

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Constructing College-Level Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Minors—Moving from Performative to Transformative DEI

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Introduction

In 2020 and 2021, members of our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Fellows Program at Michigan State University's College of Social Science created two DEI national and global minors. The intentionality that propelled the process, design, and content of these DEI minors represents an example of transformative, as opposed to performative, DEI action. In this article, we share our process of, and the structure for, creating these minors, and how that process, in the context of our college and university, can be considered radical DEI action. The goal is not to be prescriptive about the specific DEI content of the courses. Our decision to build three new courses—a general introduction to critical DEI course and two exit seminars focused on national and global DEI—evolved and was developed out of dialogue. Our decision-making processes about content were rooted in intentionality and grounded in a particularized college and university experience. Moreover, our courses were radical in that they did not rest easy with elevating the voices of the privileged, but instead centered multiple theoretical and lived perspectives that were often at odds with received canon, to provide a transformative experience for all—teachers and learners—who engaged them. Put differently, our courses and DEI minors moved beyond performative DEI to transformative DEI.

DEI has been championed by universities and institutions of higher education across the nation as being tantamount to excellence. In other words, universities should not, and cannot, position themselves as excellent without upholding the principles of diversity and inclusive excellence. What this has meant in each space has been as varied as the institution. At our university, where our articulated core values are collaboration, equity, excellence, integrity, and respect, the narrative has been loud and clear: “we take pride in the strength of our diversity” and we cannot have true excellence without inclusion (Office of Academic Governance, n.d.). However, this talk has been less than impactful. In fact, it has been louder than any concrete action taken in this space. It appears that the more we talk DEI, the more we believe our own rhetoric. Like many of our peers, our university has engaged in what we theorize as performative DEI.

Building on previous notions of limiting diversity efforts to “happy talk” (Hartmann & Bell, 2011), “hollow diversity” (Thomas, 2020), or “just another form of public relations” (Ahmed, 2012: 17), performative DEI is DEI organizing, articulations, or work performed solely to increase the social capital of the person, organization, or institution engaged in these performances or articulations, rather than a dedication to the cause. It is surface-level, superficial, flighty, non-systemic, and noncommittal; but it is extremely visible. It is also often reactionary to public incidents that damage reputation, and it places priority on individual awareness to address DEI issues. Performative DEI is concerned with amplifying low-hanging fruit—for instance, tweeting activism and anti-racism, posting reading resources, making statements in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, i.e., #BlackoutTuesday, or condemning xenophobic actions committed against Asian Pacific Islander and Desi American communities without making programs and investments

that counter such actions. It is about doing minimal work (a tweet only takes a few seconds) for maximum visible gain. In the higher education setting, it is writing anti-racism statements, it is hiring token Chief Diversity Officers, Assistant or Associate Deans for DEI, or Directors for DEI (who in most cases are untenured). It is creating DEI committees and task forces that do not have substantial power or resources to make systemic changes. DEI visibility is achieved, but resources are not committed to the work and, if it is, these resources are minimal and do not come from recurring budgets. These actions make it appear as though there is a real commitment to DEI, when there is not. Once the statements, blackouts, reading resources are posted, and token hires are made, then things go back to a passive normalcy. Like a flip of a light switch, there is no memory of commitments made and, worse still, no way to hold these leaders accountable. In short, no real work is done. Moreover, this performative DEI is often hijacked by “well-meaning” majority communities (a White Dean or Department chair, for instance) to show that they are anti-racist, that they are DEI champions, that they are doing the work. What performative DEI is not, however, is transformative or radical.

The idea of performative action, be it performative activism (Abrams, Fregne, & Awadallah, 2019), performative allyship (Hassan, 2021), or the more recent performative ‘wokeness,’ (Gray, 2018) is not new. One of the earliest uses of the term “performative activism” was in Barbara Green’s 1997 book, *Spectacular Confessions: Autobiography, Performative Activism, and the Sites of Suffrage*, where she used it, in her discussion of women’s suffrage in Australia (Green, 1997). Performative allyship is when a person from the majority, i.e., the nonmarginalized majority, “professes support and solidarity with a marginalized group in a way that either isn’t helpful or that actively harms that group” (Phillips, 2020). The person that is professing their support, Holiday Phillips suggests, is rewarded for doing so (Phillips, 2020), for instance, with likes and retweets on twitter. Performative wokeness, on the other hand, comes to us from Jenna M. Gray. She writes that performative wokeness is “drowning your lecture comments with a host of social justice buzzwords—try favorites like intersectionality, marginalized, discourse, subjectivity, or any -ism—without regard to whether other people understand” (Gray, 2018). Taken collectively, these performances, like performative DEI, remain surface-level, non-systemic, and non-transforming. In short, there is nothing radical about them.

Transformative DEI, on the other hand, anticipates and addresses resistance and roadblocks at multiple levels—in short, it is systemic and proactive (Harris, 2021). The characteristics of transformative DEI emerge from growing discussions of “non-performative” diversity (Ahmed, 2012) and shifts from diversity to “equity regimes” (Thomas, 2020). In addition to moving away from tokenism (Harris, 2021) and simply counting how many “different” people are on campus (Ahmed, 2012), systematizing DEI requires a central strategy that directs DEI efforts across campus. Absent shared meaning and goals, DEI becomes everything and therefore nothing (Thomas, 2020). To be transformative, the strategy must center DEI as a cultural

norm and proactively address problematic climates (Harris, 2021), as well as make structural changes that redistribute power, resources, and decision-making such that it is participatory rather than hierarchical (Thomas, 2020; Harris, 2021). It must also embed DEI across the university missions (e.g., teaching, research, service). Ultimately, transformative DEI requires individual growth and development among faculty, staff, and students to decenter white values and culture (Oliha-Donaldson, 2021) and reduce the pressure on historically excluded groups to assimilate (Harris, 2021), but does not rely exclusively on individualized solutions.

Transformative DEI requires strong processes to implement the central strategy (Thomas, 2021; Harris, 2021; Ahmed, 2012). "Aspirational" documents that identify goals but lack processes and procedures for implementation, evaluation, and accountability are insufficient (Ahmed, 2012). Transformative DEI involves continually assessing process and measuring progress with data (Ahmed, 2012), as well as transparent communication of, and accountability for, the metrics being assessed. Universities must reveal how new policies and procedures are being implemented, such that policy does *not* become a substitute for action (Ahmed, 2012). Implicit in this emphasis on process and data is that transformative DEI produces a measurable, direct impact on minoritized populations—faculty, staff, students, and communities.

Finally, transformative DEI requires commitment and resources (Harris, 2021). Beyond figureheads or 'diversity czars' (Newkirk, 2019), DEI leaders must be supported with infrastructure and funding to implement the central strategy and processes (Harris, 2021). This funding should come from recurring rather than non-recurring pools of money, so that it is not threatened by changes in administration. In addition to well-resourced leadership, transformative DEI includes supporting faculty efforts to incorporate DEI into their research, teaching, and service. Doing so requires acknowledging that DEI is real, time-consuming work. In sum, transformative DEI requires radical strategy and change.

The Current Work

Our team of Dean's DEI fellows seeks to move beyond performative DEI by pushing the boundaries to create transformative DEI. Towards this end, the Fellows developed two DEI minors which have the potentiality of being transformative, the potentiality of being radical. As designed, our DEI minors engage with socialist, anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, and feminist frameworks. These minors are radical in that we make a clear and distinct connection between critical/radical pedagogy and the course content as well as our process of constructing and delivering the minors. We lead students in developing a critical eye, encouraging them to combat the "disconsciousness" that comes with privilege and allows people to ignore structural inequalities (Oliha-Donaldson, 2021). We encourage them to engage in more than "happy talk," to engage in action. Through the tools of critical pedagogy, we work with our students to "develop a critical sensibility about the way things are and, second, a willingness to take action to

change the status quo" (Steinberg & Down, 2020: 5). Students are encouraged to "denounce" dehumanizing conditions and "announce" that another world is possible (Steinberg & Down, 2020).

Our team of DEI Fellows and graduate student assistant brought a diversity of perspectives, expertise, and goals to the process of constructing the minors. As such, the minors are grounded in a diversity of sources and ways of knowing, not just elite knowledge. Our objective was to create a minor that centered diverse readings and diverse speakers (e.g., "spotlights"), and, by so doing, decentered the white, U.S. centric norm. Our minors, in effect, elevated the power of difference (Kincheloe, 2008) or "a viable novelty" (Freire, 1970/2018) using a transformative lens. Rather than relying on elite knowledge, we include perspectives from social locations that lack power, exposing students to transformative insights that can change lives (Kincheloe, 2008: viii). This kind of radical learning requires humility and a recognition that we are all learners and limited in what we know. It requires that we "work with people from diverse socio-economic classes, genders, sexualities, races, and ethnicities both at home and around the world to overcome our ignorance" (Kincheloe, 2008: viii). It requires "critical knowledge networks" across geographic and social domains (Kincheloe, 2008). As a team of Fellows, we recognize that we have gaps in our knowledge and where we are lacking, we seek collaboration across campus.

Our minors are radical and transformative in that we engage interactive pedagogies, encouraging students to question sources of knowledge beyond the authority of a teacher (Freire, 1970/2018). We model democratic dialogue by encouraging students to engage diverse perspectives (Flick, 1998). We are open to challenge during the process and embed these methods into our courses. As such, our work is primarily informed by critical pedagogy (e.g., Freire, 1970/2018; Kincheloe, 2008), given the limited literature on building diversity, equity, and inclusion into higher education curriculum. Nonetheless, we incorporated recommendations from the DEI curriculum literature to include perspectives from across campus (Cook & Matthews, 2018), as well as to use intergroup dialogue and experiential learning (Raphael, 2021).

Background

The College of Social Science (SSC) Dean's DEI Fellows Pilot Program in which we are the inaugural members was conceptualized in the Fall of 2020 in response to a dearth of resources for DEI work in the college. The idea was to bring together a diverse group of faculty to assist the newly appointed Associate Dean for DEI to accomplish several goals around DEI in the College of Social Science. The Pilot Program participants come from diverse backgrounds—one is an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice and a past chair of the school's DEI committee, the second is an Associate Professor in the School of Social Work and former chair of that School's DEI committee, and the third, an Assistant Dean of DEI in James Madison College. Rounding out the team is the Associate Dean for DEI, an endowed professor of African History, and the Associate Dean's graduate assistant, a PhD candidate in African History.

The group worked collaboratively in deciding what tasks to accomplish in the first years' tenure, including a Dean's DEI Small Grants program during their first semester of work. This competitive small grant program will provide up to \$5,000 for social science scholarship, and initiatives or innovations that engage thoughtfully with and advance SSC's mission of inclusive excellence. Funded proposals may be awarded for seed funding for DEI research that leads to (1) the publication of an article; (2) applications for external funding from a foundation/charity/non-profit organization; (3) applications for external sponsorship by a commercial business, or industry; or (4) applications for external funding from local, state, or federal governments. Funding may also be used for (5) DEI initiatives that have the potential for long-term sustainable and scalable DEI change in SSC (e.g., innovations in DEI education; initiatives to improve DEI competency, advance DEI climate, and/or retention of students and/or staff), as well as (6) DEI-focused dissertation research or completion. With the completion of our college DEI strategic plan, all grants awarded in the first five years will have to align with the goals of the plan. This small grants program, transformative DEI in action, will award up to 5 grants in each faculty, academic staff, and student category. The program has been approved by the Dean, and the opportunity launched, in the fall semester of 2023.

The second item on the agenda of the Dean's DEI Fellows was to create a college-wide DEI Minor. Greenlighted by the then Interim Dean of the College of Social Science, the impetus for the creation of this minor was SSC philanthropic alumni, who articulated concerns about the unpreparedness of average graduates to assume leadership positions in the DEI space after graduation. The alumni concerns were borne out by data which suggest that companies and workplaces that make DEI a priority benefit in every facet of their organizations. They tend to be more innovative, make better decisions, and have better shareholder returns (Padamsee & Crowe 2017). A *McKinsey & Company* evaluation of companies with various levels of workplace diversity found that companies with greater gender and ethnic diversity were 25% and 36% (respectively) more likely to outperform their less diverse peers by bringing in more sales revenue, customers, and profits. Organizations that do not implement DEI practices miss opportunities to tap into their workers' potential (Dixon-Fyle, et al., 2020). Thus, the SSC Diversity minors were conceived to bring together a cocktail of diversity-focus classes with the intent of providing our students with training and skills that will allow them to be more equitable and inclusive leaders in this increasingly diverse world. Owing to the diversity of fields that the Pilot Program members came from, each was able to bring varying perspectives on how to create the minor to the table. It is the hope of these Dean's DEI Fellows that because of engaging these new DEI learning opportunities, our SSC graduates will be better placed be more competitive, engaged, and transformative leaders.

Additional impetus for the diversity minor emerged from national and campus events. Prior to the global pandemic, racist incidents regularly occurred on campus. In addition to destruction of property at the Jewish Student Center

(Tidwell, 2019), in October 2019 two African American students found a toilet paper noose on their dorm room door (Walker, 2019). Much to the dismay of students across campus, the incident was dismissed as a "Halloween prank" (Johnson, 2019a). Soon after the noose incident, an associate professor of public relations and social media in the College of Communication Arts and Sciences asked students to respond to a survey with racial slurs and epithets to determine how people respond to racist speech that is frequently encountered online (Johnson, 2019a). Students considered the content warning at the bottom of the survey insufficient, and were outraged (Johnson, 2019b). These events culminated in a community forum hosted by the Black Students' Alliance, as well as a student protest in which students expressed that the university failed to respond to racism on campus (Johnson, 2019a).

Incidents continued in 2020. In February, the performing arts center placed figures of African American leaders in its gift shop. The rack from which the figures were hung resembled a tree (Das, 2020). Later the same month, students posted racist comments in response to questions posed by Black students at an event designed to encourage discussion between the university President and students (Guzman, 2020). Students were again frustrated when the incident was not investigated, as it was deemed free speech (Monroe, 2020).

Shifting primarily to virtual classes during the pandemic did not eliminate racist incidents, or student demands for the university to improve. After posting racist comments on social media in June 2020 (Berg, 2020), a university employee was fired after students petitioned for dismissal (Chhabra, 2020). In a 2021 Community Town Hall on Anti-Asian Violence, students continued to express frustration regarding university failures. In this case, concerns were expressed with a major donor's anti-Asian comments that targeted Vietnamese-owned businesses (Hall, 2021). Although this donor's name has since been removed from the business college lab, many of these events on campus were intertwined with the increased visibility of racial inequity and injustice in the U.S. during the pandemic. Against this backdrop, we began our work on the DEI minor.

Inventory of Courses and Existing Minors: One Minor Becomes Two

We began our work to deliver a distinctive and transformative DEI experience by examining preexisting programs and minors on campus. Numerous opportunities were available for students to study the experiences of specific "diverse" groups through minors offered by units in our college, in collaboration with the College of Arts and Letters, or in collaboration with the Michigan State University Center for Gender in Global Context. These included minors (and a major) in African American and African Studies, Asian Studies, Asian Pacific American Studies, Asian Studies, Chicano/Latino Studies, Jewish Studies, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Sexuality Studies, Migration Studies, Race and Ethnicity in the United States, and Women's and Gender Studies. In comparison to what

was already available, we sought to design our minor to elucidate how multiple, interlocking forms of oppression impact the life experiences and outcomes of “diverse” groups in similar and in different ways. As such, students can consider whether and how various strategies to improve equity and inclusion may or may not effectively remedy the range of challenges experienced by different groups of people. As described further below, we also brought a global lens and an experiential component to further differentiate and advance the transformative potential of our work.

Our proposed minor does mirror the format of other minors in our college, which typically consist of an introductory and an exit or capstone course specific to the minor, and a set of preexisting courses from which students must select three to earn a total of 15 credits. The list of supplementary classes is meant to provide flexibility for students to tailor their coursework to subtopics of interest. To determine which preexisting courses would best represent our proposed minor, we first conducted an inventory of all existing minors in the College of Social Science to ensure that there was no major overlap in the minors, as overlap could impact approval of our proposed minor. We also developed a list of recommended courses that students could take by conducting a search for courses across the university with a DEI focus. Our process consisted of examining course descriptions and viewing key terms related to DEI in the course titles. In addition, we procured a list of DEI-content courses from the Registrar’s Office.

As we began our inventory, we considered key factors to ensure that the courses we selected reflected the needs of our college. These factors would also affect the themes we later developed for our new DEI minor courses. For example, we deliberately selected courses that represented distinct types of diversity (e.g., race, sexuality, social class, ethnicity, and gender from national to global perspectives), as well as provided a critical perspective. We also wanted to ensure that our DEI minor represented our university’s strong international focus, commitment to faculty that work on international issues, and significant international student presence. In the process of reflecting on the range of potential courses we identified in this inventory, we decided that it would be beneficial to have two distinct DEI minors – one national, and one global. Building our university’s strong international focus into the minors presented an opportunity for more transformative DEI.

Finally, as part of the inventory process, we looked to other Colleges within the university that had launched successful DEI courses. For example, in 2020, the College of Communication Arts and Sciences created a DEI course that focused on the importance of DEI within the Public Relations and Advertising field. The course was developed by faculty with the goal of helping students examine issues of privilege, bias, and disenfranchisement systemically and within the field (Priebe, 2021). Examining current DEI courses within other Colleges provided context and insight into how to structure our proposed DEI minors.

New Course Creation Process

To develop the new courses, we began with a brainstorming session on relevant topics that we next

grouped into larger themes. In the entry course, for example, themes included key concepts, theoretical perspectives (e.g., antiracist, feminist, socialist), disparities among minoritized groups (at the intersection of race, ethnicity, caste, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, immigration status, socioeconomic status, and religion), various domains in which these disparities occur (e.g., political, economic, marriage and family, environment, health, neighborhoods, education), and strategies for change. Theoretical perspectives include examining how white supremacy culture and values manifest and intersect with other systems of domination to oppress multiple social groups. By examining these theories as well as strategies for change, we engage students in socialist, antiracist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, and feminist frameworks. In the exit courses, we selected a set of change processes to explore in more detail (e.g., dialogue-based strategies, healing processes, legal remedies, advocacy), encouraging them to co-construct transformative strategies for DEI, thus putting knowledge into practice.

From our list of course themes, we next reflected on how to deliver each course and construct assignments to help students develop important skillsets. For example, in addition to understanding specific inequities experienced by different target groups, we constructed the first course such that students could situate these inequities within historical and modern structural and cultural contexts. In doing so, we wanted to encourage critical thinking, adopting critical pedagogical methods to help students unpack the assumptions and implications of a particular perspective. Further, we model the process of combating “disconsciousness” (Oliha-Donaldson, 2021), using local and university-related case studies to illustrate and help students recognize inequities. We recognize that learning requires humility, decentering the white U.S. centric norm through considerations of intersectionalities and multiple viewpoints. In the exit courses, we created community-engaged and driven projects—local and international—that address issues important to the communities. This collaborative engagement allows students to work towards becoming change drivers and transforming communities, not only denouncing dehumanizing conditions, but also announcing transformative possibilities (Steinberg & Down, 2020).

Given the breadth of our group’s academic, professional, and life experiences, we had far more content and ideas than we could use, requiring us to develop criteria to determine what to exclude. First, we wanted to ensure that we limited course topics such that we could cover each one in depth. Allowing adequate time to examine intra-group differences was necessary to avoid stereotypes and “single stories” (Adichie, 2009). Second, we sought to ensure that our final set of themes covered multiple target and intersectional identities and reflected the complexity of oppression at multiple levels: the personal, interpersonal, structural, and cultural levels. This systems approach allows students to see how interlocking forms of oppression present themselves in personal values, beliefs, and feelings; language and behavior in interpersonal interactions; institutional rules, policies, procedures and practices; and cultural definitions of what is right, normal, true, and beautiful (Pizana, 2017).

To narrow our potential case studies to illustrate each concept and theme, we prioritized those for which we could draw on expertise and resources at our university and within the state. We proposed creating “spotlight videos” in which faculty and staff could share relevant research or outreach projects, including those directly engaged in diversity, equity, and inclusion change efforts in relevant units on campus (e.g., the Gender and Sexuality Campus Center, Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives). We also prioritized case studies in the state, again using spotlight videos to highlight local issues (e.g., the Flint Water Crisis, educational reform in Detroit). We consciously chose state and local issues to move learning beyond the theoretical into the personal, grounding the courses in issues that are central to the students’ lives, encouraging them to engage in problem solving and become change agents (Kincheloe, 2008). Making these issues “real” for students also exposes them to the range of work occurring on campus, enabling them to learn from our community of scholars and practitioners. This was more than learning for the sake of learning, but rather developing critical consciousness by engaging with diverse knowledge networks for purposes of transformation.

To counter the typical emphasis on DEI in the United States (Kincheloe, 2008), we elected to spend an equivalent amount of time on national and global issues in a single, required entry course. We were intentional about retaining topics and themes that students could consider from both a national and a global perspective, as well as consider transnational issues (e.g., migration, immigration). This was transformative in that we purposefully wanted students to see themselves in the histories and current issues represented in the courses. This will also enable students to see how key issues affect individuals and groups in the U.S. in ways that may differ for those outside the U.S. For example, during two weeks on oppression at the institutional and cultural levels, students will consider how mass incarceration is driven by and perpetuates racial inequities in the U.S., and how ethnicity shaped the Rwandan and Biafran genocides. To further model inclusivity, we deliberately included case studies from every continent.

New Course Content

To accommodate what was now two minors—one national and one global—we created three new courses: a required entry course for both “tracks” and two exit courses. The introductory course (“Introduction to Critical DEI Studies”) is designed to help students begin to develop a critical consciousness. This course exposes all students enrolled in the minor to equivalent amounts of material on national and global DEI issues, such that we challenge neocolonial educational structures in both tracks. At the end of this 4-credit course, students are expected to: 1) know the key concepts related to identity, power, oppression and difference; 2) understand how historical and structural relations of power and difference shape social relations and outcomes within various cultural contexts; 3) explore theoretical approaches to explain different social outcomes; 4) critically evaluate and assess disparities at the personal,

interpersonal, structural, and cultural levels; and 5) develop potential strategies for, and ability to, effect change.

In order to situate the course content within the student’s own experiences, the course begins with a series of self-assessments. These assignments and class activities require students to reflect on the DEI knowledge as well as potential biases they may already possess, and on how their intersectional identities shape their worldview. The aim of these exercises is not only for students to understand their own lens, but also to promote students’ confidence and willingness to participate in open dialogue around challenging issues by learning to work through discomfort and toward problem solving (Walker, 2017). We also included these activities to help the instructor(s) have better understanding of the class, as critical education requires teachers to know their students’ backgrounds and other forces that shape their perspective (Kincheloe, 2008).

The two exit capstone courses are exclusively focused on strategies for change in either the national or global arena. No matter the chosen track, these reading-intensive courses have two shared themes that are allocated five-weeks each: “Change Processes” and “Understanding and Overcoming Resistance.” Within these broader themes are examinations of the processes of personal, institutional, and societal change, including what has changed and what has not. The courses also explore how these changes, or lack thereof, are tied to historical and modern forms of oppression such as racism. Specific change processes considered in the national track include dialogue for change, government and legal remedies, and personal work to undo bias and proactively prevent further harm (e.g., by becoming antiracist). Understanding and overcoming resistance subthemes in this course include color blindness, exploiting fear, reparations, and activism for human rights. However, the subthemes in the global track were tailored to address global issues with case studies from different geographical locations. Limited by time and scope, the course creators were deliberate in assigning readings that capture various parts of the world. Case studies were drawn from Africa, South America, North America, Asia, and Europe.

In addition to diving into real world challenges associated with social change, both courses also require students to apply their consciousness on the ground by providing resources and services to communities. This is achieved through intensive experiential learning focused on the principles, practice, and application of DEI. Specifically, students in both courses complete a project with communities outside the university. In the domestic track, this is in collaboration with a local group or organization; the global track requires collaboration with a global organization or a local group or organization tackling a global issue.

To achieve the goals of the project, five weeks of class time is allocated to small group project meetings with the instructor(s). These meetings provide an easily accessible forum to discuss progress (through mini assignments) and how to apply the knowledge gained from class to the projects, including working with selected groups/organizations in an inclusive manner. The semester concludes with presentations of a proposal jointly drafted

with their chosen group or organization. The presentation reviews a DEI problem identified by the organization, as well as a potential solution identified by the group. Thus, rather than being passive learners, the assignments and grading structure for the exit courses require students to be involved in transformative strategies to help solve real world DEI issues.

Approval Process

The approval process for the minors did not unfold as seamlessly as we would have liked. There were numerous discussions at this early stage with the Dean of the College, the Associate and Assistant Deans of Undergraduate Studies, and the Director of Integrative Studies in Social Science about what kind of minor it would be, where the minor would be housed, who would teach the new introductory and exit courses, and who would pay for the labors of the faculty teaching the courses. It also included significant feedback regarding potential courses within the minors.

Our team first shared the courses selected for the minors with the Dean and Associate and Assistant Deans for Undergraduate Studies in the College of Social Science for study and approval. Their review made certain that we did not use courses that were already included in existing minors in the college. They also ensured that the courses did not have prerequisites that might get in the way of students successfully completing the minors. Beyond this, they asked to see and approve the three new course syllabi (i.e., "Introduction to Critical DEI Studies" and the two capstone seminars). We currently await the syllabi approval.

Once these documents are approved by the Dean and the Assistant and Associate Deans for Undergraduate Studies in the College of Social Science, the next step is to package them for review and approval by the College Curriculum Committee. We expect some back and forth between us and the Committee prior to approval of our materials, which will then be placed in line to be reviewed and approved by the University Curriculum Committee. Once the University Curriculum Committee approves our two minors, the last step is to secure approval from the University Provost. From beginning to end, we expect this approval process to take about five months. If there are members of these committees who are unsupportive of DEI efforts, they may challenge critical course content during the approval process. We are preparing to respond to these committees as needed.

Working in tandem with the approval process were the discussions with the Dean of the College of Social Science to secure buy-in and resources. Once we secure buy-in, we will need to determine which faculty member(s) will be teaching the classes. We will also need to secure resources for course releases for those faculty and to produce the spotlight videos that we are going to be using, especially in our Introductory course. We expect that there may be tension with regards to who will be responsible for buying out faculty time and paying for the spotlight videos. Willingness to provide such resources would reflect a move toward transformative DEI, as the minors would become a systemic component of the

college's educational mission. Despite the lengthy approval process and hesitation to commit resources for the minors during the previous academic year, the recent release of the university wide DEI plan, coupled with the board of trustees, and alumni support, bolsters the likelihood of approval and provision of resources for these two minors. In the meantime, we offer our reflections and recommendations.

Reflections and Recommendations

First, we note a few limitations of the DEI minors. Completing a DEI minor is not required for all social science majors. Our elective approach, however, is consistent with the diversity training literature, which finds that mandatory programs are often ineffective and even counterproductive in the corporate world (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). Our goal is to inspire students to complete the DEI minors as participants and spread the word about the experiential and transformative impact. Another limitation to developing the DEI minor was that there was not a broader inclusion of members of the college, which would have meant greater investment and resources than we were allotted.

Despite these limitations, situating the task of developing the minors within the DEI Fellows program was a strategic component that gave priority and legitimacy to the process and ensured that it was structured through a transformative DEI lens. One of the key structural components of developing the minors was the inclusion of varied perspectives and experiences. As mentioned in previous sections, the Dean's DEI Fellows Program is composed of faculty from different academic programs within the university as well as in various stages within and outside the tenure system. This breadth turned out to be a balance point between emerging and established perspectives that pushed boundaries on the selection of topics and radical approaches, but also helped us remain grounded on foundational content. Beyond academic diversity, the members of the group also brought gender diversity as well as cultural diversity from their own racial/ethnic backgrounds and global group membership. Further, the inclusion of graduate students who were DEI research assistants was also crucial because they provided a unique perspective in comparison to faculty. During group discussions and task assignments, all members were given a proportionate load to contribute. Although the group had differential formal roles within the academic hierarchy, we were emphatic in making sure all members had equal voice and were an integral part of decision-making discussions. There was great transparency in the conversations even when we came across sensitive topics from an administrative standpoint as well as from cultural perspectives. Thus, through the structure of the group working on creating the minors, we modeled diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Creating DEI minors is most effective when it is a collaborative effort that exemplifies diversity, equity, and inclusion. Such collaboration must be accomplished by deliberately assembling a group of scholars and students who represent DEI membership, values, and principles. For example, our team deliberately worked to ensure that our student member, a doctoral candidate in African history, had

an equal voice in the course construction process. Her contributions to the global capstone course were particularly critical, as fewer members of our team worked in that domain. As such, she collaborated with the Associate Dean of DEI to construct this course, with the remaining faculty members merely providing feedback. Further, as ours was, this process must be inclusive of alumni and community members who are already practicing careers in diverse organizations that can inform about the gaps and priorities that their respective work markets and workplaces need to be competitive and proactive about DEI. Similarly, alumni and community members with DEI backgrounds can be better informed about the skillsets employees need as well as the gaps that currently exist in higher education programs.

Having such inclusion creates a climate where DEI can be transformative because it becomes meaningful to multiple stakeholders. Further, it establishes investment in communities inside and outside of the university, which is central to radical transformation. The service-learning component of the minors is also an element that moves the minors beyond performative DEI because it shifts the learning structure from one of authority to one that values context, culture, and difference. Lastly, it is especially important that those involved in developing transformative DEI minors are empowered with resources, commitment, and transparent access to processes that may be used to co-opt the outcomes. This is key to overcoming institutional resistance and performative DEI cooptation. An unintended consequence of performative DEI is that it can become transformative with external pressure. From our perspective, the recent release of the university's DEI plan, which encourages more DEI classes and majors, increases the likelihood that our transformative minors will be approved and resourced by the college. When performative DEI has become everyday practice, we must make radical efforts to create transformative methods that counter such performances. The work we have done in these minors models radical and transformative DEI, which can empower future generations and serve as a blueprint to critically approach DEI change.

NOTE

1. In light of our radical and transformative approach to DEI, we note that all authors contributed equally to this manuscript. To accommodate requirements for order of authorship, we alternate who serves as first author and list ourselves alphabetically thereafter.

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