



Strategic Plan for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging and Antiracism

August 2023



PROCESS:

The assistant dean for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) at Northeastern University School of Law undertook the strategic planning process with the Committee Against Institutional Racism (CAIR) beginning in the fall of 2022. With input from CAIR, the climate survey, the DEI Action Plan and the dean of the law school, this plan was created.

MISSION AND VISION:

“Northeastern University School of Law’s mission is to be a global leader in experiential legal education, providing students with the knowledge, skills and ethical and social values essential to serving clients and the public interest, now and in the future.

Through teaching, scholarship and public service, we work to promote social justice and enhance understanding of law’s impact on individuals, enterprises and communities, at home and around the world.”

Definitions:

1. **Diversity:** looks at all our human differences, people with different backgrounds and identities in the same spaces (race, gender, ethnicity, economic status, religion, gender identity, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, military status, etc..).
2. **Equity:** is an approach that ensures everyone has access to the same opportunities. Equity recognizes that advantages and barriers exist and that as a result, we don’t all start from the same place. Equity is the process that begins by acknowledging that unequal starting place and continues to correct and address the imbalance. Equity is about creating fair access, opportunity and advancement for a diverse group of people.
3. **Inclusion:** is the action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure. Included means contained as part of a whole being considered.
4. **Belonging:** refers to one’s physical, emotional and psychological safety; the indescribable feeling of being welcome. It is the experience of being a member of an organization or group in which one feels supported and validated and can thrive as their true authentic self.
5. **Justice:** is the systematic fair treatment of people, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. All barriers have been removed.
6. **Intersectionality:** is the intertwining of social identities which can result in unique experiences, opportunities and barriers. The way our unique traits and identities interact with each other to impact our lived experience.
7. **Antiracism:** refers to the practice of identifying and actively opposing racism. The goal of antiracism is to actively change policies, behaviors and beliefs that perpetuate racist ideas and actions. Embedded in its principles is the understanding that the injustices arise from a white supremacy culture, structural racism, xenophobia and colonialism that have existed throughout the history of the United States. Antiracism requires acknowledging the ongoing, systemic and perpetual racial and societal injustices embedded in the past and present, including through legal systems that have facilitated discrimination against many historically excluded people.



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THE PLAN:

Northeastern University School of Law is committed to promoting and advocating for diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, justice and antiracism for its community. We want to foster an environment that is welcoming, inclusive and promotes a sense of belonging and cultural competence for all members of the community.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

GOAL I: Create an Environment of Inclusion and Belonging

Create a positive welcoming environment that promotes, embraces and fosters diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging and antiracism.

Objectives for Goal 1

- A. Conduct an annual campus climate survey to identify areas for improvement and track progress. Create a climate survey specifically for the School of Law to assess the climate of the school and to receive demographic data. The survey will be anonymous and will have an option for people to opt into a focus group that will be conducted after the survey is complete. Focus groups will be done after the data from the survey is reviewed to narrow in on specific issues from the survey. Additionally, we will form a campus climate subgroup to analyze survey results and develop recommendations for improving the campus climate. We will implement recommended changes and track progress over time.
- B. Establish a Diversity, Equity and Belonging (DEB) taskforce. The taskforce will work with the assistant dean of DEI and CAIR to oversee and monitor the progress of the strategic plan and regularly assess progress and adjust the plan as necessary. DEB will also be responsible for the creation of the Campus Climate subgroup of DEB.
- C. Identify and address any barriers of equity in the School of Law's practices. Conduct an equity audit to assess/study the fairness of the School of Law's policies, practices, programs and organizational structures that may hinder equity and belonging. Once the audit is complete, the DEB committee will address issues found in the audit and recommend changes. With an antiracist lens, we will examine and rectify the injustices that may be embedded in our own policies and practices.
- D. Provide an inclusive, welcoming and belonging environment free from discrimination, harassment and ridicule; and provide a highly productive workplace. We will implement and provide DEI and antiracist training, seminars and resources for staff and faculty; develop leadership skills for faculty and staff, train supervisors on difficult dialogue and inclusive leadership; provide Brave Space seminars for open dialogue; and create guidelines on effective communication.
- E. Promote diversity, equity and inclusion throughout the law school, and create an environment of belonging for students to learn. Provide listening sessions for students; create trauma-informed programming for students to heal from past trauma; meet with affinity organizations to provide resources and support; create DEI and antiracist training/workshops for students; provide Brave Space seminars for open and difficult dialogue; and create bi-monthly opportunities to have coffee with the assistant dean for DEI.



- F. Develop initiatives and programming to support and celebrate our diverse community. Specifically implement programming for our first-generation, BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ community. Implement any other programming that is necessary.
- G. Develop initiatives to support students with disabilities. Additionally, create initiatives and programming around mental health and neurodiversity for the Northeastern Law community.

GOAL II: Inclusive Recruitment, Hiring and Retention

Increase the diversity of the law school community and retain a diverse student body, faculty and staff. Increase representation, inclusion and belonging of historically excluded and historically underinvested groups in all areas of the law school.

Objectives for Goal II

- A. Increase the recruitment, retention and professional growth of staff from historically excluded and historically underinvested groups. Establish a recruitment and retention plan that will develop targeted recruitment and retention strategies. Provide recruiters/managers/supervisors with required diversity recruiting and inclusive hiring training to search committees, hiring managers and anyone who will be interviewing a prospective candidate; diversify national platforms/locations/websites where advertisement for jobs are placed; develop and implement recruitment polices that ensures outreach to historically excluded and underinvested communities; review job descriptions to make sure they are in line with the requirements of the position; conduct a pay analysis on all jobs to ensure competitive pay; focus on specific recruitment activities to attract underrepresented groups of employees; and utilize automated tracking systems to effectively monitor diversity in hiring. Provide new hires with mentors and/or sponsors to ensure support in navigating the organization and new job; provide training to staff regarding mentorship, sponsorship and networking; and provide professional development opportunities.
- B. Increase the recruitment, retention and professional growth of faculty from historically excluded and historically underinvested groups. Establish a recruitment and retention plan that will develop targeted recruitment and retention strategies. Provide required diversity recruiting and inclusive hiring training to the Appointments Committee, search committees and anyone that will interview a prospective faculty candidate; diversify national platforms/locations/websites where advertisement for jobs are placed; develop and implement recruitment polices that ensure outreach to historically excluded and underinvested communities; review job descriptions to make sure they are in line with the requirements of the position; conduct a pay analysis on all jobs to ensure competitive pay, focus on recruitment activities specific to attract underrepresented groups of faculty; and utilize automated tracking systems to effectively monitor the diversity in hiring. Provide mentoring and support programs for new and junior faculty and create a robust onboarding process.
- C. Develop pathway programs that encourage historically excluded and historically underinvested groups to pursue a legal education. Look into grant opportunities to fund pathway programs.



GOAL III: Inclusive Education, Teaching and Learning

Develop a curriculum that promotes inclusivity, belonging, equity and antiracist principles.

Objectives for Goal III

- A. Train faculty on inclusive classroom pedagogy. Create best practices for classroom discussions on systemic issues; hold office hours with faculty to discuss ways to provide inclusive pedagogy in the classroom; provide faculty with training, resources and a guide on how to create inclusive classroom environments.
- B. Create policies and incentives to help create a curriculum that mirrors the law school's value on social justice, diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.
- C. Create Antiracist Teaching and Learning pedagogy for the classroom. Create an antiracist statement for the law school. Provide training to faculty and students on antiracist principles and antiracist pedagogy.

GOAL IV: Improve Transparency and Accountability

Increase and otherwise improve transparency and accountability. Communicate consistently about ongoing work, opportunities, resources and support around diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging issues with the community.

Objectives for Goal IV

- A. Increase transparency regarding Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) efforts of the law school. Communicate consistently about ongoing work, opportunities, resources and support around DEIB issues with the community. Annually review and publish the law school's progress on goals and objectives from this strategic plan.
- B. Create a streamlined and transparent reporting and complaint procedure for students, staff and faculty for reporting incidences of bias, microaggression, discrimination, sexual harassment, gender discrimination, etc.
- C. Conduct trainings with the Office for University Equity and Compliance (OUEC) on Title IX issues and reports for discrimination.
- D. Create co-op policies and procedures that promote diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. Identify workplace concerns for students and develop tools and strategies for supporting both students and participating co-op employers.
- E. Solicit feedback from the law school community on how to improve diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging and antiracist efforts.



GOAL V: Infrastructure

Develop physical, technological and economic infrastructure that supports diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging and antiracism.

Objectives for Goal V:

- A. Conduct a needs assessment and develop a plan to address identified needs. Assess the physical, technological and economic infrastructure of the law school to identify areas for improvement.
- B. Develop a plan to address and improve identified needs, such as improving accessibility for people with disabilities, increasing the availability of technological resources, and improving and exploring the physical environment and space to promote inclusivity and belonging for our BIPOC students.
- C. Develop, adopt and implement a plan to increase Northeastern Law's supplier diversity. Expanding the supplier base is critical to our social justice mission, as we realize the importance of having a wide array of sourcing options. Improve supply chain transparency, create a diversity supply chain policy, secure a commitment through the law school on increasing supply chain diversity.
- D. Create and maintain spaces and displays that demonstrate and promote the visibility of the law school's commitment to social justice, antiracism, diversity, equity and belonging.

