

AN EVALUATION OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

By

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ABSTRACT

From the 1960s to the present day, there has been a steady increase in racial minorities on college campuses. The growth is undoubtedly due to the nation's increased diversity. The United States is more diverse than it has ever been before; this trend will continue, and most Americans will be people of color by 2050. Institutions have created various diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in response to the increased diversity on college campuses and the continued social injustices that plague our nation. However, diversity initiatives are not new to higher education. Over the past 60 years, PWIs have created diversity initiatives in response to ensuing federal legislation, student protests, and the influx of Black and underserved students entering PWIs. Previous diversity initiatives included safe havens, multicultural centers, hiring Chief Diversity Officers, and initiatives that stemmed from the Completion Agenda.

DEI initiatives are essential, yet institutions' initiatives must be sincere and not simply language appeasement if they want to ensure that their efforts lead to student success. To expand the limited research on the effectiveness of DEI initiatives, the researcher utilized a mixed-methods approach to examine the most commonly used DEI best practices and how these initiatives, strategies, and plans have been evaluated and measured. The results of the study reveal that higher education has made progress toward creating diverse, equitable, and inclusive campuses. Findings indicate that using data to measure DEI progress was a common and effective way to measure the progress of DEI goals. Yet, despite widespread efforts, only a few institutions have achieved their diversity goals.

Keywords: diversity, equity, inclusion, higher education

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

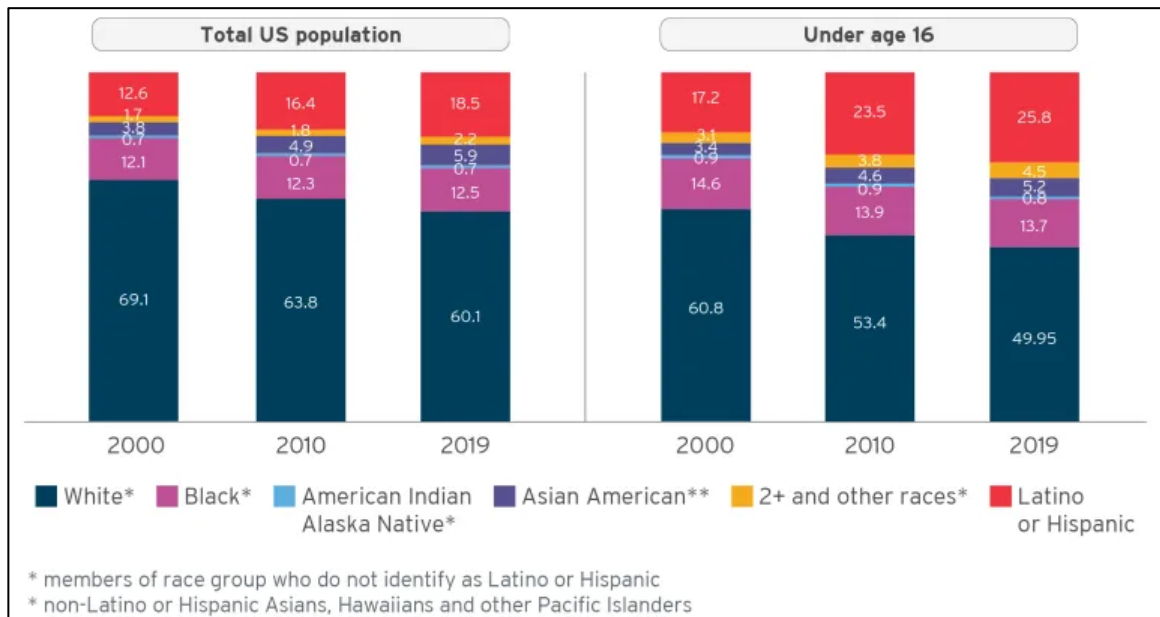
Social injustices and unrest sweep the nation and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) have become trending buzzwords in many organizations and institutions, including higher education. DEI cannot simply be rhetoric or a trend but a commitment to actions and decision-making that creates welcoming and inclusive environments where everyone is equally valued. Diversity is a permanent fixture in our society; therefore, institutions must not simply respond to it but embed it in their everyday practices. Diversity is essential if institutions hope to serve society's needs and the increasingly global scope of the economy. The American Council on Education (2012) reports that many colleges and universities share a common belief, which stems from experience, that diversity in their student bodies, faculties, and staff is essential to fulfilling their primary mission to provide a high-quality education. Diversity enriches the college experience, promotes a healthy growing society, strengthens communities, and enhances economic competitiveness. Yet even knowing the value of diversity, many institutions appear stifled in their progress to become a diverse campus. As a result, many institutions have experienced a precipitous decline in the enrollment of students from underrepresented minority groups, reversing decades of progress in the effort to ensure that all groups in American society have an equal opportunity for access to higher education. The nation's future requires that colleges and universities continue to reach out and make a conscious effort to build healthy and

diverse learning environments that are appropriate for their missions. The success of higher education depends on it.

Higher education institutions are presently more diverse than they have been in the past. Student populations represent the rich diversity of the United States. According to Frey (2020), the nation is diversifying faster than previously predicted. The Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development (2016) report that the United States population has steadily become more diverse over time. New estimates show that nearly four out of ten Americans identify with a race or ethnic group other than White and suggest that the 2010 to 2020 decade was the first time in the nation's history in which the White population declined in numbers (Frey, 2020).

Additionally, the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development (2016) reported that in 2014 almost half of the children in the United States under the age of 18 were people of color. Non-White Americans and diverse ethnicities in the United States will continue to increase. Due to the large share of people of color among young Americans, the Census Bureau projects that most Americans will be people of color by 2050. In 2019, for the first time, more than half of the nation's population under age 16 identified as a racial or ethnic minority. Among this group, Hispanic and Black residents comprise nearly 40% of the population. Frey (2020) states that as the nation becomes more racially diverse from the bottom-up of the age structure, more attention needs to be given to the needs and opportunities for America's highly diverse younger generations. The demographic dictates that this will be necessary to ensure success for these youth and the nation. Higher education has always been the cornerstone for the opportunities that Frey (2020) describes. Figure 1 depicts the census data reflecting changing race and ethnic profiles from 2000 to 2019.

Figure 1. Race and Ethnic Profile for Total U.S. Populations

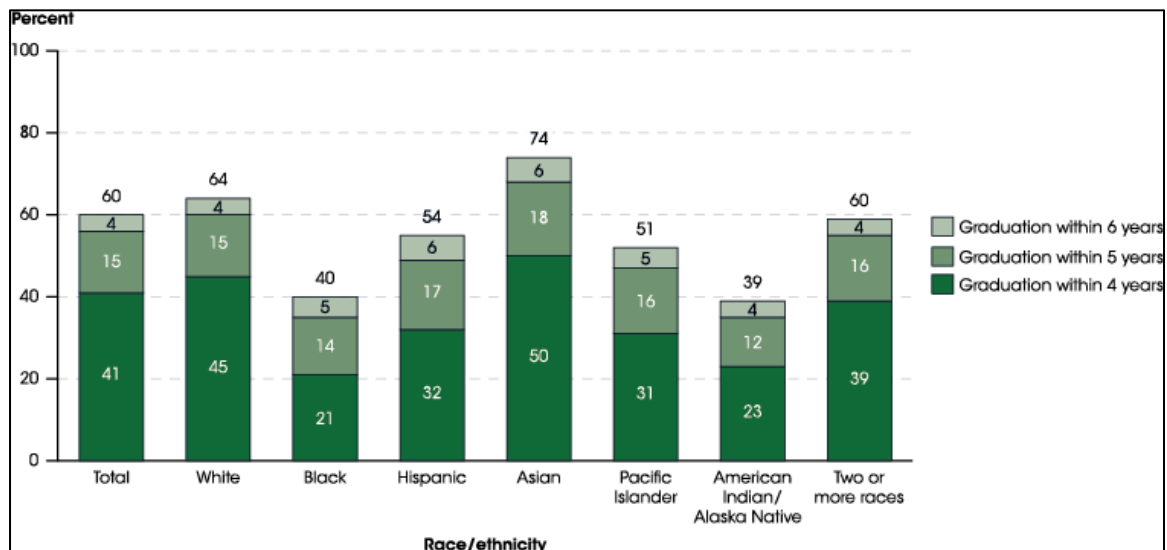


Source: Frey, 2020

Higher education has historically served a predominantly White student demographic but now must ensure they are prepared to serve a more diverse student population. Traditional academic approaches that are typically offered at predominantly White institutions that do not consider diversity, equity, and inclusion will no longer be enough to ensure student success. Education remains a crucial pathway for social mobility and economic opportunity for all students. For this to continue, it is critical to understand the challenges and the possibilities of advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in postsecondary education. Many institutional mission statements boast that they serve a diverse student population or prepare students to work in a global society. However, as colleges have become more accessible to more diverse student populations, it is evident that the needs of those students are not met as shown by the large gap between access and completion. Nationally, White students at public colleges are two-and-a-half times more likely to graduate than Black students and 60% more likely to graduate than Latino students (Sanchez & Kolodner, 2021). The National Center for Education and Statistics (NCES;

2019) provided a report on graduation rates from a 2010 cohort of students with no previous college experience seeking bachelor’s degrees at four-year postsecondary institutions. The information is based on race/ethnicity and time to completion. The graduation rates were highest for Asian students at 74%, followed by White students at 64%, students of two or more races were 60%, Hispanic students at 54%, Pacific Islander students at 51%, Black students at 40%, and American Indian/Alaska Native students at 39%. This is the data depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Graduation Rates of First-Time, Full-Time Bachelor’s Degree-Seeking Students at Four-Year Postsecondary Institutions, by Race/Ethnicity and Time to Completion: Cohort Entry Year 2010



Source: NCES, 2019

For over 60 years, Black students and other historically underserved populations have continued to feel a lack of support on predominantly White college campuses. In addition, staff and resources related to diversity initiatives and programs experience significant budget cuts during difficult financial periods, which contradicts mission statements claiming a commitment to diversity and inclusion (Patton et al., 2019). As institutions devise plans and strategies to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion, they have an equal responsibility to create key

performance indicators (KPIs) to demonstrate effectiveness in achieving each goal. This study intends to challenge higher education to ensure that DEI goals are measurable and positively impact campus diversity.

HISTORY

Over 60 years have passed since the United States Supreme Court's landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, but educational inequity continues to plague students of color and underserved populations (American Civil Liberties Union, n.d.). The unanimous ruling called for the end of racial segregation deeming it unconstitutional, and Black students were expected to assimilate into Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). While this ruling was intended to advance educational equity, the culture at these institutions was inundated with racism and discrimination. Over the past 50 years, PWIs have increased diversity initiatives in response to ensuing federal legislation, student protests, and the influx of Black and underserved students entering PWIs.

Over time there has been an evolution of institutional responses to diversity on college campuses. From the 1960s to the present day, there has been a steady increase in racial minorities on college campuses. The growth is undoubtedly due to the nation's increased diversity and evolving generational trends implemented by higher education institution initiatives to diversity (Clauson & McKnight, 2018). To understand the current challenges facing postsecondary institutions, it is helpful to review a historical context. Previous diversity initiatives included safe havens, multicultural centers, hiring chief diversity officers, and initiatives that stemmed from the completion agenda.

1960-1980s SAFE HAVENS

At the apex of the Civil Rights era, cultural centers in higher education were considered safe havens for Black students attempting to assimilate into White institutions. The institutional climate of American colleges was plagued by discrimination, oppression, and racism. The year 1968 was filled with pivotal moments that shaped society and higher education, particularly the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Activism saturated the communities and college campuses. Larger institutions developed cultural centers resembling mini student affairs divisions dedicated to supporting Black, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students and their respective populations (Clauson & McKnight, 2018). In the late 1970s, multiculturalism began to influence enrollment, curriculum, and campus culture. The once separate cultural centers of previous decades were merged into multicultural affairs. These safe spaces represented campus diversity as students were able to express their nationality, gender identity, sexual orientation, and religious affiliations. Diversity was no longer defined by culture and race alone. The centers served as an oasis where minorities could relish their differences and escape the uniformity of the rest of the campus.

1990-2000 MULTICULTURAL CENTERS

Minority students continued to feel their needs were not essential to White administration on college campuses. They demanded the establishment of cultural centers and minority affairs offices to resolve adverse campus environments for minority students (Patton et al., 2019). Clauson and McKnight (2018) report that in the 1990s and 2000s, multicultural centers evolved as the ideal practical area to address the shifting national demographics by increasing intercultural competence and providing social justice to the campus community. Multicultural centers negated the concept of acculturation, which assumes that to be successful, students from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds should adopt the beliefs and values of the dominant

culture. Instead, these centers provided a sense of belonging and fused the student's culture with the culture of the college (Patton, 2019). Ironically, this put these centers at odds with the institutions' academic mission. There has been a long-standing perception that multicultural centers and student organizations dedicated to a particular race may promote self-segregation. Often the buildings or spaces dedicated to these organized groups are located away from the main campus and student resources. The centers were perceived to lack academic benefits and to support only cultural and social agendas, and hence were pegged as nonessential (Patton et al., 2019). The evolving function of multicultural centers or offices doubling as student affairs departments was no longer sufficient, and centralized student affairs offices were created.

2000-2010 CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER

In the early 2000s, student activism and increased diversity on college campuses led to new senior-level positions dedicated to diversity and inclusion. “The position of chief diversity officer (CDO) was created to address broader institutional needs left unaddressed by multicultural centers, equal employment and affirmative action offices, and cultural student organizations” (Clauson & McKnight, 2018, p. 40). The goals of most CDOs are similar. Most hope to support and identify the needs of marginalized students as they advocate for their success and provide them with direct support (Clauson & McKnight, 2018). Initially oriented toward compliance or risk mitigation, including issues related to workplace discrimination, affirmative action, and accessibility, these roles were typically located at the department level or within a division of student services rather than at the executive level or within the president's cabinet as many are today. Conceptualization of diversity began to shift with Supreme Court rulings, most notably related to the University of Michigan's affirmative action admissions policy. This was instrumental in shifting away from a legalistic view of diversity and toward a more holistic understanding of how diversity in all forms can benefit learning environments (Pihakis et al.,

2019). CDOs make chief decisions about DEI that shape the entire institution, which is why it is considered deserving of an executive role.

2009-2020 THE COMPLETION AGENDA

A 2009 movement known as the completion agenda led by state and federal policymakers was designed to increase student completion at community colleges. In President Obama's first state of the union address in 2009, he stated, “by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world” (Humphreys, 2012, para. 2). The Obama Administration called for education to become more accessible, affordable, and attainable for all American families as jobs requiring education beyond a high school diploma would continue to rise. Obama believed that as American students and workers received the education and training needed for specific jobs, they would provide greater security for the middle class. Furthermore, increasing accessibility would close the college attainment gap.

Unfortunately, the completion agenda revealed achievement gaps between Black, Hispanic, and low-income students and their White and wealthier peers. The achievement gaps highlighted racial inequality in education, meaning talented students of color were not earning a college credential when most well-paying jobs require one. According to Smith (2019), the realization of achievement gaps led higher education leaders to understand the value of equitable college campuses. Although the value of equity was realized, leaders attempting to achieve equity had to develop strategies and initiatives to achieve equity, which requires cultural change, collaboration, research, and assessment.

2010-PRESENT INTERSECTIONALITY AND CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Although DEI initiatives are on the rise and seemingly always a topic of conversation among American colleges, Jaschik (2019) suggests that there are still frustrations and concerns

that colleges are designed for people of privilege despite DEI efforts. Diversity doesn't only impact Black people, women, or the LGBTQ community. Diversity is categorized by people who fall into multiple groups with various identities and needs. This is why intersectionality is essential in planning DEI initiatives in higher education. Intersectionality examines the interconnected lives of college students, faculty, and staff. It clarifies how the culture and structures of colleges and universities assist or hinder campus group members' academic and social efforts and, simultaneously, it describes institutional efforts to support people from different backgrounds and experiences to reduce inequalities (Byrd et al., 2019). The term "intersectionality" was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, law professor at Columbia Law School, and used by the #MeToo in 2006 and the Black Lives Matter BLM movement in 2013.

Intersectionality is a key concept of critical race theory or CRT, another term coined by Professor Crenshaw.

Critical race theorists reject the philosophy of "colorblindness." They acknowledge the stark racial disparities that have persisted in the United States despite decades of civil rights reforms, and they raise structural questions about how racist hierarchies are enforced, even among people with good intentions. Proponents tend to understand race as a creation of society, not a biological reality. And many say it is important to elevate the voices and stories of people who experience racism. (Fortin, 2021, para. 8)

As campus diversity increases, the sociopolitical climate becomes more challenging.

Students, faculty, and staff must learn to navigate across campus simultaneously and unrestricted while also engaging each other in an inquisitive scholarly discussion that enriches the college's academic and social experience. Intersectionality encourages institutions to move away from the segregated multicultural centers and openly explore different backgrounds, specifically marginalized groups. Byrd et al. (2019) state that students are demanding institutions be accountable and acknowledge that racism is an institutional reality by eliminating racial disparities among college administrators and faculty and offering more curricula and resources

that support and recognize marginalized communities. Institutions must also pay close attention to institutional structures built without diversity and move toward a more equitable vision of institutional support for students, faculty, and staff.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the various diversity initiatives that higher education institutions have implemented over the last several decades, there is deep-seated systemic racism and inequities that disadvantaged communities of color still weave into the fabric of our higher education institutions: “Student activism and advocacy for greater diversity is on the rise. The bottom line for many of today's students is clear: now more than ever, values matter when selecting a school” (Clauson & McKnight, 2018, p. 1). All students deserve a robust college experience rich in diverse backgrounds and perspectives. DEI initiatives are essential and popular, yet institutions' initiatives must be sincere and not simply language appeasement to ensure their efforts lead to student success. According to Moody (2020), colleges must demonstrate actions taken to enhance and support campus diversity as prospective students weigh the success of minority populations on campus. For this reason, institutions must be held accountable for their DEI initiatives, and this entails using metrics to ensure they are actually improving.

As a more diverse population of students goes to college, there are glaring educational inequities and opportunity gaps in accessing and completing a quality postsecondary education. Students looking for a diverse campus must first and foremost consider the institution's graduation of minority populations. The reality is that underrepresented students of color continue to face challenges that create obstacles and barriers hindering completion. To minimize these challenges and increase student success, many institutions have created DEI initiatives to improve the college experience for students of color (Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy

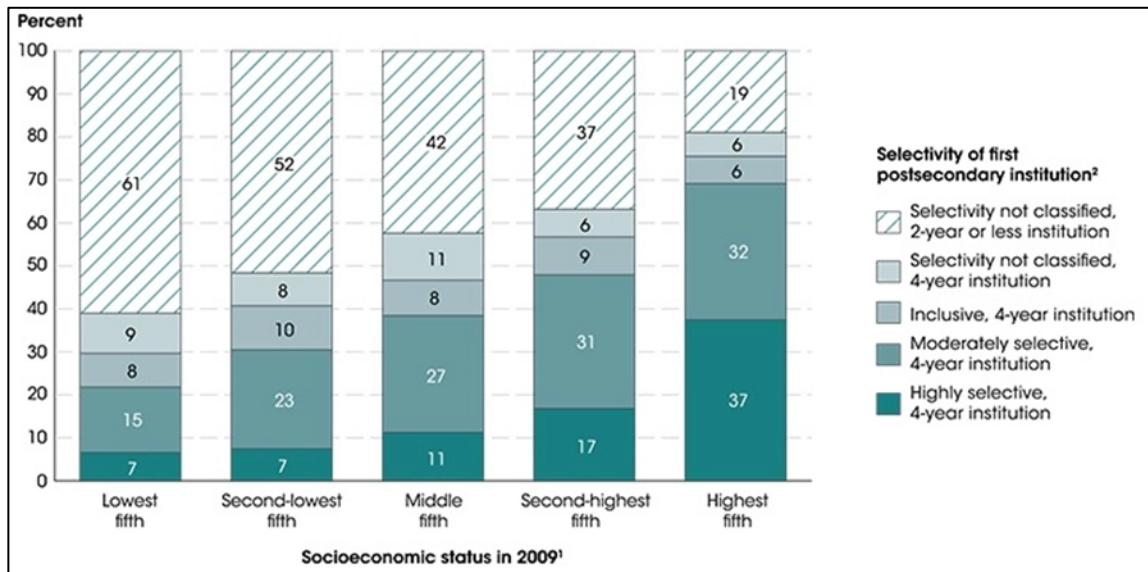
Development, 2016). There has been significant research on creating and implementing diversity initiatives but little on the efficacy and impact these initiatives have on the broad college community. I surmise that although higher education institutions are implementing DEI initiatives, they do not effectively measure the effectiveness of their DEI initiatives and goals.

COMPLETION GAPS

Under the completion agenda, the Obama Administration encouraged institutions to recruit and enroll students from various backgrounds and experiences, including lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and support and retain these students once on campus. However, data does not indicate that these students were as successful as students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. In 2016, the White House reported that more than half of the college students were graduating within six years, but the completion rate for low-economic students was around 25%. Additionally, high school graduates from the wealthiest families in the nation were, and are, almost certain to continue their education. In contrast, high school graduates from underserved populations were, and still are, less likely to attend college.

Fain (2019) reports a study that began in 2009 with a group of ninth-grade students and followed them until 2016, linking wealth to enrolling and completing college. The study revealed that 78% of students from the highest quintile of socioeconomic status, defined by parental education, family income, and occupation, were more likely to go to college than the 28% of students of the lowest quintile socioeconomic status. Furthermore, according to the report, only one-third of students from the lowest quintile of the cohort enrolled in college within one year of graduating high school and were still in college or had earned a credential by 2016, compared to 79% of students from the top quintile (Fain, 2019). Figure 3 shows this distribution.

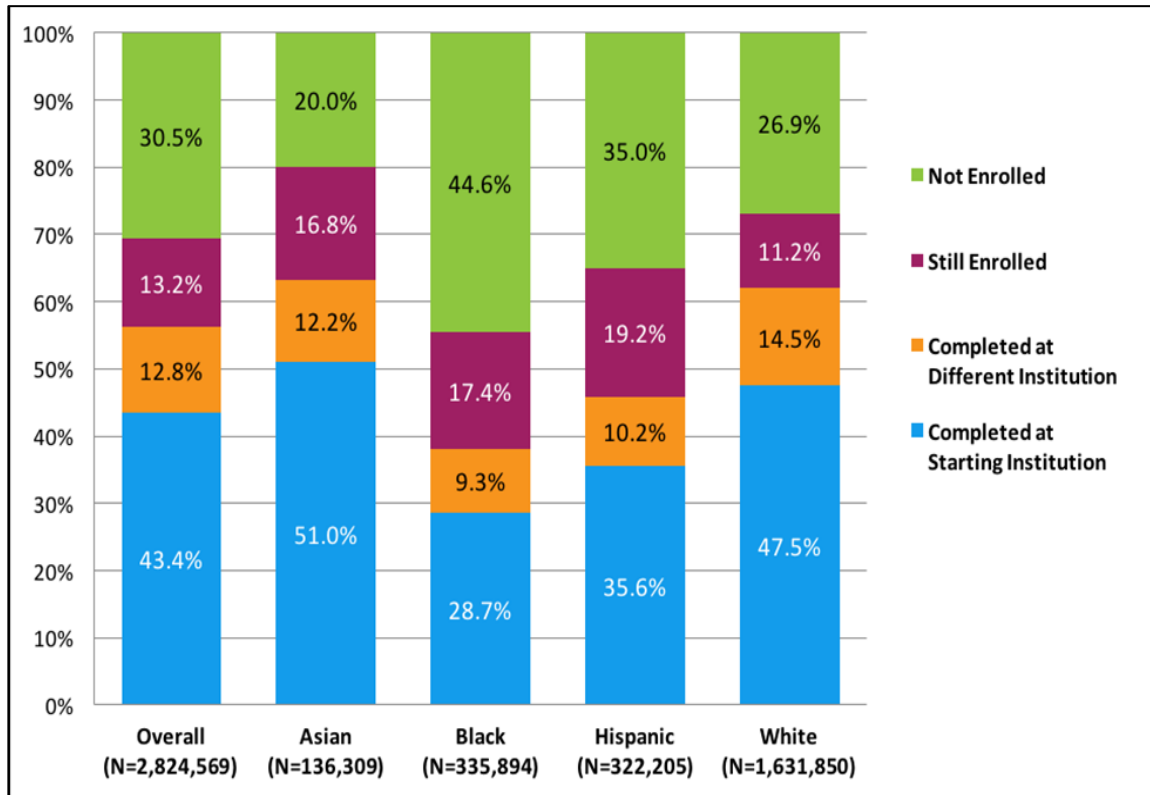
Figure 3. Among 2009 Ninth Graders who had Enrolled in Postsecondary Education by 2016, Percentage Distribution of Selectivity of Students' First Postsecondary Institution, by Socioeconomic Status: 2016



Source: Fain, 2019

Shapiro et al. (2017) provide a supplement to their Signature 12 report, summarizing six-year completion rates categorized by race and ethnicity of students (Figure 4). The students reported are from a cohort that started postsecondary education in fall 2010: “The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center worked with the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago to design a representative sample of schools from which to conduct college success studies using student race and ethnicity data” (Shapiro et al., 2017, p. 3). The report illustrates significant attainment barriers for members of underserved minority groups. Public colleges and universities enroll almost 80% of college students; this includes two- and four-year institutions. A high proportion of minority students attend public institutions, which pressures the public sector to create initiatives and goals to support non-White student completion.

Figure 4. Six-Year Outcomes by Race and Ethnicity (N=2,824,569)



Source: Shapiro et al., 2017

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Higher education has made progress toward creating diverse, equitable, and inclusive campuses. Yet, despite widespread efforts in higher education, only a few campuses have achieved their diversity goals, and many continue to struggle with linking diversity to educational quality. The purpose of this study is to discover how DEI initiatives, strategies, and plans have been evaluated and measured. In this study, I will describe the most commonly used DEI best practices and investigate how these initiatives have been assessed. Well-informed research develops DEI initiatives that create a welcoming, inclusive environment for students and staff from all walks of life, leading to opportunities for a successful future.

If there has been an evaluation process, how has it helped institutions and shaped future DEI initiatives? Moody (2020) advises students that colleges and universities may have public language exclaiming their devotion to diversity, but students should look beyond that and investigate the fruit of their claims. Prospective students are advised to weigh the success of minorities on campus, starting with graduation rates. Potential applicants should also look at the demographics and consider how they are represented on campus and how diversity is represented in faculty and staff. Furthermore, institutions are responsible for measuring their effectiveness in achieving diverse, equitable, and inclusive campuses. Unfortunately, limited information is available regarding the study of campus diversity initiatives designed to meet the demands of students. It is widely known that institutions have implemented diversity programs and initiatives, but little is known about the extent to which these programs have been empirically studied. Even less is known about how the implementation of such plans came about and how they are reviewed and influence institutional decision-making (Patton et al., 2019).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How are diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in higher education evaluated and assessed?
2. Have institutions reached their DEI goals? Why or why not?
3. Do some strategies appear to be more effective than others in measuring or achieving DEI goals?

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Diversity is defined as individual differences (e.g., personality, prior knowledge, and life experiences), group and social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations) (Association of American Colleges & Universities, n.d.). The term diversity can be as

multifaceted as the individuals to whom that label is applied. Institutions often highlight the broad-ranging term as part of their mission or a selling point to potential students or partners. There are at least nine aspects of diversity: age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, class, disability, and nationality. Younger generations define diversity as a combination of many backgrounds, whereas older generations view diversity more through the lens of equal and fair representation (ideal., n.d.). Diversity has also been described as underserved or underrepresented populations. Diversity is less about what makes people different and more about understanding, accepting, and valuing those differences (Ideal, n.d.). Ideal (n.d.) identifies these common types of diversity:

- Race
- Age
- Nationality
- Ethnicity
- Culture
- Gender identity
- Physical and mental ability
- Education
- Professional experience
- Political views, opinions, and affiliations
- Spiritual and religious beliefs
- Citizenship
- Location
- Family and marital status
- Socioeconomic status

- Job title, role, or function
- Department
- Seniority
- Union affiliation

Equity is defined as the creation of opportunities for historically underserved populations to have equal access to and participate in educational programs that are capable of closing the achievement gaps in student success and completion (AACU, n.d.). Being equitable entails creating fair access, opportunity, and advancement. Colleges face issues related to equitable access, opportunity, and achievement leading to initiatives to develop equitable experiences for students. Successful equity initiatives must build a framework that supports fair and equal treatment into the very fabric of an organization.

Inclusion is the active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity (intellectual, social, cultural, and geographical). Inclusion allows individuals to connect in ways that increase awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions (AACU, n.d.). A diverse or even equitable environment doesn't guarantee inclusion. Inclusion is the extent to which people feel a sense of belonging and value within a given organizational setting. Fostering inclusion means institutions start with respect, empathy, and trust. This entails respecting people's differences and considering the environment more broadly—from their point of view.

ADDITIONAL TERMS

The following definitions serve to inform this study as well as the broad, multifaceted use of the term diversity used in higher education:

Critical race theory (CRT): an intellectual and social movement and an organized framework of legal analysis based on the premise that race is not a natural, biologically grounded

feature of physically distinct subgroups of human beings but a socially constructed (culturally invented) category that is used to oppress and exploit people of color.

Cultural competence: the ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from one's own.

Higher education: education beyond high school, especially at a college or university.

Institutions: postsecondary institutions, community colleges, colleges, and universities.

Intersectionality: the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage (Byrd et al., 2019).

Postsecondary education: also known as tertiary education, is the education level that follows the successful completion of secondary education, often referred to as high school. Postsecondary education includes universities and colleges, as well as trade and vocational schools. Postsecondary education usually culminates with a diploma, certification, or academic degree.

Underrepresented students: Low-income, first-generation, LGBTQ, and minority students are often underrepresented on college campuses. This means that they make up only a small fraction of the college's total population. These underrepresented groups face unique challenges both in applying to and attending college.

Underserved students: Students of color, first-generation students, and low-income students (Green, 2006).

CONCLUSION

There is a rise in enrollment of underserved and diverse student populations on college campuses; however, there is a noticeable achievement gap among which student group is completing. There is an increasing number of programs and efforts on college campuses, and Patton et al. (2019) remind readers that DEI initiatives in our present context do not significantly differ from past initiatives. Still, they are generally implemented in response to the exact needs expressed by students over the last 50 years. As in previous decades, today's students want and deserve to attend college in an environment that is validating, supportive, and equitable from the time they enter campus until they successfully graduate.

The establishment and growing number of diversity initiatives can potentially play a significant role in enhancing college student experiences; challenging the racist, oppressive, and discriminatory foundation of higher education; and countering cultural hegemony. However, few empirical investigations provide insights into the proliferation and presence of diversity initiatives, and there has been limited analysis of the assumptions, myths, and perceptions of diversity initiatives. Additionally, neither the reasons underlying the creation of such initiatives, nor the effectiveness and outcomes associated with having them have been explored robustly.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the literature pertaining to the trends and best practices for diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education. As colleges welcome a more diverse student population, they must commit to strategies that address minority and underserved student populations' unique needs. This chapter examines several strategies employed by institutions to invoke a change in their campus climate and achieve cultural competence.

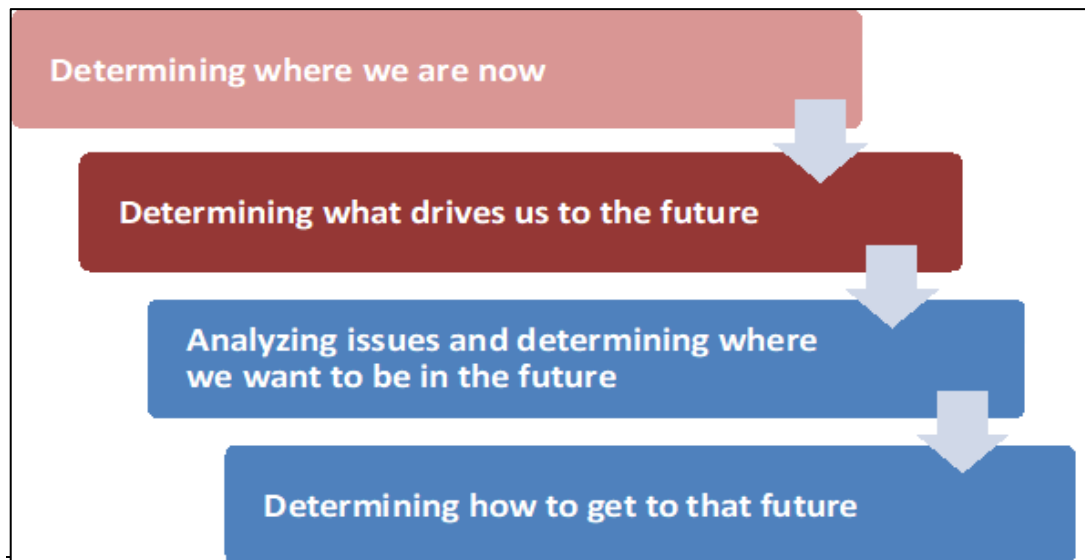
DIVERSITY STRATEGIES AND PLANS

Underrepresented students of color face far lower odds of graduating than other students. Many states and institutions have taken significant steps to increase access for underrepresented students of color and improve diverse student populations' educational experiences and academic success. To provide equitable, valuable experiences to students of color, low-income, and other underrepresented populations, colleges and universities have implemented strategies and practices designed to meet the needs of their campuses.

Growchow (2018) describes a strategic plan as a framework for describing the organization's key priorities, initiatives, processes, people, and technologies within a specific timeframe, typically 3-5 years, and how the organization can reach that future, given its current priorities, initiatives, processes, people, and technologies. Successful strategic planning teams consist of committee members and resource staff such as research and IT staff that provide data and other materials to the committee. The strategic planning research and resource staff must

collect a wide variety of data and make those data available to the strategic planning committee to support each component of the strategic planning process. Data collected should highlight trends, raise strategic issues, and distinguish the needs of various community stakeholders (such as students, faculty, administration, and alumni). The major components of the strategic planning process are illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Major Components of the Strategic Planning Process



Source: (Grochow, 2018)

According to Grochow (2018), strategic planning projects typically range from totally new projects, such as an organization's initial strategic plan, to relatively straightforward annual or biennial updates. In between are planning projects that revisit an existing strategic plan because something significant has changed.

Institutional initiatives that stem from strategic planning include implementing goals, methods, and plans that prioritize a diverse student body and campus climate. In addition, as mission statements change to include diversity, campus leadership aligns policies and procedures to the mission statement and strategic plan. According to the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and

Policy Development (2016), each of these critical steps toward diversity should be connected to the institution's strategic plan. Many institutions have opted to have separate strategic plans dedicated to DEI: “Institutions could also build their capacity to collect and analyze the data required to set and track their diversity and inclusion efforts in order to facilitate assessment of the plan's effectiveness” (Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, 2016, p. 36).

The Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development (2016) provides five examples of universities that have created mission statements, goals, and strategic plans that focus on DEI. These universities are the University at Albany, Southwestern University, University of Mississippi, University of Maryland, and the University of Michigan.

The University at Albany is part of the State University of New York (SUNY). They include diversity and inclusion as a part of the strategic plan, reinforcing the system-wide diversity vision and mission statement. The University Diversity and Inclusion Plan encompasses three goals:

1. Recruit and retain faculty, professional staff, and graduate students who reflect the multidimensional diversity of the undergraduate student body.
2. Foster an inclusive campus climate through ongoing learning opportunities that celebrate individual differences, encourage an open and free exchange of ideas, and provide opportunities to engage in constructive dialogue.
3. Cultivate an inclusive learning environment by incorporating diversity into curricular and co-curricular activities that use innovative pedagogy and discipline-specific applications.

Southwestern University published a diversity statement in 2010 that commits to developing an increasingly diverse community of students, faculty, and staff. The office of diversity education (ODE) promotes diversity, inclusion, equity, peacebuilding, and social justice initiatives on campus. The ODE also provides resources and supports the continued development

of a positive campus climate. They also include diversity in their core values, stating that they foster diverse perspectives and encourage activism to pursue justice and the common good.

The University of Mississippi boasts a strategic plan dedicated to diversity and equity that builds on previous strategic plans and further advances the university's strategic goals. The plan includes four goals.

1. Increase the enrollment and graduation rate of underrepresented students.
2. Increase the employment of underrepresented individuals in administrative, faculty, and staff positions.
3. Enhance the overall educational experience by infusing curricular content and co-curricular programming that enhances multicultural awareness and understanding.
4. Increase the use of underrepresented professionals, contractors, and other vendors.

The university's diversity and community engagement division is led by a vice chancellor for diversity and community engagement. The division provides an annual report to document the progress of diversity initiatives and goals.

The University of Maryland promotes diversity as a core value and strength. Their diversity strategic plan and guide provide baseline data on their diverse student population and current diversity goals. In addition, the university offers several significant goals and detailed strategies of the strategic diversity plan, organized in six core areas: leadership, climate, recruitment and retention, education, research and scholarship, and community engagement.

1. Leadership
 - a. Goal A1: The university will provide strong leadership for diversity and inclusion at all campus levels.
 - b. Goal A2: The university will increase opportunities for leadership training, mentoring, professional growth, and advancement of diverse faculty and staff in all divisions.
2. Climate

- a. Goal B1: The university will ensure a welcoming and inclusive learning community, workplace, and campus environment.
 - b. Goal B2: The university will develop and implement innovative, cross-cutting programs to improve and enhance the campus climate for diverse students, faculty, staff, and visitors.
3. Recruitment and Retention
- a. Goal C1: The university will continue to recruit, promote, and work to retain a diverse faculty and staff.
 - b. Goal C2: The university will recruit, retain, and graduate a diverse student body.
4. Education
- a. Goal D1: The university will ensure that undergraduate students acquire the knowledge, experience, and cultural competencies necessary to succeed in a multicultural, globally interconnected world.
 - b. Goal D2: Departments and programs will equip graduate students with diversity-related expertise.
 - c. Goal D3: The university will increase faculty capacity to educate students about diversity issues and develop inclusive learning environments.
5. Research and Scholarship
- a. Goal E1: The university will commit itself to develop and support the production of nationally recognized research and scholarship on race, ethnicity, class, gender, and other dimensions of diversity.
 - b. Goal E2: The university will provide a clearinghouse of opportunities for funded research, scholarship, and creative activities addressing diversity issues.
6. Community Engagement
- a. Goal F1: The university will promote academic and co-curricular activities that facilitate positive interactions among students, faculty, staff, and alumni.
 - b. Goal F2: The university will increase the number of partnerships and the quality of engagement with the diverse external community.

According to the University of Michigan's President Mark Schlissel, its dedication to academic excellence is synonymous with its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The

campuswide DEI plan comprises three primary strategies and actions intended to support the 50 schools, college, and unit plans. The plan's core strategies focus on three areas:

1. Create an inclusive and equitable campus climate.
2. Recruit, retain, and develop a diverse community.
3. Support innovative and inclusive scholarship and teaching.

Each strategy includes robust action plans to achieve each goal and the person(s) or office responsible for each. In addition, U of M's rich DEI webpage includes up-to-date data and annual reports located on their diversity progress dashboard.

Community colleges are typically known for enrolling a more diverse student population but are also focusing on DEI with formalized strategic plans like those seen in the four-year sector. Unlike four-year institutions, which have seen protests often related to racial issues along with a host of controversial speakers and guests, community colleges tend to avoid these high-profile issues. However, as members of the community, community college students' advocacy for change and activism is not limited to the college; it expands into their respective communities. In addition, two-year colleges aren't complacent about DEI and cultivating an on-campus culture focused on inclusion, equity, and diversity (Smith, 2018).

Community colleges are becoming more proactive about diversity with the increasing emergence of the chief diversity officer role. According to Smith (2018), a growing number of CDOs in the postsecondary education sector serve as more than a federally mandated Title IX coordinator or a director in human resources who focuses on equity. At colleges like Sinclair Community College in Ohio or Portland Community College in Oregon, these administrators report directly to the president as cabinet-level administrators. In addition, they are responsible for holding academic departments on campus accountable for DEI initiatives.

Smith (2018) reports that the CDO at Sinclair Community College encourages faculty and staff to be true to their core beliefs and live by them. If those beliefs do not align with Sinclair's inclusivity focus, they are encouraged to work elsewhere. Sinclair offers a robust array of ebooks, videos, TED talks, podcasts, websites, articles, and movies as an opportunity for their community to embrace DEI. To embrace inclusivity, Sinclair Community College conducted a diversity audit. The audit informed the college on where it needs to improve and how to be truly equitable. The college mission strives to see and acknowledge each student, faculty, and staff member as an essential contributor to Sinclair's belief in equity for all. In addition to the mission, they aspire to focus on four goals (Sinclair Community College, n.d.):

1. Work to cultivate and maintain a diverse, inclusive, and equitable campus climate for everyone who chooses Sinclair as a destination to study, work, or meet.
2. Strive to attract, retain, and graduate a diverse student body representative of the communities served.
3. Strive to attract and retain a diverse and culturally competent staff and faculty representative of the communities served.
4. Set the standard, provide the support, and drive individual accountability to everyone within Sinclair for respecting and contributing to an environment that is diverse, inclusive, and equitable in its treatment of all people.

Portland Community College (PCC) launched an equity planning process in winter 2021 to effectively respond to ongoing needs within the PCC community. The plan enhances progress and accelerates transformative change toward a more equitable and socially just campus and is organized around six key objectives to determine DEI priorities and signature activities. The key objectives are (Portland Community College Office of Equity and Inclusion, n.d.):

1. Cultivate an inclusive campus and college climate.
2. Close or eliminate opportunity and equity gaps for student access and outcomes.
3. Attract, hire, and retain a diverse faculty and staff committed to equity and belonging.

4. Assess and mitigate equity and campus and college climate concerns.
5. Adopt and integrate guiding frameworks to support the learning and development of students, faculty, and staff.
6. Improve accountability tools for assessing PCC's progress toward equitable opportunity and success.

PCC also revamped its strategic plan and included CRT to set expectations and priorities at the college. The college is also building a faculty diversity internship program to broaden its full-time faculty ranks. In addition, it now offers an inclusion advocates program that trains faculty and staff members to sit on hiring committees and ensure they're hiring applicants from diverse backgrounds while recognizing any biases in the process. College-sponsored training also helps employees recognize their biases and triggers.

CREATING A DIVERSE STUDENT POPULATION

The United States Department of Education (DOE) and the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) have guided how postsecondary institutions achieve diversity. Educational institutions can provide an enriched academic atmosphere by creating learning environments that encompasses students from diverse backgrounds. Social and intellectual interactions among students of various backgrounds offer diverse perspectives and experiences both on and off campus. These healthy interactions improve critical thinking and analytical skills, which helps students succeed in the professional world (U.S. Department of Justice & U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

The DOE and DOJ suggested two critical steps for implementing programs to achieve diversity. Step one entails identifying the reasons for the plan and creating goals related to the institutional mission. The goal should be constantly evaluated to ensure interests are attained. Step two entails implementing the plan. This step includes race-neutral approaches to achieve

diversity, such as socioeconomic status (DOJ & U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Further, the DOE and DOJ provide examples of approaches that can be used to achieve diversity.

Examples are:

- Admissions: Develop race-neutral admissions procedures to achieve diversity.
 - Consider an applicant's socioeconomic status, first-generation college status, and geographic residency.
 - Implement special admissions procedures to consider students who have endured or overcome hardships such as residential instability.
 - Implement a plan that guarantees admission to a top percentile of students graduating from all in-state high schools.
 - Select schools (including community colleges) based on their demographics (e.g., their racial or socioeconomic composition) and grant an admission preference to all students who have graduated from those schools.
- Pipeline programs: Pipeline programs are partnerships between colleges and school districts, specific schools, or other programs to increase potential applicants. “Pipeline programs can foster student body diversity at a postsecondary institution by increasing potential applicants' awareness of the institution and by assisting a diverse group of potential applicants to be better prepared to qualify for admission”(DOJ & U.S. Department of Education, n.d., IV section).
 - Institutions can select high schools for partnership based on one or more of the following: school-wide performance on standardized tests, socioeconomic characteristics, geographic proximity to the institution, the racial composition of the school's student body, or the similarity of academic or programmatic themes between the institution and the school with which it is partnering.
 - Institutions can partner with historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) or community colleges that represent underserved communities.
- Recruitment and Outreach: Institutions may develop recruitment and outreach strategies to expand their applicant pool and reach more diverse applicants.
 - The institution can target specific high schools, school districts, community colleges, or HBCUs that are underrepresented in their current applicant pool and student body.
 - Institutions can intentionally target low-income households as potential applicants.

- Marketing and advertisements can be aimed at specific racial groups. In addition, admissions staff can participate in community-sponsored events to inform underrepresented groups about the institution and encourage individual students to apply.
- Mentoring, tutoring, retention, and support programs: Diverse or underserved students may have unique needs. It is crucial to retain students by providing resources to succeed. Mentoring, tutoring, retention, and support programs assist in academic and other areas of success at the institution.
 - Provide mentoring, tutoring, supplemental instruction, and academic support to all enrolled students at risk of not completing their programs.
 - The college can sponsor a mentorship program for students. If mentorship is selective, the college may consider race among various attributes, such as grade-point averages, community service, and faculty recommendations. If race is considered, legal guidelines must be followed.
 - Lectures or workshops targeted for a specific group of interests may be offered as a retention effort.

Institutions are encouraged to attract and admit students from diverse backgrounds and experiences, but they must be prepared to support and retain the students once they are on campus. These suggestions and ideas are baseline institutional guidelines for implementing student body diversity and inclusion. Although the suggestions above regard a diverse student body, DEI initiatives should be promoted and encouraged across all institution levels, including the institution's administration, faculty, and staff.

HIRING DIVERSE FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS

Promoting diversity and inclusiveness must occur across all levels of the institution, including the institution's administration and faculty. Diverse faculty and administration can be an important way to achieve a diverse and inclusive campus climate. In addition, campus leadership, including a diverse faculty, plays a vital role in achieving an inclusive institution.

FACULTY

Moody (2020) suggests that students should look at faculty and staff to gauge the college's diversity. For over 30 years, many authors have broached the topic of hiring diverse faculty to increase awareness, importance, and goals of diverse faculty in higher education. Research indicates that a diverse faculty body creates a positive campus climate resulting from diverse faculty serving as mentors and role models for fellow faculty and students. This does not mean that White faculty cannot be successful with students of color, but that students need to see themselves represented along their academic journey (Wood, 2019). A diverse faculty also enriches collegiality among all faculty. Society recognizes the value that diverse faculty brings to the student experience. In order to prepare students for a diverse global society, it is important that students understand cross-cultural perspectives (Turner et al., 2008). Turner et al. (2008) report that increasingly diverse faculty on colleges campuses is the most challenging campus diversity initiative to achieve. Faculty of color remain the most underrepresented group among faculty. As student diversity increases, institutions must reexamine and reimagine hiring practices.

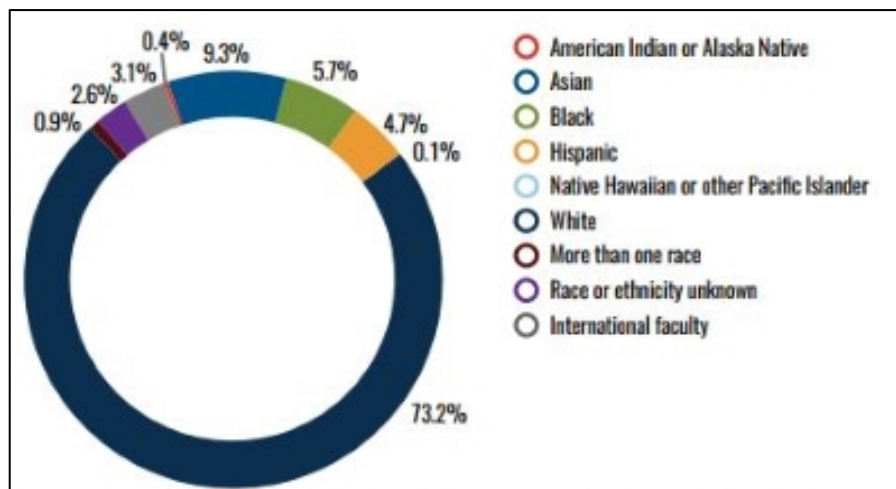
Wilder et al. (2017) state that colleges and universities may argue that there isn't enough qualified minority talent to fill positions. Diverse faculty members argue there is a deficiency in universities to recruit and retain diverse faculty. There is a lack of resources to support an increase in diverse faculty, such as travel money, scholarship, assistance in advanced degree programs, and mentorship. Effective mentorship has several benefits, which lead to a more diverse faculty talent pool. Wilder et al. (2017) refer to a study from the Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP), a nationally recognized diversity initiative program, where participants reported feeling more confident about their graduate-level work due to the accessibility of their mentors. Without ongoing support and mentorship for ethnically diverse

doctorate students, they may not pursue a career in academia. Despite the benefits of mentoring, some institutions don't mentor their faculty, which leads to some faculty feeling estranged from the institution.

A successful measure of recruiting and maintaining diverse faculty is when the percentage of diverse faculty reflects that of the surrounding communities or the percentage of diverse students on campus (Figure 6): “While the racial and ethnic make-up of students in higher education has become more and more diverse, college faculty, staff, and administrators remain predominantly White” (AAC&U News, 2019).

Knowing that the student population is more diverse, institutions must revise hiring processes to be more inclusive and make their institution more attractive to diverse applicants. The hiring process is broader than reviewing resumes and conducting interviews, especially when seeking a diverse group of candidates. When the job description is written, it should include inclusive language. Human resources staff and department managers want the job to be visible to potential applicants. Outreach should be noticeable in diverse hiring outlets. Finally, the search committee should be diverse.

Figure 6. Fall 2016 Full-Time Faculty by Race and Ethnicity



Source: AAC&U News, 2019

Each search committee should be required to complete bias training. Committee members should be trained on implicit bias and its role in each step of the hiring process. Ideal training will include real-life scenarios that provide tangible steps to making better hiring decisions. For example, hiring staff should take their time reviewing applicants and avoid using words like fit and likable. While most people may have good intentions when seeking the right candidate, they may not be aware of how their biases impact the candidate selection process (Wood, 2019).

According to Wood (2019), when people are looking to fill a position, they may reach out to colleagues and professional organizations to advertise job openings. However, these connections are often a reflection of people's networks. As a result, the candidate pool often reflects their backgrounds, which may unintentionally exclude qualified diverse candidates.

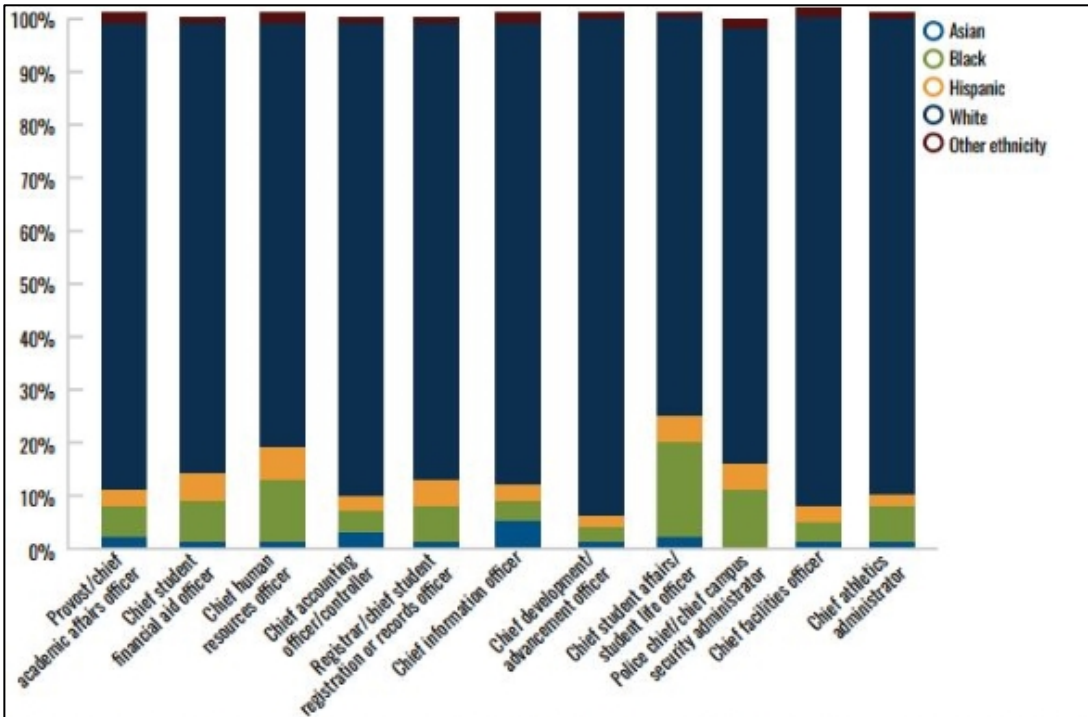
Wood (2019) suggests that all institutions have diversity advocates trained extensively in equitable hiring practices. The advocates, who support the search process, should be certified annually and sit on each search committee to help reinforce equitable decision-making. “They can intercede when criteria are applied more rigorously to candidates of color, ask follow-up questions, probe sense-making when vague words (e.g., fit, likeable) are used and help reinforce a hypervigilance about implicit bias throughout the search process” (Wood, 2019, para. 12).

Many institutional mission statements claim a commitment to serving diverse student populations or initiatives to help underserved student populations. Wood (2019) states that these initiatives should be represented in faculty job search criteria. Candidates should be asked to show their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion shown by their research or experience in teaching or service to underserved populations. The aforementioned criteria do not exclusively apply to people of color and enrich the pool of candidates with a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

ADMINISTRATION

AAC&U (2019) reports that 58.1% of college presidents are White males, and White women make up 25% of presidents. Men of color make up 11.8% of college presidents, and women of color only represent 5.1% of college presidents. People of color represent less than one-fifth of senior leadership (Figure 7). The report indicates that students are more likely to encounter people of color in service roles, not in campus leadership positions. For example, 42.2% of service and maintenance staff are people of color. Implementing hiring practices that increase diversity among faculty also holds true to increasing diversity among administrators; further, a diverse faculty pool may be eligible for administrative positions as they become available.

Figure 7. 2017 College and University Administrators by Race, Ethnicity, and Position



Source: AAC&U News, 2019

CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER OR OFFICE

The CDO role has emerged as an executive-level role geared to support and provide guidance for DEI implementation efforts. As a result, colleges and universities are increasingly under the spotlight to effectively respond to the exclusion and marginalization of underserved student populations. In efforts to lead this charge, many institutions have established the CDO.

As of 2016, more than two-thirds of major universities had appointed a CDO or an executive-level equivalent position. At least 30 other institutions have adopted the role in the last five years. Institutions have shifted away from minority affairs or the CDO serving in a legal capacity, and diversity is no longer defined simply as the presence of individuals that differ by ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or some other social identity. Instead, diversity is now seen as a resource that can be leveraged to enhance the learning of all students and is fundamental to institutional excellence. Accordingly, the mandate and expectations of the CDO role have also evolved. Many universities are now positioning the function of the CDO as integral to the strategic direction and success of the institution. While specific mandates vary by institution, effective CDOs are now distinguished by their ability to infuse diversity into all aspects of college and university life, which is why they are often a strategic partner to the college president (Pihakis et al., 2019). Parker (2020) ascertains that for the chief diversity officer to enact real change, appropriate organizational placement of that officer must be coupled with adequate authority and vertical and horizontal power. It is well documented that the CDO must be at the senior level with an associated executive job title that sits at the president's table. While CDOs who are organizationally positioned under the provost or chief academic officer are common, the CDO must have access to the president. At the very least, the high-ranking job title indicates to

internal and external stakeholders the authority and control necessary for CDOs to be productive leaders.

Mann (2021) states that the CDO's role is not an easy task. There are at least nine aspects of diversity – age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, class, disability, and nationality – and each requires special attention and skillset. Diversity is broad and hard to measure and understand. The CDO's responsibilities vary by institutional needs and resources.

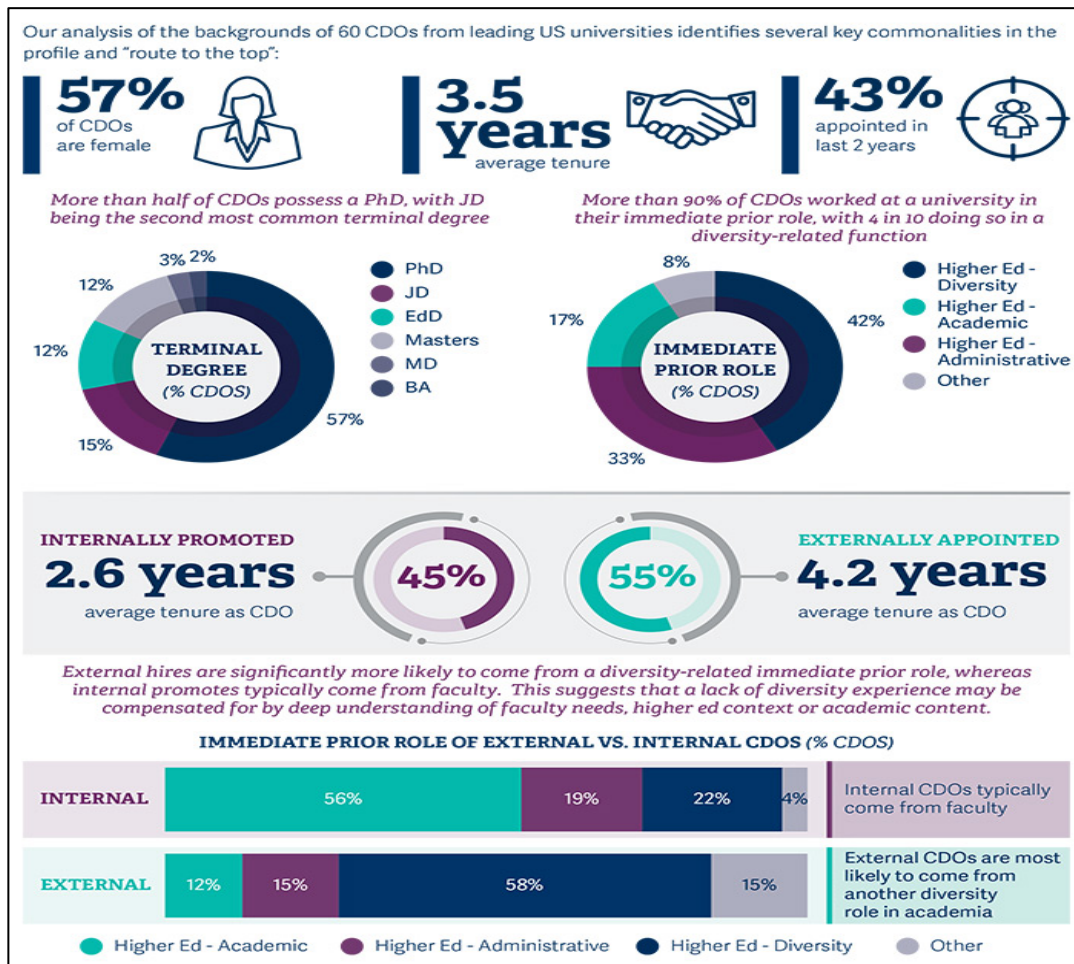
Mann (2021) provides an exhaustive list of essential responsibilities.

- Lead the diversity, equity, and inclusion plans and implement an organization's diversity initiatives and activities that interact readily and effectively with student affinity groups; students, faculty, and staff from underrepresented populations; and community members.
- Serve as a leading expert in providing employee diversity, equity, and inclusion educational programs.
- Firmly commit to the organization's goals and objectives of providing quality programs, academic offerings, and pedagogical support.
- Work with the organization's bias incident response team to respond and investigate bias-related incidents and make strategic and proactive recommendations based on outcomes.
- Collaborate with human resources to enhance the recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention of diverse faculty and staff and provide support to employees with diverse experiences and backgrounds.
- Maintain knowledge of current and emerging trends for assigned areas of responsibility, assess the impact, and collaborate with senior management to incorporate new trends in current and future strategies.
- Collaborate with human resources, business leaders, and campus leadership, to develop and implement specific enterprise diversity objectives and business plans to align inclusion initiatives with business strategies and metrics focusing on the workplace, workforce, marketplace, and community.
- Ensure diversity is reflected in marketing materials, vendors, and community events.
- Develop strategies to support current and future needs while implementing best practices for diversity, equity, and inclusion action planning.

- Manage, monitor, and report diversity program performance and trends while monitoring accountability and following up on progress.
- Design and implement metrics and reporting systems to effectively benchmark organizational progress in diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Lead strategic, innovative initiatives that institutionalize diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout all aspects of organizational operations.
- Provide strategic oversight of the language department to ensure quality, timely, and cost-effective interpretation and translation services through trained interpreters, translators, and the effective use of technology.
- Collaborate with other members of leadership to develop and maintain strategic partnerships with community organizations and other entities as appropriate.
- Represent the organization regarding diversity issues to build the organization's brand and reputation for diversity.

It is important to note that the specific characteristics, competencies, and attributes will vary by the specific mandates of each role. Pihakis et al. (2019) suggest that although roles and characteristics vary, key competencies are consistent among CDOs; the CDOs possess strategic leadership and change management skills, are persuasive and influential, partner with external stakeholders, are committed to DEI initiatives, and understand DEI and its role in higher education culture. Figure 8 illustrates the CDO profile.

Figure 8. Chief Diversity Officer Profile



Source: Pihakis et al., 2019

IMPLICIT BIAS TRAINING

Social injustices and unrest, racism, and oppression provide an opportunity for college campuses to have deepened conversations about equity, belonging, and justice. As the United States continues to experience injustices towards people of color, many institutions and organizations implemented implicit bias and diversity awareness training to achieve intercultural competence among employees. Implicit bias (also referred to as unconscious bias) is associating stereotypes or attitudes towards people with different characteristics or identities without conscious awareness, resulting in actions and decisions that are at odds with one's conscious

beliefs about fairness and equality. These unconscious biases can lead to unfair and inequitable treatment, microaggressions, and racism which “can lead us to make biased and unfair decisions regarding who we hire for a job or select for a promotion, which classes we place students into and who we send out of the classroom for behavior infractions” (Osta & Vasquez, n.d., p. 1). They are unconscious in the sense that they are deeply engrained in our brains and normalized in society, which makes the perpetrator unaware that bias has had an effect on behavior. Bias is considered an outgrowth of normal human functioning and an inevitable way our brains function (Applebaum, 2018). Research shows that this happens all the time in our schools, in policing activity, and in places of employment. The primary focus of implicit bias training is to become aware of biases to negate harmful and discriminatory actions.

Although institutions look to implicit bias training to be the cure for hostile campus climates, many believe it simply skims the surface of the larger issues related to equality and justice. Solely relying on implicit bias training may not be enough to change the culture of an institution or organization. Osta and Vasquez (n.d.) reveal that people also believe the term implicit bias keeps White people from being held accountable for creating and perpetuating systemic oppression and structural inequalities. These behaviors are shown in individuals' rhetoric of seeing no color, which allows them to avoid considering how they contribute to the social injustice they claim they want to eliminate. This gives power to those individuals and overshadows the way people are connected to systemic structures that sustain unjust systems. Implicit bias training assumes that persons with biases can rid themselves of those biases or want to; this is a limitation to implicit bias training (Applebaum, 2018). Pittman (2021) suggests the term “training” could simply indicate that only a set of skills is learned, whereas education suggests participants depart with a set of tools that allow them to continue to learn.

Implicit bias often leads to microaggressions. Microaggression education is another mainstay form of training or education that institutions present as a form of diversity education. Applebaum (2018) describes microaggressions as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, communicating hostile derogatory or negative racial, gender, sexual orientation, and religious slights and insults toward the target person or group” (Applebaum, 2018, para. 23). The concept of microaggressions was first introduced by Chester Pierce (1974), a Black medical doctor and Harvard University psychiatrist, in his attempt to name the everyday racism experienced by Black people. Microaggressions are similar to implicit bias in that both involve subtle and covert behaviors. Isolated incidents may seem inconsequential but repetitive experiences are harmful over time and contribute to larger structures of injustice. Applebaum (2018) further explains that microaggressions are ambiguous and even complimentary at times. The transgressors view microaggressions as benign isolated incidents and consider the idea of addressing these issues as unnecessary. Although regarded as gratuitous by some, many institutions are encouraging candid discussions and deeper conversations about race in the workplace.

In 1998, social psychology researchers Dr. Tony Greenwald (University of Washington), Dr. Mahzarin Banaji (Harvard University), and Dr. Brian Nosek (University of Virginia) created Project Implicit, a nonprofit organization of collaborative researchers interested in implicit social cognition. The organization administers the Implicit Association test (IAT) to educate about implicit bias, raise awareness, and encourage self-reflection. The IAT measures attitudes and beliefs that people may be unwilling or unable to describe. “The IAT measures the strength of associations between concepts (e.g., black people, gay people) and evaluations (e.g., good, bad) or stereotypes (e.g., athletic, clumsy)” (Project Implicit, n.d.). The IAT may be beneficial if

someone is unaware of an implicit bias; for example, someone may believe that men and women are equal concerning science, but the automatic associations of the IAT reveal that the individual believes that men are more associated with science than women. Project Implicit aims to educate people about bias by providing a virtual laboratory internet data collection. Project Implicit scientists produce high-impact research that informs scientific knowledge about bias and disparities (Project Implicit, n.d.).

An exclusive focus on implicit bias without considering the structures in which biases are held in place can serve as a way of protecting rather challenging the systems that maintain injustice. The bottom line is that implicit bias training only works for willing participants who believe diversity and inclusion education is imperative and are eager to comply with the training; however, learning about implicit biases or microaggression is not enough to achieve cultural competence or change campus culture.

CAMPUS CULTURE

Culture is invisible but can be felt and even seen; it lives in the hearts and habits of people and their shared perceptions. Top leadership can express their vision or assert their authority, but that won't create optimism, trust, conviction, or creativity. Articulating a mission and changing structures or policy is important, but a cultural change is only possible when people take action and commit to being the change they want to see. Creating lasting commitment to change or even a responsibility to change must be framed within the organization's purpose. It is not enough to create a short-term sense of urgency but rather a pursuit of greatness in the service of others (Walker & Soule, 2017). Conceivably, DEI initiatives are embedded in the campus's culture, and it is crucial to address the institutional logic and everyday practices of denials and habits of evasion that serve to sustain unjust systems, both

at an individual and institutional level (Applebaum, 2018). Underrepresented students experience less frequent discrimination at more compositionally diverse institutions than less-diverse institutions. Furthermore, college students report experiencing less discrimination when they perceive a more substantial commitment to diversity (Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, 2016). Creating a culture that supports DEI means “institutions must be willing to honestly examine how they are complicit in the campus climate they want to remedy. The responsibility for campus climate begins with a commitment from the institution to proactively prioritize social justice issues” (Applebaum, 2018, p. 139). A college’s culture or climate is longstanding and complicated and will not be resolved with a cookie-cutter approach. The changes will be uncomfortable, time-consuming, and complex, but worthwhile for institutions seeking to create a culture welcoming to a diverse student, faculty, and staff environment seeking to eliminate equity gaps and social injustices.

ACHIEVING CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND INTERSECTIONALITY

Achieving cultural competence and intersectionality varies for everyone. Therefore, assessments, programs, and training may be developed or implemented to increase cultural competence among leadership, faculty, staff, and students.

Campus culture and climate surveys are encouraged to identify areas of improvement. The survey results provide foundational data and inform a continuous improvement process of planning, training, and reflecting on lessons learned. The assessments also address unique aspects of the campus community and can ensure new initiatives align with the institutions’ efforts to improve their campus climates and student outcomes.

Exposure to various races and ethnicities creates a unique individualized experience. Cultural and emotional support systems, such as counseling and mentoring, create a supportive culture for students to reflect and learn from their experiences and thrive on campus. Successful

student support systems are customized to students' needs while being visible and accessible. Research shows that fostering involvement outside of the classroom, such as extracurricular activities, can play a critical role in diverse students' academic development and persistence. Unfortunately, students of color tend to have lower engagement rates in campus organizations, potentially due to adverse campus climates or because activities do not reflect their cultural interests.

Education and training are standard practices to change college culture. Many institutions implement programs to increase cultural competence among leadership, faculty, staff, and students. Some institutions require cultural competency training in new student orientations and diversity coursework as a graduation requirement. These initiatives create opportunities for students to have positive interactions with diverse peers, leading to a greater sense of belonging. Research suggests that for faculty to develop cultural competencies, training should include an orientation and an ongoing and developmentally sequenced curriculum such as cultural competency training (CCT). CCT is often combined with implicit bias training to increase awareness of the unconscious associations between groups of people and stereotypes attributed to the group. Training is more effective when it involves active learning techniques where participants engage with the course content. The training avoids assigning blame or responsibility to participants for current diversity issues. Cultural competence is lifelong learning and is not complete when training ends (Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, 2016).

CONCLUSION

This chapter presented a review of DEI initiatives and best practices implemented by various higher education institutions. Colleges and universities can work to make their campuses

inclusive, safe, and hospitable environments where all students feel respected to help ensure that everyone is able to pursue their educational opportunities to their fullest potential. According to Patton et al. (2019), further examination is needed to substantiate many DEI initiatives. Although this chapter presents a myriad of diversity initiatives, there is not enough research explaining the possibilities and limitations of DEI initiatives. The literature reviewed informs this study of the increasing desire to create diverse, equitable, and inclusive institutions. The next chapter describes the research methodology and design of this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research methods, processes, and data analysis used for this study. I chose a mixed-methods research approach where qualitative and quantitative data were incorporated in tandem to strengthen the study, both data sets were analyzed, and the results were compared (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research is the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting non-numerical data, such as language. Qualitative research helps readers understand how people involved in the study interpret their experiences. Each participant's words were collected, analyzed, and used as data supporting this study. Qualitative research is multimethod in focus and involves a natural, interpretive approach to its subject matter (Mcleod, 2019).

In contrast, quantitative research consists of the process of objectively collecting and analyzing numerical data to describe, predict, or control variables of interest. Data analysis focuses on statistical and practical data from a targeted population. Statistics are used to aid decision making by turning quantitative data into useful information. Statistics help researchers identify and describe patterns, relationships, and connections. Quantitative research aims to establish general laws of behavior and phenomenon across different settings or contexts. Research is used to test a theory and ultimately support or reject it (Mcleod, 2019).

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggest that the primary purpose of basic research is to know more about a phenomenon by engaging in a systemic process by which more is known about a particular issue than we did before the study. Applied research is primarily intended for studies used by administrators and policymakers to improve institutional processes or facilitate change. Action research is a common form of applied research where “the goal of action research is to address a workplace problem in a practice-based setting such as a classroom, a workplace, a program, or an organization” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 4). In this study, I used applied research to show how metrics are used to evaluate DEI initiatives and goals. In this case, the purpose of the research is to make decisions and improve the quality of practices related to DEI. Unlike traditional research, the context of action research is embedded in practices, not theory.

This approach was adaptable to my three goals. First, I broadened the knowledge of DEI initiatives used in higher education, as shown in Chapters One and Two of the study. Second, I improved the practice of measuring DEI initiatives by explaining what evaluation processes were utilized and how they are helping colleges progress toward creating DEI campuses. The third goal was to address the problem; in this case, there have been abundant DEI initiatives and programs implemented over the past 60 years, but no data to show if those initiatives are positively impacting colleges or, more importantly, student success. The gap in the literature suggests a gap in research that reveals there is a lack of measuring the effectiveness of DEI initiatives and goals. Finally, I assessed the value of using metrics to be accountable for the institution's commitment to serving diverse and underserved populations.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As noted in Chapter One, the study aims to discover how DEI initiatives, strategies, and plans have been evaluated and measured. Research questions determined how data was collected and guided the qualitative inquiry (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The study answered the primary research questions using a survey containing both open- and closed-ended questions (Appendix A). I also conducted virtual interviews via Zoom to gain a more detailed perspective on how DEI initiatives and goals are assessed. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. A structured list of questions (Appendix B) enabled me to gather specific information for the survey and interviews. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), a semistructured interview consists of a guided list of questions or topics to be explored, allowing the researcher to gather necessary information and consider the worldview and new ideas of the respondent.

The research questions below were utilized to gain an understanding of how DEI initiatives, strategies, and plans have been evaluated and measured.

1. How are diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in higher education evaluated and assessed?
2. Have institutions reached their DEI goals? Why or why not?
3. Do some strategies appear to be more effective than others in measuring or achieving DEI goals?

SAMPLE SELECTION

I collected data using criterion-based selection or purposive sampling. Merriam & Tisdell (2016) state that in purposive sampling, the researcher identifies predetermined attributes of the sample that are crucial to the study. Once those characteristics have been determined, the researcher seeks people or organizations that meet the criteria. For example, I have identified higher education institutions that have clear DEI strategic plans, goals, or outcomes managed by

a person or persons in charge of DEI at their respective institutions as the ideal sample population.

INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE

The institutions selected for the study had a robust webpage with strategic plans that listed initiatives, goals, strategies, or outcomes related to DEI. I initially identified 20 colleges as participants in the study but ultimately only surveyed 18 due to the expiration of two institutions' strategic plans initially identified. The survey criteria for each institution included:

1. The institution must identify as a higher education institution and provide postsecondary education.
2. The institution must have a current strategic plan devoted to DEI.
3. The institution must have an employee identified as the contact person for DEI.

The candidates identified for an interview met one or both criteria below.

1. The participant must indicate in the survey that they are interested in being interviewed to further discuss evaluating DEI initiatives.
2. The participant representing an institution with two or more DEI strategic plans in the past ten years will be identified for an interview.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

The participants identified for the study were involved with the institution's strategic plan and listed on the institution's website as persons responsible for DEI initiatives, strategies, or programs. They worked as institutional representatives in various roles such as but not limited to:

- Vice president of diversity equity and inclusion
- Chief diversity officer
- Dean or associate dean of diversity
- Director of diversity
- Taskforce or committee members dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives or goals

The institutional staff of the organizations involved in this study were identified based on my knowledge of their current work assignments. The ideal participants were the lead persons responsible for DEI initiatives who report directly to the president or provost. According to Tomlin (2016), reporting to the provost is ideal for diversity leaders whose focus is academic, such as curriculum development or refinement. However, if the focus is to change the culture of the college, these individuals report to the college president. “Some institutions are experimenting with a hybrid model where day-to-day reporting is to the provost, but the CDO is considered part of the president’s senior leadership team” (Tomlin, 2016, 3 section). The participants were all visible, connected leaders who actively engage with the community, students, faculty, and staff. They collaborate with stakeholders and evaluate potential barriers to developing DEI strategies that increase inclusivity and cultural competence. They promote, expand, and enhance diversity within their institutions. Table 1 provides participant profiles; pseudonyms were used to maintain anonymity and confidentiality.

DATA COLLECTION

I acted as the primary data collection instrument. Following approval by the Institutional Review Board (Appendix D), the data collection happened in two phases. Phase One consisted of an online survey via Survey Monkey asking both open- and closed-ended questions that align with the research questions. Phase Two consisted of semi-structured interviews. Interviewees were employed at institutions with two or more strategic plans in the past ten years or self-identified interest in participating in an interview when taking the online survey. Survey participants who answered the question, “I am interested in a 30-minute virtual interview to discuss the evaluation of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. If yes, please enter your name and contact information in the text box,” were contacted for an interview. (Appendix C)

The purpose of the interview was to take a deeper dive into the institution's process of identifying and assessing DEI initiatives. It also allowed them to compare and contrast former DEI goals and practices with present or new. The semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility by providing both structured and less structured questions. This allowed me to explore the participant's worldview, perceptions, and new ideas on the topic.

Table 1. Survey Participant Profiles

PSEUDONYM	REGION	TITLE
CC1	Midwest	Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer
CC2	Midwest	Chief Diversity Officer
CC3	Northeast	Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
CC4	Southeast	Director of DEI
CC5	Southeast	Manager of Diversity and Inclusion
CC6	West	DEI Committee member
CC7	Midwest	Chief Diversity & Compliance Officer
CC8	Northeast	Director of HR, Compliance & Talent Development/Chief Diversity Officer/Title IX Coordinator
C1	Northeast	Vice President of Student Affairs & Chief Diversity Officer
CC8	Midwest	Director of Diversity and Inclusion
U1	Midwest	Assistant Vice Provost for Equity, Inclusion, and Academic Affairs
U2	Northeast	Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer
U3	Northeast	Assistant Director of Diversity Training and Educational Initiatives
U4	West	Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer
U5	Southeast	Vice President of Inclusive Excellence
C2	Midwest	Chief Diversity Officer
U6	Midwest	Executive Director
U7	Midwest	Vice President for Inclusive Excellence

PHASE ONE ONLINE SURVEY

The survey was sent to 18 participants who were identified within the institution's strategic plan or on the website as persons responsible for DEI initiatives, strategies, or programs. They worked as institutional representatives in various roles such as a vice president

of diversity equity and inclusion, chief diversity officer, dean or associate dean of diversity, director of diversity, or task force and committee members dedicated to diversity and equity and inclusion initiatives or goals. The survey questions were designed to understand the institution's DEI goals, i.e., how they were created, displayed, and measured. The participants were sent an invitation to participate in the survey to their institution's email address (Appendix E). The email also contained informed consent describing the intent of the survey (Appendix F). No signature was required on the informed consent; clicking on the survey link indicated consent and a willingness to participate in the questionnaire. I used SurveyMonkey to conduct the survey. The questions were both open- and closed-ended questions, and the survey took 5-10 minutes to complete.

PHASE TWO INTERVIEWS

Six participants were invited to participate in an interview. The participants for the interviews were identified within the institution's strategic plan or on the website as persons responsible for DEI initiatives, strategies, or programs. They may work as institutional representatives in various roles such as a vice president of diversity equity and inclusion, chief diversity officer, dean or associate dean of diversity, director of diversity, or task force or committee members dedicated to diversity and equity and inclusion initiatives or goals. The participants were sent an invitation to their institution's email address, inviting them to participate in the interview. The email also included the informed consent. The participants agreed to participate in the study by agreeing to be interviewed. The participants and I agreed on a date and time, and I sent the participants a Zoom link for the date and time selected. The interview was recorded and transcribed. The interview allowed participants to provide more detailed answers regarding their institution's DEI goals, i.e., how they are created, displayed, and measured. I asked semi-structured, open-ended questions via Zoom, and the interviews took 25-

40 minutes. After the interview transcripts were transcribed, they were sent to the participants in a follow-up email, asking them to review for accuracy and clarification.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

I identified participants' names, titles, and email addresses on their college website; therefore, this is public information. I took several measures to conceal the identity of the participants.

- Emails were visible only to me and stored in my password-protected email.
- Pseudonyms were used to conceal each participant's identity.
- I coded all transcripts and notes.
- All data collected during the study were kept in a secure, electronic, password-protected file. Only I have access to this information.
- All data collected during the study and related to the study will be destroyed three years after I successfully defend the study.

DATA ANALYSIS

QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

All quantitative data in this study was collected via survey questions. I used the survey as a data collection tool to gather close-ended responses from the participants. Question types were primarily categorical (e.g., “yes/no”) and interval/ratio questions (e.g., rating-scale, Likert-scale). Close-ended survey questions generally had stem questions and a set of answer alternatives to provide participants with a fixed number of responses from which they need to choose their answer (SAGE Research Methods Datasets, 2019). The statistical data provided by the closed-ended survey questions turned quantitative data into useful information helpful for analyzing data. Descriptive statistics summarized data and described patterns, relationships, and connections (McLeod, 2019). Descriptive statistics are used to present quantitative descriptions in a manageable form by helping the researcher sensibly simplify large amounts of data (Trochim,

2018). Descriptive statistics were used to describe the basic features of the data in a study. They provide simple summaries of the sample and the measures. Together with simple graphics analysis, they form the basis of virtually every quantitative analysis of data.

I utilized content analysis to analyze documents and public records found online. This information aided me in reviewing literature and DEI initiatives of various institutions. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) define content analysis as a viable means to analyze unstructured data by reviewing meanings, symbolic qualities, and expressive content. The analysis of public information was quantitative in nature identifying data relevant to DEI at each institution.

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The primary qualitative data was collected via open-ended survey questions and interview questions. While the closed-ended quantitative questions were designed to be easy for participants to answer and provided quick data that was easy to analyze, surveying with open-ended questions offered me rich, unconstrained participant responses to broad questions. Open-ended questions allowed participants to express their perspectives using their own language, terms, and expressions, giving them the freedom to provide an answer in their own words. Open-ended questions encouraged more thoughtful and genuine answers (SAGE Research Methods Datasets, 2019). Interviews provided further detail using open-ended, less-structured questions to gain unique responses from participants.

I utilized thematic analysis to examine data to gain meaningful comprehension of participant perspectives. Thematic analysis requires the researcher to identify patterns within the data, enabling a detailed understanding of the research data. It is a valuable method for analyzing qualitative data as it looks for patterns from participant communication that is not constrained by any limitations to the responses.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Validity is an assessment of accuracy; it is the extent to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. “Regardless of the type of research, validity and reliability are concerns that can be approached through careful attention to a study's conceptualization and the way in which data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and the way in which findings are presented” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 238). Quantitative data depict variables and measurable units, while qualitative information describes people and events. Mixed-methods studies describe how criteria are applied to assess the trustworthiness of the study. My careful design of the study contributes to the study's reliability and acceptance by the scientific community.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that reliability refers to the degree to which research findings can be replicated. One of the primary requirements of any research process is the reliability of the data and findings. Quantitative research may yield similar results because data is static and straightforward. However, qualitative data are narrative and subjective. The purpose is not to attain the same results but rather to agree that the findings and results are consistent and dependable based on the data collection processes.

I ensured that the study was valid, reliable, and unambiguous by using multiple modes of data collection. Participants for the study were carefully selected based on specific criteria gained through an extensive literature review. I confirmed the participant's role in DEI by checking public information on the institution's website. I carefully designed each survey question in various formats such as multiple-choice, scales, yes or no, and open-ended. I used member checks for the interviews and provided the interview results to the participant to be confirmed and validated.

RESEARCHER BIAS AND ASSUMPTIONS

All researchers have their own values, beliefs, and worldviews but must attempt to collect, analyze, and interpret data impartially. As an African American woman, I am considered a member of a diverse population. My identity and personal interest are why I chose this topic. As a minority, I want institutions to be accountable for their DEI efforts. As a researcher, I can remain neutral and suspend any biases I may have.

LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

Limitations are a concern of any research study and present potential weaknesses that are out of the researcher's control. Mixed-methods studies share some common limitations, such as qualitative methodologies can't be truly replicated or verified. Quantitative studies can prove correlation but not causation. In addition, the study may have been limited by the degree of success in recruiting participants for the study. As stated previously, participants were invited to participate in the study via email. The link to the survey was sent via email, and a survey reminder was sent two weeks after the initial email. The lack of responses for participation could have resulted in a lack of data needed to make appropriate comparisons and conclusions. To mitigate this limitation, I appealed to the target population once more to invite them to participate in an interview and successfully reached a purposeful sample.

Delimitations are concerned with the definitions and boundaries of the study set by the researcher. The primary objective of this study was to identify how higher education institutions evaluate or measure their DEI initiatives. Therefore, I asked comprehensive questions about how this was done. There were no questions that identified a specific metric. In addition, I only chose institutions that have already shown progress in DEI, evidenced by their DEI strategic plan, which could have eliminated other institutions that are doing substantive DEI work.

CONCLUSION

This chapter described the methodology used to investigate how higher education institutions evaluate DEI at their institutions. To gain further insight into how DEI initiatives and goals are evaluated, I asked all participants the following research questions about their institution: (1) How are DEI initiatives evaluated and assessed? (2) Have they reached their DEI goals? Explain why or why not? and finally, (3) Have they identified specific strategies that appear to be more effective than others? I conducted a mixed-methods study utilizing both a survey and interviews to provide a comprehensive assessment of the research problem.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Three focused on the data collection process and methodology to understand how DEI initiatives are evaluated in higher education. This chapter presents the findings that emerged from surveys and interviews I conducted. All participants are employees of higher education institutions engaged in substantive DEI efforts with similar initiatives and goals mentioned in Chapter Two. In addition, each has been identified as an institutional DEI contact person, evidenced by a publicly available, current DEI strategic plan on the institution's website.

I conducted this study utilizing a mixed-methods approach as outlined in Chapter Three to examine the evaluative methods used to measure DEI initiatives across the United States' various higher education institutions. The surveys and interviews focused on answering the researcher's primary research questions:

1. How are diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in higher education evaluated and assessed?
2. Have institutions reached their DEI goals? Why or why not?
3. Do some strategies appear to be more effective than others in measuring or achieving DEI goals?

DATA COLLECTION

I began finding potential participants by researching colleges that have already implemented strategic plans dedicated to DEI. Once the institutions were identified, I used the public information available on the college website to identify responsible parties who represent and evaluate DEI efforts at their institutions. Potential participants were sent an invitation to

participate in the study’s survey, an informed consent document, and a link to the SurveyMonkey questionnaire. The survey contained both open- and closed-ended questions.

Virtual interviews were conducted via Zoom. Interviewees were identified using two methods. First, the survey included a question asking the participants to indicate their interest in being interviewed to discuss further evaluating DEI initiatives. Second, via email, I contacted individuals representing an institution with two or more DEI strategic plans in the past ten years and invited them to a 30-minute virtual interview via Zoom. I asked questions that elicited participants' actual knowledge about their institution’s DEI initiatives.

I distributed surveys to DEI representatives at 18 institutions. Six were completed, which is a 33% survey response rate. Two survey participants indicated they were interested in an interview. In addition, I emailed four people directly and invited them to interview. One individual accepted for a total of three interview participants.

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Individuals responsible for representing and evaluating DEI at their institutions were invited to participate in the survey. Additionally, interviews were conducted with DEI leaders that report directly to the campus’s president. To maintain anonymity and confidentiality, pseudonyms were used to replace all identifying factors, including participant names and titles. In addition, some feedback was paraphrased to avoid revealing identifying information. Table 2 shows the interview participant's pseudonym, role at their institution, and region within the US.

Table 2. Interview Participant Profiles

PSEUDONYM	ROLE	REGION
Timothy	Director of Diversity and Inclusion	Midwest
Kimberly	Vice President of Student Affairs and Chief Diversity Officer	Northeast
Chad	Chief Diversity Officer	Midwest

FINDINGS: RESEARCH QUESTION 1

The first research question examined how higher education institutions utilize metrics to evaluate their DEI initiatives.

SURVEY FINDINGS

The data collected from the survey revealed that 50% of the participant's institutions administered a campus climate survey. Campus climate surveys ask students, faculty, staff, and administrators about their perceptions of their institution's culture and climate, how their institution supports diversity and equity, and experiences with discrimination and harassment at their institution (Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium [HEDS], 2022). An additional open-ended survey question asked how the institution has determined a need for a DEI plan or goals. Below is a list of survey participant's responses:

- Diversity audit
- Strategic plan and diversity SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat) analysis
- Campus climate surveys
- The state commissioner has made race equity a priority with goals to close equity and opportunity gaps. We examine our own data and identify gaps. With shrinking enrollments, we must better serve our ALANA (African American, Latio/a American, Asian American, Native American) and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) students for sustainability.
- It's a requirement of the state system

Another open-ended survey question asked participants to explain how their DEI initiatives are evaluated. All participants provided an answer. Responses included the following comments:

- Student and employee data are derived from surveys and interviews.
- We recently became an ATD (Achieving the Dream) school, so that plus our strategic plan and state goals will be our methodology.

- Action items are either completed or not. There are over 2,500 action items across 50 units with DEI plans over five years.
- We only review what programs have been accomplished.
- Each goal is controlled by a metric that is reviewed and reported quarterly.
- Each goal is reviewed, and it is determined if it has been met in a yes-or-no format.

INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Interview participants revealed that campus climate surveys established baseline data to gauge DEI efforts and track their progress. Chad, a CDO at a midwestern college, indicated that his institution conducted a second climate survey and used that data to provide insights into trends compared to the first survey, which was completed in 2016. In addition to campus climate surveys, interview participants also utilize diversity audits, key performance indicators (KPIs), SWOT analysis, and strategic planning as evaluative measures. Diversity audits are designed for companies seeking to add diversity initiatives to their institutional goals. Chad sought the help of a third-party auditor and human resources professional to ensure the audit was viewed as credible and unbiased. He went on to speak about the auditor and the audit, saying:

She's a well-known HR expert in the community, and she created 128 questions for the audit that touched every part of the college. We started examining what we had based on the questions. The president made it clear that everybody had to participate. So, we got buy-in from all the VPs to give us the information we needed. So, a VP was either directly responsible, or they would have a designee that would provide information. And whatever the question was, if you said yes to the question, you had to provide evidence as to why that answer was yes. So, for example, if you went to marketing and said, do you have wide representation in your marketing material? And if marketing said yes, then you had to provide evidence that that was so. Then from the audit came recommendations and goals.

According to Chad, the diversity audit was a 20-month project that started in fall 2018, leading to seven recommendations and 12 goals. After the diversity audit was completed, Chad and other campus leaders conducted a SWOT analysis to identify their institution's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Chad stated that the SWOT analysis brought around 60

people together to discuss the college's current practices, needs, gaps, strengths, and weaknesses. As a result, they were able to identify opportunities and threats. In addition, they found that their SWOT analysis aligned with the recommendations from the diversity audit, which was essential for college leadership. As of winter 2022, Chad states that his institution has completed 80% of the initiatives derived from the audit and is approaching a timeline to reconvene and create new initiatives.

A KPI is a quantifiable measure of performance that you have decided is important. KPIs are commonly used in business to track progress towards goals. In addition, they are used to measure performance at different strategic levels (Pearson, 2021). Timothy, director of Diversity and Inclusion at a midwestern community college, stated that his institution uses KPIs to evaluate diversity goals, such as bias on search committees, as they have a 90% White faculty demographic. The goal was to offer bias training to 50% of faculty and staff within the first year of identifying this initiative. Timothy also uses KPIs to measure the progress from one strategic plan to the next. KPIs offer an opportunity to evaluate what has been accomplished and what should be carried over to a new strategic plan. According to Timothy:

Being transparent about the data and having engaging conversations about progress also identifies emerging trends that may be a new priority. The improvement is tracked on a reporting template and reported to the Cabinet, the Board of Trustees, and the college community.

Kimberly, vice president of Student Affairs and CDO at a northeastern community college, reveals that a previous strategic plan's goals have influenced the existing strategic plan. She gives the example of her institution's goal to increase underrepresented minority (UPM) faculty to increase student persistence. It is a goal that has transferred from the previous strategic plan to the current plan. However, it has been a challenge due to the lack of data collection as human resources view race and ethnicity data as personal and private.

FINDINGS: RESEARCH QUESTION 2

The second research question seeks to discover if institutions have reached their DEI goals. A large part of identifying if an institution has achieved its goals entails having clearly defined quantifiable goals.

SURVEY FINDINGS

Survey participants were asked if their institution's diversity, equity, and inclusion goals include data to measure progress. On average, 49% of survey respondents reported their institution does have data to measure DEI progress. Additionally, survey participants were asked if their institution's DEI goals were clearly defined and measurable. Figure 9 illustrates the participant's responses. Survey participants were also asked if their institution has achieved its DEI goals. Figure 10 reveals that 75% of the respondents do not agree that their institution has fulfilled its DEI goals.

Figure 9. Survey Question: Diversity Goals at My Institution are Clearly Defined and Measured

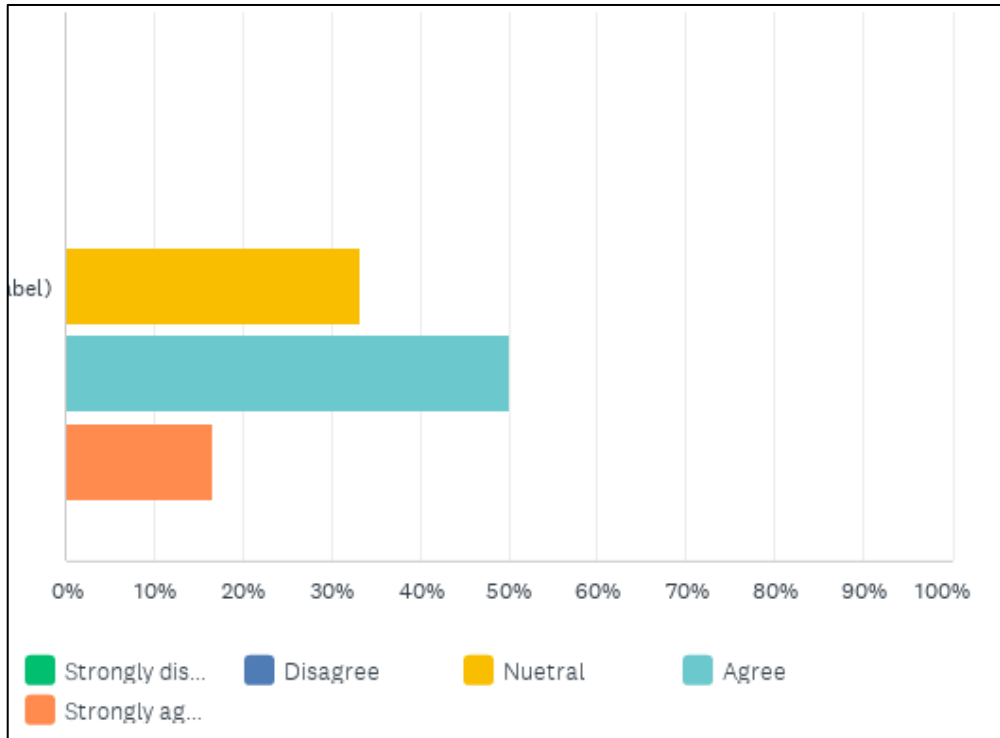
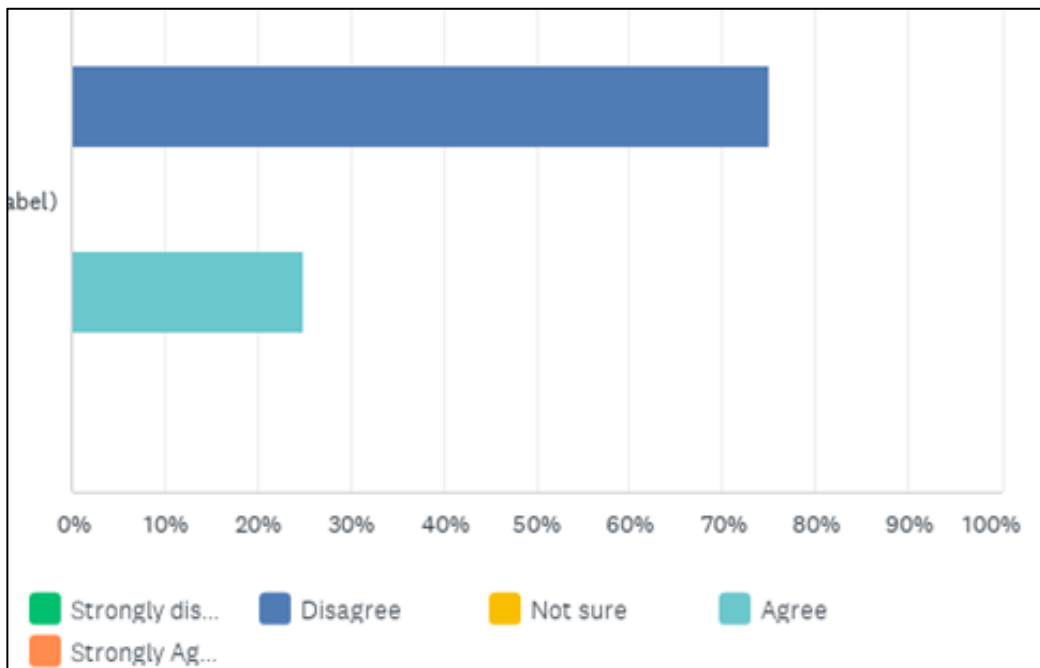


Figure 10. Survey Question: My Institution has Achieved its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Goals



Participants answered an open-ended survey question about the effectiveness of evaluating DEI. Some revealed they do not believe their institutions are achieving their DEI goals. For example, one survey participant stated their institution struggles to capture any fundamental statistical data. Another said they have a set of goals, but they are not measured, and there is no support to ensure the execution of their goals.

INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Both Timothy and Chad, representing Midwest institutions, believe they have clearly defined, measurable goals as a part of their institutions' robust DEI strategic initiatives. Interviewee Kimberly revealed that her institution is a part of a statewide diversity initiative. Her job title as CDO was created because of this initiative. In Kimberly's case, the role of CDO was tacked on to her vice president duties. Other institutions within this system have assigned the CDO as one standalone position. Some colleges decided the position would be better suited as a director, and others, like Kimberly, work in dual roles. The assignment of diversity staff is at the discretion of each institution as are the diversity goals. Kimberly states that her institution's goals are not measurable due to a lack of support in collecting data.

Strengths in Achieving Goals

Each interview participant reports to the college president, which they believe was essential to creating and supporting their positions. As they noted during their interviews, this reporting structure was a sure sign that the president and the college community were to take DEI seriously. Timothy stated that being promoted to a director and reporting to the president was a positive step in showing everyone, even those skeptical of diversity initiatives, that the DEI plan is a permanent staple at the institution. According to Timothy,

DEI leaders need authority to investigate issues and concerns and ultimately make necessary changes; rankings and titles are important. The DEI person needs to be at the

very top level or at least report to the top level. Otherwise, everything gets lost in the wash, meaning both optics and authority are important.

Chad referred to himself as a unicorn because there are not many CDOs in community colleges. He reports to the president and has a seat on the president's cabinet. The push for this position stemmed from the college community recognizing a need. When he was initially asked to consider applying for the job, he turned it down because he did not believe the college was ready to take DEI seriously. The previous CDO was two layers under the cabinet and did not appear to make much of an impact. Therefore, Timothy made it clear that he did not want to accept the position if the CDO did not report to the president. He understood early on that this needed to be the reporting structure if DEI initiatives were to be a success and taken seriously. Two interview participants stated that the diversity position required "teeth" to be taken seriously.

All interview participants revealed that being supported was essential to achieving diversity goals. For example, Timothy stated that the college president created the institution's DEI strategic initiatives, and that is how his position was created, which allowed him to work on strategic initiatives in partnership with the president. In addition, the institution's board of trustees is a diverse group that supports DEI, which has helped with goal attainment and shows the community that they are not simply checking a box.

Interview participants reported that it is crucial to have the support and the appropriate resources when working on attaining goals. They revealed that the most impactful resources were having a budget and a staff. The board of trustees and the president move resources forward, so it is imperative to have their support. Chad reported that he has a full-time administrative assistant and coordinators that work exclusively on DEI, but he is not the only DEI administrator. There is also a vice president of equity who doubles as the Title IX

coordinator. Timothy stated that he has held off on hiring any staff as he wants to focus on his work instead of supervisory responsibilities but has the support from his president to hire someone when he is ready. For now, he is satisfied working with the institution's DEI committee.

Barriers to Goal Attainment

Survey and interview participants conveyed concern that it was difficult to attain DEI goals. Most participants attributed not achieving their goals to a lack of support and resources. Others listed paucity of data as a barrier. Responses included:

The culture. If the college still sees diversity as checking a box, we have to change the culture.

Not enough data or aggregated data due to lack of support from human resources; they believe data is personal and private, so they don't want you to have access to information.

Data fatigue. Data keeps people motivated and moving; it's a necessary evil.

There is a lack of support for DEI. If the college was really serious about it, they would sacrifice somewhere else and provide resources for DEI.

Infrastructure issues that give you pause to question just how committed the institution really is. Yes, we have a CDO; we check the box. But am I really fulfilling the CDO role if there are barriers in the way for me to do my job?

Lack of staff

Kimberly provided a detailed account of her experience as vice president of Student Affairs and CDO stating that she does not have the bandwidth or support to perform both roles. Kimberly offered the following perspective about the limits to achieving DEI initiatives when you have dual roles:

The challenge with my job is that I'm the vp of Student Affairs, which is a full-time job. Being the Chief Diversity Officer is also a full-time job. And I don't really have the staffing, particularly for DEI. Because when we talk about DEI, it's not just students; it's employees as well, admin, and faculty, which is complex in and of itself. And so, for me, for the past years that I've been here, it's been really challenging because, for all intents

and purposes, my priority has been student affairs. Seven years ago, [college name] had a mandate that all of the colleges in the system had to have chief diversity officers. How that looked across the system is kind of blurred. Some people have chief diversity officers that report to the provost and not the president. Some are faculty members who do it. There are a few of us who have dual roles, and then some have full-blown operations and offices.

For me, with all the work that has to be done, it's not the battle that I'm going to fight right now. I don't have the bandwidth for it because there's too much other stuff that has to be done. One of the reasons why I was hired here was because of my background in diversity. So right picking. But to have to fulfill those roles, both of those full-time roles, something isn't going to get done, particularly when there's no staff, and because of the financial environment that we're living in, if you get a staff member, it's a miracle.

The study's survey and interview participants reveal both strengths and opportunities for improvement for achieving DEI goals. Table 3 summarizes the participant's responses.

Table 3. Strengths and Challenges Achieving DEI Goals

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES
Appointed DEI leader	College culture
Reporting to the college president	Goals not measured
College community support	No college community support
DEI Budget	No DEI budget
DEI staff	No DEI staff
Data access	Lack of access to data or incorrect data

FINDINGS: RESEARCH QUESTION 3

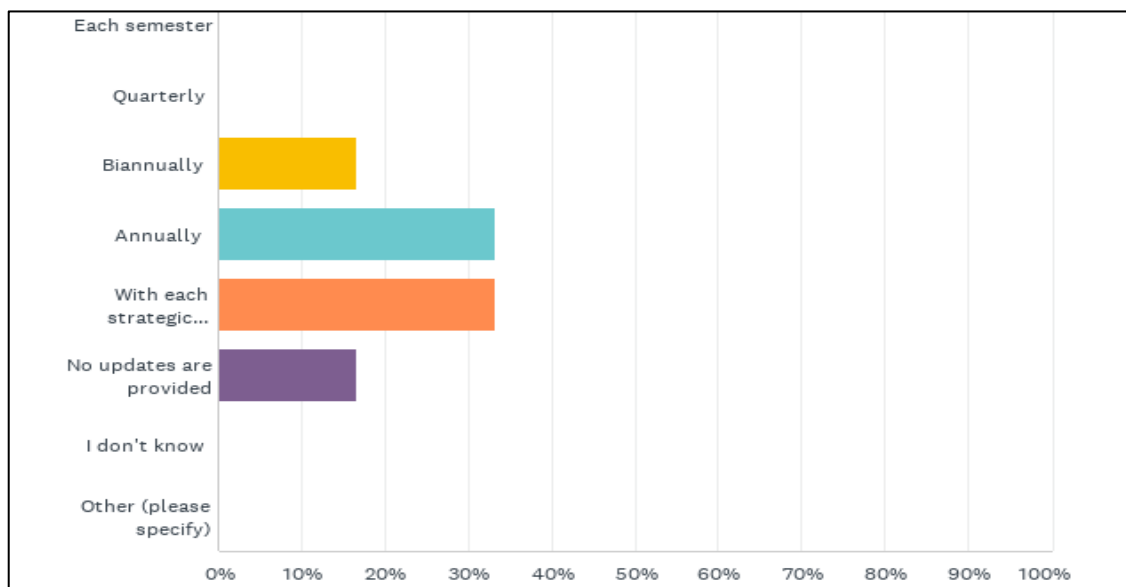
The third research question explored whether some DEI strategies appear to be more effective than others. The study allowed me to ascertain several methods tried and trialed by DEI professionals. Below are the diversity strategies and processes that survey and interview participants reported have worked:

- Appoint a DEI leader, preferably who reports to the president.
- Conduct a campus climate survey or diversity audit.
- Adopt and implement a DEI strategy or plan.

- Have support in the form of resources such as staff and a budget.
- Utilize data for benchmarking and measuring progress.
- Reporting findings to the college community at least once per year.

Figure 11 illustrates how often survey participants' institutions report updates of their DEI goal progress.

Figure 11. Survey Question: How Often Does Your Institution Provide Updates on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Goals?



GENERAL FINDINGS

A theme that emerged from the survey and interviews was how DEI impacts the college's culture. Noted below are the study's survey and interview participant's collective comments on college culture:

There is no endpoint. DEI is an ongoing culture change. Yes, action items have been achieved, and that is a goal, but the overall goals are long-term culture change.

Measuring the culture or climate is a qualitative assessment that is ongoing.

We also have to measure those qualitative and behavioral things, and oftentimes that's what most of it is. We're trying to change people's mindsets and behavior, Oftentimes even their hearts. But that's difficult to assess.

I call myself a DEI consultant, and we have to ask how the culture has changed? How is it changing? What do I see? I see the boldness of people. I think people who have been on the fence about DEI really want to be supportive of DEI or want to be allies. I think that those folks are feeling a lot more comfortable whether it's Black Lives Matter, whether it's anything to do with LGBTQ, anything to do with people with disabilities. I just think people feel a lot more emboldened to say they're supportive of that.

You are going to have people who don't really believe in this, but we've built a culture, and you can see it. But to provide context, one of the things that we have done is we created a diversity task force on hiring, and then we've hired someone as a human resource hiring recruiter, specifically looking at diverse candidates. All that came out of what we did seven years ago. Those are recommendations people were not happy with.

The city is about 60% African American. Our county is about 20% African American. So on every level, we need to reflect what the community looks like.

I took this position looking to build a culture of diversity.

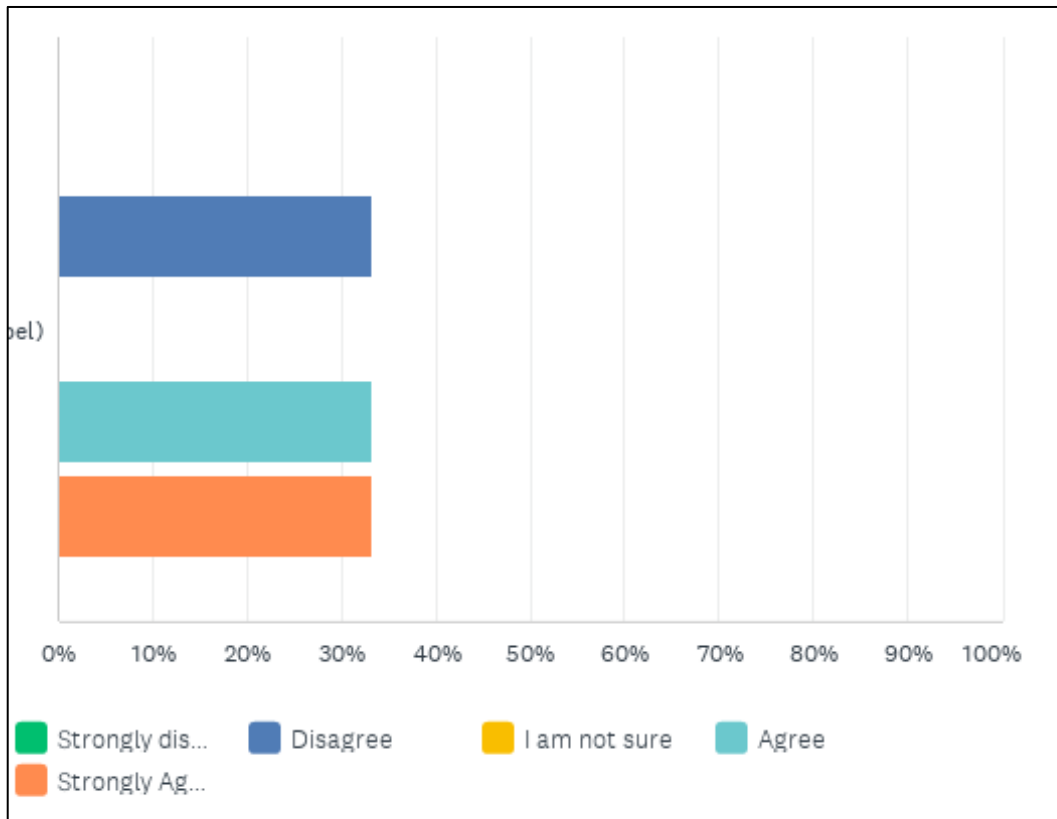
Culture change. So you can see it happening. It's slow as you can expect. There is resistance, as you should expect, but it's moving, and it's changing for what I feel is the better. And I'll say this, it's too fast for some folks, and it's not fast enough for others.

I think the culture is changing. So, therefore, the reporting structure has changed, and folks feel a lot more comfortable, and it's more supportive.

I've got a faculty fellows program on the books that we haven't been able to implement because of budgeting issues and the culture of our faculty union.

Figure 12 illustrates survey participants' responses when asked if their institution's DEI initiatives have positively impacted their campus climate and culture. Four participants agree that DEI has positively impacted their campus climate and culture, and two disagree.

Figure 12. Survey Question: The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives at My Institution Have Positively Impacted the Campus and Culture



CONCLUSION

This chapter presented key findings derived from a mixed-methods study comprised of a survey with both open- and closed-ended questions and interviews. The survey and interview participants are DEI professionals who evaluate DEI at their institutions. The survey provided concise statistical data, and the interviews allowed the participants to give more in-depth details about DEI assessment. The data collected from the survey and interview answered the three research questions. In Chapter Five, I analyze the data provided in Chapter Four, draw conclusions, and make recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

This research study explored how higher education institutions evaluate their DEI initiatives. As discussed in Chapter One, DEI practices are not a new concept. The need for diversity initiatives stemmed from racial inequities that students of color faced at PWIs. There has been an evolution in how institutions respond to increasing diversity concerns that coincide with an upsurge of minorities on college campuses. Previous diversity initiatives included safe havens, multicultural centers, employing a CDO, and Barack Obama's Completion Agenda. Currently, the concepts of intersectionality and CRT are being considered as a means to close the equity gaps in postsecondary education. Despite past attempts to diversify colleges campuses, racism, biases, and inequities of disadvantaged students continue to plague higher education. More diverse student populations pursue higher education, but there are opportunity gaps between access and completion for this particular student demographic.

This study described standard DEI best practices used in higher education and investigated how these initiatives were evaluated. A wealth of literature exists on standard DEI practices such as DEI strategic planning, enrolling a diverse student body, diverse hiring practices, employing a CDO, implicit bias training, and changing the campus culture. However, existing literature provided little insight into the analysis and perceptions of the DEI initiatives on college campuses. Therefore, I focused my study on answering the following research questions:

1. How are diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in higher education evaluated and assessed?
2. Have institutions reached their DEI goals? Why or why not?
3. Do some strategies appear to be more effective than others in measuring or achieving DEI goals?

Chapter Four presented findings that focused on the research questions. The findings were derived from an online survey and virtual interviews. This chapter analyzes these findings and allows me to draw conclusions and make recommendations for further action and research.

INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: HOW ARE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION INITIATIVES IN HIGHER EDUCATION EVALUATED AND ASSESSED?

The participation criteria for this study narrowed the focus to higher education institutions that have already made steps toward achieving DEI by implementing a strategic plan focused on DEI and having a person(s) responsible for DEI initiatives. Even with comparable actions taken toward implementing DEI plans or goals, the way DEI is assessed varied by each institution. The findings showed that each institution used a different form of evaluative measure. Interview participants reported that it is ideal to establish a starting point and collect baseline data by performing campus climate surveys, diversity audits, or SWOT analysis. These analyses led to creating strategic plans that list specific strategic initiatives and goals related to DEI. Individuals representing the statewide college systems created goals using national and institutional data to close equity gaps. Additional evaluative measures were reporting KPIs; engaging in surveys, interviews, and program reviews; and reviewing the completion of action items. The Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development (2016) states that institutions should have the capacity to collect and analyze data to track their DEI efforts. Further exploration of the institutional assessments reveals that only about half of the participants use

data to measure the progress of their institution's DEI goals. Participants acknowledged that using data is helpful to identify trends and inform their future DEI plans, but a lack of capturing institutional data hinders tracking DEI effectiveness.

Two interview participants indicated their institution has a goal to increase diversity among faculty. Each interviewee gave examples of how data impacted this initiative. For example, one interview participant stated that their faculty is 90% White, which led to a specific goal: in one year, 50% of faculty and staff would participate in diversity and bias training related to the hiring process. Progress was tracked every six months by the director of diversity and human resources. The second participant stated that there was an institutional goal to increase underrepresented minority faculty but could not collect relevant data because human resources did not reveal the racial identity of employees.

The participants' goals to hire more diverse faculty and offer bias training for hiring committees aligned with research about increasing diversity in higher education. Institutions with a diverse faculty body are shown to create a positive campus climate for students and increase collegiality among all faculty (Wood, 2019). However, Wilder et al. (2017) reveal a gap in minority faculty recruiting and retention efforts.

Bias training for hiring committees has been indicated to mitigate the gap between predominantly White faculty and staff serving a diverse student body. The main focus of implicit bias training is to become aware of one's biases and eliminate potentially harmful and discriminatory actions such as microaggressions. Training assumes that people are willing to rid themselves of the learned biases and associated behavior. Pittman (2021) suggests forgoing bias training and adopting bias education. Training indicates learning a skill, whereas education suggests long-term learning, leading to changed behavior.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: CONCLUSION

These findings lead me to conclude that DEI initiatives in higher education are evaluated using several measures. Establishing baseline data is essential before creating specific goals or benchmarks, and this can be accomplished via a campus climate survey, diversity audit, or performing a SWOT analysis. Additional assessments include KPIs, surveys, interviews, program reviews, and reviewing action items. Institutions that have identified a need to increase diversity among faculty and staff may track this initiative if they can collect and review the appropriate data. In addition, institutions wishing to implement bias training may go a step further and create an ongoing bias education series to facilitate continuous learning accompanied by changed perspectives and behaviors.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: HAVE INSTITUTIONS REACHED THEIR DEI GOALS? WHY OR WHY NOT?

The second research question determined if the participants had reached their DEI goals and the strengths and challenges associated with goal attainment. Data relative to the second research question revealed that most participants believed that their institution's DEI goals were clearly defined and measurable. Still, the majority of participants stated that their institution had not achieved its DEI goals. During the data collection process, themes emerged that showed both strength and challenges in achieving goals. A primary strength included having a person or office responsible for DEI, specifically when oversight of DEI initiatives is their primary job. Strengths in goal attainment are shown when the person responsible for DEI reports directly to the college president, indicating authority and efficacious leadership (Parker, 2020). Many of the study's participants were vice presidents or CDOs. As stated by Pihakis et al. (2019), CDOs possess strategic leadership and are proficient in change management skills, and they are influential with external partners and committed to DEI initiatives, which is why they are strategic partners to the

president. Interview participants revealed that DEI initiatives are taken seriously when the responsible party has authority. This shows that the college knows the importance of DEI and has given authority and responsibility to make necessary changes to make DEI a success.

Additionally, participants revealed that institutional support is vital to achieving DEI goals. Support is shown mainly by having resources, such as a budget and staff members, and being a part of a community that supports DEI initiatives. Support is also demonstrated by collaboration among departments, specifically as it relates to collecting and sharing data; this includes having procedures in place for the data collection process.

When these support systems were not in place, the participants revealed that they were unable to achieve their DEI goals. Some participants reported additional barriers to DEI goal attainment, which included data fatigue; although metrics are often motivating, they can also become redundant and cumbersome. An interview participant described her struggle to work dual roles as a vice president and CDO. She stated that she does not have the capacity or resources to fulfill the CDO duties appropriately. In her case, the CDO role was a part of a statewide initiative, and each community college in the state either appointed or hired a CDO; some were stand-alone positions, and some added responsibilities to an existing position.

Many participants spoke about how college culture impacted DEI goal attainment. If the college community sees diversity as simply checking a box or if the college culture does not value diversity, a culture change is necessary to achieve diversity goals. Nonetheless, most participants agreed that their DEI initiatives have positively impacted their campus climate and culture. Literature suggests that a culture change in any organization is often the most challenging part of any transformation. Achieving DEI goals or cultivating new culture may be viewed as adaptive and innovative, which may be met with resistance. Simply explaining the

need for change is not enough, and it is also not enough to create a sense of urgency. A lasting commitment to cultural change entails framing the change within the organization's purpose (Walker & Soule, 2017). "Remediating a toxic campus climate for marginalized groups is time-consuming and will require assurances from higher education administrators that are willing to tarry and not avoid the discomfort that is necessary for learning and transformation" (Applebaum, 2018, p. 140).

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: CONCLUSIONS

A conclusion drawn from these findings is that DEI leadership positions that report directly to the campus president, such as a CDO, are essential to developing and implementing DEI initiatives. This person should hold one title with a job description that embeds DEI into the institution's policies, practices, and culture. This person should have full support from the college community, including the board of trustees and external partners. Support of DEI should also be available in the form of budget, staff, data availability, and cross-departmental collaboration. DEI goals must be well defined and included in a DEI strategic plan. Common strategic priorities include a mission to provide equitable, inclusive, and valuable educational experiences for underserved communities and students of color. Institutional initiatives should include implementing goals and aligning policies and procedures with the college's mission statement.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: DO SOME STRATEGIES APPEAR TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE THAN OTHERS IN MEASURING OR ACHIEVING DEI GOALS?

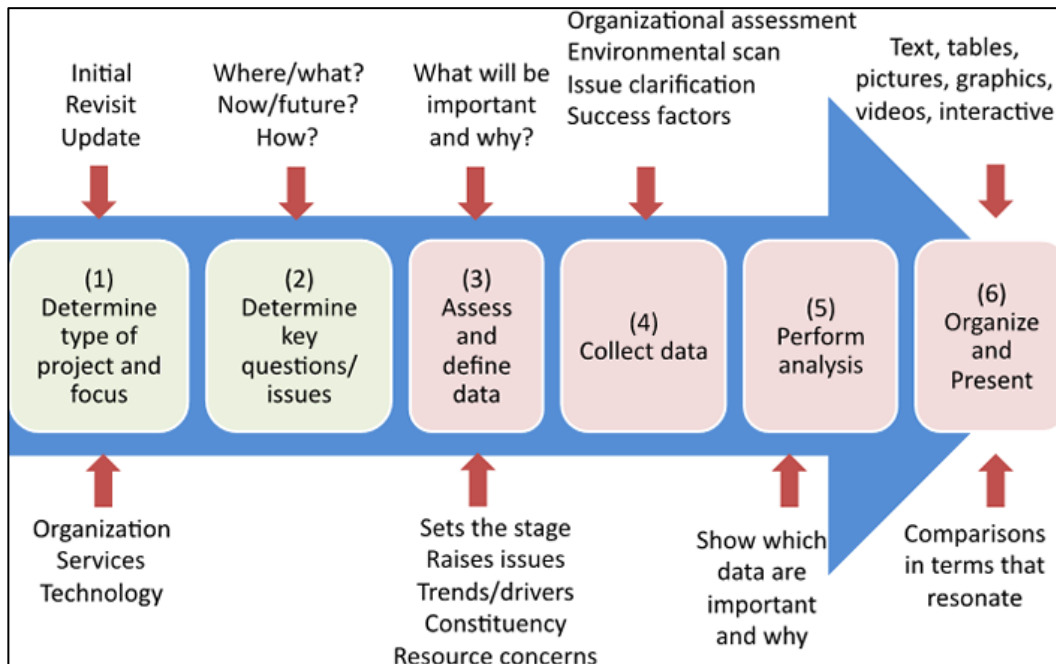
Participants revealed that the most effective strategies and processes were those previously mentioned, including DEI leadership, campus climate surveys, diversity audits, DEI plans, and support such as resources and budgets. The most common theme reported among participants regarding effective strategies was using data to track DEI progress and effectiveness. Participants repeatedly stated that having access to data, collecting data, and even reporting

findings were imperative to measure and achieve DEI goals. Participants were asked how often their institution provides updates on DEI goals. Only one participant said that they do not provide updates. All other participants' institutions report updates biannually, annually, or within each strategic planning cycle. Although participants revealed various DEI strategies they found effective, most participants indicated that their institutions had not achieved their DEI goals.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: CONCLUSIONS

My conclusion is that the most effective way to measure and achieve DEI goals is to utilize data to measure progress and share the progress by making it publicly available to all interested parties and stakeholders. Successful institutions will create a DEI strategic plan based on the results of a campus climate survey, diversity audit, state initiatives, or determining an institutional need. The next step is for the DEI strategic planning team to identify key DEI issues or concerns and create specific goals. An effective process will resemble the data-driven strategic planning framework shown in Figure 13, which consists of a sequence of tasks to be executed during data collection and presentation.

Figure 13. Data-Driven Strategic Planning Framework



Source: Grochow, 2018

LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

The study may have been limited by the degree of success in recruiting participants for the study. As stated previously, participants were invited to participate in the study via email. The link to the survey was sent via email, and a survey reminder was sent two weeks after the initial email. The lack of responses for participation could have resulted in a lack of data needed to make appropriate comparisons and conclusions. To mitigate this limitation, I appealed to the target population once more to invite them to participate in an interview and successfully reached a purposeful sample.

The main objective of this study was to identify how higher education institutions evaluate or measure their DEI initiatives. Therefore, I asked comprehensive questions about how this was done. There were no questions that identified a specific metric. In addition, I only chose institutions that have already shown progress in DEI, evidenced by their DEI strategic plan. This

could have resulted in a delimitation or boundary that eliminated other institutions that are doing substantive DEI work.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

This investigation of how higher education evaluates DEI provides a descriptive analysis of how institutions assess their DEI initiatives. Based on my findings and analysis, I offer these recommendations, which play a crucial role in creating, tracking, and reporting DEI progress, to improve how institutions evaluate their DEI initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION 1: HIRE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION LEADERSHIP

The scope of DEI makes it challenging to measure and define. Diversity is fundamental to the higher education experience and enhances perspectives and learning. DEI should be embedded in the college's strategies, plans, and operations. While some may say every institutional leader is responsible for establishing and maintaining a campus culture that values DEI, not solely one person, scholars assert that higher education institutions must appoint an executive-level administrator to enact institutional change toward a more diverse and welcoming campus. This person should report directly to the president or have direct access to the president as part of the president's cabinet. The specific role of this leader is to motivate and galvanize the institutional community toward shared diversity-centered goals and missions (Parker, 2020). A senior leader tasked with helping the institution achieve those goals and adhere to the mission is essential. Tomlin (2016) advises that other administrators must see the diversity leader as a consultant, adviser, sounding board, partner, and resource. Diversity leaders will lead the institution to construct culturally engaging programs and build productive relationships that encourage institutional change. It is not the diversity leader's responsibility to be operational by managing projects or meeting department objectives. DEI initiatives offer collaborative

opportunities for faculty, staff, and students on learning, teaching, student development, institutional functioning, and engagement in local and global communities. These collaborative activities are typically housed in a diversity office or department supported by staff and a budget. Diversity offices historically have been poorly structured without sufficient attention to and assessment of the college's cultural and social contexts. However, when strategically and purposely structured, funded, and supported, diversity offices play a vital role in present-day higher education institutions.

RECOMMENDATION 2: CREATE A DEI PLAN

A strategic plan is used to communicate the organization's goals, the actions needed to achieve those goals, and the other critical elements developed during the planning exercise, such as creating a framework for analysis and identifying resources. Effective strategic planning articulates where an organization is going, and the actions needed to ensure success. It involves stepping back from day-to-day operations to see the bigger picture and envision the institution's future. An institution that hopes to increase its DEI endeavors should develop a strategic plan that identifies both problems and goals related to diversity and inclusion. Data must be collected to highlight trends and strategic issues to distinguish the needs of different community stakeholders such as students, faculty, administration, and alumni (Grochow, 2018).

There are no absolute rules regarding the proper strategic planning framework, but most follow a similar pattern and have common attributes. I recommend the standard strategic planning steps (Balanced Scorecard Institute, 2022):

1. An understanding of the current internal and external environments is developed by performing various analyses or assessments.
2. A strategy is formulated, and a high-level strategy is developed.
3. The strategy is executed. The high-level plan translates into a more operational plan including initiatives, action items, and goals.

4. An evaluation or sustainment/management phase is maintained. This includes ongoing refinement and evaluation of performance, culture, communications, data reporting, and other strategic management items.

RECOMMENDATION 3: COLLECT AND ANALYZE DATA

Data collection has been an ongoing theme in this study and is the crux of effectively measuring DEI progress. To calculate the success of any initiative, it is essential to establish baseline data. Baseline data is a measurement collected prior to intervention for later comparison. Kryshaniivska (2017) suggests that when formulating plans, initiatives, or goals, baseline data helps to:

- Set realistic goals and measure the progress towards them
- Inform what difference the project is making while maintaining accountability
- Inform and motivate stakeholders to pay attention to specific issues and increase their participation
- Provide a justification for policymakers and donors for a project intervention
- Shape expectations and communication strategies

A campus climate survey will generate baseline data by providing details as well as general statistics that will inform DEI plans and help establish DEI initiatives or goals. This type of survey is administered to students, faculty, staff, and administrators to establish their perceptions of their institution's climate, perceptions of how their institution supports diversity and equity, and experiences with discrimination and harassment at their institution (HEDS, 2022).

For a more comprehensive analysis of DEI efforts, an institution may opt to do a diversity audit. Brooks (2021) states that it is imperative to do a thorough diversity audit to determine the actual needs of an organization. However, this may be performed in lieu of a campus climate survey or after because it provides important information on how to improve future DEI actions.

A diversity audit collects quantitative and qualitative data from diagnostics surveys, equality impact assessments, diversity research, and gender pay gap analysis. The main benefit of a diversity audit is to provide an unbiased report on how well an organization is doing in terms of diversity objectives. The diversity audit helps institutions generate, understand, and develop diversity data. It will help design and capture diversity data or explore benchmarking and analysis if the institution is already collecting it.

Once the institution has established the strategic priorities for DEI and determined initiatives or goals, they should choose the type of data needed to assess the current state and identify trends that may affect the future. Next, it will be essential to organize a systematic approach to data collection. The ongoing steps would be to analyze and regularly report or present data until targets are met and new initiatives are established.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This study provides opportunities for further research focused on DEI in higher education. I concentrated this study on how institutions evaluated their DEI initiatives. Although specific initiatives were described, such as increasing diversity hiring practices or bias education, I did not focus on exploring particular initiatives in-depth and recommend additional research on the effectiveness of specific DEI initiatives.

The creation of DEI strategic plans and initiatives are relatively new to many institutions as are the studies to evaluate the effectiveness of these initiatives. In this study, I experienced a lack of participation which may have limited the amount of data necessary to make appropriate comparisons and conclusions. Therefore, I recommend additional research on this topic. In addition, further studies may have a narrower focus on how DEI initiatives directly impact the retention and completion of Black and underserved students.

Within my findings, there was limited research about the role of higher education administrators, including the college president's role, in DEI initiatives or increasing campus diversity. However, my review of current literature revealed that there was sufficient research about the faculty's role in achieving DEI initiatives. Therefore, I recommend further research on how college administrators, from mid-level management to the college president, impact DEI initiatives such as recruiting and retaining diverse faculty, staff, and students.

Some institutions have opted to forgo specific DEI initiatives and instead focus on student success initiatives designed for the most underserved student but capturing the entire student body. This concept is illustrated in the work of Dr. Timothy Renick's National Institute for Student Success. Dr. Renick's work began at Georgia State University where he implemented evidence-based student success initiatives using predictive analysis, early intervention, and microgrants. As a result, Georgia State is one of the most diverse public universities in the nation and has raised its graduation rates by 23% overall and by more than 30% for Black, Hispanic, and low-income students. The unprecedented result of Georgia States' student success initiatives is the elimination of all achievement gaps based on race, ethnicity, and income level (Allison, 2019). Similar student success practices have been adopted by Colorado State University and California State University. In addition, programs like Achieving the Dream focus on evidence-based institutional improvement that promotes a long-term, sustainable commitment to improving student success (Achieving the Dream, 2022). The success of Georgia State University and the increasing trend of student success initiatives in higher education warrants further research on how student success initiatives compare to DEI initiatives and which approach is the most effective in assessing DEI.

CONCLUSION AND PERSONAL REFLECTION

Diversity is an increasing permanent fixture in our society, and there is a growing number of diverse populations seeking higher education opportunities. Institutions that embrace DEI expose their students to enriched college experiences due to the exploration of diverse perspectives. However, many colleges and universities have historically served a predominantly White student demographic. Over the past 60 years, there have been DEI initiatives and programs in higher education, such as safe havens and multicultural centers. The literature reviewed in this study provided descriptive information about current DEI best practices in higher education, such as implementing DEI strategic plans and goals to embrace diverse student bodies and close equity gaps. Recent higher education best practices include initiatives to increase the enrollment and recruitment of a diverse student demographic; hiring a diversity leader that reports to the college president, such as a CDO; diverse faculty hiring practices; and implicit bias training. Still, there is insufficient research to show if those initiatives positively impact colleges or, more importantly, student success. The primary goal of this study was to discover the evaluative tools higher education institutions use to measure their diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

Additionally, this study aimed to explore whether these assessment tools led to achieved DEI goals and if any strategies were identified as effective in attaining those goals. This study's participants revealed that strengths in DEI goal attainment include having an appointed DEI leader who reports to the college president, internal and external stakeholder support, and access to resources to further DEI initiatives such as sufficient staff and budget. The most prevalent finding indicated that collecting and analyzing data was a common and effective way to measure the progress of DEI goals; however, most institutions revealed that they still had not attained their DEI goals. Based on my findings and data analysis, I recommend that institutions hoping to

improve their assessment of DEI initiatives hire DEI leadership, create a standalone DEI strategic plan, and collect and analyze data.

This topic was inspired by the social injustices such as the deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd that plagued our nation and consumed diverse populations in 2020. I was especially intrigued by how organizations, specifically higher education, responded to the social unrest. Typical responses included convening town hall meetings and increased diversity initiatives. Therefore, I wanted to make a valuable, practical, and long-term contribution to DEI by researching institutions that were already immersed in DEI work. This research is intended to challenge higher education to be accountable for their DEI goals and to continue to strive for DEI campuses. Higher education is a beacon of light and hope for the students who come to our campuses, open to learning and amenable to new concepts and ideas. We have a responsibility to be welcoming and accepting of all differences while doing our best to ensure success for all students.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

An Evaluation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives in Higher Education

Survey Questions

1. My institution clearly defines the meaning of diversity, equity, and inclusion
Scale
Not clearly defined Defined
2. My institution has completed a campus climate survey
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I don't know
3. How has your campus determined a need for diversity, equity, and inclusion goals?
4. My institution has a current strategic plan that focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I don't know
5. Diversity goals at my institution are clearly defined, measurable goals?
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree
6. My institution's diversity, equity, and inclusion goals include data to measure progress
Scale
No data is included Data is included on each goal
7. Please explain how your institution evaluates diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives or goals
8. How often does your institution provide updates on DEI strategic goals?
 - a. Quarterly
 - b. Biannually
 - c. Annually
 - d. With each strategic planning cycle
 - e. No updates are provided
 - f. I don't know
 - g. Other: Please explain
9. My institution has achieved its diversity, equity, and inclusion goals
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree

10. The diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives at my institution have positively impacted the campus climate and culture

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly Agree

11. Please provide any other details about your institution's efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of its DEI goals.

12. I am interested in a 30-minute virtual interview to discuss the evaluation of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. If yes, please enter your name and contact information in the text box.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

An Evaluation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives in Post-Secondary

Education

Interview Questions

1. Who do you report to, and who reports to you?
2. Please describe your institution's process for selecting DEI strategic goals.
3. Please describe how the goals are measured and reported?
4. Did you have previous DEI goals? If so, were your former DEI goals evaluated? Did previous institutional goals or initiatives influence your current DEI goals?
5. Do you believe your DEI goals are positively impacting diversity at your institution?
Please explain.
6. How do you keep the DEI momentum going and avoid DEI fatigue?
7. Do you feel supported by superiors, colleagues, campus community?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding DEI assessment at your institution?

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW INVITATION EMAIL

My name is Keambra Pierson, and I am a doctoral student from Ferris State University, and I am conducting a research study as part of my doctoral degree requirements. My study is entitled *An Evaluation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives in Post-Secondary Education*. The purpose of this study is to assess how diversity, equity, and inclusion goals or initiatives are being measured in higher education. This is a letter of invitation to participate in this research study.

{Insert college name} is doing progressive DEI work, and I would love to explore it further in a brief 30-minute Zoom interview. Your participation will contribute to the current literature on metrics and evaluative measures of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in post-secondary education.

Please let me know if you or another DEI leader is available.

APPENDIX D: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

1010 Campus Drive FLITE 410 Big Rapids, MI 49307

www.ferris.edu/irb

Date: October 4, 2021

To: Susan DeCamillis, EdD and Keambra Pierson

From: David R. White, Ph.D, IRB Chair

Re: IRB Application for Review

The Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application for using human subjects in the study, "*Evaluating Diversity Equity and Inclusion Initiatives in Higher Education*" and determined that it does not meet the Federal Definition of research on human subjects, as defined by the Department of Health and Human Services or the Food and Drug Administration. This project does not meet the federal definition of research on human subjects because the unit of analysis is the institution and not human subjects. As such, approval by the Ferris IRB is not required for the proposed project.

This determination applies only to the activities described in the submission; it does not apply should changes be made to the project design. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities are research involving human subjects, submit a new request to the IRB for determination. This letter only applies to Ferris IRB Review; it is your responsibility to ensure all necessary institutional permissions are obtained and policies are met prior to beginning the project, such as documentation of institutional or department support. **Note that quality improvement project findings may be published, but any findings presented or published should be clearly identified as part of a quality improvement initiative and not as research.**

Your project will remain on file with the Ferris IRB for purposes of tracking research efforts at Ferris. Should you have any questions regarding the determination of this letter, please contact the IRB.

Regards,



David R. White, Ph.D, IRB Chair

Ferris State University Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX E: LETTER OF INVITATION

My name is Keambra Pierson, and I am a doctoral student from Ferris State University; and I am conducting a research study as part of my doctoral degree requirements. My study is entitled ***An Evaluation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives in Higher Education***. This is a letter of invitation and consent to participate in this research study. The purpose of this study is to assess how diversity, equity, and inclusion goals or initiatives are being measured in community colleges.

By agreeing to participate in the study, you give your consent for the researcher or principal investigator to include your responses in her data analysis. Your participation in this research study is strictly voluntary, and you may choose not to participate without fear of penalty or any negative consequences. You will be able to withdraw from the survey at any time, and all survey responses will be deleted.

By clicking on the survey link below, you indicate that you understand the information and give consent to participate in this study. The study will not include identifiable information, remarks, comments, or other identification of you as an individual participant. Information you provide in this study will be maintained and secured by the researcher for 3 years. All results will be presented as aggregate, summary data and used for statistical purposes.

The survey will last no more than 15 minutes. Your participation will contribute to the current literature on metrics and evaluative measures of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in higher education. No compensation will be offered for your participation.

If you have any questions about this survey or difficulty accessing the site, please contact **Student Researcher Keambra Pierson at: jonesk20@ferris.edu or the Principal Investigator, Susan DeCamillis, Ed.D., decamis@ferris.edu.**

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant, contact the Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants at: 1010 Campus Drive, FLITE 410G, Big Rapids, MI 49307 (231) 591-2553 or IRB@ferris.edu.

Thank you for your consideration,

Keambra Pierson

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW INFORMED CONSENT



FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH
1010 Campus Drive FLITE 410 Big Rapids, MI 49307 | (231) 591-2553 | www.ferris.edu/irb

Informed Consent

Project Title: An Evaluation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives in Higher Education

Principal Investigator: Dr. Susan DeCamillis, Ferris State University

Email: SusanDeCamillis@ferris.edu

Co-Investigator: Keambra Pierson, Ferris State University Student Researcher

Email: jonesk20@ferris.edu Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx

You are invited to participate in a research study about **An Evaluation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives in Higher Education**. The researcher is interested in learning about your institution's assessment and evaluation of your diversity, equity, and inclusion goals. Participation will involve a semi-structured, open-ended interview which will take approximately 30-45 minutes. They will take place in a virtual live-streamed session using Zoom. The researcher may need to contact you following the interview to clarify questions and/or to request additional information. The interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate in this study if you do not wish, and you may leave at any time without consequence. If you agree to be part of this study, you will be asked to answer questions about your experiences involving diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives at your institution. Your employment status or academic standing at your institution will not be affected whether or not you decide to participate in this study.

There are minimal risks associated with this research. The information collected during the interview will be used in the researchers' dissertation and could be published in an article or presented at a conference presentation but will not include any information that would identify you. The interview will be recorded, and the digital files will be maintained and secured by the study team for 3 years.

If you have questions about this study, please contact the Primary Investigator, Dr. Susan DeCamillis, listed above. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant, contact the Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants at: 1010 Campus Drive, FLITE 410G, Big Rapids, MI 49307 (231) 591-2553 or IRB@ferris.edu

By agreeing to be interviewed, you are giving your consent to participate in this study.