Departmental Statement on Diversity, Inclusion, and Values

As members of the Psychology Department, we strive to cultivate an inclusive academic community that values diverse questions, viewpoints, and approaches, to promote and foster intellectual growth and creativity, and to challenge biases. We are committed to supporting and including students, faculty and staff from all backgrounds and groups, regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexuality, gender, age, ability, and culture.

To enhance diversity and inclusion in our department, we are committed to the following goals:

- foster a departmental culture characterized by sensitivity to and support of diversity issues and diverse students, faculty, and community members;
- create a more diverse faculty and student population by recruiting, selecting, supporting, and retaining diverse faculty, as well as undergraduate and graduate students;
- evaluate the diversity and inclusiveness of our existing curriculum and the perspectives represented in it;
- integrate issues of diversity and increase discussion of diversity issues at all levels within the department and classroom;
- educate ourselves on how race, ethnicity, and other variables intersect and differentially affect our everyday lives in ways that foster inequalities in health, education, and employment;
- maintain awareness of and active participation in university-wide diversity efforts, including policies and activities designed to promote inclusion and achieve diversity at all levels; and
- identify and follow through on ways that we, as individuals and as a department, can promote justice on campus and in the larger middle Tennessee community.

Twenty years of educational and social science research has unequivocally demonstrated the benefit of racial and ethnic diversity in a classroom environment [1-3]. Such benefits include (a) perceptions of higher quality education, (b) improved perspective taking, (c) expansion of independent thought and belief systems, (d) higher levels of critical and active thinking, (e) greater engagement and motivation in the classroom, (f) greater readiness to participate in a diverse workforce, (g) greater satisfaction with the college experience, and (h) declines in ethnocentric thinking. Of particular importance, a diverse environment also has been associated with greater feelings of school belonging, and multiple studies have demonstrated a link between perception of school belonging and academic achievement and student retention [4-6]. Moreover, the benefits of a diverse classroom have been found to benefit not only those of minority status but also those of the racial and ethnic majority [1-2]. Support for the importance of diverse environments also has been found in organizational settings. A diverse environment has been found to facilitate the attraction and the ability to retain talented personnel, greater creativity and innovation, better problem solving, more organizational flexibility, and improved marketing efforts [7-8].

References (In Order of Mention):