FY2021 Equity Plan
June 2020

Ridgewater College is actively taking intentional steps to focus on equity and inclusion needs and issues in the college and the communities we serve, beginning with the hiring of a new position of Director of Equity, Inclusion, and Student Success/Diversity Officer in December 2019. This position has a 50% focus on Equity and Inclusion and a 50% focus on Advising Services. As an active liaison with the College’s Executive team, this new position will help the College elevate attention to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion throughout the institution and focus on the following strategies for FY2021:

• Develop a college-wide initiative focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion, with a consistent level of activity on both the Hutchinson and Willmar campuses in partnership with community stakeholders.
• Apply an equity lens to an ongoing review of new and existing college policies.
• Develop a partnership between the Director of Equity, Inclusion, and Student Success/Diversity Officer and the College’s Institutional Research Team to focus on identifying, gathering and analyzing key data to identify equity gaps and guide action by the College.
• Develop a strategy and processes to engage with prospective, incoming and current students in order to identify needs and barriers and increase student access to support resources that will promote student success and improve recruitment, retention and completion rates.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Create a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council on Each Campus

Goal
Create a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council for the Hutchinson and Willmar campuses, in collaboration with community stakeholders.

Strategies
Ridgewater College has had a Diversity Council on the Willmar campus that included faculty and staff but had minimal community involvement, and the College has never had a Diversity Council on the Hutchinson campus. For FY 2021, the College will develop a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council on each campus and intentionally engage the communities they serve in a role similar to that of an advisory board. Community members on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council advisory board will provide input to inform college activities and decisions and also serve as liaisons to the community and as partners in college and community collaborations to address diversity, equity and inclusion issues on campus and in the community.

Success Measures/Outcomes
• A charter document will be developed for the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Councils with clear structure, mission, and purpose by Fall 2020.
• A schedule of regular recurring meetings will be developed for each Council with participation from faculty, staff, students, and community members beginning Fall 2020.
• A survey will be conducted mid-year and end-year to gather input from college and community participants in the Council to identify ways to improve the Council initiative.

2. Apply an Equity Lens to College Policies and Procedures

Goal
Include an equity lens in the ongoing process to develop and review new and existing college policies.

Strategies
Beginning February 2020, the Director of Equity, Inclusion, and Student Success/Diversity Officer became a member of the College’s new Policy Group that reviews proposals for new policies as a first step in the college policy process. For FY 2021, the role of the Director of Equity, Inclusion, and Student Success/Diversity Officer with the Policy Group will two-fold: first, to ensure that an equity lens continues to be applied to the review of proposed new policy, and also initiate an equity-based review of all existing college policy; and second, to educate and train faculty, staff and administration on use of the equity tool kit from the Office of Equity and Inclusion at Minnesota State.

Success Measures/Outcomes
• Identification and assessment of college policies and procedures linked to student success rates (retention, graduation, and transfer) for students of color, Pell-eligible students, and first-generation students.

• Tracking and reporting on FY21 changes to existing and new policies and procedures that help improve student success and eliminate equity gaps.

• Assessment of the impact of financial holds and “drop for non-payment” on students of color, Pell-eligible students, and first-generation students, including tracking and assessing actions taken to reduce negative outcomes.

3. Identify, Gather and Analyze Key Data Related to Equity Gaps in the College

Goal
The Director of Equity, Inclusion, and Student Success/Diversity Officer will collaborate with the new Director of Institutional Effectiveness and their institutional research team to identify current equity gaps in the College.

Strategies
Ridgewater College is in the process of hiring a Director of Institutional Effectiveness and a Research Analyst. Once these new staff members are onboarded, the Director of Equity, Inclusion and Student Success/Diversity Officer will collaborate with these two positions to identify the key indicators related to tracking and assessing equity gaps in the College. This data will inform further development of the College’s Equity Plan.

Success Measures/Outcomes
• Development of appropriate measurements for student success.
• Identification of key indicators related to equity gaps.

• Development of action items to address issues related to the equity gaps.

• Demonstrated improvement in student success measures (retention, graduation, and transfer) for students of color, Pell-eligible students, and first-generation students following the implementation of action items to address identified equity gaps.

4. Develop proactive strategies to improve recruitment, retention and completion rates for at-risk, under-served student populations.

Goal
Develop a strategy and related action items to engage with prospective, incoming and current students in order to identify needs and barriers and develop proactive strategies to increase student access to support resources that will improve recruitment, retention and completion rates for at-risk, under-served student populations.

Strategies
The Director of Equity, Inclusion and Student Success/Diversity Officer also oversees Advising, Counseling, TRIO, and Disability Services for the College. There is an opportunity within this role to identify practices and procedures that advance equity and inclusion in the College.

Action items are expected to include a Basic Student Needs Assessment and Intrusive Advising with Special Populations

The Director of Equity, Inclusion and Student Success/Diversity Officer will also work with the College’s Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) to develop Equity and Inclusion Training for faculty and staff.

Success Measures/Outcomes
• Opportunities for equity training offered to faculty and staff.

• Results of basic needs surveys of new incoming and current students, and actions developed in response to the survey findings.

• Development of an Intrusive Advising model and tracking/monitoring of the impact of the new advising model on student performance, retention and completion rates.