



Advisory Council On Diversity 2026-2029 Strategic Plan Narrative

The Advisory Council on Diversity (ACOD) is an official campus committee designated by the University chancellor and chaired by the chief diversity officer. Cultural proficiency is the University's model of practice for work in this space. ACOD is comprised of University constituents throughout the campus community. ACOD's primary purpose is to develop and monitor the University's diversity strategic plan while simultaneously sharing information with campus constituents within each member's sphere of influence.

The quarterly meetings include an annual retreat to build community and more profoundly discuss strategic direction for this work. The 2026-2029 plan was initiated during ACOD's March 2025 meeting. During that meeting, the chair identified earning the Champion award from Insight into Academia as a primary goal for the University. Insight into Academia is the oldest and most robust magazine and whose website focused on excellence in higher education. The magazine recognizes institutions that demonstrate excellence in fostering campus environments where students, faculty and staff thrive. The metrics required for this award define the scorecard used annually by the diversity department. The Champion award exemplifies an unyielding commitment to excellence throughout the campus communities, across programs, and at the highest administrative levels. Very few institutions earn this distinction. These institutions earmark the principles, and values that establish frameworks to be modeled by others. In August of 2025 A.T. Still University (ATSU) was notified that it earned the distinction of Health Professions HEED and Champion Awards. The application process includes 9 categories and regularly consists of more than 30 pages. The ATSU community (e.g., schools, departments, and programs) contributed to the development of this application. Following the March meeting, ACOD had a series of in-person meetings, virtual exercises, and email correspondence.

The results of these activities are noted below:

Strategic Initiatives:

1. Promote cultural proficiency throughout the University
2. Reimagine DEI to be timeless and irreproachable

Strategic Goals:

1. Create cultural proficiency learning opportunities throughout campus
2. Partner with ATSU's administration to comply with all federal rules, laws, and regulation regarding non-discrimination
3. Preserving ATSU's mission and culture during implementation of federal budget changes
4. Institutionalizing cultural proficiency as the prevailing approach

The work towards becoming culturally proficient is an enduring commitment to improve from one day to the next. The committee decided the first strategic initiative is as relevant now as it was in the previous plan. Considering the continual flow of employees and students within





higher education institutions, ATSU's culture, as prescribed by its history, mission statement, diversity statement, land acknowledgement, and diversity definition should remain at the forefront of institutional ideology. Accreditation site visitors, prospective students, and employees repeatedly remark about how the ATSU community is fully committed to its mission.

Cultural proficiency constitutes an understanding of culture; defined by a wide variety of different settings¹. Intertwined in these settings, are individual differences. Unique to each cultural setting is a chance for misinterpretation and unintended consequences. Conversely, these settings also offer chances for improved communication, building trust, and better outcomes. Often idiosyncrasies are the impediment to culturally responsive interactions. Therefore, understanding one's own idiosyncrasies, and inherent preferences positions them to pre-reflect on each cultural setting and respond appropriately. ATSU promotes cultural proficiency through policies, education, course content, campus events, written communications, role modeling, and case studies.

The ATSU mission explicitly states, the University is committed to continuing its osteopathic heritage and focus on whole person healthcare, scholarship, community health, interprofessional education, diversity, and underserved populations. The federal government's H.R.1 Bill² (better known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA)) is a significant hurdle for student borrowing, recruitment, and retention efforts (particularly for first-generation and low socio-economic students) at the graduate health sciences level. While writing this narrative, its authors noted a stable or increase in primary applications for most of the ATSU schools/programs. ATSU's unique relationship with the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) and Federally Qualified Community Health Centers (FQCHC) has contributed to on-campus FQCHC sites at 2 of its campuses and a teaching health center at its St. Louis, MO. Location. Notably, these relationships inspired the development of the University's third campus in Santa Maria, CA.

By reimagining diversity, equity, and inclusion to be timeless and irreproachable, ATSU recognizes the impact current federal regulations are having on student access and knowledge acquisition. The University will always remain compliant with the law and committed to its more than 130-year history of academic excellence in the graduate health professions environment. ATSU is committed to its branding of "Whole person healthcare" and added "diversity means more than hue" to its vocabulary more than a decade ago. Its curriculum aligns with the social justice and health equity mission of NACHC and FQCHC's (all of which annually receive federal funding through congress). The University actively seeks better understanding and best practices through collaborations with other content-specific organizations.

¹ Baugh, A. D., Vanderbilt, A. A., & Baugh, R. F. (2020). Communication training is inadequate: The role of deception, non-verbal communication, and cultural proficiency. *Medical Education Online*, 25(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/10872981.2020.1820228>

² H.R.1 – 119th Congress (2025-2026): An act to provide for reconciliation pursuant to title II of H. Con. Res. 14. (2025, July 4). <https://www.congress.gov/bills/119/congress/house-bill/1/text>





ATSU's strategic direction has always been informed by data and shaped through a culture of innovation, access, and improved outcomes. These traits are earmarked by a student-centered approach to osteopathic medicine. ASTU was founded by Dr. Andrew Taylor Still in 1892 at its Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine in Kirksville Missouri. Its founding class was not only innovative in theoretical science; it also included women, which was unheralded at the time. ATSU has evolved into a University with 7 schools, 15 doctoral programs, 15 master's programs, 24 certificate programs across 3 different time zones.

The University is home to the award-winning Museum of Osteopathic Medicine. The museum was founded in 1934 with support from family members and other DOs. The museum includes the International Center for Osteopathic History and has been accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The museum has the largest collection of osteopathic medicine artifacts and has traced the lineage of osteopathy to American Indian culture. Through its expertise, global reach, and future collaborations with the National Center for American Indian Health Professionals the University can expand on its mission, values, and purpose to more clearly construct values around differences which transcend the boundaries of time, geography, and political influences.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion also known as DEI is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as: *“a set of values and related policies and practices focused on establishing a group culture of equitable and inclusive treatment and on attracting and retaining a diverse group of participants, including people who have historically been excluded or discriminated against.”* Therefore, that which is part of the English language can't unequivocally be removed. The United States of America was born with the weaponization of language used to divide and create a sense of “others;” often meant to be those who didn't represent the dominant culture. There is no doubt the current framework around otherism will take shape in the future as well. The term “White” was used in the 17th century to define legal status. Prior to this, people were referenced by their religious identity or nationality. People of color (e.g., Black, Hispanic, Italian and two or more races) have been identified by societal norms as Colored, Negro, Mulatto, Greaser, Alien, Wetback, Wop, Jap, Savage, and Redskin to name a few). As derogatory and demeaning as these identifiers are, they each have a specific definition ascribed to them. In some cases, terminology used to demean a particular group was captured and re-claimed affirmingly by the group it sought to undermine. Clearly, ATSU doesn't condone or give language like this the time of day. However, in his 1905 book (The Life of Reason), George Santana wrote, *“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”* The exclusive and divisive nature of language and actions of the past have resurfaced today. Therefore, it is important for organizations to lean into their mission, understand the complexities of the human experience, and evolution of the United States of America to ensure its trajectory towards a society that welcomes, values, and appreciates the totality of its people and all those who interact therein. For these reasons, ATSU has adopted cultural proficiency to deconstruct the destructive nature of weaponizing terminology. The University also considers those educationally and economically disadvantaged as part of the fabric of differences.





As a data-driven institution of higher learning, ATSU understands its place in providing academic excellence. This measure alone compels the University to value differences. Research shows us the value of difference in all its forms (e.g., ethnic, cognitive, skills, lived experiences, and personality types) produces far better outcomes than homogeneous groups. Reenvisioning DE&I begins with its mission statement and commitment to cultural proficiency. The University's holistic review process positions it to admit large swaths of medical students whose MCAT scores are midrange. Research suggests schools reflecting these applicants tend to be more diverse and primary care focused³.

Interprofessional education is a construct of the value of differences to achieve optimal success and improve outcomes⁴. The collaborative care approach prepares health professions students to be comfortable working across disciplines to navigate complexities of a patient or populations health crises. These collaborative teams are attentive to the factors contributing to the crises from their professional Lense by evaluating their approaches, and assessing outcomes to enhance the quality of care provided⁵.

APPENDECES

The 2026-2029 DSP reference document:

University Mission Statement – A.T. Still University of Health Sciences serves as a learning-centered university dedicated to preparing highly competent professionals through innovative academic programs. The University is committed to continuing its osteopathic heritage and focus on whole person healthcare, scholarship, community health, interprofessional education, diversity, and underserved populations.

Land Acknowledgement Statement - A.T. Still University (ATSU) acknowledges it provides graduate health professions education on land indigenous to nationalities currently identified as American Indians. The University is comprised of three campuses (Mesa, Arizona; Santa Maria, California; and Kirksville, Missouri). The University also operates a dental center in St. Louis, Missouri, in collaboration with Affinia Healthcare.

³ Terregino, C. A., Saguil, A., Price-Johnson, T., Anachebe, N. F., & Goodell, K. (2020). [The diversity and success of medical school applicants with scores in the middle third of the MCAT Score Scale](#). *Academic medicine: journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges*, 95(3), 344-350.

⁴ Oandasan I. & Reeves S. (2005). [Key Element of Interprofessional Education. Part 1: The Learner, the Educator, and the Learning Context](#). *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, May 2005, 1(suppl): 21-38.

⁵ Terregino, C. A., Saguil, A., Price-Johnson, T., Anachebe, N. F., & Goodell, K. (2020). [The diversity and success of medical school applicants with scores in the middle third of the MCAT Score Scale](#). *Academic medicine: journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges*, 95(3), 344-350.





ATSU's Mesa, Arizona campus is near Phoenix, Arizona and resides in the Salt River Valley, indigenous to the Pima (Akimel Au-Authm") and Maricopa (Xalychidom Pipaash") peoples. The Santa Maria, California campus resides on land first occupied by the Chumash people. The Kirksville and St. Louis Missouri properties were first occupied by the Cherokee, Ioway, Otoe-Missouria, Illini, Kickapoo, Sioux, and Iroquois Tribes, in addition to the Chickasaw, Osage, and Quapaw Nations. ATSU is committed to cultural proficiency and honors their rights and sovereignty.

Diversity Statement - ATSU believes excellence requires understanding, affirming, and valuing human differences.

ACOD Mission Statement - The Advisory Council On Diversity (ACOD) will work to cultivate a culturally proficient community, which embraces all forms of difference and perpetuates the University's mission to enrich learning experiences of students, faculty, and staff in support of serving the underserved.

ATSU Diversity Definition – ATSU believes diversity is an authentic understanding and appreciation of differences and, at its core, is based upon the value each human being brings to our society and each person's access and opportunities to contribute to our University's cultural Proficiency.

Educationally & Economically Disadvantaged - A student who comes from an environment that has inhibited the individual from obtaining the knowledge, skill and abilities required to enroll in and graduate from a health professions or nursing school.

Objectives – What is to be measured?

Primary Measure – How will the metric be measured?

Source/Data Available – What source was used to pull the data (e.g., website, Institutional Resources, Data Analytics Reports, and etc.)?

Results/Data – From where did the school/division/department begin? What was the quantifiable data before current collection point (e.g., previous year data)?

Recommendations by ACOD – Based on the stated goal, objective, and metric, does the school/division/department recommend the metric is met/not met and/or adjustments to the objective or measure to more accurately assess?

Priority Rating/Implementation Deadline - Who (individual) is accountable for retrieving and passing the data along to ACOD?





Follow Up/Outcomes – What has been accomplished since the last reporting period. Should be comprehensive and specific to each metric?

Interprofessional Education - “Occasions when a member of two or more professions learns with, from, and about one another to improve collaboration and the quality of [service].” ([CAIPE 2022](#))

Interprofessional Collaborative Practice - “When multiple health workers from different professional backgrounds work together with patients, families, careers, and communities to deliver the highest quality of care.” (WHO, 2010)

Interprofessionality – An education and practice orientation, an approach to care and education where educators and practitioners collaborate synergistically.” (D’Amour and Oandasan 2005 p10)



Evidence:

- ATSU, [Interprofessional Education](#),. (n.d.) A. T. Still University.
- Baugh, A. D., Vanderbilt, A. A., & Baugh, R. F. (2020). Communication training is inadequate: The role of deception, non-verbal communication, and cultural proficiency. *Medical Education Online*, 25(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/10872981.2020.1820228>
- D'amour, D. and Oandasan, I., (2005). [Interprofessional practice and interprofessional education: An emerging concept](#), *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 19, pp. 8-20.
- H.R.1 -119th Congress (2025-2026). An act to provide for reconciliation pursuant to title II of H. Con. Res. 14. (2025, July 4). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/1/text>
- Lindsey, R. B., Robins, K. N., & Terrell, R. D. (2003). *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders 2nd ed.* Corwin Press Inc.
- Oandasan I. & Reeves S. (2005). [Key Element of Interprofessional Education. Part 1: The Learner, the Educator, and the Learning Context](#), *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, May 2005, 1(suppl): 21-38.
- Oandasan I. & Reeves S. (2005). [Key Elements of Interprofessional Education. Part 2: Factors, Processes and Outcomes](#), *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, May 2005, 1 (suppl): 39-49.
- Terregino, C. A., Saguil, A., Price-Johnson, T., Anachebe, N. F., & Goodell, K. (2020). [The diversity and success of medical school applicants with scores in the middle third of the MCAT Score Scale](#). *Academic medicine: journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges*, 95(3), 344-350.