

Overview of NECO's 10-point plan for Diversity and Inclusion program

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Moving from what we should do, to what we are doing to combat racism and promote diversity

A key institutional priority identified in NECO's 2020-2025 strategic plan is our commitment to promote a culture of responsibility, sensitivity, and civility towards all communities, and to support an organization that embraces and values different backgrounds, experiences, opinions, and beliefs.

1 - The Impact Seat - Baseline assessment

Last year, NECO engaged the services of **The Impact Seat** to help guide us as we explore, reflect and strategize how to evolve as a diverse and inclusive community. The focus of their work included individual interviews and a comprehensive survey to assess our commitment, progress and challenges relating to diversity and inclusion at NECO.

2. Diversity and Inclusion Liaison

We created a new role, **Diversity and Inclusion Liaison (DIL)**, and are delighted to announce the appointment of Dr. Angela Abraham into this position. Dr. Abraham will work with stakeholders across campus to facilitate intentional efforts towards advancing diversity and inclusion in alignment with NECO's strategic plan. She will work in collaboration with student services, admissions, as well as our faculty and staff to foster a community that is bias-free, equitable, diverse and inclusive.

3. Alliance for the Advancement of Diversity and Inclusion - Internal

We are establishing the Alliance for the Advancement of Diversity and Inclusion. This group - comprised of faculty, staff and students across the community - will work with Dr. Abraham to build a more diverse and inclusive environment for underrepresented minorities, and to promote a culture where individuals from diverse backgrounds and life experience feel they belong, are able to contribute, and can thrive academically and professionally.

A primary role of this Alliance is to connect D&I activities to a broader set of data-driven, results-oriented strategies, and to promote campus-wide communication on progress including an **annual report on D&I (Point#9)**. More information about this group and its members will be communicated over the course of the next several weeks.

4. Diversity and Inclusion Council (external)

With the assistance of **Janet LaBreck** (member of the Board of Trustees), we will establish a **Diversity and Inclusion Council**. The Diversity Council will be a group of external leaders in the D&I

field who will guide us on best practices, and collaborate with the President's Leadership Team to ensure alignment of NECO's overall strategy and to help institutionalize human capital practices that support and accelerate D&I goals.

5. Create vehicles for capturing anonymous and direct feedback and observations (Hotline, Info Box and email).

We will **promote open and ongoing dialogue** to ensure people have avenues to express their concerns and observations. Towards this end we will be **placing suggestion boxes, emails, and a hotline that** allow individuals to communicate their concerns, feedback and observations about diversity and inclusion at NECO (either anonymously or in person). Individuals who prefer in person meetings can reach out to HR, the D&I Liaison, or Academic Resources.

6. Public acknowledgement and recognition of our diverse history on campus

Many individuals have commented about the portraits at our Beacon campus. These portraits depict our history, and the vital contributions of individuals who have made NECO what it is today. They are predominately white men, at a school that today is not. We will be changing how we display current portraits and introduce new art to the open walls.

7. Set Goals for Increase in Faculty, Students, Staff and BoT's from URM. (13% Promise)

We have committed **NECO to join the 13% Promise**, an initiative created by Black Eyecare Perspective (BEP). Data from the US Census shows that 13.4% of the U.S. population identifies as African American, as compared to 9% in the state of Massachusetts. BEP is asking for equity in black representation in Eye Care Companies, Colleges of Optometry and Optometry Boards of Trustees. BEP will work to create a specified plan to help get everyone's numbers up to 13% and will provide diversity resources and accountability to help achieve targeted goals.

8. Interactive Training - Clear expectations and consequences for departure from expected behavior

We will soon be introducing a **diversity and inclusion training program** to provide our community with the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in respectful and positive interactions in the workplace, while reducing discrimination and prejudice based on factors such as gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, gender expression, age, religion, and physical and mental ability.

9. Annual report on progress

Each year, NECO will develop a progress report on the initiatives to identify what works well and what we need to continue to improve.

10. Industry wide discussion

Facilitate and participate in industry wide discussion on the topic of D&I as well as Allyship