

Forward Focused: Monarch Task Force Report on Inclusive Excellence 2022-23

Summary:

At Old Dominion University, we understand that diversity, equity, and inclusive excellence are indispensable to the experience of our campus community members. Diversity enhances and enriches the educational, employment, and community experience. Over the years, a series of committees and task forces have formed to make recommendations on how to continually advance these issues on our campus—what is now the Monarch Task Force for Inclusive Excellence (MTFIE). Our goal of Inclusive Excellence encourages diversity in every aspect of the university.

Inclusion is active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity—in people, in the curriculum, and in the communities. Inclusive excellence, therefore, is a level of institutional success that can only be realized in diverse communities where all constituencies have equitable opportunities to succeed. With the installation of Brian O. Hemphill, PhD as the ninth President of ODU in 2021, the institution has expanded its commitment to advancing the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Task Force has also worked diligently to further the goals and objectives within the inclusive excellence framework also known as the [Monarch Plan for Inclusive Excellence 2021-2025](#), some of which has been utilized for the University's overall 2023-2028 strategic plan entitled [Forward Focused: Where Innovation Meets Possibilities](#).

To undertake this work, the Task Force has partnered with key university leaders, faculty, and staff members to promote the concept of visible equity: putting systems, resources, and measurements in place to ensure that intentional attention is given to the people, practices, and policies that operationalize diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The Monarch Plan for Inclusive Excellence reaffirms ODU's commitment to growing and sustaining diverse and inclusive living, learning, and working environments. Thanks to the leadership of the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity, and the support of the Task Force, implementation of elements of the framework have been undeniably successful.

The Monarch Task Force for Inclusive Excellence meets bi-weekly throughout the academic school year and focuses on five key areas of Inclusive Excellence: *Access & Success, Climate & Intergroup Relations, Education & Training, Infrastructure & Accountability, and Community Engagement*.

This report outlines the progress in the areas of Climate & Intergroup Relations and Community Engagement, alignment to the University Strategic Plan, and a glimpse into the 2023-24 Academic Year.

Climate & Intergroup Relations

The Monarch Task Force (MTFIE) has devoted much of its work to Climate and Intergroup Relations. Utilizing the results of the [2022 Staff Campus Climate Survey](#), the MTFIE has sought to provide a springboard for responding to the request to continue efforts and opportunities that promote inclusiveness and equitable treatment for the campus community. “I’m sure ODU could use some improvement,” remarked one survey participant, “but ODU is doing really well here when compared to other universities, and especially when compared to other industries. I dare say ODU is a model for DEI, with the caveat that it is always working to improve. At least ODU truly cares about doing well.”

In response to the Staff Climate Survey and to further push the university toward Inclusive Excellence, the MTFIE composed a framework to promote this concept which highlights four key areas:

1. Self-Awareness
2. Social Awareness
3. Better Conversations
4. Capacity Building



These key areas build upon themselves as an individual moves through them, and the cyclical nature of the framework suggests that the work to promote inclusive excellence is constant and ever evolving. Empathy and intercultural competency skills are at the core of the framework to ensure that inclusive excellence can be operationalized.

Vector Solutions Training

Once the MTFIE established the framework, they began curating professional learning and training opportunities that aligned with the [University's Core Values](#) through [Vector Solutions](#). The first installment of the Inclusive Excellence Modules, which launched in March 2023, includes courses for Instructional and AP Faculty as well as Classified Staff members on topics such as engaging with diversity, the impact of unconscious bias, and how to become an ally.

Currently, the Task Force is working with ODU's Communications and Marketing Team to create marketing for a campus-wide Inclusive Monarch Certification that allows members of the Monarch community who have taken the required training at each level to display the Inclusive Monarch Logo in their email or with signage in their work areas.

Pathway Retention and Diversity Champion Awards

As part of their obligation to the learning and working environments of ODU, members of the Task Force serve on the scoring committees of two prominent awards given through the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity. The Pathway Retention Award provides a specified meal plan and/or bookstore scholarship to diverse undergraduate students. Its aim is to recognize the value that diverse students bring to the campus community while supporting them as they persist and matriculate at the university. This year, 7 students received the PRA.

The Diversity Champion Award celebrates students, faculty and staff members, alumni, and community members who encourage and advance the principles of equity, inclusion, and diversity through their works and deeds and throughout the greater Hampton Roads area. Members are nominated by other members of the Monarch community and the final selections are made by a subcommittee of the MTFIE. This year, they named 21 members across the campus community as Diversity Champions.

For more information about the awards, please visit the [PRA](#) and [DCA](#) websites.

Community Engagement

During the 2022-23 Academic Year, the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity, in collaboration with the Monarch Task Force for Inclusive Excellence worked to advance the principles of visible equity and inclusive excellence to the greater Hampton Roads community through campus events, training and professional learning opportunities, and partnerships. The push to engage with the surrounding community also scaffolds the corporate and community partnerships strategy outlined in the University's strategic plan.

CommUNITY Conversations

Our major initiatives included two [CommUNITY Conversations](#). The first was held November 10, 2022, to highlight Native American Heritage Month. The Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity partnered with The College of Arts & Letters' English Department, Norfolk State University, and the Virginia Tribal Education Consortium (VTEC) to hold the first ever land acknowledgement symposium on campus. "This is Tsenacomoco: A Native American Land Acknowledgment Symposium" brought together interdisciplinary academics with members of the Nansemond and Chickahominy tribes to discuss the rich and complex histories of the land on which ODU and NSU presently stand, the intricate relationship that indigenous peoples have with the land, and the importance and role of land acknowledgements at institutions. On hand were two executive officers of VTEC (also alumnae of ODU) who also spoke directly to some of the educational concerns Virginia's tribes face, and the work being done by the consortium to add culturally competent and historically accurate information to the Commonwealth's education curricula. Over 100 people attended.



Picture of the Chief of the Nansemond Tribe

The second CommUNITY Conversation “Black Fatigue: Resisting, Persisting, and Thriving” underscored the effects of racism on the mental health of BIPOC students and discussed the role of social media in perpetuating trauma and other images. This student-centered campus-wide conversation was held February 8, 2023. In observance of the theme for Black History Month—Resistance—a panel-led discussion provided students with culturally competent strategies to take back their mental health and manage their well-being. This included ways to set healthy boundaries and understanding their baseline, or triggers and traumas. This much needed and timely conversation was held in a hybrid format to allow our ODU Global community to engage in the conversation.

CommUNITY Conversations have become a staple at ODU. As the University grows and looks toward the future, the MFTIE hopes to elevate and expand this platform. We’re building an inclusive community, one conversation at a time!



Picture of participants and panelist

Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities

A continued partnership with the [Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities](#) (VCIC) has fostered two events for high school students across Hampton Roads. Diversity Dialogue Day is a one-day forum that brings together students from public and private schools in a particular geographic area in Virginia. The curriculum takes participants through a process of awareness-to-action. They learn to recognize prejudice and intolerance and to respect others. Students work closely with their peers from a wide range of ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds, and trained facilitators guide the students through small group learning activities that explore personal experiences with discrimination and to develop conflict resolution skills. At the conclusion of the Diversity Dialogue Day, participants develop strategies for increasing awareness and promoting inclusion within their schools. This year's theme centered on "Stopping Stereotypes in Schools." The ODU Peninsula Center hosted students for Diversity Dialogue Day on November 1, 2022. This past March, the Webb Center welcomed participating students for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic. Members of the Task Force served as facilitators.

As a member of the State Board of Directors for VCIC, co-chair of the Task Force and AVP for Diversity and Inclusive Excellence, Dr. Veleka Gatling collaborated with other community members to create the [Guide to Constructive and Inclusive Dialogue](#) for VCIC. It is designed to provide frameworks, tools, and resources to support dialogue that (re-)build community. This guide is intended to be used by individuals and institutions interested in planning or organizing dialogues as they consider whether or not dialogue is the best option, how to structure a dialogue session or series, who to invite, and more.



Picture of people having small group discussion on the topic of social identities.

Partnership with the City of Suffolk City

During the spring, Dr. Gatling provided professional learning and training for the City of Suffolk's Leadership Team, at their annual DEI Summit. The leadership team included department heads, assistant directors, chief of police, human resources team, constitutional officers, along with three city council members, the city manager, and the mayor. This work will continue in the fall and will involve additional members of the Task Force.



Members of the DEI Committee and Suffolk City Council

First Colonial High School (Virginia Beach, VA)

In an effort to develop their self-awareness and promote visible equity, the leadership team at First Colonial High took the Intercultural Development Inventory. Dr. Gatling, along with members of the Task Force, in collaboration with Adria Merritt (Virginia Department of Education) and Dr. Monica Robinson (Virginia Beach City Public Schools) will be facilitating workshops and providing resources for the team throughout the summer and fall that will assist in developing their intercultural competence. The leadership team will utilize their experiences, as they plan educational and social experiences to ensure that all students and staff feel included and welcomed in the school.

Infrastructure and Accountability

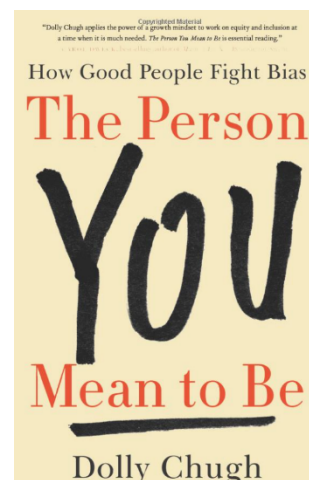
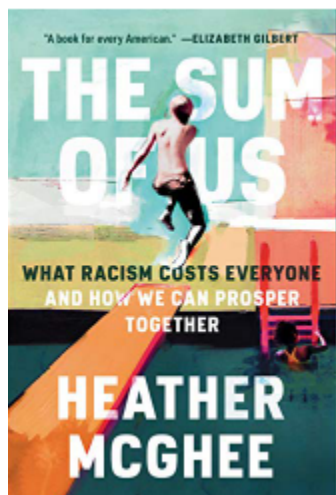
Expanding the Intercultural Competency of the Task Force

During the summer of 2022, the Task Force committed to building their cultural competency by engaging in the [Intercultural Development Inventory \(IDI\)](#). The IDI is a cross-cultural assessment of intercultural competence - the capacity to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities - that is used by individuals and organizations to build intercultural competence to achieve diversity and inclusion goals and outcomes. All IDI assessments were completed in January 2023 and the group profile was presented in April. The IDI recognizes that everyone approaches DEI work differently and at varying stages of development. However, it is the goal of the assessment to create bridge builders of the Monarch community that help pursue and elevate the University toward infinite possibilities. As such, members of the MTFIE have committed themselves to life-long learning and building community. During the Fall of 2023, they will take the [Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory](#). This assessment tool will assist identifying core approaches to improving communication, resolving conflict and solving problems across cultural differences.

Commitment to Life-long Learning and Building Community

Since the summer of 2020, the Task Force has committed to engaging in a book discussion. This past summer, they read Dolly Chugh's *The Person You Mean to Be: How Good People Fight Bias*. This discussion allowed members of the Task Force to delve deep into their own biases in their pursuit to become good-ish people. In *The Person You Mean to Be*, Chugh guides readers through the "psychology of good people" to argue that inequality is grounded in this way of thinking because it is a fixed mindset. Instead, she contends that the only way to be on the right side of history is to be a good-ish - rather than good - person. Good-ish people are always growing or possess a growth mindset.

This summer Task Force members will read Heather McGhee's *The Sum of Us: How Racism Affects Us All*. McGhee explores how American society has inherited and perpetuated a zero-sum mentality, the idea that progress for one group of people will hold groups back. She offers an alternative vision. *The Sum of Us* provides hope that with understanding and open mindedness, the world can be more united and equitable.



Book cover