

# College of Humanities and Social Sciences



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## **CHSS Inclusive Excellence Plan Academic Years 2021-2024**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## I. Introduction

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) is a hub of intellectual dynamism and diversity, a locus of local and global civic engagement, and an access point to educational excellence for individuals of all backgrounds. Whether students are beginning their college-level education with us, transfer here to finish their undergraduate degree, or come to Mason at a later point in their life's journey either to finish an undergraduate degree or pursue advanced research training, re-skilling and/or up-skilling, CHSS is committed to being a "relationship-rich"<sup>1</sup> educational environment in which all students benefit from robust advising and faculty mentoring.

Currently, the college employs over 700 full-time faculty and staff and offers 10 doctoral degrees, 18 master's degrees, 13 graduate certificates, 19 undergraduate majors, and 64 minors.

In CHSS the liberal arts tradition of studying human minds, beliefs, languages, cultures, histories, societal structures, and forms of creative expression drives our community forward as we advance cutting-edge research—in transdisciplinary paradigms of inquiry as well as discipline-based, interdisciplinary, and multi-disciplinary modes of inquiry—and help students develop critical competencies for today's global and knowledge-based economy. We serve all of the university's undergraduates, not only our own majors and minors, through our faculty's extensive engagement in the Mason Core as well as through the tutoring services in written and oral communication our faculty provide to students throughout the university community. We value our faculty's excellence in teaching as well as their recognition by the university, the state, and professional colleagues nationally and globally for outstanding, field-defining research and impactful public service.

Given the size, reach, and both disciplinary and interdisciplinary arenas of expertise in the college, CHSS plays a critical role in advancing anti-racism, equity, inclusion, and social justice at Mason. In the college's past and current diversity, equity, and inclusion work, CHSS innovates policies and practices designed to enhance Mason's unique identity in the higher education ecosystems of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the nation. As this Inclusive Excellence report conveys, CHSS is engaged in a bold, collective, and continual process of self-examination and transformation that serves the university's majority-minority student population and high numbers of transfer students, the institution as a comprehensive public research university, and the surrounding community of the National Capital Region. CHSS is already engaged in the commitments to diversity and inclusion outlined in the recent announcement of the One Virginia Plan.<sup>2</sup> As CHSS sustains and further advances our faculty's research profile nationally and globally, in transdisciplinary and translational research, scholarship, and creative activity, we have an opportunity to establish a national reputation for inclusive excellence in "Next Generation" (NEH's phrasing) and learner-centered undergraduate and graduate education.

CHSS is committed to being a courageous leader, not only within the university, but in the National Capital Region and beyond in its continued efforts to acknowledge and combat all forms of discrimination, exclusion, and inequity while fostering healing, inclusion, inter-cultural competencies, civic-mindedness, and excellence. CHSS will serve as an exemplar of inclusive excellence by centering diversity, equity, anti-racism, and inclusion in all of our spaces, practices, and communities as we continue our pursuit of outstanding research, teaching, and service. We will collaborate within the college and with stakeholders across the university to

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Felten and Leo M. Lambert, *Relationship-Rich Education: How Human Connections Drive Success in College* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorviriniagov/governor-of-virginia/pdf/toolkits/ONEVirginiaPlan-HigherEd-OnlineDoc-031921.pdf>

make inclusive excellence the responsibility of all individuals and units so that CHSS and Mason are places where students, staff, and faculty of all backgrounds feel welcome, safe, and thrive.

The CHSS Inclusive Excellence Plan is built on five pillars or core values: diversity, inclusion, equity, anti-racism, and civility. The college adopts the definitions of diversity, inclusion, and equity offered by the Mason Anti-Racism and Inclusive Excellence Taskforce:

**Diversity:** Individual differences (e.g., personality, prior knowledge, and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations)

**Inclusion:** The active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity—in the curriculum, in co-curricular activities and learning communities, and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect—in ways that increase awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and units.

**Equity:** Access, fair treatment, and opportunities for advancement for all people accompanied by dedicated efforts to identify and eliminate barriers to equal access and opportunity.

Our IE plan is built on two additional pillars as well:

**Anti-Racism:** “Striv[ing] to change the norms and practices that allow racism to exist”<sup>3</sup> through constantly identifying, describing, and dismantling them<sup>4</sup>.



<sup>3</sup> Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2003, p. 243

<sup>4</sup> Ibram Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*, One World, 2019, p.9

**Civility:** professional behaviors based upon the four elements of respect, awareness, empathy, and moderation. Cultivating a more inclusive and equitable environment requires intentional discussions and interventions regarding civility so that all members of the college community can experience security and well-being as they work productively and collaboratively.

## II. Overview

CHSS was established in its current structure in 2007 and the School of Integrative Studies (formerly New Century College) was reimaged within CHSS in 2016.

CHSS provides an intellectual foundation for all of the university's students. The tradition of broad and integrative learning that our faculty support prepares students exceptionally well for economically successful and civically engaged lives—as evidenced by the successes of our graduates. In today's global and knowledge-based economy, the competencies that students develop through CHSS courses and cocurricular activities—competencies in oral, written, and digital communication; ethics and critical thinking; research, team-work, and project management; intercultural communication and global understanding—are not a luxury or a private good. They are life and workplace skills that set students up for success in a diverse array of occupational fields and for career advancement across a lifetime of opportunities.

The research, scholarship, and creative activity of CHSS faculty was instrumental in the university's recent recognition as an R1 (very high research activity) institution, as designated by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. The college is rooted in intellectual leadership tied to real-world outcomes on regional, national, and global levels. Our faculty are committed partners in innovative programs, service offerings, and strategic alliances that strengthen the public and private sectors of the community. As we continue to diversify our research fields and our faculty, we also anticipate steady growth in our Research and Development (R&D) expenditures from the FY20 level of \$17.2 million to \$19.3 million by the end of FY24. A plan to reach this goal has been developed that includes three emphases: 1) Broaden the base of faculty involved in sponsored research; 2) Build on the success of CHSS chartered research centers and promote involvement with university centers, institutes and initiatives to further advance CHSS research and scholarly goals; and 3) Optimize the diversity of funding sponsors that fund CHSS research (119 sponsors in FY20 illustrate the breadth and depth of the college's scholarly enterprise), and maintain at least 50% R&D from federal sponsors (54% of federal R&D in FY20).

While sponsored research is one indicator of the college's scholarly productivity, it is an incomplete measure, since a great deal of scholarly work and creative activity occurs outside of externally funded awards. Our researchers are prodigious scholars who publish monographs and articles; present work at conferences and scholarly venues; publicly engage inquisitive audiences at events and through traditional media (radio, newspapers) as well as through ever-evolving digital media platforms. Our faculty take their public engagement charge seriously and engage regularly with museums, schools and school districts, non-profit and professional organizations, local and state governments, community-based organizations and health care systems, and through personal interactions that create opportunities for long-term institutional partnerships.

During Dean Ardis' first year at Mason and in consultation with many college constituencies and stakeholders, six college strategic priorities were established that have served as a guide for college-level decision making and related financial planning. These priorities are:

- Address longstanding faculty and staff compensation and career development issues
- Support enrollment growth and strategic curricular innovation



- Strengthen support for research and graduate education
- Enhance PR for CHSS faculty, students, and alumni achievements and diverse career pathways
- Diversify the college's development portfolio and enhance gift stewardship, alumni engagement, and alumni giving
- Strengthen the college's culture of shared governance

The hiring of additional senior staff members, continued engagement with stakeholders, and discussions of SMART goals for this IE plan have resulted in the articulation of three additional strategic priorities:

- Provide support for success across the student lifecycle, focusing on the different college experiences of racially and ethnically diverse, first generation, multilingual, international, and other diverse students
- Increase the accessibility of all academic pathways in the College—across all undergraduate programs, Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's (BAM), certificate, and graduate programs—and in all modalities of instruction
- Diversify faculty and staff and create processes and cultures that center equity, civility, and a growth mindset for all

**Our overall college goal, as noted above, is to serve as an exemplar of inclusive excellence by centering diversity, equity, anti-racism, and inclusion in all of our spaces, practices, and communities as we continue our pursuit of outstanding research, teaching, and service.** Each of the CHSS Inclusive Excellence SMART goals emerge from our college goal and are aligned with the college's strategic priorities, outlined in section IV. The CHSS IE plan begins with the articulation of these SMART goals (phase 1) and will be sustained through robust and inclusive engagement of our college community (phase 2). In the second phase of the IE plan, outlined in more detail in section IV, a CHSS IE Council will be constituted with representatives from our college constituents with the explicit charge to inform IE planning and implementation and to communicate across the college.

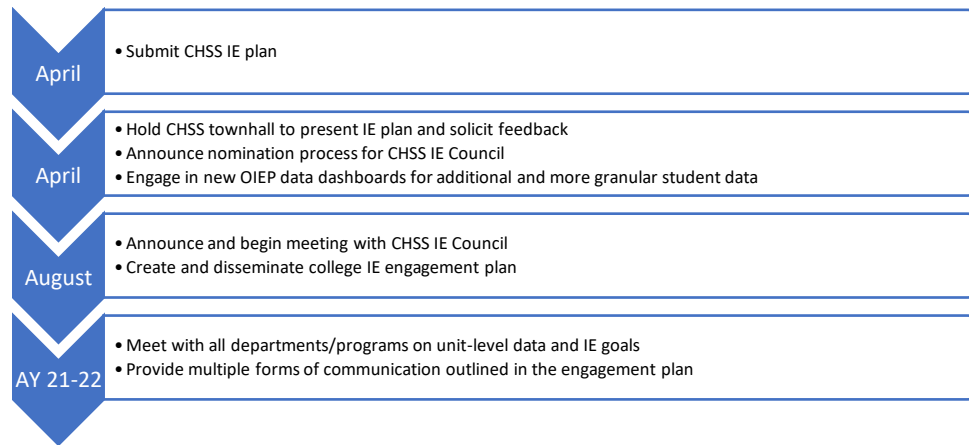
### III. Inclusive Excellence Plan

The CHSS IE plan is informed by the framework of President Washington's Anti-Racism and Inclusive Excellence Taskforce to "eradicate practices and traditions of racial bias at Mason, and position the university as a national beacon for the advancement of anti-racism, reconciliation, and healing." The CHSS IE plan integrates the college's strategic priorities and five major DEI pillars and is designed to bring greater, research-based intentionality to our inclusive values and engage our many college constituents. Important to the IE plan is access to accurate and refined data on our college students, faculty, and staff. The implementation of the new OIEP dashboard on faculty and staff demographics has already helped to inform our college-level decision making on faculty search process as well as SMART goals related to staff hiring. Access to undergraduate and graduate student data in a similar dashboard will be critical to engaging CHSS departments/programs as data informed decision-makers. The plan is rolling out in phases:

**Phase 1 (through April 1, 2021):** college-level data collection, review, and collaborative formulation of SMART goals in alignment with CHSS strategic priorities and ARIE recommendations by senior staff and their teams.

**Phase 2 (beginning April 2021):** engage all CHSS constituents in further development and implementation of college IE plan. This will involve: 1) holding a college-wide townhall (April 2021); 2) constituting a nomination-based CHSS IE council (by August 2021); 3) working with OIEP to gather more granular college-level and local academic unit-level data once their new data dashboard is available (estimated for April/May 2021); 4) meetings with departments/programs (chairs/directors, faculty, staff) to discuss unit-level data and

their vision for implementing inclusive excellence (AY 2021-2022); and 5) developing a robust engagement plan to allow for consistent and constant opportunities for feedback, discussion, and collective implementation of IE work (through 2024).



The CHSS IE plan is designed to model inclusiveness through college-wide engagement from all constituents, across all our programs and departments, and to maintain flexibility to change with input and new initiatives that support both CHSS strategic priorities and university-level initiatives. The goals of phase 2 are to:

- Refine the metrics with new OIEP data dashboards and with input from CHSS constituents
- Get feedback from all our constituents on the SMART goals and to engage in modifications of the goals
- Establish an implementation plan on the college and department/program level that acknowledges the work already ongoing as well as new initiatives to support IE
- Create a robust communication plan to update our CHSS constituents often and regularly

To support the ongoing work of phase 2, we will constitute a CHSS IE Council with representatives from CHSS students, faculty, staff, and alumni communities. The committee will comprise approximately 8-10 individuals representing: faculty (term, adjunct, tenure-line, tenured), representatives from Faculty Assembly, staff, alumni, and current students (undergraduate and graduate). The Council will be constituted using an open nomination process.

The charge of the Council is to actively contribute to CHSS IE planning and implementation by:

- Assisting in the creation and implementation of the IE engagement plan
- Seeking and synthesizing information and feedback from their respective constituency
- Sharing information on IE work to their constituency

### CHSS SMART Goals Summary

CHSS has established the following DEI SMART goals to provide the foundation for college-wide engagement and implementation. These goals are established with a multi-year timeframe, starting this semester and until 2024. The SMART goals are provided in a slightly modified version of the ARIE Taskforce committee framework including goals, initiatives, milestones, and impact.

### Curriculum, Recruitment, and Student Success

- Recruit, retain, and support diverse graduate students and faculty from historically underrepresented groups.

- Increase graduate student voice in shared governance.
- Increase access to and diversity within CHSS majors.
- Embed Student Success support framework throughout student lifecycle through scaffolded support (entry to graduation).
- Create specific initiatives for internal and external recruitment of diverse populations for undergraduate and graduate programs in CHSS
- Identify opportunities to support faculty and student success across CHSS interdisciplinary programs.

### **Staff and Faculty Training and Development**

- Work to expand the inclusivity and visibility of the college's staff in all relevant unit initiatives.
- Continue the good work to have our web properties accessible to diverse audiences.
- **Complete trainings during each academic year to further learning about anti-racism and inclusive excellence**, as well as to become trained SafeZone advocates.

### **Research**

- Advocate with university central for databases and related dashboards to track research opportunities and projects.
- Ensure equity and fairness of faculty and student internal research and scholarship opportunities.
- **Highlight multidisciplinary academic research and practices around anti-racism, diversity, and inclusive excellence.**
- Encourage graduate student research opportunities and research training.

### **Faculty and Staff Recruitment and Hiring**

- Diversify the composition of the faculty and staff through the implementation of research-based effective search practices.
- Review Renewal, Promotion, and Tenure.
- Support retention of all CHSS faculty, including faculty of color.
- Seek resources to support CHSS' stated goal to recruit and retain diverse faculty.
- **Establish mentoring opportunities for faculty and GTAs with attention to equity, anti-racism, and inclusive excellence.**

### **Campus and Community Engagement**

- Work to better engage and support diverse alumni.
- Increase buy-in and help our community understand the value of this work by taking an active role in telling the story of CHSS's DEI work to focus on the value of equity and to communicate the benefits of this work.
- Building on our key pedagogical role in modeling good practices, ensure our communications channels are positive examples of inclusion and diverse perspectives.