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LEARNING LOG

Promoting Equity-Mindedness at Davidson County Community College

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DETAILS

MAKING IT WORK, UNDERSTANDING WHAT WORKS, AND SHARING WHAT WORKS

TITLE

Promoting Equity-Mindedness at Davidson County Community College


SOLUTION

Redesigned Planning Advising and Student Services;Digital Learning and Next Generation Digital Courseware;Developmental Education Reform and Supports for Learning

CAPACITIES

Leadership & Culture

Owner

 [Susan Burleson \(/education/s/profile/0053600000472KNAAY\)](/education/s/profile/0053600000472KNAAY)



Record Type

Monthly-Current 2017



INSTITUTION

Davidson County Community College

REFLECTION

SITE INITIATIVE

To build awareness of differing perspectives and background experiences, the College initiated campus all-reads in the summer of 2011. Since that time, faculty, staff, and administrators have read and discussed works that focus on issues related to poverty, race, class, social status, disability, immigration, and LGBTQ. While a direct measure of influence on student success is not measurable, the interactions and relationships across campus following participation in the campus all-reads are reflected in greater cultural and social awareness.

PROGRESS TOWARD STUDENT SUCCESS

Beginning in 2011, we read a series of books that had been used by an Achieving the Dream school from Arkansas. After 3 years, we decided to seek nominations from the faculty and staff at Davidson County Community College. Many were already sending ideas spontaneously as they read other books they believed would advance awareness of our student needs, cultural background, and perspectives. From these nominations, a book is selected that best fits the current needs of our campus. For instance, last year, a number of faculty asked for guidance and professional development related to transgender students in their classes. This came in light of a controversial North Carolina legislative bill, House Bill 2 or HB2, (the Bathroom Bill) about what the college could do legally to meet the needs of our transgender students. Therefore, we chose to read "Becoming Nicole: The Transformation of an American Family" by Amy Ellis Nutt.

Each spring, we distribute the book at our closing all-personnel meeting. Typically our president will share her thoughts on the selection and value of the book to our campus. The following fall semester opportunities are provided for reflecting on the takeaways from the book and identifying actions that we can engage in to improve our interactions with students. These opportunities have included all-day workshops with external consultants, panel presentations, small group conversations similar to participating in a book club, and larger group professional development sessions.

In Spring 2017, we distributed the book "Hillbilly Elegy" by J.D. Vance and are working now to secure a speaker on connecting economic mobility, social class, and education.

IMPACT

From both survey data and information shared at the professional development sessions each Fall, we feel confident that the summer all-read books have had an impact on our campus culture. Still today, almost six years after the first book ("Bridges Out of Poverty" by Ruby Payne), lessons from that particular book are

referenced by individuals and in larger convenings. However, we recognize more work is necessary to take the awareness building from the all-reads and move to the next step of developing an equity plan which establishes a shared responsibility and accountability for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) issues at DCCC.

INTERNAL/EXTERNAL RESOURCES❶

Human and financial resources have been needed to support the summer all-read strategy. Each year we purchase about 250 books and have used both state dollars and grant funding to purchase the books. The Student Success and Communications area of the college facilitates the identification and distribution of the book and the Student Success team has facilitated the professional development opportunities associated with the book. External consultants with specific expertise have been involved in about 1/3 of the campus sessions related to the all-reads.

NEXT CRITICAL STEPS❶

A small team, representing 3 areas of the college including a faculty and professional advisor, have been engaged in early conversations about creating an equity plan. A cross-functional interdisciplinary team will be identified to work with the external consultant(s) to: 1) review the institution's equity data; 2) engage the college community, including students; 3) assess campus climate, perceptions and biases; 4) build awareness; and 5) identify and prioritize strategies to promote more equitable outcomes.

OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES❶

Key Pivot Moments

When the book addresses topics that can be sensitive or uncomfortable, we have had faculty and staff refuse to take the book. Thus far, we have not made the all-reads a mandatory requirement. However, we have recently updated our mission, vision and values to reflect our commitment to equity. This provides more "teeth" to the expectation that all employees at DCCC should share the same commitment. Last year, we worded the calendar invitations in a way that suggested the book review sessions were required - although we didn't actually use that language. Turnout and participation in the sessions were better than in previous years. We have also changed our new employee position descriptions to include the following statement: "Maintain high level of sensitivity, understanding, and respect for a diverse academic environment, inclusive of students, faculty, and staff of varying social, economic, cultural, ideological, and ethnic backgrounds." Therefore, new employees begin their careers at DCCC with these expectations.

Last year we recognized that we did not have the in-house expertise to lead the discussions about LGBTQ perspectives and worked with an external group skilled at guiding such conversations. To diffuse the potential for negative interactions, the facilitators began the all-campus and the small group discussions with ground rules for engagement. Their approach was also inclusive of different opinions and very clear that the goal was not to challenge belief systems (particularly religious) but to learn more about how to create learning environments that are safe and welcoming to all students. After all, we are an educational institution, and lifelong learning is something we expect of our students - and should also expect of ourselves!

Opportunities/Challenges

We have hit a few roadblocks in trying to work with the external consultants we had identified as our first preference. Schedules have not coordinated, availability has been very limited and costs for services are also high. We are continuing to explore options for moving the equity plan forward, including sending faculty and staff teams to various conferences to listen and explore other potential consultants to help us in this work.

We anticipate opportunities to reveal or uncover biases that may not even be known to us. Our data shows a clear gap in outcomes among certain groups of students. So far, it has been very difficult to drill down to discover the reasons for those gaps. Therefore, there is the opportunity to learn more as we begin creating an equity plan.

Lessons Learned

The all-read books have been a good first step in beginning conversations around issues of equity; however, these conversations should not be isolated attempts to create an inclusive campus climate. Plans of action should come from the professional development opportunities related to the campus all-reads and accountability for those plans should be assigned to the appropriate individuals. While we have been very well-intentioned in becoming a more equity minded campus, a comprehensive approach to achieving equitable outcomes is needed. This will ensure the commitment becomes ingrained in the fabric of the organization and all interactions and communications are viewed through the lens of equity.

Another recommendation is to match the creation of an equity initiative to the culture of the institution. As we move forward with the development of an equity plan, we recognize that our campus is more open to change when external consultants assist in the process. It seems to be easier to accept and mobilize when someone from outside the institution guides the review of data, the awareness building activities, and the development of a plan of action.

QUESTIONS/REQUESTS❶

What initiatives or strategies have other colleges engaged in around diversity, equity and inclusion?


Are there external consultants you have worked with that you would recommend to us?

Do you have equity plans you would be willing to share or that are public?

What have been the biggest barriers to having conversations around equity on your campuses?

STATUS

Final

Completion Date 

5/25/2017

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(/education/s/profile/0053600000472KNAAY)

Susan Burleson (/education/s/profile/0053600000472KNAAY) (Davidson County Community College) updated this record.


May 25, 2017 at 1:03 PM (/education/s/feed/0D53600001Ms4gBCAR)

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