

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) progress report

2024-2025

Introduction

The College continued to advance its commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB), building on the ambitions set out in our Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2025.

Across governance, teaching, recruitment, community engagement and the student experience, the College has worked to embed inclusive practice and remove barriers to participation.

Our work this year has focused on strengthening representation in decision-making structures, expanding community engagement activity, improving inclusive practice across recruitment and staff development, and continuing to enhance the accessibility of our physical and digital environments.

While significant progress has been made, the year has also highlighted the importance of improving data capture, developing clearer benchmarks for impact, and strengthening reporting mechanisms to support evidence-based action planning.

Symphony Orchestra, photo by Kirsten McTernan



Students

Inclusive teaching and learning

Departments have continued to broaden the diversity of artists, practitioners and consultants contributing to teaching through workshops, masterclasses and collaborative projects. These activities expose students to a wider range of creative perspectives while embedding inclusive practice within the curriculum.

Examples within the Design department during 2024-25 include choreographer June Campbell Davies, Artistic Associate with National Dance Company Wales, working with students on the Wearable Art project. The College also recognised Shubhra Nayar, founder of *The Great Elephant Migration*, as a Fellow of the College in recognition of her international creative and environmental work.

Inclusive consultation has also informed student productions. The puppetry production *Spawn* was supported by consultancy from The Chinese in Wales Association to ensure sensitive representation of a Chinese-Welsh family, and from Steph Bailey-Scott, Access, Inclusion and Participation Manager at Taking Flight Theatre, to advise on Deaf and hard-of-hearing access.

In drama teaching, sessions led by Jenn Jacob Evans explored approaches to 'de-gendering' dressing rooms and incorporating intimacy considerations in costume fittings, supporting students to develop inclusive production practices that avoid reinforcing binary gender assumptions.

Inclusive themes are also reflected in teaching projects. A BA1 design project worked with playwright Isley Lynn, whose work explores gender inequality, queer relationships and women's experiences.

Case Study: Craidd Partnership-Embedding Access and Inclusion in creative practice

We are a partner in the Craidd initiative, a collaboration between Welsh arts and cultural organisations aimed at strengthening access, inclusion and representation across the sector.

The partnership supports shared learning, co-creation and the integration of lived experience into decision-making and creative practice.

As part of this work, the College's Craidd *Agent for Change*, has been attending technical rehearsals at Theatr Clwyd to review access and sensory aspects of productions. Learning from these observations is shared with academic staff, production teams and students at RWCMD, helping to inform teaching, production planning and future collaborations. In doing so, accessibility and inclusive design principles are increasingly embedded within the training of emerging theatre professionals.

The partnership has also supported direct engagement with young disabled people through a series of creative workshops hosted by the College. Delivered by alumni and creative practitioners with lived experience of disability, these sessions introduced participants to

different creative practices while providing visible role models within the arts. The workshops created a supportive space for young people to explore artistic expression and gain confidence while learning more about pathways into creative education and careers.

In addition, the College piloted new approaches to accessible performance during the production of *The Adventures of David Copperfield*. A touch tour was delivered prior to a performance in the Bute Theatre. The tour enabled visually impaired audience members to explore elements of the set, costumes and props through touch before the performance began. Developed in collaboration with the Stage Management team, the initiative also provided students with practical experience of implementing accessibility measures in a live production environment.



Access and student recruitment

The College continues to monitor recruitment against targets aligned with the Strategic Equality Plan, with a focus on increasing participation among UK-domiciled students from under-represented backgrounds.

Recruitment data is reviewed through the Student Recruitment group, enabling early identification of trends and targeted interventions where required. During 2024-25 work began to strengthen analysis and reporting of admissions data to improve insight into representation across protected characteristics.

The College continues to collect and analyse data relating to recruitment, progression and achievement. Work during 2024-25 focused on improving the accuracy and consistency of this data to enable targeted action where disparities are identified. However, the College recognises the need to develop more robust analytical frameworks to support strategic decision-making and ensure that recruitment initiatives translate into measurable improvements in access. Longitudinal analysis is beginning to provide clearer insight into trends in student outcomes and will inform future planning.

Meanwhile, the Student Recruitment Team has worked to make recruitment events more inclusive by increasing visibility of accessibility guidelines and offering smaller group talks for prospective students who might experience sensory overload and those that may be anxious in large group settings.

Students

Inclusive library collections

In the 2024/25 academic year, we implemented a new Library collections management policy. This policy clarifies how we manage the material the library holds. It is designed so that diversity, inclusion, equity and belonging are guiding factors in how we acquire resources and make them available. For example:

- + We actively acquire material representing historically under-represented voices, helping our collections better reflect the diversity of the performing-arts world
- + We work closely with students and staff to review what's in our collections, listening to feedback and identifying where representation can be improved.
- + We make inclusive choices when selecting new resources, thinking carefully about who is represented, how accessible each format is, and the needs of users with protected characteristics.
- + We handle outdated or sensitive content responsibly, using content notes in the catalogue and on items, relocating or removing where appropriate, while not censoring material with ongoing educational or historical value.
- + We champion diverse voices in library displays and teaching material.

Governance and representation

During the year the College reviewed the composition of academic committees to strengthen representation and broaden perspectives in decision-making.

Membership has been expanded to include external advisers like members of the Craidd initiative to the DEIB committee from and representation from Hourly Paid Staff with expertise in equality and inclusion.

The College recognises the challenges in establishing an accurate baseline of protected characteristic data, particularly where declaration remains voluntary. In recent years, efforts have been made to improve data collection, including inviting all members to update their details via iTrent, the staff information system. However, response rates have remained relatively low, and declaration across committees continues to be inconsistent. The College will continue to explore approaches that encourage greater transparency and participation, while fully respecting individuals' choice around personal disclosure and maintaining trust and confidentiality.

Staff development and organisational culture

A structured induction programme has been introduced, including dedicated information on equality, diversity, and inclusive practice to ensure all new staff have a consistent foundation. In addition, staff development days have delivered targeted training on inclusive teaching strategies, anti-racism, and restorative approaches to conflict resolution.

Further cohorts of staff have completed restorative practice training, equipping teams with practical tools to support inclusive communication, manage conflict constructively, and strengthen collaboration across departments. Staff have also benefited from sector-focused collaborations such as the Craidd partnership, which promotes shared learning around accessibility and inclusive practice in professional theatre settings, reinforcing inclusive mindsets across departments.

Consultation on the new DEIB strategy was carried out during a scheduled staff development session. The session was organised around key thematic areas of the strategy, with structured discussions enabling staff to review priorities, provide feedback, and deepen their understanding of how the plan will be implemented in practice.

Community

Inclusive culture and engagement

Ensuring that engagement activity reflects the diversity of the communities served by the College has been a key focus during 2024-25.

Workshops and performance projects have engaged participants from a range of protected characteristic groups, including initiatives exploring inclusive music-making and accessible performance practices. Creative projects have incorporated approaches such as British Sign Language interpretation and accessible puppetry.

In addition, In partnership with Parkinson's UK, the College established the Good Vibrations Chorus, a weekly Parkinson's Choir that provides participants with social, physical, and emotional benefits. Students actively contribute to workshops, developing inclusive facilitation skills while supporting community wellbeing.

Music Matters 2026, photo by Kirsten McTernan



Community

Community partnerships

The College continues to strengthen relationships with community organisations to broaden engagement and support more inclusive pathways into arts education.

During 2024-25 the Community Engagement Partner began developing a series of partnership agreements with key community organisations working across arts, disability inclusion and community support, including:

- + Oasis One World Choir
- + TAN Arts
- + UCAN
- + Hijinx
- + The Wallich
- + Race Council Cymru

These partnerships aim to strengthen the College's connection with diverse communities while supporting wider access to creative opportunities and pathways into higher education.

Case Study:

Community wellbeing: Good Vibrations Chorus

The College recognises the important role that arts participation can play in supporting health and wellbeing within local communities.

In partnership with Parkinson's UK, RWCMD established a weekly Parkinson's Choir hosted at the College.

The choir provides a welcoming space where participants can experience the social, physical and emotional benefits of collective singing.

Central to the initiative is the involvement of the College's students, who actively support the delivery of workshops alongside staff. Students assist with warm-ups, musical leadership and participant engagement, helping to create a welcoming and

respectful space for all attendees. Their involvement not only enriches the sessions but also provides valuable learning opportunities.

Through direct interaction with participants, students gain greater awareness of accessibility, health-related barriers to participation, and the importance of inclusive practice in arts settings. This experience helps cultivate more inclusive mindsets and equips students with the skills needed to work compassionately and effectively with diverse communities throughout their future careers.

Music Matters 2026, photo by Kirsten McTernan



'I use music, especially singing, to engage communities and bring out people's personalities. Seeing the individual journeys participants go on is rewarding to a level I can't describe. It's addictive to see all the smiles and the joy that's created just from using singing.'

**Joshua Jones -
Chorus leader and graduate**

Community

Public and creative programming

Public engagement activity continues to align with national equality campaigns and awareness initiatives, while also reflecting the diversity of artists and creative voices presented through the College's performance programme.

Analysis of the 2024-25 creative programme indicates strong representation among headline artists and creative leadership. Within the music programme, 47% of headline artists were women, including performers such as Kathryn Stott, Laura Cannell, Maria Włoszczowska, Gaëlle Solal, Catrin Finch & Aoife Ní Bhriain, Rachel Podger and Norma Winstone. 25% of headline artists were artists of colour, including Dennis Rollins, Debasmita Bhattacharya & Gurdain Ryatt, Sidiki Dembélé, Rakesh Chaurasia & Shahbaz Hussain, Sun-Mi Hong and Zara McFarlane.

The Richard Burton Company programme also demonstrated strong representation in creative leadership, with 52% of productions directed by women and 16% directed by directors of colour. In addition, 32% of productions were based on texts written by women.

Programming initiatives during the year have also supported greater cultural diversity in performance. This included the reintroduction of Indian Classical concerts, which had paused during the Covid-19 period, delivered primarily in partnership with Asian Arts Agency in Bristol.

Alongside this programming activity, the College supported events including International Women's Day, Pride, Lunar New Year and Black History Month, celebrating the diversity of the College community and encouraging dialogue around equity and representation.

Community

External hires

The hire programme provided opportunities for a wide range of cultural organisations and community groups to use College facilities. This included events and performances involving organisations such as the Welsh Black Music Awards, South Wales Gay Men’s Choir, Cardiff Trans and The Songbirds Choirs, UCAN, and the Samarpan Nrithyalaya Classical Indian Dance Festival, alongside events organised by the Cardiff Filipino, Malaysian and Asian societies. Partnerships with external promoters and agencies also introduced new artists and audiences to the College, including Indian classical musicians through SAMA, Indus Music and SAYA Arts, Polish artists through Sherlock Events, and community-based events serving Muslim audiences through Agency 26.

Treasure Island, photo by Kirsten McTernan



Community

Sector engagement and institutional commitments

The College continues to engage with national equality frameworks to strengthen its institutional approach to inclusion.

During 2024-25 the College, along with University of South Wales, achieved the AdvanceHE Race Equality Charter Bronze Award, recognising progress in identifying and addressing racial inequalities in higher education. The award reflects the work undertaken by staff and students and provides a framework for further action to advance race equity across the institution.

Romeo and Juliet, photo by Kirsten McTernan



Case Study:

National Open Youth Orchestra: Inclusive Music Making

The National Open Youth Orchestra (NOYO) is a pioneering inclusive orchestra that brings together disabled and non-disabled musicians aged 11-25 to rehearse and perform contemporary classical music.

RWCMD, in partnership with BBC National Orchestra of Wales, hosts the Cardiff NOYO Ensemble. The programme provides advanced-level ensemble opportunities for young disabled musicians through accessible rehearsal and performance environments.

The programme enables young disabled musicians to develop their artistic skills at an advanced level while performing alongside non-disabled peers.

It also challenges traditional assumptions about orchestral performance, expanding the range of instruments, sounds and audiences associated with contemporary classical music.

In May 2025 the National Open Youth Orchestra performed at BBC Hoddinott Hall in Cardiff, bringing together young musicians from across the UK for a relaxed performance designed to be accessible for neurodivergent and disabled audiences.

NOYO Class, photo by Kirsten McTernan



