



University Policies

[Section III: Academic Affairs](<https://policies.umd.edu/academic-affairs>)

Policy Number: III-9.00(A)

POLICY ON DIVERSITY IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

(Approved by the President April 05, 2005)

I. Policy and Definition

The University of Maryland is a publicly funded land grant institution and the flagship institution of the University System of Maryland. As set forth in the University's Mission Statement, the University is committed to achieving excellence as the State's primary center for research and graduate education, and the institution of choice for undergraduate students of exceptional ability and promise.

Consistent with this Mission and the 2000 Strategic Plan, the University is an inclusive educational community that attracts a diverse population of academically talented students. This community has resulted, in part, from the University's previous initiatives to overcome its history of State-enforced racial segregation, to enhance gender equity, and to provide equal educational opportunities to students with a broad variety of personal characteristics. As the community has become more heterogeneous, the University has determined that a diverse student population enhances the educational experience and is an integral component of educational excellence.

Consistent with this academic judgment, the University shall continue to recruit, admit, retain, and graduate students who meet the University's requirements for academic success and who bring to the University a variety of talents, backgrounds, experiences, and personal characteristics, including but not limited to race; gender; ethnicity; socioeconomic background; and geographic origin. The means of achieving and promoting this diversity shall remain flexible, and the manner in which race, ethnicity, and gender are to be considered shall meet standards evolving in federal and state law.

The University's measure of what constitutes a diverse student body may, and should, change. Accordingly, to achieve its educational goals, the University has rejected selection processes for admission and for other academic programs that do not permit individualized assessments. Instead, the University engages in holistic processes that evaluate each student as an individual, using a number of criteria to identify those who can best contribute to, and benefit from, membership in the academic community and its various programs.

II. Educational Benefits of a Diverse Community

The University counts a diverse academic community to be among its greatest strengths, and so aspires to achieve a broadly diverse faculty, staff, and student body. Opinions rendered by a diverse community further the University's educational goals by challenging traditional educational practices and arrangements, and by contributing new perspectives to the curriculum and other scholarly pursuits. The University expects the impact of a diverse community on academic programming to be beneficial to the individual, the institution, and the environment in which both function.

For example, research and everyday experience show different perspectives, particularly in discourse, enhance the learning environment for everyone, and benefit students, staff, and faculty individually by advancing a variety of educational outcomes. Students who interact with diverse peers and take courses that advance multicultural perspectives show enhanced critical thinking skills; tend to be more engaged in learning; report higher self-assessments of their academic, social, and interpersonal skills; are more likely to be involved in community service programs; and are more likely to remain enrolled, and to aspire to advanced degrees after graduation. A diverse student body promotes cross-cultural understanding, and exposes students to common goals and values critical to many occupations, particularly those based on teamwork and mentoring. It also helps students understand why people of diverse backgrounds interpret the same information differently. These outcomes, in turn, benefit society by preparing students for professional careers and positions of leadership, and for successful and productive participation in a heterogeneous democracy and global economy.

In this regard, the University recognizes that while some attention to numbers is necessary to produce educational benefits, diversity's positive effects do not automatically accrue from a simple focus on numerical representations of various populations in an admitted class. Rather, diversity produces benefits through thoughtfully structured policies and programs designed to support and facilitate interaction among students as part of

the academic experience. These include outreach and enrichment; recruitment; financial aid; scholarships; general education diversity course requirements; programs designed to improve retention, and to cultivate a learning environment, in and out of the classroom, which enhance the individual and collective experiences of the campus community.

III. Periodic Review

Diversity is not an end result, but a means of achieving a concrete set of educational objectives. Accordingly, the University shall periodically review its diversity-related policies and programs to determine their achievements, and to adjust them as necessary to further those objectives.

The Provost shall direct this review, which shall evaluate the extent to which diversity impacts learning outcomes, and otherwise advances the University's educational goals. The review may take into account scholarly educational research as well as institutional self-assessment. The review also shall consider the viability of race-neutral approaches to meet the institution's academic goals; the extent to which the use of race-conscious policies place a burden on non-minorities; and any areas in which changes should be made.