The School of Journalism and Mass Communication (JMC) at Kent State University continues its commitment to diversity and inclusion, as evident by the role the Diversity and Globalization Committee (DGC) and Student Voice Team (SVT) have in creating, supporting and executing strategic initiatives within the school.

A fall 2015 “Survey of Americans on Race” by CNN and the Kaiser Family Foundation provides key takeaways that demonstrate how important it is to observe diversity issues in our environment and develop appropriate reactions to these observations through JMC’s Diversity Plan and DGC.

The report\(^1\) finds, in part:

- Americans are more likely to consider racism a big problem today than they were 20 years ago
- The percentage who see racial tensions increasing has grown as well
- White America lives a largely segregated life and
- Large numbers of black and Hispanic Americans say they have been treated unfairly in the last 30 days

JMC’s DGC mission is four-fold. It focuses on Institutional Climate, Culture and Community Relationships; Student Access, Recruitment, and Success; Education and Scholarship; and Institutional Accountability. We believe these strategic, coordinated efforts will help JMC provide a culture and environment in which students of all backgrounds and who represent all facets of diversity can be successful and thrive despite the larger narrative outside the walls of Kent State University.

The School’s diversity activities this year continue to evolve with new forms of student dialogue and engagement, as well as events and continued faculty research and outreach.

This report updates the School’s Diversity Plan, which is Goal #3 of the School’s Strategic Plan, and highlights the School’s 2015-2016 academic year accomplishments for each objective.

**Goal #3: Enhance our commitment to diversity and inclusion in both our faculty and student body through initiatives developed by the School’s Diversity and Globalization Committee.**

\(^1\) [http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/24/us/race-reality-key-findings/]
Objective #1: Institutional Climate, Culture and Community Relationships. Understand the perspectives and needs of the School’s community and create supportive environments by way of building community, trust and credibility for all groups, to include internal and external collaborative partners of JMC.

- Student Voice Team (SVT) hosted “Social Media and Society: A JMC Conversation,” Thursday, November 19, 2015, an open forum discussion about social media use and consumption and the impact it is having on our global society. Panelists included SVT member Ray Strickland, a senior broadcast major, Mark Goodman, JMC Professor and Knight Chair in Scholastic Journalism, JMC Assistant Professor Stefanie Moore, and Pulitzer prize-winning journalist, syndicated columnist and JMC alumna Connie Schultz. JMC Director Thor Wasbotten and SVT member Arbrion Chambliss moderated the discussion.
- Before delivering the keynote address for Kent State’s 14th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration on Jan. 28, 2016, author and MSNBC correspondent Joy-Ann Reid spoke to JMC students about her career path and current hot button issues in journalism and mass media.
- State-of-the-State speaker, two-time Emmy award nominee and “Sesame Street” actress, Sonia Manzano, spoke on March 17, 2016, to a group of JMC students, staff and faculty about her Latin American and Hispanic roots and how her upbringing and culture influenced her career in television and media.
- John Quinones spoke on March 17, 2016, in the First Energy Auditorium to Professor Gene Shelton’s Media, Power & Culture class of 150 students and other JMC students. Quinones, Latin American ABC news correspondent and host of the weekly "What Would You Do?,” spoke about his career and showed two videos from his show. Both videos centered on racism: Black racism against whites and white racism against Muslims.
- Student Voice Team (SVT) hosted “Media and Politics: A JMC Conversation” on Thursday, March 31, 2016. It was an open forum discussion about politics and media as it relates to the 2016 election and the Millennial generation. Panelists included Danielle Sarver Coombs, Ph.D., Associate Professor (JMC). Amy Reynolds, Ph.D., Dean of the College of Communication and Information (CCI), Connie Schultz, CCI Professional-in-Residence, and JMC Director Thor Wasbotten. Several student groups on campus participated, including BUS, College Democrats, College Republicans and SALSA.
- Danielle Wiggins, ’04 and ’09 was selected in October 2015, as one of the Fast Track Award recipients, presented annually to recent alumni for early and significant contributions to their fields.
- Assistant Professor and DGC co-chair Luke Armour and Associate Professor Danielle Coombs are developing a student survey to assess student and employee feedback on the climate for diversity in JMC. With the help of two graduate students, one-on-one interviews were conducted in May 2016, with members of the SVT to help create a formal survey for the fall semester.
• SVT members provided an update of their activities and highlights to the JMC Professional Advisory Board, April 28, 2016.
• Professor Gene Shelton, co-chair of the DGC, is working on restarting National Association of Black Journalists.
• PRSSA Kent has hosted speakers representing diversity and hosted the joint panel discussion with Black United Students, “Social Media Movements,” focused on using social media for social movements, March 30, 2016.

Objective #2: Student Access, Recruitment, and Success.
Increase engagement of underrepresented and underserved student groups to provide stronger bonds that will enhance academic goals within JMC. The main area of focus for this dimension is recruitment and retention to intentionally aid underrepresented students to enter, persist and graduate from the University.

• The Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion conducted diversity training workshops for the Kent Stater and TV2 as part of their annual training for student staff.
• Retention and graduation figures hit high marks this year with under-represented students in JMC. The four-year graduation rate for the 2011 freshmen cohort reached 21.95%, up from 5.41% for the 2010 cohort. The 2011 four-year graduation rate for non under-represented students was 27.64%. In addition, second-year persistence rates hit six-year high at 56.25% with the 2013 cohort of under-represented students. This compares with 40.54% second-year persistence rate for the 2012 cohort and 51.83% for the 2013 non under-represented cohort.
• The SVT, which includes both undergraduate and graduate students who represent the diverse voices and viewpoints of the JMC student body, under the advising of Professor Gene Shelton, continued to increase in membership and activities. Members of the SVT advised the DGC and the School’s Director and was engaged in specific assignments to help the School achieve its diversity and globalization goals.
• JMC’s Promising Scholars include several under-represented students.
• Professor Gene Shelton conducted a diversity workshop at the annual Ohio Scholastic Media Association convention held at Kent State in April.
• The JMC Director actively meets with various diversity-based student groups on campus, including, but not limited to, The Spanish and Latino Student Association (SALSA), Black United Students (BUS), and The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning (LGBTQ) Student Center.
• The JMC Director completed Safe Space training and is a Safe Space Ally.
Objective #3: Education and Scholarship
Broader the curriculum to emphasize cross-cultural knowledge by providing diversity-teaching resources and by assisting faculty with global outreach education and by providing teaching and learning strategies focused on multicultural competencies.

We looked at diversity with a fresh eye this year and realized we had to broaden our view.

- We felt the Robert G. McGruder Student Award for Diversity had been too narrowly defined, and made the award available for ALL students whose work was published or broadcast in a Student Media outlet, other professional media outlets such as an internship, or as part of a JMC classroom assignment. With Mrs. McGruder’s support we were able to add money to support the award.
- JMC continues to support specific diversity scholarships
  - Albert E. Fitzpatrick Endowed Scholarship
  - Robert G. McGruder Minority Scholarship
- JMC also added a specific internship to increase global awareness. Prof. Karl Idsvoog and Prof. Dave Foster have arranged internship opportunities with the Phnom Penh Bureau of Radio Free Asia, and our first intern traveled to Cambodia in summer of 2016.
- **DIVERSITY TRAINING WITH IMPACT:** A trip with immediate impact is the one Senior Lecturer Traci Williams arranges. It's an overnight two-day trip to Michigan with a stop at Ferris State University where students tour the Jim Crow Museum. Other stops include the African-American History Museum, Motown and a diversity training session. This is diversity training that has campus-wide impact for Kent State University. The students who have participated include JMC’s Student Voice Team (9 students) and JMC’s student media leaders (10 students). The discussions that start on this trip continue all year, and one can see the impact in student media reporting. This past year, Dean Amy Reynolds joined the group.
- JMC continues its international outreach opportunities.
  - Prof. David Smeltzer took eight digital (and electronic) media production and four journalism students to Costa Rica.
  - Prof. Gary Hanson and Prof. Mitch McKinney took students to Cyprus and Greece as part of the International Storytelling course.
  - Prof. Karl Idsvoog conducted training for journalists in Myanmar, Cambodia, and Taiwan and utilizes the work of reporters there with students at Kent State. This summer, he’ll be training Vietnamese journalists for Radio Free Asia and will be returning to Myanmar.
- Mackenzie Lunde, ’16, a fashion merchandising major and public relations minor, created an event proposal for the UNCHAINED fashion show as part of
her fall 2015 Public Relations Tactics course. UNCHAINED is a Columbus, Ohio-based company that brings awareness to human trafficking, one of the world's fastest-growing illegal enterprises, through fashion. Lunde carried out the event proposal she first drafted for class and the UNCHAINED fashion show was presented on April 4, 2016, in the Kent Student Center Ballroom, in partnership with A Magazine, Kent State’s student-run fashion magazine.

• Sonali Kudva, who teaches Writing Across Platforms, introduced a class discussion about covering religion and people of different cultures. She has also assigned students to research various countries with a map of the world to understand world current affairs and movements. In spring 2016 they tied that discussion to the refugee movement.

• JMC’s diversity statement continues to be required in the syllabi for all JMC courses.

• Faculty are continuing the development of diversity exercises and content in JMC courses to supplement JMC’s required diversity course, Media Power and Culture, and diversity courses like Managing Media Diversity, African American Media and Black Hollywood.

• JMC has utilized the JMC intranet site for faculty to share specific diversity assignments, compile relevant articles, and provide links to training resources such as those on the Poynter and SPJ sites.

• JMC will continue to use the JMC intranet site as a central repository for diversity resources after the site is migrated to Drupal.

Objective #4: Institutional Accountability.
Increase the recruitment and success of a diverse faculty and staff.

• The funds provided by the President and Provost’s initiative to overcome barriers to hiring diverse candidates enabled JMC to reach out to and hire Dr. Cheryl Lambert. Dr. Lambert has an established reputation within her profession and academia. Her presence within the School brings a new level of diversity and connection with the community of practicing professionals.

• JMC welcomed Professional-in-Residence Connie Schultz, a nationally syndicated Pulitzer Prize-winning writer and author of two books. She brings her expertise to the classroom and provides an enhanced level of connection with the community as well as recognition of the program, broadening the School’s recruitment possibilities. She is a strong advocate of women’s rights and politics.

• Search Committee Diversity Training – Faculty members participating in hiring committees as well as interested staff attended sessions of the Search Committee Diversity Training offered by the Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

• The DGC welcomed the Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and The Student Voice Team (SVT) to the April 2016 FAC for a diversity
awareness presentation and discussion of student issues regarding the classroom and cultural environment at JMC.

- Two of the four academic sequences continue to be led by women.