



28 April 2021

TO: Dr. Karen P. DePauw
Vice President and Dean for Graduate Education
Graduate School
Virginia Tech

M.S. Geography Inclusion and Diversity Plan

The Department of Geography recognizes and is dedicated to advancing issues surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The Department of Geography eschews all actions, policies, and informal and systemic injustices that infringe upon human rights and advancing the human condition. As such, the Department of Geography is implementing the following plan—solidified in the M.S. Geography Plan of Study—to create the space for a critical examination of DEI issues and to meet the Graduate School’s Inclusion and Diversity requirement as stipulated by the Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies Resolution 2017-18A. This plan leverages resources provided by the University and Graduate School, expertise of the College of Natural Resources and Environment’s Director of Inclusion and Diversity, and the disciplinary and professional experience of faculty members within Department of Geography.

- 1. Virginia Tech Principles of Community – Valuing Human Diversity and Inclusion:** The Virginia Tech Principles of Community are required by the College of Natural Resources, and thus the Department of Geography, to be included in all course syllabi. The most recent statement is provided to all faculty prior to each semester, along with additional campus resources, to be included in all course syllabi. The Principles of Community are also presented and discussed at the mandatory M.S. Geography Orientation.
 - a. *Learning Goals:*
 - i. Recognize the inherent dignity and value of every person;
 - ii. Appreciate the value of diversity in enriching our lives and the university community;
 - iii. Understand our individual and collective commitments to Virginia Tech’s Principles of Community.

- 2. Redress and Shared Responsibilities – The Role of the Active Bystander:** Redress and shared responsibilities are addressed through a mandatory orientation session that occurs every fall prior to the first day of classes. This session includes a visit from a Graduate School official at the Office of the Ombudsperson in which redress and shared responsibilities are discussed. Further information is provided on departmental policies and appropriate conduct among students, faculty, advisors, and Teaching and Research Assistant supervisors. Additionally, students are introduced to channels for redress and made further

aware of their responsibilities as active bystanders by directing students to webpages and resources provided by (but not limited to): the “Title IX and Violence Against Women Act” at the Office for Equity and Accessibility, Dean of Students’ “Student Code of Conduct,” Graduate School’s “Graduate Honor System” and “Disrupting Academic Bullying,” Cook Counseling Center, Women’s Center, InclusiveVT, and the American Association of Geographers’ “Statement on Professional Ethics” and “Professional Conduct Policy and Procedures.”

a. *Learning Goals:*

- i. Know where to seek resources to effectively navigate conflicts;
- ii. Recognize the right of fairness to all humans;
- iii. Realize the responsibility we have to advocate for fairness for all.

3. Impact of Personal Actions and Words – The Effects on the Community in which we Live:

These impacts are addressed through two modules in GEOG 5004 every fall semester (required course). One module is dedicated to content on and a discussion of critical components of the topic. A subsequent, discipline-specific module is a seminar series that demonstrates original geographic research and theories on the impacts of personal actions and words.

a. *Learning Goals:*

- i. Understand how our actions and words manifest in societal consequences;
- ii. Examine the impacts of actions and words on communities;
- iii. Reflect and think critically on the impacts of actions and words and what has been learned for the future.

4. Individual Introspection – Explore your Biases: Individual introspection and biases are addressed through two modules in GEOG 5004 every fall semester (required course). One module is dedicated to content on and a discussion of critical components of the topic. A subsequent, discipline-specific module is a seminar series that demonstrates original geographic research and theories on concepts related but not limited to introspection, biases, positionality, and social location.

a. *Learning Goals:*

- i. Understand key terms and concepts related to individual and institutional biases;
- ii. Examine the impacts of individual and institutional biases;
- iii. Reflect and think critically on the impacts of individual biases and how they can be dismantled.

Formally submitted by:

**Graduate Committee
M.S. Geography Program
Department of Geography**