

# OneANDERSON

Center for Community, Dignity, & Inclusive Campus Family

*Everyone an insider. No one an outsider.*



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Following the 2023 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Students for Fair Admission, Inc. v. President & Fellows of Harvard College*, all organizations are compelled to reexamine and improve upon their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs. In the Harvard decision, the Court found that the admissions programs of Harvard and the University of North Carolina violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and, coextensive with the Equal Protection Clause, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act by considering students' race when making admissions decisions. The Court stated that elimination of racial discrimination means to eliminate all of it. More recent court cases, regulations, and executive orders have clarified that institutions of higher education may not discriminate because of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, gender, or any other protected status in their programs or activities.

If an educational institution treats a person of one race differently than it treats another person because of that person's race, the educational institution violates the law. In other words, federal law prohibits covered entities from using race in decisions about

admissions, hiring, promotion, compensation, financial aid, scholarships, prizes, administrative support, discipline, housing, graduation ceremonies, and all aspects of student, academic, and campus life. Put simply, universities may neither separate nor segregate students based on race, nor distribute benefits nor burdens based on race.

In addition, the DEI issue has been compounded by public backlash to Critical Race Theory, or CRT (which is in disagreement with traditional Christian doctrine), inadequately and/or poorly designed DEI programs, and mandatory DEI training and education programs, all of which resulted in consumer boycotts and state-level legislative restrictions on DEI. Economic uncertainties are also causing budget cuts, and some organizations are re-evaluating the efficacy of traditional DEI models. They seek instead to embed inclusive practices more holistically into their core operations while ending racial discrimination and politicized terminology.

To be clear, Anderson University in South Carolina, as an actively Christian institution, has always had a non-political, biblical approach to its inclusive philosophy and efforts. Diversity in and of itself is good. It is “unlawful diversity” which results in discrimination that is wrong. Going forward, at Anderson University these principles and efforts will be known as “**One Anderson**” through its **Center for Community, Dignity, and Inclusive Campus Family**.

As a Christian institution, we have a distinct approach to the One Anderson philosophy as expressed through our explicitly stated mission and values, rooted in traditional Christian principles. To better understand our program, it is important to understand the philosophy underlying our approach and distinguish it from some of the concepts that are often confusing or misleading.

Consistent with Scripture, as well as Anderson’s Statement of Faith and other policies, we believe that commitment to diversity, inclusion, justice, and unity, all through the lens of Christ, is central to fulfilling the Great Commission, the Greatest Commandments, and Anderson University’s mission. We strive to create a truth-filled, grace-filled, Christ-centered academic community where all members are recognized, loved, and respected (Matthew 22:37-40 and 28:19-20; Revelation 7:9-10).

Because of Christ’s reconciling death on the cross, we repent of racism, sexism, and other divisive sins and we commit ourselves to make real what Christ died to achieve. We want to create a campus culture where we are known as Christ-followers and the love we have for one another as a diverse campus family (Mark 3:24-26; John 13:34-35; Ephesians 2:12-16; 1 John 1:7-8).

Now, let’s discuss the conceptual framework underlying this work and distinguish it from some of the concepts that are often confusing or/or misleading, and terms that have more than one meaning.

## Christian Inclusivity and Human Dignity

The core philosophy of Anderson University's One Anderson initiative, as expressed through the Center Community, Dignity, and Campus Family and the motto "Everyone an insider. No one an outsider," is grounded in the inherent dignity of all human beings as image-bearers of God.

Here's a breakdown of its tenets:

### **Imago Dei (Image of God) as Foundation**

The most fundamental principle is that every individual, regardless of their background, race, ethnicity, gender, or abilities, is created in the "Imago Dei" (Genesis 1:27). This belief grants inherent worth, dignity, and respect to every person. This is not earned; it is divinely bestowed.

Implication: Because all are created in God's image, there is a moral imperative to treat everyone with honor, respect, and love, fostering an environment where all can flourish.

### **Biblical Mandate for Unity and Reconciliation**

Drawing from scriptures like Galatians 3:28 ("There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus") and 2 Corinthians 5:18 ("God... reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation"), the philosophy emphasizes a call to unity that transcends earthly divisions.

Implication: This leads to an active pursuit of reconciliation, peacemaking, and the dismantling of barriers that separate people. Racism, discrimination, and prejudice are explicitly condemned as affronts to Christian values.

### **Hospitality and Love of Neighbor**

The concept of Great Hospitality is explicitly mentioned in Anderson University's values, stating, "We relentlessly pursue genuine hospitality because people really matter. We respect, honor, and serve one another on the AU campus. We want everyone to feel like an insider, and no one to feel like an outsider." This aligns with the biblical command to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22: 39, James 2:8).

Implication: This isn't just about tolerance, but active welcome, service, and creating a truly warm and generous environment for all.

### **Community Formation through Shared Purpose (Christ-Centered) and Campus Family**

While embracing diversity, the unity sought is ultimately centered on shared Christian values and a commitment to the University's Christ-centered mission. This is where the

concept of a Campus Family truly flourishes. It signifies a profound sense of belonging where individuals from all walks of life—diverse racial groups, ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds, and personal histories—come together to form a cohesive, supportive unit.

The Campus Family is bound by a common pursuit of truth, faith, and service within a distinctively Christian framework. In this family, every member is valued not despite their differences, but because of them. We actively strive to:

- **Honor Everyone's Background and Uniqueness:** Recognizing that each individual brings a rich tapestry of experiences, perspectives, and talents. We celebrate these unique contributions, understanding that they enrich our collective learning, spiritual growth, and community life.
- **Foster Mutual Care and Support:** Like a family, members are encouraged to look out for one another, offer encouragement, and provide support in times of challenge. This creates a nurturing environment where individuals feel safe to grow, learn, and express themselves authentically.
- **Build Interconnectedness:** Moving beyond mere coexistence, the Campus Family fosters genuine relationships and a deep sense of interconnectedness, reflecting the unity found in the body of Christ.

Implication: Diversity is not an end in itself, but a reflection of God's Kingdom (Revelation 7:9) that enriches the Christian community and its mission. The goal is to build a cohesive community where differences are celebrated within a unifying framework of faith, forming a true Campus Family.

### **Addressing Injustice and Inequality (Justice as a Christian Virtue)**

The commitment to "combat racism at both the personal and institutional levels" and "disrupt racism, discrimination, inequality, and marginalization" demonstrates a recognition of historical and ongoing injustices. This is rooted in the Christian call for justice and righteousness (Amos 5:24).

Implication: This moves beyond passive acceptance to active efforts to identify and address barriers, promote racial equity, and ensure fair treatment for all.

## **Recognizing Student Diversity and Kingdom Diversity**

As a student-focused, Christ-centered university, Anderson places immense importance on recognizing and valuing the racial and cultural diversity present within our student body. This diversity is not merely a demographic statistic; it is a profound strength that enriches the entire educational experience. When students from varied racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds come together, they bring distinct viewpoints, life experiences,

and problem-solving approaches that foster a more dynamic learning environment, broaden perspectives, and better prepare all students for an increasingly interconnected global society.

This rich tapestry of backgrounds allows for deeper discussions, more nuanced understandings of complex issues, and the development of empathy and cross-cultural competence—qualities essential for leadership and service in today's world.

Anderson University is dedicated to ensuring every student enjoys a truly enriching college experience, filled with the intellectual growth, personal development, and meaningful connections that all college students seek. We want the world to know that we deeply love and recognize the unique individuality of each student; we encourage them to value their God-given individuality; and we join hearts with others in the campus family to passionately seek God's Kingdom in harmonious relationship with one another.

Indeed, our focus remains firmly on Kingdom Diversity. This concept emphasizes unity in support of one another, recognizing that despite our varied backgrounds, we are all united under God's love and purpose. Kingdom Diversity is not about erasing individual identities but about affirming them within a shared spiritual framework. It calls us to:

- **Embrace Unity in Christ:** Understanding that our ultimate identity is found in Christ, which transcends earthly distinctions and creates a bond of brotherhood and sisterhood among believers.
- **Serve One Another:** Motivated by biblical principles, students are encouraged to support, uplift, and learn from one another, fostering an environment where every individual can thrive academically, spiritually, and personally.
- **Reflect God's Global Kingdom:** Seeing our diverse student body as a microcosm of God's diverse Kingdom, where people from "every nation, tribe, people, and language" (Revelation 7:9) worship and serve together in harmony.

Through Kingdom Diversity, we cultivate a campus where differences are celebrated as gifts from God, and unity is forged through shared faith, mutual respect, and a collective commitment to the University's mission.

## How One Anderson Differs

### **Factionalism (Tribalism)**

The One Anderson philosophy presents a distinctive approach to community, differentiating itself from factionalism (also known as tribalism). Unlike factionalism, which uses group identity (e.g., race, political affiliation, economic status, and other personal characteristics) that create insiders and outsiders, the University's approach is based on the belief that all individuals have inherent dignity because they are created in

the image of God. The goal is to build a community where everyone feels like an "insider" by prioritizing reconciliation and unity over divisions. This framework positions inclusivity within a broader mission of love and service to all, moving beyond inward self-interest often associated with group-specific affiliations.

## **Marxist Interpretation of Equity**

The One Anderson philosophy, while committed to addressing inequality and injustice, operates from a different conceptual foundation than a Marxist interpretation of equity. A Marxist view typically focuses on achieving equal outcomes through a redistribution of power and resources, often within a secular framework of "oppressor" and "oppressed" groups. In contrast, One Anderson is explicitly rooted in Christian principles of reconciliation and individual dignity. Its efforts aim at ensuring equitable access and opportunity for all, not necessarily enforcing identical results. The University's approach is driven by the spiritual and moral imperative to foster unity, love, and a sense of shared purpose within its campus community.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Anderson University's One Anderson conceptual framework leverages Christian theological principles to articulate a vision of deep, Christ-centered inclusivity of all students. It seeks to transcend the divisive tendencies of tribalism by focusing on universal human dignity and actively works to address inequities, but it does so through a lens of reconciliation, love, and spiritual purpose, fostering a true Campus Family where everyone belongs and is celebrated as a human being endowed by God with sacred human dignity.