

# Guidance for Colleges in Implementing DEI in RPT Processes

Developed by the Office of the Provost

Office of Faculty and Academic Staff Affairs and Office of Faculty and Academic Staff Development,  
Michigan State University

November 2, 2022

A commitment to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is embedded in the values and work of Michigan State University. MSU's *Strategic Plan 2030* is clear on the institution's commitment to DEI: "Michigan State is dedicated to providing opportunity through education and building the future of Michigan and the nation with the talent and contributions of individuals from all backgrounds and communities." Informed by this commitment, the *Strategic Plan* includes this goal: "Become a national leader in increasing diversity, promoting inclusion, ensuring equity and eliminating disparities on our campus and beyond."

The same commitment is stated in MSU's *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan*:

A culture embracing diversity, equity and inclusion is essential to all MSU does and strives to accomplish and be. Diversity, equity and inclusion are central to strengthening our safe campus culture and assuring all-embracing excellence in teaching, research, outreach and service. To establish a framework for making MSU a national leader in diversity, equity and inclusion, we must all work together to advance DEI throughout every part of our university. We must hold ourselves accountable for prioritizing this essential work, adopting initiatives to make progress and achieve meaningful and measurable results.

Deans have requested guidance about addressing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in the Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure process (RPT). This memo addresses the key questions raised and provides guidance intended to be helpful to Deans as they implement RPT processes and work with the faculty within their colleges.

In line with MSU's strategic goals and values, Provost Woodruff's [2022 tenure & promotion memo](#) to Tenure System Faculty, Deans, School Directors, and Chairpersons entitled *University Philosophy and Guiding Policies on Faculty Tenure and Promotion* highlights the importance of advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion as part of the work done by faculty and academic staff within MSU. While the Provost's full memo provides important information concerning the promotion and tenure process, two paragraphs specifically address the issue of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the RPT process:

***Page 5-6: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Efforts Related to Diversity, Equity, and Research/Scholarship/Creative/Performative Activities, Teaching Outreach, and Service:***  
*Because DEI are core values of Michigan State University, candidates should detail their DEI efforts, providing evidence of their activities and accomplishments in the context of research/creative activities, teaching, service, outreach, and engagement. Faculty should include evidence of their activities and accomplishments in DEI, as appropriate, when detailing information on relevant research/creative activities, teaching, and service in appropriate sections of their dossier. Faculty should describe how these efforts are interwoven and enhance all other areas of faculty accomplishment. Whenever applicable, faculty commitment to learning*

*and engaging in DEI efforts will be recognized and considered in the RPT process. Certainly, scholars across campus engage in a myriad of research and teaching efforts, not all of which can incorporate DEI activities. Significant involvement in DEI efforts can be viewed as a metric for advancement.*

**Page 7:** *Consistent with Michigan State University's core values, the University is committed to excellence and equity in every facet of its academic mission. As such, all faculty are strongly encouraged to play a proactive role in learning about, contributing to, and supporting MSU's institutional goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Contributions to DEI will be acknowledged, evaluated, and recognized in the reappointment, promotion, and tenure process, as well as in annual reviews of faculty accomplishments.*

Below are FAQs raised by Deans with responses drawn from the Provost's 2022 memo:

**Are faculty required to address their contributions to DEI in their RPT documents?**

- All faculty are *"strongly encouraged to play a proactive role in learning about, contributing to, and supporting MSU's institutional goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)"* (p. 7).
- *"Faculty should include evidence of their activities and accomplishments in DEI, as appropriate,..."* (p. 6). Because colleges and departments are unique in the focus and nature of their work, and individual faculty members are unique in the full pattern of their assignments and contributions, individuals will respond to this strong encouragement in ways specific to their circumstances.

**Are faculty expected to address DEI in regard to each domain of their work (Research/ Scholarship/ Creative/ Performative Activities, Teaching, Outreach and Service)?**

- Explicit attention to DEI will occur in different and unique ways for each faculty member. For some, explicit evidence of contributions to DEI may occur in each domain of work (Research/Scholarship/Creative/Performative Activities, Teaching, Outreach and Service). For others, their contributions to the university's values pertaining to diversity, equity, and inclusion may fall primarily (or solely) in one or two of the domains of academic work. As stated in the letter: *"Certainly, scholars across campus engage in a myriad of research and teaching efforts, not all of which can incorporate DEI activities."* (p. 6)

**What are examples of the range of contributions that could be made to the institution's DEI values?**

- Contribution to the institution's DEI values can be accomplished in many ways, depending on an individual's field, responsibilities, and interests. *"DEI efforts can be accomplished through research, teaching, and service, with expected impact on the department, program, discipline, or institution. For example, candidates might:*
  - *propel a research agenda that incorporates equity and inclusion issues, or diversity in their object of study;*
  - *establish/support the creation of initiatives around DEI;*
  - *foster inclusive learning environments both in the classroom and research groups that ensure that students are provided with equitable opportunities for success;*
  - *participate in mentorship programs for minoritized students;*

- *create new DEI curricula programming; or work with diverse groups/organizations on and off campus” (p. 7).*

### **Where and how should faculty discuss and present their contributions to advancing DEI?**

- *“Faculty should include evidence of their activities and accomplishments in DEI, as appropriate, when detailing information on relevant research/creative activities, teaching, and service in appropriate sections of their dossier. Faculty should describe how these efforts are interwoven and enhance all other areas of faculty accomplishment” (p. 6).* Faculty members may weave their discussion and documentation of their DEI contributions throughout the essay, or they may choose to devote specific sections to such discussion. Colleges may provide guidance about presentation according to their norms and practices.

### **What is the role of the college in providing specific guidance to faculty members about addressing their contributions to advancing DEI?**

- Determining specific instructions about how to address DEI in RPT materials resides at the college level. The Provost’s letter states: *“Just as this memorandum is shared annually to communicate university-level expectations and procedures, each college will review the University statement and ensure alignment of their systems to enable a positive outcome” (p. 4).* High-quality, impactful academic work presents itself differently in varying fields of study; thus, a centralized, narrowly defined approach will not be taken. Instead, each college, through the leadership of its dean, should determine how it responds to the guidance provided through the Provost’s letter. The letter provides university-wide guidance; each Dean has the agency to establish college-level expectations and guidance that align with institutional expectations and procedures.

### **What resources are available to deans and their college leaders as they integrate the Provost’s expectations into their RPT processes?**

- The Council of Diversity Deans (CODD) has provided [recommendations](#) and a related [appendix](#) for consideration by colleges as they establish their own practices and standards for review. CODD’s compilation of suggestions provides specific examples of how DEI efforts might relate to individual impact, programmatic impact, and institutional impact. Suggestions are also given for possible approaches to weighting these contributions. Review of the suggestions from CODD can provide colleges with ideas as they discuss and determine the particular approaches appropriate for their specific contexts.
- The Office of Faculty and Academic Staff Development is offering a relevant workshop for faculty members and college leaders on December 2: [Navigating the Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure Landscape at MSU](#).
- FASD also offers annual Thrive sessions to provide information, resources, and guidance about promotion processes for faculty and academic staff. The 2023 program offerings, which will be offered in February, will be posted on the FASD website.

- Informed by the overall guidance from the Provost, each dean and college will develop appropriate guidance for its faculty based on its own context, policies, and practices. One example is from the College of Human Medicine: [Guidance from the CHM RPT committee](#). Again, however, this is one example; each dean and college should develop guidance appropriate for their context.

In summary, DEI is integral to the excellence of the institution, and contributions to DEI will be considered as one of the indicators of quality and excellence in the evaluation of faculty in annual reviews, and reappointment, promotion, and tenure processes. The details of what is expected and how materials are presented stand within the purview of each college and its departments.