

## **EASFAA DEIB Membership Survey: Summary, Key Insights and Strategic Impact**

The EASFAA DEIB survey provides a comprehensive view of the breadth, complexity, and lived experiences represented across our membership. The results reinforce that Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) is not a singular initiative, it is a multidimensional framework that touches every aspect of our professional community and the students we serve. There were 248 surveys submitted.

### **1. DEIB Is Broad, Intersectional, and Lived Daily**

Survey responses highlight that DEIB within EASFAA spans a wide range of identities and experiences, including:

- Race, ethnicity, and cultural identity. Over 60 ethnicities expressed
- Gender identity and sexual orientation. 5 Gender Identities & 5 Sexual Orientations
- Socioeconomic background, including strong representation of first-generation from low-income experiences.
- Disability and health, including physical disabilities, chronic illness, mental health conditions, and neurodivergence
- Caregiving roles, including members supporting children, adults, and individuals with disabilities
- Religion and spirituality, with members expressing both inclusion needs and challenges related to religious observance. Over 9 religions reported.
- Professional diversity, spanning roles from entry-level staff to executive leadership across all institutional types. Over 82 distinct positions.

The data makes clear that DEIB is intersectional, members often identify across multiple dimensions simultaneously (e.g., caregiver + first-generation + neurodivergent). This reinforces that inclusive practices must be holistic, not just siloed.

### **2. Inclusion and Belonging Remain Central Priorities**

While representation is present, survey responses consistently emphasized a deeper need: belonging.

Members shared:

- Concerns about feeling excluded from informal networks or professional spaces
- A desire for more inclusive environments shaped by leadership behaviors

- A need for intentional culture-building, not just programming

This underscores a key takeaway: DEIB is not only about “who is in the room,” but whether individuals feel valued, supported, and able to contribute meaningfully.

### **3. Strong Demand for Practical, Skills-Based DEIB Training**

Across responses, members expressed interest in actionable, applied learning opportunities, including:

- Supporting neurodivergent students and colleagues
- Addressing mental health and accessibility needs
- Improving communication practices for diverse populations
- Creating inclusive workplaces and equitable hiring/retention strategies
- Understanding and supporting:
  - First-generation students
  - Immigrant/refugee communities
  - Student parents
  - Religious diversity
  - Underrepresented and marginalized populations

A consistent theme emerged: Members are seeking practical tools and guidance that translate DEIB values into everyday professional practice.

### **4. Neurodivergence Emerged as a Critical Focus Area**

One of the most consistent and urgent themes across the dataset was neurodivergence.

Respondents specifically:

- Identified as neurodivergent themselves (e.g., ADHD, autism, learning disabilities)
- Indicated they work with neurodivergent students regularly
- Requested guidance on:
  - Accessible communication strategies
  - Flexible service delivery
  - Better understanding of neurodiverse needs

This feedback clearly signaled a gap between current practices and member needs.

#### Strategic Outcome

In direct response, EASFAA:

- Directly targeted subject matter experts to present on working with neurodivergent students through the financial aid lens, focused on understanding, inclusive communication, and equitable service delivery

### **5. Survey Results Directly Informed the EASFAA DEIB Calendar**

The survey also revealed the importance of recognizing and valuing the full range of identities and experiences across the membership.

Members highlighted:

- Religious observances and the need for greater awareness
- Cultural identity and heritage recognition
- Awareness of invisible identities (e.g., disability, caregiving, mental health)

#### **Strategic Outcome**

These findings led to the creation of the EASFAA DEIB Calendar, designed to:

- Recognize diverse cultural, religious, and identity-based observances
- Increase awareness across membership and leadership
- Support more inclusive scheduling and programming decisions
- Serve as a practical, year-round tool for embedding DEIB into operations

The calendar reflects a key principle reinforced by the survey: Inclusion requires proactive awareness, not reactive accommodation.

### **6. DEIB as a Strategic Imperative for EASFAA**

The survey results affirm that DEIB is not a peripheral initiative, it is central to:

- Member engagement and retention
- Professional development relevance
- Student success outcomes
- Organizational culture and leadership effectiveness

Members are looking to EASFAA to:

- Lead with intentional, informed DEIB strategy
- Provide practical tools and resources
- Foster a welcoming and inclusive professional community

The EASFAA DEIB survey demonstrates that our membership embodies the full spectrum of diversity, across identity, experience, and perspective. Just as importantly, it highlights a shared commitment to building a more inclusive, informed, and supportive professional community.

The launch of the DEIB Calendar paired with the calendar awareness presentation at the conference and our Tuesday at 2 session on Neurodiversity 101 are direct, tangible outcomes of member voice. These efforts mark a transition from awareness to action, ensuring that DEIB is not only discussed, but meaningfully integrated into how we serve our members and how we must serve our students.