
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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Recommendations for Pathways to Greater Inclusion

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Introduction

Recent global social and political events (e.g., Hamas/Israel war, US elections) have created or deepened divisions on campus and resulted in some members of The George Washington University (GW) community feeling unwelcome, excluded and/or targeted. There is a need to strengthen connections across divides and foster a deeper sense of belonging among all members of the GW community. The Pathways to Greater Inclusion faculty committee was charged with suggesting “approaches to ensure diverse constituents truly feel part of the GW community.”

GW [defines inclusion](#) as the, “the active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity -- in people, in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities (e.g. intellectual, social, cultural, geographic) with which individuals might connect.” Our focus is on [belongingness](#), which extends beyond mere inclusion. While inclusion involves equitable participation and benefits, belongingness “confers full and unconditional membership,” allowing individuals to participate in and co-create the culture of the organization (Powell & Menendian, 2024, p. 137).

¹ It refers not only to being welcomed, but also empowered: “Under belonging, you are fully able to participate in the norms, setting, and, ideally, in cocreating the culture and life of the organization” (Ibid.).

This report outlines recommendations to enhance belongingness within the university community, distinguishing between immediate and short-term actions and medium to longer-term strategies. We have prioritized those recommendations deemed most impactful. Additional ideas and recommendations follow these priorities.

It is important to note a few caveats: Our committee consisted exclusively of full-time and adjunct faculty members, which may not fully represent the diverse units and types of faculty at the University. Our recommendations are informed by our diverse experiences with various constituencies and shaped by our committee members' varying lengths of service at GW, ranging from a few years to several decades. While these perspectives span a broad range of situations and events, they may not fully capture the unique needs and preferences of all community members. Additionally, due to time constraints and varied summer schedules, we did not conduct extensive research on existing initiatives. Despite these limitations, we believe these recommendations offer a solid foundation for fostering a university community where everyone feels they belong and can thrive.

¹ See John A. Powell and Stephen Menendian. *Belonging without Othering: How We Save Ourselves and the World*. Stanford University Press, 2024.

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To achieve this, we encourage all students, staff, and faculty to engage in diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) learning experiences and activities that will unite the GW community in cultivating belonging. We also urge the University administration to collaborate with all constituencies to identify, innovate, and implement initiatives that support this critical goal.

Immediate to Short-Term Recommendations

For All of GW

1. **Schedule a campus-wide keynote speaker.** We recommend [John A. Powell, Director of the Othering and Belonging Institute](#), University of California at Berkeley, as a campus-wide keynote speaker. He can bring a message of how we can begin to heal and connect with one another. For an example of his messaging, we suggest watching his 2021 talk available [here](#). You can start at 2:25 and it is only about 15 minutes from there. We recognize time is too short to consider Dr. Powell for the Fall Convocation and Day of Service. We urge consideration of him as an opening keynote speaker of the first Inclusion Summit (see below) or for GW Teaching Day (if there is one).
2. **Start an “I am GW” Campaign.** A crucial component of belonging is visibility and recognition (see Powell and Menendian 2024). Inspired by “[I, Too, am Harvard](#),” this campaign can feature short videos of diverse students who share: 1) a group they belong to, 2) what they would like others to know about that group, and 3) why they feel they belong to the group. The groups could be based on their identity or a social group they belong to at GW or beyond. A version of this campaign exists in the GW School of Public Health.
3. **Identify and make public previous salient recommendations.** Review the recommendations of the [Diversity Program Review](#) and identify the most salient inclusion-related recommendations. Make these (and other recommendations) public and begin implementation as soon as possible. In addition to identifying helpful interventions, making use of these reports and making them public will demonstrate respect and inclusion for the many constituents who participated in these initiatives. It will be symbolic of these constituent’s belonging at the university (i.e., their participation in co-creating the life and culture of the university).
4. **Coordinate DEIA Offices through GW-wide inclusivity mapping and intentional alignment of efforts.** Conduct an 'inclusivity mapping' exercise across all schools and departments. This process would involve identifying existing DEIA offices and their activities, assessing overlaps, and pinpointing gaps. The goal is to create and implement a coordinated strategy

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that aligns with the university's mission while remaining flexible to respond to unit-specific needs in real-time. It's essential to allow space for creativity and to identify areas where more programming or interventions are needed, as well as to facilitate the sharing of lessons and best practices across the university.

5. **Implement Appreciative Inquiry to enhance campus-wide inclusion.** [Appreciative Inquiry](#) (AI) is “an asset-based approach to organizational and social engagement that utilizes questions and dialogue to help participants uncover existing strengths, advantages, or opportunities in their communities, organizations, or teams.” This approach will help identify and build on successful practices related to inclusion, address challenges, and foster mutual support among all campus members. Two recommendations include:
 - a. **Conduct Campus-Wide AI Interviews:** Implement AI interviews with diverse campus stakeholders, including students, faculty, and staff, to explore positive inclusion practices and areas for growth. These interviews will generate insights and highlight effective strategies for creating a more inclusive environment.
 - b. **Host an AI Summit:** Bring in an AI expert to lead a university-wide summit, involving students, faculty, and staff. This first could be raised at faculty development (FD) sessions. This summit will facilitate collaborative discussions and workshops on inclusion, allowing participants to share experiences and co-create actionable solutions to enhance campus-wide belonging and community. We also recommend that the outcomes of such initiatives be summarized, made available to the community, and tracked to ensure meaningful progress.



6. **Develop formative and summative evaluation of inclusion efforts to gauge impact and strengthen future initiatives.**

Create a plan to conduct formative and summative evaluation of belonging and inclusion goals, objectives, and impact across campus. This should involve qualitative and

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quantitative data collection from all of GW's community (i.e., students, staff, faculty) to gauge how well these initiatives are working, but also to determine how they should evolve.

For Faculty

1. **Engage Faculty in Professional Development on Inclusive Classrooms**—All faculty, including adjuncts, graduate teaching assistants, graduate student lecturers, and any professor/instructor who engages with students, should cultivate their own dispositions and skills for supporting student belonging and inclusion. This may be achieved in a variety of ways, such as:

- a. [Request each unit to commit to participating in professional development focused on inclusion, led by a GW's Instructional Core Faculty Development Staff member who has led workshops about inclusion. For example,](#) units could be asked to reserve time during their initial meeting(s) of the academic year for a GW Instructional Core Faculty Development Staff member (e.g., Daphna Atias) to deliver a brief presentation and Q&A on (i) How to set an inclusive tone for and among students in the classroom and how to respond to difficult situations that may emerge and (ii) How to understand and seek additional trainings and resources available at GW. Or they could create a video presentation available on the Gelman website under "Support for teaching and faculty" that faculty could view and comment on or query.

As part of these meetings and more generally (e.g., over email) invite faculty to share examples of class exercises and assignments that promote respectful engagement and inclusion. Create a repository (e.g., online lessons, Box, Dropbox) with the instructional core to share these resources. Encourage sharing between Schools, departments, and programs to cultivate faculty feeling a part of a larger GW community.

- b. Complete and earn LinkedIn Learning Certificates for completing courses such as those listed below. This may be beneficial for any faculty who have already participated in workshops on inclusion led by GW's Instructional Core Faculty Development Staff:
 - i. [Creating Inclusive Learning Experiences](#)
 - ii. [How to Be More Inclusive](#)
 - iii. [Inclusive Leadership](#)

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- c. Organize brown bag lunches for faculty to hear directly from other faculty members how they promote respectful engagement and inclusion. Include participating students when possible or organize lunches specifically for students with faculty oversight.
2. **Incentivize inclusion learning and practices of belongingness.** The University can elevate the importance of these efforts through regular communications, as well as adding a question to the faculty annual reports and other feedback mechanisms that explicitly asks what permanent and adjunct faculty have done in the past year to support inclusion and belonging. It might also include checkboxes to gauge whether they have participated in signature initiatives. Offer grants to develop education and research efforts focused on developing inclusion.
3. **Conduct virtual check-ins with students.** Approximately two weeks into the Fall semester, we recommend faculty and administrators conduct virtual check-ins with students. Each unit can be tasked with organizing these for their students. Faculty and staff leaders can volunteer. Students can sign up (and possibly indicate their preference for who they would join) to sessions with limited number of attendees. These would be organized as open listening sessions. Volunteers would report back to deans on what they learned. These data could also provide formative evaluation data that can also inform decision-making.
4. **Invite adjunct faculty to attend departmental faculty meetings, professional development opportunities, and events as appropriate.** This will make adjuncts feel more integrated, while the department will benefit from their expertise and views.
5. **Revive a faculty community space or faculty club.** Provide a space and eating options (i.e., a faculty club of sorts), where all faculty members from across units can come together, share a meal, and meet each other. In addition to unstructured meeting/eating opportunities, this space could be used for topical discussions, including sharing teaching experiences emerging from the instructional core and appreciative inquiry recommendations described above.
6. **Discuss Inclusive Statement in Syllabus:** Encourage faculty to include an inclusive statement in their syllabi and take a moment to speak about their personal commitment to inclusion and engage students in discussion about belongingness in their classroom. This practice can set a tone of respect and belonging from the start of each course.

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Medium to Longer-Term Recommendations

For all of GW

1. **Dedicate more resources (e.g., staff and programming/financial) to support diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) initiatives within each unit and across the campus.** DEIA units across the campus repeatedly report a shortage of resources for supporting initiatives and ensuring the belonging climate we aspire to. Very promising initiatives that demonstrate strong positive results often remain at a small scale (reaching only few community members) or are unit-specific and not scaled up to reach broader constituencies across the campus. As a community we probably already know a lot about what works to promote belonging. Yet, we do not adequately share that information across units and fund it so that it can maximize impact and reach.
2. **Include “inclusion and belongingness” as core components of the Annual GW Diversity Summit and other Office of Diversity, Equity, and Community Engagement (ODECE) initiatives.** Begin with a trauma and healing workshop to equip participants with tools and skills for self-regulation during divisive dialogues. Faculty can then present the forum's rules of participation, followed by student organization leaders speaking on relevant topics. The summit could feature speakers like the chaplain, rabbi, and imam, who would discuss peace to conclude the meetings. These events could be recorded and used as teaching resources, inspiring projects, research, or ongoing classroom discussions.
3. **Develop a publication on inclusion and belongingness.** Take open submissions from faculty, staff, and students submitting responsive research, projects, and other creative modalities to speak to the political and religious tensions of this time. This publication could be a cutting-edge resource and/or research tool that is inclusive of all viewpoints and inclusive of student, staff and faculty perspectives. This text could house the diverse opinions being shared and be compiled for print and/or digital publication.
4. **Support social gathering among students.** The university could introduce coffee and snack carts or related options into spaces where students may gather to study. Encouraging coffee breaks could incentivize interactions and social times into new spaces, as well as spaces where students are already gathering to study, but may not linger for social interactions. Meeting students where they are and supporting their gatherings can help foster communal spaces and feelings.
5. **Include DEIA activities in GW Annual Report.** To increase transparency and accountability, GW should integrate DEIA activities and initiatives into its annual report. This would involve documenting and reporting on all DEIA efforts, including progress made, challenges

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encountered, and future goals. By including a comprehensive overview of DEIA activities, the university can ensure that stakeholders are informed about its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and hold itself accountable for meeting its DEIA objectives. This practice will also help in evaluating the effectiveness of DEIA initiatives and making data-driven decisions for continuous improvement.

6. **Leverage student groups to advance inclusivity initiatives.** Foster collaboration between student groups and with faculty and administration. Empower organizations such as the GW Student Government Association and school-specific groups like the Public Health Student Association by providing them with resources, support, and clear calls to action. This approach will enable these groups to drive inclusive initiatives, advocate for their peers, and work in tandem with university leadership to address DEIA challenges effectively.

For Faculty

1. **Dedicate more DEIA resources to supporting faculty members.** Dedicate resources to support both adjunct and full-time faculty, addressing their distinct needs. This might include providing more information and guidance to faculty members experiencing bias and bias reporting, and having an ODECE staff member specifically dedicated to supporting faculty. By recognizing the different challenges faced by these groups and offering tailored support – including strategies for cultivating belonging in teaching, the university can enhance professional development and promote equity, strengthening the overall DEIA environment for faculty.
2. **Establish an Adjunct Faculty Council.** Since 50 percent of GW’s teaching force consists of adjunct faculty, consider establishing an Adjunct Faculty Council (subject to legal requirements), similar to the [GW Staff Council](#), to represent the interests of adjunct faculty. This council would provide a formal platform for adjunct faculty to voice their concerns, participate in committees and working groups, and engage in university programming. Establishing this council will help create a more inclusive, supportive, and safe community for adjunct faculty.

For DEI Staff/Programming

1. **Improve learning and engagement among DEIA offices across GW.** To optimize the effectiveness of DEIA offices across GW, the following recommendations aim to enhance effectiveness and creativity. These measures will ensure that DEIA efforts are more accountable and impactful.

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- a. **Accountability and Transparency:** Incorporate measures for accountability metrics and transparency across all DEIA offices and student service offices with an inclusion focus.
- b. **Reporting Structure:** Ensure that school-based DEIA officers report to both their respective Deans and the Central DEIA Office (similar to the dual reporting of finance and human resources), fostering greater independence from deans and alignment across units.
- c. **Qualified DEIA Personnel:** Prioritize the selection of DEIA officers who are specifically trained in DEIA, rather than selecting based solely on demographics.
- d. **Student and Alumni Involvement:** Ensure the inclusion of students and alumni in DEIA initiatives to broaden perspectives and impact.
- e. **Engage with Student Groups:** Actively engage with various university student groups to explore opportunities for jointly funded and operated DEIA activities.
- f. **DEIA Hotline:** Establish a DEIA hotline that allows campus community members to report DEIA-related incidents to the university, potentially involving campus police.

Appendix: Additional Recommendations for Consideration

The following recommendations, while not fully prioritized or developed within this report, are important ideas that should be considered for future implementation. These suggestions offer potential avenues to further enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts across the GW community:

1. **Orientation:** Integrate DEI resources and increase awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in the orientation programs for new faculty, staff, and students. This will help establish a foundational understanding and commitment to DEI from the outset.
2. **Provide Research Grants for Adjunct Faculty:** To encourage independent research among adjunct faculty, the university should offer small research grants. These grants would incentivize adjuncts to conduct research in their fields, enhancing the quality of their teaching and providing opportunities to involve students in research efforts.

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3. **Continue with the Working Group:** Maintain the momentum of the Pathways to Greater Inclusion working group (subject to members' willingness and availability to serve) with semi-annual reviews to assess progress, address emerging challenges, and refine strategies. This ongoing effort will ensure that inclusion remains a central focus of university initiatives.

4. **DEIA Promotion for all of GW:**
 - a. **Assessment of DEIA Activities:** Identify the strengths and deficiencies of activities within DEIA offices to enhance their effectiveness.

 - b. **Promote Inclusive Spaces:** Develop an online map on the university's website highlighting inclusive spaces, such as all-use restrooms, lactation rooms, and meditation/prayer rooms.

 - c. **Interactive Kiosks:** Position interactive devices or kiosks in all major university buildings to provide easy access to inclusivity information without relying on personal devices.