



# NORTHWESTERN STATE

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA



## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION STRATEGIC PLAN

2022-2026

# Table of Contents

Message from the President ..... 1

Message from the Vice President of Inclusion & Diversity..... 2

Executive Summary ..... 3

Northwestern State University DEI Plan..... 4

    Access and Equity ..... 7

    Academic Engagement..... 9

    Infrastructure ..... 10

    Environment ..... 10

NSU DEI Affirmations ..... 11

Appendices

    Glossary of Terms ..... 13

    Data ..... 14







**Dr. Marcus Jones**  
President

## Message from the President

Northwestern State University is committed to advancing the principles and practices of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in all its pursuits and endeavors. NSU is intentional in its efforts to expand the institutional culture in which diversity, equity, and inclusion are our campus ethos.

The University strives to foster an environment in which all individuals are respected and valued for their different backgrounds, interests, experiences, and cultural and intellectual perspectives.

Esteem for every student, faculty, staff member, and others in the University community and respect for their dignity regardless of dissimilarities are embedded in the institution's mission, vision, and values.

Northwestern's commitment to a diverse, welcoming climate on its campuses is reflected in the objectives of the University's Office of Inclusion and Diversity and the emphasis on equity and inclusion in the institution's strategic plan.

That plan includes initiatives for increased diversity of faculty, staff, administration, and student population, integration of diversity and inclusion throughout the academic curriculum and all events and activities, and assurances that diversity and inclusion are reflected in policies, procedures, budgeting and other areas of University operations.

We affirm the relevance of DEI and provide content to our culture as we reiterate our message to our diverse communities, perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds, must be reflected in our campus culture, our policies and procedures, and our employment opportunities. Investing in DEI allows our campuses to maintain a competitive advantage, provide safe spaces for students, and model the behavior we expect as members of the Demon family.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marcus D. Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



**Dr. Michael Snowden**

## Message from the Vice President of Inclusion and Diversity

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are preeminent factors in the institutional mission of Northwestern State University. Our campus will continue to be the community where diversity is embraced, inclusion is practiced, and equity is manifested in each decision. Over the last almost three years, we have seen horrific racial strife and discord perpetrated by individuals who would have you believe there is no shared humanity among diverse groups.

NSU strives to be a leader in the DEI space. This document serves as a road map or compass which our University will use to guide our policy, practice, and programs. NSU is heavily invested in this work. Our written articulation of our actions demonstrates a renewing of our commitment and public facing example of where we are and where we want to be.

As we forge ahead in our work, we make a declaration to the constituency of NSU faculty, staff, students, alumni, and supporters. DEI leadership is the NSU contribution to providing a safe, equitable world where difference can be celebrated and community enhanced.

We look forward to having each department and person work to achieve our plan. This plan hinges on a strong concerted effort by everyone at NSU.

Fork Em Demons!!!

Sincerely,

*Michael T. Snowden*

# Executive Summary

## Northwestern State University Mission Statement

Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. Through its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

## Introduction

Northwestern State University is the oldest continually occupied site for higher education in Louisiana. Established in 1884 in Natchitoches, the Louisiana State Normal School offered two-year training of teachers. The first class included forty-five young women and fifteen young men from thirteen Louisiana parishes. Normal began offering the four-year education degrees in 1919 and was renamed Louisiana Normal College (LNC) in 1921. In 1944, the school became Northwestern State College. In 1965, NSC admitted its first African American students. In 1970, the legislature changed the name to Northwestern State University. Today, more than 135 years later, NSU has campuses in Shreveport, Alexandria and at Fort Polk, and its eNSU program allows students around the world to study at Northwestern State. NSU has grown from its modest beginnings to become a diverse regional institution of higher education that is home to a community of roughly 10,000 students, 450 faculty, and 400 staff with different backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences.

NSU's community is diverse. Embracing and valuing that diversity is a guiding principle at Northwestern State, as diversity is listed among its core values: "Diversity helps define who we are. We welcome and respect everyone traveling on a journey for knowledge. Differences make us stronger." The University is not just an institution but also a community, defined by the diversity of its members, dependent on how well that community respects and supports the rich differences of students, staff, and faculty, as well as the broader community around it. Northwestern State's commitment to its strategic plan—to strengthen the student experience, to attain academic excellence, to meet the demands of a global economy, to achieve athletic prominence, and to enrich the local and regional community—requires the University community to cultivate diversity, embrace equity, and be an inclusive community. NSU cannot meet these goals and achieve its mission unless it guarantees equitable access, opportunity, and advancement for all students, faculty, and staff at every stage of education and career, regardless of difference.

This plan attempts to define and refine the University's goal to increase diversity and improve inclusiveness across campus through specific strategies and indicators that will ensure the University continues to move toward its mission.

# NSU DEI Plan

## History

NSU's first attempt at diversity planning resulted from a retreat in the spring of 2005. That five-year plan was adopted and then updated in 2010. The Mission Statement for that University Diversity Plan reads as follows:

*The University's fundamental mission in addressing diversity is to cultivate and nurture diversity as a change agent, and to provide a student-oriented community with opportunities for cultural, intellectual, social, economic, and ethnic development. Recognizing this fundamental purpose, the University fosters an environment that encourages all members to acknowledge, respect, accommodate, and learn from the human experience. The University is committed to excellence in recruiting, communicating, and maintaining a community of diverse people, ideas, perspectives, possibilities, and backgrounds.*

These five-year plans laid out goals for diversity planning, needs assessment, cultural change through campus activities, intentional recruiting for diversity, and retention strategies. While those plans were never fully implemented, they sparked discussion of diversity across campus and led to college- and department-level diversity statements and plans. More importantly, they led to greater awareness of the diversity of NSU's populations of students, faculty, and staff.

In the fall of 2016, in response to the increasing importance of inclusion globally, the president of Northwestern State University appointed a group of diverse students, faculty, and staff to a steering committee for the creation of a Diversity Center on the Natchitoches campus. Through this committee, the Center for Inclusion and Diversity was established with the following mission:

*The Center for Inclusion and Diversity exists to promote a welcoming environment for all Demons. We are committed to combating prejudice and advocating for all minority and marginalized populations. We exist to give space and voice to everyone, including but not limited to all races; all religions; the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Community; and the Disabled Community.*

Since then, the coordinator of the Center for Inclusion and Diversity (CID) has worked alongside the University Diversity Committee to ensure and promote the University's dedication to advancing principles of diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunity through programming and other resources. To further understand perceptions of inclusion and diversity on campus, the University Diversity Committee crafted and distributed a University-wide climate survey in 2018. Through that survey, the CID was able to adequately identify many of the specific diversity needs at NSU. The results of the survey necessitated an intentional plan of action to improve diversity and inclusion across campus.



## The Planning Process

In the fall of 2019, the vice president of The Student Experience appointed various members of the NSU community—including students, faculty, staff, and administrators from across campus—to serve on the Diversity Planning Team. Tasked with developing strategic, measurable goals to increase diversity and improve inclusivity at NSU, the planning team started the work to enact a plan to continue effort to increase diversity and foster an inclusive atmosphere at NSU.

Northwestern furthered their commitment to this effort in its establishment of the Office of Inclusion and Diversity (OID) lead by Vice President of Inclusion and Diversity Dr. Michael T Snowden. The overarching goal of the Office of Inclusion and Diversity is to foster a sense of institutional belonging where everyone can thrive and become their absolute best. To that end, the OID will establish and promote cultural competence by promulgating diversity, equity, and inclusion across campus and in all activities to close the gap in recruitment and retention. To quantitatively measure its progress, Northwestern will establish Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as its sixth Strategic Focus Area (SFA) in its new Strategic Plan 2023-2028 – A New Day.



## The Goal

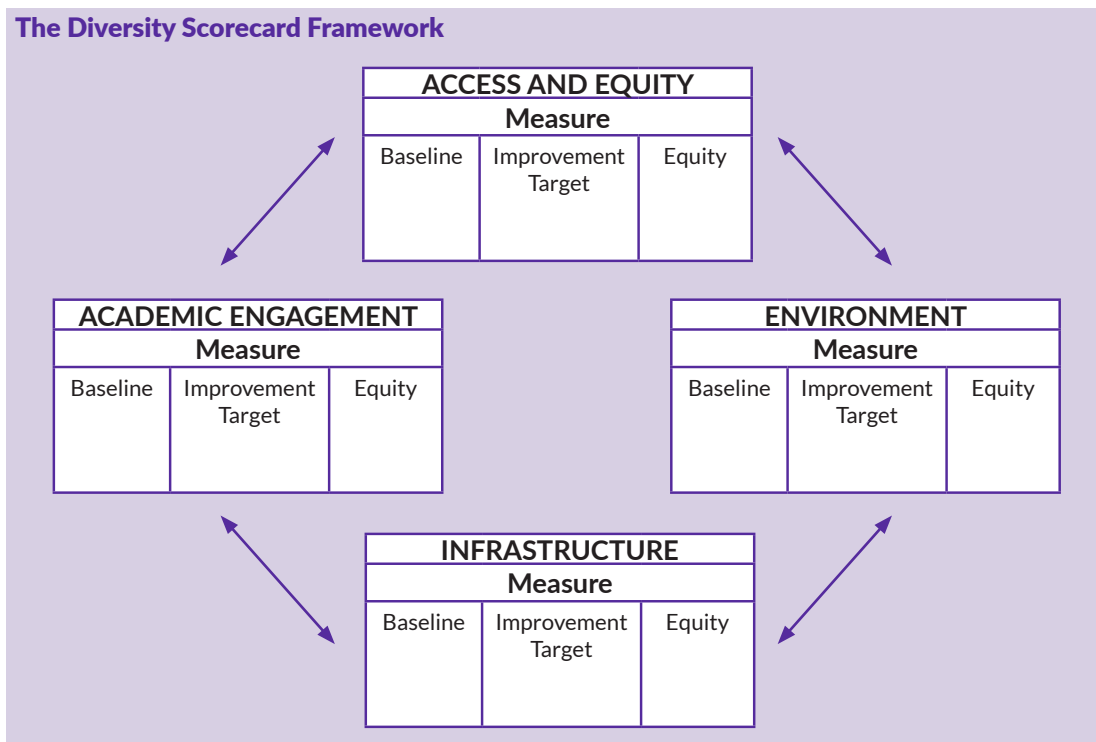
The goal is to grow and nurture a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment for our entire campus community allowing everyone to reach their full potential.

### Objectives

- Increase diversity and equity among the student body, faculty, staff, and administration.
- Integrate diversity and inclusion throughout the academic curriculum and support programs.
- Ensure diversity and inclusion are reflected in policies, procedures, budgeting, staffing, facility management, and other areas of University operation.
- Develop a more inclusive campus environment that fosters success and meaningful participation for all students, faculty, and staff.

The strategic plan can only be adequately implemented if there are measures of success and benchmarks of progress. NSU has adopted the Diversity Scorecard first introduced by Dr. Estela Bensimon at the Center for Urban Education in the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California with grants underwritten by The James Irvine Foundation<sup>1</sup>.

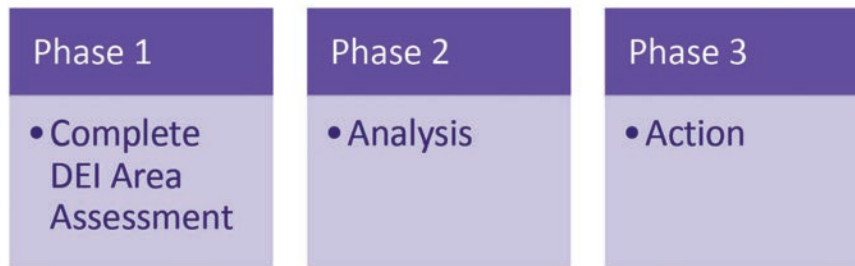
The scorecard framework will align our objectives. Those objectives drive our work as we seek to promote the details of this plan. We have four areas of focus: Access and Equity, Academic Engagement, Infrastructure, and Environment. Each objective is measured by the scorecard adapted from the work done at Ball State.



<sup>1</sup>Bensimon, E.M (2004). The Diversity Scorecard: A Learning Approach to Institutional Change, *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 36(1), 44-52, DOI: 10.1080/00091380409605083



The plan is designed around a three-phase process:



## Access and Equity

### **OBJ 1. Increasing diversity and equity among the student body, faculty, staff, and administration.**

- A. Implement best practices for recruiting students from underrepresented populations.**
  1. Research current population and look for trends and pipelines.
  2. Establish outreach efforts to localized Native American high schools.
  3. Use targeted media campaign to reach African American males.
  4. Enhance and grow scholarship opportunities for local and regional high school applicants.
- B. Implement best practices for retaining students from underrepresented populations.**
  1. Invest in faculty diversification.
  2. Provide supplemental academic counseling.
  3. Create cohort groups in academic majors.
  4. Utilize the early alert system to inform students of academic progress.
- C. Implement best practices for graduating students from underrepresented populations.**
  1. Encourage and assist in financing study abroad opportunities.
  2. Connect upper class students with alumni mentors.
  3. Develop a graduating student check list.
- D. Implement best practices for attracting underrepresented population to join the alumni association.**
  1. Alumni sponsored events for graduating seniors.
  2. Free one year membership to graduating seniors.
  3. Early marketing to rising junior.
- E. Implement best practices for recruiting diverse faculty, staff, and administrators.**
  1. Write job advertisements to encourage application more assertively from those within underrepresented groups and include a statement of intention to hire diverse faculty and staff.
  2. Expand the avenues through which candidates for positions on campus are identified and contacted.
  3. Develop a list of sources for identifying potential candidate for positions within each department.
  4. Advertise in regional and national publications and journals for positions (will require additional funding).
  5. Consider Historic Black Colleges and Universities as a priority from which diverse applicants are recruited.
  6. Seek qualified candidates by communicating with others in the industry/profession.

7. Fund competitive beginning salary and start-up incentives (e.g., moving expenses, provision of labs, equipment, teaching assistants, research funding, etc.).
8. Sponsor visas for international professors.
9. Add more visiting professorships.
10. Offer post-doctorate fellowships.

**F. Implement best practices for hiring diverse faculty, staff, and administrators.**

1. Develop, implement, and enforce a Policy on Search Committee Composition.
2. Develop, implement, and enforce interview and campus visit policies for the inclusion of students, faculty, staff, administration from diverse backgrounds.
  - a. Recommended/required interview question about the candidate's approach to diversity.
3. Establish a formal training process for all budget unit heads and hiring authorities to brief them on ensuring sound equal employment opportunity practices throughout the search and in reviewing the level of underrepresentation of minorities or women in the job group to which the searched position falls. These heads can then train the hiring committees in their areas and ensure an appropriate process.
4. Include the training process as a requirement for all new department heads.
5. Emphasize the importance and indeed, the necessity, of making diversity and equity a priority in developing an applicant pool.

**G. Implement best practices for retaining diverse faculty, staff, and administrators.**

1. Create a mentorship program for diverse employees, which will result in a better level of connectivity among themselves and consequently will increase their level of belonging and confidence.
2. Promote the activities and accomplishments of diverse employees.
3. Provide and fund opportunities for professional development/training sessions for faculty and staff related to diversity in higher education.
4. Maintain salaries and benefits at levels that make NSU competitive within the SREB.
5. Create Diversity Achievement Award to recognize and celebrate employee success in diversity and inclusion efforts.
6. Create and promote advancement opportunities for internal candidates that encourage diverse employees to apply.
7. Develop a Visiting Scholar Program and/or a Faculty Exchange Program. The Visiting Scholar honorary title awarded to people who hold professorial (including research) positions at other institutions, or other professional positions, and are invited by an academic department. This can be implemented by contacting, among others, Historic Black Colleges and Universities and other minority-serving institutions.

***Campus Lead: Human Resources, Office of the Provost, Office of Inclusion and Diversity, Student Experience, Alumni Affairs***



## Academic Engagement

### **OBJ 2. Integrating diversity and inclusion throughout the academic curriculum and support programs.**

- A. Increase course offerings and establish programs in ethnic studies areas.**
- Add the following Ethnic Studies concentrations and non-degree certificates, housed in Anthropology-Sociology, and informed by the four-field approach of anthropology:
    - African-American Studies
    - American Indian Studies
    - Gender and Sexuality Studies
    - Asian-American and Pacific Islander studies
  - Develop and secure faculty for the following Ethnic Studies minors, concentrations, and non-degree certificates, housed in Anthropology-Sociology, and informed by the four-field approach of anthropology:
    - Hispanic Studies
    - Creole Studies
  - Create a standing committee for the Ethnic Studies tracks that will explore adding new classes so that the Ethnic Studies curricula are deliberate, interlinked, and widely informed.
- B. Strengthen cultural competence in classroom management.**
- Provide annual mandatory equity syllabi sessions.
- C. Provide more visibility and support for the Creole Center and Williamson Museum.**
- Assess the needs of the Williamson Museum and Creole Center to ensure their ongoing stability and increase access/usage without creating additional burdens on existing staff.
  - Obtain funding through grants to support Williamson and Creole Center with staff or facilities improvements without imposing uncompensated additional work on existing staff.
- D. Identify curriculum gaps and continue expanding current programs.**
- Create a standing committee for the Ethnic Studies to research and provide recommendations for the continued improvement of the program.
- E. Integrate diverse perspectives and analysis across the entire University curriculum.**

**Campus Lead:** Office of the Provost, Academic Deans, Office of Inclusion & Diversity





## Infrastructure

### ***OBJ 3. Ensuring diversity, equity, and inclusion are reflected in policies, procedures, budgeting, staffing, facility management, and other areas of University operation.***

- A. The University will apply an equity lens to conduct policy review.**
  1. Assess policy purpose and inclusiveness to ascertain if the policy has disparate impact.
  2. Uncover policy assumptions which may inequitably impact non-majority interests.
  3. Make equity intentional as a practice and not an afterthought.
- B. The University will use the DEI Tool Kit to measure diversity, equity, and inclusion contributions which will be included in the performance evaluations.**
  1. Build in an expectation that DEI continuing education is expected.
  2. Provide extensive opportunities to engage DEI continuing education.
  3. Establish a metric system of successful DEI continuing education attainment.
- C. The University will provide a facilities checklist to establish campus guidelines for new construction and renovations to include a more accessible and inclusive physical environment inclusive of all bathroom accommodations.**
  1. Use the Guidance of the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design to audit each building.
  2. Convert all single stall bathrooms into “All Gender Bathrooms” with signage.
  3. Audit all buildings for culturally appropriate aesthetic appeal.
  4. Research building names and provide naming opportunities for influential alumni of color.

***Campus Lead: Human Resources, Office of the Provost, Office of Business Affairs, University Affairs***

## Environment

### ***OBJ 4. Developing a more inclusive campus environment that fosters success and meaningful participation for all students, faculty, and staff.***

- A. Create a climate study to focus on satisfaction of classroom instruction, work environment, and overall campus attitude toward DEI structures.**
- B. Initiate a Students of Color Peer Mentoring Program.**
  1. Student mentees will be recruited through Freshman Connection.
  2. Student mentors will be recruited from upper-class student leaders.
  3. Once mentees are identified, there will be an onboarding process to acquaint mentors and mentees.
- C. Increase DEI programs and initiatives.**
  1. Northwestern Inclusive Coaching Seminar Series
    - a. Expand program to undergraduate students.
  2. Brave and Bold Dialogue Module for UNIV 1000 course.



**D. Establish a DEI-focused marketing approach.**

1. Utilize a targeted media campaign focused on the Latinx population.
2. Market in more urban and high diverse populations.
3. Investigate naming opportunities with the NSU Facilities Committee to identify outstanding faculty, staff, and alumni of color whose name warrants the honor.

**E. Hire more staff that focus on DEI initiatives.**

1. Hire a Director of the Center for Inclusion and Diversity.
2. Hire a coordinator to focus on NPHC Organizations.
3. Hire a counselor with expertise in DEI's impact on mental health diagnosis and treatment.

**F. Rebrand the BIAS report mechanism.**

*Campus Lead: DEI Committee, Center for Inclusion and Diversity, Office of Inclusion and Diversity, Student Experience, Marketing*

---

## NSU DEI Affirmations

*Members of the Northwestern State University community believe:*

At NSU we affirm that challenges are a part of our institutions ethos when it comes to fighting biases, ethical breaches, and abuses of power. We will stand fast on our integrity, be mindful of our decisions examine how we lead, and focus our powers to uplift others.

At NSU we affirm our unique strengths and cultural resources as a value added.

At NSU we affirm to walk in authenticity which strengthens our students, faculty, staff, and campus community.

At NSU we affirm that Black Lives Matter too and that racism is unacceptable and must be eliminated.

At NSU we affirm that diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging will guide our interactions as we continue to evolve the institution into a place where everyone feels liberated

At NSU we affirm that neither misogyny nor discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation will be tolerated.

At NSU we affirm to be a leader in the work of inclusion, equity, and diversity. But not just by printed words on our brochures, but by our actions we undertake in our day-to-day activities



# Appendix



## Glossary of Terms

**Academic Engagement** – The use of curriculum to provide viable learning opportunities for all students.

**Access** – Obtain, examine, or gain entrance to a program or facility.

**Diversity** – The wide variety of shared and different personal and group characteristics among human beings.

**Environment** – The surrounding or conditions in which a person operates.

**Equity** – Takes into consideration the fact that the social identifiers (*race, gender, socioeconomic status, etc.*) do, in fact, affect equality. In an equitable environment, an individual or a group would be given what was needed to give them equal advantage. This would not necessarily be equal to what others were receiving. It could be more or different. Equity is an ideal and a goal, not a process. It insures that everyone has the resources they need to succeed.

**Inclusion** – Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

### Scorecard Terms:

**Measure** – An indicator that illustrates areas of equity or inequity of educational outcomes among ethnic/racial groups of students.

**Baseline** – The historical or current status of the measure.

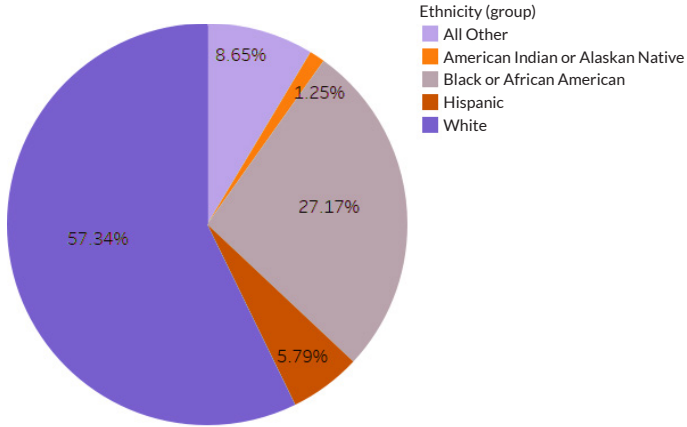
**Improvement Target** – A periodic marker of the progress made toward equity.

**Equity** – The point at which equity would be achieved for a given measure.

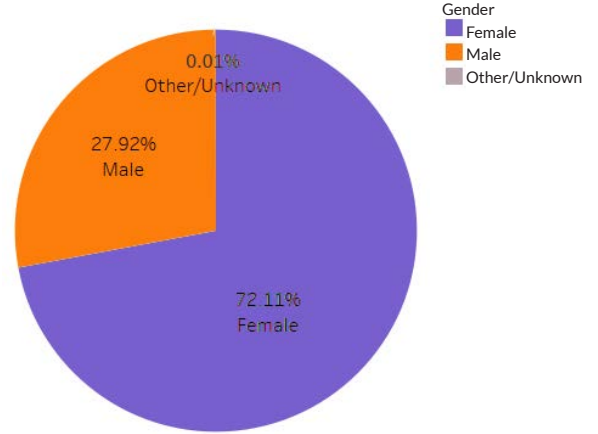


# Campus Data Snapshot Students

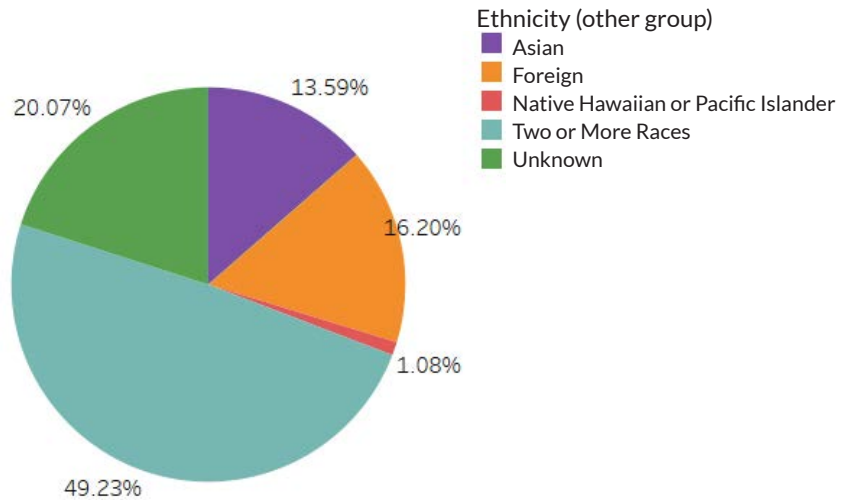
### Race/Ethnicity



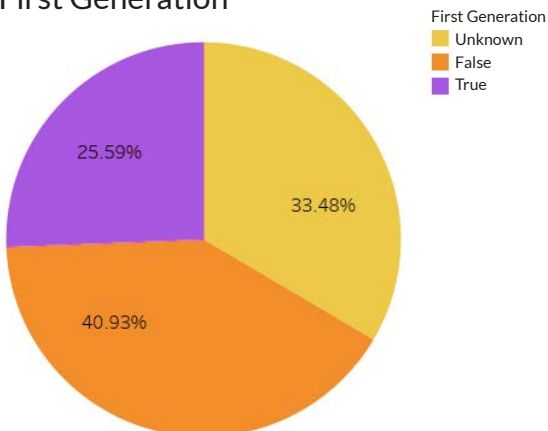
### Gender



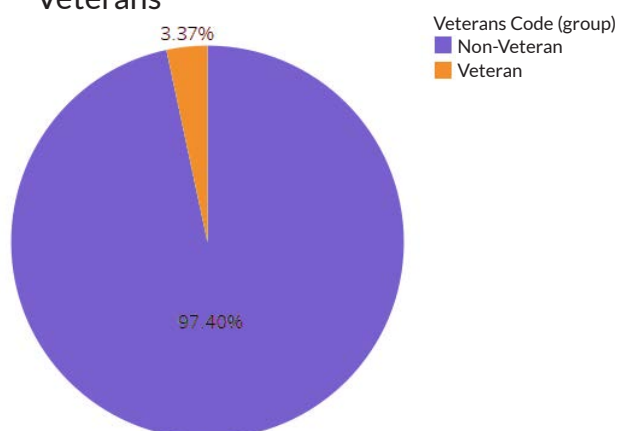
### Breakdown of "Other" from Race/Ethnicity



### First Generation



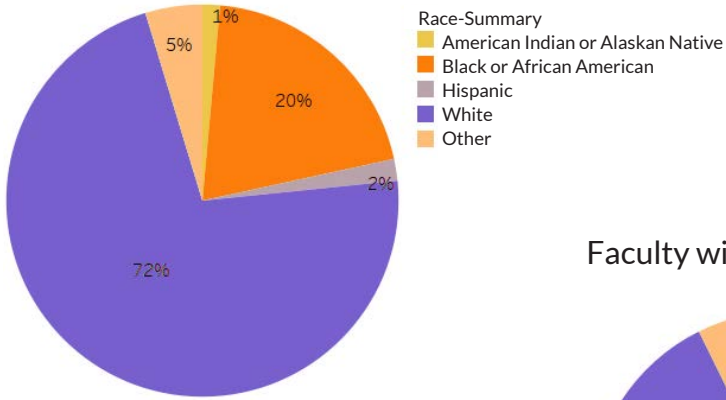
### Veterans



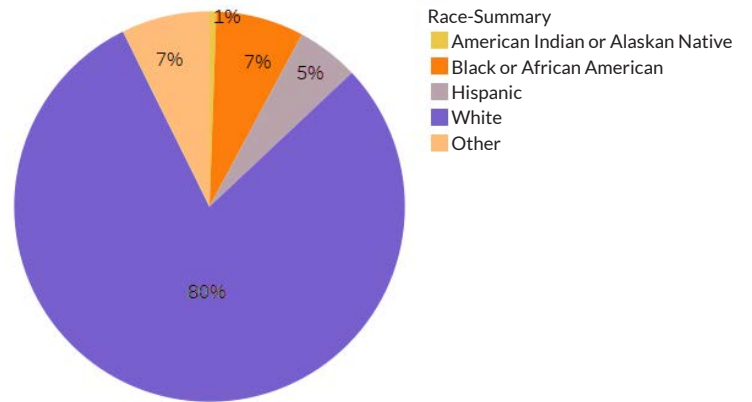
# Campus Data Snapshot

## Faculty

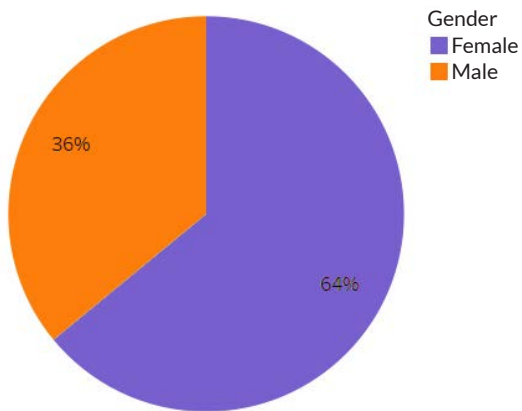
Staff by Race/Ethnicity



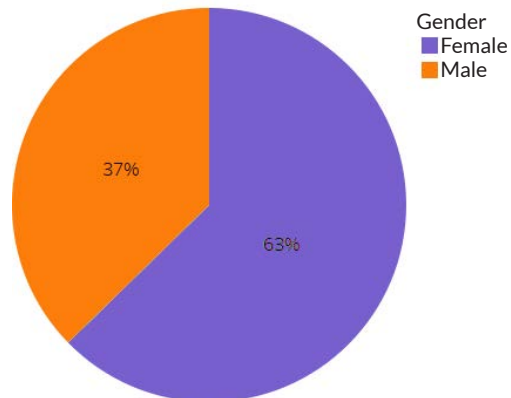
Faculty with Rank by Race/Ethnicity



Staff by Gender



Faculty with Rank by Gender





III | NORTHWESTERN STATE

[nsula.edu](http://nsula.edu)

Published by  
The Office of Inclusion and Diversity

Northwestern State University  
Natchitoches, Louisiana 71497

August 2022