



Office of Equity and Inclusion Newsletter

December 1, 2021



A Message from Dr. Keith Johnson, Vice President for Equity and Inclusion

“Ready or Not, Change is Here”

Dear, Friends,

COVID-19 has created significant enrollment challenges in higher education. And we will not see the full impact for years. Statistically fewer students are high school graduates. And both students and their families are seriously questioning the need to attend college. These cultural shifts mean that recruiting and retaining students will require creativity. The turbulence of COVID-19 illuminated our existing problems in attracting and enrolling students, especially underrepresented minorities.

The pandemic accelerated long overdue investments and reform in education. The pandemic hastened the move to virtual learning and support, providing unprecedented attention to equity gaps. This created a once-in-a-lifetime funding source for higher education of over \$77 billion in pandemic relief. The priorities for the funding included: institutional debt cancellation, financial aid and retention grants, increased student learning technology, campus success technology, and expanded student services.

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“Research shows that you begin learning in the womb and go right on learning until the moment you pass on. Your brain has a capacity for learning that is virtually limitless, which makes every human a potential genius.”

~ Michael J. Gelb, author ~

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Continued ~ Message from Dr. Keith Johnson

But despite recent major financial investments in higher education, the National Student Clearinghouse reports a significant decrease in enrollment and satisfaction between 2020 and 2021. Two-year public colleges in the U.S. experienced an 11.3% change in enrollment. While public four-year institutions experienced a 2.9% decrease. And private, non-profit, four-year colleges saw a 3.9% downward shift. The significant decline in community college enrollment will greatly affect transfer-dependent colleges and universities, including ETSU.

However, higher education does not occur in a vacuum. By the third grade, children should stop learning to read and begin reading to learn. Children who are not reading proficiently by third grade are less likely to attend college than those who are reading proficiently. Only one in four of these children will catch up by the end of high school. Data collected by McKinsey and Company suggests that schools with a majority of Black and Hispanic students are disproportionately impacted by this compared to mostly white schools. Also, poverty negatively impacts students who are not reading proficiently. As the pool of college-ready students decreases, it creates significant challenges in future workforce development.

And vast occurrences of absenteeism in eighth grade learners will impact our college classes of 2026. Prior to the pandemic, over three million youths in grades eight through 12 were considered chronically absent from school. And during 2020-2021, between five and seven million students were chronically absent. And many of those will not return without intervention. Colleges and universities must adjust their recruiting strategies to attract students who have slipped through the cracks of secondary education.

The high school classes of 2021 are still evaluating the value of higher education. Approximately 17% of graduates will abandon college plans. The ripple effect of this can already be seen as colleges and universities across the country experience a significant decline in enrollment. ETSU's overall enrollment in 2020 for the female population was just over 62%, while the male population was 37%.

To address and overcome these challenges, ETSU will need to collaborate with multiple partners to enable the university to shift with all the changes in demographics and declining interest in higher education. We intend to build a brand that is valuable to the faculty, staff, students, and the community that we serve.

As we strive to meet the challenges of the years ahead, we keep in mind that our core values are:

- **PEOPLE** come first, are treated with dignity and respect, and are encouraged to achieve their full potential.
- **RELATIONSHIPS** are built on honesty, integrity, and trust.
- **DIVERSITY** of people and thought is respected.
- **EXCELLENCE** is achieved through teamwork, leadership, creativity, and a strong work ethic;.
- **EFFICIENCY** is achieved through wise use of human and financial resources.
- **COMMITMENT** to intellectual achievement is embraced.

Sincerely,
Dr. Keith Johnson

Safe Zone

ETSU Safe Zone is a community of LGBTQ+ allies on the ETSU campus who have all undergone an orientation to being an LGBTQ+ ally and signed the ETSU Safe Zone pledge.

What does it mean to be an Ally?

An Ally is a person of one social identity group who stands up in support of members of another group; often times these are marginalized groups that are being discriminated against or are being treated in an unjust way.



Why are Allies important?

Allies of any marginalized group have the opportunity to lend their support and increase visibility for these groups—in this case, the LGBTQ+ communities. Being an Ally can be difficult and can require a fair amount of education on the part of the Ally. Never be afraid to ask open and honest questions, and never hesitate to speak up if you identify as an Ally.

Learn more by visiting the [Safe Zone website](#)

First Day of Class Introductions: Trans Inclusion in Teaching Lars Stoltzfus

For students and faculty alike, the first session of a given class is charged with excitement, anxiety, Zoom difficulties, or fear in the first few minutes as the instructor settles in to see how their roster aligns with the students actually in attendance. In place of the traditional roll call method of introductions—where an instructor calls out names and makes real-time adjustments based on student feedback—this trauma-informed way of doing introductions prevents instances of outing a transgender student due to a discrepancy in their legal name and their actual name. It also avoids placing a student in the uncomfortable position of correcting the person in power—the instructor—when misgendered, outed, or called by the wrong name.

This activity requires passing out index cards to students (if in person) or creating a quiz or short essay assignment in one's virtual course management system (if online). Ask students to answer the following questions:

- What is the name you go by, and how do you pronounce it?
- What is your student ID?
- What are your pronouns?
- What are your reasons for taking this course?
- Is there anything else you would like me to know as we begin our semester (e.g., you work a 40-hour week, you don't like correcting someone if they misgender you, you hate chemistry, etc.)?

Continued ~ First Day of Class Introductions

With the student ID, an instructor can compare a student's actual name with their name on the roster or in the course management system, make adjustments, and practice pronunciation. The instructor can easily access these index cards or quiz results in subsequent class meetings to see student information. This short survey also creates an opportunity for students to disclose additional information—like their pronouns or concerns regarding a course—without feeling forced into sharing via a class discussion. This style of doing introductions does take a bit more time on the instructor's part. However, the co-constitution of a course environment valuing respect and self-determination has positive ripple effects throughout the semester.

After turning in their surveys, introductions can be verbalized in several ways depending on class size and subject. Shuffling the cards and asking each student to read a small section of the syllabus or asking students to share something they hope to learn during the semester, for instance, allows instructors and students alike to connect names with faces. These simple introductions can be used in an online class as well. Virtual courses may have the additional affordance of students being able to input their own names (and perhaps pronouns) on a video call or the drawback of needing an IT Department to change one's name within a course management system. Providing information about navigating these systems *before* the semester begins encourages students to submit an introductory comment in a thread or speak up on Zoom because they know the name that will be displayed is the name they actually use.

Goals or Hopes: The goal here is to create a classroom environment where students do not have to contend with hypervigilance accompanying the trauma of being outed, deadnamed, and/or misgendered during roll call introductions. The unease of knowing one's classmates suddenly know information they would *never* otherwise know may create an environment of distrust in one's classmates and instructors. Doing introductions via this short survey hopefully creates a more inclusive and thoughtful course environment. By respecting student identities and providing confidentiality through this discreet

survey, students will feel respected and safe. This, in turn, generates a feeling of trust and increased engagement as students implicitly and explicitly understand that the course instructor values student autonomy and self-presentation.

Trauma-Informed Principles Exemplified:

Transgender students routinely experience being outed as transgender through traditional methods of classroom introductions as their legal name—and, sometimes, the assumed gender accompanying such a name—is what is on the roster, and thus what they must answer to in order to be counted. By handling introductions differently, students will not experience the jarring dissonance of being forcibly outed to a group of peers they do not know in an already stressful situation. This activity creates a sense of safety and trust as students know the instructor will respect them. It also creates a sense of empowerment as students have control over their own bodily narrative in a classroom.

Additional information: This initially began to protect the confidentiality and bodily integrity of transgender students. It soon became apparent, though, that this activity benefits cisgender students as well: international students who are weary (and wary) of instructors mangling their names know they will not have to provide an "American" name in order to feel a sense of belonging in the course, students who go by a nickname or middle name can clearly state how they should be addressed, and students who may have other concerns can let you know on the very first day of class without fear of judgment or guilt. It has resulted in better holistic environments as we learn more about our students right away, and they learn that their identities will be respected and protected.

Lars Stoltzfus, "First Day of Class Introductions: Trans Inclusion in Teaching." *Trauma-Informed Pedagogies: A Guide for Responding to Crisis and Inequality in Higher Education*, co-edited by Phyllis Thompson and Janice Carello, Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming.

Why Do Pronouns Matter?

Pronouns are some of the most commonly used words in the English language. And as such, using correct pronouns is a simple and fundamental way that you can tell a person that you respect them.

Many of us get in the habit of assuming the pronouns of strangers based on their name or appearance. However, this isn't always accurate, and it can be disrespectful or hurtful when one assumes incorrectly.

This is why it's important to ask others what their pronouns are before addressing them using gendered language.

As increasing numbers of people feel safe identifying themselves as trans and/or non-binary, asking for someone's pronouns is a relatively new courtesy. It may feel awkward or intimidating at first, which is why it can be helpful to practice. With practice, it will begin to feel more and more normal.

One easy way to overcome the potential awkwardness of asking is to lead with your own pronouns when introducing yourself. For example, "My name is Laura and I use she/her pronouns, how should I refer to you?"

Remember that assuming someone's gender and pronouns may be harmful to them, which is why asking is always the more courteous and respectful way to learn how someone identifies.



Watch/listen to this helpful video: [Pronouns: How Do You Ask?](#)

"Our hopes for a more just, safe, and peaceful world can only be achieved when there is universal respect for the inherent dignity and equal rights of all members of the human family."

~ [Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka](#),
UN Women Executive Director ~

"Let us remember: One book,
one pen, one child, and one
teacher can change the world"

[Malala Yousafzai](#),
Pakistani education activist

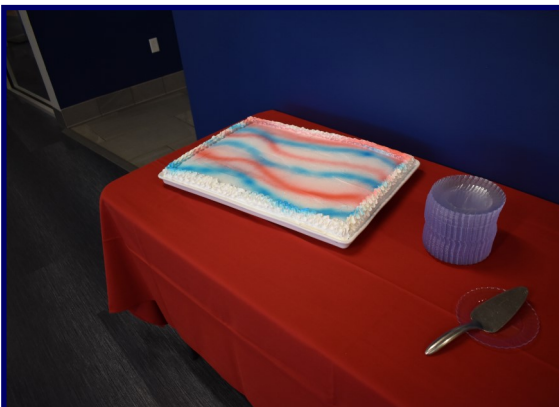
"It means a great deal to those who are oppressed to
know that they are not alone. Never let anyone tell
you that what you are doing is insignificant."

~ [Desmond Tutu](#),
South African civil rights activist ~

Highlights from Veterans Day Lunch at ETSU Dining Hall



The ETSU dining hall honored and served over 50 veterans which included students, faculty, staff, and community members. The appreciation lunch provided by Sodexo was held on November 10th following the Veterans Day ceremonies held on the campus of East Tennessee State University.



To every **veteran**, **Thank you** for your service, your dedication and your sacrifice to keep us and our country safe.

Upcoming Events

December 2021

Thursday	December 9th	Lavender Graduation	5:00pm	Culp, Room 272
Friday	December 10th	Multicultural Center Graduation Celebration	7:00-9:00pm	Culp, Ballroom

January 2022

Tuesday	January 25th	Lunch and Learn Lecture Series <i>Where are you really from? Recognizing and Responding to Microaggressions</i> Discussion Lead: Jessica Wang, Director of Student Success, Clemmer College	12:00-1:00pm	Join Zoom Meeting
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February 2022

Tuesday	February 8th	Lunch and Learn Lecture Series <i>Intersectionality: The Different Layers of You and Me</i> Discussion Lead: Khia Hudgins-Smith, Journey Center for Healing Arts	12:00-1:00pm	Join Zoom Meeting
Tuesday	TBA	Lunch and Learn Lecture Series <i>Inclusive Excellence through Cultural Competency Presentations</i> Discussion Leads: TBA	12:00-1:00pm	Join Zoom Meeting

March 2022

Tuesday	March 8th	Lunch and Learn Lecture Series <i>Intercultural Communication for Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing</i> Discussion Lead: Stephanie Horvath, Assistant Professor, Audiology and Speech Language Pathology	12:00-1:00pm	Join Zoom Meeting
Tuesday	March 22nd	Lunch and Learn Lecture Series <i>Factors That Impact Health</i> Discussion Lead: Dr. Randy Wykoff, Dean, College of Public Health	12:00-1:00pm	Join Zoom Meeting
Tuesday	March 29th	Lunch and Learn Lecture Series <i>We all Identify: A Guide to Healthy Conversations Around Gender and Sexuality</i> Discussion Leads: Adam Derrick, GA, Pride Ctr and Alison Dyer, GA, Womens Resource Ctr	12:00-1:00pm	Join Zoom Meeting

April 2022

Tuesday	April 12th	Lunch and Learn Lecture Series <i>Inclusive Global Discipline Learning: Curricular, Co-Curricular and Extra-Curricular Engagement</i> Discussion Lead: Nate Tadessee, Mentoring Coordinator, Mary V. Jordan Multicultural Center	12:00-1:00pm	Join Zoom Meeting
Tuesday	April 26th	Lunch and Learn Lecture Series <i>Race, Culture, and Collegiate Athletics</i> Discussion Lead: Calvin Claggett, Director of External Operations and Equity and Inclusion, Department of Intercollegiate Athletics	12:00-1:00pm	Join Zoom Meeting



THEC Black Male Success Initiative Task Force Report

Black males in Tennessee face a staggering education attainment gap. Compared to their counterparts, Black men are less likely to enroll in postsecondary education, less likely to continue in their studies, and less likely to graduate. The result is that in Tennessee:

- In 2019, the college going rate for Black males graduating from Tennessee public high schools was 13 percentage points lower than for other student demographic categories.
- The overall enrollment for Black male undergraduates at Tennessee public colleges and universities has declined 16 percent from Fall 2015 to Fall 2020.
- The rate at which Black males are retained has declined eight percentage points from a high of 65 percent in Fall 2010 to 57 percent in Fall 2019.

Six-year graduation rates for Black males are at least 20 percentage points below graduation rates of other students every year. In order to understand and address these gaps, the Black Male Success Initiative (BMSI) was established in 2021. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) convened a taskforce comprised of thoughtful leaders from public and private colleges and universities; systems administrators; K-12 educators; and nonprofit agencies with the charge to identify best practices and resources to support Black men in higher education in Tennessee. Consistent with the mission of THEC, the initiative has focused specifically on the experiences of Black male students while engaged in higher education.

This report highlights the work of the taskforce and includes data centered around Black male success within the state of Tennessee. Additionally, the report highlights several barriers to Black male success alongside opportunities to address attainment gaps. Lastly, a comprehensive overview of various factors affecting Black male success in postsecondary education is presented.

Click here to read the full November 2021 Tennessee Higher Education Commission [Black Male Success Initiative Task Force Report](#).

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Challenge An Ideas Challenge for Institutions of Higher Education

The [National Science Foundation](#) is seeking submissions in a 3-page narrative format describing the evidence-based steps that Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) have taken, or will take, to mitigate the long-term negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the diversity, equity, and inclusion of undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, and faculty in STEM higher education programs and institutions.

Click here to access [Taking Action: COVID-19 Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Challenge](#). Submission deadline January 20, 2022.

Equity and Inclusion Diversity Champion Spotlight



Dr. Jill Channing, Chair, Assistant Professor, Associate Director of Center for Community College Leadership is truly a diversity champion. She holds a Bachelor's in English and Spanish; Master's in English; two Graduate Certificates in Women's and Gender Studies; has over a decade of experience teaching gender's studies and human sexuality courses; a Ph.D. with a concentration in Educational Leadership and Cultural Studies; and numerous publications and presentations on equity and inclusion issues such as race and faculty hiring committees, gender-blind sexism, women in leadership, and LGBTQ educators.

Jill feels the purposes of the Office of Equity and Inclusion are to promote equity and inclusion efforts at ETSU and to support faculty and staff as they engage in these efforts. She believes the roles of the Equity and Inclusion Advisory Council should be developing institutional goals to advance equity and inclusion at ETSU, developing relevant educational programming, and supporting faculty and staff involvement in the Office's initiatives.

Jill sees diversity as the expansive unique nature of human life, not limited to a list of categories. This expansive uniqueness is something that should be celebrated and honored through educational opportunities and through the ways we interact with one another. Examples include curricula that recognizes perspectives of marginalized groups, initiatives to hire people from diverse backgrounds, and programs to create a culture of caring and appreciation of others.

Her approach is to listen and consider what others say. As an academic, Jill points to data, literature, and multiple perspectives. She asks others to push themselves in their thinking and to push her in her thinking. For example, in a classroom discussion about sexual orientation, she might frame the discussion by tracing historical and cultural views of sexuality over time and then examining current views and their cultural influences.

Jill contributes to ETSU's efforts to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion in her role as a department chair by encouraging diverse candidates to apply to positions in the department and encouraging diverse students to apply to their programs. As a faculty member, she continues to integrate equity and inclusion topics in her courses. Jill collaborates with others to promote diversity education programming at ETSU through speakers and other extra-curricular activities.

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hear from you.**

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