



Equity Plan & Practices Framework Baseline Plan

May 2024

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Institutional Vision of Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility	3
Institutional Vision for equity.....	4
Analyze Data.....	4
ICCB/IBHE Data Analyzed.....	4
Additional Data Analyzed.....	4
Gap Analysis.....	4
Barriers in Policy and Practice.....	5
Assessment of Programs, Outcomes, and Lessons Learned.....	6
Assessment of Climate.....	8
Climate survey process, overview, key findings, and summary.....	8
Policies, Strategies, Services, and Practices.....	10
Outline of Curricular or Pedagogical Changes, Support, Diversity Efforts,.....	10
Financial Assistance, and or Other Changes to Be Implemented	
Timeline for Implementation with Milestones.....	10
Near-term and Long-term Outcomes and Metrics.....	11
Process for Equity Plan Development.....	11
Relationship to Previous Equity Plans.....	11
Plans for Future Feedback.....	11
Strategy Narratives.....	12
Policies, Procedures, and Audits.....	12
Hiring, Recruitment, and Retention.....	12
Education and Training.....	12
Assessment and Data.....	13
Pedagogy Training Faculty.....	13
Appendices A, B, and C.....	14-16

I. Introduction

A. Institution vision of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility, including:

1. Adopted Institution Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Statements

We are committed to a culture of equity, focused on respect and fairness, in all aspects of the Kishwaukee College experience.

2. Adopted Institution Mission, Vision, Value Statements

Kishwaukee College's mission is to improve lives by providing equitable, student-centered education.

Kishwaukee College's vision is to provide accessible and innovative education by responding and adapting to changing student and community needs.

Kishwaukee College's Values include:

- Collaborative: Build positive and trusting relationships through partnership and teamwork.
- Equity: Support and embrace a diverse campus community.
- Future Focused: Respond and adapt to changing needs through innovation and flexibility.
- Quality: Provide an accessible education with a focus on excellence and continuous improvement. Supportive: Foster an empathetic, civil, and encouraging College environment.

Link to all <https://kish.edu/about/college-information/mission-vision.php>

3. Other institutional statements and goals that support DEIA efforts (such as College, Division, or support areas)

Kishwaukee College's Purpose Statement: Helping you create the life you want.

Civility Statement: Kishwaukee College embraces an environment which is conducive to learning and fosters a culture of mutual respect.

Our commitment to civility requires intentional cooperation, tolerance, forgiveness, acceptance, inclusiveness, kindness, compassion, courtesy, and patience. It is expressed not only in the words we choose, but also in our tone, demeanor, and action. As an institution of higher learning, we seek to understand our differences and build connections that increase knowledge, understanding and community strength.

B. Institutional vision for Equity

Kishwaukee College will provide accessible and innovative education by responding and adapting to changing student and community needs. We are committed to a culture of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging, focused on respect and fairness, in all aspects of the College experience. Kishwaukee College's values of equity and support are indicative of our commitment to ensuring all learners know they are welcomed and valued members of the Kish community. We believe everyone deserves an affordable, quality education, and any barriers or completion gaps must be addressed. For the College's efforts, Kish was recognized with the 2022 Equity and Diversity Award by the Illinois Community College Trustees Association.

II. **Analyze Data:** Assess the equity gaps for Black, Latino, low-income, adult, rural students, students with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups, as identified in 110 ILCS 205/9.16.

A. **IBHE/ICCB will provide data on current gaps and five-year trends in enrollment, persistence, advancement, completion, and student loan repayment rates, as collected statewide.**

- The data provided by the state were compiled into the chart (see Appen with significantly higher/lower percentages highlighted as green/red, respectively).
- Full time fall-to-fall retention rates were lower for Kishwaukee College compared to the state level most significantly for males, Black or African Americans, and rural students. Additional momentum metrics from the state provided data set illustrated comparable results.

See Appendix A: IBHE/ICCB Kishwaukee College and State Performance Metrics by Demographics

B. **Provide any additional relevant institution-specific data that you analyzed.**

The [College's Annual Databook](#) compiles several metrics disaggregated by race/gender/Pell status.

C. **Use IBHE/ICCB data and additional institutional data provided from Parts a and b above to identify gaps to be addressed.**

- In 2023, the largest gaps identified were overall course completion rates (A, B, C, D, F and A, B, C, D, F, W) for Black African Americans: 79.4% versus Overall: 89.2%.

- Similar gaps were observed for overall and online-specific success rates (A, B, C/A, B, C, D, F). Data on fall-to-fall retention and 150% graduation rates mirrored the state-level data provided by IBHE/ICCB.
- Regarding 150% graduation rates, Black or African American students exhibited a significantly lower gap from the College average.

Gaps in the data: The most significant gaps identified were for graduation rates of Black or African Americans, and full-time retention rates for all males, Black or African Americans and rural students.

D. Identify major barriers in policy and practices that have led to equity gaps for each group identified above.

A review of national research and data trends revealed significant disparities in equity across various demographic groups, underscoring barriers related to challenges in transportation, technology accessibility, mental health services, and childcare, disproportionately impacting distinct segments of our student population.

Inequities in technology access further exacerbate disparities, with rural and economically disadvantaged students being significantly impacted. Poor internet availability in rural areas restricts students' ability to engage in remote learning, while financial constraints impede access to technology among Black or African American students, highlighting the digital divide.

In addition, the scarcity of mental health services poses a significant obstacle, particularly for rural students. Limited accessibility to mental health resources presents challenges, impeding students' ability to address their well-being, and hindering their academic success.

Furthermore, the lack of accessible childcare options presents a substantial barrier, primarily impacting rural students. The absence of adequate childcare facilities or services in rural areas forces students to navigate the competing demands of academia and caregiving responsibilities, resulting in undermining their educational pursuits.

Addressing these systemic inequities demands a comprehensive approach that acknowledges the policy and practice barriers contributing to the equity gaps. By prioritizing initiatives that enhance transportation infrastructure, expand technology accessibility, improve mental health services, and increase childcare support, we can foster a more inclusive educational environment where all students have equitable opportunities to succeed and thrive.

E. Assess programs, efforts, curricular, or pedagogical changes that have been implemented to address the equity gaps and their outcomes. Describe any “lessons learned” that inform this plan and the practices/policies recommended.

- *Transportation:*
Prioritizing equity by providing bus services in rural communities is essential to ensuring access to education. During COVID, for the first time, the college allocated \$25,000 from COVID funding to assist students with getting to and from the college. Students utilized all the funds provided demonstrating the student need for financial assistance. When the COVID funds were depleted, the college committed to continue offering free bus transportation and was able to seek out a Foundation donor to provide dollars to continue this opportunity. This included service from Transvac for Dekalb and LOTS for Rochelle. On average over the last three years, one hundred riders have chosen to utilize this service.
- *Laptop Loan and hotspots loan program:*
Ensuring equitable access to technology is an important barrier to continue to address. As with many educational institutions, COVID required Kish to transition quickly to online learning. This quick transition made it clear that Kish students had technology and connectivity issues that were magnified during COVID. Kish committed to developing and maintaining a laptop loan program to provide laptops to any student who needed one. Additionally, it became clear during COVID that our service region had some digital deserts that limited connectivity for some of our students. The College committed to providing hotspots to students for them to be able to continue learning in the online format. As the College moved past COVID but maintained a 50% online course model, Kish has committed to maintaining both the laptop and hotspot loan programs for all students. Annually, 200 laptops and 3 hotspots are loaned to students to support success.
- *Childcare and subsidy for students that utilize the colleges Early Learning Center:*
This program began with COVID funding where the college recognized a continuous need for support. Based on student need, the College has budgeted \$50,000 annually to support childcare for Kish students. We will continue to prioritize childcare subsidy eligibility based on the greatest financial need, considering factors such as income level, family size, and other financial obligations.
- *Development of co-requisite models in math and English:*
The College developed co-requisite models in math and English to decrease cost and time to completion. As part of the state work on developmental education reform, the College has implemented co-requisite models for several math and English courses. This model pairs college-level credit courses with just-in-time support for students. As the College continues to scale-up this work, additional work is being done to tailor co-requisite models

to meet the diverse needs of students, considering factors such as academic background, learning styles, and personal circumstances.

- *DEIA Faculty Training:*

When the college joined Partnership for College Completion (PCC) and Illinois Equity Attainment Initiative (ILEA) in its first year, we quickly realized the need to increase the amount of culturally responsive pedagogy training we provide to faculty. The Instruction team determined three different pathways where faculty training could best be provided to the majority of faculty. First, all required fall and spring in-service faculty programming contain at least one culturally responsive pedagogy training session. Second, the structure of monthly faculty meetings has moved from information and updates to professional development with at least 25% of the topics related to DEI content. Third, as part of the recent faculty contract, rank advancement now requires the completion of 20 hours of professional development in the College's Innovation Center for Teaching and Learning. The Innovation Center builds a schedule of courses each semester, and about 25% of the programming is related to DEI and/or culturally responsive pedagogy training. All Innovation Center training is available in-person, online synchronously, and asynchronously to maximize flexibility for faculty. Additionally, each session requires a reflection with action steps to help faculty connect the content with their classrooms.

- *Textbook Affordability:*

During COVID, the College committed to providing free textbooks to students using relief funding. The feedback from students on the impact of that service was overwhelming, and the College knew that it needed to find a way to address the impact of textbook costs. The first phase of this work was to continue to use the textbook resources from COVID and provide one penny rentals to students whenever materials were available. While this was successful, it was not sustainable as materials became outdated. The College assembled a Textbook Affordability Taskforce with the goal of textbook affordability for students. This taskforce developed rubrics for course material review and worked to develop a plan and process to increase open educational resources (OER) usage. Since 2022, the College has increased the number of courses using OER's by 11.7% and the number of sections using OER's by 9.5%. Changes have been made to the adoption process through the bookstore to better determine how adoption impacts cost. The College continues to identify additional ways to move this work forward.

- *Mental Health Assistance:*

In 2022, the College purchased Talkspace for online counseling to provide mental health support for students in need. This opportunity offers online texting and online counseling based on the student's preference. During the first year, 90 students utilized the service and at this time for the second year, 46 students have received assistance from Talkspace.

In addition, the College created partnerships with four new local agencies in the community to provide mental health services for students who may be referred by a Kish staff member. Since 2021, seventeen Student Services staff have completed Mental Health First Aid Training certification.

- *Champions Fund:*

The Kishwaukee College Foundation “Champions Fund” helps students who are struggling to enroll or stay enrolled because of a financial emergency. Students requesting funds are required to meet with an academic advisor, or other type of case manager to identify additional support services that may be available to support the student and keep them enrolled and on the path to completion. Emergency support provided includes assistance for books and supplies, housing, tuition, food, gas, utilities, car repair, childcare, counseling therapy, etc. On average, \$25,000 is awarded annually to approximately sixty students. The funds for this program are provided by a Foundation donor on an annual basis.

- *Food Pantry*

In late 2019, the College launched an on-campus food pantry, Kody’s Cupboard, to help alleviate hunger and meet the basic needs of our students. Kody’s Cupboard serves students through non-perishable food items and monthly meal kits. The food pantry relies solely on monetary donations. An average of 165 students benefited from this program annually, with the total funding support of \$7,000 annually provided by a Foundation Donor.

IV. Assess Climate (Campus Climate Survey):

- A. Kishwaukee College utilizes a comprehensive approach to assess our campus climate and culture, prioritizing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

In 2024, a campus climate survey on diversity, equity and inclusion was administered to both employees and students, ensuring a broad spectrum of perspectives, with survey questions focused on racial/ethnic minorities, marginalized populations, low-income, rural, individuals with disabilities, and adult students. Additionally, we actively engaged with local partners, including educational institutions, community organizations, policymakers, and employers, to incorporate external perspectives in our assessments, fostering a more holistic understanding of our community dynamics.

- B. The institution plans to conduct the Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL) survey for the spring and fall 2025 to students and employees, respectively. This survey provides information collection on a wide range of topics including diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Further discussions will be held regarding best ways to encourage

participation in the survey process. The College will repeat this Campus Climate Survey for DEIA in 2026 to further determine areas for improvement and gaps.

- C. The most recent campus climate survey was completed in 2024 with a commitment to continuous improvement. Future assessments will follow a regular schedule to ensure up-to-date insights into the evolving dynamics of our campus environment. The survey was administered on February 19, 2024, and data were compiled into a report on March 3, 2024. The survey was designed to gather comprehensive feedback from both employees and students. This format typically covers various aspects such as satisfaction levels, institutional priorities, and areas for improvement.

The survey collected significant participation, with over 300 employees and students completing it within the allotted timeframe. This diverse participation ensures a broad spectrum of perspectives and insights into the institution's functioning.

See Appendix B for survey findings.

- D. The key findings from our recent campus climate survey provided valuable insights that will shape our Equity Plan and Practices. These findings underscore areas of strength, highlight opportunities for enhancement, and shed light on challenges faced by various segments of our community. By systematically analyzing this data, we are dedicated to implementing targeted strategies that foster a more inclusive and equitable campus environment, addressing the specific needs and experiences of our diverse stakeholders.

Summary of Campus Climate Survey 2024:

Students responded positively to all items with 7/9 items rated over 3.5 on a 4.0 scale. However, there was uncertainty regarding whether special activities and speakers adequately reflected the diverse nature of the school and community.

- Student Comments:
 - The statement, “Special activities and speakers reflect the diverse nature of the school and larger community” had the largest proportion of students indicating “Unsure” (29.5%).
 - Comments from students mostly illustrated contentment with the current culture and practice.
 - Addressing the needs of students with physical and mental disabilities was the most common suggestion.
 - Student comments expressed satisfaction with the current culture but highlighted the need to further address the needs of students with disabilities.
- Employee Comments:
 - Employee scores were slightly lower overall.
 - The statement, “Mentorship programs are in place to support underrepresented groups in academia” was the only item under 3.0 on a 4.0 scale (2.8).

- Comments from students mostly illustrated contentment with the current culture and practice.
- Addressing the needs of students with physical and mental disabilities was the most common suggestion.
- Comments from employees focused on increasing the hiring/retention/professional development for candidates from diverse backgrounds. Employee feedback emphasized the importance of increasing diversity in hiring, retention, and professional development, and improving communication and training opportunities related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

As part of our dedication to transparency and accountability, we are committed to sharing the survey summary and results on the Kishwaukee College DEIA website. By making survey data results readily available on our DEIA website (link below), we aim to foster a culture of accountability, trust, and continuous improvement. Our stakeholders, including employees' students, and community members, deserve to have access to the insights and feedback collected through surveys, as they play a vital role in shaping our DEIA initiatives and strategies.

The 2024 survey data results can be viewed on the Kishwaukee colleges DEIA webpage at: <https://kish.edu/about/college-information/equity.php>

III. **Policies, Strategies, Services, & Practices:** Based on the data analysis, campus climate assessment, evaluation of any current programs/services, outline an **integrated, holistic plan** of research- or practice-informed policies, services, strategies, and practices to be implemented (or continued) to close equity gaps for minority, low-income, rural, adult, individuals with disabilities, or other marginalized, underrepresented groups. Include strategies to close gaps in enrollment, persistence, advancement, completion, and student loan repayment rates. Describe the connection between the analysis, the research, and the strategy chosen.

A. **Outline curricular or pedagogical changes, academic support, student support (including basic needs), faculty/staff diversity efforts, financial assistance (and increasing awareness of financial assistance available), policy, or other changes to be implemented.**

This information is provided in Appendix C which identifies the strategies, milestones, areas of responsibility, resources, and outcomes. In addition to the table in Appendix C, narratives with descriptions of the strategies are included.

B. **Include a timeline for implementation with appropriate milestones.**

This information is provided in Appendix C which identifies the strategies, milestones, areas of responsibility, resources, and outcomes. In addition to the table in Appendix C, narratives descriptions of the strategies are included.

C. Identify approaches to assess near-term and long-term outcomes of the strategies. Include data and metrics that will be collected and reviewed.

This information is provided in Appendix C which identifies the strategies, milestones, areas of responsibility, resources, and outcomes. In addition to the table in Appendix C, narrative descriptions of the strategies are included.

D. Describe the institution's approach to the development of the equity plan, including efforts taken to ensure all staff including but not limited to, faculty, student, executive leadership, institutional committees, staff, students, administrative personnel, and transfer coordinators, participated in the design of this plan and how feedback and buy-in at all levels occurred.

As original members of the Partnership for College Completion, Kish has been involved in this equity work for many years. This is the College's third version of an equity plan, and with each plan, the College has continued to refine and adapt to the changing needs of the College and the community. The current equity plan committee consists of staff representing a cross-section of the College. Culture surveys were conducted with both students and staff to receive feedback to frame the equity plan. Strategies were developed through the guidance of the president and the senior leadership team.

E. Describe the relationship of this equity plan to other institutional plans (e.g., institution strategic plan, enrollment management plans, other DEIA plans).

As mentioned previously, this is the third version of an equity plan for Kish. The work of this plan has become embedded into all the work that is done at the College. For example, equity work goals are also goals of the College. As the work in this plan becomes a part of the College's goals, it becomes part of all work that occurs at the College. Each department takes ownership of components of the College goals. In this way, the plan is embedded in the fabric of the College and no one person is responsible. As goals are completed, the outcomes are shared with stakeholders through meetings, announcements, and demonstrated work.

F. Describe the institution's plans to solicit ongoing feedback and how information will be shared with staff, students, and faculty as well as the community.

Annual surveys such as the Campus Climate Survey and Ruffalo Noel Levitz as well as listening sessions with students will continue to allow the College to refine and revise this plan moving forward. Through ongoing review of college-level and department-level goals, the College will solicit feedback and share information to make sure that all stakeholders are informed and engaged in the work.

Strategy Narratives

Policies, Procedures, and Audits

Accessibility audit of website and classroom tools: The College will be hiring a consulting firm to complete an accessibility audit of the website and classroom tools such as the D2L learning management system to identify any concerns related to accessibility. Once the audit is completed, the College will work with a consulting firm to correct any areas of concern related to accessibility.

Marketing/communication calendar and plan implementation: A committee has been developed to create a calendar with marketing expectations for DEI events. Once completed, the committee will implement the calendar and adjust and maintain the document and process as needed.

Hiring, Recruitment, and Retention

Development of mentoring program: As part of an overall review and revision of employee onboarding, it was determined that the College would benefit from an employee mentoring program. In year one of this plan, the College will research and develop the mentoring program structure, develop an intake survey, develop a mentoring guidebook, and plan for the fall 2025 start to the program.

Improve interview access process: To ensure that candidates who will add to the diversity of the College have access to the process, Human Resources will implement a system to inform hiring committees of candidates that will add to the College's diversity. Additionally, if an applicant identifies as a candidate that will add to the College's diversity, the candidate will automatically be on the list of those interviewed.

Education and Training (Staff)

Land Acknowledgement Statement: Recognizing that the College is on land that was owned and inhabited by Indigenous people, the College will develop a committee with the purpose of research and development of a land acknowledgement statement. The statement will be shared via the College website and at campus events and will be included as a part of course syllabi.

Research what it means to be a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI): As the College continues to reach a level of diversity that would qualify it as an HSI, we need to determine whether gaining official designation will benefit the students and the institution. Identify the qualifications, requirements, benefits, and process to become designated as an HSI. Determine whether College should commit to the requirements to become an HSI.

DEI training for staff: The College has held a wide variety of DEI training opportunities for staff. There is a need for the development of a more structured list of topics and a calendar to ensure thoughtfully planned and implemented training. The goal will be to communicate these opportunities and provide at least one DEI staff training opportunity each semester.

Assessment and Data

Publish disaggregated data and statistics: The College produces an annual data book with student and staff data. While the data book contains a great deal of disaggregated data, there is always the need to continuously review the data metrics to ensure we are being fully transparent in our data sharing. This year's review will include the consideration of the inclusion of success data related to students who use Disability Services. The plan will also include the development and implementation of a process to share student success data with key stakeholders every semester.

Pedagogy Training Faculty

Inclusive syllabus work: A cross-college taskforce will work together to develop recommendations for an inclusive syllabus statement. The College will review for approval and statements will be available for faculty implementation into Concourse syllabus system.

DEI professional development for all faculty: Develop and provide cultural competency training related to classroom pedagogy at fall in-service and spring professional development days.

DEI professional development opportunities for faculty: Through the professional development structure of the Innovation Center for Teaching and Learning, several opportunities for DEI/pedagogy training will be on the professional development calendar in fall and spring semesters.

See Appendix C for a detailed table of strategies.