

Process to Become Recognized as a Columbus State Employee Resource Group

Employee Resource Groups at Columbus State are self-determined, College-sanctioned associations of faculty, staff, and administration organized around a specific *minoritized identity* (a social group that society devalues, restricts access to resources from, and withholds power from), a group of minoritized identities, or a collective goal that relates to diversity, equity, and/or inclusion. Columbus State's ERG Program is a critical part of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI), which recognizes and supports ERGs committed to using *anti-racist and anti-oppression practices* (practices that seek to notice, examine, and uproot interpersonal, internalized, institutional, and structural racism and other oppressions) to:

- help attract, nurture, and retain a diverse workforce,
- build inclusive workplace and learning environments,
- confront legacies of discrimination within higher education workplaces and learning environments,
- and/or advocate for policies and practices in the service of advancing equity.

ERG Program Purpose

The ERG program is designed to support the College's commitments to:

- Develop a workplace where employees of all identities can be successful, have equitable access to growth and advancement opportunities, and feel that they belong.
- Develop a workforce and leadership reflective of the community it serves.
- Foster a campus climate of inclusion.
- Achieve student success outcomes across all demographics.
- Be the front door to higher education and a leader in advancing our region's prosperity.

ERG FORMATION PROCESS

Step 1: Initial application

The initial application establishes:

- ERG name
- ERG mission
- Initial needs the ERG intends to meet (including some evidence—*anecdotal, empirical, or otherwise*—that this is a true need for a segment of Columbus State employees)
- Other ERGs or departments the ERG hopes to collaborate with
- Names of ten employees with an interest in being part of the ERG, including at least two who are prepared to take on a leadership role. (If ERG founders are concerned that the total number of the employees who are identifiers, the nature of the stigma associated with the ERG identity, or other relevant concerns, might make it challenging to meet the 10-person minimum, they

may discuss with the ERG Manager who—in consultation with the Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion—has the discretion to reduce the minimum number. The ERG Manager will also work with the ERG Leads to identify relevant outreach methods, cultivate trust among identifiers, and/or address oppressive workplace culture that may keep identifiers from joining the ERG.)

- Two of the following Areas of Focus the ERG will align its first-year goals with and what goal or initiative they have identified with regard to each of their chosen Areas of Focus.

ERG Areas of Focus

- **ERG Member Impact:** Could include opportunities to gather in safe/brave spaces; formal and informal networking and mentoring; leadership development; advocacy workshops for allies/accomplices; celebrating member accomplishments; or partnering with talent acquisition team to promote advancement opportunities and identify and prepare candidates.
- **Workforce Impact:** Could include advising on policies, procedures, and practices that foster equity and inclusion; partnering with appropriate departments to advance cultural and structural competence on campus; or helping identify and recruit BIPOC, LGBTQ+, disabled, women, first generation, immigrant, and/or veteran candidates for employment at the College.
- **Campus Culture Impact:** Could include offering educational opportunities for Columbus State employees and/or students to broaden their DEI-related awareness and skills; partnering with appropriate departments to advance cultural and structural competence on campus; or sponsoring cultural, celebratory, and/or responsive events that promote campus-wide engagement with various cultures, equity milestones and setbacks, and relevant current events.
- **Student Impact:** Could include mentoring students; supporting student organizations; or partnering with appropriate departments to advance cultural and structural competence on campus.
- **Community Impact:** Could include engaging in activities that promote racial and social justice in the broader community and/or strengthen the campus/community connection.

Step 2: Review of Application

The ERG Manager reviews the initial application in consultation with the Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and considers the following:

- **Does this group meet criteria for groups eligible to be formally recognized and supported as ERGs as described above?** If no, the ERG Manager may either recommend possible adjustments to the ERG mission or that the applicants pursue an informal (unfunded) affinity group.
- **Has this group identified a significant need to be addressed?** If no, the ERG Manager may work with the applicants to identify employee needs, if any, that relate to the proposed ERG mission.
- **Does this group have a critical mass of people committed to getting it up and running?** If no, the ERG manager may help the applicants create a plan for recruiting more ERG leaders.
- **Has this group adequately aligned its proposed plans with relevant ERG Areas of Focus?** If no, the ERG Manager will make suggestions for improved alignment.

When the ODEI can answer yes to all of the questions above, the ERG Manager will indicate to the applicants that they are ready to move onto Step 3 of the ERG formation process.

If the applicants do not satisfactorily meet the requirements above, the ERG Manager will inform them that the ODEI is not going to advance their application to become an ERG. The applicants may appeal this decision to the Chief Diversity Officer.

Step 3: Develop ERG charter and gain formal recognition

Once the application has gained initial approval, the new ERG will develop a charter with assistance from ERG Manager as desired. Charter should include:

- Columbus State Mission Statement
- ERG Mission Statement
- Membership Guidelines
 - Who can join? (Example: Employees committed to developing an inclusive and equitable workplace for Latine employees.)
 - How do you become a member? (Example: send an email to the ERG membership chair)
 - What does it mean to participate? (Example: We encourage members to attend a minimum of three monthly meetings per year and engage in at least one ERG sponsored initiative per year as their schedule allows.)
 - What are the expectations for interaction? What behaviors do you encourage? What behaviors will be reported to HR? Are there suggested ways for allies/accomplices to engage? (Example: While we value full participation from all of our members we recognize that achieving equity requires us each to consider and self-adjust for the ways our identities amplify or diminish our voices in the setting of a predominantly/historically white institution. In particular we ask members to privilege the voices of Latine-identifying employees while engaging in ERG meetings, Teams chat conversations, and other communication forums. We expect ERG members to conduct themselves in accordance with all Columbus State employee policies.)
- Leadership Structure
 - Lead or Co-Leads (Required)
 - Other roles as designated by the ERG founders (Suggested. See ERG Program Guidelines for suggestions.)
 - Length of terms for each role (Required)
 - Term limits if any
 - Method for selecting people to fill roles (Required)
 - Succession plan for ERG Leads/Co-Leads (Required)
- Meeting Schedule should include:
 - All member meetings
 - Leadership meetings
- Statement of the ERG's intentionality around noticing, examining, and uprooting interpersonal, internalized, institutional, and structural racism and other oppressions. (This commitment can be embedded within the mission, goals, and/or membership guidelines or expressed explicitly in a separate statement.)
- Recognition that while the ERG may advocate for compensation equity, they do not negotiate on anyone's behalf on matters that relate to wages or terms and conditions of employment.

Once the charter is complete, three members of the Cabinet—including the Chief Diversity Officer and the Vice President for Administration—will review the charter and grant or deny approval of the ERG.

Step 4: First Year of ERG

Over the course of the first year of the ERG, Leads will work with the ERG Manager to:

Identify effectiveness measures to be collected. Based on planned initiatives, could include:

- Overall membership - the number of people that have joined the ERG (required)
- Event attendance - the number of people that attend events (required)
- Event registration - the number of people that sign up for events
- Event NPS - the average net promoter score (how likely are you to recommend this event to a colleague?) for events
- # of new hire referrals submitted - the number of employee referrals submitted via our ERG members
- # of member promotions – the number of ERG members who advanced to new positions
- # of College initiatives supported - the number of initiatives we've partnered on with various Columbus State teams
- Mentorship program participation - the number of our group members that participate in mentorship program.

Identify and establish employees to fill ERG roles

- Establish a critical mass of employees to take on key roles to ensure a healthy organizational start to the ERG.
- Consider first year goals/focus areas as identified in the application. Ensure that roles are aligned with goals.

Conduct Lead and Chair orientation

- Review ERG Program guidelines including purpose of the Program, how to handle uncomfortable or harmful situations with ERG members, critical communication flows, and procedures to access funding.
- Ensure Leads understand the unique roles of Business Partners, Equity and Compliance, Employee Experience, Victim Advocacy, and the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in order to effectively refer members appropriately.

Identify and secure an executive champion

- With support from the ERG manager, the new ERG will identify and establish a relationship with an executive champion, including communicating clear expectations for how the executive champion will be involved in and supportive of the ERG's work.

Identify opportunities for allyship

- Identify roles that allies and accomplices can play and ways allies can participate that contribute to the mission of the ERG without de-centering the needs or voices of the "in group" of the ERG.

- Develop language to communicate clearly the suggested norms for ally and accomplice engagement.

Formalize first year goals already indicated in the application

- Review goals.
- Check for feasibility and alignment with identified roles. Adjust as necessary.

Develop an outreach plan to build membership base. Should consider:

- New hires
- Existing employees at all levels and across all departments of the College
- Multiple communication media and strategies

Develop a survey to assess employee needs relevant to the new ERG and establish a baseline for measuring ERG impact

- Data collected should be relevant to the areas of focus identified in the application
- ERG Manager will gather relevant baseline data for the new ERG, which could include demographic breakdown of new hires, current staff, promotions, and resignations; relevant satisfaction survey data; etc.

Step 5: Kick-Off of the new ERG

At some point during the first year, when the new ERG Lead and ERG Manager agree that the ERG is ready for kick off:

- ODEI announces new ERG in College publications
- ERG Manager adds new ERG info to website
- ERG Manager informs new-hire welcome team of new ERG and supplies them with updated communications materials about ERGs for new hires
- ERG launches outreach campaign

BENEFITS OF BECOMING AN ERG

Established ERGs will have access to the following:

- Up to \$2000/year to support activities and initiatives approved by the DEI office. Subject to availability, newly formed ERGs may have access to prorated funding based on start date.
- Support in partnering with other departments to leverage additional resources.
- ERG Lead participation in ERG leadership group.
- Inclusion in the College's DEI strategy and implementation efforts.
- Strategy, operations, and communications support from the ERG manager.
- Formal connection to HR Talent Acquisition and Office of Organizational Development and People Analytics teams for the purposes of helping ERG members advance at the College.