Seattle Colleges Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Plan

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Introduction

In the Seattle Colleges Strategic Plan, the mission establishes the expectations that the colleges will prepare "...each student for success in life and work, fostering a diverse, engaged, and dynamic community..." in a multicultural, diverse, and international society. The Seattle College District serves both "traditional" students, and students who come with experiences and life circumstances that do not fit neatly into traditional educational models. In addition to minoritized students, our changing student population includes students from countries and cultures not seen in measurable numbers by US educational systems until very recently.

In addition to these demographic changes, the changing economic landscape of the Seattle region, the needs of regional employers, the cost of living in the region, and practices based on entrenched and unaware racist policies[1] all create barriers for students who do not natively practice or have not assimilated to existing norms. These barriers act as gatekeepers and sorters to determine who can enter into and acquire an education.

Rather than asking students to assimilate to dominant norms, we have a moral responsibility as public open-access learning institutions to change to serve the existing and current reality of our students. The racial equity gap cannot be eliminated simply by improving education for '...all students...', using the metaphor of a 'rising tide that floats all boats'. Indeed, research shows the existing racial equity gap is maintained with such improvements, albeit at a higher baseline. Meaningful and effective organizational change requires a fully engaged commitment throughout the organization and adequate time to develop capacity for change. As part of the system, we as individuals and as employees of the system, must change in order for the system to change. We are not separate, and students can only have a more effective experience at our colleges when we are also willing to make changes in our teaching and the ways we serve students.

Seattle Colleges Mission, Vision, Values and Strategic Goals

This plan is deeply rooted in the Seattle Colleges mission, vision, values, and strategic goals, and is informed by prior equity and diversity efforts and initiatives at each of the three Seattle Colleges. It is also influenced by the recently adopted SBCTC Vision Statement that starts with, *"Leading with racial equity…"* Full statement and detailed description here: https://www.sbctc.edu/resources/documents/colleges-staff/commissions-councils/wsssc/vision-statement-intent-final-9.25.2019.pdf.

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[1] Based on Dr. Ibram Kendi's preferred language recommendations, we use the term "racist policies" rather than "institutionalized racism" or "systemic racism". Dr. Kendi believes these to be redundant since racism is both systemic and institutional. Some examples of these racist policies (not limited to higher education) are: racial inequalities in financial aid and distribution of resources to students of color; racial profiling; redlining in housing; cultural biases in standardized tests; lack of services in communities of color; significantly higher rates of incarceration for people of color; and environmental policies with disproportionately negative impacts on low income communities of color.

Consistent with these prior efforts, this District-wide Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Plan explicitly recognizes, facilitates awareness of, and addresses patterns of social inequity at the Seattle Colleges.

Three Year Plan

The Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Plan (EDIC Plan) will act as a three-year racial equity action plan to guide the Seattle Colleges in these efforts. This plan and these objectives have been created through a collaborative effort between the three AVP EDIs and the Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion as an EDI leadership team. A primary purpose of the EDI leadership team is to strengthen District work in a consultative role, and ensure that EDI work happens. Both the strategies and progress toward the goals will be evaluated each year by the EDI leadership team in conjunction with the Presidents and campus EDI leadership advisory councils or teams.

Phase 1: 2018-2020 — Build the foundation, Develop the baseline

Activities:

- AVP team hired and AVPs at each campus begin to learn the context of each unique college with strong focus on their respective college constituencies
- Begin collaborative and consultative work together to understand prior and ongoing EDI work at each college, and existing activities district-wide
- Listen and engage with key constituencies to learn about the needs, concerns, and challenges of each campus
- Engage with state-level Chief Diversity and Equity Officer (CDEO) group
- Establish, promote, educate, and support employees to adopt a District-wide practice of opening campus and public events with Land Acknowledgment statements
- Establish Equity Leadership Capacity Building Institute (Equity Institute) working with PSESD (Puget Sound Educational Service District 121) to create a critical mass of employees with a common racial equity language and mindset. To date approximately 90 employees and students have participated in the Equity Institute training workshops
- Establish monthly meetings convened by VC of EDI

Phase 2: 2020-2022, and ongoing - Design and implement assessment & EDIC Strategic Plan

Planned Activities:

- Continue with a primary focus on activities and priorities at each campus
- Continue ongoing district-wide collaborations, including partnering with HR to train and manage Inclusion Advocates on each campus, and partnering with District and across 3 campuses to support Seattle Pathways work which is intended to address the racial equity gap throughout the District
- Implement aligned methods for EDI landscape assessment across 3 colleges and Siegal Center
- Use assessment data, analysis, and iterative discussion and engagement to further develop the EDIC Strategic Plan
- Using continuous improvement methods and broad engagement methods described above, continually refine and improve the EDIC Strategic Plan

Following are some examples of District-Wide and College-Based EDI efforts and activities:

District-Wide Efforts and Activities	College-Based Efforts and Activities
Practices: • Land Acknowledgments • Use of Racial Equity Tool to review policies • Use of Directed Self Placement as an alternative to standardized placement tests *Professional Development:* • Equity Institutes – personal and organizational development • TILT - Transparency in Learning and Teaching - equity-focused curricular and pedagogical approach *Partnering and Leadership:* • With HR on Inclusion Advocates • With various committees, task forces, work groups, including: o Seattle Pathways Leads, SEEM, Climate Survey development, Hiring Process Committee, FDIC *Provide Support:* • Annual MLK Jr Celebration - provide programming and curricular support at both District and College level	*North:* • President's Diversity, Inclusion Council for Equity • North Seattle College Equity and Welcome Center • Faculty Staff Learning Community on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and Closing Equity Gaps *Central:* • EDI Advisory Team • Standardizing and implementing anti-bias/anti-racist policies and training of search and selection committees • Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) Protocol and campus-wide training *South:* • EDI Advisory Council • Use of the IDI (Intercultural Development Inventory) to promote campus-wide intercultural capacity • South Men of Color (SMOC) Affinity Group (including resources and support for students)

Seattle Colleges Strategic Goal #2 - Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Community

"At Seattle Colleges, we firmly establish equity, diversity, and inclusion as a strategic goal and as human rights for all. We frame our decisions and actions with a lens of equity, diversity, and inclusion and are accountable to the community." The EDI leadership team has established three preliminary objectives to achieve this strategic goal that will be further developed over the course of the three-year plan:

Objectives to achieve progress on all four of the Seattle Colleges Strategic Goals, and in particular Goal #2[2]:

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[2] These objectives were created in alignment and resonance with those of the SBCTC Chief Diversity and Equity Officers group (CDEOs), but are specific to Seattle Colleges.

1. Continue progress toward the goal of eliminating the racial equity gap in order to achieve success for all students
2. Improve intercultural competency and practice among employees and students through professional development and curriculum with concepts of racial equity, diversity, inclusion, and community system-wide
3. Recruit, hire, support, and mentor employees in order to develop and retain a stable and diverse workforce

Accountability

As noted above, the Seattle Colleges EDIC Plan will require engagement and accountability at all levels – students, exempt and non-exempt staff, faculty, administration, contractors, and all who develop or participate in Seattle Colleges activities – both within the individual colleges and at the District.

In addition to accountability to each other, the Seattle Colleges are accountable to the larger community, and as such this plan will continue to reflect this accountability. To that end, the Seattle Colleges will continue to:

- Build community, develop leadership, and promote healing within and across all campuses
- Encourage collaboration within and across departments and disciplines
- Partner with educational, business, governmental, labor, and community organizations
- Build capacity for organizational change and meaningful assessment
- Create and support a collaborative culture

As such, our mission of being, becoming, and remaining an open-access learning institution is a mission that is pressed upon at every juncture: in the ways we identify and prepare our students for student success, in the decisions we make about growing, nurturing, and sustaining a diverse workforce that reflects the rich diversity of our student body and communities, in how we attract and develop environments where true, authentic learning takes place, and in the nature and quality of our partnerships.

We believe that if we hold to our vision and aspirations, we can create an environment where students who are members of our communities can attain the education that they come to us for and develop a sense of belonging to a community of learners. When we lead with racial equity, we can make a significant difference in the lives of all of our students, become a more meaningful work environment for all of our employees, build better partnerships within our communities, and contribute to creating a more just and humane society.

Measurables (as leading measures vs. outcomes):

- Establishment of District-wide BIRT / BIRST processes
  - Use of protocol with goal of 48-hour turnaround time when incidents occur
  - Train all college units (i.e., Faculty, front line staff, Student Services, Security)
- Establishment of naturally occurring groups where critical connections can happen (e.g., training Central Security group on implicit bias)

- Support and oversee establishment of college- and District-wide Affinity Groups
- Develop, provide, and support opportunities for employee participation in racial equity-related professional development
- Support work plan of Faculty Diversity and Inclusion Committee (FDIC), a faculty led group using racial equity to revise faculty hiring practices
- Training, preparation for understanding how to navigate Hate Speech, engaging with discourse, Free Speech
- Completion of EDI landscape assessment at 3 colleges and Siegal Center
- Goal of 60 faculty and staff each year participating in Equity Institute (detailed plan below)

Equity Leadership Capacity Building Institute (Equity Institute) Annual Plan

Quarter	Activity
Fall	Fall Equity Institute with new cohort, includes college-based gatherings in between sessions
Winter	Activities to support further reflection and development work for cohort participants (Including all previous cohorts/participants)
Spring	Spring Equity Institute with new cohort, includes college-based gatherings in between sessions
Summer	Activities to support further reflection and development work for cohort participants (Including all previous cohorts/participants)

Appendix A

Definitions and common language:

Equity
"Historically, equity refers to the process of creating equivalent outcomes for members of historically underrepresented and oppressed individuals and groups. Equity is about ending systematic discrimination against people based on their identity or background." (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2008)[3]

Seattle Colleges leads with *racial* equity because we acknowledge the history and impact that intergenerational and institutional barriers have had on students of color, who make up 44% of our student body (or nearly 60% of students who identify by race on their applications), while our faculty and staff do not yet reflect these same demographics.

Diversity
As an open access institution, Seattle Colleges holds diversity as an ongoing discovery of the intersections of identities and "diversity refers to all of the ways in which people differ, including primary characteristics, such as age, race, gender, ethnicity, mental and physical abilities, and sexual orientation, and secondary characteristics, such as education, income, religion, work experience, language skills, geographic location, and family status. Put simply, diversity refers to all of the characteristics that make individuals different from each other and in its most basic form refers to heterogeneity." (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2008)

Inclusion
This work matters because students and employees thrive where they feel they belong, especially in a climate of political divisiveness. "Inclusion exists when traditionally marginalized individuals and groups feel a sense of belonging and are empowered to participate in majority culture as full and valued members of the community, shaping and redefining that culture in different ways." (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2008) It is important to note that inclusion, by itself, is not enough. The pursuit of inclusion without discernment of the impact of providing commensurate access to majoritarian actions and practices can actually undermine the original purpose of empowering minoritized communities.

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[3] Williams, D. and Wade-Golden, K. (2008). *The Chief Diversity Officer: A Primer for College and University Presidents.* Washington, DC: American Council of Education (ACE).