



## Review of the University of Maryland, College Park Policy on Inclusive Language

**PRESENTED BY** Tom Porter, Chair

**REVIEW DATES** SEC – September 20, 2019 | SENATE – October 2, 2019

**VOTING METHOD** In a single vote

**RELEVANT POLICY/DOCUMENT** [VI-1.00\(C\) UMCP Policy on Inclusive Language](#)

**NECESSARY APPROVALS** Senate, President

### ISSUE

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In fall 2018, the Senate and President Loh approved Providing Gender Inclusive Facilities (Senate Document #16-17-32). The report made a series of recommendations, including that the Senate Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion (EDI) Committee be charged with reviewing the University's Policy on Inclusive Language to ensure that it accords with the University's principles on diversity and inclusion, as well as existing policies and practices. In September 2018, the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) considered a proposal that identified concerns with the use of gendered language across campus (Senate Document #18-19-07). The SEC determined that the EDI Committee should review this proposal as part of its broader review of the Policy on Inclusive Language.

In September 2018, the SEC charged the EDI Committee with reviewing various policies, practices, and guidelines related to non-discrimination and inclusive language at the University; reviewing similar policies and practices at Big 10 and peer institutions; consulting with a range of stakeholders and affected units on campus; and recommending changes to University policy and guidelines as appropriate.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

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The EDI Committee recommends that the Senate approve the revised University of Maryland College Park Policy on Inclusive Communication (VI-1.00[C]) which immediately follows the report. The committee also recommends that:

1. The Office of Strategic Communications should work with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and other subject-matter experts to revise the University of Maryland Editorial Style Guide to include information and best practices regarding inclusive communications.
2. The Teaching and Learning Transformation Center should work with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and other subject-matter experts to develop materials for using inclusive communication in syllabi and other instructional resources.
3. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion should establish and maintain a central webpage that provides resources and links related to inclusive communication.

4. The University should direct faculty and unit heads to available resources on inclusive communication (e.g. the Office of Diversity and Inclusion webpage) that help support their professional responsibilities.

## COMMITTEE WORK

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The EDI Committee reviewed the University's strategic plan for diversity ([Transforming Maryland: Expectations for Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion](#)), the USM Policy of Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity or Expression, UMD's Policy of Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Expression in the Use of Gendered Facilities, and the Proposal to Evaluate Gendered Language (Senate Document #18-19-07). It also researched policies addressing inclusive language at Big10 and peer institutions. The committee consulted with a representative of the Office of General Counsel, a representative from the Office of Civil Rights and Sexual Misconduct, and the Director of the LGBT Equity Center.

Through its review, the committee determined that the policy should continue to emphasize opportunities for learning about inclusion rather than being overly prescriptive or punitive. The committee identified a need for the policy to clearly establish the importance of inclusive communications in order to establish a welcoming, inclusive environment free from discrimination. The committee developed an introduction to the policy that clearly establishes an expectation that every member of the University community treat others with dignity and respect. In response to stakeholder concerns related to academic freedom and the First Amendment, the committee worked to pair the broad expectations in the introduction of the policy with succinct policy provisions that rely on a limited, explicit definition of "official University communication" that does not include oral communication or reference instructional materials.

The Committee also developed a series of administrative recommendations that would develop more resources for instructors and staff members on how to incorporate Inclusive Communication, including developing a central webpage for hosting information and revising the University's Editorial Style Guide.

After due consideration, the Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Committee voted to approve the revised policy and administrative recommendations at its meeting on May 23, 2019.

## ALTERNATIVES

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The Senate could choose not to approve the revisions to the policy. However, the University would lose the opportunity to ensure that its Policy on Inclusive Language reflects principles of diversity and inclusion.

## RISKS

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There are no known risks to the University.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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Financial resources may be required to implement the recommendations.



## **Review of the University of Maryland, College Park Policy on Inclusive Language**

### **2018-2019 Committee Members**

**Tom Porter** (Chair)  
**Samira Anderson** (Faculty)  
**Oluwatoyin Awotunde** (Undergraduate Student)  
**Branson Cameron** (Undergraduate Student)  
**Moneca Clyburn** (Exempt Staff)  
**Jennifer Dindinger** (Faculty)  
**Cynthia Edmunds** (Ex-Officio Chief Diversity Officer)  
**Mary Forsythe** (Staff)  
**Rachel Gammons** (Faculty)  
**Angela Harmon** (Exempt Staff)  
**Yakeen Jain** (Graduate Student)  
**Anne Martens** (Ex-Officio VP Administration & Finance Rep)

**Manouchehr Mokhtari** (Faculty)  
**Daune O'Brien** (Faculty)  
**Daniel Ostick** (Ex-Officio VP Student Affairs Rep)  
**Jeanne Pekny** (Non-Exempt Staff)  
**Chandra Reyna** (Graduate Student)  
**Laura Rosenthal** (Ex-Officio Provost's Rep)  
**Joanna Wiley** (Non-Exempt Staff)  
**Grace Karmioli** (Ex-Officio OCRSM Rep)

### **Date of Submission**

**September 13, 2019**

## **BACKGROUND**

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In fall 2018, the Senate and President Loh approved Providing Gender Inclusive Facilities (Senate Document #16-17-32). The report made a series of recommendations, including that the Senate Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion (EDI) Committee be charged with reviewing the University's Policy on Inclusive Language to ensure that it accords with the University's principles on diversity and inclusion, as well as existing policies and practices. The Policy on Inclusive Language has not been updated since 1991. In September 2018, the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) considered a proposal that identified concerns with the use of gendered language across campus (Senate Document #18-19-07). The SEC determined that the EDI Committee should review this proposal as part of its broader review of the Policy on Inclusive Language.

In September 2018, the SEC charged the EDI Committee with reviewing various policies, practices, and guidelines related to non-discrimination and inclusive language at the University; reviewing similar policies and practices at Big 10 and peer institutions; consulting with a range of stakeholders and affected units on campus; and recommending changes to University policy and guidelines as appropriate (Appendix 3).

## **CURRENT PRACTICE**

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The current Policy on Inclusive Language prohibits personnel from using terms that reinforce inappropriate, outdated, or demeaning attitudes about a person based on age, disability, ethnicity, gender, national origin, race, religion, or sexual orientation when preparing official University publications or written communications. The policy requires the regular review of a range of publications, many of which are outdated, and references offices that no longer exist, including the Office of Institutional Advancement, which is tasked with oversight of the policy. In practice, guidance to faculty and staff on using inclusive language in written communication is limited. Currently, the Teaching and Learning Transformation Center offers a syllabus template with minimal guidance on pronoun usage that instructors may reference.

## COMMITTEE WORK

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In early 2019, the EDI Committee reviewed a range of materials, including the University's strategic plan for diversity ([\*Transforming Maryland: Expectations for Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion\*](#)), the USM Policy of Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity or Expression, UMD's Policy of Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Expression in the Use of Gendered Facilities, and the Proposal to Evaluate Gendered Language (Senate Document #18-19-07) (Appendix 1). It also researched policies addressing inclusive language at Big 10 and peer institutions (Appendix 2). The committee consulted with representatives of the Office of Civil Rights & Sexual Misconduct (OCRSM) to gather background information and gain a better understanding of the legal framework, and met with the Director of the LGBT Equity Office to better understand the proposal on gendered language. The committee also consulted with the Office of General Counsel throughout its work.

The committee researched policies concerning inclusive language at Big 10 and peer institutions. It found that only three institutions have a policy on inclusive language and that each are similar in length, detail, and scope to the University's current policy. The committee found that a number of peer institutions offer a range of informational materials developed by various units that support inclusive language but are not codified into official policy. All but two institutions had a style guide for writing and presenting information using inclusive language, and over half offered explicit syllabus or other guidelines to faculty for instructional purposes.

While the current policy focuses on communication by University personnel, the committee discussed whether and how the policy should address communication by students and student organizations. The committee considered how the roles of students and student organizations differ from those of employees, and determined that it would not be possible or appropriate to address communication by students, since students are independent actors and do not represent the University in an official capacity.

The committee determined that the policy should continue to emphasize opportunities for learning about inclusion rather than being overly prescriptive or punitive. In considering the best way to ensure continued attention to the development of language and terminology, the committee considered whether the policy should be replaced with aspirational guidelines that could be updated regularly and provide more specificity than would be appropriate in a policy. However, the committee raised concerns that the impact and visibility of guidelines could be diminished, as policies are centrally located and guidelines tend to be placed on a variety of administrative web pages and referenced on an ad hoc basis. The committee also felt that guidelines, while more expansive, could carry less significance to the campus community than a policy would likely carry.

Throughout its review, the committee discussed at length ways to balance the University's commitment to diversity and inclusion with the need to respect academic freedom and individuals' First Amendment rights. The committee identified a need for the policy to clearly establish the importance of inclusive communications in order to establish a welcoming, inclusive environment free from discrimination. The committee developed an introduction to the policy that clearly establishes an expectation that every member of the University community treat others with dignity and respect. In response to stakeholder concerns related to academic freedom and the First Amendment, the committee worked to pair the broad expectations in the introduction of the policy with succinct policy provisions that rely on a limited, explicit definition of "official University communication" that does not include oral communication or reference instructional materials.

The committee consulted with the Office of Faculty Affairs and the Office of General Counsel on the agency instructors have over incorporating inclusive communication into their work. The committee developed several administrative recommendations to provide educational resources, to be developed by a number of offices in collaboration with subject-matter experts including the LGBT Equity Center, to assist faculty and staff who wish to incorporate inclusive communication into their daily interactions and written communications. In addition, the committee revised the name of the policy from “Inclusive Language” to “Inclusive Communication” in order to better convey the types of materials covered by the policy.

After due consideration, the Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Committee voted to approve the proposed University of Maryland Policy on Inclusive Communication and administrative recommendations at its meeting on May 23, 2019, contingent on their review by the newly appointed Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion. Following that review, several minor changes were adopted to clarify the University's commitment to protecting academic freedom and freedom of expression and more clearly establish that the policy applies to materials produced by employees in the course of their duties. These changes were shared with the Office of General Counsel, the Office of Strategic Communications, and the new EDI Committee, none of which had any objections

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The EDI Committee recommends that the Senate approve the revised University of Maryland Policy on Inclusive Communication (VI-1.00[C]), which immediately follows this report.

The committee also recommends that:

1. The Office of Strategic Communications should work with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and other subject-matter experts to revise the University of Maryland Editorial Style Guide to include information and best practices regarding inclusive communications.
2. The Teaching and Learning Transformation Center should work with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and other subject-matter experts to develop materials for using inclusive communication in syllabi and other instructional resources.
3. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion should establish and maintain a central webpage that provides resources and links related to inclusive communication.
4. The University should direct faculty and unit heads to available resources on inclusive communication (e.g. the Office of Diversity and Inclusion webpage) that help support their professional responsibilities.

## **APPENDICES**

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- Appendix 1 — Proposal to Evaluate Gendered Language (Senate Document #18-19-07)
- Appendix 2 — Overview of Inclusive Language Policies at Big 10 and Peer Institutions
- Appendix 3 — Charge from the Senate Executive Committee

# VI-1.00(C) UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, ~~COLLEGE PARK~~ POLICY ON INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION

APPROVED BY PRESIDENT 24 APRIL 1991

## I. Introduction

~~As an institution that stands for equality of educational and employment opportunity, t~~The University of Maryland ~~at College Park reaffirms its commitment to creating a campus~~ **is committed to creating and maintaining an educational, working, and living** environment ~~free of discrimination~~ **that is welcoming, inclusive, and free from discrimination** and bias, both subtle and overt. **The University maintains this commitment while preserving the intellectual and academic freedom, freedom of speech, and freedom of expression of all students, faculty, and staff.**

~~It therefore expects all personnel, when representing the University to its publics, to use language that shows respect for human diversity. Those preparing official University publications or written communications shall accordingly avoid biased language of two kinds: Every member of the University community has an obligation to treat their colleagues and peers with dignity and respect, recognizing the various dimensions of human diversity, individual rights, and equal worth of all human beings.~~

- ~~1. using generic masculine words or titles to refer to all persons; and~~
- ~~2. using terms or expressions that reinforce inappropriate, outdated, or demeaning attitudes or assumptions about persons or groups based on age, disability, ethnicity, gender, national origin, race, religion, or sexual orientation.~~

~~When illustrations are included in publications, they shall be chosen to reflect diversity. Care shall be taken to ensure that women, minorities, and persons with disabilities are portrayed in non-stereotypical ways.~~

~~The publications listed below shall be reviewed regularly for the use of inclusive language and a balanced range of illustrations. Appropriate supervisory personnel shall have the responsibility for overseeing this policy. Various reference manuals for the use of inclusive language are available in the offices of the deans and vice presidents. Concerns or questions about implementation of this policy should be addressed to the Office of Institutional Advancement.~~

~~Publications to Review Regularly:~~

~~Guidelines for Using Inclusive Language and Illustrations in University Publications~~

~~Faculty Handbook~~

~~UMCP Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual~~

~~Guide to UMCP Policies and Procedures~~

~~Undergraduate Catalog~~

~~Graduate Catalog~~

~~New Student Handbook~~

~~Graduate Assistant Handbook~~

~~Outlook~~

~~Career Development Center materials~~

~~Recruitment and admissions materials~~  
~~Student financial aid materials~~  
~~Brochures with campus-wide distribution~~  
~~Institutional reports~~  
~~News releases~~  
~~Alumni and fund-raising materials~~

## II. Definitions

“Inclusive Communication” means sharing information in a way that is inclusive of groups and individuals regardless of race, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, age, national origin, political affiliations, physical or mental disability, religion, protected veteran status, genetic information, personal appearance, or any other legally protected class. Inclusive Communication affirms and respects how people describe, express, and experience various components of their identity.

“Official University Communication” refers to materials produced by employees in the course of their assigned duties, whether intended for internal or external audiences (e.g. press releases and marketing materials, University websites, University policies, handbooks, and reports).

## III. Applicability

This policy applies to all University of Maryland employees in the fulfillment of their duties.

## IV. Policy

It is the policy of the University of Maryland that all employees shall use Inclusive Communication when preparing Official University Communication.

Unit heads shall have responsibility for communicating available resources on Inclusive Communication to the members of their unit. Inquiries about the application of this policy should be directed to the relevant unit head.