

# Diversity and Inclusion at Our Core

Posted on [September 8, 2014](#) by [Carol Hixson](#)

<https://poynterdean.wordpress.com/2014/09/08/diversity-and-inclusion-at-our-core/>

*Note from March 2021: Some links in this posting may no longer function. To search for digital content previously available in the USFSP Digital Archive, visit the new repository at: <https://digital.stpetersburg.usf.edu/>. Search the [USFSP Library](#) and [USFSP](#) web sites, as well other secondary sites, if you encounter other links that no longer work.*

On November 12, 2010, I posted a message on my Dean's Messages web site on the [topic of diversity](#). The message addressed one of the sculpted bronze hands embedded in the walls of the Poynter Library. One of those sculptures extols the value of **DIVERSITY**. I originally wrote about diversity as a [response to a student](#) who had contacted me wanting to know why we had hosted an exhibit on Black History but hadn't done an exhibit on Irish Heritage Month. In the summer of 2013, I again addressed the issue when a student wrote to President Genshaft complaining about what she considered pornography in the Library because we were advertising a talk on the 1964 [Florida Legislative Investigative Committee's Report on "Homosexuality and citizenship in Florida"](#) by using an image from the state government document showing two bare-chested men kissing.

These concerns from USFSP students, along with recent incidents in our community and around the country, make it clear that the topic merits much more discussion. For that reason, I am reposting my original message, with some additions.

The KKK incident in the City of St. Petersburg's Stormwater Department that happened in October 2013 but was [reported on by the Tampa Bay Times on August 16, 2014](#) is one indication of how close to the surface tensions around diversity really are. The [August 9, 2014 shooting of an unarmed African-American teenager in Ferguson, Missouri](#) and the subsequent reactions in that community and around the world have highlighted our need for closer self-examination and renewed commitment to a diverse, inclusive society. The ongoing [battle in the courts about same-sex marriage](#) is another manifestation of how divided we as a people are regarding diversity and inclusion. There are countless examples from around the country and the world of people wanting to be included in all the benefits enjoyed by others and accepted as they are and sometimes negative reactions from other members of society.

What is diversity and why do we consider it one of the core values of the University of South Florida St. Petersburg and the Poynter Library? Diversity in the U.S. has often been a political hot-button, serving to divide rather than unite us. One of the definitions given in the Oxford English Dictionary is "a point of unlikeness; a difference, distinction; a different kind, a variety." One simple definition, then, is variety in who we are and how we live.

Wikipedia lists many kinds of [diversity](#), including political diversity, ethnic diversity, diversity training, biodiversity and more. Under political diversity, Wikipedia asserts that the term is used "to describe differences in racial or ethnic classifications, age, gender, religion, philosophy, physical abilities, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, gender identity, intelligence, mental health, physical health, genetic attributes, behavior, attractiveness, cultural values, or political view as well as other identifying features."

In its [statement on diversity](#) in its mission and vision, the University of South Florida St. Petersburg asserts its "dedication to the diversity of human beings as well as diversity of ideas and viewpoints." Respect and tolerance for different backgrounds, different abilities, different physical characteristics, different points of view, and different modes of self-expression are the cornerstones of our university. By accepting our right to be different and to be uniquely ourselves, we are able to call on a wider array of resources as we face new challenges. In diversity, we are strong.

We in the Nelson Poynter Memorial Library support and celebrate the diversity of our students and faculty, the university, our local community, and the world around us. Libraries actively strive to present multiple points of view. This is a principle that is well defined within the North American library community, as outlined by the [American Library](#)

[Association in the Library Bill of Rights](#). To this end, we will continue to host a wide variety of lectures and debates representing diverse points of view; we will continue to mount [exhibitions on wide-ranging topics](#) such as military history, Black history, Gay pride, Native American identity, Jewish culture, the [Holocaust](#), Women's History and more; we will continue to develop collections of materials that reflect a full range of viewpoints on important topics in support of the University's courses and programs; we will continue to strive to serve all of our students in the ways that they need, such as our services to students with special needs through improving our Assistive Technologies Room and more.

The Nelson Poynter Memorial Library is a safe haven for all people and ideas. Come to the library (physically or virtually) where we will strive to make you feel safe to ask questions and explore the world around you, value you for who you are, and encourage you in your journey of self-discovery, self-expression and lifelong learning.

The Library this year will be developing a formalized diversity program. As we proceed, we will be inviting members of the campus and the broader community to take part and share experiences and insights. Drop me a note at hixson at usfsp.edu or call me at 873-4400 (*note: these contacts are no longer in operation for Carol Hixson*) if you would like to be part of the discussion.