoiding jargon or terms that could alienate others. Address participants in gender-neutral terms (e.g., "everyone" instead of "ladies and gentlemen") and avoid assumptions about cultural backgrounds or experiences. Ensure presentation materials and handouts are clear, readable, and free of any bias or stereotypes.

Provide Support Resources

Make arrangements for those who may need additional support, such as interpreters for sign language or other language assistance. Include contact information for accessibility accommodations on event invitations so participants can request what they need in advance.

Offer Flexible Participation Options

Create options for remote or hybrid participation to allow those who cannot attend in person to engage. Record meetings or events when possible and provide materials to those unable to join live.

Respect Dietary Restrictions and Cultural Preferences

When providing food, account for diverse dietary needs, including vegetarian, vegan, halal, kosher, and allergen-free options. Ensure that everyone can participate fully and comfortably without compromising their personal, cultural, or health-based choices.

Creating Inclusive Spaces

→ ## Best Practice for Meetings and Events

Be Mindful of Time Zones and Scheduling
When organizing virtual events, consider participants' time zones to avoid inconvenient scheduling. For ongoing meetings, vary the times when possible to allow equitable participation across time zones.

Set Clear Guidelines for Inclusive Behavior
Establish a code of conduct or community agreement at the beginning of the event to promote respectful interactions. This may include expectations around active listening, speaking respectfully, and refraining from interrupting or dominating conversations.

Create Spaces for Reflection and Feedback
Allow time during or after meetings for participants to reflect and provide feedback on the inclusivity of the event. This can be in the form of a feedback form, anonymous surveys, or a brief discussion period. Feedback helps improve future events and ensures participants feel valued and heard.
Encourage Pronoun Sharing

If participants are comfortable, offer opportunities to share pronouns (e.g., during introductions or on name tags) to respect everyone's gender identity. This practice should always be optional and handled sensitively, so no one feels pressured.

Utilize Visual and Auditory Aids Thoughtfully
Use clear, contrasting colors and large fonts in presentation materials for readability. Incorporate descriptive narration for visual content to make it accessible for participants with visual impairments. Similarly, avoid loud or distracting noises in audio elements to ensure a comfortable experience for all.

# Creating Inclusive Spaces

Resource List

- [Inclusive Language Guidelines](#)
- [Equity in Events Toolkit by Tacoma Venues and Events](#)
- [DEI Event Planning Checklist by Colombia Business School](#)
- [GPSS Events: Links to GPSS Events](#)

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→ University Services

- **Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** Offers support and resources for students.
- **Samuel E. Kelly Ethnic Cultural Center:** The Samuel E. Kelly Ethnic Cultural Center of the University of Washington is part of The Office of Minority Affairs & Diversity. The Kelly ECC has a wealth of resources and opportunities available to students including student advising, organizational development, personal growth, and referrals to different departments and programs.
- **Counseling Center**: Provides a safe, inclusive environment to help you explore the challenges of life and learning through counseling, consultation, workshops, and presentations.
- **Food Pantry:** Provides food to students, staff, and faculty who may be experiencing short-term food insecurity.
- **Student Legal Services:** Provides a safe and confidential space for all UW-Seattle, Tacoma, and Bothell students who have legal questions or concerns. We offer free 40-minute consultations on a broad range of issues.
- **Q Center:** The Q Center is the professionally supported resource, advocacy, and mentoring center for queer students and concerns at the University of Washington.

Institutional Resources
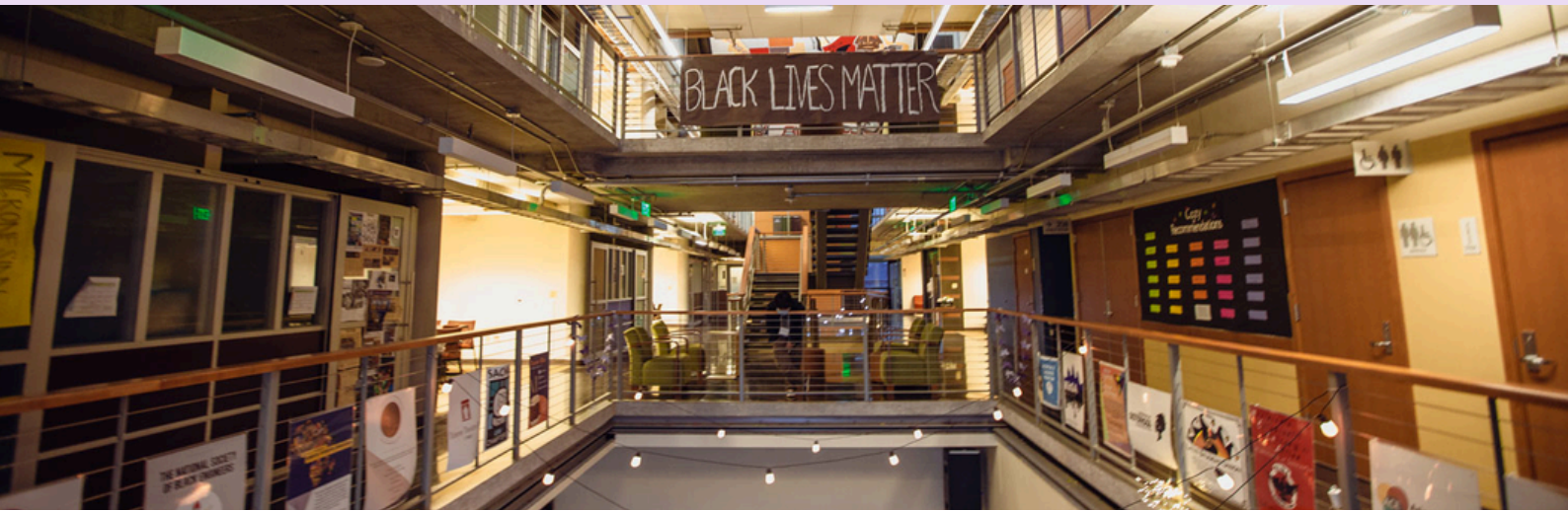
→ **University Services**

- **The D Center:** The Disability and Deaf Cultural Center — also known as the D Center — is a physical and virtual community gathering space for UW students, staff, and faculty who identify as Disabled, D/deaf, or allies.

- **Veterans Services:** The University of Washington Veterans Education Benefits office serves current service members, veterans and their dependents during their time as students at the UW.

- **CIRCLE:** CIRCLE (the Center for International Relations & Cultural Leadership Exchange) is the UW's primary portal to resources, community and activities that help international and domestic students maximize their Husky Experience, together.

- **Leadership Without Borders:** Works to serve and empower undocumented students at the UW. LWB offers leadership development resources, college success navigators, the Husky Lending Library, a space for community building, and connections to other campus and community resources.

- **UW Child Care Resources:** University of Washington Children's Centers (UWCC) offer year-round care for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers at four Seattle campus locations and are operated by Haggard Childcare Resources.

Institutional Resources

→ ## Student Organizations & Groups

Academic & Student Unions

- **American Federation of Teachers:** Representing English language extension lecturers in UWEO's International and English Language Programs (IELP)
- **Resident and Fellow Physician Union – Northwest:** Representing residents and fellows in the UW School of Medicine and in the UW School of Dentistry
- **Service Employees International Union 925 – Libraries**: Representing UW employees working within the University of Washington Library System
- **United Auto Workers – Academic Student Employees (ASEs):** Academic Student Employees (ASEs), which include research and teaching assistants, readers, graders, tutors, and others, are represented by the United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 4121
- **United Auto Workers – Postdoctoral Employees (Postdocs):** Postdoctoral employees (Postdocs), which include research associates, research trainees, senior fellows, and senior fellow trainees, are represented by the United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 4121.

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Institutional Resources

→ **Student Organizations & Groups**

RSO – creation of information, distribution, dissemination, collaboration

- [RSO Directory](#)
- **How to register a Registered Student Organization (RSO)**
  - Develop an idea: Before you register a new RSO, be sure to check the directory above to see if any RSOs of similar purpose already exist
  - Gather at least 5 members: All RSOs are required to have 5 group administrators to become and remain registered
  - Attend an RSO Registration Session: RSOs must attend an RSO Registration Session every year to remain active for that academic year. Only one officer needs to attend the session before October 31.
  - RSO Approved!: Once all registration requirements are met, your group is approved! If you are a new RSO, you will receive a separate email with your new RSO email account information.
- [Affinity Groups](#)
- [Equity Focus](#)

Institutional Resources

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Who to Talk to on Campus

Racial Bias Reporting

- The Bias Incident Reporting Tool is for NON-EMERGENCY incidents. If your immediate safety is at risk, you are witnessing violence or perceive imminent harm to yourself or others, please dial 911. If your experience includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, and/or relationship violence, please contact UW SafeCampus at 206-685-7233.
- What the University of Washington DOES with bias incident reports:
    - Refer those who report incidents to appropriate campus offices and programs that can effectively respond in accordance with applicable University policies and principles of expression.
    - Catalog all reported incidents and track trends.
    - Assess avenues for minimizing or eliminating future incidents of bias.
    - Consult with the vice presidents for the Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity and the Division of Student Life regarding possible institutional responses.
    - Work with campus offices and departments to develop strategies for addressing bias trends and patterns at UW
- What the University of Washington DOES NOT do with bias incident reports:
    - Conduct investigations. Should you utilize some of the campus resources offered to you through this process, they might use the information you provide to initiate disciplinary action.
    - Impinge on free speech rights and academic freedom
- **BIAS REPORTING TOOL**

Institutional Resources

→ **Title IX:**

- If you have experienced sex- or gender-based violence, harassment, or discrimination, support and resources are available whether you make a formal complaint. The Title IX Office can help you understand your options, rights, and resources. Individuals always have a right to make a formal complaint, report to the police, do both or neither.
- Supportive measures are intended to restore or preserve access to UW's education and work environments. Examples include modifications of course-related deadlines, changes in class schedules, changes in work or housing locations, leaves of absence and mutual restrictions on communication between two parties.
- When supporting a colleague, student, or friend who shares that they have experienced sex- and gender-based violence, harassment, or discrimination, the Title IX Office can help you respond with care and provide access to information about support resources and rights. To consult with the Title IX Office, use the online reporting form.

Institutional Resources

→ **Title IX**

- **Why submit a report?**
  - You have experienced violence, harassment, or discrimination and want to learn about your rights, resources, and supportive measures
  - You are seeking information about how to support a colleague, student, or friend
  - You want to make the University aware of a situation you experienced or witnessed
  - You are an Employee Required to Report
  - You want to learn about the option of submitting a formal complaint to the UW Civil Rights Investigation Office

- **What happens when a report is received?**
  - The Office of the Title IX Coordinator will:
    - Review the details of the situation and assess for immediate safety concerns
    - Discuss supportive measures
    - Explain formal and informal options to address the concerns
    - Provide referrals to additional resources
  - Making a report does NOT automatically initiate an investigation

Institutional Resources

→ **Academic Freedom Information**

- Academic freedom is the freedom to discuss all relevant matters in teaching, to explore all avenues of scholarship, research, and creative expression, and to speak or write without institutional discipline or restraint on matters of public concern as well as on matters related to shared governance and the general welfare of the University.

- Faculty members have the right to academic freedom and the right to examine and communicate ideas by any lawful means even should such activities generate hostility or pressure against the faculty member or the University. Their exercise of constitutionally protected freedom of association, assembly, and expression, including participation in political activities, does not constitute a violation of duties to the University, to their profession, or to students and may not result in disciplinary action or adverse merit evaluation.

- A faculty member's academic responsibility requires the faithful performance of professional duties and obligations, the recognition of the demands of the scholarly enterprise, and the candor to make it clear when one is speaking on matters of public interest, one is not speaking for the institution.

- Membership in the academic community imposes on students, faculty members, administrators, and regents an obligation to respect the dignity of others, to acknowledge their right to express differing opinions, and to foster and defend intellectual honesty, freedom of inquiry and instruction, and free expression on and off the campus.

- The expression of dissent and the attempt to produce change, therefore, may not be carried out in ways that injure individuals and damage institutional facilities or disrupt the classes of one's instructors or colleagues. Speakers on campus must not only be protected from violence, but also be given an opportunity to be heard. Those who seek to call attention to grievances must not do so in ways that clearly and significantly impede the functions of the University.

- More information on academic rights found here.

Institutional Resources

→ ## GPSS Process & Response for Grievances & Funding

- **GPSS Funding**
  - GPSS provides various funding opportunities for graduate students' experiences outside the classroom.
  - **What GPSS funding opportunities are available?**
    - <u>**Travel Grants:**</u> Funds to support students attending or presenting at academic conferences or seminars
    - <u>**Diversity Funds:**</u> Awarded by the GPSS Diversity Committee and are to supplement programs or events related to diversity efforts. Funds should be used to benefit a cross-section of graduate and professional students. Diversity includes, but is not limited to, consideration of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, disability, age, language, religion, and nationality.
    - <u>**Special Allocations:**</u> Funds reserved for Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) to supplement their programming and events. Funds should be used to benefit a cross-section of graduate and professional students have typically been awarded to offset the cost of honorarium, advertising, and facility rentals.
    - <u>**Departmental Allocations:**</u> Funds reserved for events or items that benefit students in each department. The useful life of any item purchased should be greater than one year. Departmental Allocations typically have been used to fund items like microwave ovens, magazine subscriptions, refrigerators, digital cameras, and community building events.

Institutional Resources

→ Other Funding Opportunities

- [SEED grants with OMAD.](#)
- The Vice President for Minority Affairs & Diversity and University Diversity Officer offers Diversity and Inclusion Seed Grants. These small grants support projects for institutional transformation across the University of Washington's tri-campus community that align with the goals of the [2022-2026 UW Diversity Blueprint](#).
- [Scholarships for underrepresented students.](#)
- [Campus Sustainability Fund (CSF)](#)
- [UW Alumni Association (UWAA) Scholarships](#)

Feedback and Continuous Improvement

→ **Feedback Mechanisms**

We value your input! Share your experiences and suggestions through our online form [link to form coming soon].

→ **Commitment to Growth**

This toolkit will be regularly updated based on community feedback and emerging needs.

Conclusion

↘ Call To Action

We encourage all students to engage with this toolkit, participate in initiatives, and contribute to a more equitable and inclusive campus culture. Together, we can make a difference!

↘ Additional Resources

Local Organizations:

- Seattle Foundation: Creative Equity Fund
- Seattle Office for Civil Rights
- South Core
- U-District Food Bank
- Diversity Center Seattle
- Washington State PTA – DEI

↘ Educational Workshops

Contact Information

For questions or to get involved, contact:

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