

## Background from the U.S. Department of Education<sup>1</sup>

*Section 427 requires each applicant for funds (other than an individual person) to include in its application a description of the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally-assisted program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs. This provision allows applicants discretion in developing the required description. **The statute highlights six types of barriers that can impede equitable access or participation: gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age.** Based on local circumstances, you should determine whether these or other barriers may prevent your students, teachers, etc. from such access or participation in, the Federally-funded project or activity. The description in your application of steps to be taken to overcome these barriers need not be lengthy; you may provide a clear and succinct description of how you plan to address those barriers that are applicable to your circumstances. In addition, the information may be provided in a single narrative, or, if appropriate, may be discussed in connection with related topics in the application.*

## Local Circumstances

At Winthrop, none of the following characteristics impede equitable access or participation in opportunities: Gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. Winthrop recruits and welcomes diverse populations. Founded as a women's college in 1886, Winthrop has a long history of serving underserved populations. For example, Winthrop ranked second in the nation by the Education Trust<sup>2</sup> as a top performing institution supporting black student success. In 2021-22, over 60% of Winthrop's undergraduate population is female and over 40% come from groups underrepresented in higher education.<sup>3</sup>

Winthrop's mission articulates our efforts to recruit and retain students and employees from diverse backgrounds. *Winthrop prides itself on being an institution of choice for groups traditionally under-represented on many college campuses... Winthrop has a diverse and able faculty and professional staff of national caliber and supports their work as effective teachers, scholars, researchers, practitioners, and creative artists.*<sup>4</sup> Our Office of Diversity & Student Engagement provides students, faculty members, and staff with several avenues through which they can enhance their knowledge about other cultures and the diversity issues that individuals belonging to such cultures face in today's society.<sup>5</sup> The Office of Accessibility cultivates an

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/gepa427.doc>; OMB Control No. 1894-0005; Exp 06/30/2023

<sup>2</sup> Nichols, A. H., & Evans-Bell, D. (2017). *A look at Black student success: Identifying top-and bottom-performing institutions*. Washington, DC: The Education Trust.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.winthrop.edu/uploadedFiles/institutional-effectiveness/cds20212022final.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.winthrop.edu/aboutus/mission-statement.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.winthrop.edu/diversity/>

atmosphere of accessibility independence for the members of our campus community who possess a disability recognized under the ADA.<sup>6</sup> *Winthrop offers a variety of services and opportunities for our student veterans and other military-affiliated students, and we encourage you to utilize these services.*<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Winthrop's efforts hire and retain a diverse body of talented and expert employees is led by the Vice President of Human Resources, Employee Diversity, and Wellness and Associate Vice President for Human Resources/Chief Diversity Officer. Together, the Chief Diversity Officer (HR) and Assistant Dean for Student Diversity and Inclusive Excellence work to actualize Winthrop's diversity goals and objectives.<sup>8</sup>

## Program Purpose

The Winthrop McNair Scholars Program prepares low-income individuals who are first generation college students and undergraduates from underrepresented backgrounds to be successful in doctoral programs by providing research and other opportunities as well as informational and financial aid assistance throughout the graduate admissions process. Winthrop's program includes, but is not limited to, a paid summer research experience, faculty mentoring, workshops, graduate admissions test preparation, graduate application support, and travel to present research and explore graduate programs.

Winthrop's program is funded by a five-year renewable TRiO grant from the U.S. Department of Education. \$261,888 in federal funding is provided each year for programming and materials that will help 30 eligible students prepare for graduate study. This represents approximately 75% of program costs. Winthrop contributes the remaining 25% of the budget with cash and in-kind support.

The U.S. Department of Education describes the program in this way:

*Through a grant competition, funds are awarded to institutions of higher education to prepare eligible participants for doctoral studies through involvement in research and other scholarly activities. Participants are from disadvantaged backgrounds and have demonstrated strong academic potential. Institutions work closely with participants as they complete their undergraduate requirements. Institutions encourage participants to enroll in graduate programs and then track their progress through to the successful completion of advanced degrees. The goal is to increase the attainment of Ph.D. degrees by students from underrepresented segments of society.* (Downloaded 4/21/2022 from <http://www.ed.gov/programs/triomcnair/index.html> )

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.winthrop.edu/student-affairs/accessibility/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.winthrop.edu/student-affairs/military-and-veterans/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.winthrop.edu/uploadedFiles/trustees/portal/quarterly-reports/DiversityInitiativesReportOct2019.pdf>

**Below are the steps Winthrop will take to ensure equitable access to and preparation in the McNair program.**

- 1) Deliberately and prudently recruit and select program participants and staff that represent McNair eligibility requirements, including race, ethnicity, and citizenship. For hiring of staff, first preference will be given to qualified applicants who successfully completed the McNair program.**
- 2) Uphold relevant University Policies regarding equity in access and participation.** This includes the current Equal Employment Opportunity Statement (revised 12/01/18, <http://www.winthrop.edu/uploadedFiles/hr/policies/EqualEmploymentOpportunityStatement.pdf>). That statement includes the following local circumstances and guidance which will be followed in the McNair program.

*Winthrop University recognizes that employees are the essential resource of the institution. Winthrop is committed to the principles of equal employment. It is the policy of the University that all personnel related decisions be made without regard to race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy and childbirth, or related medical conditions), national origin, age (forty plus / 40+), protected disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or other characteristic protected under applicable federal, state or local law. This policy applies to all personnel actions including, but not limited to, recruitment, hiring, classification/compensation, benefits, promotions, transfers, layoffs, recall from layoffs and educational, social or recreational programs of this institution.*

*In addition, Title II of the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 (GINA) protects applicants and employees from discrimination based on genetic information in hiring, promotion, discharge, pay, fringe benefits, job training, classification, referral and other aspects of employment. GINA also restricts employers' acquisition of genetic information and strictly limits disclosure of genetic information. Genetic information includes information about genetic tests of applicants, employees, or their family members; the manifestation of diseases or disorders in family members (family medical history); and requests for or receipt of genetic services by applicants, employees, or their family members.*

*The President of the University is committed to equal opportunity in employment and is ultimately responsible for the development and implementation of equal employment policies. Specific authority and responsibility for administering equal employment has been delegated to the Vice President for Human Resources, Employee Diversity, and Wellness who administers related policies and procedures in collaboration with the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and their respective staff members. Full cooperation of all administrators, managers, supervisors and other employees in achieving the goal of equal employment is expected.*

*No one will be subjected to, and the University prohibits, any form of discipline or retaliation for reporting, pursuing, or cooperating in the investigation of complaints of employment discrimination that are consistent with this policy.*

*Equal employment opportunity is an integral part of the mission and purpose of the University.*

- 3) Ensure that online program communication is conveyed in accessible formats, as per the University policy regarding Section 508<sup>9</sup> that went into effect 01/18/2018. A helpful check list is found here: <https://webaim.org/standards/wcag/WCAG2Checklist.pdf>.**
- 4) Advertise requests for participant and personnel applications using online resources and physical locations that are easily accessible to underrepresented and disadvantaged populations.**
- 5) Regularly review all existing program communications, documents, and policies to ensure the language and procedures are inclusive of and welcoming to groups historically underrepresented.**
- 6) Include a discussion of this policy in the training of new personnel.**
- 7) Solicit and use constructive recommendations from new program contacts regarding ways to improve Winthrop McNair equity in access and participation.**
- 8) Involve all key staff in decisions for and recruitment of diverse, qualified staff and program participants.**
- 9) Address concerns about potential violations of this policy and/or GEPA best practices as quickly as possible, documenting progress to resolving the issue within 10 business days.**
- 10) Post this statement on the program website ([www.winthrop.edu/mcnair](http://www.winthrop.edu/mcnair)).**

Last Updated April 21, 2022

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.winthrop.edu/web/section-508-explained.aspx>