

Statement on Fostering Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic presents significant challenges that intersect with various inequalities facing our world today (i.e., healthcare, employment, education, and low socio-economic status, to name a few). The pandemic has forced us to venture into unfamiliar territory and shift abruptly to remote teaching and service, often with little preparation and varying levels of support. To ensure there is equity in the delivery of instruction, we must be mindful that in times of crisis, underrepresented and marginalized groups may be disproportionately impacted by the sudden change brought on by the pandemic. To actively promote the full participation of all students, faculty, and staff, it is crucial to acknowledge that everyone is operating under different circumstances, and the coronavirus pandemic exacerbates some of the challenges faced by historically marginalized groups.

Likewise, while fostering a safe and welcoming community that is inclusive and respectful of differences, we must be mindful that some members of our community are facing bias, discrimination, and attacks based on their identity. In the case of COVID-19, it is our Asian community, particularly Chinese and Chinese Americans, who have been targeted by harmful stereotypes permeating our daily interactions, social circles, and media coverage of the virus. Rather than use terms such as “Chinese Virus,” “Wuhan Virus,” or other phrases that wittingly or unwittingly project hatred toward Asian communities, refer to the virus as either “COVID-19” or “coronavirus” in both written and oral forms. Though we are separated physically during these difficult and uncertain times, we are still one community, and each member deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. No matter the distance between us, we all play an important role in building a caring, diverse, equitable, and inclusive Penn State community.

Stay inspired! Despite all the challenges posed by COVID-19, this crisis presents us with a unique opportunity to consider how we might create systemic change, not only during a time of crisis, but also in the future. We should always strive to support inclusive excellence and a community where all feel valued and welcomed.

Take good care and be well,

College of Arts and Architecture Committee on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

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