Diversity Statement for WMUK 102.1 FM | September 2020

Why diversity is important to our public media work.

WMUK-FM is licensed to Western Michigan University (WMU). As part of WMU’s commitment to diversity, the Station annually provides a report on our internal diversity, as well as our efforts to reach an increasingly diverse audience with our reporting and programming. We also believe this is also an extension of our licensee’s educational mission, as well as the Station’s core mission of creating a more informed public.

The extent to which our staff and governance reflect such diversity.

WMUK is currently compromised of ten (10) full-time employees and one (1) part-time employee. Within the Station unit, the General Manager is an African-American male, the Corporate Support and Major Giving Manager is an Indian-American female, and one part-time employee is an African-American female. Additionally, there were four news interns between 1 October 2019 and 30 September 2020 – of this group two were white females, and one was an African-American male.

With regard to our governance, there are eight (8) Board of Trustees of Western Michigan University (the license holders for WMUK 102.1 FM). Of these eight, two are minority female trustees (one Asian-American, one African-American). Additionally, WMUK’s governance includes the President of the University, who is an African-American male.

Additionally, WMUK and WMU seek to reach diverse candidate pools as part of our employment outreach. This includes posting to minority job banks, both locally and nationally, when employment opportunities become available.

Progress we’ve made to increase our diversity in the last 2-3 years.

In recent years, WMUK has maintained efforts to reach diverse communities through both local reporting and interviews by staff. While our efforts in 2020 were largely hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, we still provided timely coverage of the local Black Lives Matters protests and counter-protests, as well as the response by local law enforcement. In particular, one member of our news staff produced a three-part series exploring the aftermath of the BLM protests for the Black community of Kalamazoo. The reporter and producer is an African-American female with extensive connections within the community that was the target of the series.

Additionally, a locally-hosted music and arts program (“Let’s Hear It”) carried a number of interviews on topics of importance to minority listeners. Many of these interviews were with visiting guest or local minority artists who discussed their works on-air, as well as their efforts to promote diversity within their art forms.
In January 2020, WMUK implemented a station-wide strategic change in mission that resulted in a significant change in our programming format and goals. Our primary channel on 102.1 FM shifted to a mostly news format, and we moved classical music (local and syndicated) to a new 89.9 FM channel. This change has reinforced the consolidation of our on-air arts production staff and our News department, into a unified content team.

This change has allowed the Station to provide significantly more coverage of news-related issues due to our increased programming from national networks – many of which cover matters related to diversity. Coverage and analysis of the U.S. Black Lives Matter movement was a major part of this national coverage. Further, all of the midday news programs that we added for weekdays are hosted by female minorities. On our new Classical WMUK service, we have featured more classical works by Black composers.

Finally, the Station conducted a nationwide job search for a Morning Edition Host / Reporter, and one of the finalists was an African-American female. Unfortunately, due to a University-wide hiring-freeze (related to the global COVID-19 pandemic and budget implications thereof), we were forced to discontinue the search before an offer of employment was made to a candidate.

Our diversity plans for the coming year (FY 2021 | October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021)

- WMUK’s unified content unit will continue the Station’s commitment to covering issues affecting diverse communities across our region, through locally-produced programming. This includes increased efforts by Station staff to ascertain community needs via local community organizations. This work will help to inform the shape of our coverage, particularly regarding issues surrounding diversity.

- Our content team will also continue our efforts to produce 2-3 significant feature segments and/or interviews on the diversity issues relevant to the communities of West Michigan.

- As COVID-19 pandemic conditions allow, WMUK will continue to collaborate with organizations that promote diversity through participation in diversity-themed events.

- Finally, if a twelve-month hiring freeze is lifted by our University license, the Station will continue to recruit and interview qualified minority staff where employment opportunities exist, as well as for students seeking to participate in our paid News internship program.