

The Dean's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Fellows Pilot Program at Michigan State University

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Introduction

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is fundamental to any university's institutional excellence. As such, it should be infused into the university's most important academic human resources—the curriculum, the compositional diversity of the university's students, faculty, and staff, as well as policies and practices designed to improve campus climate. DEI should also be integrated across admissions, faculty development, marketing and communication, and institutional advancement.

Yet, this is not the case in most universities of higher education. During an era of shrinking university budgets nationwide, DEI work is often introduced as an additive, rather than embedded into the overall university system. Moreover, it tends to be the least resourced work in higher education administration. DEI work also tends to be funded by non-recurring budget streams, instead of recurring ones, and therefore the work can easily be discontinued. A 2019 *Insight into Diversity* study reveals that even though DEI costs have increased by nearly a third from 2014/15 to 2018/19 academic years, it accounts for an extremely low 0.49 percent of university-wide budgets (Insight to Diversity, para. 3).

In response to the turmoil of visible social injustices nationwide, universities want to present the image that they take DEI seriously. Therefore, they perform DEI, that is, create visible expressions of DEI support—webpage, statements, and token appointments that are neither institutionalized nor embedded in the administrative structure of the university. Because these appointments are made at the whim of a sitting administrator, they may be dissolved when another administrator arrives. Moreover, individuals chosen to do this work are often not tenured, and therefore are vulnerable to censure and may refrain from pushing for impactful DEI change for fear of losing their positions, jobs, and livelihood. Recent studies show that university Chief Diversity Officers on average do not last very long in their positions (Hamilton, 2021; Fairchild, 2020; Cutter and Weber, 2020).

Against this backdrop, the College of Social Science (SSC) wanted to assume a leadership position in the DEI space at Michigan State University (MSU). Towards these ends, the College created a new position of Associate Dean for DEI. This Associate Dean however had little to no support for the work that needed to be done, as the College failed to prioritize DEI in its budgeting or funding. Thus, the SSC's Dean's DEI Fellow's Pilot Program was created to help propel the College's DEI agenda. The authors of this article are members of the first cohort, which included rotating graduate student membership.

We ground the development of the Dean's DEI Fellow's Pilot Program in broader MSU social context, reflecting on our experience with this program, and sharing the lessons learned. We view the lack of resources/support in MSU's College of Social Science in relation to other colleges at MSU, Colleges of Social Sciences (or equivalent Arts and Sciences colleges) nationwide, Schools in the Big 10 Conference, and DEI award-winning Champion institutions. Framing our discussion within the available literature, we make recommendations concerning the under resourcing (budgets, human resources) of DEI projects and programming, the performative nature of DEI structures (single position, lack of infrastructure), and the fact that DEI is not built into the reward structures (e.g., tenure and promotion) of most institutions.

Origins. In March 2020, there was a dean transition at MSU's SSC. The outgoing Dean was assuming a more senior leadership position as Provost at a peer institution. Because of this transition, an Interim Dean was named. The past Dean had conceptualized the position of Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion before she left the university and hired the existing Faculty Excellence Advocate¹ to fill that position after a university-wide search process. Coming on the heels of the murder of George Floyd, and the Black Lives Matter Movement, the Interim Dean of Michigan State University's largest college wanted to have the SSC assume a leadership position in the DEI space. While there was an articulated intent to build and advance DEI in SSC, the resources and staffing for this work was non-existent. Therefore, with the encouragement of the new Interim Dean, the in-coming Associate Dean for DEI visioned a Dean's DEI Fellows Pilot Program which would provide support for DEI work in the College.

The in-coming Associate Dean and the chair of the DEI committee in one of the SSC departments set about the task of imagining what this pilot program would look like. The process was data driven. We scoured the internet for similar programs in the Big Ten Conference and further. The institutions that we explored had various DEI structures and levels of support. Universities with the highest levels of support, had DEI administrators (i.e., Chief Diversity Officer at the university level, Associate or Assistant Deans, and/or Director of DEI Offices at the College level) with support staff (i.e., Assistant Director, program coordinator) embedded into their overall DEI structures, clear and actionable DEI strategic plans, recruitment programs for future students, required and elective DEI courses, and mentoring initiatives for pre-college students. In addition, peer institutions, for the most part, provided more support for program participants than we were able to secure for our DEI Fellows Program.

Our initial idea was to bring together faculty (tenure-stream and fixed term, or those on short-term contracts), academic staff, and graduate students to work together on identified College-wide DEI concerns. After consultation with the Interim Dean, however, the program scope was narrowed to only include faculty. The central question that propelled the creation of the Dean's DEI Fellows Program was the following: What does a leader who is committed to, and demonstrates equity and inclusion act like and what is that skill set? Working under the premise that universities, like other communities, have struggled to both attract, retain, and promote, diverse leaders and build inclusive environments, the SSC's Dean's DEI Fellows Pilot Program was envisaged as a competitive

¹ Faculty Excellence Advocates at Michigan State University work with faculty, department chairs, and the Dean's Office, to create a climate of, and meet its goals for, quality, inclusiveness, alignment, objectivity, consistency, and transparency of all academic human resource policies and practices (particularly faculty recruitment, retention, and advancement) in all the colleges at Michigan State University.

program that would attract faculty to build leadership skills around DEI and prepare the fellows to lead internally and externally. Additionally, the Dean's DEI Fellows Pilot Program would offer opportunities for professional development around DEI issues.

Purpose and Focus. During their fellowship year, the DEI Fellows would be expected to participate in the creation and structuring of DEI programming in the SSC, including: (1) assisting with the development of innovative strategies and programs that advance DEI in SSC; (2) having meaningful impact on DEI policy in SSC and its units; (3) serving in collaboration and partnership with the Associate Dean for DEI to realize the overall SSC DEI strategic initiative; (4) undertaking one or more mutually defined DEI projects that benefit the Fellow's unit and SSC at large; and (5) participating in weekly meetings with the Dean's DEI Fellows team.

The Associate Dean and the Interim Dean pinpointed key DEI focus areas for the pilot program, including:

(1) Inclusive Climate: Implement a comprehensive College climate assessment system to regularly evaluate the climate for equity and inclusion in SSC.

(2) Equity and Access for Students: Develop innovative strategies to advance the recruitment, retention, funding and success, graduation/promotion of diverse students. For instance, the creation of a summer immersion program for first generation students, or First-Generation Scholars program.

(3) Education and Learning: Design/re-design curriculum and pedagogy that prepares students for a diverse and inclusive world (e.g., creation of a DEI minor).

(4) DEI Criteria for Faculty Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure: Assess SSC policy and practices on key decision points for faculty—annual review, promotion, assessment of academic progress, etc.—to ensure that faculty governing documents relating to Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure support greater equity and inclusivity.

(5) Leadership and Professional Development: Develop training and skills that nurture diverse talent and cultivate leaders and professionals to implement and sustain a diverse, equitable, and inclusive world. (Diversity Fellows SSC, 2021)

Fellows would submit an application for the Dean's DEI Fellows Pilot Program which addressed proposed DEI focus areas that they would like to concentrate on during the first year of the program. Successful Fellows would report directly to the Associate Dean of DEI and would be appointed for a negotiable 1-2-year term. Each Dean's DEI Fellow would receive \$4,000 which could be used for professional development, teaching/research materials, funding for community partners, or other appropriate uses, as determined by the fellow and approved by the Associate Dean for DEI. Funds could not however be used for compensation or for course buyouts or be in conflict with Michigan State University policy regarding expenditure of general funds.

Being mid-semester in the pilot year, the Interim Dean and Associate Dean agreed that a competition would not be launched, but rather, the Associate Dean would handpick members of the 2020-2021 Dean's DEI Fellows Pilot Program cohort. The Fellows included a tenured Associate Professor in the School of Criminal Justice, and past chair of her school's DEI committee; a tenured Associate Professor in the School of Social Work, and current chair of his school's DEI committee; and a Fixed Term Assistant Professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, and current chair of his department's DEI committee, who in collaboration with the Associate Dean for DEI and her DEI graduate assistant carved out activities for the initial 1.5 semester appointment, including:

Creating two DEI Minors—domestic and global focus;

Creating three new courses for the DEI Minors, including one entry course on “Critical DEI Studies” covering both DEI domestic and global issues; and two capstone seminars covering domestic and global issues, respectively;

Creating a DEI Small Grants Program for faculty, staff, and graduate students;

Creating a proposal for an empowered and inclusive Office of DEI/Associate Dean for DEI Office Structure redesigned organizational diagram;

Writing and publishing articles about our process.

University Climate

The DEI Fellows Program was implemented on the heels of a major sexual abuse scandal and series of racist incidents on campus emblematic of the need for change. Regarding the former, allegations of serial sexual abuse by MSU faculty member Larry Nassar became public in September 2016, with the publication of a story in *The Indianapolis Star* (Evans, Alesia & Kwiatkowski, 2016). Ultimately, the allegations of more than 160 women and girls (Correa & Louttit, 2018) resulted in a 175-year prison sentence for Nassar for child pornography and first-degree criminal sexual conduct (Adams, 2018). Although MSU reassigned him from clinical and patient responsibilities after receiving a criminal complaint a few months prior to the initial story (Evans, Alesia & Kwiatkowski, 2016) and subsequently fired him (Adams, 2018), survivor complaints (including some to university personnel and local police) were ignored for decades prior (Dolce, 2018; see also NPR's *Believed* podcast). As a result, several MSU administrators (including President Lou Anna Simon) and other personnel resigned, and/or were charged, and/or convicted for actions or inaction related to the Nassar case (Hauser & Zraick, 2018).

While the MSU community was still reeling from this egregious failure, a series of racist incidents occurred on campus, three in October 2019. In one incident, two men trespassed on the property of the MSU Hillel Jewish Student Center and destroyed the Sukkah during a Jewish holiday (Tidwell, 2019). In another, two African American students reported that a toilet paper noose was hung on their dorm room door (Walker, 2019). The culprits stated that it was not meant to resemble a noose (Schellong, 2019). Afterwards, the executive director for residential education and housing, Ray Gasser, sent out an email in which he referred to the noose incident as a “Halloween prank.” This

email was not well received by the Black student population already aggrieved by the noose. Students saw the email as offensive and dismissive to their feelings (Johnson, 2019). During a town hall meeting organized by the Black Students Association and Associated Students of MSU, Black students made it clear that a response like Gasser's normalizes racial bias at MSU (Walker, 2019). Gasser, who was in attendance, apologized, and apologized again in another email to MSU students, while reaffirming the university's efforts to make its living space diverse and inclusive (Johnson, 2019).

In the wake of the noose incident, an Associate Professor of public relations and social media in the College of Communication Arts and Sciences created a survey to understand how various people respond to racist online speech. The survey asked students to rate racially charged social media statements by determining the degree to which the statements were stereotypical, offensive, positive, funny, or prejudiced (Burr, 2019). While the survey included a warning that the content could be considered racially stereotypical and offensive, this statement appeared at the bottom of the survey (Johnson, 2019). Minoritized students insisted that the disclaimer was insufficient, and many reported feeling ill and unsafe on campus after the survey was circulated (Johnson, 2019b). The survey was taken down, but it had nevertheless set into motion, conversations about the racial climate at MSU and the loopholes inherent in the university's IRB process (Guzzman, 2019). In the aftermath, MSU Black Students' Alliance hosted a community forum and students protested on campus, voicing concerns that the university does not adequately respond to racism on campus (Johnson, 2019a).

These incidents continued into 2020. In February, the gift shop at the Wharton Center for Performing Arts displayed figures of historical and current African American leaders hanging from a rack resembling a tree (Das, 2020). Again, MSU apologized, calling the display "inappropriate and insensitive" (Rahman, 2020). In his response letter, MSU President acknowledged the traumatic impact of the display, especially on African American communities, noting the launch of racial-bias education for Wharton staff, a university-wide DEI strategic planning, and the recruitment of a new Chief Diversity Officer (Das, 2020). Later that month, during an "Ask [the] President" student event, a series of racist remarks were posted on the Q & A screen by audience members (Guzman, 2020). Black students were frustrated when the MSU police pointed to free speech as the reason not to investigate the anonymous comments (Monroe, 2020).

Though the frequency of such incidents has declined, perhaps due to a suspension of on-campus activity resulting from the COVID-19 global pandemic, these episodes have nonetheless, continued. In June of 2020, a university employee was investigated after posting racist comments and stories on social media (Berg, 2020). The employee was initially suspended, but later fired in response to a student-led petition for dismissal (Chhabra, 2020). In 2021, students continued to express frustration with the university response to racism on campus. At a March 25th Community Town Hall on Anti-Asian Violence, students linked racialized rhetoric, like comments by an MSU donor targeting Vietnamese businesses, to violence against Asian and Asian-American communities. They called for the university to change the name of the offending donor-funded program and expressed more general frustration at the failure of MSU to listen and be held accountable (Hall, 2021). Student pressure for change at MSU is not at all new and goes back to the Civil Rights Era. (Multicultural Center, para. 2).

University Transitions

Following the fallout engendered by the Nassar affair, a new President and Provost were hired at Michigan State. President Samuel Stanley, an infectious disease medical doctor by training, joined Michigan State on August 1, 2019, from Stony Brook University, where he had served as President. (Office of President, para. 1-2) Provost Teresa K. Woodruff, the past Dean and Associate Provost of Northwestern's Graduate School and an endowed professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology, was hired to fill the position ceded by Interim Provost Teresa Sullivan, President Emerita of University of Virginia, who had agreed to serve her alma mater in this capacity at the invitation of President Stanley (Provost, para. 3). With both President Stanley and Provost Woodruff in place, in late summer of 2020, a search committee was convened to hire a new Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer (VP CDO). Jabbar Bennett, an Associate Professor of medicine and former Associate Provost for Diversity and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer at Northwestern University was hired (President, para. 1). Bennett's position was brand-new, as Michigan State University had previously only had a Senior Advisor to the President on Diversity, who also served as the Director of the Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives (OI3). Prior to Bennett's hire, President Stanley had set up a DEI Steering Committee as well as a Taskforce on Racial Equity. The steering committee was tasked to:

Produce a university-wide inventory of DEI efforts and initiatives;

Aggregate feedback across campus and from alumni and external partners;

Review and highlight best practices and insights on DEI efforts from benchmarking;

Identify and recommend metrics, central and unit based, to measure on-going progress for DEI across MSU; as well as unit/role accountability for DEI initiatives and outcomes across MSU;

Make recommendations for a Strategic DEI Planning Process for the university, with short-term, mid-range and long-term action items and goals, with the end goal of making MSU a national leader in this area." (President, para., 7)

The Racial Equity Taskforce's work concentrated on three focus areas: 1) policing; 2) campus climate and safety, 3) and faculty and staff diversity. For the first time in the authors' cumulative 45-year tenure at Michigan State, the university was engaging and having open dialogue about DEI.

Just before the hiring of the VP CDO, the Associate Dean for DEI in the SSC collaborated with two other DEI Deans on campus to create a Council of Diversity Deans (CODD), whose aim it was to provide a university level "forum for Assistant and Associate Deans with college level responsibility for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Michigan State University." The Council "provides recommendations for policies and procedures that strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion within the MSU community . . . [and] collaborates with university administration including the President, Provost, Vice President for DEI, and Deans to inform the University's overall action plan for DEI." (Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives, para. 1-2)

The Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic forced another transition and presented many challenges that would add additional roadblocks to the advancement of DEI initiatives at MSU. As a result of the pandemic, the university experienced an economic loss from the emergency measures it had to take to mitigate the effects of the virus. One of the ensuing consequences came, in April 2020, with the announcement from university administration that there would be a tuition freeze (Guerrant, 2020). This resulted in widespread budget reductions ranging from salary cuts at the executive and faculty levels (including no merit increases), to hiring freezes, and suspending matching contributions on retirement plans and furloughs for non-academic staff (Office of the President, 2020). Discretionary expenses were discouraged, and a 3% budget reduction was applied to academic administrative units (Office of the President, 2020). At the same time, employees were instructed to work remotely. Under this backdrop, DEI work and programming, which ran on a skeletal basis, remained wrapped in tense climates due to the uncertainty about the financial future of the university.

The pandemic revealed differentials in the experiences of faculty, staff, and students. Minoritized and low-income populations were severely impacted, with many having uneven internet access. (Francis and Weller, 2021). Some students relied on public internet at fast food restaurants and parking lots to access courses. Others who had internet access at home may have experienced the doubly challenging reality of living in distracting and/or unsafe environments (Office of Civil Rights, 2021). These realities and environments were not learning-friendly, yet the university was not as proactive in addressing and adjusting to these circumstances with student success in mind as it could have been. These disparities were further exacerbated by instructors who demanded that students have cameras and other accessories to complete courses successfully. The differential impact of COVID was also revealed in the discomfort expressed by students who lived in suboptimal conditions and felt bullied by their professors' insistence that they turn on their computer cameras (Office of Civil Rights, 2021).

The pivot to remote learning also raised security concerns for many students who faced domestic/gender violence in their homes, at the hands of members of their households. Further, women (faculty and/or students) who bore the responsibility of childcare (and child education) or eldercare were adversely impacted (Office of Civil Rights, 2021). The members of the Dean's DEI Fellows program were all too aware of these disparities but struggled to address them due to the financial and systemic restrictions that were made more visible during the pandemic.

Challenges and Opportunities

The DEI Fellows Program operated in a financially restricted environment, which challenged the opportunities for funding and resources to accomplish the work. University and college priorities often placed DEI work at the low rung of the ladder. In research-intensive universities, research takes precedence over other pursuits. Thus, the expectations for research productivity (publications and grants) remain, and DEI work is seldom counted toward Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure. Therefore, in setting up the Dean's DEI Fellows Program, an expectation for scholarly production was necessarily built into the program. Yet, there was also resistance to incentivizing the participation of Fellows by granting time away from teaching or providing adequate monetary

relief. Neither were exemptions for other types of time release from preexisting workloads considered, despite the considerable amount of time needed to complete the DEI agenda for the first year of the program. Another form of resistance came with the lack of staff support for DEI work in the College—a dearth that the program was set up to address.

Effective DEI work is both collaborative and inclusive. The initial proposal for the DEI Fellows program included staff personnel, but there was reluctance to grant staff time away from their work to dedicate to the fellows' program. Shrinking budgets, financial cuts, and uncertainty due to the pandemic, made it even more difficult to fight resistance. Nonetheless, financial constraints do not explain the lack of prioritization of DEI work by university administrations. Such resistance is neither new nor resulting from the pandemic, rather it is a sign of systemic white supremacy which allows for a devaluation of DEI in support of the status quo, of things staying the same, of “the way it has always been done.” Despite this resistance, the Associate Dean for DEI was able to secure a small research budget for each fellow in recognition of their work in the program.

Accomplishments

In recognition of the need for a better resourced and more collaborative approach to DEI, Associate Dean and the DEI Fellows prioritized the construction of a proposal for a Diversity, Equity and Inclusive Affairs (DEIA) Office. The proposal provided an organizational structure, a description of additional DEIA office positions, and a vision for working with the other Associate Deans as an interdependent network to integrate DEI into every theater of operation in the College. To contextualize and justify the additional positions, a set of responsibilities was provided. Given MSU's ongoing budgetary constraints exasperated by the Nassar sexual assault survivor payout, related fines, and the pandemic, the proposal drew upon existing personnel in the college as much as possible. For example, the document asked for an incorporation of DEI responsibilities into the work of current communications and development specialists by allocating a portion of their time to DEI work, and the increasing of the Associate Dean for DEI appointment to .75 FTE from its present .51 FTE combined Associate Dean and Faculty Excellence roles. Fully integrating DEI into the College, we argued, would require additional positions, including an Assistant Director/Dean who would be in charge on the day to day running of the DEIA Office, an Assistant Director of DEI for Undergraduate and Graduate Affairs, an administrative assistant, as well as a graduate student assistant. The proposal forcefully tied DEI to academic excellence, included justifications for the infusion of DEI into every single college endeavor, and concluded with a description of the resources needed to realize the reconceptualized structure.

As part of our multipronged DEI college strategy, the DEI Fellows worked to create a DEI minor track for Michigan State University students. We conceptualized and created from the start, three new syllabi: an introduction to critical DEI studies and two exit capstone courses—domestic and global tracks. The three courses were visioned to capture the realities of all student populations in the SSC and beyond, both domestic and global.

“Introduction to Critical DEI Studies” is a 4-credit course aimed at introducing students to critical DEI issues, different DEI theoretical frameworks and the historical, structural, and cultural dimensions of DEI. Students are introduced to a wide range of scholarship—social justice issues and the varying dimensions of power and agency in the US and globally. The aim is to help students

recognize different dimensions of power and inequalities and how these inequalities manifest. The course provides a framework for the understanding these inequalities. The first few weeks of the course are dedicated to exploring the treatment of difference and differential access to power, using theoretical, historical, and cultural lenses. From local to global communities, "Introduction to Critical DEI Studies" engages various understandings of identity, intersectionalities, historic and current structural differences, social justice, and directions for change. At the end of the course, students are expected to:

Know the key concepts related to identity, power, oppression, and difference;

Understand how historical and structural relations of power and difference shape social relations and outcomes;

Explore theoretical approaches to explain different social outcomes;

Critically evaluate and assess disparities at the personal, interpersonal, structural, and cultural levels;

Exposure to potential strategies for and ability to effect change.

The themes and assigned readings in the introductory course were chosen consciously to touch on major DEI issues both locally and globally, giving the same amount of time to both the domestic and global components. This choice was made to introduce students to a variety of realities, which would in turn help them decide on which track—domestic or global—to focus on.

The exit capstone courses offer students a more focused and intensive study. The themes selected for each track remained constant even as geographical location changed. This too was intentional, so that students were able to assess how major issues affect individuals and groups in the US and how those issues may be different or have different effects on individuals and groups outside the US. The exit capstone courses allowed students an opportunity for intensive experiential learning and reading, focused on the principles, practice and application of DEI. Specifically, students examine the processes of societal, institutional, organizational, and personal change; and how various forms of supremacy underpin the resistance to these processes of change. The courses also examine how white supremacy culture and values manifest and intersect with other systems of domination to oppress multiple social groups. Each capstone DEI minor course culminates in a collaborative project highlighting the needs of a local organization for the domestic focus minor, or the needs of a local group which focuses on international issues or an international organization, for the global track. Both with the aim of jointly developing a proposal for change around a specific DEI issue.

The assignments for all three courses are designed to help students understand DEI in its broadest of terms, understand implicit and explicit bias, and develop an attitude for problem solving. The assignments in the exit courses are explicitly designed to help students be active observers and learners and involve themselves in enacting policies that can help solve an identified DEI issue important to the organizations with whom they are working. Students are expected to work in

collaboration with the said local or international organizations in tackling their identified DEI concerns.

The Dean's DEI Fellows also put together a proposal for establishing a Dean's DEI Small Grants Program for faculty, staff, and graduate students. These grants were conceptualized to advance DEI scholarship, support innovation, scale up initiatives, and provide avenues to make these initiatives sustainable. Two faculty grant tracks were envisioned—innovation and research. Faculty innovation grants are open to faculty holding majority appointments in the College of Social Science, and provide up to \$5,000 for social science initiatives, or innovations, that engage thoughtfully with, and advance SSC's educational mission of inclusive excellence. The College encourages collaborative innovation projects and will award up to 3 grants a year. Faculty research grants also provide up to \$5,000 for social science scholarship that engages thoughtfully with, and advances SSC's educational mission of inclusive excellence. Open to tenure stream and fixed term faculty holding majority appointments in the SSC, the college will fund up to 5 grants a year.

Staff holding majority appointments in the SSC are also eligible to apply for DEI funding in this small grants program. Staff grants are awarded for initiatives that have the potential for long-term transformative DEI change in the College. These initiatives could, for instance, help improve student and staff retention, climate, and DEI competency within the College. Like the faculty grants, collaborative projects are highly encouraged, and the College will award up to 2 grants a year. The graduate student small grants program funds graduate students in the SSC who are in good academic standing and are awarded for DEI dissertation research and dissertation completion. Each grant comes with \$5000 stipend.

Recommendations

Under-resourcing budgets and human resources for DEI projects and programming creates an environment of performative DEI, where choices of what is done or left undone are guided exclusively by the visible nature (hiring an administrator without resources, updating webspace etc.,) or impact of the said DEI activity. Institutions do this, so that, from the outside, it appears as though the institution is in fact doing transformative DEI work, when it is not. There is often a lack of DEI infrastructure, nor is DEI built into the reward structures (e.g., tenure and promotion) of most institutions.

As noted by the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education, effective DEI change requires organizational infrastructure, including fiscal, physical, and human resources (Worthington, Stanley, and Smith, 2020). This would include a DEI office similar to the one proposed by the fellows. Absent such infrastructure, goal achievement becomes very difficult. Such infrastructure may be complimented by programs similar to our Dean's DEI Fellows Program. For greatest impact, we recommend upfront and regular interaction and dialogue with, and support from, the Dean and other stakeholders in the Dean's office. It is also important to immerse the fellows into the college-level (DEI) leadership, which may also allow the fellows help promote change within their own units. Achieving DEI goals requires a balance between centralized and decentralized effort (Worthington, Stanley, and Smith, 2020).

In our experience, having faculty from tenure and non-tenure systems as well as graduate students in our DEI Fellows Program was very instrumental in creating an inclusive environment and a diversity of perspectives. Furthermore, we were able to incorporate international and domestic (USA) representation and expertise within the same cohort. Nonetheless, the absence of academic staff and other students from the undergraduate level was felt as a shortcoming that we strongly advocate for our program as well as similar efforts at other institutions. Ideally, there should also be a community liaison to represent the perspectives of the community in which the university resides. This representation is often left out of the conversation—a grave oversight, since they may hold key insight into innovative ways of reaching and collaborating with communities that are marginalized. Inclusive representation can mean more investment of resources on the part of administrators, which universities and colleges tend not to want to do. That notwithstanding, the labors of faculty in such programs should be recognized with course load reductions, annual review, and reappointment, promotion, and tenure credit.

Developing a minor and a grants program was met with support and constraints. Both initiatives were welcomed, however, the process of obtaining approval to implement the programming was constrained by budget concerns and required negotiation. Negotiating DEI investment is counterproductive, especially when universities insist that there can be no excellence without diversity. Since university missions and visions prioritize DEI, universities should necessarily fund DEI initiatives as a recurring expenditure. More efforts should be dedicated to envisioning short-, medium-, and long-term benefits to implementing transformational DEI strategies and programming beyond the performative trap of implementing the lowest costing visible DEI initiatives. Our experience underscores the need for continued work and support of DEI programming at the unit, college, and university levels. DEI must be integrated across multiple domains (Worthington, Stanley, and Smith, 2020).

Conclusion

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion literally permeates every facet of university life: faculty, staff, alumni, students, and future students. Nonetheless, universities are resistant to adequately resourcing this work, worsening already existing inequities, whereby minoritized faculty are expected to shoulder burdens of working in this space, with little or no funding or human resource support. What is more, DEI tasks are assigned to minoritized faculty, in addition to existing duties, and is not provided the necessary support.

The labor of DEI advocates and administrators is equally unrecognized and underappreciated (American Council on Education, 2020). As argued in this article, DEI work is often performative, with universities creating positions of convenience, and a visibility around DEI that makes it appear as though they are more committed than they actually are. Additionally, DEI sustainability tends to be lacking in universities because it is not embedded into the mission and structure of universities colleges, departments, and units as it should be. Moreover, DEI objectives are far too often contingent on the goals of a current dean, provost, or president, which provides no stability for the work, and makes its existence dependent upon the whims of a current administration. To propel transformative DEI change, these values must permeate all goals and objectives of universities, colleges, departments, and units, and must be supported at all levels of the university. It is not enough to simply form taskforces and steering committees or create scholarly platforms for the

study of race and anti-racism. The recommendations of these DEI scholars, taskforces, and steering committees must form the blueprint for effecting transformative DEI change and advancement within institutions of higher learning. Furthermore, university chairs/directors, deans, provosts, and presidents should be held accountable for this programming, and DEI successes and failures should be effectively tied to performance reviews for these administrators. When this occurs, DEI support programming, like our Dean's DEI Fellows Pilot Program will flourish in partnership with the institutions in which they inhabit.

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