

For something to prosper, it must have healthy, strong roots. From its beginning, Olivet College vowed to provide an education that enriches lives intellectually, morally and spiritually to a diverse campus community, regardless of gender, race or socioeconomic status. Building a sustainable and prosperous future does not mean we disregard this mission and the core values that make Olivet College unique. On the contrary, now more than ever, we must nurture and strengthen the College's roots. Only then can the College grow and expand.

The first priority of the strategic plan centers on remaining firmly "Olivet." Retaining its deep roots will be achieved by ensuring the signature Olivet College relationship-based education, incorporating College-Wide Educational Goals and Learning Outcomes into all undergraduate and adult professional degree programs, and embedding "service" in all undergraduate and adult professional academic programs. The College must also achieve racial diversity within the student, faculty and staff populations and maintain socioeconomic undergraduate student diversity to remain deeply rooted and firmly grounded.

Racial Diversity Within Our Faculty

Students today are living in a world that is more diverse than ever before. Globalization has made the world smaller and has exposed 21st-century students to a multitude of races, ethnicities and cultures.

"It is our responsibility to prepare our students to live, learn and work in a diverse environment," said Linda Logan, Ph.D., vice president and chief inclusion officer. "Chances are graduates will be working or living in communities of color. Therefore, our students must have the benefit of learning from and being mentored by people of different backgrounds."

Olivet College has always attracted a high percentage of students of color, mostly African American and, secondarily, Hispanic/Latino students. Consequently, the College's faculty and staff should reflect the student population.

Provost Maria G. Davis, Ph.D., said, "Our renewed focus on ensuring diversity in our faculty search process is in response to two observations: under our previous application system, we didn't know anything about the diversity of faculty and staff applicants. Once our new application system was implemented, we then realized we weren't attracting diverse talent. As a result, the College is putting new strategies in place, including recruiting all faculty and professional staff through diverse professional networks and recruiting from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) to ensure a diverse applicant pool. We're already seeing an influx in the number of diverse applicants and new hires of faculty and academic staff through these efforts."

"Having a diverse faculty and staff involved in our relationship-based educational experiences will challenge stereotypes, implicit biases, explicit biases and microaggressions, as well as provide opportunities to learn, grow and expand our understanding of others," Logan said. "With employees and students as learners and contributors to our campus culture, we can better create an environment in which we are all receptive to and value each other's reality."

Maintaining Socioeconomic Undergraduate Student Diversity

More than 50% of students admitted to Olivet College are Pell-eligible, which means they can afford less than \$6,000 per year for educational expenses. A high percentage of Olivet students are also first-generation students who tend to be racially diverse and from lower socioeconomic families.

A photograph of two young women, likely students, in a library or study area. They are both wearing red t-shirts with "OLIVET COLLEGE" printed on them. They are looking down at an open book held by the woman on the right. The woman on the left has long, dark, curly hair and is smiling. The woman on the right has her hair pulled back and is also smiling. The background shows bookshelves and a window with a view of the outdoors.

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“Pell-eligible and first-generation students often do not have a support network at home to help navigate the college search process, including admissions and financial aid,” said Doug Kellar, vice president for enrollment management. “On top of that, families feel overwhelmed from the start when they see the sticker price of an institution, not realizing how financial aid and scholarships can bring down the cost dramatically. It can be difficult for families to see the value of a college degree and the earning potential it brings.”

The Office of Admission is making concerted efforts to support the needs of lower socioeconomic students by helping them explore college options and navigate the admission process. The College has partnered with college access programs, including Lansing Promise, Kalamazoo Promise, Capital Area College Access Network, Michigan College Access Network and others.

“We visit the high schools associated with these access network programs and work with high school counselors to encourage students to consider postsecondary education and help them in that pursuit. There are so many high school students with extraordinary potential. They simply need guidance and encouragement to apply to college,” Kellar said.

The support for first-generation or lower socioeconomic students doesn’t end once the student chooses to attend Olivet College. The College has programs in place, and many in development, to support at-risk students. These programs assist students who lack some preparation and understanding about how to be successful in college.



Kalamazoo Promise Scholars

“A racially and socioeconomically diverse student body brings different perspectives. Interacting with and developing relationships with people of contrasting backgrounds is educational. We all learn from one another through shared ideals from various cultural and even socioeconomic backgrounds,” Kellar said. “If the College is to grow, and if we are to have a racially and socioeconomically diverse undergraduate population, we must continue to support these students through creative financing programs, summer courses that permit degree completion in less than four years, success navigators and more.”

Nadia Anzaldua, a first-year student majoring in business administration and a Lansing Promise scholar, agrees that a diverse student body and employee base are important. “Programs like the Lansing Promise give all students in the Lansing School District a fair opportunity to attend college. Inevitably, these scholarship programs bring diversity onto the campus, which allows us to learn more about other races and cultures and learn things from their perspectives.

“Students also need to see faculty and staff who look like them. It can help make you feel a little more comfortable. And it’s one more way for all students who will one day be getting jobs and moving to new communities to learn different perspectives on certain situations regarding race and culture,” Anzaldua said. “If everybody looks like you and holds the same opinions as you, it can get boring, and you don’t grow as a human being.”