

Zilkha Center Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy

April 2021

What do we mean by Diversity, Equity and Inclusion?

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) is about creating a community where all members can thrive. A community that is free of harmful bias and discrimination, has addressed inequities in opportunity, and one that continuously engages in critical conversations and initiatives that promote diversity, equity and inclusion.

The Williams College Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (OIDEI) has defined the terms diversity, equity and inclusion as follows:

Diversity: Diversity refers to all the many ways in which people differ, encompassing varying characteristics that make one individual or group different from another, including, but not limited to race, ethnicity, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender expression, socio-economic status, language, culture, national origin, religion/spirituality, age, (dis)ability, and military/veteran status. We believe it is important to understand how aspects of a person's identities combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege, paying special attention to underserved and underrepresented groups in our community and to uneven dynamics of social power.

Equity: Equity refers to the ways we intentionally ensure all individuals can thrive. We recognize that the members of our community have unique and different circumstances and may need different support at different times. Equity is different from equality in that equality implies treating everyone as if their experiences are exactly the same. Being equitable means acknowledging and addressing structural inequalities — historic and current — that advantage some and disadvantage others. Equal treatment results in equity only if everyone starts with equal access to opportunities (e.g., not requiring a student to select books based on their costs, but implementing a book grant that covers all required books).

Inclusion: Inclusion encompasses the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can participate fully and is welcomed, respected, supported, and valued. In some ways, inclusive efforts demonstrate our commitment to celebrating differences among and diversity of our community. An institution can be both diverse and non-inclusive at the same time, thus a sustained practice of creating inclusive environments is necessary for success.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Williams College

Williams College, like society at large, continues to reckon with and address its history of racial and social oppression. The College strives to be ...

a community where all members thrive: where they feel a sense of belonging and being valued; where they can access the wide range of learning and growth opportunities the college offers; where they are heard and respected; where they engage in meaningful dialogue about a wide range of issues; and where they live and work in safe, welcoming, and comfortable spaces. These aspirations are based upon an understanding that in higher education, diversity, equity, and inclusion are inextricably linked to excellence.

As part of the current [Strategic Planning](#) effort, the Williams College DEI working group identified the following focus areas for improving DEI in the coming months and years¹

- Recruitment, retention, and development of faculty, students and staff
- Campus climate
- Thriving of constituents on campus
- Inclusion and belonging in all learning environments
- Fostering inclusive communities on and off campus

As a member of the Williams College community and a critical partner for campus sustainability programs, the Zilkha Center is committed to and actively participating in the DEI planning efforts and has developed the present DEI Strategy.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the Zilkha Center

For the Zilkha Center, diversity, inclusion and equity have long been part of its work with students, staff and faculty. For one, DEI intersects closely with sustainability, which we view as the integration and balancing of environmental, social and economic objectives while ensuring intra- and intergenerational equity, fairness and justice. DEI is connected to all three dimensions of sustainability. For example, there can be no social and economic sustainability without the equitable representation of women and communities of color in civil society and the full acknowledgment of their past and current contributions to society. Environmental protection and conservation are also issues that require multi-stakeholder participatory decision-making and that cannot succeed without the equitable inclusion of women, BIPOC and other marginalized communities and respect for traditional knowledge and practices. Furthermore, DEI is intrinsically linked to key concepts in the definition of sustainable development such as inter- and intragenerational fairness, moral universalism and distributive justice.

In addition to the role of DEI in promoting sustainability at Williams College, we also know that our work is more relevant, encompassing, and successful if it's developed and carried out with the participation of our diverse campus community. A diversity of viewpoints, lived experiences, and skill sets helps ensure, for example, that our efforts to reduce food waste are more likely to be recognized and embraced by everyone. Our landscape management is more likely to be welcoming to our community and visitors if it acknowledges its cultural and historical past, while enhancing its ecological, aesthetic, and functional values. At the same time we know that the environmental and sustainability fields and movements have historically not been inclusive spaces for people of color and across the full socio-economic spectrum. If we are to embed sustainability in the culture and fabric of the College, we need to broaden its foundation and diversify its vision and solutions to meet the needs of all members of our community.

Representation of DEI in Zilkha Center's Vision and Mission Statements

At the forefront of the Zilkha Center's commitment to principles and practices of DEI is to emphasize and make explicit their links to its sustainability work. At the highest and most aspirational level, this means integrating DEI explicitly in the Center's vision and mission statements.

¹ See [DEI Report](#).

Our current statements read as follows:

Vision Statement

Williams College will make reductions in its environmental footprint in ways that are beyond incremental improvement. It will serve as a model, knowledge hub, and testing ground for sustainable practice and the integration of social, economic, and environmental sustainability. The campus community will be engaged, empowered, knowledgeable and possess the skills to implement sustainable practices.

Mission Statement

The Zilkha Center pursues sustainability at Williams in collaboration with many other departments and individuals on campus and further afield. We ...

- *provide connections between those diverse groups; design and advocate for operational change;*
- *research, implement and share best practices;*
- *incorporate education, knowledge sharing and opportunities for action in all that we do;*
- *consider our work in the broader context – the world, our region, and our local communities;*
- *actively seek out collaborations with peer institutions and partners to magnify our impact;*
- *continually review our efforts through internal reflection and collaborative partnerships, always seeking new methods and setting new goals that will keep us moving toward our vision;*
- *provide inspiration and support to other campus community members implementing sustainable projects and practices;*
- *inform the College's efforts to set ambitious and achievable goals; and*
- *monitor the College's progress and report on its successes and failures.*

In order to do this successfully, we recognize we must understand and value the intersections of sustainability with social justice, environmental justice, equity and inclusion. We strive to make our work accessible to a wide range of people: those who are committed environmentalists, those who have felt unwelcome in the mainstream sustainability movement, and everybody in between.

Proposed Updates:

Vision Statement

The Zilkha Center aims to be a leader and catalyst for minimizing the environmental footprint of Williams College in ways that go beyond incremental improvements. It serves as a model, knowledge hub, and testing

ground for sustainability practices and learning that embody the principles of environmental justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Mission Statement

The Zilkha Center advances sustainability at Williams College in collaboration with departments and individuals on campus and further afield. We facilitate connections among stakeholders to design and advocate for operational change; we inform the College's efforts to set ambitious and achievable goals and monitor and report on progress; we provide inspiration and support to campus community members implementing sustainable projects and practices; we research, implement and share best practices; we incorporate education, knowledge sharing and opportunities for action in everything we do; we embed our work in the broader local, regional and global contexts; we collaborate with peer institutions and partners to magnify our impact; and we continually review our efforts through internal reflection and external feedback.

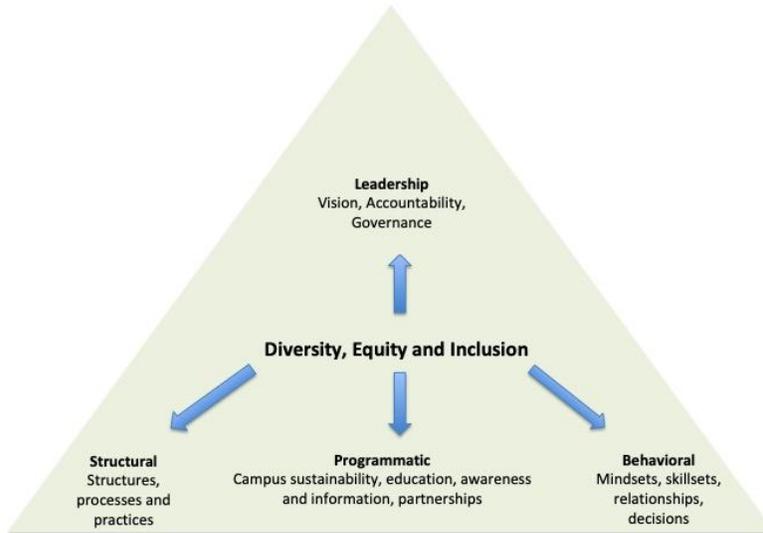
Our work is informed by our core values of:

- *Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity: We maintain an open and safe work environment that is welcoming to everyone.*
- *Systems Thinking: Our work is informed and guided by the fragile interdependence of human and natural systems.*
- *Responsibility: We recognize the individual and collective responsibility to protect, care for and enhance the environment for the benefit of all.*
- *Proclivity towards Nature: We believe that nature can be a source of wonder, inspiration, personal growth, and building community.*

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Advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Zilkha Center Programs and Operations

We commit to approach our sustainability work through the lenses of diversity, equity and inclusion. Our main action areas are:



We will review and expand our existing DEI practices in each of these areas.

<p>Leadership</p>	<p>We will ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed DEI as a Zilkha Center core governance value • Espouse and model the principles of DEI in our own work and interactions with others, including by acknowledging the existence of historic discrimination, exclusion and marginalization in the environmental field • Hold ourselves accountable through annual reviews and by actively seeking feedback on our words, actions and behaviors • Continue to educate ourselves in DEI theories and practices and participate in training workshops • Highlight the importance of DEI by emphasizing its critical links with sustainability
<p>Structural</p>	<p>We will ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure DEI is integrated into our staff hiring and retention efforts, salaries and professional advancement and learning opportunities, and performance assessment • Continue to apply DEI principles in our student recruitment and retention, mentoring, evaluation, recommendation letter writing, and alumni networking • Maintaining an internal working environment that is inclusive, respectful, transparent, and accountable

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include DEI in our strategic planning ● Seek out external DEI review and/or certification for the Zilkha Center
Behavioral	<p>We will ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Foster a work culture that enables open communication, self-reflection, and restorative justice ● Promote knowledge, skills and ultimately the mindsets needed to fully live our DEI values ● Integrate DEI principles in our partnerships and internal and external decision-making, including by inviting feedback from our partners, collaborators, and visitors
Programmatic	<p>We will ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue to strive to make the Zilkha Center an open, welcoming place for everyone ● Include DEI as a lens through which we develop and carry out projects, initiatives, and actions ● Advocate for DEI as part of sustainability improvements college-wide

Assessment and Reflection

Embedding and living the principles of DEI is a continuous process, similar to our pursuit of a sustainable society. This requires iteration and continued reflection and assessment. The Zilkha Center DEI Strategy is a work in progress and a living document. We seek to evaluate, reflect on, and improve on our goals and progress on an annual basis and in partnership with the OIDEI and the Davis Center.

Setting DEI Measurable Goals

These main action areas are further broken down into specific DEI goals that we have set for ourselves. Some of them have clearly defined endpoints and timelines, while others are to become routine part of our work, mindsets, and operations. In order to continue to learn, improve, and be transparent about our successes and shortcomings, each goal is supported by observable qualitative and quantitative indicators. We will also conduct regular annual self-evaluations as a center and invite peer-feedback from our partners, collaborators and visitors.

Zilkha Center Domain	Goal	Link to Williams DEI Strategic Plan	What is currently there/being done?	What needs to still be done?	Indicators/Metrics	Timeline
Environmental initiatives	Build a future of inclusive diversity by acknowledging history of discrimination, exclusion and marginalization of poor and marginalized communities of color in the environmental field	Study and reflection upon Williams College's institutional history	Working with our Zilkha Center interns and other students, we discuss the economic and political power imbalances and how they relate to race in particular	Review how historical and continuing environmental racism and discrimination in the environmental and sustainability movements are discussed in our work with students and other partners Regularly examine whether our own strategic sustainability goals adversely impact our DEI goals and objectives and take corrective action as needed	Discussion of past and present systemic oppression, discrimination, exclusion and marginalization in the environmental field is included in all student intern and staff training and in external programs such as Root	Review in spring-fall 2021, roll out of new training & discussion materials in spring 2022

Zilkha Center Domain	Goal	Link to Williams DEI Strategic Plan	What is currently there/being done?	What needs to still be done?	Indicators/Metrics	Timeline
Incorporate DEI into Zilkha Center-run programs	Identify, unpack and foster understanding of the critical links b/w sustainability and DEI	Reflected in the guiding principles of the Strategic Planning exercise.	Have worked to incorporate DEI into all program areas, including new intern orientation, program implementation (e.g., workshops, field trips, presentations, movies) and evaluation	Review Zilkha-run programs regarding the extent to which they incorporate DEI and its links to sustainability Use sustainability frameworks that explicitly incorporate DEI and/or DEI frameworks that link to sustainability	All current and future ZC programs, initiatives and actions are reviewed as to whether they advance DEI and this review is documented appropriately	On an ongoing basis starting with existing programs
Links between sustainability and other domains	Identify, unpack and foster understanding of the critical links b/w sustainability and DEI	Reflected in the guiding principles of the Strategic Planning exercise.	Foster a close working relationship with the Davis Center and engage with it in planning programs on campus sustainability practice, environmental and climate justice	Use sustainability frameworks that explicitly incorporate DEI and/or DEI frameworks that link to sustainability Seek conversations with other departments to utilize those aforementioned sustainability frameworks and push the frameworks themselves to improve	DEI-sustainability relevant frameworks identified, introduced to our partners, and incorporated in partners' planning, decision-making, and operations	On an ongoing basis starting with existing collaborations

Staff hiring and retention	Build a diverse, inclusive and respectful ZC	Recruitment, retention, and development of faculty, students and staff Thriving of constituents on campus	Job posts include diversity statement Jobs are posted widely to reach diverse audiences Redact names in the initial round of vetting in order to reduce implicit bias	Our full time staff is not racially diverse We have not evaluated DEI aspects in staff retention We have not evaluated DEI aspects in staff salaries and professional advancement	Track, share, and leverage key metrics like representation and retention according to race/ethnicity, disability ² Fully developed DEI integration in the whole hiring process, question catalog and rubric for hiring, DEI statement, specifying DEI experience in cover letter	Ongoing effort
Zilkha Center Domain	Goal	Link to Williams DEI Strategic Plan	What is currently there/being done?	What needs to still be done?	Indicators/Metrics	Timeline
Staff hiring and retention (contd.)	Build a diverse, inclusive and respectful ZC (contd.)	Inclusion and belonging in all learning environments Fostering inclusive communities on and off campus	Collectively develop and use common set of questions and evaluation rubrics as tools in our staff hiring process Using performance-based evaluation processes for staff There are a variety of genders, sexual	We have not yet undergone training in performance-based evaluation Annual ZC Impact Report	All staff involved in hiring undergo anti-bias training Staff at ZC with supervisory functions participated in performance-based evaluation 360 feedback reviews and group discussions address individual work satisfaction, work	

² Available information depends on what HR collects through applications.

			<p>orientations, and ages represented within our current staff</p> <p>We value and respect the different perspectives, skills, and experiences our small staff brings to the ZC</p> <p>Ensure a people-centric work culture at the ZC that recognizes and appreciates staff contributions in all forms and shapes</p> <p>Ensure that DEI related concerns are included in staff satisfaction surveys and that the resulting data is used to inform practices and processes</p>		<p>culture, and DEI issues at the ZC</p>	
Zilkha Center Domain	Goal	Link to Williams DEI Strategic Plan	What is currently there/being done?	What needs to still be done?	Indicators/Metrics	Timeline
ZC Student recruitment,	Build diverse, inclusive and	Recruitment and retention of	ZC strives to build diverse intern	Seek input from DC and OIDEI about the	Track, share, and leverage key metrics	Ongoing effort

retention, mentoring	<p>respectful student teams</p> <p>Invite and respond to feedback, suggestions and ideas regarding DEI at the ZC</p>	<p>a diverse faculty, staff, and student body</p>	<p>cohorts</p> <p>Student surveys (ZC summer & academic year internships)</p> <p>ZC uses surveys for receiving and managing complaints, suggestions, and ideas for DEI improvements</p>	<p>integration of DEI into our surveys</p> <p>Set up a physical and/or digital suggestion box for feedback and ideas</p> <p>Annual student survey for Root</p> <p>Annual ZC Impact Report</p>	<p>like representation and retention according to race/ethnicity, economic background (financial aid)</p> <p>Survey ZC interns at mid-point and end-of-term (academic year, summer) and use feedback to revise and improve DEI in internships</p> <p>Use suggestions from for continued DEI improvements</p>	
External collaborations with students, faculty and staff	<p>Design and implement programs, initiatives and actions that reach, appeal to and meet the needs of a diverse range of Williams students</p> <p>ZC is recognized as an advocate and model of DEI implementation</p>	<p>Common understanding of what it means to be a diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus</p> <p>Community learning and exchange of respectful dialogue</p>	<p>We discuss equitable and inclusive processes for campus sustainability decision-making</p>	<p>ZC is not yet recognized as a leader in DEI on campus or beyond</p> <p>ZC does not have a clear process for receiving and managing suggestions, ideas for DEI improvements from external campus constituents</p> <p>Set up a physical and/or digital suggestion box</p>	<p>Track, as feasible, the reach and impact of ZC programs, initiatives and actions (e.g., the newsletter, event attendance)</p> <p>Seek feedback, when feasible, from our collaborators on the effectiveness of including DEI in ZC programs, initiatives, and actions</p>	Ongoing effort

				(accessible only to WC) for feedback and ideas		
Zilkha Center Domain	Goal	Link to Williams DEI Strategic Plan	What is currently there/being done?	What needs to still be done?	Indicators/Metrics	Timeline
External collaborations with students, faculty and staff (contd.)	<p>ZC pursues and obtains DEI certification if available</p> <p>Clear processes for receiving and acting on suggestions and feedback on DEI from our partners, collaborators, and visitors</p> <p>Promote DEI as necessary and complementary to campus sustainability</p>		We use sustainability frameworks with operational partners (Facilities, PDC, & Dining) that incorporate a DEI lens and our staff discuss how we might encourage the departments to utilize those frameworks and push the frameworks themselves to improve	<p>Promoting adoption of Living Building Challenge Volume framework</p> <p>Annual ZC Impact Report</p>	<p>Assessment of the ZC's response to suggestions and ideas</p> <p>Go for DEI Certification if and when it becomes available</p> <p>Regular communication in partnership with the Davis Center in Davis Center Times and ZC newsletters on intersection of DEI and sustainability</p> <p>Assessment of the extent to which the frameworks the college uses pertaining to sustainability incorporate DEI</p>	

Zilkha Center Domain	Goal	Link to Williams DEI Strategic Plan	What is currently there/being done?	What needs to still be done?	Indicators/Metrics	Timeline
<p>ZC collaborations and partnerships outside of Williams College</p>	<p>Promote and be seen as a leader in integrating DEI in community engagement and cross-institutional partnerships</p> <p>Promote DEI as a necessary and complementary component of community sustainability</p>		<p>Current external partnerships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Winter Blitz (home weatherization), -Give it Up (move out donation program), -Community Climate Fund (CCF), -Carbon offsets projects, -the Farmington Solar Project, -food procurement from local farms; -several Root partnerships: Soul Fire Farm, etc -Berkoneers -Battery Storage RFP consortium 	<p>Annual ZC Impact Report</p>	<p>Acknowledgement through feedback, joint projects, conference presentations and awards of the ZC as a partner and champion of DEI</p> <p>Measures of inclusion of DEI in our interactions with external partners, e.g., through education, project criteria, and external communications</p>	<p>Ongoing effort</p>