

# DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION GLOSSARY

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**Affirmative  
Action**

Any action taken by an employer, in compliance with federal law, to promote the employment and advancement of people who have been the traditional targets of discrimination.

**Ally**

A person of one identity group who supports and advocates members of another group; typically a member of a dominant group standing beside members of a targeted group.

**Assimilation**

The process by which a person or persons acquire the social and psychological characteristics, customs and attitudes of a prevailing group.

**Bias**

An inclination of preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgment.

**Bicultural**

Having or combining the cultural attitudes and customs of two nations, peoples, or ethnic groups. A person who is bicultural has the ability to function effectively and appropriately and can select appropriate behaviors, values and attitudes within either culture.

**Biracial**

Of, relating to, or involving people from two races; also having parents from two different races.

**Bisexual**

A person whose emotional, sexual or romantic attractions are to both men and women. Bisexuals need not be “equally” attracted to, or have had equal sexual experiences with, both sexes. Nor do they need to have attractions toward both sexes at the same time.

**Cisgender  
or Cissexual**

Having a gender identity which matches one’s sex.

**Classism**

Any attitude or institutional practice which subordinates people due to income, occupation, education and/or their economic condition.

**Cross-  
cultural**

Combining, pertaining to, or contrasting two or more cultures or cultural groups.

**Cultural**

The collective behavior patterns, communication styles, beliefs, concepts, values, institutions, standards and other factors unique to a community that are socially transmitted to individuals and to which individuals are expected to conform.

**Cultural Appropriation**

Cultural appropriation is the adoption or use of elements of one culture by members of another culture. Cultural appropriation is seen by some as controversial, notably when elements of a minority culture are used by members of the cultural majority; this is seen as wrongfully oppressing the minority culture or stripping it of its group identity and intellectual property rights.

**Cultural Competence**

A set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professions to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.

**Cultural Conditioning**

The social process in which authority figures such as parents, professors, politicians, religious leaders, peers, and the media define our cultural values, beliefs, ethical systems, and ultimately the way we perceive ourselves in the world.

**Cultural Diversity**

The existence of a variety of cultural or ethnic groups within a society or group.

**Discrimination**

The treatment or consideration of, or making a distinction in favor of or against, a person or thing based on the group, class, or category to which that person or thing is perceived to belong to rather than on individual merit.

**Disparate Impact**

The unconscious process by which we are socialized to adopt the way of thinking of our own group.

**Diverse Supplier**

A minority-owned business that is at least 51% owned, managed and controlled by one or more African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Indian Americans/Native Americans, Asian Indian Americans or Asian Pacific Americans. Certifications are provided by the National Minority Supplier Development Council and by Federal, State and Local Governments.

**Diversity**

The similarities and differences of people found in our workforce, our customers and in the community in which we serve. Diversity includes many characteristics that may be visible such as race, gender and age, and it also includes less obvious characteristics like personality style, ethnicity, ability, education, religion, job function, life experience, life style, sexual orientation, geography, regional differences, work experience, and family situations that make us similar to and different from one another.

**Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)**

Basing terms and conditions of employment, as well as management decisions, on job-related factors without regard to age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion or sex.

**Ethnicity**

Refers to shared cultural practices, perspectives and distinctions that set apart one group of people from another. The most common characteristics distinguishing various ethnic groups are culture, religion, language or the like.

**Frames of Reference**

A particular way of perceiving and making sense of the world around us. A set of filters through which thoughts, actions and decisions pass.

**Gender**

The state of being male or female (typically used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones).

**Gender Expression**

How an individual manifests a sense of femininity or masculinity through appearance, behavior, grooming and/or dress.

**Gender Role**

A set of societal norms dictating the types of behaviors which are generally considered acceptable, appropriate, or desirable for people based on their actual or perceived sex or sexuality.

**Glass Ceiling**

An unofficially acknowledged barrier to advancement in a profession, especially affecting women and members of minorities.

**HBCU**

An abbreviation used to refer to Historically Black Colleges or Universities.

**Heteronormative**

Cultural rules (including social, family and legal) that pressure everyone to conform to a heterosexual standard of identity.

**Heterosexual**

A person who is emotionally, physically and/or sexually attracted or committed to members of the opposite sex.

**HIS**

An abbreviation used to refer to Historically Hispanic Serving Institutions.

**Homosexual**

A person who is emotionally, physically and/or sexually attracted or committed to members of the same sex.

**Inclusiveness**

The action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure.

**Intersectionality**

The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

“Through an awareness of intersectionality, we can better acknowledge and ground the differences among us.”

**LGBT**

This is the acronym most commonly used in the United States to address the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. The acronym can vary in a number of ways, including GLBT and GLB, and can include additional letters, such as Q (queer, also questioning); A (straight ally); and I (intersex).

**Micro-inequities**

Small, sometimes unspoken, often unconscious messages we constantly send and receive that have a powerful impact on our interactions with others. They can be either positive or negative. Some common examples include a wink of understanding from across the table; a distracted glance at the ceiling or watch while someone is speaking.

M

N

O

P

Glossary  
by alphabet 

### **Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)**

A business that is at least 51 percent owned/operated/controlled by a minority group (African American, Hispanic American, Asian-Pacific American, Asian-Pacific American, Asian-Indian American, Native American).

### **Multicultural**

The co-existence of many distinct cultures within a given context, such as community or nation.

### **Non-discrimination Policies**

An employer's non-discrimination policy, or equal employment opportunity policy, typically covers conditions of employment including hiring, promotions, termination and compensation for federally protected classes and non-federally protected characteristics such as gender identity or expression and sexual orientation.

### **Organizational Culture**

Underlying values, beliefs and principles that serve as a foundation for the organization's management systems as well as the set of management practices and behaviors both exemplify and reinforce those principles  
Pansexual—not limited in sexual choice with regard to biological sex, gender, or gender identity.

### **Physical Abilities**

Disabled, vision impaired, blind, hard-of-hearing, deaf, hidden challenges, little people.

## Pluralism

A system that holds within it individuals or groups differing about basic background experiences and cultures. It allows for the development of a common tradition, while preserving the right of each group to maintain its cultural heritage.

## Prejudice

Implies a preconceived idea, judgment, or opinion, usually an unfavorable one marked by hatred, and is directed toward a racial religious, cultural or ethnic group. Judgments about others that reinforce superiority/ inferiority belief systems. Exaggerate value/ worth of a particular group while diminishing the worth for other group(s). Reinforced by stereotypes.

## Privilege

A special right, advantage or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group of people.

## Queer

- 1 An umbrella term sometimes used by LGBTQA people to refer to the entire LGBT community.
- 2 An alternative that some people use to “queer” the idea of the labels and categories such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, etc. Similar to the concept of genderqueer. It is important to note that the word queer is an in-group term, and a word that can be considered offensive to some people, depending on their generation, geographic location, and relationship with the word.

## Race

As a social construct, is a group of people who share similar and distinct physical characteristics. First used to refer to speakers of a common language and then to denote national affiliations, by the 17th century race began to refer to physical (i.e. phenotypical) traits.

**Racism**

The belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.

**Reverse  
Discrimination**

(In the context of the allocation of resources or employment) the practice or policy of favoring individuals belonging to groups known to have been discriminated against previously.

**Sex**

Refers to the biological characteristics that define an individual; sex categories are “female” and “male”.

**Sexism**

A system of beliefs or attitudes, which relegates women to limited roles and/or options because of their sex.

**Straight Ally  
/LGBT  
Supporter**

An individual who identifies as non-LGBT and who supports the LGBT community in a direct way, such as attending LGBT group meetings, acting as an executive sponsor, or volunteering.

## Stereotypes

The belief that all people of a certain racial, ethnic or cultural group are the same and behave in the same way.

## Workplace Diversity

Workplace diversity refers to the variety of differences between people in an organization. That sounds simple, but diversity encompasses race, gender, ethnic group, age, personality, cognitive style, tenure, organizational function, education, background and more.

## Workplace Harassment

Harassment is unwelcome conduct that is based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information. Harassment becomes unlawful where 1) enduring the offensive conduct becomes a condition of continued employment, or 2) the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive.