

RESOLUTION ON EQUITY AND INCLUSION

WHEREAS, Liberty University (“Liberty” or the “University”) is “a Christian academic community in the tradition of evangelical institutions of higher education” (Mission Statement); and

WHEREAS, the University’s Doctrinal Statement affirms that “[a]s reasoning moral agents, [human beings] are responsible under God for understanding and governing themselves and the world”; and

WHEREAS, cultural diversity has always been a core value of the University, and the University’s Mission Statement reveals our understanding of diversity as a reflection of the awesome power of the Creator and the truth of the Gospel message for all people, regardless of their nation, tribe, or tongue:

Education as the process of teaching and learning, involves the whole person, by developing the knowledge, values, and skills which enable each individual to change freely. . . . [T]he University educates men and women who will make important contributions to their workplaces and communities, follow their chosen vocations as callings to glorify God, and fulfill the Great Commission. Liberty University will: . . . [p]romote the synthesis of academic knowledge and a Christian worldview in order that there might be a maturing of spiritual, intellectual, social and physical value-driven behavior; [p]romote an understanding of . . . the diverse elements of American cultural history [; and c]ontribute to a knowledge and understanding of other cultures
. . . .

and

WHEREAS, academic studies have shown that a diverse student body enriches the educational experience through the exchange of ideas, beliefs, and perspectives and equips students to enter and succeed in an ever-changing competitive and complex global economy (e.g., Patricia Gurin et al., *Diversity and Higher Education: Theory and Impact on Educational Outcomes*, 72 *Harv. Educ. Rev.* 330 (2002); Nisha C. Gottfredson et al., *Does Diversity at Undergraduate Institutions Influence Student Outcomes?*, 1 *J. Diversity Higher Educ.* 80 (2008)); and

WHEREAS, to those ends, the University seeks to foster a co-educational student body with a range of interests, abilities, life experiences, and ambitions compatible with the University’s mission, collectively reflecting the diversity seen in the Body of Christ; and

WHEREAS, without limiting the characteristics relevant to such a student body, the Liberty University Board of Trustees (the “Board”) takes note that:

- over the past decade, the percentage of Liberty’s resident undergraduate students who have received a Federal Pell Grant for low-income students has averaged 28.83%;
- the percentage of Liberty’s resident undergraduate students who report an ethnic origin other than White has remained at approximately 20 percent over that same period; and

- while Liberty has maintained substantial socio-economic diversity, the percentage of Liberty’s resident undergraduate students who self-identify as Black or African-American has decreased from ten percent to five percent over that ten-year period, and the percentage of new resident undergraduate students who self-identify as Black or African-American has decreased from 13 percent to four percent over that period; and

WHEREAS, the Board further takes note that:

- over the past decade, the gap between enrollment of resident undergraduate male and female students at Liberty has widened from a six-percentage-point spread in 2007 (47%:53%) to an eight-percentage-point spread in 2017 (46%:54%); and
- over that same time period, the gap between male and female students at four-year colleges nationally has decreased from 10.64% in 2007 to 9.65% in 2017; and

WHEREAS, the University’s Strategic Plan for 2017–2022 outlines six critical success categories – among them a Unique Culture, Outstanding Academics, and Effective Leadership – that emphasize Liberty’s desire to “intentionally equip faculty, staff, and students” with the biblical Fruit of the Spirit, to “[e]quip students with the knowledge, values, and skills needed to excel in the workplace, flourish in life, and positively impact their communities,” and to focus on key outcomes objectives, including “[s]tudent recruitment” and “[s]tudent retention”; and

WHEREAS, in 2018 the University transitioned its Center for Multicultural Enrichment into a more comprehensive Office of Equity & Inclusion and created the position of Vice President for Equity and Inclusion/Chief Diversity Officer in order to develop and implement initiatives to cultivate “a culturally and ethnically diverse leadership team, faculty, staff, and student body free from all unbiblical and unlawful discrimination” (Office of Institutional Equity & Inclusion, A Comprehensive Transition Plan, March 2018); and

WHEREAS, both the Center for Multicultural Enrichment and Office of Equity & Inclusion have surveyed resident students at Liberty and recent Liberty alumni regarding the University’s commitment to and success in fostering a diverse, inclusive campus environment and identified areas in which respondents indicated that the University may improve (Survey of Cultural Engagement, 2017–2018; Student Satisfaction Survey Comparative Analysis, June 2018; University Ethnicity Survey Report, June 2018); and

WHEREAS, the University wishes to support such initiatives in a manner that complies with federal and state nondiscrimination laws, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq., and its implementing regulations, 34 C.F.R. part 100 (collectively, “Title VI”) and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. § 1681 et seq., and its implementing regulations, 34 C.F.R. part 106 (collectively, “Title IX”); applicable policies of the University’s accreditors and membership organizations; and the University’s faith-based mission.

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the above, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board recognizes that fostering a diverse, co-educational student body and an inclusive educational environment reflective of the Body of Christ is an integral part of the University’s Christ-centered mission and of the educational experience that the University provides to its students; and

RESOLVED, that while the University historically has relied on its nondiscrimination policy and other neutral methods to achieve the goal of a diverse, co-educational student body, the University may also utilize more proactive measures, including those that may be race-conscious or gender-conscious, consistent with law; and

RESOLVED, that these initiatives shall be designed to create an inclusive environment, and that nothing in these resolutions shall authorize initiatives that constitute quotas based on race or sex or exclude students from admission based solely on their race or sex;

RESOLVED, that the Board invites the faculty to consider the educational benefits of a diverse, co-educational student body at Liberty and to work with the Vice President for Equity and Inclusion/Chief Diversity Officer and other appropriate University officers on initiatives to recruit, admit, enroll, and retain such a student body in order to enhance the educational experience at Liberty and further the University's mission in accordance with these resolutions; and

RESOLVED, that the Board authorizes and directs the appropriate officers of the University to do all things and to take all actions, in the name and on behalf of Liberty, as may be necessary or convenient in effecting the foregoing resolutions; and

RESOLVED, that the President of Liberty shall report to the Board, on at least an annual basis, concerning the University's progress in implementing the foregoing resolutions.