

College of Design Diversity Committee
Summary Report:
Diversity Climate Focus Groups and Spring Survey
Spring 2016

Executive summary

As outlined in the College of Design's (CDes) Collegiate Diversity Goals, the Diversity Committee focused their efforts this year on assessing our collegiate diversity climate. This report discusses the findings obtained through an existing survey data analysis, stakeholder focus groups, and a brief follow-up survey. The themes explored in these findings are as follows:

- being “the only one,” which describes the experience or feeling of isolation underrepresented people in our college environment;
- sense of belonging, meaning the extent to which diverse others in our college feel like they belong in our environment;
- socioeconomic status, an unanticipated theme that emerged that describes the hardships low-income students encounter in our college;
- recruitment and retention explores the expressed desire for our college to grant more focus to these areas
- respect and cordiality, which explores the ways in which stakeholders behave in opposite ways in our college and how that affects our environment;
- hierarchy and power, which explores the way in which hierarchy and power can affect inclusion;
- microaggressions, meaning the subtle/covert ways in which stereotypes and discrimination were exemplified in our findings;
- culture of unwillingness, inability, and/or fear to confront, which describes collegiate stakeholder tendency to not confront others when witnessing intolerance;
- St. Paul vs. East Bank, which examines the presence of diversity in each location.
- diversity is everybody's everyday work, which explores the expressed desire that stakeholders in all levels of our organization engage in diversity efforts;
- diversity and excellence, which highlights examples of how some in our college perceive diversity and excellence to be mutually exclusive; and, finally,
- breaking down the silos, meaning diversity can be strived for via greater interdisciplinarity.

These findings highlight that we have some problematic diversity climate issues in the college related to complacency, exclusion/isolation, and stereotyping. To address these issues, the Diversity Committee will explore response strategies in the fall of 2016 and

begin to work with various college constituencies to improve our climate in the areas identified.

Introduction

In recent years, the CDes Diversity Committee¹ (DC) has been actively and strategically pursuing several initiatives to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in the college. In the spring of 2014, the DC drafted, and the Faculty Assembly approved, a collegiate diversity statement:

In pursuit of a fully inclusive community, the College of Design at the University of Minnesota is committed to supporting diverse people and ways of knowing. We seek to understand and meet the needs of all types of people to create culturally and socially responsive prototypes, projects, and environments. As such, we first look to foster such inquiry and responsiveness within our own College by welcoming, affirming, and empowering all students, faculty, and staff

In addition, we welcome people who are innovative thinkers, people who are creative, and people who are willing to challenge the status quo. Through this commitment to diverse people and ways of knowing, we seek to increase diversity within our professions and advocate for true social change via our teaching, research, and outreach. Especially because of the professions we represent, we understand that change is oftentimes an iterative process that requires brainstorming, experimentation, prototyping, successes, and failures. With this understanding in mind, we pledge to continually engage the process of enhancing diversity in the College of Design, and to learn from each other as we do so.

The following academic year, 2014-1015, the DC engaged in a self-assessment process to analyze our collegiate diversity climate, as perceived and understood by DC members. That assessment generated a set of diversity goals that the college reviewed and adopted in May of 2015. Relevant to the current report, one of those goals was to complete a college-wide assessment of our diversity climate the following academic year. The purpose of that assessment was to gain a better understanding of the diversity climate within the College of Design specifically, but also in the larger University as it applied, in order to identify stakeholder needs and recommendations for next steps to improve the climate.

Thus, in the fall of 2015, our newly hired Graduate Assistant (GA) for Diversity Initiatives examined existing climate-related data as a first step in the college-wide

¹ Members include: Teddy Russell (chair), Marilyn Bruin, Julia Robinson, Matthew Tucker, Amanda Smoot, Nicole Kennedy, Mohsin Khokar, Renee Cheng, and Holley Locher.

assessment. The data came from the following surveys/sources: SERU², Grad SERU, COACHE³, Employee Engagement, and the Catalyst for Change Engagement group's Selfie. The DC reviewed the GA's report in December and utilized the data presented to inform the second step in the assessment process, which was to conduct focus groups with various stakeholders in the college. In March of 2016, the DC met with the following categories of CDes stakeholders: staff, tenured faculty, non-tenured faculty, undergraduate students, graduate students, international students, and adjunct faculty. Also, in an effort to generate additional data for groups that had low or no attendance, the DC sent a brief follow-up survey in April to the same stakeholders. In this report, we discuss the findings generated through the fall data analysis and the spring focus groups and follow-up survey.

Methods

Participation. In early February, the DC emailed each previously identified stakeholder group using the college listservs to solicit their participation in the focus group most relevant to them at a specified date and time. All focus groups were held in the month of March, 2016 and the DC was careful to rotate between McNeal and Rapson Hall locations to encourage broader participation. Ultimately, overall participation in the focus groups was mixed at 22 total.

Subsequently, upon concluding the focus groups, the DC decided to make one more good faith effort to solicit additional qualitative data regarding our collegiate diversity climate. They drafted a brief online survey that asked only one open-ended question, "What is the one thing that you would like the Diversity Committee to know about our collegiate diversity climate?" The survey garnered 70 respondents.

In returning to a discussion of focus group participation, the focus group for staff had the most participants at 10, while the focus groups for international students, graduate students, and adjunct faculty had no participants. With regard to the focus groups that had little or no participation, several factors could have precluded participation: participants may have been busy during their scheduled focus group time; the timing of the focus groups themselves may have been problematic (e.g., the focus group for tenure-track faculty was held the Friday prior to spring break); participants may not have felt like their time would be well-spent voicing their concerns; participants may have felt too overburdened to attend, etc. Subsequently, we cannot make any conclusions regarding the overall lack of participation for some groups.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that according to one focus group participant, there are some dedicated faculty, staff, and students that consistently show up and engage in diversity work;

² Student Experience in the Research University

³ Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education

Those who are there want it. Those who are not there are the ones who need it.

Why isn't THAT person going? They need it. I wish they were forced to go.

In this statement, this person implied that those who would benefit most from attending a diversity-related event and/or training, meaning those who have the most opportunity to grow in this area, are not the ones who typically attend. Those who attend, on the other hand, are the ones who are already interested in, knowledgeable of, and committed to diversity. Other participants indicated that either themselves or their colleagues do not have adequate time to participate in or pursue work that is explicitly diversity-focused. With regard to diversity training, a participant commented, "we don't have time...[we're] soft-funded." Another stated that because we have a culture of scarcity in our college, people "don't have time for diversity." In these comments, participants attributed their inability to engage in diversity activities to a lack of resources. Again, while we cannot definitively account for the reasons why college members chose to participate or not, these latter comments are important to consider.

Data collection. First, with regard to the fall data analysis, the GA gathered data from all the surveys and sources previously mentioned. He met with relevant staff in the Office of Institutional Research to identify questions that were climate-related and he compiled that data into one summary report. The DC then met to review his report to both identify areas of concern and areas in which we felt like we needed more information to reach any sort of conclusion. That review helped to frame the questions and data that the DC felt were important to investigate in the subsequent focus groups and follow-up survey.

In preparation for the focus groups, the DC discussed and selected the various categories of stakeholders for which focus groups would be held. They then crafted protocol and interview questions for each group, which served to better standardize group facilitation and guide the conversations. The protocol included an assurance of anonymity for participants in the final report. Also, the protocol included a reading of our collegiate diversity statement to frame the way in which we as a committee were conceptualizing diversity. Again, some interview questions were developed in direct response to the existing data analysis from the previous fall. For instance, the SERU survey framed several climate-related questions around the extent to which students felt a sense of belonging and respect, which was reflected in the following two focus group questions:

1. What does belonging and respect mean to you?
2. To what extent do you feel a sense of belonging and respect in your program and/or the College?

Members of the DC divided the facilitation and note-taking responsibilities among themselves, being careful to have at least one facilitator assigned to each group that hopefully had credibility with those particular stakeholders as a fellow member. For instance, two staff members facilitated the staff focus group, two tenured faculty

members facilitated the tenured faculty focus group, one undergraduate student and one graduate student facilitated the student focus groups, etc. The notes from each focus group were compiled and shared with committee members.

Again, upon concluding the focus groups, a follow-up survey was sent in early April using Google Forms and the college listservs. Stakeholders were given two weeks to respond to the survey and the responses were collected in Google Forms. This format generated far more responses, potentially because it was short and could be completed anywhere at anytime.

Data analysis procedures. To analyze the data from the focus groups and follow-up survey, the GA and Holley Locher utilized a coding process to examine both the focus group notes and the follow-up survey data. Following Creswell (2009), they relied on some predetermined codes that they DC had developed, which were informed by the fall analysis. One such code was “a sense of belonging.” As Miles and Huberman recommend (1994), they first read through all of the data sources to better understand them as a whole. They then went back and began to assign the predetermined codes to the data in Google Docs through color-coding. Additional codes, however, emerged in the analysis process. For example, several participants stated that they felt like they were oftentimes “the only one,” meaning that they perceived they were the only person with a marginalized identity in their classes, in college meetings, etc. That then became a code: being “the only one.”

Prior to writing a formal analysis, the DC met to review the data and codes to check for accuracy, understanding, and agreement or disagreement. The GA revised the codes after that meeting and drafted a preliminary report of the findings. Dr. Locher then edited the report and the DC again met to review it. Final edits were agreed upon and the report was submitted to the interim dean, Becky Yust, on May 12, 2016. The DC then presented on their findings at a brown bag session for faculty, staff, and students on Tuesday, May 16.

Later in June, Dr. Locher continued to edit and refine the report, which included weaving in relevant findings from the fall data analysis. Dr. Locher read through the fall data analysis report in tandem with the spring report and flagged areas of overlap. For instance, several pieces of data from the fall report measured student’s sense of belonging and the extent to which they felt respected on campus, specifically in relation to their socioeconomic status, gender, and race/ethnicity. Those data related to several themes in the spring report, such as being “the only one,” sense of belonging, socioeconomic status, and respect and cordiality. These overlaps are discussed in the findings.

Relevant Demographics

Overall College – Faculty and Staff. In order to contextualize the findings presented in this report, the following information highlights several demographics of faculty and staff in the College of Design from 2015.

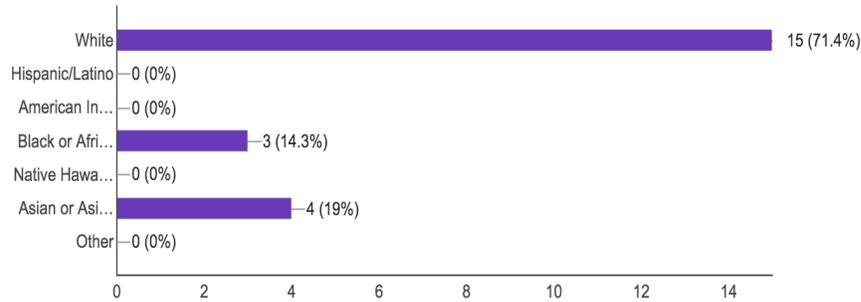
GENDER			
	T/TT Faculty	Adjuncts/ Instructional P&A's	Staff (does not include Temp/Cas)
Female	29	30	47
Male	24	33	20
Total	53	63	67
RACE			
	T/TT Faculty	Adjuncts/ Instructional P&A's	Staff (does not include Temp/Cas)
American Indian	1	0	0
Asian	8	2	2
Black	2	0	2
Hispanic/Latino	1	1	0
Not Specified	0	4	1
White	41	56	62
Total	53	63	67
AGE			
	T/TT Faculty	Adjuncts/ Instructional P&A's	Staff (does not include Temp/Cas)
20-30	0	5	6
30-40	8	24	18
40-50	13	12	18
50-60	14	12	13
60+	18	10	12
Total	53	63	67

Overall College – Students. Again, to offer context, below is data relevant to all College of Design undergraduate and graduate students from the fall of 2014.

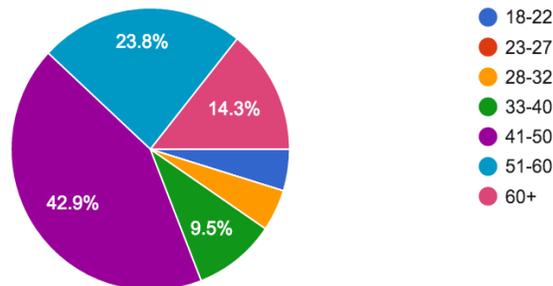
GENDER		
	Undergraduate Students	Graduate Students
Female	791	112
Male	429	96
Total	1220	208
RACE		
	Undergraduate Students	Graduate Students
American Indian	16	1
Asian	94	18
Black	33	3
Hawaiian	0	2
Hispanic/Latino	41	7
International	108	73
Not Specified	8	1
White	966	179
Total	1266	284
Income Levels		
	Undergraduate Students	Graduate Students
\$0-30,000	161	106
\$30,001-48,000	84	23
\$48,001-75,000	113	11
\$75,001-110,000	184	11
\$110,001 and more	347	n/a
Unknown	377	133
Total	1266	284

Focus Groups. While the DC did not collect demographic data in the spring follow-up survey, it was solicited in the focus groups, which is reported below. The DC chose not to collect demographic data in the follow-up survey to ensure that the survey remained as brief as possible to encourage participation.

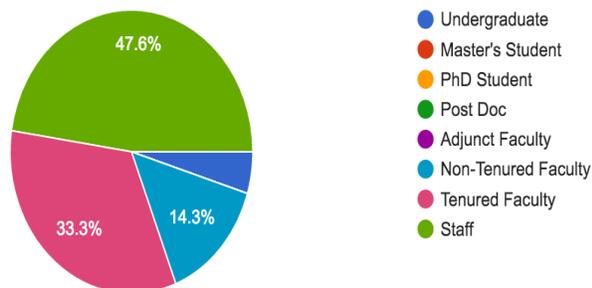
Race/Ethnicity (21 responses)



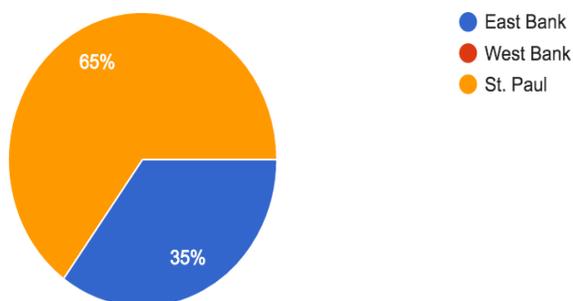
How Old are you? (21 responses)



What is your classification? (21 responses)



Primary Campus (20 responses)



Findings

There were several themes identified in the data that highlight areas of concern related to our collegiate diversity climate. Below is a report of those themes.

Being “the only one.” Some expressed concern related to their perception that they are oftentimes “the only one” in various college settings, meaning that they embody one or more underrepresented identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc.) that they do not otherwise see in the college. Particularly with regard to race, this perception is corroborated by our overall college demographic data, which highlights that we have a low percentage of people of color in our college. For some, this experience results in feelings of loneliness, disappointment, and/or vulnerability. Several individuals commented on this particular point in the survey:

- It [the college] is not as diverse as people think it is. In my graduating class I know there is one or two people, including myself, that are non-white in my class. How depressing is that?
- It seems like the Design program is mostly middle-upper class white folks and is not very diverse at all, which is disappointing.
- There is an insularity [of] people within their own cultural groups....I feel lonely here.
- There are too many white people in the College of Design. I am one of like four students of color in all of my classes (more or less). White people, white people, white people everywhere.
- There is just not a lot of diversity in the demographics of [my program]. Specifically, there are not enough women or people of color....I don't like being in classes with 18 males and 3 females, and in those [program] classes I feel like I have to "prove" myself to the class because there isn't a supportive environment.

A few focus group participants stated something similar. For example, one participant described that,

Many times you're in the room, you're invisible. I'm the only one. People can always find someone to talk to and it's not you. They split in groups and you have to figure it out.

Thus, while the phenomenon of being “the only one” can be problematic in and of itself due to negative feelings it can generate, the problem is exacerbated when dominant culture classmates and/or colleagues fail to demonstrate “a...depth of understanding and ability to empathize with topics outside of the white experience,” which another individual described.

Several participants described the need for our college to do a better job of recruiting diverse students, faculty, and staff. One person acknowledged, though, the difficulties in doing so in relation to being “the only one;” “students of color feel underrepresented here which in turn makes it difficult to attract other students of color.” The phenomenon of being “the only one,” thus, can be a turnoff to diverse individuals who are considering joining our college.

Nonetheless, while we do not have large numbers of underrepresented people in our college, there are ways that the phenomenon of being “the only one” can be diminished or challenged. For instance, a participant described that,

Change [can occur] through visibility. Professors are white. Guest speakers are white. Ted Talks are white men. You can't flood the college with people of color and queer students instantly, but changing what they see in class is important.

Another participant commented, “[diversity] is also about how we represent users in an aspirational way. Are we broadly thinking about audience when we represent our buildings, landscapes, products, graphic campaigns, apparel?” Thus, considering diversity in our materials, curriculum, and audience is a step we can take in the short term as we continue to increase our numbers of underrepresented people.

Sense of belonging. One can reasonably assume that being “the only one,” or being one of few, in a given space can affect one's sense of belonging. The focus groups revealed that some members of the college community experienced a diminished sense of belonging due to their race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language ability, etc. For example, with regard to race, one individual described that she does not feel “a sense of belonging [in the college] as a person of color and as a woman...I am the only “Other.” Another said, “Black students are keenly aware of not belonging but white students don't feel that and don't notice it in others.” And, another student of color implied that if he were younger, he would not have the fortitude to stay in the college; “If I were 18 walking into the environment, I wouldn't want to stay here. I wouldn't be surprised if retention rates are low for students of color. I wouldn't be here after 1 semester.”

One student took the time to thoroughly describe the ways in which socioeconomic status can affect one's sense of belonging in the college;

While I have been very happy and impressed with the receptivity of my department to students of diverse backgrounds, it has sometimes been difficult to feel a true sense of belonging. My first year here, I struggled with issues relating to my socioeconomic status. We had to buy certain high-end laptops, software programs and supplies for class. We had to dress and speak in a certain way for presentations. Cheese, crackers and wine, I later learned, were common food items of a socioeconomic class and culture that was altogether unfamiliar to me. These sorts of unspoken cues taught me very quickly that I didn't belong here. I say all this, not in judgment, but in illustration that design school, while already demanding, can be even more intimidating for students like me.

This student's description aptly points out that one's sense of belonging can be negatively affected by "unspoken cues" in addition to those that are verbal, this time in relation to socioeconomic status.

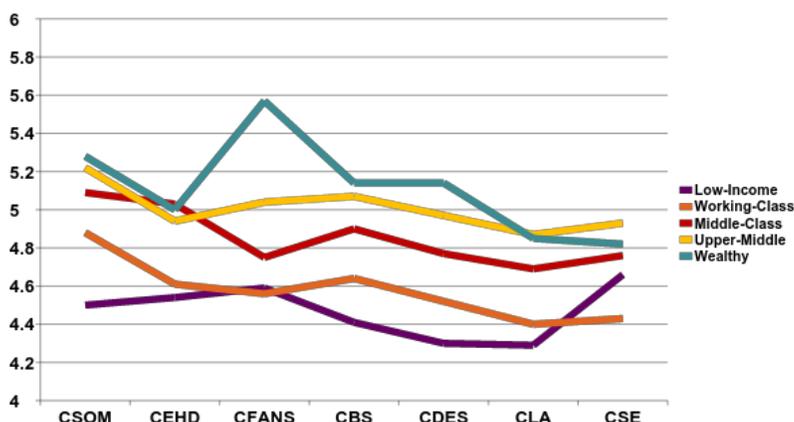
Finally, one faculty member expressed concern about the extent to which his students experience a sense of belonging in the college. He stated,

There are things we can do to help students feel more included via groups and resources. Providing students with answers to some of their challenges. I'm trying to figure out ways to do that that's not patronizing, offensive...How do you do it?

In this comment, the faculty member highlighted a desire to help students feel more included, but he was unsure of the best way to go about doing so.

Of relevance to this theme, the undergraduate SERU survey also measured the extent to which undergraduate students felt a sense of belonging at the University of MN Twin Cities campus. In 2014, 8,332 undergraduates completed the survey, 323 of whom were College of Design students. The overall University results highlighted that transgender, low income/poor, American Indian, and LGBTQ students feel like they least belonged on campus, while heterosexual, Christian, Jewish, upper middle class, and Muslim students felt like they most belonged on campus.

Socioeconomic status. One's socioeconomic status can also contribute to the extent to which one feels a sense of belonging in a given space. For instance, the 2014 SERU results highlight the correlation between students' socioeconomic status and their level of agreement with the question, "I feel that I belong at this institution [the University]." SERU relies on a scale of 1 to 6; 1 is low, 6 is high.



In almost all colleges, CDEs included, students of low socioeconomic status reported feeling the lowest sense of belonging, while wealthy students reported feeling the highest sense of belonging.

In response to the follow-up survey that the DC sent upon completion of the focus groups, numerous students commented on their financial status and how there is not a broad understanding of the difficulties that low-income students face in our college. As one person described, “I would like financial status to be considered by the Diversity Committee, and to have [discussion on the] ways in which the gap can be compensated for. While it isn't a topic that would necessarily be immediately thought of at the words "Diversity Committee", it is something that affects the entire student body in the opportunities and inclusiveness of the CDEs environment.” The following comments all demonstrate the financial problems that students can encounter in the college and the negative experiences they can have as a result:

- As an individual who does not come from a lower-middle to upper class family, it is highly apparent that I am in the financial minority of this college. This was especially apparent during an abroad seminar through CDEs that I took, and I would like it if the college put in more efforts to make study abroad opportunities accessible to those who are struggling to get by.
- Because of the requirement of the College of Design for students to pay additional collegiate fees and buy their own materials, students must be of a higher socio-economic status to be successful. I've seen this reflected in some students' ability to essentially "buy" their grades because they used more expensive materials and tools, or had more time to spend on a project because they didn't have to work part-time during the school year. The College of Design does not foster a diverse socio-economic climate.
- This [attending CDEs] is super expensive. Students of color come in at an immediate disadvantage because we tend to come from more disadvantaged communities...I spent \$600 on supplies last semester. Professors sometimes seem

oblivious. I had a required text, \$200, and we never had an assigned reading for it.

I had a kid in my class whose high school had 3D printers in their classroom.

In these statements, the students all expressed frustration at the hardships they face in paying for an education in our college. In the last comment in particular, the student expressed frustration that his professors did not empathize or even acknowledge his financial hardship. While the DC acknowledges that a design education can be expensive, what is most problematic in these statements is the perceived lack of empathy on the part of faculty, which can diminish a student's sense of belonging.

Recruitment and retention. Again, many expressed a desire for the college to do a better job recruiting diverse faculty, staff, and students. Statements made to this effect include:

- [With] graduate student recruiting we have been working very hard, but [we] need more help with scholarships to fund students coming. We also need to identify good source schools to target.
- The one thing we can do to increase the attractiveness of our programs to a diverse student body - as well as faculty and staff - is to give more attention to the public-interest, community development work going on in the college. As long as the design fields are perceived, rightly or wrongly, as primarily serving the rich, who have the means to commission buildings, redo interiors, buy fashionable apparel, etc., we will struggle to attract a more diverse population to the college.
- Most of the diversity seems to come from international students [and] there is a lack of diversity coming from domestic students.
- [We need to] reach out to students of color in high school.

Fortunately, there are some efforts being made to more intentionally recruit diverse students. One person noted, “[We are] focusing on recruitment – [my unit] attended [a minority-focused professional organization conference] – we got some exposure with that. We will try and have a student of color attend with us next time. We’ve done recruiting at colleges with a high percentage of diversity.” Collegiate units have also been collaborating more broadly on these efforts, including partnering on recruitment events and visits and consulting with diversity recruiters elsewhere in the University.

Some participants mentioned broadening our methods so as to not discriminate against or alienate those who may be victims of circumstance in the application process, which differs from a discussion of lowering standards. For example, one participant stated,

In...evaluating student portfolios, we are looking for “design excellence”...That’s not the only “coin of the realm” though. There are other skills. In our pursuit of the best students, we may only be selecting certain types of students.

Through this comment, the participant implied that “design excellence” is a dominant culture, historically-inherited way of evaluating students that does not necessarily

account for different skills and/or ways of knowing. As such, if we continue with this evaluation strategy, we may miss out on the opportunity to attract high quality, underrepresented people. Another participant commented,

[My program] is pretty white. Why is that? We look at test scores, GPA, etc. We need to look at qualifications more broadly like drawing, skills, etc.

This participant recognized the problem with only considering these types of measures; underrepresented communities have, historically, experienced less access to resources, which can affect how one performs on such measures. One person commented that one of the reasons we may have struggled with broadening our standards thus far is because, “Sometimes we admit students that look ‘easy’ to educate rather than those that may ‘take more work,’” implying that we are most comfortable with dominant culture students whom we perceive need less support.

In addition to recruiting, it is important to note the extent to which onboarding and retention need to be more explicitly focused on in our college. A faculty member stated, “The problem is that we haven’t created a good system to support/develop “junior” faculty...When I got tenure, no one sat me down & said congrats, let’s talk about your next 5 years. There is no infrastructure for developing people.” Others said,

- We need a more active, structured system for addressing the concerns/challenges of various groups of traditionally underrepresented students while in school. This would be like a support system or network for the College of Design. These need to be held with some regularity and they need to be well-advertised. As the diversity of the College grows, this type of support will become increasingly essential.
- Minorities are not strongly represented in higher education and this is evident in the College of Design. As a student of color myself, I found it particularly hard to identify and befriend other students of similar cultures. It would be nice to have events and other extracurriculars that are geared to multicultural networking within the design industry. This would be tremendously useful in instilling a ‘a sense of belonging and respect in the college.’ It also could lead to opportunities for professional development.
- In addition to recruiting for diversity, we should develop programs and activities to bring current students with different backgrounds together in positive ways.

In these comments, participants communicated that they do not believe it is enough to just bring different people into the college. We also need to consider the ways in which our organization needs to change to be more inclusive and equitable to a variety of people.

Respect and cordiality. There were other issues that surfaced in the focus groups related to general respect and/or cordiality in the college, albeit a couple individuals commented in the survey that they have not witnessed any acts of uncordiality or

disrespect. Of those that did discuss this issue, the majority of them attributed the problem to real or perceived differences in power and hierarchy. For instance, some participants described that they have witnessed disrespectful behavior in college meetings either between faculty or between faculty and staff. One person said, “[that behavior] made me feel uncomfortable. I don’t want to get nailed by them.” While such behavior can cause discomfort, as that person described, it can also have the effect of making “people ineffective because they just don’t want the deal with the drama.”

With regard to the diversity climate, though, some participants described that they felt talked down to or disrespected because of their race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, etc. One person commented on the problematic nature of the terms “junior” and “probationary” that are used to describe faculty of a particular rank. He described that because of these terms, “you are guilty until proven innocent” and that colleagues have made “joke comments to me...’oh you’re so cute, you weren’t even born when’...” His description implied that because of his junior status and young age, colleagues failed to treat him with the respect they would afford older, more senior colleagues. In another example, a participant, presumably another faculty member, stated, “I have seen students be turned away in group creation, 2 students recently, and one was an international student and one was not from our college. How do I handle that? I feel like I just can’t let it go.” In this comment, the participant was suggesting that these two students were excluded from a particular group due to their outsider statuses, either as an international student or as a non-CDes student. This lack of cordiality bothered the participant; “I just can’t let it go.”

Finally, one participant commented,

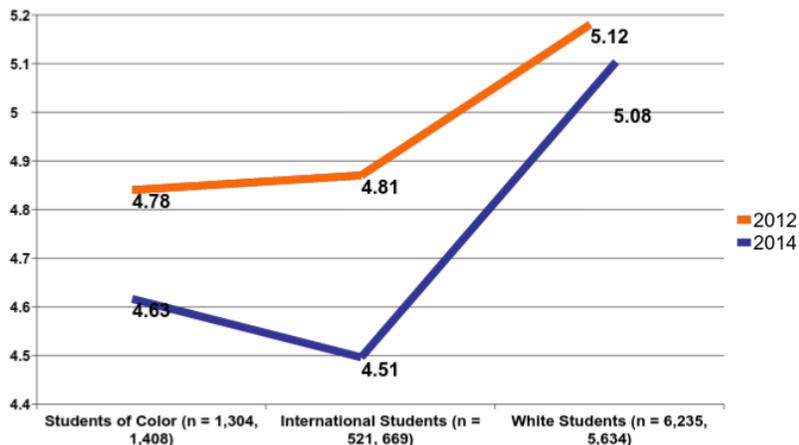
I think there is a huge lack of diversity and respect for diversity in [my program] environment, compared to the [environments in other CDes programs] that I've witnessed. I think that the lack of care or respect for diversity is related to the demographics of [my program’s] students, a lot of people interested in studying [the discipline] come from extremely privileged families who can afford things like the [program] software.

In this statement, the participant equated the lack of diversity in our college to fact that those who most often gravitate to that particular discipline come from high socioeconomic backgrounds. As such, there is little understanding or respect for those who come from different backgrounds, in particular low-income.

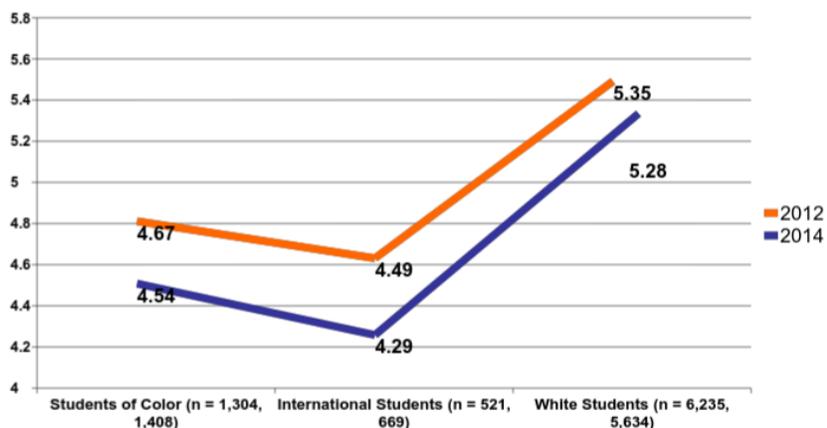
With regard to relevant data from the fall analysis, in the 2015 Employee Engagement survey, 68% of CDes Faculty and 76% of CDes Staff reported that they feel respected and recognized in the college, which is 2 to 5% points higher than the overall University results. These data, however, were not broken out by demographics and we know that we have fewer numbers of underrepresented faculty and staff in the college. On the other hand, the SERU survey did analyze questions about feelings of respect

broken down by various demographics, which is highlighted in the following two graphs. Again, a scale of 1 to 6 is used.

Students of My Socio-Economic Status are Respected

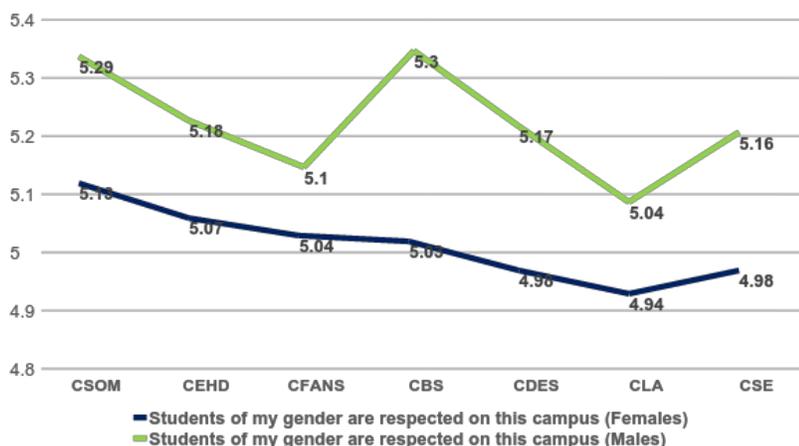


Students of My Race/Ethnicity are Respected



As one can see, when paired, the charts show that White Students in general feel far more respected than any other ethnicity or origin, regardless of socioeconomic status.

The SERU data highlighted additional areas of concern related to respect. A greater percentage of women reported feeling like they belong at this institution than other gender identify groups, but men felt most respected, which is demonstrated in the graph below.



Finally, the SERU data further showed that American Indian, Black, low-income/poor, international, and LGBTQ students reported feeling like they were least respected on campus. Thus, when assessing the extent to which faculty, students, and staff feel respected in the college, it is important to consider the voices of those who are historically marginalized and/or in the minority, as well as the majority.

Hierarchy and power. Again, in relation to the to previous theme, hierarchy and power were cited in almost all focus groups as problematic for inclusion in general. Several participants negatively described interactions between students, faculty, and staff in the college and many perceived an inability to discuss these power issues because of potential consequences or “blow back” for speaking out. For instance, the following comments were made across the various focus groups and in the survey:

- Staff to faculty has a lot of negative interactions. Disrespectful interactions from faculty creates an ineffective environment. Has been an ongoing problem.
- Hierarchy plays into a lot of the dynamics. But I don't feel comfortable stepping in in these scenarios.
- It difficult because of the hierarchal system. Can I say that to this person? That person going to be deciding on my tenure. Hierarchy breeds an inability for people to honestly express concerns. I've seen it and tried to have difficult conversations, but it's hard.
- There is also a faculty to student dynamic. I suspect there are students struggling with issues and they don't feel comfortable talking to the instructor. It shows up at the end in teaching evaluations. Trying to create [positive] environments in class is important, but it's hard.
- I received a comment from senior faculty “you are so quiet so that people will always think you are right when you do speak.”
- I was told by a senior faculty that as an assistant professor, I should be quiet.

- [I was] told that if I say something or do something that faculty would vote against me when qualifying for promotion.

These comments highlight that on account of real or perceived differences in power, students, faculty, and staff may not always feel comfortable and confident in this environment. And while participants overall did not tend to link these power dynamics to social identity, one person did posit, “I wonder with my own experience how much of it is related to gender, how much is related to opportunity, how much is rank.” As it currently stands, our climate is less welcoming and inclusive on account of these hierarchy and power issues.

Microaggressions. There were several examples of microaggressions found in the data generated via the focus groups and follow-up survey. Microaggressions are subtle/covert instances of bias or discrimination against people who come from historically marginalized groups (Sue, et. al, 2007). While these microaggressions may have been perpetrated unconsciously and/or due to a lack of awareness or knowledge, they can still have the effect of hurting those who are marginalized. Examples of the microaggressions communicated in this analysis include:

- The diversity and inclusive climate is pitiful. You have staff, faculty, fellow graduate students making blanket statements and decisions about language skills of capabilities of international students. In some instances in some programs international or diverse students are pushed towards specific faculty as advisors because of the unwelcoming atmosphere. There is low tolerance and a lack of acceptance of differences which is shocking in particularly in an academic environment. I am always upset when I hear comments like the minority students are the weakest from my colleagues. There are so many blanket statements and unnecessary judgemental statements being made which are so disappointing.
- Some of the language used by professors in class is heterosexist, which can contribute to a poor climate. Like one class I was in the professor talked about how all guys need to do this particular thing to snag a woman. [It] would be appropriate to retire that type of language.
- People don't say anything offensive to my face. When you're the only person of color in a space, they talk like you're not there. I don't want to be the one who says something when I hear those people talking and saying offensive stuff. I'm also a commuter, a little older, etc.

In the first comment, by making “blanket statements” about international and/or minority students’ language and academic skills, “staff, faculty, and fellow graduate students” alluded to the fact (consciously or not) that they believed those students to be of lower intelligence and ability. With the second statement, the professor who “talked about how all guys need to do this particular thing to snag a woman” failed to consider that the males in the room may not all be heterosexual and/or that the students, in general, may

not appreciate such comments. Again, while this comment may have been well-intentioned, it could serve to create an uncomfortable atmosphere. Finally, with the third comment, the person described feeling invisible; “they talk like you’re not there.” While no one openly disparaged that person, being ignored can be a painful experience and it can contribute to an unwelcoming atmosphere.

As an example of another microaggression, a participant in one of the focus groups talked about an event that she had attended in which she perceived that she was the only White person. She described how she found the experience valuable because she was able to gain empathy for people of color by putting herself in their shoes. And, she added, “I wasn’t mistreated. I had no reason to feel afraid or disrespected, it was eye-opening.” First, while this statement may have been well intentioned, by communicating her surprise that she was not made to feel unsafe or uncomfortable as a White person among people of color, she implied the opposite was the norm. Also, this description diminished the lived experiences of marginalized people who experience being in the minority every day. Being in that situation once does not necessarily allow someone to understand what it is actually like to be in “other people’s shoes.” It may not expose someone to the realities of systemic discrimination and oppression, and it is not the sole solution to increasing cultural awareness.

Finally, one student commented in the survey that,

Diversity as you understand it is irrelevant. True diversity is when we don't even recognize a difference between one person and the next. Your question and questions like it only reinforce the fact that there are differences, preventing true diversity from existing. So screw this.

While not necessarily subtle, this student’s comment highlights the phenomenon of colorblindness: saying “I don’t see race.” Ironically, by saying “I don’t see race,” one is acknowledging that race exists and that there is a racial hierarchy, which does nothing to actually challenge or disrupt that hierarchy. People experience race differently everyday; ignoring that fact diminishes both the person and the experience.

Culture of unwillingness, inability, and/or fear to confront. As an unfortunate follow up to the previous theme, some participants expressed unwillingness to tackle issues of intolerance or disrespect when they arise in the college, while others stated that they do not feel safe, empowered or knowledgeable enough to do so. This finding is not in alignment with what is stated in our collegiate diversity statement regarding our desire to challenge the status quo and create a welcoming environment for all. It is important to note for some that it may not be a cultural norm for them to challenge others, especially those who are in positions of authority. However, this unwillingness and/or discomfort with confrontation could contribute to diminished feelings of respect, belonging, and safety for those who are the victims of intolerance or disrespect in the college. For example, someone commented that “it's scary for you even having the ability [to

confront]...it's even scarier for those who are experiencing the intolerance.” In response to a question related to the extent to which participants would feel comfortable confronting someone in the college who was being intolerant towards someone else, participants stated:

- There is not a culture of intervening in said difficult situations” [i.e., situations of intolerance].
- I have the ability, I’m not sure I always have the courage.
- Sometimes I feel like I need a list of words [to address the situation].
- Sometimes I feel like I need to practice ahead of time [to address the situation].
- The default position is to say nothing at all.
- When you’re in the class you don’t want to be too critical. Design is so subjective already. The way classes are taught, it’s do what you’re told.
- It is a culture of hypocrisy and risk aversion, embedded in a structure created by white patriarchy.
- People get away with things because authority says “they’re just that way.” Bad behavior [is] not confronted.

If college stakeholders are uncomfortable confronting issues of intolerance and disrespect, authentic and honest engagement in the change process to improve our diversity climate may be more difficult. One participant pressed even further;

People need to change, not [just] numbers or initiatives. People need to be in uncomfortable situations to learn and grow. It has to be more than just calling out individual acts. We need to look at how white people are benefitting from the systems [of oppression].

This participant implied that confronting acts of intolerance is a surface level response as opposed truly examining white privilege and institutional oppression.

St. Paul vs. East Bank. A less often stated, but still noteworthy, issue was a feeling of separation between the St Paul and East Bank communities. While comments were not always diversity-related, some did allude to the fact that this perceived separation can negatively impact the extent to which diverse students see themselves and/or their culture represented on the St Paul campus: “[One CDes program] has [a] professor of color doing amazing cultural work, but I’ve never met them. In [the] undergrad level, we never hear about it. When something happens, it’s always in Rapson;” and “In Minneapolis there are more cultural events, more diverse events. Not so much in St. Paul. It’s class, and then go home.” For diverse students who are primarily housed on the St. Paul campus, not seeing diverse individuals and/or events can hamper the extent to which they feel like they belong in that space.

Response Suggestions Revealed in the Data

Diversity is everybody's everyday work. "Diversity is everybody's everyday work," is the mission statement for the Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) at the University of Minnesota. In the spirit of this statement, the vast majority of participants seemed to be in agreement that we have a diversity climate problem in the college and that everyone needs to explicitly support and be involved with efforts to improve it. The work needs to occur at the highest level of leadership all the way down to those who are engaged in grassroots efforts. Participant responses ranged from, "University administration needs to be involved, it [diversity work] is not happening on all levels," to, "That question [asked in the survey] is important for our entire community. I would enormously benefit from hearing what other people say they would do. Hearing stories and experiences on the ground is important." Some discussed the barriers to involving everyone, though, by describing that the current climate is too comfortable for those perpetrating the issues. For example, one participant commented, "at many of the trainings the people who are there aren't the ones who need the training. The people who are creating pain points are not present at these trainings." Nonetheless, several participants described a desire to learn more about diversity, equity and inclusion and they welcomed further conversation on the topic;

- The workshop last fall in our faculty meeting was incredibly useful. Doing more of that is good;
- Evaluating power structures across the college between different groups. It would be useful for us to spend time talking about this; and
- Sensitivity training could be useful because in the university setting there is so much about self-promotion, individualism, there is very little community or team building.

One participant desired further connection since, "we are all struggling with the same things, but we don't know it."

In returning to the phrase, "diversity is everybody's everyday work," one student talked about the faculty's responsibility to address diversity and inclusion in the classroom: "Some professors say it doesn't come up, so I don't need to talk about it. Others say it didn't come up, so I need to talk about it." This statement perfectly exemplifies the intent behind OED's mission statement by holding all faculty accountable to discuss these issues in class, regardless of whether or not it is the explicit focus of the class. This same student described that, "A learning environment is the perfect place to start this practice...It sets an example for students to follow in and outside of the classroom."

Diversity and excellence. The DC is convinced that in order for the college to truly embrace and enact upon the statement, "Diversity is everybody's everyday work,"

there needs to be an explicit shift in the way we all think and talk about the imperative to diversify our college. Rather than positioning diversity as crucial to achieving excellence, there is evidence in the data that diversity and excellence are thought to be mutually exclusive by some. For instance, one person described, “You have staff, faculty, fellow graduate students making blanket statements and decisions about language skills of capabilities of international students...I am always upset when I hear comments like the minority students are the weakest from my colleagues.” Also, other participants commented;

- I was frustrated with the lack of diversity in the pool. It harms the effort if we bring in less quality candidates;
- I wouldn't advocate for lowering our standards [to bring in more diverse people], but we could look at a broader range of standards; and
- You don't see the NBA trying to achieve racial balance – you want to win games. You hire the best.

Simply put, as one participant bluntly commented, “diversity does NOT equal academic excellence [in this college].” While seemingly well intentioned, these comments highlight the tendency of some in our college to pair conversations of diversity with lowering standards. Rather than find fault with the way we engage in the pursuit of diverse individuals, for instance, the conversation drifts to a discussion of standards; prioritizing diversity would mean foregoing hiring or admitting “the best,” which would “harm the effort” overall. Comments such as these position diversity as a barrier to achieving excellence instead of positioning it as necessary to doing so. And, one DC member stated, such comments are just plain offensive.

Breaking down silos. Finally, in the course of completing this analysis, the DC continued to refer back to the college's diversity statement, which references our commitment to diverse people and ways of knowing. In particular, the DC agrees that diversity of thought is an essential component to the efficacy of the design process. Interdisciplinarity can play a role in creating situations where diverse people and ways of knowing can emerge. Along those lines, one student commented in the survey,

I also didn't think there were enough interdisciplinary courses offered during my time as a student. I feel strongly that diversity can be incorporated through interdisciplinary exposure. It may be a while until we see equal representation in higher education, but until this happens, we should be able to collaborate and interact with students of various learning and work styles.

Again, as we look to make improvements in the short term, offering more opportunities for interdisciplinary learning and interaction can serve to bolster diverse ways of knowing; we need to do a better job of breaking down our disciplinary silos. Like one person stated, “we should develop programs and activities to bring current students with different backgrounds together in positive ways.”

Conclusion

Respectfully, the DC ends this report with a statement made by a student who responded to the follow-up survey. This student describes the imperative of diversity for our college and, thus, our need to improve our diversity climate.

This college will fail if it does not embrace diversity not only as a metric goal, but also as a duty and a strategic advantage. The College needs to prioritize the issues of minoritized groups (it should be noted that these groups are minorities in the U.S. ONLY) both internally and externally. We need to be looking at global issues and we need to attract top talent, and that's only possible if the College commits itself to having a diverse makeup of people within and a diverse array of topics in courses and initiatives. Without doing that, CDes will continue to be just another second-rate, traditional American institution.

This report highlights that although many positive steps are being taken to improve our diversity climate in the college, there are areas of concern that need to be addressed at all levels of our organization. Subsequently, the DC is hopeful that this report will inform meaningful and effective next steps. The DC will reconvene in the fall of 2016 to again present on their findings at the September College Assembly, as well as to begin working on recommendations, consultation, and engagement with college stakeholders. While the committee has briefly discussed some preliminary recommendations, including monthly diversity discussion groups, regular time on unit meeting agendas allocated to diversity-related discussion and development, a diversity and design week that includes a lecture series and exhibits, auditing our curriculum for diversity content and representation, increasing interdisciplinary opportunities, etc., we look forward to a more thoughtful and focused discussion on recommendations in the fall.

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