

**PRESIDENT’S COUNCIL FOR EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE
2019-2020 ACADEMIC YEAR**

The Council for Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice advises the President and University leadership on the creation and coordination of strategies to enhance equity, inclusion and social justice across the institution. The Council is appointed by the President and is composed of a cross-section of the University community, including faculty, staff and students. Although the Council will always include diverse representation from the campus community, the specific constitution and membership of the committee may vary from year to year, depending on the specific task(s) with which the Council is charged by the president.

CHARGE FOR THE 2019-2020 ACADEMIC YEAR: Holistic Student Wellness

Advancing Inclusive Success is one of the three core themes of [Western’s strategic plan](#). Increasing retention and graduation rates for all students, while eliminating achievement gaps for students from diverse and under-represented backgrounds, is one of the [lead metrics of the strategic plan](#). While these overarching metrics are important benchmarks for assessing progress, advancing student success requires qualitative understandings of and responsive support for students’ diverse intersectional identities and lived experiences beyond the classroom. Timely academic progress toward graduation is furthered by both the academic experience, and by the physical, psychological, emotional, social, and economic dimensions of holistic wellbeing. Barriers to holistic well-being may hinder the success of some students from diverse and under-represented backgrounds.

For the 2019-2020 academic year the Council is charged with focusing on two specific aspects of holistic student wellness.

1. Review and Assessment of Bias Education and Response Team (BERT) proposal.

Threats to physical safety and acts of identity-based bias and discrimination can significantly impact well-being. Over the past several years, students from diverse and marginalized identities have expressed serious concerns about the frequency of bias-driven incidents on campus, and the nature and timeliness of the University’s response to them. Starting in Winter 2019 University leaders have met with members of marginalized student groups to better understand the unique needs and concerns of different groups, and developed an action plan and timeline for progress available [here](#).

One suggestion for improving the University’s handling of these incidents is the creation of a Bias Education and Response Team (BERT). A proposal for the implementation of a BERT at Western was drafted in 2016, but may need to be updated to take account of events and changes in campus and national climate. The Council for Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice is charged with reviewing this proposal, and providing suggestions and recommendations regarding the purpose, structure and/or protocol of a BERT, and other considerations that would guide the BERT team and university leadership in responding to bias incidents. These recommendations are due to the President by the end of winter quarter 2020.

2. Develop Recommendations for Proactively Addressing Holistic Student Wellness

Improving Western's response to bias incidents on campus will play an important role in enhancing the holistic wellbeing of diverse students, allowing them to focus more fully on academic endeavors, and ultimately increasing retention and graduation rates. However, the University's approach to enhancing diverse student wellness must be proactive as well as reactive. The University cannot ensure that bias incidents will not happen again on campus; given the size of the institution, its physical and ideological openness, and the constant flow of people bringing a wide range of values and experiences with them. The University can improve its response to such incidents, while also engaging in proactive efforts that support diverse students' individual and community resilience and empowerment.

Dedicated efforts to further the holistic wellness of diverse students is a necessary dimension of an inclusive, caring, and just university. The Council is charged with reviewing the suggestions student groups have provided to University leadership in this regard and the work the University has initiated in several areas, identifying missing areas for proactively enhancing diverse student wellness, particularly outside of the academic setting, and providing recommendations to the President regarding how Western can most impactfully support the holistic wellness of diverse and underrepresented Western students.

2019-2020 AY Council Membership

Sura Alquadah, Professor, Engineering and Design

Yesugen Battengel, Associated Students Vice President for Diversity

Josue Claros, Student Representative, Resident Advisor

Lani Defiesta, Associated Students President

Kevin Delucio, Professor, Multicultural Psychology and Mental Health, Council co-chair

Teri Hall, Student Success Specialist, College of Business and Economics

Jeff King, Professor, Psychology

L.K. Langley, Director, LGBTQ+ Western, Council Co-chair

Sislana Ledbetter, Executive Director, Counseling, Health and Wellness

Fatuma Musa, Student Representative

Valeria Pedraza, Student Representative

Leti Romo, Assistant Director, Student Representation and Governance and President, Minority Employee Council

Michael Sledge, Assistant Dean of Students

Sarah Zarrow, Professor, History