



**Samuel Merritt  
University**



**Strategic Vision for  
Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion**  
2021-2026

Executive Summary

Samuel Merritt University educates students to become highly skilled and compassionate healthcare professionals who positively transform the experience of care in diverse communities. We are steadfastly committed to upholding our institutional values, ensuring that we foster:

- A learning environment where we challenge ourselves and our students to think critically, seek mastery, and act compassionately
- A collegial environment where we are fair, respectful and behave with integrity
- A collaborative environment where we partner with one another and with others in the community
- An innovative environment where we take reasoned risks and move nimbly
- A results-oriented environment where we provide and expect exceptional performance and service

A pillar of Samuel Merritt University's Strategic Plan is to foster a sense of belonging of our diverse leadership, faculty, staff and students who advance learning, scholarship and service to the community.

This Strategic Vision for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion 2021-2026 both reflects and furthers Samuel Merritt University's mission and will ensure that we achieve our institution's vision to become nationally recognized as a premier, multi-specialty health sciences institution.

With pride,



Dr. Ching-Hua Wang,  
President



Dr. Fred Baldini,  
Provost & VP of Academic Affairs



## INTRODUCTION

**This Strategic Vision for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for 2021-2026 highlights the progress Samuel Merritt University has made under previous diversity action plans. This document also details the next steps we will take to achieve the university's goals for preparing a diverse and inclusive healthcare workforce committed to making high-quality, patient-centered healthcare equitable and accessible to diverse communities in California and nationwide.**

## BACKGROUND

The Strategic Vision for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion 2021-2026 focuses on building on our successes in attracting a more diverse student population, establishing an inclusive campus climate, and graduating diverse healthcare professionals to enter the workforce and improve the experience under-served populations have with healthcare. This plan intentionally engages all of the university's academic and co-curricular programs, and multiple aspects of the administration, to build sustainable change from within.

In July 2020, President Ching-Hua Wang charged a task force of students, faculty and staff at Samuel Merritt University (SMU) to vet with the campus community and external stakeholders the draft strategic vision developed over the previous three years. The charge included four specific tasks toward the finalization and operationalization of a plan to be implemented beginning in January 2021:

1. Finalize the 5-Year Strategic Vision for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Plan (2021-2026)
2. Discuss successes and opportunities regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion with campus stakeholders
3. Gather input on implementation feasibility for plan objectives
4. Deliver recommendations about the vision, along with goals and metrics to measure the success of the plan

## SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

To ensure that an SMU education provides its health sciences students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences they need to improve health outcomes for underserved and vulnerable communities, the university will increase the diversity and diversity-consciousness of faculty, staff, and students. Specific objectives toward meeting this goal include:

1. Recruit, develop, and promote faculty from groups that are underrepresented in the healthcare professions<sup>1</sup> and faculty who demonstrate an inclusive diversity consciousness.

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<sup>1</sup> This includes, but is not limited to: a) underrepresented minorities (URM) determined by Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to be underrepresented in the healthcare professions: American Indian or Alaska Native, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Hispanic (all races); b) Two or more races, when one or more are from the preceding racial and ethnic categories listed by HRSA; c) groups in racial or ethnic categories deemed to be underrepresented in healthcare professions based on current data from credible sources; d) minority groups not categorized by race or ethnicity that are deemed to be underrepresented in healthcare professions, based on current data from credible sources.

2. Implement holistic admission review in all SMU academic programs.
3. Increase the percentage of enrolled Latinx, Black/African American, Native American, and Pacific Islander students, and enhance the preparation of all students to serve medically underserved and vulnerable communities.
4. Eliminate disparity in the on-time graduation rate for all students in all academic programs.
5. Partner with the vice president of University Advancement and Communications to increase the university's current-use grant funds available for scholarships for groups that are underrepresented in the healthcare professions.
6. Collaborate with the university's vice presidents to create a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) plan for each academic program and division.
7. Implement restorative practices training across all departments and programs, to create a culture for resolving conflict that also fosters a supportive and nurturing community for faculty, staff, and students.

This Strategic Vision for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion permeates all aspects of SMU operations. It informs the implementation of major university initiatives, including the development and implementation of a new Academic Master Plan, the execution of the university's strategic plan, the assessment of the university's institutional learning outcomes, the support of the new student-success framework, and the ongoing enrichment of the university's culture of inclusion.

## TASK FORCE MEMBERS

<b>Ché Abram</b> (Co-Chair)	Associate Director of Diversity, Office of People & Culture
<b>Craig Elliott</b> (Co-Chair)	Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs
<b>Keamiyah Walker</b>	Student, Entry-Level Master of Science in Nursing program
<b>Cheng Yu</b>	Student, Physician's Assistant Program
<b>Jessica Arauza</b>	Academic Support Coordinator, Staff Council
<b>Brandy Beazley</b>	Assistant Professor, School of Nursing
<b>Kay Davis</b>	Associate Professor, Health Sciences Simulation Center
<b>Goli Hashemi</b>	Assistant Professor, Occupational Therapy
<b>Shawna Holbrook</b>	Interim Dean of Admission
<b>Marcus Penn</b>	Adjunct Assistant Professor, Bachelor of Science in Nursing
<b>Emily Prieto-Tseregounis</b>	Chief of Staff to the President & VP of University Initiatives
<b>Nancy Stollon</b>	Administrative Assistant to VP of University Initiatives
<b>Celeste Villanueva</b>	Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs
<b>Kathryn Ward</b>	Assistant Director of Student Services

