

## Statement on diversity, equity, and inclusion

Department of Architecture  
College of Architecture Art and Design  
American University of Sharjah

*Drafted in 2018. Revised in 2020.*

Diversity at the American University of Sharjah is addressed in a holistic manner distinct in many ways from quantitative approaches common in North America and more reflective of the role that diversity plays in the United Arab Emirates and at the American University of Sharjah. Information on specific racial identification is not collected, as diversity is understood as a broader issue encompassing culture and experience.

The mission statement of the American University of Sharjah states that AUS is, "Based on an American model of higher education, integrating liberal arts and professional programs, and grounded in the context of UAE culture, AUS prepares engaged and effective members of society who display mastery in their areas of specialization, communicate clearly, think critically and solve problems creatively. AUS fosters a community that celebrates diversity, and whose members are committed to the ideals of open intellectual inquiry, ethical behavior and civic responsibility."

Diversity in the student body is also addressed by the student recruitment unit which is an integral component of the Office of Enrollment Management (OEM). AUS brings together a diverse group of students who share a strong desire for intellectual growth and who will challenge each other through their diverse backgrounds, styles of learning, areas of excellence, and goals for the future.

The AUS Academic Support Center (ASC) provides university-level support to students with short-term mobility disabilities and those with learning disabilities. The ASC provides disability contracts that are based on North American standards related to accommodations for students with diagnosed learning disabilities. The contracts are established in consultation with the Associate Dean of the relevant school/College and provides for measures such as additional time for assignments and extended periods for tests and exams that may be conducted outside of regular classrooms.

The AUS Academic Support Center (ASC) helps undergraduate students succeed academically at AUS. Advisors at ASC teach students to take responsibility for their education, set academic goals, graduate in a timely manner and successfully meet all requirements for a quality education at AUS. ASC works with students who are struggling academically (such as those on academic probation) and provides them with extra support and skills development training required for academic progression. ASC also coordinates academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities recognized by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) that are affecting their academic performance, in compliance with the UAE Federal Law 29 of 2006, to the extent permissible by available resources.

The department explicitly seeks to recruit and hire faculty with a broad range of diverse interests, expertise and backgrounds. While generally successful, we are conscious of challenges unique to our context. While all academic institutions encounter recruitment challenges, those faced by the American University of Sharjah faces recruitment challenges above and beyond those encountered by all academic institutions. For example, mid-career colleagues are often concerned about educational possibilities for children and, being unfamiliar with the primary and secondary educational systems in the United Arab Emirates, may experience some hesitation in moving to the Middle East. Most qualified candidates for faculty positions at CAAD have neither lived in nor visited the Middle East before, and there may be misconceptions that range from questions about acceptable everyday behavior to perceived challenges associated with gender.

Despite these challenges the department has engaged in rigorous efforts to recruit diverse, well-qualified faculty members for available positions, with particular emphasis on increasing representation of women. Faculty and administrators attend conferences and symposia to identify potential candidates and engage in dialogue about the College and the program. Combined with our NAAB accreditation these efforts have succeeded in raising awareness and increasing the applicant pool.

While distance and travel logistics make it difficult to invite candidates to campus during the interview process, CAAD faculty and administrators work collectively to engage faculty from other universities at conferences to provide information and answer questions. Faculty have worked proactively to identify potential candidates and nurture latent interest through dialogue to overcome hesitation based on a lack of information. Women on our faculty try to contact potential female faculty to create an avenue for open dialogue regarding life in Sharjah.