

## Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (BEDI) Definitions

### A report to the college from the BEDI Council

A survey asking for input on draft definitions for belonging, equity, diversity and inclusion were sent to all Delta College faculty and staff (897 people). There were 270 responses received (30% response rate). The vast majority of respondents (80%-plus for each definition) accepted the proposed definitions as written. Approximately 15% of respondents, however, had suggestions for changes (40+ for each definition). Those suggestions were carefully considered and discussed among council members and resulted in changes in the definitions that were submitted to the board for approval.

The survey soliciting feedback and the resulting discussion within the council and changes to the definitions was a very deliberate process: we want to ensure that the definitions include and reflect the thoughts and voices of the college as a whole. These definitions have been approved by the board and are now standard for the college. A brief description of the changes to each definition that were based upon the feedback is provided below:

**Belonging:** *Belonging is the result of continuously embodying socio-cultural support, integration, empathy, acceptance, and respect for all, thereby creating a safe space that invites individuals to experience an increasing awareness of and appreciation for their individuality and connectedness within the community.*

82% of respondents accepted the definition proposed in the survey. Based on 48 comments that were submitted, the belonging definition sub-committee did draft and recommend changes that were implemented and approved. Those changes were:

- Removed words “A sense of..” prior to word “belonging”
  - Rationale: to align formatting of other definitions
- Remove the word “community” (within the first half of the definition)
  - Previous version: “A sense of belonging is the result of community continuously”
- Including the word “safe” before the word “space”
  - Previous version: “thereby creating space”
- Using the words “invite individuals to experience” instead of “inviting individuals”
- Added the word “connectedness” to the last segment of the definition
  - previous version: “..and appreciation for their individuality within community”

**Equity:** *Equity is the progressive practice of recognizing and eliminating barriers to opportunities for students, employees, and community members. Equity involves recognizing and eliminating both conscious and unconscious biases within institutional and organizational policies, procedures, and processes so all stakeholders may thrive.*

85.3% of respondents accepted the definition proposed in the survey. The changes were made to make the definition more concise.

- Changed “ongoing, continuous, and progressive” to just “progressive”

- Removed “intentional and unintentional”
- Removed “eradicating opportunity gaps”

**Diversity:** *Diversity encompasses the full range of differences and uniqueness that embody the lived human experience including, but not limited to ability, age, education, ethnicity, experiences, family status, gender identity/expression, geographic location, heritage/history, immigration status, income, indigenous status, language, occupation, race, religion, sexual orientation, and thoughts.*

84.2% of respondents accepted the definition proposed in the survey. Based upon the 42 comments that were provided, however, the diversity definition sub-committee did draft and recommend changes that were implemented and approved. Those changes were:

- “gender” was changed to “gender identity/expression”
- “sexuality” was changed to “sexual orientation”
- “thoughts” and “experiences” were added by a board member during the approval process

There were several suggestions that the definition include “intelligence”. It was reasoned, however, that this dimension of diversity was subsumed under “ability” so that descriptor was not added to the definition.

**Inclusion:** *Inclusion welcomes the contributions, experiences, ideas, and perspectives of all people by proactively addressing obstacles that impede equitable access to opportunities, resources, and decision-making, thereby creating and sustaining a culture of belonging, compassion, respect, appreciation, and recognition.*

88% of respondents accepted the definition proposed in the survey. Overwhelmingly the definition of inclusion was accepted as written. When considering the proposed changes we made slight modifications to the wording to make the definition more representative of the collective ideas of inclusion.

- “embraces” was changed to “welcomes” (inclusion welcomes the...)
- “removing” was changed to “proactively addressing” (by proactively addressing obstacles...) because it would be nearly impossible to remove every obstacles (e.g., racism and poverty), but we can address them.

The BEDI council expresses its thanks to all who participated and shared their perspectives and thoughts through this survey. We are grateful for the input provided—it has allowed us to create definitions that more fully reflect the voice of the college as a whole.

As a council, we will always try to model our title: belonging, equity, diversity and inclusion. Therefore, we openly invite participation and input from all members of our college community. If you have questions or would like to participate more directly in our work, please just contact us.

Sincerely and respectfully,

The Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (BEDI) Council.