Clinical Focus

Developing, Implementing, and Learning From a Student-Led Initiative to Support Minority Students in Communication Sciences and Disorders

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Purpose: The Student Equity & Inclusion Workgroup is a student-led initiative at The University of Kansas that aims to advance equity and inclusion. Within this structure, the workgroup is entirely student-led and independent of any institutional initiatives. It has developed three themes—recognizing minority student leadership, ensuring equitable access to opportunities, and meaningfully supporting students—and used those themes to develop comprehensive programming in research, institutional advocacy, mentorship, and fellowship. Research initiatives included creating research opportunities for minority students by developing independent research projects. Institutional advocacy initiatives focused on policy change and developing a uniquely situated network of allies at and beyond the university. Mentorship centered student-to-student transmission of knowledge, skills, and support. Fellowship entailed creating opportunities for community building and recognition of minority student excellence.

Conclusions: Student-led initiatives such as those of the workgroup may be an effective way of supporting minority students in communication sciences and disorders. Institutions endeavoring to advance equity and inclusion should consider empowering students through facilitation of self-directed development, using institutional supports to support minority students on their terms, and recognizing students as capable partners in rethinking equity and inclusion.

In the United States, racial and ethnic minorities (hereafter, minorities) are persistently underrepresented in communication sciences and disorders (CSD; American Speech-Language-Hearing Association [ASHA], 2020a, 2020b), such that speech-language pathology is one of the least diverse health professions (Snyder et al., 2018). As Table 1 shows, in 2019, minorities were underrepresented in ASHA, with approximately 50% as many multiracial and Asian/Pacific Islander members, 31% as many Hispanic/Latinx, and 25% as many American Indian/Alaska Native and Black/African American members relative to the U.S. population (ASHA, 2020b; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). It is unclear whether greater diversity in academic programs in CSD will subsequently lead to increased diversity in ASHA membership. This is because minority representation among CSD students is higher than among ASHA membership. In 2019, minorities comprised 29.5% of students in undergraduate programs, 15.4% in audiology clinical doctorate programs, 21.3% in master's speech-language pathology programs, 35.4% in speech-language pathology clinical doctorate programs, and 17.3% in research doctoral programs; however, race- or ethnicity-specific data on attrition or postgraduate outcomes were not publicly available (Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders & ASHA, 2020). Given the discrepancy between minorities in student enrollment and ASHA membership, ensuring that minority students advance in CSD is critical in addressing underrepresentation.

More broadly, data from the health professions reveal that minority underrepresentation is nuanced (Snyder et al., 2018). As Table 1 shows, from 2004 to 2013, the health workforce was more diverse than the U.S. population, with overrepresentation of Black/African American and Asian/Pacific Islander individuals (Snyder et al., 2018).

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Table 1. Percentages of minorities in American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) and the allied health professions compared to percentages in the U.S. population.

Race/Ethnicity	ASHA	U.S.	Health	U.S.
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.3	1.3		
Asian/Pacific Islander	3	5.9	8.1	6.2
Black/African American	3.5	13.4	18.2	14.8
Hispanic/Latinx	5.8	18.5	10.9	17.1
Multiracial	1.4	2.8		
White/Caucasian	91.7	60.1	70.9	75.3

Note. Blank spaces = percentages not reported; Health = Allied health professions; ASHA percentages from ASHA (2020b); U.S. population percentages relative to ASHA from U.S. Census Bureau (2019); Health professions percentages and U.S. percentages from Snyder et al. (2018).

However, minorities were only more highly represented among professions with lower entry points (e.g., home health aides) and underrepresented in those with higher ones (e.g., speech-language pathologist; Snyder et al., 2018).

In addition, discourse on minority underrepresentation in CSD and related areas, such as the health professions and linguistics, has mostly focused on race and language (e.g., ASHA 2019; Hudley et al., 2020; Linguistic Society of America, 2019). There is a need to consider minority identities from an intersectional perspective (Buchanan & Wiklund, 2020; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Minorities may belong to multiple marginalized groups related to characteristics such as disability status, first-generation status, gender, and sexuality. For example, a Black, cisgender, bisexual woman and a White, cisgender, heterosexual man are both in the minority in the field of CSD yet their identities are likely to give rise to different experiences. Blackness, bisexuality, and being a woman each confer membership in marginalized groups; Whiteness, heterosexuality, and being a man do not. Thus, only some intersecting identities are tied to marginalization (Buchanan & Wiklund, 2020; Martinez et al., 2017; Rogus-Pulia et al., 2018). Without intersectional approaches, it is difficult to understand minority student experiences in the fullest sense, to identify specific areas of minority underrepresentation and to provide responsive supports (Buchanan & Wiklund, 2020; Ellis & Kendall, accepted).

In parallel to these broader discussions on underrepresentation, The University of Kansas (KU; University of Kansas, 2019) has included diversity in its institutional mission. As at other White-majority campuses, minority students at KU are more likely to have adverse experiences at the university than their White peers (KU Campus Climate Steering Committee, 2017). In this context, a group of minority students in CSD self-organized in 2017 into an informal group now known as the Student Equity and Inclusion Workgroup. To our knowledge, this was the first student-led initiative at KU to address structural issues related to equity and inclusion in CSD. Most equity initiatives at KU are run through institutional offices. Other student-led initiatives at KU are general, rather than CSD-specific, and include Rock Chalk Invisible Hawk, which focuses on students of multicultural backgrounds, and Black at KU, which highlights and advocates for the experiences of Black students.

Since 2017, the workgroup has developed into an official student organization. This workgroup is independent of any institutional initiatives or organizations (e.g., the Child Language and Speech-Language-Hearing Graduate Student Organization, the National Student Speech-Language-Hearing Association) and does not sit on any departmental meetings. Within this structure, the workgroup is student-run and only seeks faculty involvement as needed or for specific topics, such as external funding. For sustainability, the workgroup fosters the development of students who take part in and who lead its initiatives.

This clinical focus article describes the development, activities, and lessons learned of the workgroup. First, we describe models for supporting minority students. Next, we describe the workgroup, including its development, guiding themes, and initiatives and outcomes. Then, we discuss lessons learned from developing and implementing workgroup initiatives. We conclude by offering actionable steps for other institutions and thoughts on where CSD must go.

Models for Supporting Minority Students

Given the underrepresentation of minorities in CSD and the need to consider intersecting identities, two types of support models may be useful. Top-down support models, or initiatives implemented from the top of an institution down, may be effective at addressing underrepresentation in terms of broad categories, such as race. Personalized support models, or initiatives developed at the individual level, may help address underrepresentation in an intersectional way. In this section, we describe two top-down support models, two personalized support models, and findings on culturally responsive mentorship relevant for the workgroup.

Top-Down Support Models

Recent top-down support models are student-centered and have empowered them as leaders. In particular, institutional programming encompassing financial and social supports, mentorship, and intensive training opportunities, may support the recruitment and retention of minority students in CSD (Snyder et al., 2018).

One top-down support model comes from North Carolina State University, which implemented a university-wide linguistic diversity initiative (Dunstan et al., 2018). The aim was to engage the campus community about linguistic diversity, focusing on equity and inclusion for speakers of dialects other than mainstream American English. To achieve this goal, institutional offices across the university—the College of Humanities and Social Science, the Division of Academic and Student Affairs, and the College of

Education—formed partnerships, while offering intensive programming (e.g., workshops and trainings) and empowering graduate and undergraduate students interested in linguistic diversity and social justice as peer educators. Within this structure, graduate students had the opportunity to develop leadership skills while playing a critical role in the initiative in terms of connecting with students across campus and ensuring initiative sustainability by formally organizing as a student organization.

Another top-down model is the Minority Student Leadership Program, which aims to increase diversity in ASHA by providing minority students with explicit leadership programming (ASHA, n.d.). Programming includes networking with ASHA leaders, learning about ASHA governance and opportunities for leadership, and developing fellowship with cohort members while learning about leadership skills. The underlying principle is that explicit programming, rather than merely access to the profession, is needed to advance minorities in ASHA. Program alumni have experienced success with entry to funded doctoral programs, career advancement, leadership positions within ASHA, and ASHA awards and scholarships. Thus, intentional top-down supports may be effective at supporting minority students in CSD.

Personalized Support Models

Personalized support models may also be effective. Given that comprehensive mentorship and culturally responsive mentorship may be particularly important for minority students in CSD (Saenz et al., 1998), two relevant models are the Multiple Mentor Model (Wright-Harp & Cole, 2008) and the Learner-Centered Model (Mahendra et al., 2005). Minority faculty developed these models for students in CSD specifically.

In the Multiple Mentor Model, various types of mentors facilitate students in their academic, clinical, and professional development (Wright-Harp & Cole, 2008). To ensure student success, multiple types of mentors will likely be required, including academic, clinical, research, peer, and career and professional development mentors. Regardless of mentor type, various considerations are necessary for ensuring mentor effectiveness including committing to the mentoring process, communicating with the mentee, presenting as a suitable role model, and monitoring the progress of the mentee. Critically, this model emphasizes sustainable mentorship, in that it is unrealistic for any single mentor to serve as the sole source of information and perspectives on CSD.

The second model, the Learner-Centered Model, focuses on the relationship between instructor and student within the context of learning about cultural and linguistic diversity (Mahendra et al., 2005). The model has the potential to support minority students because it focuses on intercultural communication skills. Based on Weimer's (2002) work, the model includes five elements: shared power between teacher and learner (or mentor and mentee), learning collaboratively rather than passively, encouraging student involvement and responsibility in the learning process, and aligning evaluation methods with learning outcomes. The Learner-Centered Model uses five steps to implement these elements: learning key parameters of cultures, developing cultural self-awareness, recognizing how bias influences behavior, understanding cultural conflict, and learning strategies to resolve cultural conflict. Overall, these personalized support models mentor the whole student in the fullest sense, which is especially important for minorities.

Culturally Responsive Mentorship

Culturally responsive mentorship is also a specific need for minority students (Wright-Harp & Cole, 2008). For example, a research study found that clinical supervisors in psychology varied in their multicultural competence by racial/ethnic minority status and in the amount of time they spent discussing multicultural issues with students (Hird et al., 2004). Specifically, White supervisors reported being less competent than minority ones and spending less time than minority supervisors discussing multicultural issues (Hird et al., 2004). One conclusion from these findings is that culture, as a dimension implicated with race, is an everyday reality that minorities must navigate (Hird et al., 2004). Another is that minority students may be perceived as having more difficulties than their White peers with clinical practice, whereas the underlying issue is underrepresentation of minorities in the profession, such that the predominantly White majority informs clinical supervision methods (Buchanan & Wiklund, 2020). However, it is unknown how these findings translate to CSD.

Cross-cultural mentorship in CSD highlights potential barriers to culturally responsive mentorship. In implementing a peer mentorship program, Bellon-Harn and Weinbaum (2017) found that predominantly White graduate students mentoring minority students noted that mentees' schedules complicated effective mentorship in a way that suggested their mentees lacked motivation. Specifically, mentors noted they always had to initiate contact with mentees and struggled with mentee responsiveness (Bellon-Harn & Weinbaum, 2017). Thus, culturally responsive mentorship initiatives may have to explicitly state expectations, model mentorship interactions, and teach cultural humility to be effective.

In all, a mix of approaches may be the most effective at supporting minority students in CSD. Top-down supports may work toward the broad goal of increasing minority representation, personalized supports may work toward resolving precise areas of underrepresentation, and culturally responsive mentorship throughout may help support individual minority students.

The Student Equity & Inclusion Workgroup

The Student Equity & Inclusion Workgroup is a student organization at KU, which is a research-intensive, predominantly White institution that enrolls over 27,000 students. In addition to a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (KU, 2019), the university has institutional

priorities that align to its commitment: (a) increase the number of students who complete degrees; (b) reduce average student debt; (c) assure quality of programs as measured by learning outcomes; (d) reduce average time to degree; (e) improve social mobility for underserved groups; and (f) assure student engagement and satisfaction (University of Kansas Strategic Planning Implementation Team, 2020). Within this scope, minority students at KU in CSD and related areas began supporting one another in meeting their academic and professional development needs. Many of their needs overlapped with institutional priorities. In this section, we describe the workgroup background, its guiding themes, and initiatives and outcomes.

Background

The workgroup began as an informal organization in 2017 following a diversity panel that the cofounder proposed and coordinated (Girolamo, 2018). This panel provided minority students in CSD with a platform for sharing their experiences with community members from across KU, the Haskell Indian Nations University, and the local community. The aim was to foster dialogue on barriers to diversity, equity, and inclusion at the university and in the local community, as well as identifying next steps to advance equity and inclusion. We focused on equity and inclusion, because diversity efforts tend to lead departments to focus on meeting some percentage of minority student enrollment. In contrast, equity and inclusion center the conversation on to what extent minorities have fair access to opportunities while feeling welcomed for who they are, rather than feeling they must suppress their identity in order to succeed (Dunstan et al., 2018). Afterwards, the panelists met with the Vice Provost of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to discuss their work and how to move it forward. The students also self-organized to develop initiatives to meet the needs of minority students and became an official student organization in 2019. Again, because this group is independent of institutional initiatives, students can dynamically adjust its programming according to student needs.

The workgroup is open to all interested students and serves underrepresented students from historically oppressed backgrounds at and beyond KU. Currently, it has 50 members, 50% of whom are doctoral students, 25% of whom are master's students, and 25% of whom are undergraduate students. About 90% are racial and ethnic minorities, and over 50% are Black. Membership also includes White, first-generation college students, and many members have intersecting identities in multiple marginalized groups (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Most recruitment occurs through by word-of-mouth. The organizational structure is lateral in order to allow for the appreciation of the innate abilities of each student member (Ellis & Kendall, accepted).

Guiding Themes

The workgroup developed themes for its programming primarily through internal conversations with its members and the diversity panel. Secondary sources of information for theme development included the KU Campus Climate Survey (University of Kansas Campus Climate Steering Committee, 2017) and university townhalls and workshops on intersectionality.

Theme 1: Minority Students Need to Be Recognized as Leaders

Minority students have unique skill sets that make them well suited to be leaders in the field. To advance in CSD, many minority students have had to acquire and learn how to navigate through multiple sets of sociocultural norms: those of their own backgrounds and those of the dominant background (i.e., predominantly White and middle class). Developing such socio-pragmatic abilities requires critical thinking, which may be important for serving clients of diverse backgrounds (University of Kansas Department of Hearing and Speech, 2018). In addition, some minority students have had to develop specific mental resilience due to their intersecting identities of race by gender (Crenshaw 1989, 1991; Ellis & Kendall, accepted). For example, Ellis described that he "was groomed to have the mental toughness required to deal with the ills of society and the negative perceptions of the Black man" (p. 7; Ellis & Kendall, accepted). It is never desirable for inequity to force minority students to develop additional skills, as it is an undue burden that has nothing to do with them and everything to do with systemic racism. However, it is important to explicitly recognize these skills and to cultivate them as leaders in CSD.

Theme 2: Minority Students Need Equitable Access to Opportunities

To create a just system, those with greater privilege, such as administrators, faculty, senior students, and peers from dominant backgrounds, should work to remove systemic barriers impacting minority students. This perspective does not entail providing minority students extra opportunities, such as receiving a scholarship or an admissions offer simply due to being a minority, or equal opportunities (e.g., receiving the same exact supports as peers of dominant backgrounds), nor does it entail "saving" them. Rather, equitable access to opportunities involves ensuring minority students have a fair shot at success considering the legacy of discrimination in the U.S. For example, race-blind laws which mentioned only income, not race, had racialized outcomes, as people of different races tend to also differ in income (Powell, 2012). Equitable access entails thinking about the many factors that created and continue to perpetuate systems where only some have a fair shot at success, rather than merely whether minority students seem to be as well prepared as their peers from dominant backgrounds.

Theme 3: Minority Students Need Meaningful Supports

Initiatives to support minority students should consider all the aspects necessary for success. Successfully applying to graduate school in CSD, for example, is a competitive process that requires "extras," such as awards, conference presentations, fellowships, internships, research

training, and leadership experience (Polovoy, 2014). Minority students who are unaware of these extras may progress through a program without acquiring the experiences that will help them advance in CSD. For example, a Latinx first-generation student of an international background whose parents completed few years of formal education in the workgroup shared that they did not know graduate school required letters of recommendation, or that attending office hours to build a relationship with faculty was a pathway for obtaining strong letters of recommendation. Conversely, students from dominant backgrounds may be more likely to know about or be able to pursue these activities. Meaningful supports should explicitly address and help minority students acquire the extras.

Initiatives & Outcomes

Given what is known on underrepresentation in CSD, support models, and the guiding themes, the workgroup developed initiatives. While many initiatives have moved online due to COVID-19 outbreak, the objective has always been to provide students with support on their terms while cultivating them as leaders (ASHA, n.d.). The assumption was that minority students would succeed in the absence of systemic barriers to success. Conversely, if minority students did not succeed, the efforts of workgroup initiatives to remove barriers were likely insufficient. Consistent with Wright-Harp and Cole (2008), the workgroup has implemented a model where multiple students mentor peers on a broad range of topics. Furthermore, as per Mahendra et al. (2005), workgroup mentorship is dynamic, where the ultimate goal is the development of lifelong skills.

Research

Knowing that minority students may face barriers to accessing research opportunities due to having life commitments outside school (Fuse, 2018; Fuse & Bergen, 2018) or due to faculty perceiving them as not "research ready," the workgroup developed research projects to provide minority students with research experience. These research projects are independent of any official academic programming, such as independent study courses or opportunities where faculty members may be flexible with when and how students complete research duties. Students with research training from Graduate Research Assistantships or NIH T32 traineeships mentor their peers. The aim is not to replace official research training but to connect minority students while modeling an ethical and responsible research environment. In addition, the research initiatives make the often-opaque sociocultural norms and expectations of collaborative research transparent. Two recent research projects used a Multiple Mentor Model (Wright-Harp & Cole, 2008). Student mentors served primarily as peer and research mentors, although the projects also involved academic and professional development mentorship.

On the first project, a senior doctoral student mentored a junior doctoral student in developing a research study that aligned to their interests and helped them acquire research experience. Areas of mentorship ranged from ideation to development of conference submissions. Ideation involved developing a project that was meaningful but would not hamper their ability to progress in the program. Applying for institutional review board approval entailed working through the application together section-by-section while discussing the purpose of and expectations for each portion of the application. Research design involved developing a study where the research questions and analytic plan aligned with one another. Building a research team involved the senior doctoral student contacting minority graduate and undergraduate research students who were interested in research, providing an overview of the project, and asking them to participate. Importantly, the senior doctoral student had already built trust with these parties, such that students knew they would be in an environment that respected their identities and would provide them with a conference presentation and a co-authorship article. Project management involved providing guidance on leading research team members. Development of conference submissions involved discussion of expectations for different presentation types, reviewal of previous conference submission materials, and iterative feedback on submission drafts.

On the second project, a senior doctoral student mentored a junior doctoral student in their mentorship of an undergraduate student. Here, the junior doctoral student was mentoring the undergraduate student in developing an independent research project. The senior doctoral student provided advice and mentorship to the junior doctoral student on research design and development of a conference submission. Research design involved developing outcome measures that were meaningful and a template for data documentation and data visualization. Development of conference submission involved discussion of expectations for different types of conference submissions, including sample conference submission materials, and feedback on conference submission drafts.

Outcomes of the research initiatives are as follows. The first project resulted in three accepted submissions to a national conference. One was an oral presentation by the junior doctoral student, and two were poster presentations by undergraduate research assistants. The manuscript from that project is in preparation, with many of the research assistants as coauthors and the senior doctoral student offering advice. The second research project resulted in an accepted poster conference submission at a national conference. Furthermore, the project served as the basis for a master's thesis. In sum, these projects had multiple levels of mentorship. Students used their knowledge, skills, and relationships—all parameters of privilege—to remove barriers for others. Importantly, the shared experiences of mentors and mentees meant that the mentors appreciated many of the barriers to success of the mentees, making mentorship fruitful.

Institutional Advocacy

Institutional advocacy initiatives run on both an ongoing and an ad-hoc basis. Following the inaugural meeting with the Vice Provost of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion,

the workgroup expanded its institutional advocacy programming to include other administrators and faculty. As in Dunstan et al. (2018), the goal was to develop strategic partnerships with key stakeholders across the university. Table 2 shows stakeholders that the Student Equity and Inclusion Workgroup works with, including various administrators and faculty at KU Lawrence and KU Medical Center (KUMC). Meetings with each stakeholder take place once a semester and focus on exploring how workgroup initiatives and the work of various stakeholders complement one another. In this way, the workgroup and institutional offices have a feedback loop that is transparent and sustainable, with opportunities for minority students to develop leadership skills. These meetings also normalize centering individual students in equity and inclusion work, rather than relying on university-level data.

Ad-hoc initiatives focus on immediate barriers and issues as they arrive. For example, the workgroup met with KUMC Vice Chancellor of Research and the Director of the Project on the History of Black Writing in response to specific events. The motivation for these meetings is to make university administration aware of specific instances of discrimination in academic settings and the need for anti-discrimination mechanisms and policies, as well as to explore potential solutions for removing barriers to success. In these meetings, undergraduate students who were Black and first-generation shared specific experiences where they faced barriers to accessing advising. Similarly, minority graduate students voiced their specific experiences with adversity at the university. For example, a program expectation that cohort members develop collaborative relationships with one another put a Black student at a disadvantage, because their White cohort members consistently spoke over and ignored them. Consequently, as the only Black student in their classes and in their program, they could not equitably access these collaborative and peer networking opportunities. Finally, workgroup members connected with other researchers beyond the university who are known to be invested in equity and inclusion.

Overall, institutional advocacy has led to greater awareness of equity and inclusion at the university level. In addition to the stakeholders in Table 2, the workgroup has gained university-level leadership opportunities and built a nationwide network of allies in CSD and administration. Ad-hoc initiatives resulted in the: (a) creation of a reporting mechanism for cases of discrimination, (b) identification of supportive postbaccalaureate positions for minority students, (c) development of culturally responsive support plans for students experiencing adversity, (d) inclusion of specific discriminatory experiences of workgroup students in a report to the provost, (e) invitation of minority students to give talks about their work at other institutions, and (f) development of customized programming on topics related to equity, such as Universal Design for Learning.

Mentorship

The workgroup provides students with a one-stop place for accessing explicit mentorship. The aim is to ensure minority students have equitable access to opportunities, versus merely hoping they find out about opportunities and receive help from others. Because informal mentorship often relies on personal connections, minority students are likely to be left out.

An example of academic mentorship comes from the first author, who is experienced in applying to student awards and conferences and developed training materials for applying to awards, undergraduate and graduate school, and fellowships. The workgroup has used these materials in workshops with Black high school students from a Black-led community organization, as well as with undergraduate and graduate students at and beyond KU. First, mentors meet with students to review the application and training materials, as well as to assist in drafting an application outline. Training materials consist of self-designed templates for application documents and interviews, as well as actual application materials from previous submissions if available. The second meeting involves reviewing the draft and the strengths of the student which higher education may not

Table 2. Stakeholders in the Student Equity & Inclusion Workgroup institutional advocacy initiatives.

Campus	Position
KU Lawrence	Interim Provost
KU Lawrence	Interim Dean of College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
KU Lawrence	Associate Vice Provost for International Affairs
KU Lawrence	Vice Provost of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
KU Lawrence	Vice Provost of the Office of Graduate Studies
KU Lawrence	Chief Information Officer
KU Lawrence	Director of the Project on the History of Black Writing & Distinguished Professor, Department of English
KU Lawrence	Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
KU Lawrence	Dean of the School of Education
KU Lawrence	Graduate Students of Color Network Advisory Board
KU Medical Center	Vice Chancellor of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
KU Medical Center	Vice Chancellor of Research

Note. All positions are those each person held when the workgroup began working with them. Some stakeholders have moved on to other positions at or beyond the university. KU = The University of Kansas.

credit them for developing. For example, a First Nations student applying to ASHA's Minority Student Leadership Program initially wrote in their essay that they were applying to the program in order to acquire leadership skills that would support flexibility of thought. It was important to highlight that the student was already flexible with strong critical thinking skills, as they had developed the ability to navigate between the sociocultural norms of their background and of predominantly White CSD. Subsequent meetings include iterative reviewal and editing of drafts until applications are competitive.

An example of clinical practice and career and professional development comes from the second author, who has extensive experience working with minority families of international backgrounds. They coach mentees in weekly meetings on academic, clinical, and professional skills. Specific topics of mentorship include time management skills, study strategies, professional communication, interview skills, and best practices for culturally and linguistically diverse clients. To help students transition to clinical practice, this mentor has identified shadowing opportunities with clients In this way, mentees have the opportunity to develop skills through direct experiences in a low-stakes setting where they are embraced for who they are.

A third mentorship initiative involves scaffolding mentees into opportunities. Senior students in the workgroup invite more junior students to institutional advocacy meetings, interviews for university administrator positions, and university-level committees. Prior to their first meeting, senior students review expectations for participation and examples of successful participation with junior students. In the meeting, senior students provide support by setting junior students up for successful participation and debrief them afterwards. The more experience students gain, the less support senior students provide, with the end goal being junior students feeling ready to participate on their own. The workgroup implements a similar scaffolding approach for students who want to have a successful mentoring relationship with an external mentor or who want assistance with identifying potential doctoral advisers. The first author has developed training materials, including personalized spreadsheets with criteria for evaluating doctoral programs, as well as templates for preparing to communicate with and for communicating with potential advisers. The point of these initiatives is that minority students need to have equitable access to opportunities and receive support in developing their skill sets.

Mentorship may have facilitated successful applications to awards, fellowships, and graduate school, as well as workgroup sustainability. The high school students who participated in workgroup training developed successful scholarship and college applications. All students who applied to a Kansas City Black Economic Union Scholarship and 4-year schools were accepted to their program of choice. At the graduate level, multiple students successfully applied to the ASHA Minority Student Leadership Program, institutional fellowships, university-level awards, and to top, fully funded doctoral programs. An outcome that was not an express workgroup goal was that a student who successfully applied to a top CSD graduate program and fellowship mentored faculty on how to integrate a technology platform into their fellowship program. Thus, the mentee became the mentor. These outcomes were not purely attributable to the workgroup. Minority students came in with their own accomplishments and strengths that the workgroup helped them translate into applications, while discussing equity with institutional offices responsible for evaluating applications.

Fellowship

Fellowship initiatives focus on recognizing minority student excellence while ushering in the next generation of students. The aim is to address the social barriers that disproportionately impact minority students. As with other initiatives, they required little more than time and effort.

The workgroup developed a Leadership Series to recognize minority student excellence. Each event in the series takes place off campus or online in an informal setting. Attendees respond to self-reflective prompts, such as identifying something they are proud of and a specific area in which they want to further develop. This allows them to practice self-assessment in a supportive environment. In addition, recognizing that many students did not feel free to be themselves in all settings, students also generally brought a dish from their culture or dressed in a way that was consistent with their authentic selves. Overall, this fostered a sense of community among students who experienced marginalization in academic settings.

The workgroup also developed a component of the Leadership Series to usher in the next generation of students. Here, workgroup members supported Black high school students from a community organization in applying to college. Some were considering KU. Thus, the workgroup developed first-look programming and brought them to the university for an all-day tour with support from the Child Language Doctoral Program. Prior to their visit, the workgroup spoke with students and the organization leader about the career goals of each student, as well as what they were interested in learning about at KU, in order to create personalized programming. At the visit, the high school students had multiple opportunities for meeting and debriefing with minority students in the workgroup, many of whom they already knew. The students participated in a general admissions tour and customized tours pursuant to their career goals (e.g., the Lab of Human Molecular Genetics provided a personalized introduction to how genetic approaches may inform language research, as in Andres et al., 2020), visited the Project on the History of Black Writing, and received a customized visit from TRIO.

Fellowship initiatives have resulted in a wider range of students from across the university building connections, even during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Leadership Series has fostered a sense of community, while also conveying the message to minority students that they are integral members of the university community, in CSD, and in

higher education. Specifically, the Leadership Series component that focused on ushering in the next generation of students helped encourage one student to apply to KU; that student matriculated into the Honors College.

Lessons Learned

Although the sustainability of the workgroup remains to be determined, there are takeaways for other institutions endeavoring to advance equity and inclusion in CSD. We offer some lessons learned with the caveat that institutions, not students, have the onus of effecting equity.

Lesson 1: Empower Minority Students Through Facilitation

Workgroup initiatives have revealed that minority students are leaders who are self-directed in their academic and professional development. While peer-to-peer transmission of knowledge and skills is typically explicit in order to ensure minority students are aware of the opaque expectations and sociocultural norms in CSD, empowering students through facilitation is a key strategy. Treating mentorship as a dynamic process is effective at helping minority students find their own way in CSD (Mahendra et al., 2005; Wright-Harp & Cole, 2008). A common concern from others external to the workgroup is that helping minority students runs the risk of misrepresenting their abilities, yet this is not a concern if initiatives facilitate and scaffold them in their development. Furthermore, in leaving space for students to develop their own goals, many minority students who the workgroup serves and who are members feel safe sharing information that may make them vulnerable and that is relevant for developing responsive supports. For example, after a student shared a disability status, members in the workgroup lobbied administration for policies to ensure they had fair access to academic success. Thus, while facilitation is key to empowering students, students must trust that if they share vulnerable parts of their identities that they will receive support without judgment.

Lesson 2: Use Institutional Supports to Support Minority Students on Their Terms

Although the workgroup is student run, it interfaces with institutional structures. This is because the workgroup aims to effect change through collective buy-in and because individual administrators and faculty have offered support (Dunstan et al., 2018). In developing relationships with administrators as individuals, the workgroup has built standing relationships with those invested in equity and inclusion. In this way, administrators and faculty act as vectors who can help maximize the impact of equity work and use their positionality to establish a just environment (see Barohn, 2020). Moreover, when administrators and faculty support minority students, minority students are more likely to feel invested in their education and engaged in their campus community. Hence, it is worth considering how to leverage institutional structures to support minority students in CSD on their own terms.

However, this approach is not without its challenges. At times, interactions with administrators indicated working together would not be productive for them or the workgroup. For example, the workgroup suggested to top administrators that the university consider alternative pathways to leadership for students who could not access traditional pathways to leadership, such as Student Senate, due to work (Fuse, 2018) and caregiver responsibilities. When the administrators responded that this request was not actionable, as students had to "be qualified" for leadership opportunities and made it clear that they were not open to future dialogue, the workgroup moved on. The workgroup also unsuccessfully reached out to the provost, who may not have responded due to the challenges of managing the university during the COVID-19 outbreak or of managing campus responses to the elimination of diversity, equity, and inclusion offices and positions held by senior Black staff members.

Lesson 3: Students Are Valuable in Rethinking Equity and Inclusion

Many of the minority students in the workgroup face systemic barriers that should not exist in higher education. Faculty, administrators, and peers should listen to minority students with the intention of empathizing with and learning from them, rather than listening to respond. Listening to the discriminatory experience of a minority student with their cohort member only to suggest they should not share their experience outside the university, because doing so can harm its reputation, is listening to respond. Conversely, truly listening to minority student stories keyed the workgroup into areas of need that were not addressed by existing institutional initiatives (University of Kansas Campus Climate Steering Committee, 2017). Thus, treating students as teachers themselves (Mahendra et al., 2005) may help other institutions shape their equity and inclusion initiatives.

In addition, minority students may help further our understanding of equity from an intersectional lens. Minority students in the workgroup with ADHD who are skilled clinicians and early career academic researchers have spoken about facing racial discrimination plus ableism in CSD. Such students are the most likely to be negatively impacted by the use of such measures in graduate admission, and multiple marginalization is never a reason to exclude someone from CSD (Buchanan & Wiklund, 2020; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Instead, we suggest exploring how such students with intersecting marginalized identities have developed the skills to get to where they are, despite facing specific challenges and receiving few protections in higher education (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004). This information can inform work to remove barriers to success. Arriving to this perspective would not be possible if students did not feel open to sharing their identities.

Actionable Steps

An underlying assumption of this report is that it is always the "right time" to begin working toward a more just field. The following process is one of many ways other institutions could implement a similar initiative: (a) identify the equity and inclusion needs relevant to students, (b) develop an action plan with students as active partners, (c) identify resources that students can access to meet their goals, and (d) review progress and revise the plan.

A first step is identifying the equity and inclusion needs that minority students feel are the most pressing. The process for identifying needs is flexible and may occur in many ways, such as a diversity panel (Girolamo, 2018) or workshop. Institutions must materially commit to supporting minority students. To demonstrate this commitment, institutions could work with minority students to develop a written agreement stating protocols and structures for supporting students. For example, prior to the diversity panel, panelists and the faculty moderator jointly developed a statement to establish the norms, guidelines for participation, and a protocol for what to do if someone did not follow them. In addition, an academic program director who was a faculty member wrote in support of the panel, offered to host the panel on an annual basis through the Child Language Proseminar, and had a record of supporting minority students. The panel revealed that minority students felt their adverse experiences with respect to equity and inclusion were tied to being students at a predominantly White university in a predominantly White state. For example, White doctoral students in CSD telling the faculty adviser of the Graduate Student Organization they did not want the only Black student in the program to serve on the board with them without any reason, may manifest differently at minority-serving institutions. Thus, identifying local issues is important.

A second step is developing an action plan. Students themselves may develop a plan, as the workgroup did, or faculty may offer their skills to students who want help (in which case, it is important to support students on their terms). The workgroup developed a mission statement and subsequently shared their plan with trusted administrators and faculty. Immediate goals included supporting minority students in handling microaggressions, such as when White cohort members ignored them at a national conference except to belittle them after they successfully networked with faculty. Long-term goals included removing systemic barriers to success for minority students at the institutional level.

A third step is identifying resources available for equity and inclusion work. This step follows development of an action plan, because end goals should inform how institutions leverage or seek out resources. Students themselves might start by reviewing an organizational chart, or, given that minority students may be unfamiliar with institutional structures (ASHA, n.d.), faculty might offer to review an organizational chart with students. The goals of reviewal could be to identify (a) offices that might support a student equity and inclusion initiative, (b) individual faculty and administrators already doing equity and inclusion work, (c) individual administrators and faculty who may be good allies, and (d) potential funding sources. In the workgroup, speaking with a trusted faculty member revealed that key faculty and administrators at and beyond the university supported equity and inclusion work. In turn, many of these faculty and administrators were willing to leverage their own connections to support the workgroup.

A fourth step is reviewing progress and revising the plan. Students may independently review progress and develop next steps, or institutions may work with students. Workgroup students review progress independently, including tracking initiative outcomes. Next steps include building a sustainable network. This work entails training in the next generation of students and maintaining and expanding the workgroup network of allies. Ultimately, we aim to build a network that transcends any specific institution.

Conclusions

The workgroup is merely one example of student-centered and student-led equity work. The importance of supporting minority students in CSD, especially at this moment in time, cannot be understated. While it is easy for departments and programs to engage in self-study about equity and inclusion, it is less easy to make oneself vulnerable and open to being called in with a concrete commitment to action. Pivoting from the status quo in CSD requires both vulnerability and action. Implementing initiatives where minority students are respected for their full selves and treated as essential, not optional, leaders in CSD is a workable solution that nearly all at higher education institutions—regardless of resource constraints—may implement.

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