

ECU receives Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award for eighth straight year

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East Carolina University's focus on diversity and inclusiveness has been recognized for the eighth consecutive year with the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award.

The HEED award, sponsored by Insight into Diversity magazine, recognizes colleges and universities that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion. The 2019 award winners were selected for initiatives that focus on all aspects of diversity including gender, race, ethnicity, veterans, people with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ community.

"We are so pleased to receive the HEED Award for the eighth consecutive year," said LaKeshia Forbes, associate provost for equity and diversity and Title IX coordinator for the Office for Equity and Diversity at ECU. "This is the perfect opportunity for us to celebrate our successes and reaffirm our commitment to diversity, inclusion and belonging at ECU. Collectively and individually, we must continue to find new and innovative ways to advance and build an inclusive ECU."

The award comes amid increases in the representation of racial/ethnic minorities in the student, faculty and staff populations. According to enrollment figures, the representation of racial/ethnic minorities in the student population has grown from 22% in 2012 to 29% in 2018. The Hispanic student population has more than tripled since 2009, increasing from 475 students in 2009 to 1,564 students in 2018.

Faculty racial/ethnic representation went from 10.62% in 2012 to 18.03% in 2018, while staff numbers went from 25.67% in 2012 to 29.20% in 2018.

Also, Campus Pride, a national nonprofit organization working to create safer and more LGBTQ-friendly learning environments on college campuses, named ECU a "premier campus" for a score of 4.5 out of 5.0 for its commitment to LGBTQ-inclusive policies, programs and practices.

"Equity and diversity are part of our guiding principles at ECU," Forbes said. "We are dedicated to being a university that is globally diverse. We strive to value our differences and will continually embrace and celebrate them among our students, faculty and employees."

ECU's mission statement includes preparing students to succeed in a global, multicultural society, and the university's strategic plan includes ECU's responsibility to "embrace an inclusive university community and (commit) to recruiting and retaining faculty and staff with diverse backgrounds."

ECU promotes a diverse, respectful and inclusive environment through a variety of educational programs, training and seminars. The university also has more than 60 cultural and religious student organizations.

Each ECU student is required to take at least six hours of global and domestic diversity courses prior to graduation, and in 2018-19, 111 global and 60 domestic diversity courses were offered. Earlier this year, ECU was recognized as a top university for international students by U.S. News and World Report.

ECU's commitment extends into the community as well. The Intergenerational Community Center in the Division of Student Affairs provides services to enrich, empower, engage and bring positive changes in west Greenville, a predominantly minority residential area.

“The HEED Award process consists of a comprehensive and rigorous application that includes questions relating to the recruitment and retention of students and employees — and best practices for both — continued leadership support for diversity, and other aspects of campus diversity and inclusion,” said Lenore Pearlstein, publisher of Insight into Diversity magazine. “We take a detailed approach to reviewing each application in deciding who will be named a HEED Award recipient. Our standards are high, and we look for institutions where diversity and inclusion are woven into the work being accomplished every day across their campus.”

ECU is one of four institutions in the UNC system to receive the 2019 HEED award. The university will be featured along with the 92 other recipients in the November issue of Insight into Diversity magazine.

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