

## UW-L Guidelines for Inclusive Language and Representations in Written and Spoken Communication

**What do we value?** We value our commitment to high quality academic experiences for all students and we value a strong liberal arts education. We value one another and the contributions each of us makes to our university, our community and our state. We value diversity in ourselves and in our academic programs. We value our students and we support them both in and out of the classroom. We value recommitment to the spirit of the “Wisconsin Idea.” We value being an academic community of learning and inquiry both locally and globally.

We acknowledge the following in relation to the use of language in verbal and written communication, and in visual representation:

- Language is not neutral - community values are reflected in language use
- Exclusions in language and images may result in individuals feeling that they are not valued as active and productive members of the University community.
- Non-verbal communication, including body language and tone of voice also sends inclusive or exclusive messages to groups and individuals.
- Exclusions may hamper the satisfaction of faculty, staff and students at the University
- Silences as well as discriminatory language at the University may contribute to feelings of discomfort and a lack of safety.

In keeping with our commitment to diversity among our faculty, staff, and students, we offer these guidelines for public communication:

1. Use inclusive language in which the diverse experiences of students, faculty, and staff are represented and valued with equal respect in relation to socioeconomic status, gender, racial background, sexual orientation, and ethnic background.
2. Use inclusive language to support, foster, and enhance the achievements, collaboration, satisfaction, and well-being of students, staff, and faculty.
3. Be careful not to ask an individual to speak as a representative for an entire group.
4. Recognize/understand that discriminatory language marginalizes, excludes, and devalues the different experiences, cultures, values, beliefs, and lifestyles of students, staff, and faculty.

Whenever possible use language and/or images that

- portray students in proportions similar to those found in the UW-L general population;
- represent both traditional age (18-23) and non traditional age students;
- acknowledge that some students may be parents;
- acknowledge that some students are financially responsible for self and others;
- acknowledge that students, faculty and staff may come from a range of family configurations (foster families, institutions, family of choice, emancipated, single parents, wards of the court, same-sex parents, blended family, multi-racial, etc.);
- acknowledge a spectrum of leisure time behaviors – not just stereotypic college drinking.