



OFFICE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mindful Moments Newsletter

Fall

2023

ComMUunity of the Future



The world we live in had entered a cultural paradigm shift long before the words diversity, equity, and inclusion were bunched together and formed into a national debate. The infusion of individuals into other spaces was once how Europe settled wars. Today we have no betrothal lined up or cacao to present. Instead, we lend each other perspectives into the spaces we occupy.

At Millersville University, inclusivity is part of our **EPPiIC** values, and our partnerships are part of our essence to help one another feel accepted. The sense of belonging impacts our satisfaction in life, happiness, mental and physical health, and longevity. As a community of human beings, we want all those things for each other. While we strive for inclusive excellence, we must remember the challenges we face together, and as individuals, navigating this world.

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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ON THE INSIDE

- 2 CONVERSATIONS WITH CARLOS WILEY, CHIEF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION OFFICER
- 3 OPEN FORUM ON CLIMATE SURVEY
- 3 INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE STATEMENT
- 4 INTRODUCING DENICE VELEZ, INTERCULTURAL CENTER DIRECTOR
- 5 STUDENT SPOTLIGHT, ANJILA KARKI
- 6 INTEGRATED STUDIES: A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE
- 7 DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT, INTEGRATED STUDIES



Conversations with Carlos Wiley

Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer at Millersville University

“INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE,”

The role of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion is to provide leadership and guidance in assisting divisions, departments, units, and students to understand and engage in inclusive excellence behavior and learning. This occurs by providing definitions of words, workshops, and facilitated discussions around inclusion, belonging, and social justice.



Millersville University Inclusive Excellence Statement

Inclusive Excellence encompasses the processes within Millersville University that purposefully value differences to promote the learning, critical thinking, and personal enrichment of students, faculty, and staff. It aims to build “a welcoming campus community” for all its students, faculty, and staff.

We are launching the 21-Day **Inclusive Excellence Challenge**, which encourages the Millersville Community to read, watch, engage, act, and connect. Participants can engage in something that helps them grow, like attending Intercultural Center events or the Hazel I. Jackson Lecture. A luncheon will occur at the end of the challenge, which will end on November 30, 2023. Learn more [HERE](#)



Inclusive Excellence recognizes diversity in thought, learning, and personal characteristics that can be tapped and understood in the University's working, living, and learning environments. Inclusive Excellence enables us to engage in civil conversation with those who hold views that differ from our own, to engage in civil debate on critical issues with others who hold different views and positions, and to socialize with persons who have had differing lived experiences. Also, in class, clinical, and field experience settings, Inclusive Excellence is addressed through ample opportunities to learn about diverse cultures locally, nationally, and globally.

Inclusive Excellence includes university protocols and policies for the admission and graduation of diverse students from racial, ethnic, and social backgrounds and for hiring and retaining faculty, administrators, and staff with diverse experiences and perspectives.

Through Inclusive Excellence experiences, students can develop knowledge and personal abilities that may enhance their critical thinking and learning and better enable them to contribute to society as graduates of Millersville University.

Diversity

Diversity is expressed in myriad forms, including race and ethnicity, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, language, culture, national origins, religious commitments, age, ability status, political perspective, thought, and more.

Equity

Equity is actively working to remove the systemic and oppressive forces that act as barriers for student success.

Inclusion

Inclusion is creating a campus community where differences are welcomed and respectfully heard and where every individual feels a sense of belonging, and it requires intentional and deliberate strategies.

Social Justice

Taking concrete steps to ensure the physical and psychological safety and security of students, faculty, and staff.

Event Photos



Land Acknowledgement

"We would like to recognize the Native peoples of the lower Susquehanna River basin, those known and those unknown to us, who have stewarded the land, upon which Millersville University sits, for thousands of years. We acknowledge that the land on which we gather, study, and work is the ancestral land of the Conestogas, Susquehannocks, Shawnee, and others. One group, the Shenks Ferry people, had a village adjacent to the campus. We pay our respects to the traditional occupants and caretakers of this land."

This year we will dedicate four white pines that we had planted in the spring honoring the four tribes that were here before us.



CAMPUS CLIMATE OPEN FORUM

Join us for the roll out of the Climate Survey findings along with recommendations and implementation plan in a number of open forums. We will be helping folks through the process that we need to evolve and engage in learning, connecting recommendations to what we have to do for our Middle State Accreditation.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2023 12-1PM SMC, ROOM 18
REFRESHMENTS AND SNACKS PROVIDED

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2023 12-1PM SMC, ROOM 24
REFRESHMENTS AND SNACKS PROVIDED

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2023 3-4PM
FORD ATRIUM, MCCOMSEY HALL
REFRESHMENTS AND SNACKS PROVIDED

All are welcome to any of the sessions. Join us for an in-depth discussion of the results and recommendations of the **2022 PASSHE DEI Campus Climate Survey**. More information can be found [HERE](#)

Introducing Denice Velez

Director, Dr. Rita Wade-El Smith Intercultural Center

“CELEBRATING DIFFERENCES”

Denice received her Bachelors in Ethnic Studies and Chicanx Studies from the University of California, Berkeley and Master of Public Policy and a Master's in Higher Education from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She was born and raised in Southern California. She has dedicated her student and professional career to various cultural centers including a Cross-Cultural Center and Latinx Resource Center in Southern California. Most recently she served as the Associate Director for the Dowdy Multicultural Center at West Chester University. In these roles, she has enjoyed empowering students to understand their role in social justice and affirming their diverse identities. She looks forward to bringing these experiences to working with students with their talents, skills and passions to address similar topics.



DENICE VELEZ

Director, Intercultural Center (she/her/ella)

Her favorite quote is “Without justice there can be no love” - bell hooks.

The Intercultural Center aims to support a sense of belonging by having a physical space where students can come and have conversations in a place that is inviting. Creating and sustaining a welcoming and inclusive campus at Millersville University is about recognizing, accepting and celebrating differences within our campus and surrounding community. We aim to provide students opportunities to explore their multiple identities and learn about the background and experiences of others. Together, we hope to create a culture of inclusion, equity and a sense of belonging here on campus and beyond. Our office offers an array of programs, discussions, workshops, social events, and resources to spark self-discovery.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Hispanic & Latinx Heritage Month

September 15 - October 15

Hispanic & Latinx Heritage Month Museum

Monday, September 18 | 12pm-1:30pm |
SMC Atrium

Dutchirican: A Latinx History of Central Pennsylvania

Conversation by Dr. Ivette Guzmán-
Zavala and Dr. John Hinshaw

Wednesday, October 11 | 4pm-5pm |
SMC Room 24

Student Spotlight

Anjila Karki

Undergraduate Art Education Major; Psychology Minor



ANJILA KARKI

Millersville University's FEA Mentor

“COMFORT in my COMMUNITY”

Mentors are essential to guide development and positively affect engagement and achievement in higher education.

For Anjila, the memorable messages of support encouraged her to persevere. Anjila was born in Jhapa, Nepal. Her family arrived in the United States as refugees when she was eight, settling in Spokane, Washington. In 2018, she moved with her family to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, after living in Lakewood, Ohio, for some time. In high school, she immersed herself in programs that allowed her to explore different career paths. Dr. Miriam Witmer, Assistant Professor and the Color of Teaching Coordinator, led a seminar recruiting students for Project Teacher Development through the Lancaster Partnership Program with Dr. Christina Williams, Associate Director for Student Access and Support Services and Coordinator of First-generation Programs. Today, Dr. Witmer runs the Future Educator Academy.

The Future Educator Academy at Millersville University is a week-long residential experience for high school juniors who have expressed interest in becoming a future PK-12 educator like teacher, administrator, school counselor, school social worker, and athletic coach. A primary goal of the Academy is to recruit students into the field of education from underrepresented racial/ethnic minorities, first-generation college students, and students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. The Future Educator Academy is designed to be interactive and inclusive.

“THERE IS NO GROWTH IN THE COMFORT ZONE”

By participating in the Academy, students will experience firsthand the roles and responsibilities of professions in education and better understand the dispositions and abilities needed to be a successful educator.

The summer after her junior year in high school, Anjila spent a week immersed in intentional programming. The rest is now history. Today, she is a senior at Millersville University and serves as a mentor to the Academy.

Reflecting on her experiences, she says, “Being part of the program as a mentor is a full-circle experience for me. My mentee was from Haiti, I saw myself in her. She was so sad when the program ended she wanted it to go for one more week. She mentioned how she got to practice her English; I remember when that was me. I came to Millersville because I felt welcomed, the program (Future Educator Academy) made that happen for me. Now I get to do what I love, so others who look like me, or sound like me, can see me and say I can do that too.”

“The first few days of the program mentees are very shy, it takes a couple of days for them to open up and express themselves. This is a safe space for them to ask questions. It was important for me to make them feel comfortable.”

She recounts, “I remember participating in PSSI (Pre Scholars-Summer Institute), with Dr. Williams and Dr. Dar Newman, learning strategies to learn and process information. Having positive experiences led to finding comfort in my college life. I have comfort in my community and my role as an educator.”



When asked what courses have empowered her, she notes, “Cultural Anthropology, with Dr. Garcia, gave me insight into how culture plays a role in our lives. Being Hindu and Asian in Washington State in a third-grade ESL class meant something. In my placement, I encourage students to read aloud because it is something that helped me. It makes me emotional to talk about it, I didn't know English. I was in that position once.”

ESL classes in the United States cater primarily to Spanish-speaking students. English as a Second Language programs must respond faster as we see increased demand for Arabic, Creole, and other languages in student support settings.

Reflecting on her favorite mantras, she says, “One of my favorite quotes I learned from Dr. Williams. There is no growth in the comfort zone, there is no comfort in a growth zone.”

Consistent support in mentorship opportunities empowers and promotes student's success across their experiences in higher education. Recruitment and retention practices amplify the importance of engaging growing demographics. The inclusive excellence framework focuses on improving and sustaining the Millersville University learning community.

Student Spotlight

Morgan Huber

INTERGRATED STUDIES: A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

By Morgan Huber
As featured on The Snapper April 2023

"Many hear of this program, but few know about its function and purpose. They see students they perceive as having special needs, but may not understand why they are on campus or what their goals are. Because of this lack of understanding, a variety of misconceptions, rumors, and discrimination run abound within the community. However, this small but powerful program seeks to do more than just be Special Ed goes to college."

The foundation of Millersville University's mission lies in its core, or "EPPIC" values - Exploration, Professionalism, Public mission, Inclusion, Integrity, and Compassion. By adhering to these values, the Millersville community seeks to make learning and progress genuine, meaningful, and accessible. One of the unique ways the university does this is by making education inclusive to all through an initiative known as Integrated Studies. Many hear of this program, but few know about its function and purpose. They see students they perceive as having special needs, but may not understand why they are on campus or what their goals are. Because of this lack of understanding, a variety of misconceptions, rumors, and discrimination run abound within the community. However, this small but powerful program seeks to do more than just be "Special Ed goes to college".

What is Integrated Studies?

Integrated Studies is an inclusive initiative for young adults with intellectual disabilities. Enrolled as full-time, non-degree-seeking students, the 28 current participants in the program attend classes and practice independent living by residing on campus and navigating life on their own. With the help of the staff team and their support coaches, students in Integrated Studies create individualized plans in order to take classes and pursue opportunities that fit their interests and career goals.

Integrated studies students have access to the same facilities, resources, and privileges as the majority student population. They may use the library, dining halls, and labs, and are encouraged to participate in clubs and activities outside of class. Upon completion of the program, graduates receive a certificate and can enter the workforce or, if they choose, may apply to enroll at Millersville or another school as a degree-seeking student.

In addition to academics, the university holds students in Integrated Studies to the same academic, financial, and behavioral standards. Participants in the program pay the same amount for tuition, housing, and technology fees.

**making
EDUCATION
INCLUSIVE
to ALL**

On top of that, however, students also pay an Educational Support fee each semester, which covers the additional services and support they receive through faculty, staff, and student success coaches.

Finances can be daunting for anyone considering college, but that should not discourage anyone from pursuing their goals. Students can apply for financial aid and scholarships such as Ruby's Rainbow and the National Down Syndrome Society's O'Neill Tabani Enrichment Fund, both of which support college students with Down Syndrome. What is Integrated Studies? 12 Another source of aid, the EPIIC Scholarship, exclusively serves Millersville students participating in the Integrated Studies program.

Integrated Studies is not unique to Millersville. Similar programs already exist in 49 of the 50 U.S. states at more than 300 colleges and universities.

Inclusion in Action

Initiatives like Integrated Studies strive to fight exclusion in post-secondary education. Aided by the Comprehensive Training Program (CPT), initiatives such as those at Millersville seek to empower students with intellectual disabilities by holding the same standards and valuing them as equal to any other college student.

The remainder of this article can be found [HERE](#) prospective from Luke Davis. Antonia Little, Pascal Muganyizi, and an outlook into the future await!

"After all, inclusion and compassion are integral parts of the university's EPPIC values." - Morgan Huber

Integrated Studies

Department Spotlight

Director, Dr. McKenna Killion, OTD, Interviewed by Carolina Hidalgo-Ahmed

What is Integrated Studies?

In integrated studies, we are an inclusive post-secondary education initiative, which means we're providing support to students with intellectual disabilities so that they can receive a college education.

That means they're auditing courses related to their career goals here on campus, and we're providing support through a peer mentor coaching model. We hire other student workers on campus who are undergrad or graduate students who are typically seeking a degree, and they are paired with some students enrolled through integrated studies. And they're just providing that extra support to ensure that the resources and information here on campus are accessible to our students.

The coaching support that we provide is a crucial aspect of our program. It's one of the most integral parts of what we do here at Integrated Studies. The coaching support is a true mentorship model. The coaches we're hiring and training are taught how to guide students with an intellectual disability through the college experience and four main areas.

The first one that we always think of is academics. The coaches will model what being a student in class is like. What does it look like to be a college student? Whether that's prompting them to answer questions or to show up on time. All those things that are expected of a college student might be implicit. Sometimes, our students need it, said explicitly to them, so the coaches are providing that mentorship.

Addressing Implicit Bias

Our students are capable of making their own decisions. Students have the knowledge and the ability to communicate to find the resources needed here on campus. We try to be intentional about it when we are making connections with faculty and explaining that, while our students are auditing, there's still an expectation that they are actively participating and learning something from the course. And often, our students communicate what they're learning differently.

The campus community must direct students to the correct resources like any other student. As the Director of Integrated Studies, students want me to know only some aspects of their personal life.

It can create an uncomfortable situation where I know too much about the students, and they feel uncomfortable coming to me for the correct academic help. The education and referral pieces have been essential for the department echo for the Millersville Community.

Our goal is that our students will have access to all courses here at the university and all resources and be seen as valued members of those classes. That, to me, is what inclusive excellence would mean for our students. If they're not in class one day or miss a club meeting because they were busy, it is noticed that they're not there and that their presence needs to be noticed. Once a faculty member has a student, their perspective changes because they are exposed to someone different; they can learn from them and see what our students bring to the table. So, I would love to continue seeing some moments where people's minds change.

Breaking Down Barriers

It's easy to get caught up on some of the challenges of supporting a different learner. It challenges faculty to reflect on their teaching style and how they're assessing learning. And that process can be complex, and we acknowledge that.

Integrated Studies Department Spotlight

Director, Dr. McKenna Killion, OTD, Interviewed by Carolina Hidalgo-Ahmed

But at the same time, there's a lot of growth that happens for all students in the classroom for the faculty or staff members feel like they can share that experience with other faculty who may not have encountered an integrated study student or who have not taught a student with an intellectual disability.

The chain of communication and sharing stories will promote growth for everyone on campus and make us more open-minded. I can try some of that in my coursework. What I try to remind everyone on campus is that integrated study students are not the only students with disabilities that you are going to have in your courses.



If we use a universal design of learning and make these changes, maybe those changes will start because you have a student from integrated studies in your course, but it will benefit all of your students in the room. The consistent feedback that inclusive post-secondary education programs get across the country from faculty is that they were challenged to look at their coursework and how they were assessing learning because they had a student with an intellectual disability.



The conversation has never ended, and it has to continue to evolve and change as society and the campus evolve and change. Inclusion gets left out so quickly. The conversation needs to be ongoing, but it's never going to be a complete conversation until all members of the campus community are actively represented in that conversation, not just the panel. We are here to support each other through this process and create a safe space; if we're unsure how to start supporting a student, we can have those conversations without judgment.

This would be a significant step in supporting all students here at Millersville with a disability. The connections and opportunities for people to meet our students and understand the program's importance get the buy-in from people who might have yet to hear of inclusive post-secondary education. We started going to different departments, educating them on what integrated studies is and what our students are doing, but also sharing about our students' goals. Having all employees be told right up front what integrated studies is and why it's so important that we're here.

**Opening Doors to College
Featuring Millersville University
Students**



**Learn More
Think Higher. Think College.**



Event Photos

Climate Survey Open Forum



Arms Wide Shut?



