

**BLUElab**



**Diversity, Equity,  
and Inclusion Plan**

Developed Fall 2017

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## I. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan Overview

In March 2015, President Mark Schlissel of the University of Michigan charged every school, college, and department to develop a 5 year strategic plan for achieving the University's vision for diversity, equity, and Inclusion (DE&I). The College of Engineering has developed a plan and now charges all sponsored student organizations in the College of Engineering to develop a plan as well. BLUElab also recognizes the value of developing this plan to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout BLUElab practices.

### *Definitions*

We will use the following definitions for diversity, equity, and inclusion in our work. These definitions are from the College of Engineering DE&I plan with some modifications:

Diversity: We recognize that many dimensions exist that describe human beings and speak to the human experience, such as race and ethnicity, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, language, culture, national origin, religious commitments, age, (dis)ability status and political perspective. We commit to work assiduously to broaden the diversity of our community, to promote and extend opportunities and outcomes for all members of our community, and to develop a campus environment in which each individual can realize their full potential.

Equity: We commit to working actively to challenge and respond to bias, harassment, and discrimination. We are committed to provide equal opportunity for all persons and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, height, weight or veteran status as prescribed by University policy. Furthermore, we will strive to create community partnerships which foster growth for both partners through a focus on co-design and engagement.

Inclusion: We commit to pursuing deliberate efforts to ensure that our college is a place where differences are welcomed, different perspectives are respectfully heard and where every individual feels a sense of belonging. We know that by building a critical mass of diverse groups and creating a vibrant climate of inclusiveness, we can more effectively leverage the resources of diversity to advance our collective capabilities.

### *Motivation and Strategic Imperative*

The many reasons for the development of diverse, equitable, and inclusive organizations, partnerships, and engineers have been demonstrated and cited time and time again. In particular, diversity drives innovation and fosters creativity [1,2]. Diversity of experience benefits all students, improving near- and long-term intergroup relations [3]. Further information on this topic can be found in the DE&I plan of the College of Engineering.

BLUElab project teams practice co-design with community partners making intercultural competence and understanding key to our work. BLUElab cannot reach its full potential as an organization without effectively developing a diverse, equitable, and inclusive culture. Failure to do so would be an incredible disservice to our members and to the College of Engineering and to our community partners. With this in mind, BLUElab will adopt the following strategic imperative:

*BLUElab will become a leader on campus and among student organizations by promoting diversity among members, equitable access to opportunities, and inclusive team environments. We will develop students who excel as team members, mentors, communicators, and leaders on design teams due to their understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We will develop projects that excel as examples of socially engaged design and development due to their focus on intercultural competence and making full use of the power of diverse viewpoints and membership.*

## **II. Plan Development Process**

This plan was developed by the 2017-18 BLUElab Executive Board, with assistance and advices from the 2017-18 BLUElab Project Board, as well as the BLUElab Faculty Advisor, Jesse Austin-Breneman. A full listing of the membership and contact information of these board members can be obtained by contacting [bluelab-contact@umich.edu](mailto:bluelab-contact@umich.edu). Advice was also sought from the Office of Student Affairs, Center for Campus Involvement, and the Ginsberg Center.

## **III. Key Concerns**

There are several key concerns this DE&I plan will attempt to address within the organization during the next three years. These concerns are divided in terms of DE&I below.

### *A. Diversity Concerns*

BLUElab is made up of students from multiple levels of undergraduate and graduate education, from 8 schools and colleges on campus, and is 55% self-identifying female/woman. However, the organization currently lacks data about membership or leadership makeup by race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, national origin, or other metrics. This makes it difficult to understand what student populations BLUElab is failing to reach or serve well.

### *B. Equity Concerns*

Given our lack of understanding of the demographics of BLUElab, it is also difficult to determine how equitably various groups of students are treated. Current BLUElab recruitment processes allow individual project teams to interview students and determine which students to accept and reject. Furthermore, leadership selection decisions are often left to one or more project leads or executive board leads. Current mechanisms provide no assurance that bias is not occurring in these selection processes.

Furthermore, while BLUElab does not have dues, many of our teams operate internationally and send team members to travel multiple times per year. Currently, we fail to adequately support economically disadvantaged students if the team is unable to fund these trips. This is a clear area for improvement and a significant need within the organization.

Finally, it is unclear how all community partners view their relationship with BLUElab project teams. The equitable balance of these relationships must be assessed both from the view of the project team and from the view of the community partner.

### *C. Inclusion Concerns*

BLUElab currently lacks training or guidance for current and incoming leadership concerning inclusive team environments. Furthermore, BLUElab does not currently have an anonymous or external mechanism for the reporting of feedback, positive or negative, which stifles reporting of incidents of discrimination, bias, or other issues with team, executive board, and project board environments.

## **IV. Goals and Objectives**

There are a variety of broad goals we have developed to address the above concerns. Each of these are paired with clear objectives and actionable tasks.

### *A. Improve understanding of inclusive leadership practices among BLUElab membership and leadership in order to improve organizational culture with regards to inclusion.*

The key objectives that must be met in pursuit of this goal include:

- All incoming leadership will participate in workshops surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion. A focus in these topics will be inclusive leadership.
  - Beginning Winter 2018, this will include all members of the executive board and a majority of members of the project board.
  - Beginning Fall 2018 this will include all members of the executive and project boards. By Fall 2019, this will include team leadership below the project board level.
  - These workshops will be provided by an outside group such as the Program on Intergroup Relations, the Ginsberg Center, or other qualified groups.
- All membership will be exposed to diversity, equity, and inclusion topics throughout their BLUElab experience.
  - Beginning Fall 2018, topics such as servant leadership and collaboration will be covered during recruitment events.
  - Beginning Winter 2019, servant leadership, team dynamics, and inclusive leadership topics will be included in in-team workshops.

*B. Develop an organizational culture that supports all members and promotes intercultural competence within teams and cognizance of equity and inclusion in interacting with community partners.*

The key objectives that must be met in pursuit of this goal include:

- All leadership will participate in workshops surrounding leadership style and inclusive leadership.
  - Beginning Fall 2017, these topics will be included in the Emerging Leaders Workshop
  - Beginning Fall 2018, these topics will be addressed in the BLUElab fall leadership retreat for executive board and project board
  - Beginning Fall 2019, a workshop on this topic will be available to all BLUElab leadership
- Membership will participate in workshops that focus on the importance of team dynamics and intercultural competence.
  - Beginning Fall 2017, these topics will be included in the Emerging Leaders Workshop which is required for new members.
  - Beginning Fall 2019, a workshop on this topic will be available to all membership.
- Events and promotional materials which involve BLUElab as organizers or presenters must be culturally conscious and inclusive.
  - By Fall 2018, include an assessment of inclusivity of all events in event feedback forms.
  - By Winter 2019, develop a set of metrics to assess BLUElab events and promotional materials for appropriate sensitivity and inclusivity. These may include accessibility to events by people of all levels of ability, use of appropriate language when discussing community partners, and responsiveness to concerns and accommodations required by participants.
  - Beginning Fall 2019, all BLUElab events will be assessed by the metrics developed.
- BLUElab climate will be assessed in terms of inclusion across leadership and membership.
  - Beginning Winter 2018, planning will begin for a climate survey or other assessment to be conducted by Winter 2019.

*C. Ensure that incidents of discrimination and bias are documented and addressed in order to create a culture of accountability and address concerns surrounding inclusion.*

The key objectives that must be met in pursuit of this goal include:

- A system for feedback from members will be developed.
  - This system will be piloted in Winter 2018.
  - This system must be available and open for all members to use.
  - This system must allow complaints about leadership members to be addressed.
- Members will be educated in recognizing bias incidents and in the reporting mechanisms
  - Beginning Fall 2018, recruiting and new member materials will include information about reporting mechanisms
  - Beginning Fall 2019, recruiting and new member materials will contain information about reporting mechanisms and recognizing bias incidents

*D. Allow all members equal access and opportunity to benefit from events, opportunities, and skills available through BLUElab and BLUElab project teams in order to provide equitable support to all members and to a diverse cross section of the University population.*

The key objectives that must be met in pursuit of this goal include:

- Needs-based systems to support students who may need financial aid in order to participate in BLUElab project team activities will be established.
  - By Winter 2019, establish a travel award system to ease the burden of travel costs for students.
  - By Winter 2019, determine what other financial needs or burdens may be passed down to team leadership or membership and develop a plan to address these.
- Equitable recruitment methods for member selection will be developed with a focus on underserved segments of the student population.
  - Beginning Winter 2018, determine current demographic makeup of BLUElab and assess what segments of the student population may be underserved. Determine a plan for serving these underserved segments.
  - Beginning Fall 2019, train leadership members on equitable recruitment practice (drawing from literature on equitable hiring practice). All teams conducting interview processes should submit outlines of interview questions and interview note taking plans.
  - Beginning Winter 2019, assess demographics of Fall 2018 recruited class and the retention of those members. Assess if underserved segments of the student population are better served by new recruitment efforts.
- Equitable promotion methods for selection of leadership within BLUElab will be developed.
  - Beginning Winter 2018, apply equitable recruitment practices to the executive board selection process.
  - Beginning Winter 2019, train team leadership on equitable recruitment practice.
  - Beginning Fall 2020, assess leadership promotion based on the demographics of BLUElab and determine if there are disparities in promotion of certain segments of the student population. Develop a plan to address these disparities.

## **V. Supporting and Updating DE&I Plan**

The continued implementation and updating of this DE&I plan will fall under the responsibility of the BLUElab President, with assistance from the Executive Board. At the end of each Fall or Winter semester, the BLUElab President will write an update to this plan assessing goals and objectives. The BLUElab Executive Board can also add new goals and objectives following consultation with the Project Board.

At the end of the Winter semester, the BLUElab President will also present this information to the incoming Executive and Project Board to make them aware of the current condition and possible future of the DE&I plan. The incoming BLUElab President will then determine, with the Executive Board, the concrete steps in order to implement upcoming goals and objectives in the plan. All updates to the plan will be shared with the BLUElab Project Board at their first meeting of the Fall and Winter semesters. Updates to this plan will also be shared with BLUElab membership at large when deemed appropriate, but at least once per school year.

This DE&I plan is intended to extend into the 2020-21 school year. At that point, a new Strategic Visioning and Planning effort will be made and a new DE&I plan will be constructed as a part of that process.

## References

- [1] Page SE. The difference: How the power of diversity creates better groups, firms, schools, and societies: Princeton University Press, 2008.
  
- [2] Galinsky AD, Todd AR, Homan AC, Phillips KW, Apfelbaum EP, Sasaki SJ, Richeson JA, Olayon JB, Maddux WW. Maximizing the Gains and Minimizing the Pains of Diversity A Policy Perspective. Perspectives on Psychological Science 2015;10(6):742-8
  
- [3] Maruyama G, Moreno JF, Gudeman RH, Marin P. Does Diversity Make a Difference? Three Research Studies on Diversity in College Classrooms. 2000.