

The Changing Roles and Contributions of Campus Diversity Offices and Their Influence on Campus Culture

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Abstract

Higher education has struggled to include and support students, faculty, and staff from underrepresented and marginalized groups. In recent years, universities have decided to address these struggles explicitly, using a variety of different approaches to better support these groups from mandatory trainings to optional events, from external audits to internal campus climate surveys. One promising approach to providing support to marginalized groups has been to employ campus diversity officers and offices. These offices operate at the executive level and take on campus-wide leadership responsibilities, incorporating inclusive excellence and an equity perspective throughout campus policies, functions and culture. In this article, programmatic and policy efforts at two public universities are detailed, spotlighting systemic-proactive and individual-reactive policies and programs needed to advance access, diversity, equity, and inclusion across institutions of higher education. Although the approaches each university takes are site and context specific, they use the role of chief diversity officer both to marshal policy and programmatic change to improve the educational experiences for all who work at and learn at these institutions.

Keywords: campus climate; cultural responsiveness; equity; microaggressions; Chief Diversity Officer

Introduction

Higher education has been grappling with the need to address educational inequities and to improve recruitment and retention of diverse students, faculty and staff for at least 30 years (Hurtado, Arellano, Griffin, & Cuellar, 2008). Student activism around the country in recent years has added more urgency to this critical institutional responsibility. To this end, the incorporation of an equity perspective throughout a campus is paramount and can take on many forms. For the purposes of this article, an equity perspective “is a transformative quality improvement tool used to improve planning, decision-making, and resource allocation leading to more racially equitable policies and programs” (Multnomah County, n.d.). It focuses change on multiple fronts simultaneously and includes multiple stakeholders who influence policies, processes and programs in order to move the institutional needle towards thinking about equity in each new and existing context throughout colleges and universities. The equity perspective ensures that it is the institution that bears the burden of creating pathways to success, rather than institutions using a framework based on cultural deficit that assumes the student is solely at fault for academic failure and thus the university bears no responsibility for inequitable outcomes.

Through direct experience and collected data, we know the racial, ethnic and gender demographics of students are changing (Williams, 2013; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). In

2014, the nationwide percentage of students of color in public schools was 49.5% (McFarland et al., 2017). Institutions of higher education have ongoing deliberations of how to best recruit, and most importantly, retain, students of color in high schools and also in colleges. The *2017 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) State of Education* confirms the gaps for students of color. They are not attending college at the rates they should compared to white students, and when they do attend college, they are not achieving degrees at proportional rates (McFarland et al., 2017). Likewise, faculty of color statistics have also not seen marked improvement (Supiano, 2015). There is a need for a continued focus on increasing diverse faculty, another issue of urgency spotlighted in nationwide student activism.

This paper details efforts at two institutions to build an equity perspective throughout campus policies, decision making, processes and programs. Reading through the efforts at two similar but different institutions demonstrates how each place must consider its local context as it strives to implement an equity perspective across its institution.

Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU Denver) and Portland State University (PSU) have adopted elements of Inclusive Excellence to guide and assist in the advancement of equity throughout their campuses. Introduced by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), inclusive excellence is the practice of moving beyond numeric measurements as the only strategy to promote diversity. Inclusive excellence involves embedding the practices and philosophies that encourage diversity in every aspect of an organization. Moreover, inclusive excellence involves institutionalizing systemic practices and philosophies, thus generating a broader outcome in regards to: inclusivity, excellence, cultural competence, innovation, synergy, and pride (Anderson, n.d.).

Institutions of higher education generally adapt, to their own environment, approaches that are derived from national efforts such as Inclusive Excellence. They develop policies, practices and programs that advance the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) missions in unique ways. The two universities highlighted here, MSU Denver and Portland State University, each take differing approaches in developing a university-wide approach to applying an equity lens couched in the concept of inclusive excellence. Structurally PSU is a Research One University and MSU Denver is a Regional Comprehensive University. This fundamental difference has an effect on the faculty and student ratio, resources, hierarchy, and elements of their mission.

When reviewing MSU Denver's instructional practices, you find that they promote an average class size of 19 students with no teaching assistants at the university. This means over 90% of the classes are taught by faculty with discipline-specific terminal degrees. Moreover, the evaluation of the faculty is weighted at greater than 50% on their teaching and advising performance with a much lesser weight on their research performance. For MSU Denver, there is an emphasis on faculty professional development, with an equity focus on increasing diverse faculty. For the culture and climate work, institution-wide DEI professional development and emphasis on supervisory training is critical.

Reviewing PSU instructional practices, you find that PSU has three categories of instructors, tenured and tenure track faculty, non-tenure track faculty with continuing full-time contracts and adjunct faculty. Its average class size is twenty-seven. With a student population of over twenty-

nine thousand, the emphasis on cultural responsiveness in curriculum and pedagogy increased in depth, breadth and urgency. A December 2015 Student of Color Speak-Out raised these issues further. To engage in continuous improvement of campus culture and climate, strategies to advance DEI goals include the use of an equity lens in decision making, and the restructuring of a council of stakeholders, with committees focusing on various institutional needs, policies and practices.

Although each institution is unique, the similarities in their urban locations, diverse student, faculty and staff populations (and the fact that they are at the forefront in systematically infusing diversity and inclusive philosophies throughout their respective institutions) provide a common perspective to share how their diversity offices influence campus culture.

The following section details how each university has developed policies and programs that best meet its individual identity and internal stakeholder needs related to diversity and inclusion. These programs center around professional development, community engagement, mentorship, curriculum and instruction with the collective goal of how to best achieve DEI advancement.

Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU Denver)

MSU Denver, founded in 1965, is an urban university that takes a proactive approach to diversity. Diversity is reflected in the curriculum; programs, policies; and in the composition of faculty, staff and students. For example, MSU Denver has a curriculum requirement that all students must complete a three-credit diversity course to be eligible to receive their undergraduate degree. This diversity course requirement promotes an understanding of diversity that we hope will continue in the future. Also, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion serves as the facilitator of programs and policies to support university diversity efforts. The diversity initiatives grant process provides \$100,000 for university departments to apply to execute programs that align with the university mission and inclusive excellence. Lastly, the systemic campus climate survey policy provides a continuous stream of data that provides university leadership with constituency feedback informing their decisions in regard to campus climate.

Currently 39.52% of the student body is racially and ethnically diverse, and 24.14% faculty and staff are racially and ethnically diverse. Furthermore, MSU Denver's administrative staff population is made up of 32.85% people from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds. While this breadth in diversity is very much welcomed, managing and advancing the campus diversity interactions must be considered. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion is tasked with supporting and promoting diversity and inclusion in all aspects of campus life, to include the design and development of policies and initiatives that embrace and support diversity, and that move the university down the path of Inclusive Excellence. Below are several initiatives created by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion that embody the move to systemically and individually incorporate an equity perspective throughout the university.

At MSU Denver, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion is called upon to lead and be an integral part of this equity charge. The inclusive excellence framework, grounded in inclusive excellence theory and connected with quantitative and qualitative research specific to MSU Denver, was designed by Dr. Myron Anderson to create a guide while allowing for the promotion of

creativity, authenticity, and flexibility as programs and policies are shaped to advance equity. MSU Denver’s framework includes Campus Climate, Civic Engagement, Retention and Recruitment, Diversity Initiatives, Diversity Development, and Equity in Excellence (see model below). It is important to note that all elements within this framework lead to the aspirational goal of inclusive excellence (Anderson, n.d.). MSU Denver and other campus diversity offices across the country are often being called upon to lead and engage in many of these elements when introducing an equity perspective.



Figure 1. Elements of inclusive excellence (Anderson, 2017).

When incorporating an equity perspective throughout a campus, it is important that each institution’s framework has both system-wide and individual paths. Having this approach allows for an institution to be both proactive and reactive in the development and implementation of policies and programs that promote equity. Both paths are needed to effect change in this regard. The role of the Chief Diversity Officer is to serve as an ally and as a resource in the development and implementation of both system-wide and individual activities throughout the university.

It is important to note that these activities are not solely programmatic in nature. In our experience, there needs to be an intentional effort to develop and implement equity policies and processes as well. It can be a misstep to focus too heavily on programs; then the diversity office quickly morphs into a program office. This is the case when an office focuses too many of their resources on implementing a focus on national holidays, affinity group programs, or general diversity programs classified as an event. We find that programs do not move the equity needle unless they are undergirded by policies and processes that infuse diversity and inclusion throughout the institution.

The implementation of equity policies and processes can take the forms of university-wide professional development. At MSU Denver, it led to the creation of a Center for Faculty Development, the engagement of the Enrollment Management, Equal Opportunity and Diversity and Inclusion Offices. In our experiences, empowering and connecting these areas when it comes to developing and implementing policies and process can systematically advance equity throughout your institution.

Institutions may have different ways and labels for doing this. Some institutions may not be aware that their programs and initiatives can be categorized via this model. However, this model allows institutions to develop a clear inventory of initiatives, and to attach a value to each

initiative confirming the long-term and short-term impact of the initiative in relation to broader equity goals.

To this end, MSU Denver created the Four-Way Implementation Model to illustrate the long-term and short-term impact of diversity and inclusion policies and programs (see model below).

Diversity and Inclusion Four-Way Implementation Model

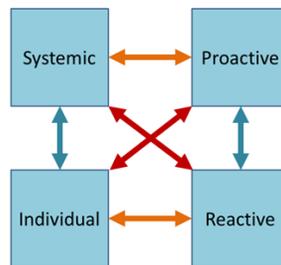


Figure 2. Diversity and inclusion four-way implementation model (Young & Anderson, 2017).

Based on the frameworks above, we share how the Diversity and Inclusion Four-Way Implementation Model provides a platform to create systemic-proactive and individual-reactive initiatives that have had a significant impact on infusing equity throughout MSU Denver. This model can also be used to inform institutional leadership about new initiatives and to establish an accountability instrument to ensure equity goals. Shared below are several MSU Denver equity initiatives that have knowledge acquisition, curriculum development, mentorship and community engagement at their core, are designed to place an institution down the path of inclusive excellence.

Tenure Track Supper Club

The Tenure Track Supper Club (TTSC) is a faculty retention program that utilizes mentorship as a tool in the retention of minority faculty. Given the disproportionately low retention rates of African-American faculty at the university, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion led the development of the Mentorship Program for African-American and other faculty of color. The program now welcomes tenure-track faculty from all underrepresented populations and majority junior faculty, to introduce them to tenured faculty who serve as mentors, help educate new faculty about the hidden curriculum of higher education, and demystify the tenure process.

The TTSC provides a safe environment to share knowledge with new faculty, and in turn have those faculty share with administrators in promotion and tenure review leadership positions, about the subliminal inequities in the tenure process that are experienced by faculty in the classroom and in the office. These inequities arise from valuing differently areas of scholarly activity, to expectations for in-service days and to requirements around advising, to daily interactions with students, other faculty, and staff at the university. This two-fold education

environment (mentorship and knowledge sharing) arms the faculty of color with additional tools to combat received inequities. However, just as important, it educates the university system (the decision makers in the promotion and tenure process) about inequities, thus providing an avenue for removing inequities from the process as well. This program promotes collaboration from multiple fronts and promotes inclusive efforts to remove inequity and promote excellence, thus increasing the diversity of the faculty. At the onset of the program, African-American faculty were earning tenure at 60% while white faculty were earning tenure at 90%. Today, African Americans are earning tenure at 95% and White faculty are earning tenure at 95%.

Supervisory Training

The university engages in proactive voluntary approaches like the implementation of the university-wide Professional Development Conference, the Higher Education Diversity Summit, and the opportunity for staff and faculty to attend learning communities focused on diversity and inclusion to learn about diversity, as in the program above. It also engages in mandatory, proactive strategies to teach people in positions of authority about their role in promoting diversity as part of the university's mission. Dobbin and Kalev (2016) argue that managers advocate better for a diverse workplace when managers become part of the problem-solving team. To foster the development of diversity champions throughout the university, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion facilitated the development of a 90-minute interactive workshop on diversity and inclusion that was woven into a mandatory supervisor-training program. This administrative decision squarely places issues of cultural competence within the broader framework of supervisors' responsibilities within the university. It asks them to be problem solvers for diversity-related questions related. The ninety-minute presentation teaches the fundamental concepts of diversity, inclusion, cultural competence, microaggression awareness and understanding. This interactive session breaks supervisors into groups to share their own experiences of microaggressions on campus. These experiences are incorporated into a larger discussion on diversity, inclusion and equity and its relationship to campus climate.

Microaggressions refer to "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color" (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007, p. 271). This interactive workshop helps supervisors think about their role in reducing microaggressions from individual and organizational perspectives, see the equity disconnect, and develop strategies to advance diversity and inclusion throughout their unit. Based on informal feedback, this training resulted in over 500 supervisors understanding what microaggressions are and having tools and strategies to remove them from their work environment. Although we do not have a quantifiable number of the amount of microaggressions removed from the campus, we have received numerous indicators, positive comments from supervisors, employees, and a significant improvement in MSU Denver's campus climate survey results in the employees' perception of a welcoming environment.

Higher Education Diversity Summit

The Higher Education Diversity Summit (HEDS) is an annual campus initiative that promotes and increases professional development opportunities through the lens of inclusive excellence

(Williams, Berger & McClenden, 2005). HEDS acts as a catalyst to understand others' experiences on campus. It opens communication about how to be supportive to groups and individuals who traditionally feel marginalized at universities. The Higher Education Diversity Summit promotes cultural competence and reduce incivility throughout the university. HEDS educates the campus in the areas of implicit bias, diversity and inclusion, LGBTQIA+ issues, disabilities, race, gender, socioeconomic status, ageism, organizational climate, microaggressions, and much more. This annual conference provides an opportunity for continuous knowledge acquisition, as well as a platform for faculty, staff, and students to engage with one another and transfer knowledge in the diversity and inclusion space. Further, this conference keeps the diversity and inclusion conversation at the top of the university's agenda and provides multiple data and dialog points to make change via education related to equity objectives throughout the university.

Faculty Fellow

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion receives funding from the university to secure a faculty member's time, in the equivalent of a six-credit hour course load, to work in the Diversity and Inclusion Office. The Chief Diversity Officer follows the institution's internal search process to identify and confirm faculty to serve in this role. This Fellow is charged with being a liaison between administration and faculty and lending scholarly expertise to the Office. The Fellow's responsibilities change as the institution's needs change. The Faculty Fellow has shared responsibility for developing and conducting trainings on and off campus (co-writing articles for academic consumption), and for participating in a variety of university-wide initiatives related to diversity and inclusion. The impact of the faculty fellow is linked to how it advances the individual and reactive elements of the "Four-way Implementation Model".

The faculty fellow has designed and implemented many customized interactive workshops within departments and units to improve campus climate issues. The fellow has the ability to work closely with the faculty and staff on individual, unit, and employee bases to resolve issues on the ground. This position promotes the ability to be nimble and react individually to provide skills and strategies to departments on how to resolve negative climate issues. Hosting a Faculty Fellow in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion demonstrates cooperation between administration and faculty which models equity at the university.

These four programs provide a comprehensive, proactive and long-term impact on equity throughout the college campus at MSU-Denver. Portland State University has been very intentional in their quest to incorporate an equity perspective throughout their campus and has done so systemically, proactively, individually and reactively as well. We share some of these efforts below as they differ from the efforts at MSU Denver.

Portland State University (PSU)

Portland State University is a public university located in Portland, Oregon, with a student body of twenty-nine thousand students. Currently, 28% of the student body is racially and ethnically diverse, and there are seventeen hundred international students from ninety-one countries. Its student population is the most diverse of the public institutions in the state. PSU has long had

various resource centers, including cultural resource centers and a Diversity and Multicultural Student Support Services unit in Student Affairs that offers academic support as well as houses the various cultural centers. PSY and MSU Denver have some similarities, a diverse student population, urban locations, a wide range of affinity groups, a diverse faculty and staff, and a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion that is indicated in the mission of the institutions. In 2011, the Chief Diversity Officer position was created. This position was charged to lead the also newly created division of Global Diversity and Inclusion (GDI). In 2015, the position was elevated to Vice-President in part due to the December 2015 PSU Student of Color “Speak-Out” which is described below.

The school’s mission is “Let Knowledge Serve the City” and its new strategic plan “Let Knowledge Serve” has five goals, one of which is “Expand our commitment to equity.” The other four goals each have an equity lens consideration statement as well as equity objectives. During the writing of the plan, an equity lens panel was formed to review all sections and iterations from a racial and equity lens and also to review the goals from other dimensions of diversity. The efforts to inculcate the equity lens vertically and horizontally throughout campus functions, climate and culture is at the core of GDI’s mission, responsibilities and contributions.

The office is structured in four areas of effort: (a) Diversity Education and Learning, (b) Equity and Compliance; (c) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advocacy (focused on policies and procedures); and (d) Partnerships and Engagement (internal and external). Structuring the office around these four areas allow for the flexibility to engage with issues and concerns around equity, and provide resolutions. As mentioned in the approach at the Metropolitan State University of Denver, it is very important for the executive diversity office and efforts of the office not to be overly focused on programming. The critical role is to tackle inequities in policy and practice, which can disenfranchise our underrepresented students, faculty and staff ,and provide system-wide and individual solutions to the inequities. Following are three on-going efforts that intend/aim/seek/with the goal of spurring the system-wide change needed to better achieve the strategic plan equity goals.

Equity Lens Use in Decision-making

The equity lens requires an institution to question themselves to see if they are being inclusive and to interrogate the impact their policy and programmic decisions might have on marginalized groups. In its most basic explanation, the equity lens is a way of consciously asking questions when making decisions. Some of the starting questions of an equity lens are: (a) What is the decision to be made? (b) Who is making the decision? (c)How will the decision affect those not at the decision-making table? And (d) what are the benefits and consequences, including thinking through unintended consequences to historically marginalized and underrepresented groups? To operationalize this, and use the strategic plan as a focus, PSU has developed an equity lens panel that will review and make recommendations on the strategic planning process using the concepts of the equity lens in decision making.

GDI and other partners focus on teaching the use of the equity lens in decision-making. This initiative began with the President-led Annual Leadership Planning Session (ALPS), a day-long retreat of both the academic and non-academic leadership with attendance of approximately 120,

including the Vice-Presidents and their direct reports, Deans, Associate Deans, Chairs, Directors and Associate Directors. The 2016 retreat was devoted to the equity lens and went from the presentation model to table-top exercises ranging from practicing using the equity lens at the policy level to directly addressing progress on objectives of the five university strategic plan goals.

Since that ALPS, PSU has engaged in an on-going series of systematic and proactive workshops for supervisor's campus-wide that include work with hands-on scenarios and open discussion on issues specific to the units they represent. Several follow up unit-initiated workshops have occurred, as well as the centralization of the equity lens as a keynote for the annual day long Cultural Responsiveness Symposium.

The President's Annual Leadership Planning Session was the ideal starting point for incorporating the concepts of the equity lens in decision making. However, as it has moved to our strategic planning process the objective is for the university is to institutionalize the use of the equity lens in decision-making throughout all aspects of the university.

Cultural Responsiveness in Curriculum and Pedagogy

PSU students of color held a Student of Color Speak-Out on December 1, 2015, like many students around the country. One strong and often-repeated concern was about what was happening and not happening in the classrooms in relation to cultural responsiveness. Many students emotionally shared stories of microaggressions, the absence of their stories and voices in the curriculum, and the absence of needed classroom management to mitigate microaggressions. Many were listening, and GDI reached out to faculty to explore how PSU might incorporate better the equity lens in the classroom.

The faculty, through the unions, through the Faculty Senate, and through the key faculty academic units already deeply engaged in culturally responsive pedagogy and curriculum, developed and led a partnership with GDI to create a workshop series to address the student concerns. Utilizing faculty as instructors, a large roll-out of sessions on re-tooling individual courses from a cultural responsiveness framework as well as learning more about culturally responsive pedagogy was initiated this past academic year. Having union and Faculty Senate support (and partnership) is a critically important component in curriculum and pedagogical change, as is a modest faculty enhancement grant to participating faculty who complete a course revision. Early results are gratifying, with over 200 faculty participating in a two workshop sequence, one each for curriculum and pedagogy. Participating faculty have revised curriculum and assignments in courses and adjusted their own instructional skills to better manage difficult classroom conversations, learn about different learner types, develop classroom discussion protocols and the like.

Additionally, curriculum processes were changed for new courses. The course submission protocol has two additional questions: (a) one on how the new course will have curriculum content that better reflects diverse learners; and (b) one on the faculty member's plans for addressing culturally responsive pedagogical needs. GDI and faculty partners continue to engage

in how this particular education and learning focus will evolve and continue this academic year and in future years.

President's Diversity Action Council

The PSU President's Diversity Council (DAC) has contributed greatly to the diversity work and progress for over 20 years. In the past two years, stakeholders have explored how better to harness its university-wide representation, its members' collective knowledge, skill sets, advocacy orientation, and energy, to better address systemic and structural change needs, in addition to its ongoing valuable programming. A reorganization was decided upon.

A committee structure for the Council was developed. The committees include three focused on culture and climate (curriculum and pedagogy, workshops and annual symposium, the co-curriculum), recruitment and retention of diverse students, recruitment and retention of diverse faculty, recruitment and retention of diverse staff, communications, the President's Diversity Mini-Grants, and the President's Diversity Awards. Each committee has co-chairs who, with GDI leadership, serve as the steering committee. The DAC meets as a whole with the President at the start of the academic year to consult and hear their charge. The DAC meets again at the end of the year with the President and campus leadership to share their deliberations, recommendations and work going forward.

In the first year under the new structure has been completed, the DAC has grown to over 80 members. The results include significant success in achieving the goal of substantive recommendations per the committee topic areas that will assist leadership in moving forward. Recommendations range from the relatively simple step of improving and encouraging use of a central campus diversity calendar to the more challenging and/or complex goals of significantly increasing funding support for the hire and start-up of new diverse faculty, and including DEI assessment categories on all employee (faculty and staff) performance evaluations.

Conclusion

The roles of campus diversity offices are changing. As indicated in the efforts by MSU Denver and by PSU, the impact of the Chief Diversity Officer and the Diversity Offices that they manage addresses university-wide systemic, structural and programmatic issues throughout the institution. A key point in the changing role of the Campus Diversity Office and the Chief Diversity Officer is that we are no longer overly focused solely on programming. Rather, the role is to tackle inequities in policy and practice that can disenfranchise our underrepresented students, faculty and staff. Our experiences confirm that Diversity Offices that focus too much on programming will see diversity surface gains but experience stagnation in curriculum development and system implementing which can influence campus culture for generations.

A similarity between PSU and MSU Denver linked to our success in influencing campus culture throughout our respective institutions is tied to the fact that our positions report directly to the President at our institutions. It is important where the Chief Diversity Officer resides on your institutions organizational chart, because this communicates a message of the institution's valuing of diversity. Further, it provides formal and informal opportunities for the Chief

Diversity Officer to engage with senior leadership on institutional and national issues related to diversity. Furthermore, this conceptual and physical location provides multiple opportunities to identify, develop and provide recommendations across institutional leadership channels in regard to diversity and inclusion. Finally, this reporting structure promotes opportunities to acquire resources to build, develop, implement, partner, and facilitate crosscutting initiatives involving faculty, staff, students and the community, generating a synergy where everyone is working together to promote an inclusive environment for everyone.

Additionally, the work of this kind of division is multidimensional and incorporates multi-actions. Addressing strategically and simultaneously university issues of recruitment and retention, curriculum and pedagogy, bias, microaggressions, discrimination and harassment, procurement practices, community engagement, fiscal and human resource allocations, fundraising, space use and allocation, research and scholarly activity—in short, the totality of university endeavors—through the equity lens, is essential if equity is to increase in universities.

The initiatives shared in this paper act as part of the infrastructure of continuous learning and improvement related to diversity at each university and as ways to improve campus climate. The initiatives address people at different stages of their professional development. They recognize the urgency of addressing educational inequities and improving recruitment and retention of diverse students, faculty and staff leading to successful outcomes. All have the goal of encouraging a campus who sees diversity as an asset to be cultivated. Chief Diversity Officers are the leaders of these new and exciting changes. Stay tuned.

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