

DEI Tenure and Promotion Expectation Proposal and Rationale

Proposal

The tenure and promotion process will require faculty to include in their narrative a description of their contributions to diversity, equity and inclusion. Faculty might choose to address intellectual, cultural, residential and/or student life experiences. Evidence supporting the statement should be included in the supplemental materials.

To that end, faculty will address one or both questions:

1. How is a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion apparent in your work at Augustana?
2. How have you developed your skills and abilities related to diversity, equity and inclusion?

Those two questions allow for myriad ways of articulating commitment to our student body, to pedagogy, and/or to our disciplinary work. They allow for those who teach content-relevant courses both to have that work formally recognized as well as to continue learning; they allow for those who continually work to better understand the needs of students from diverse backgrounds to articulate that skills-based practice; and they allow for those new to the work to have their learning and development be recognized and encouraged. There is no “woke” contest, no universal body of knowledge, no minimum page length, no one expectation for this work other than that we commit to our students’ educations. This proposal formally recognizes that we faculty are committed to inclusion.

Rationale: AKA, why are we asking for this?

Students asked for it

Students have asked for more formal expectations of all faculty; in 2014, a group of students even petitioned the administration to “encourage faculty to expand and update curriculum to include more racially diverse material” and to be “proactive rather than reactive” to issues of inclusion. Similar requests as well as concerns were in the Sense of Belonging Survey (2019) and in a multitude of student conversations with administrators and faculty.

Students deserve it

Our students are not one monolithic group. We must recognize that and include that fact in our own preparation.

Promotion of an inclusive classroom environment that values diversity, equity and inclusion takes into consideration students from a variety of backgrounds who may learn in various ways with differing challenges. Better meeting our students can result in better challenging and preparing all our students. This is the main intent.

If our students are to succeed in a world in which they encounter people who differ from them in all conceivable ways, teaching them or modelling how to relate to people who are different (in terms of ethnicity, nationality, sex/gender status, sexuality, disability status, political ideology, etc.) should enable them to negotiate workplaces more easily but also in more inclusive and equitable ways. Given the indications that those who receive liberal arts educations are more likely ultimately to make their way into managerial positions, our efforts in this regard could well provide the opportunity for outsized influence on the part of our students in working for a more inclusive and equitable society.

The workplace is an obvious justification -- but acting on our commitments to inclusion can also encourage critical thinking and values-based action for a lifetime.

It is consistent with our mission and values

“The purpose of Augustana College is to afford an opportunity for a higher education in the liberal arts that provides for the development of all dimensions of human existence, in a manner consistent with the higher education values of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.”

If we take seriously the phrase “all dimensions of human existence,” attention to ways in which we can increase diversity, equity and inclusion in our work is not only consistent with, but demanded by, our mission statement.

It honors the Five Faith Commitments

- Interfaith Engagement
- Social Justice
- Spiritual Exploration
- Reasoned Examination
- Vocational Discernment

The Five Faith Commitments have been agreed upon by the faculty and the Board of Trustees. They “represent Augustana College's commitment to honor its roots ... in a way that meets today's students where they are. This means that the Five Faith Commitments are more than a sentimental retrospective on the college's relationship with the church. [I]t is a document . . . which will guide us into our future. These faith commitments are institutional and apply not only to those who share the religious affiliation of the college.”

It aligns with Augustana’s Learning Outcomes

Infusing diversity, equity and inclusion into the promotion and tenure process models our commitment to college-wide learning outcomes. Indeed, our contributions to diversity, equity and inclusion could be crafted with various learning outcomes in mind: Intercultural competence, ethical citizenship, intellectual curiosity, and communication competency, for example, are clearly relevant to this proposal.

It reflects efforts that the college and faculty already are making

Equity Guides are part of the faculty search process from the beginning. Discussions about diversity, equity and inclusion already are part of the interview process. Tenure track candidates interview with the Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. As such, we should commit to it not only in interviews, but in tenure and promotion.

Some of our faculty teach directly about matters of diversity, equity and inclusion or involve themselves and their students in projects and interactions with the local communities around Augustana and in study away programs. We need to make changes that would better reflect the efforts that Augustana faculty have put forth in their teaching and advising, and that would also better encourage and recognize faculty involvement in diversity, equity and inclusion efforts. This is shared work and that expectation, though largely already shared, must be made explicit for all faculty since it matters in tenure and promotion.

The College reaffirmed its commitment to inclusion with the 2018 hire of the Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. We have worked to increase diversity, and to be more equitable and inclusive in our practices. This proposal shows that the commitment resides in the faculty and not in one administrative office.

It is community work and part of community building

Many underrepresented faculty mentor underrepresented students. If all faculty do not participate, attention to diversity and supporting students through inclusive practices will fall heavily on underrepresented faculty. All students will benefit from knowing that all faculty are committed to including all students. Diversity and inclusion in the tenure and promotion process creates a path of expectation and actualizes our commitment. It could be a healthy, productive, and energizing part of a shared culture.

It honors and preserves academic freedom

This proposal is consistent with academic freedom. Indeed, some faculty will not center diversity and inclusion in their course content, but all Augustana faculty teach and most Augustana faculty are advisors. As such, all Augustana faculty can discuss efforts to practice engaged and inclusive pedagogy. Practitioners in all academic disciplines have conversations on reaching diverse audiences in their national and international associations. Teaching, research, and/or service are relevant domains for one's statement.

It is important to sustainability

There will be fewer traditional college-aged students in the next five years; Augustana already is seeing that demographic shift in regards both to domestic diversity and international student enrollment. More students are interested in learning in/at diverse institutions. Cultivating a reputation as an inclusive and inviting institution may enable us to recruit more students and in doing so increase the number of students from underrepresented groups (see, for example, the Higher Education Demand Index).

Being able to respond to demographic shifts are essential to the sustainability of the college. The future strength of the college requires that we reach a broad student population and make a conscious effort to build a healthy and diverse learning environment that aligns with our mission. This is a logical next step to meeting and fulfilling our aspirations.

We offer this proposal proudly and in conversation with many faculty and colleagues in addition to those named here:

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