

## **Fostering Inclusivity During the Holiday Season: A Guide**

### **Introduction:**

As we approach the holiday season, it is essential for our university community to reflect on fostering inclusivity. This resource aims to provide guidance on promoting an environment that respects diverse beliefs and traditions while maintaining a festive spirit on campus.

### **Why Embrace Inclusion?**

#### **1. Diversity and Inclusion:**

- Our university is a community of diverse cultures, beliefs, and traditions. Embracing secularism ensures that everyone, regardless of religious background, feels welcomed and included during the holiday season.

#### **2. Respect for Pluralism:**

- In a diverse community, it is crucial to recognize and respect various cultural celebrations that occur during the same period. An inclusive approach avoids favoring one tradition over another, fostering mutual respect among students and staff.

#### **3. Focus on Shared Values:**

- By adopting a more inclusive stance, we can emphasize universal themes of kindness, generosity, and community, transcending religious boundaries and promoting a sense of unity during the festive season.

### **Reconciling Traditions:**

#### **1. Nativity Scene Alternatives:**

- Consider replacing the traditional nativity scene with inclusive and culturally neutral decorations such as festive lights in the trees on University Avenue, winter landscapes, or symbolic ornaments representing peace and harmony.

#### **2. Decorate Spaces Thoughtfully:**

- Aim for decor that is visually appealing and evokes a sense of holiday cheer without relying on religious symbols. Utilize winter-themed decorations, such as snowflakes, evergreen wreaths, and seasonal colors, to maintain a festive atmosphere.

### **What to Keep:**

#### **1. Community Gatherings:**

- Continue to organize holiday events that bring the campus community together, emphasizing inclusivity and shared joy. Events like tree lighting ceremonies, festive concerts, and charity drives can be enjoyed by all.

#### **2. Inclusive Symbols of Celebration:**

- Embrace universally recognized symbols of celebration, such as decorated trees, wreaths, and lights, which are not tied to a specific religious tradition. These symbols promote a sense of festivity without excluding any particular group.

### 3. **Inclusive Language:**

- When communicating about holiday events, use language that is inclusive and neutral. Instead of focusing on specific religious holidays, highlight the spirit of joy, giving, and togetherness that unites us all.

## **Engaging the Campus Community:**

### 1. **Seek Input and Feedback:**

- Involve students, faculty, and staff in the decision-making process regarding holiday decorations and events. Solicit feedback to ensure that diverse perspectives are considered.

### 2. **Educational Initiatives:**

- Implement educational programs that highlight the cultural significance of various winter celebrations. Promote understanding and appreciation for the rich tapestry of traditions within our community.

### 3. **Encourage Personal Expressions:**

- Allow individuals to express their own holiday traditions within personal spaces. Dorm rooms, offices, and communal areas can feature individualized decorations, respecting the diverse backgrounds and beliefs of the campus population.

## **Incorporating Cultural Celebrations:**

### 1. **Hanukkah (December 18-26):**

- Include Menorah displays alongside other decorations. Organize educational sessions about the significance of Hanukkah and consider hosting a campus-wide menorah lighting ceremony.

### 2. **Kwanzaa (December 26 - January 1):**

- Incorporate the seven principles of Kwanzaa (Nguzo Saba) in campus messages. Encourage students and staff to create personal or communal Kwanzaa displays highlighting unity, self-determination, and collective work and responsibility.

### 3. **Diwali (October-November):**

- Host events that celebrate the Festival of Lights, including cultural performances, traditional foods, and the lighting of lamps or candles. Collaborate with cultural organizations to ensure authentic representation.

### 4. **Winter Solstice:**

- Recognize the significance of the Winter Solstice with decorations that highlight the changing seasons. Consider organizing nature-inspired events, like winter walks or stargazing sessions.

To make a traditional Christmas carol event more inclusive, consider incorporating a variety of holiday songs that represent different cultures and celebrations. Here's a diverse list of songs that can add inclusivity to your event:

1. **"Feliz Navidad" by José Feliciano:**

- A festive and upbeat song that blends English and Spanish, adding a touch of Latin flair to the celebration.

2. **"Dreidel, Dreidel, Dreidel":**

- A playful Hanukkah song that can introduce the joyous spirit of the Festival of Lights to the event.

3. **"Jingle Bells" (Various Versions):**

- Include renditions of "Jingle Bells" by artists from different cultural backgrounds to showcase the universality of this classic holiday tune.

4. **"Winter Wonderland" by Darlene Love:**

- A secular winter-themed song that captures the magic of the season without specific religious references.

5. **"Happy Xmas (War Is Over)" by John Lennon and Yoko Ono:**

- A song that combines holiday sentiments with a message of peace and reflection, suitable for a diverse audience.

6. **"The Chanukah Song" by Adam Sandler:**

- A humorous and inclusive song that highlights the celebration of Hanukkah in a lighthearted manner.

7. **\*"Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays" by NSYNC:**

- A pop song that celebrates the holiday season in a cheerful and inclusive way, suitable for a modern and diverse audience.

8. **"African Noel" (Traditional):**

- Incorporate this African-inspired carol to bring a unique and multicultural element to the event.

9. **"Deck the Halls" (Instrumental):**

- Opt for instrumental versions of familiar carols to focus on the melody and create a more inclusive atmosphere.

11. **"Fum, Fum, Fum" (Catalan Carol):**

- A lively and traditional Catalan carol that adds an international flavor to the event.

12. **"Seven Joys of Mary" (Traditional Appalachian Carol):**

- Introduce a folk and Appalachian touch with this joyful carol that has cultural diversity embedded in its roots.

13. **"Sleigh Ride" by The Ronettes:**

- A classic winter song that captures the joy of the season without specific religious connotations.

14. **"Betelehemu" (African Carol):**

- Infuse the event with the rhythmic and energetic sounds of this Nigerian Christmas carol.

15. **"We Need a Little Christmas" from "Mame":**

- A cheerful and inclusive song that emphasizes the joy and togetherness of the holiday season.

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By embracing a more inclusive approach that incorporates diverse cultural celebrations, our university can create an inclusive and enriching environment for all during the holiday season. This commitment to diversity reflects the values of a modern educational institution and fosters a sense of unity among our campus community.