

Fairfield University's

Diversity  
&  
Inclusive  
Excellence  
Narrative



# PREFACE

President  
Mark R. Nemeec



As a Jesuit, Catholic university, Fairfield is dedicated to diversity and inclusion and to radical hospitality in the service of racial, social, and economic justice. As a Jesuit, Catholic university, we are dedicated, as our motto states, *Per Fidem ad Plenam Veritatem*: through faith to the fullness of truth.

To pursue these efforts in the spirit of *the magis*, with a fullness of integrity, our work must always be characterized:

1. by an unceasing spirit of inquiry — the embrace of faith and reason;
2. by an authentic humility — the recognition that no one of us, no one approach has a singular hold on the truth; and,
3. by a generosity of spirit — a recognition of the dignity of every individual and an assumption of goodwill in others.

As a University and scholarly community founded upon and fully embracing of the classical liberal academic tradition, our work is focused on the formation of individuals, as St. John Henry Newman summarized in *The Idea of the University*, published in 1858:

“A university training is the great ordinary means to a great but ordinary end; it aims at raising the intellectual tone of society...It is the education which gives a person a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them and a force in urging them.”

And as the seminal 1967 International Federation of Catholic Universities Land O’ Lakes statement on the nature of the contemporary Catholic university echoed over one hundred years later, our work must be grounded in a community of boundless inquiry and open discourse:

“...the intellectual campus of a Catholic university has no boundaries and no barriers. It draws knowledge and understanding from all the traditions of [human]kind; it explores the insights and achievements of the great [persons] of every age; it looks to the current frontiers of advancing knowledge and brings all the results to bear relevantly on one’s life today. The whole world of knowledge and ideas must be open to the student; there must be no outlawed books or subjects. Thus, the student will be able to develop his [or her] own capabilities and to fulfill himself [or herself] by using the intellectual resources presented to him [or her].”



Grounded in these values -- of open inquiry, humility, and the dignity of every individual -- we offer this narrative both as:

- a. an exercise in common reflection, keeping in mind the words of James Baldwin: “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced,” and,
- b. as an instrument for aspiration, responsive to the call of Rev. Arturo Sosa, S.J., Superior General of the Society of Jesus, in the most recent Apostolic preferences for works of the Society to accompany our youth toward a hope-filled future.

In this, an Ignatian Year (May 2021-July 31, 2022), we offer this narrative to further our work as “contemplatives in action” as well as to enhance activities well underway. Our commitment to radical hospitality in service of racial, social, and economic justice is present in many initiatives, but perhaps most notably in our ongoing effort to advance access and affordability, and with a recognition that our goal is not simply to recruit a broader community of students, but rather to recruit, retain, graduate, place, and engage a community of students — with the support of faculty and staff — that is reflective of the rich tapestry of humankind and that celebrates the dignity of every individual. AMDG. All for the Greater Glory of God.



# INTRODUCTION

# Radical Hospitality



This narrative on Fairfield’s ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusive excellence emerges from a process of campuswide engagement, which included a leadership survey, Board of Trustees presentations, and listening sessions with community members across campus. [The Presidential Working Group on Inclusive Excellence](#) — charged by President Mark R. Nemecek, PhD, in 2018 “to advance the Jesuit Catholic commitment of Fairfield University to creating and supporting radical hospitality for and with diverse others in our teaching, learning, scholarship, and service” — drove this process. The Presidential Working Group coordinates our University-wide diversity and inclusive excellence efforts. Fifteen administrative, faculty, and student leaders constitute the working group, co-chaired by Vice Provost Jocelyn Boryczka, PhD, and Vice President Karen Donoghue ’03, who collaborate through three project teams to promote recruitment and retention of diverse students, faculty, and staff, and to cultivate a vibrant campus community. The Presidential Working Group builds on the President’s Institutional Diversity Council, established by then-President Jeffrey von Arx, S.J., in 2005, taking a less advisory and more action-oriented, outcomes-focused approach.

This narrative captures institutional anticipation of, and responses to, historical and cultural shifts as they have evolved and emerged over time — from World War II to the Civil Rights era, up to and including our contemporary moment. Regardless of changing times, the Jesuit Catholic values, as expressed in our [Mission, Values, and History](#), with its emphasis on social justice and openness to diversity, has informed how the University has adapted over time. This openness to evolution and institutional conversion expresses the more than 500-year-old mission in education established by St. Ignatius of Loyola — a tradition and obligation to mission that will continue to guide Fairfield University into the future.

Our [Diversity and Inclusive Excellence Mission Statement](#) grounds Fairfield University’s approach to advancing these values and, as such, this narrative. Four pillars support our overarching approach. Inclusive excellence, the first pillar, anchors our academic mission to educate through the broadest possible range of dynamic ideas, perspectives, peoples, and identities necessary, to prepare our students to meet an ever-changing world. Second, a diverse community conveys our commitment to bringing together a community of learners from different social, economic, racial, cultural, national, and religious backgrounds. The third pillar is global engagement that attends to developing students as global citizens at home in the diverse cultures of the world.



Radical hospitality, the fourth pillar, involves the practice of equally welcoming, and being welcomed by, one another with keen attention to those on the margins of society, in keeping with the apostolic preferences of the Society of Jesus. Remembering, welcoming, and belonging make up the three sequential steps in radical hospitality and frame each of the following chapters: *Remembering* calls us to look back to our historical and traditional roots. *Welcoming* involves reflecting on the past, and moving from this reflection toward understanding, and accountability for how well we, as a University, include diverse peoples in our present context. *Belonging* looks forward by responding to current strengths of, and limits to, our ongoing efforts toward cultivating a culture of inclusiveness founded on a respect for the richness of diversities that constitute the University community.

*The magis*, which former Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Rev. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., defined as an approach that “continually seeks a more effective manner of service,” and a principle of discernment by which one seeks “the greatest possible service to God,” acts as the narrative’s guiding point of reflection and culmination, simultaneously inviting us into a continuous new beginning. The spark of imagination animating *the magis* prompts us to gather more evidence and think more deeply in order to push the boundaries of what we know. As an academic institution committed to pursuing excellence, Fairfield University engages our students in pursuing *the magis* in their own work, study, and lives. *The magis* acts as our community’s point of ultimate reference as we straddle the space between where we are and where we want to be, as we work toward a better future.



CHAPTER ONE

Where We Have  
Been —  
Remembering





Fairfield, as a Jesuit Catholic university, belongs within a 500-year continuum of Jesuit educational and spiritual traditions meant to transform individuals by unlocking their full potential so that they can repair certain fissures in our world. We draw on a tradition beginning in 1548 with the founding of St. Ignatius College in Messina, Italy, which reflects how the Society began to adopt education as an avenue of mission. Pedro de Ribadeneira, S.J., explained the purpose of Jesuit schools as *institutio puerorum, reformatio mundi*, meaning “the proper education of our youth will mean improvement of our world.” The Society, by 1560, recognized schools as their primary mission. By 1773, the Jesuits had established more than 800 academic institutions to create the largest international educational network that the world had ever seen.

Fairfield University joined this network as the all-male, predominately white and Catholic, Fairfield College and Preparatory School in 1942, while World War II ravaged the globe. This moment of origin locates our institution within Catholic education’s long tradition in the United States. Catholic immigrants in the 19th century were among those who became targets of discrimination. This is the era of the Chinese Exclusion Act, signs for “No Irish Need Apply,” discrimination against Italian Americans, and the rise of the Ku Klux Klan. Nativism, racism, and class struggles subjected many new Americans to serious, often life-threatening challenges. Partially in response to such discrimination, immigrants banded together in their churches, and through aid societies and fraternal organizations. These institutions wove together a societal web to serve and protect vulnerable communities by opening hospitals and orphanages. They also built high schools, colleges, and universities to advance Catholic families through an education that would form leaders who would strengthen their communities, nation, and faith.

The Jesuits identified Fairfield as home to Fairfield University as Connecticut was then one of the nation’s most diverse states. Second generation immigrants clustered in urban centers such as the neighboring city of Bridgeport. This industrial hub bustled with workers who assembled small appliances at General Electric, manufactured munitions at Remington Arms, built sewing machines at Singer Manufacturing, and produced corsets at the Crown Corset Company, among other heavy industries that were then operating in the state. The founding Jesuits anticipated that this population would ultimately need to be served by a university.

Opening in 1947, Fairfield University offered educational opportunities for first-generation immigrant men and returning veterans. Colleges and universities at that time generally remained closed to women. A closer look at the first four years from 1947-51, ending with the year that Fairfield graduated its pioneer class, reveals a more diverse narrative.



Women started taking summer classes and undergraduate courses for nurses in 1949, and joined the Graduate Department of Education in 1950. Thomas MacCalla, Fairfield's first student of color, graduated with a bachelor's degree in social science education in 1951. That year, "The Credo of Fairfield University," stating that "we are vigorously opposed to all forms of 'racism' — persecution or intolerance because of race," was issued. These events preview the major societal changes of the 1960s and '70s that transformed American society, including its educational institutions such as Fairfield University.

Tectonic shifts also occurred in the Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and the Society of Jesus, through the Jesuit General Congregation 32 (1973-75), brought a critical recommitment to Catholic social teaching that altered how campuses such as Fairfield responded to the era's push for inclusion by marginalized groups. During this time, Catholic universities and colleges gained greater independence from the Church hierarchy, which moved them away from the constraints of prescribed Catholic theology toward a broader diversity of ideas more aligned with the secular framework of academic freedom. Fairfield University directly joined this national shift as a litigant in the *Tilton v. Richardson* 1971 Supreme Court case which established that a college or university's religious affiliation did not interfere with its secular educational functions. In 1967, the Land O' Lakes report declared true autonomy and academic freedom as essential to the survival of Catholic universities that required open education with no forbidden books, attention to pressing social issues, and religious leaders sharing responsibilities with laypeople. University corporations then began assuming ownership of Catholic universities, which established independent boards of trustees with sponsoring orders and laypeople represented. Fairfield became separately incorporated in 1974, marking a decline of ecclesiastical control over University life. In 1975, the Jesuits recognized that their insufficient attention to the vulnerable and marginalized was "leading, to division rather than union, to alienation rather than communication, to oppression and domination rather than to a greater respect for the rights of individuals or of groups." Against this backdrop and that of the era's civil rights movements, Fairfield encountered the historical struggle for the dignity of diverse peoples in our nation. Certain significant moments, focused on religion, race, and gender, open a window onto our recent past:

- April 14, 1965, introduced Fairfield University to the era of protest for civil rights and against the Vietnam War, movements which included an expressed desire by some for greater religious freedom of expression. Early in the morning on April 14, a never-identified group of students entered the Canisius Library. From a caged area holding roughly 700 Indexed books that the Catholic



Church had deemed “harmful to the faith and morals of the faithful,” the group took out about a 100 volumes and placed them in the general stacks. Months later, Vatican II ended this *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* and Fairfield no longer maintained the library’s caged collection.

- Reflecting a commitment to religious freedom, Fairfield University celebrated the inauguration of Professor Ellen Umansky, PhD, as the Carl and Dorothy Bennett Chair in Judaic Studies on October 18, 1994, a position with the express purpose to share knowledge of the Jewish faith and culture.
- In February 2010, KADIMA, the Jewish student organization, and the Muslim Student Association co-sponsored their first event, ["Stand Up for Peace,"](#) a comedy show featuring Jewish American comic Scott Blakeman and Palestinian American comic Dean Obeidallah. Later that year on November 19, Imam Amjad Tarsin offered the first Muslim prayer, the Jumu’ah, on campus.
- The University’s Campus Ministry appointed Jewish, Muslim, and Protestant chaplains to serve the community in 2010. The [Islamic World Studies Program](#) became a minor in 2016 to introduce students to aspects of Muslim societies and Islamic civilization’s artistic, literary, and cultural achievements. Embracing diverse faith traditions continues to animate Fairfield’s commitment to the religious freedom of its community.
- 1968-69, amid an intense period of the Civil Rights movement, marks a point when student activism began to generate significant institutional change related to diversity, much of which specifically focused on Black students, faculty, and staff. History professor emeritus Walter J. Petry Jr., PhD, joined Fairfield in 1957 as its first faculty member of color and became a leading voice for civil rights on campus. Art Crawford '61 became the first African American to play varsity basketball at Fairfield and later became the first African American branch manager at Xerox. In November 1969, Black students presented a list of six demands that included increasing Black student enrollment, hiring Black professors in all departments, and establishing a holiday to celebrate a great Black leader, to then-President Rev. William C. McInnes, S.J. While Fr. McInnes accepted many of the principles underlying the demands he rejected the specific directives on a number of grounds. Black students then occupied Xavier Hall until they reached a “Statement of Agreement” with President McInnes. The Black Liaison Associated Council (BLAC) formed in 1969 to improve Black and white student relations at



Fairfield, and Perry Kirk became the first advisor to minority students. Larri Mazon joined Fairfield in 1983 as counselor to minority students, later becoming the director of the Office of Minority Relations in 1988, the precursor to today's [Office of Student Diversity and Multicultural Affairs](#) (SDMA).

- The [Black Studies Program](#), established in 1994 is “devoted to scholarship on the histories, political and cultural movements, institution-building, and identities of people of African ancestry.” Ed Cooley became Fairfield’s first Black head coach, assuming leadership of the basketball program in April 2006. In 2015, Anif McDonald ’16 became the first Black student elected Fairfield University Student Association (FUSA) president.
- The Black Student Union formed in 2016, building on the legacy of UMOJA, Kiswahili for “unity,” Fairfield’s African American student association that formed in 1979. Such student activism on campus catalyzed meaningful change to advance racial and social justice and inspired other diverse groups to do the same. The [Latin American & Caribbean Studies Program](#) began to offer its minor in 1980. Students organized the Latinx Student Union and SALSA (Spanish American Latinx Student Association). Edwin Muniz ’11 was elected the first Hispanic FUSA president in March 2010. Fairfield joined the national dialogue about immigration reform in 2009. The now-Center for Social Impact’s [Strangers as Neighbors](#) project hosted focus groups, issued a white paper on how religious dialogue can help to reframe the political discourse on immigration, and created the [Strangers as Neighbors Toolkit: One Parish One Community](#) in 2013 for engaging United States Catholic Congregations in difficult dialogues.
- Vatican II’s pronouncement in the mid-1960s that women have as equal a right to education as men led to six years of controversy about admitting females to Fairfield University. Yet, females started taking undergraduate nursing courses in 1949. Female graduate students enrolled in the Graduate Department of Education, now the [School of Education and Human Development](#), starting in 1950, making it coeducational from the beginning. Female graduate students today outpace their male counterparts in terms of enrollment by nearly 50 percent. The first female full-time professors, Dorothy Shaffer, PhD, (mathematics) and Joan Walters, PhD, (economics), however, were appointed in 1963. Fairfield University welcomed female undergraduate students in 1970, joining the coeducation movement that swept the nation. That same year, the School of



Nursing opened under Fairfield's first female dean, Elizabeth K. Dolan, PhD.

A number of female firsts followed throughout the 1970s and '80s. In 1975, Amy Zigmont '76 became the first female editor of the student newspaper, then called *The University Voice*, and GERALYN Radowiecki '76 became the first female head of the FUSA Legislature. The first women's varsity sports programs in tennis and basketball, called the Stagettes, began in 1974. Female outnumbered male students 52 to 48 percent by 1980. Arneha Eaddy excelled as the first female African American coach in Fairfield athletics history when she became head coach of the women's volleyball program in 1987. Katrina Fields '85 earned a spot in the Fairfield University Athletic Hall of Fame for her prowess on the basketball court, the first African American woman to earn that honor. The 1987-88 women's basketball team defied the odds, won the MAAC, and became the first Fairfield women's team to go to the NCAA tournament.

The 1990s brought key institutional changes amid some tense debates. One debate focused on renaming the Stag-Her Inn, a popular campus hangout, due to its sexist connotation. The Women's Studies Program, now Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies (WGSS), began in 1993 under co-directors Johanna Garvey, PhD, and Lucy Katz, JD. Mary Frances Malone, PhD, was the first woman appointed to a key administrative leadership position as associate academic vice president, which she held for 25 years. In 1997, Rosa Rebimbas '98 became the FUSA Court's first female chief justice.

Throughout the 2000s, females continued to break through glass ceilings and shape the conversation. Karen Donoghue '03, now the first female vice president of Student Life, won election in 2002 as the first female FUSA president, an event significant enough that it garnered coverage in *The New York Times*.

To explore what Women's Studies looks like at a Jesuit Catholic institution, Fairfield University hosted the first, and to-date only, [Jesuit and Feminist Education: Transformative Discourses for Teaching and Learning Conference](#) in October 2006, organized by Jocelyn Boryczka, PhD, and Elizabeth Petrino, PhD, to examine how Jesuit and feminist pedagogy intersect. Lynn Babington, PhD, became the first female senior vice president for Academic Affairs and provost, and was later appointed by the Board of Trustees as the first female interim lay president in 2017. Christine Siegel, PhD, assumed the position of provost in July 2018.



Looking to our past grounds us in a history that resonates with the richness of religious, economic, racial, ethnic, and gender diversity that generates the change necessary to meet the world, our students, and each other where we are now, and pushes us in the direction where we hope to go. This history continues to encourage us as a Catholic university to empathize with those who now experience themselves as other, or as excluded from the mainstream of American life. Our Jesuit Catholic tradition calls us to tap into our history, faith traditions, and common humanity, to learn from the past and listen to all individuals, including the historically wounded, in order to continue to be a force for healing in our communities.



## CHAPTER TWO

# Where We Are Now — Welcoming



Remembering our past enables us to better understand the present. Welcoming — the second step toward radical hospitality — is in keeping with Fr. General Arturo Sosa’s call for each Jesuit university to “throw open its doors and windows to people at the margins” and to invite everyone into our community based on unconditional respect for the diverse characteristics of human experience and identity. Embracing our differences generates mutually transformative experiences in and outside the classroom and campus, deepening and expanding our collective understanding of the world, and advancing our commitment to academic excellence.

Here, we scan the current terrain of diversity and inclusive excellence at Fairfield University with an eye on our achievements and towards areas in need of attention. We do so in the midst of a nation reckoning with its past as manifest in a present marked by a resurgent concern for social, cultural, economic, and political inequities faced by Black American communities in our nation, contentious border politics, and a polarized polity. In particular, our current moment calls us to recognize race as a historically important issue, often focusing national conversation.

As a Jesuit Catholic university, we take to heart the words of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in their 2018 pastoral letter against racism, “Open Wide Our Hearts,” that Christ’s central commandment to love “compels each of us to resist racism courageously and...to begin to change policies and structures that allow racism to persist.” This message informs how we meet the demographic predictions, indicating that, by 2025, a majority of the college-bound population in the United States will come from traditionally minority communities. Such demographic shifts prioritize Fairfield’s preparedness for welcoming an ever-changing student population.

The terrain mapped out below conveys the broad contours of Fairfield University’s current efforts to meet the world where it is. To help us do so, Fairfield issued in April 2018 its [\*Principles that Guide Free Expression\*](#) to ensure that all community members can engage in civil modes of discourse marked by the free and rigorous exchange of ideas, debate, discussion, and disputation as vital to our academic mission. The public targeting of a Fairfield faculty member for sharing research and analysis on race prompted President Mark R. Nemeck, PhD to draw upon his experience and the [\*University of Chicago’s Principles of Free Expression\*](#) and Report of the role of the University in Political and Social Action to animate a faculty committee leading to the creation of these principles and the ad hoc committee established in May 2020 tasked with bringing further clarity on any related issues. Fairfield University approaches diversity with an intentionality of inclusion that provides the





groundwork for our curricular, co-curricular, and community-oriented initiatives.

Three pillars of our Diversity and Inclusive Excellence Mission Statement — inclusive excellence, a diverse community, and global engagement — organize these initiatives to help us discern the impact of what we are doing now, as we continue to chart our journey toward the fourth pillar of radical hospitality.



## Inclusive Excellence

This pillar animates our academic mission as we strive to educate through engaging with the broadest possible range of dynamic ideas, perspectives, and identities as necessary for achieving the highest standards of learning in an ever-changing world.

- **Delivering a dynamic curriculum engaged with the world's diverse peoples and ideas** starts with the *Magis Core Curriculum* that was implemented in 2018 to create a shared learning experience for all Fairfield students. Overall, the Core Curriculum advances Fairfield's commitment to *the magis* as it translates aspects of our Jesuit Catholic tradition into learning outcomes relevant for today's college graduates. Courses in the Core are animated by three signature elements: Writing Across the Curriculum, Interdisciplinary Study, and Social Justice. The Social Justice element of the *Magis Core* focuses on examining social justice through the Ignatian lens to engage students in identifying "values, beliefs, and practices of multiple cultures, worldviews, or perspectives," including their own and asking "critical questions about assumptions, biases, or worldviews." One of the two required higher level Social Justice courses "must focus on race (broadly conceived), studied intersectionally with gender and class."

A "**Black Lives Matter**" course, housed in the Black Studies Program, emerged from student-led protests on campus in the wake of Michael Brown's shooting by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri on August 9, 2014, that mobilized the Black Lives Matter movement across the nation. Fairfield University students, faculty, and staff formed the Racial Justice is Social Justice group that coordinated [demonstrations](#), including a die-in at the DiMenna-Nyselius Library's lobby attended by then-President von Arx. Faculty and administrators responded to student calls, echoing those who took over Xavier Hall in 1969, for this course's creation. The "[Black Lives Matter](#)" course, modeled after similar courses implemented at other universities during this same time, was approved at Fairfield in 2016. The course brings various faculty, staff, and community partners together into the classroom experience, in a model of interdisciplinarity, so that "students will be empowered to identify and interrupt frameworks of racism" and "be able to articulate and understand race and racism from a multidisciplinary perspective."

[Community-Engaged Learning](#), coordinated across our academic areas by the [Center for Social Impact](#), delivers nearly 30 courses



each semester that take an experiential approach to teaching and learning that links academic study to community-engaged work. Fairfield strives to build sustainable and reciprocal community partnerships based on a commitment to solidarity and collaboration with marginalized and vulnerable people.

**First-Year Experience (FYE)**, a co-curricular seminar for all first-year students, covers various topics including an introduction to our Jesuit values, the importance of creating an inclusive community, and expectations of an academic community. In particular, FYE engages students in dialogue around the principles of creating a radically hospitable environment.

**Alpha Alpha Alpha** is a national honor society for first-generation college students that Fairfield brought to our campus in summer 2021 to recognize and celebrate the academic excellence of these students.

- **Curating programming and courses that challenge how we see the world**, our **interdisciplinary programs** stand at the cutting edge of new knowledge development and push disciplinary boundaries. Women's Studies, for instance, became the [Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program](#) in 2012, reflecting the discipline's inclusion of gender and sexuality, and responding to the decades-long movement for LGBTQ+ rights. Fairfield's 22 interdisciplinary programs enable students to major and minor in areas that focus specifically on diverse communities such as [Asian Studies](#), [Black Studies](#), [Catholic Studies](#), [Italian Studies](#), [International Studies](#), [Irish Studies](#), [Islamic World Studies](#), [Judaic Studies](#), [Latin American & Caribbean Studies](#), and [Russian, East European & Central Asian Studies](#). In addition, programs in [Humanitarian Action](#) and [Peace and Justice Studies](#) examine how students can address the pressing needs of the world's most marginalized peoples through a social justice lens. Our [Academic Centers and Institutes](#) reach beyond the classroom to the world and showcase how rigorous scholarly inquiry can advance human understanding and promote a more just, inclusive, and humane world.
- **Cultivating experiences and resources for understanding through Arts and Culture** engages our community in controversial topics and ensures consideration of different perspectives through constructive dialogue. The Regina A. Quick Center for the Arts, the Fairfield University Art Museum, and Theatre Fairfield spotlight performances and exhibits highlighting diversity and inclusion, such as a discussion on race with Michael Eric Dyson and John H. McWhorter, an evening with author Isabel Wilkerson, a gallery talk



on the work of celebrated photographer Carrie Mae Weems, and *Project X*, an original 2021 production that explored race and privilege at Fairfield. The annual [Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration](#) features nationally recognized speakers such as Angela Davis, Nikole Hannah-Jones, Ibram X. Kendi, Cristina Beltrán, and Robin D.G. Kelley, who engage with our community as it celebrates the legacy of civil rights as enlivening our present moment.

The DiMenna-Nyselius Library curates resources and supports programming central to our academic community's engagement with diversity. [An Antiracist Resource Guide](#), created by the DiMenna-Nyselius staff, and to which faculty, staff, and students contribute, began in July 2020 in response to the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor. The books, films, and other content in the guide help our community understand approaches to addressing racial injustice. Joining libraries from 85 countries around the world in a social movement known as the [Human Library](#), the DiMenna-Nyselius Library hosted its sixth annual event in 2021 for which our community members became books who shared their stories about race, religion, sexual orientation, and other aspects of their lives, in an effort to dismantle stereotypes and prejudices through positive dialogue.

- **Coordination across the professional schools and the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS)** emerged from 2019 to 2021 to advance efforts related to **diversity, equity, radical hospitality, and inclusive excellence across academics**. The School of Education and Human Development (SEHD) was the first to establish its Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee in fall 2019. In fall 2021, the CAS followed, creating its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force, and the library formed a Diversity and Inclusive Excellence Committee. The Charles F. Dolan School of Business established a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force in spring 2020 with the Marion Peckham Egan School of Nursing and Health Studies forming its Egan Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force in fall 2021 and the School of Engineering creating its task force in fall 2021.



## A Diverse Community

The second pillar distinguishes a Jesuit education as we strive to welcome individuals from the fullest range of social, economic, racial, cultural, national, and religious backgrounds possible. Building our diverse community begins with recruiting students, staff, administrators, trustees, and faculty to join us at Fairfield University, and then supporting them in their personal and professional development to meet an ever-changing world — and our students — continually where they are.

- **Building pipelines and recruiting for student diversity** drives Fairfield’s overall approach to cultivating a more inclusive community. The [Office of Admission](#) develops relationships with middle schools and high schools nationally, particularly those in the Jesuit, Nativity, and Cristo Rey networks. These relationships complement long-standing partnerships the University has with some schools in those networks, such as Brooklyn Jesuit Prep, which has brought more than 100 of their middle school students to campus each summer for over 20 years, and St. Martin de Porres Academy, which initially partnered with Fairfield on the development of its curriculum and training for teachers. Fairfield’s newest initiative in this arena, created in fall 2021, is [The Company Scholars Program](#), named after St. Ignatius’ six closest companions known as “The Company of Jesus,” which provides a select cohort of underrepresented students recruited from Jesuit and Cristo Rey high schools with significant financial support and wrap-around academic resources. More locally, Fairfield is expanding our relationship with Fairfield Prep and their robust S.E.E.D. diversity program, which includes cultural clubs, campuswide activities and events, and a 1:1 peer-to-peer mentoring program connecting Fairfield University and Prep students. The [Multicultural Visit Program \(MVP\)](#) invites underrepresented students and their families to join the Fairfield community by attending campus events celebrating diversity and speaking one-on-one with faculty, staff, alumni, and current students. The Community Partnership Scholarship, started in August 1999, provides full-tuition scholarships to top academic students at partner schools in Bridgeport, New Haven, New York City, and Newark, New Jersey. The Bridgeport Tuition Grant, established in 2000, offers full-tuition scholarships to low-income families from Bridgeport Public Schools.
- **Supporting diverse students in order to thrive at Fairfield** is the focus of the **Office of Student Diversity and Multicultural Affairs (SDMA)**, which carries out [programs and services](#) to increase student engagement in activities that foster an inclusive living and



learning community, and enables students to obtain a deeper understanding of diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice. SDMA works to further integrate diversity into developmental and social programs for students, and establishes meaningful relationships with students in order to address their needs, interests, and concerns more effectively. The Diversity Book Club, Breakfast Club, CARE team, and Safe Space training create awareness and educational opportunities. SDMA supports mentorship programs for students and coordinates Fairfield United, an umbrella organization for affinity group student clubs. SDMA coordinates two incoming student support programs. The [Cura Personalis Mentoring Program](#) is for incoming first-year students from underrepresented populations who partner with a peer and faculty/staff mentor. [Academic Immersion](#), a summer bridge program, assists an incoming group of approximately 30 first-year students transitioning to Fairfield University, offering courses, tutoring, mentoring, and a residential experience. The Coordinated Community Response Team coordinates our increased efforts to prevent sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking, and is supported by a 2018 federal grant. Undocumented students receive support through the [Fairfield University Dream Fund Scholarship](#).

The [Office of Accessibility](#) helps students with diverse attentional, learning, medical, psychiatric, and other needs, to access the University's programs, services, and activities. Through this office, students can secure key living and learning supports such as special housing, modified dining, study skills development, time management and organizational assistance, note-taking support, testing modifications, and assignment extensions.

The **Athletics Department** embraces the diversity and cultural competency of our campus community and helps direct our mission through an inclusive environment for our student-athletes, coaches, and staff. The ["We Are Stags"](#) initiative advances a vision for Stags Athletics that incorporates the totality of human development. The mission is to create a courageous and compassionate family dedicated to the expression of student and staff's personal and collective best. Cultural commitments serve as daily guideposts in efforts to care more, risk more, and give more, finding strength through our diversity. As those who serve for and with others, we are inclusive servant leaders who promote justice by standing up, speaking up, and stepping up for our shared values. Today, many Stag student-athletes carry forward the legacy established by their predecessors; Nya Jones '23 and Sydney Williams '19 are recent winners of Fairfield University's MLK Vision Award for demonstrating a commitment to the ideals



and values of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Other initiatives include participating in the Ignatian Solidarity Network's 21-Day Ignatian Racial Equity Challenge and the MAAC Black History Month Campaign.

**Fairfield University Student Association (FUSA)** established a Diversity and Inclusion Board in April 2016 to address issues of diversity and student concerns about campus climate, and to advocate for and with students of color. In 2020, the Diversity and Inclusion Board created a larger Student Diversity Council to identify issues of diversity and inequality and recommend strategies for combating marginalization. FUSA supports a range of [affinity-based student clubs](#), such as the Alliance: LGBTQ+ and Ally Group, the Asian Student Association, the Black Student Union, the Muslim Student Association, the Latinx Student Union, and Performing for Change, which are all coordinated through SDMA's umbrella organization, Fairfield United.

The **Office of Alumni Relations** formed the Fairfield University Alumni of Color Network in response to, and collaboration with, Fairfield alumni of color in spring 2021. This network, an official affiliate group of the Office of Alumni Relations, will create a community and gateway to support Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) Stags during and after their time at Fairfield. The network hosts various programs that cultivate personal and professional connections and opportunities to support the University while demonstrating the strength and success that exists within the BIPOC community. [The Fairfield Awards Dinner](#), a flagship event started in 1988 to celebrate inclusive excellence, has raised nearly \$20 million through the Alumni Multicultural Scholarship Fund, which grants around 20 students a year \$24,000 awards.

- **Cultivating a rich spiritual life** focuses efforts of **Campus Ministry** and the **Murphy Center for Ignatian Spirituality (MCIS)**. Both are inspired by the Second Vatican Council, recent General Congregations of the Society of Jesus, and the Universal Apostolic Preferences, to seek to accompany our community in a rich encounter with the living God. Protestant, Muslim, and Jewish chaplains join the Catholic ministry team in offering diverse opportunities for prayer, worship, and reflection faithful to the respective traditions and open to interreligious engagement. Our community can participate in retreats, challenging discussions about social and racial justice, volunteer service in traditionally underserved communities, immersion trips, and outreach to those most likely to suffer marginalization. Campus Ministry recently hosted services for victims of racial violence and the first-ever



retreat for members of the LGBTQ community, and supported the 21-Day Ignatian Racial Equity Challenge. The Murphy Center for Ignatian Spirituality recently launched the MCIS Women's Initiative to assist women in their spiritual journey.

- **Bringing and welcoming diverse staff and faculty to Fairfield** is a focus at the University that has doubled the proportion of its diverse faculty hires from 2018 to 2021. Under President Nemeč's leadership and with his direct support, Fairfield achieved this outcome by moving from passive to active search processes, using a comprehensive approach to hiring that involves active outreach, networking, and identifying candidates at specific institutions, and funding opportunity hires. Our goal is to increase the diversity of candidate pools to meet the University's requirement for diversity on interview slates at 25 percent, or the diversity of the applicant pool, whichever is greater while meeting the variations of diversity reflected in different divisions, areas, and disciplines of our institution. [Human Resources](#) partners with departments to develop orientation and mentoring programs for new hires in order to establish a welcoming environment and provide the coaching and support to ensure career success and long-term retention.

Fairfield also offers opportunities to build intentional community across diverse groups of faculty and staff. Faculty affinity group lunches began in spring 2019 to offer professional development and networking for LGBTQI+, first-generation, and faculty of color. Faculty and staff of color lunches also occur each semester. The Fairfield chapter of the Connecticut ACE (American Council on Education) Women's Network (CTAWN) hosts events to support women's professional development. In 2019, the University hired its first full-time administrator for matters of equity, to serve as Title IX coordinator and oversee institutional responses to discrimination. Fairfield has standard compliance training programs on diversity and sexual harassment in the workplace. The [Center for Academic Excellence](#) (CAE) delivers racial and social justice workshops on teaching and course design, and coordinates diversity-focused faculty learning communities. In spring 2022, the CAE launched the Mid-Career Faculty of Color Professional Learning Community. Fairfield, in fall 2020, became an institutional member of the [National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity](#) (NCFDD). This nationally recognized, independent organization offers career development and mentoring resources for faculty and graduate students with particular attention to diversity.





## Global Engagement

This third pillar conveys our commitment to preparing our students to become global citizens at home in the world, able to engage in different cultural contexts with an open mind and capacity to empathize with the perspectives of diverse peoples. In the Jesuit spirit, we also welcome and hope to be welcomed by the world as we engage with partners across the globe.

- **Connecting our students to the global community** is the focus of [Global Fairfield](#), which opens them to a world of possibilities while preparing them academically and professionally through programs and partnerships spanning much of the globe. Our [Fairfield Centers](#) in Aix-en-Provence, France; Florence, Italy; Galway, Ireland; and Madrid, Spain anchor our study abroad and international student exchange opportunities that extend from a semester to a year. Additional programs and partnerships provide students opportunities for study, service, or work internationally at locations in Barcelona, Beijing, Brisbane, Greece, London, Madrid, Netherlands, Puerto Rico, South America, South Korea, and Sydney. Fairfield's [faculty-led programs](#) move learning from our campus to the world with students studying Italian art in Florence and participating in social work field experiences in Greece. Global Fairfield is collaborating with the Office of Admission to integrate the international experience into The Company Scholars Program, and to support diverse students to participate in study abroad.
- **Taking the Fairfield classroom to the world** now becomes increasingly possible through innovative uses of online and hybrid learning. In spring 2021, the Dolan School of Business launched the customizable [Fairfield Dolan MBA Program](#) for business professionals [in Shanghai](#), China, which builds connections between their nation and ours through education. We also offer training in international consulting to students in our Master of Science in Management (MSM) Program through our center in Aix-en-Provence. Our students in the College of Arts and Sciences participate in virtual internships around the globe while our Egan School of Nursing students learn by doing in Australia and Ireland.
- **Journeying with youth and walking with the excluded** anchor the [St. Oscar Romero International Immersion Program](#) coordinated by Campus Ministry. Students share in the lives of those living in poverty through short-term service projects and living experiences, while reflecting critically on issues of faith and justice at locations such as the Working Boy's Center in Quito, Ecuador; Mustard Seed Communities in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic; and Rostro de Cristo, Guayaquil, Ecuador. The [humanitarian action](#) minor, one of



the few in the United States, prepares and directly engages our students in learning how to take action to address pressing global challenges from conflict to abject poverty. In April 2019, Fairfield became the first Jesuit institution to offer the [Peace Corps Prep Program](#), which prepares students for international development fieldwork and potential service in the Peace Corps. Fairfield's [Fulbright Program](#), run by the [Office of Scholarly Development](#), supports students in applying for this prestigious year-long scholarship that supports post-graduate study, research, work, or teaching in another country.

Keeping our eyes cast to the global horizons enables our students to engage the world grounded in the Jesuit practice of welcoming and being welcomed. Fairfield's present moment encompasses many ways to foster dynamic learning — inclusive of myriad peoples, ideas, and perspectives — as we work toward more diversity in our community. Positioned in the present moment, as we look to the future, we continue to better understand our past. President Nemeč invited us to do so on June 19, 2020, when he announced that [Juneteenth](#), one of our country's oldest commemorations of the end of slavery in the United States, would be recognized as an annual holiday at Fairfield University. Such holidays invite us to pause as a community and remember how discrimination cripples us all so that we can discern how to move forward. For Fairfield, this involves clearly seeing the work ahead, to welcome ever greater numbers of underrepresented members, particularly students, to join our community.



## CHAPTER THREE

# Where We Want To Go – Belonging



Looking to the future, Fairfield aspires to ensure that all members of our campus community feel that they belong at Fairfield and consider it to be their home. We acknowledge that our current campus demographics do not reflect the diversity of our region, much less our nation or the world, and, as such, are not where we want them to be. As a student-centric, values-based, outcome-focused institution, Fairfield is called to prepare our students to be 21st century leaders in a complex world rich with diverse peoples and ways of knowing and being. To do so, we are called to recruit, admit, retain, graduate, place, and engage diverse, underrepresented, and first-generation college students.

To ensure that students, staff, faculty, and administrators of all backgrounds and experiences belong as full members in our community,

# we are committed to the following:

## Initiative #1

Identify, attract, admit, retain, graduate, place, and engage a diverse student body.

## Initiative #2

Identify, attract, hire, promote, develop, and retain a diverse faculty and staff.

## Initiative #3

Preparing students, faculty, and staff for full engagement and leadership in diverse communities on and beyond our campus.

## Initiative #4:

Commit to continuous improvement on diversity and inclusive excellence.



## Initiative #1

### Identify, attract, admit, retain, graduate, place, and engage a diverse student body.

Fairfield will continue to expand student access to higher education with a focus on diversity and inclusive excellence. Fostering a sense of belonging among all new members of our student community extends from in-person to online experiences.

- **Identify** prospective underrepresented students through partnerships and by building pipelines, focusing as early as middle school to establish a successful pathway to Fairfield. We will continue to build our partnerships with Cristo Rey, Nativity, and Jesuit middle schools and high schools such as Fairfield Prep, Brooklyn Jesuit Prep, St. Ignatius Prep, and St. Martin de Porres. We will deepen these partnerships while developing new pipelines reflecting Fairfield's increasing role on the national stage.
- **Attract and admit** underrepresented students through outreach programs such as the Multicultural Visitors Program (MVP) and preparatory programs such as Upward Bound, which prepares high school students in Bridgeport to attend college and Fairfield Prep's S.E.E.D. program. The Company Scholars program will recruit a fully funded student cohort annually. The Academic Immersion program will continue and expand its capacity to transition students to Fairfield University through its summer bridge program. We plan to develop further strategies to address financial need, and sustain and build out our Admission programs while developing new ones.
- **Retain** first-generation students and students of color by providing student support services such as those offered by our Academic Access Counselor, and easy access to formal mentoring and leadership programs to assist students' social identity development and academic engagement. We will attend further to advising students about their changing financial needs. We will provide more opportunities for all of our students to engage in high-impact practices such as conducting independent research and studying or participating in service while abroad.
- **Graduate and place** our students in jobs, careers, and graduate programs by ensuring their access to high-quality internships, community engagement experiences, and career placement services. We will continue to cultivate our national alumni network with attention to providing underrepresented students with mentoring and career-building opportunities.



- **Engage** our alumni in the Fairfield community and advance our underrepresented students. We will increase membership in the Alumni of Color Network and collaborate with them to create pathways for alumni of color to mentor and support students of color.

The Fairfield Bellarmine campus (which welcomed its first class in the fall of 2023) encompasses Fairfield's multiple efforts to identify, attract, admit, retain, graduate, place, and engage a diverse student body. This project is our most recent initiative initially advanced under President Nemec's leadership in 2020 and in partnership with the Diocese of Bridgeport. Fairfield Bellarmine offers a fully funded two-year associate degree for qualified students from our local community. The project promises to expand access to higher education and its associated benefits for students of color, first-generation, and Pell-eligible students by ensuring students graduate with a clear pathway to a four-year degree program or employment.



## Initiative #2

### Identify, attract, hire, promote, develop, and retain a diverse faculty and staff.

Fairfield will continue to diversify its population of employees — including faculty, staff, and administrators — in order to best meet the needs of its growing and changing student body. The sense of belonging that we aim to foster among students will likewise extend to efforts to foster positive workplace experiences for all who are employed at the University.

- **Identify** diverse faculty and staff by building pipelines with specific universities and colleges, supporting the development of professional networks, and using relevant online tools to advance our active approach to recruiting.
- **Attract and hire** by completing and implementing the University-wide checklist for hiring diverse faculty and staff that establishes a 25 percent benchmark for diversity on interview slates or within the applicant pool, whichever is greater, while meeting the variations of diversity reflected in different divisions, areas, and disciplines of our institution. We will continue to build cultural competencies into the hiring process to identify bias and barriers for applicants from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups. We will initiate departmental review of hiring every three years that will occur with department leadership in conjunction with their college / school / division and Human Resources. We will integrate our commitment to diversity and inclusive excellence into hiring and orientation to ensure a welcoming process aligned with radical hospitality.
- **Promote and develop** diverse faculty and staff by developing the support structures necessary for advancement and ensuring formal mentorship. We will continue to build cultural competencies into our professional development opportunities and provide support through memberships such as the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (NCFDD). We will continue to develop leadership programs to cultivate talent and create opportunity for growth.
- **Retain** diverse faculty and staff through a network of professional development efforts and opportunities. We will maintain and expand faculty and staff affinity group gatherings. Human Resources will conduct exit interviews as employees leave the University, and track and analyze aggregate demographic trends for faculty and staff. We will develop clearer communication about the opportunities for engaging in affinity-based groups and development opportunities across the University, to cultivate a stronger sense of belonging.



## Initiative #3

### Preparing students, faculty, and staff for full engagement and leadership in diverse communities on and beyond our campus.

Fairfield will continue to cultivate an inclusive community by attending to the ways in which we prepare and support students, faculty, and staff to engage meaningfully with each other as individuals, as they pursue their own growth trajectories. Such attention will invite all members of the community to the range of experiences that comprise our Jesuit Catholic university.

- **Expand** our curricular and research opportunities to ensure our ability to meet our academic mission that calls us to learn and continuously build our capacity to prepare our students to meet an ever-changing world. We will continue to develop workshops, curriculum development institutes, and learning communities to ensure that faculty members are prepared to engage all of our students, and help them interact with people different from themselves and in local, national, and global contexts. We will continue to build an inclusive community through the shared *Magis* Core Curriculum, while expanding on and developing the Social Justice signature element. We will continue to support faculty and student scholarship that examines the critical questions of our time. With the recognition that no one scholarly approach has a singular hold on the truth, we will invite all forms of research into conversations examining issues of diversity and inclusive excellence.
- **Develop** further socialization opportunities that will embed diversity and inclusion into our way of proceeding. Such opportunities will be designed to encourage community members to build meaningful relationships across differences, develop awareness about race, ethnicity, and other affinities, and seek change in the local, national, and global community. The continued development of affinity groups for students, staff, and faculty is one example of such socialization opportunities.
- **Provide** professional development opportunities for employees across all divisions and departments that will support and promote participation in building capacity for greater diversity and inclusion. For example, we will continue to improve sexual harassment and diversity training available through Human Resources. We will offer opportunities for faculty, staff, and student leaders to learn how to better support students with disabilities, students navigating mental health issues, international students, first-generation students, underrepresented students and undocumented students as we accompany all our students in their learning and development.





- **Invite** our community to participate in spiritual growth and learning opportunities offered through the Murphy Center for Ignatian Spirituality, Campus Ministry, the Bennett Center for Judaic Studies, and the Center for Catholic Studies. We will develop further our commitment to interfaith religious dialogues and community-building.
- **Create** a University-wide learning pilot program grounded in our Jesuit Catholic tradition that offers the opportunity to engage our members in a process that cultivates a shared understanding of, and commitment to, our mission of diversity and inclusive excellence. Grounded in radical hospitality, this program will focus on the richness of diversity as necessary to recognizing the dignity of each individual and developing an inclusive community that strives for belonging.



## Initiative #4:

### Commit to continuous improvement on diversity and inclusive excellence.

Since its founding in the mid-century as an institution dedicated to providing opportunity to those who were then at the margins of higher education, Fairfield University has evolved as a modern, Jesuit Catholic university, forming students from across the country and around the world to be men and women for and with others. As we continue to evolve, we commit to progress monitoring and continuous improvement of our diversity and inclusion goals. Further, we commit to clear, coordinated, and current communication about the ways in which we enact our mission of diversity and inclusive excellence.

- **Track progress** by identifying and assessing key performance indicators linked to efforts to diversify our student and employee populations and cultivate an inclusive community. In addition to monitoring demographic trends in student admission, retention, and completion, we will conduct periodic surveys, focus groups, and listening sessions to assess students' sense of belonging and engagement on campus. We will note the experiences of part-time, commuter, international, and graduate students to ensure their full membership in the Fairfield University community. We will likewise monitor demographic trends in employee hiring, retention, and promotion, and develop methods to assess engagement and belonging among our full- and part-time faculty, staff, and administrators.
- **Cultivate a culture** of accountability and collaboration around diversity initiatives, practices, and policies. Based on data from our assessment practices, we will revise, as needed, policies and practices to ensure that they reflect the breadth of diversity on our campus. We will include diversity and inclusion in annual reports, goal setting processes, and performance evaluations. We will review and, as needed, revise organizational structures and committees to ensure effective implementation of diversity strategies.
- **Communicate** with greater frequency and synergy our diversity and inclusive excellence messaging around events, resources, and opportunities. We will continue to build the Diversity and Inclusive Excellence website as a hub for information about Fairfield's diversity programs and initiatives to advance our educational efforts and create connections across departments and divisions. We will provide regular updates to the community about the Presidential Working Group's efforts, in conjunction with those areas across campus, including various committees.



## CONCLUSION

Reaching for  
*the Magis*



These initiatives help to chart our path forward. This path, while taking many twists and turns, is guided by our shared pursuit of *the magis*, the more, a beacon on the horizon that calls us to do better, try harder, and strive for a form of excellence that links each of us together through a broader sense of the common good. Together, we engage in continuous learning that enables us to answer the call of Fr. General Arturo Sosa, S.J., to seek to understand the lived experience of so many, the “inequality that generates violence, the forced migrations, racial discrimination and injustice, populism and authoritarianism, and the deterioration of the environment.”

Such understanding then informs how we animate the Universal Apostolic Preferences to “accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future” and to “walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated in a mission of reconciliation and justice.” To do so, our community will cultivate its practice of radical hospitality, which calls us to remember our past as we welcome and are welcomed by one another, with full recognition and equal valuation of our shared dignity as human beings with richly diverse backgrounds and experiences, in order to deepen our sense of belonging.

As a Jesuit Catholic University, Fairfield was founded to act as an agent of social transformation. We aspire to accompany our students and by extension, young people everywhere, in their efforts to build a shared human society that respects the dignity of all people and is enriched by diversity. Through our collective efforts, we strive to respond to Fr. Sosa’s invitation in 2018 to open our doors and windows to all, including our most vulnerable, “who will, in turn, bring with them ‘*un aliento vital*,’ a new, fresh breath of air that will be the source of life in abundance to all that we are trying to do to transform the world.”

