

Grays Harbor College
Aberdeen, Washington

PACE Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Qualitative Report
PACE Climate Survey for Community Colleges

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Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Qualitative Analysis

Racial injustice continues to be embedded in systems and institutions across the United States and within higher education. In an effort to facilitate conversations around this topic at community colleges, we provided an opportunity for faculty, staff, and administrators to respond to two qualitative questions that focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The PACE Climate Survey is intended to promote evidence-based decision making across critical issues at community colleges, including topics like this.

The questions are grounded in Bensimon’s Equity-Minded framework as depicted on the University of Southern California Center for Urban Education website (see Figure 1). Equity-mindedness is a way of approaching educational reform that foregrounds the policies and practices contributing to disparities in educational achievement and abstains from blaming students for those accumulated disparities (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015). Community college leaders need to improve practice, inform policy, and extend theory to address racial and other disparities in educational achievement that exist across the higher education ecosystem. For this reason, the two DEI-focused questions are related to the role of leadership in equity-focused work and understanding the institutional challenges that may create barriers to equity on community college campuses.



Figure 1. Bensimon’s Equity-Minded Framework

Of the 114 Grays Harbor College (GHC) employees who completed the PACE Climate Survey for Community Colleges (PACE Climate Survey), 61 (53.5%) provided open-ended comments for these two questions.

Please refer to Tables 1 and 2 for the qualitative responses to the two DEI open-ended questions. Please note that responses to open-ended questions are listed in alphabetical order and quoted exactly as written except in instances where the integrity of the report or and/or confidentiality are compromised. Comments are reported without demographics, and any phrasing or sentences in the open-ended responses that may reveal the identity of the survey respondent will be removed. Any additional edits for confidentiality are indicated by [].

1-Center for Urban Education | USC. (n.d.). *Equity mindedness*. Retrieved September 28, 2020, from <https://cue.usc.edu/about/equity/equity-mindedness/>

2-Dowd, Alicia C., & Bensimon, M. E. 2015. *Engaging the “race question”: Accountability and equity in U.S. Higher Education*. Teachers College Press.

Table 1. Leadership Priority Responses

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Qualitative Question 1: When thinking about your institution's work to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, what do you think should be institutional leadership's top priority in this next year? (n=57)

Table 1.

According to the results of our most recent DEI survey, we are doing excellent in every measurable way. I do believe that our college is a very open and inclusive place, and despite our town being a “backwater” it is a very accepting community. I think right now college leadership is spending far too much time on DEI, because it’s something that we’re doing well already. Continuing to focus on something that is not an issue is distracting us from addressing actual problems our college is facing, like our perpetual budget problems and lack of accountability for useless spending. Our institution needs to focus on work that actually addresses our real problems, instead of reinventing the way we assess outcomes for the umpteenth time. Many of our problems could be solved by more clear and reliable communication from administration.

Additional training for employees. Staffing and opening the diversity and equity center.

Attracting and hiring more diverse faculty, and doing what we can to keep minority faculty in their teaching positions. Students need to see faculty that reflect the diversity in the student population, and the DEI initiatives that GHC is advocating.

Based on the data recently provided about DEI, we just need to continue our work.

Closely examine where and how job postings are publicized, making sure to reach out to organizations that focus on diversity and equity.

Continue to promote diversity.

Continue to seek opportunities to help all students-noting that needs are different depending on individual circumstances and challenges.

Table 1.

continued discussion and seminars

Continuing to be welcoming of all.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are important, but hiring someone that has the relative experience is better than hiring someone without.

Fixing our entry process to the college should be the focus so that we don't lose anymore student to 9 other surrounding institutions.

Hiring *appropriate* staff for the Diversity Center (once SSIB is built) and actually utilizing it so that students staff and faculty are aware of it..

Hiring a full-time employee to oversee the Diversity Center.

Hiring in a manner that can not discriminate against those in ANY group, including majority groups.

Hiring more diverse employees when able. Bringing back the DEI center for students and staff.

Hiring more diverse staff, administrators and faculty

Table 1.

Hiring staff that have DEI in mind, and getting rid of staff who do not.

Hiring those that are qualified for the position they interview for.

I think it needs to be recognized that this is a deep, societal wide issue that does not have easy answers. It's not just about the numbers, and I feel that this institution (as with many at all levels) focuses too much on the numbers, as if reaching certain percentage benchmarks will mean 'problems solved'. It doesn't work that way. We have to go deeper - deeper in understanding, deeper in self reflection, deeper in healing, deeper in connecting, deeper in changing to really get closer to equity.

I think the institution should consider that equity and inclusion needs to start at the top and keep in mind that there needs DEI.

I think they really need to look at the current culture and work to provide more training - not just the standard, state "click through" training either - but really intense workshops, speakers, etc. I think we need to figure out where in our current culture we're going wrong that's making it so we cannot retain people. Then we can focus on hiring more people.

I think we focus on this too much and not enough on ensuring quality of education.

I would like to see us work to make our online presence and resources more accessible in terms of both ADA compliance and languages.

Identifying and removing policy/practices that create roadblocks for students.

Table 1.

In this predominantly white community, race and equity seem remote and less applicable. Hearing from locally affected individuals about their experience could ground the reality of the local inequities. I understand it is unreasonable to expect oppressed people to teach non-oppressed people. Maybe talking about the history of oppression in the grays harbor community would achieve this goal.

Increasing faculty/staff diversity.

Instead of promoting DEI practice it! Everyone knows what DEI is and how to incorporate it, but administrators do not USE IT. Also, diversity is not just POC, which people seem to have driven to that point. Diversity is difference. This means not just racial or cultural items but gender, age, etc. The top priority should be for leadership to listen and incorporate ideas instead of listening and this disregarding them.

Issues around poverty and not about race and ethnicity as poverty and lack of educational preparedness is the REAL issue.

It would be great if leadership did not treat faculty and staff as either hostile to or ignorant of DEI work. The conversation should be at a much more nuanced state than it is.

Leadership needs to consider how it can provide a roadmap to the campus outlining a path forward for EDI within existing resources.

Leadership needs to make this a better place to work so that people will stay. They need to stop doing feel good session for everyone, and start working on creating a culture that not only keeps people, but makes it desirable. This culture change has to come from the top.

Table 1.

Leadership needs to promote diversity of actual ideas. What leadership currently wants is for people to look different but think the same. It obsesses over identity categories, while it pays little to no attention to philosophical or ideological diversity. In fact, it is hostile to philosophical and ideological diversity. Greater inclusivity will follow from greater diversity. The obsession with equity needs to be dropped. It's a thinly-veiled manifestation of a demonstrably oppressive and destructive economic philosophy.

Make it an intrinsic part of our daily practice, rather than an external task. For example: intrusive and proactive advising. It helps all students and is a great practice, but it helps HUG students most of all. Another example: the inclusive practices of our awesome welcome center team help our HUG students most of all.

More focus on program promotion, recruitment, and enrollment over the entire spectrum of potential student base in the community.

Moving from information about it to implementation.

Our Transitions program serves primarily a diverse population, and yet it has little to no clear leadership. In fact, there have been rumblings for years about this program being eliminated completely. The staff and faculty in this department have consistently taken on more and more work and responsibility while receiving very little support or input from admin. The decision to break up the Dean of Transitions position and absorb it into other departments was a very short sighted one. The needs of these students and the programs used to address them are unique to this program and deserve a dedicated Dean that actually understands those needs and has a desire to help the students, staff and faculty to be successful.

Possibly incorporate more conversations with the local tribes to promote enrollment of more natives from the area.

Table 1.

Prioritizing DEI in the hiring process/recruitment.

Provide support at every level so people feel like they want to stay.

Putting supervisors in place that are effective at their positions. If a supervisor has shown over the last 3 years that they don't have the ability to do the job, they need to be asked to leave so more diverse and effective leaders can help our college move forward. We currently do not have instructional leaders other than just a couple that are respectful to all and effective at their positions.

Recruiting and retaining diverse employees.

Stop over emphasizing race and gender as a problem. Address a problem if it exists. Over emphasizing a non-existent problem, ends up creating the very problem you are trying to avoid, ...racial gender division.

Stop pushing this as though Grays Harbor College should ignore the mixture in our community. Why are we not looking at who lives here and making sure they have some priority, instead of reaching out to far away places. Yes we can reach out, but what about our community? Why do we have to define by race, ethnicity and gender? Look at my prior answers.

student housing for out-of-town recruits/athletics which is where much of our diversity comes from

Support all students, not just the ones that are convenient to support.

Table 1.

Supporting efforts to hire and retain diverse faculty and staff

The priority should be on focusing on areas where students need the most help, and work towards boosting them up. One such area would be in proper placement ,which currently is not working well.

The top priority should be kinesthetically changing and implementing diverse strategies at the campus. How are we changing and adapting if we don't step into the shoes of a person who has been systemically and historically disadvantaged.

They are doing fine.

This institution does a great job of excellent job at inclusion.

This really seems like lip service. It is what is trending. I feel like, really, we all do accept the benefits of DEI, but the web-based trainings and speakers that we listen to feel like a check-mark on a list, just going through the motions.

To ensure our students can see themselves represented in our staff and faculty and have people who they can seek that ALL students can feel comfortable with.

Table 1.

To stop trying to influence the hiring and hire the best people. I have sat on committees that shy away from people of Middle Eastern descent because they have a bias. I listened to our DEI training talk about how our schools demographics reflect our area. That is only because we recruit our athletes from places like Las Vegas and California. Students from Tacoma and Seattle don't want to come here. I have talked to students that are stating they have issue with the lack of faculty and staff that they can relate to. We have to do better. We must do better.

To take action and actually open back up the DEC and have a safe space for students to go to. There is currently no GSA or private area for students who are having trauma to feel comfortable in to be at and that is a problem. The only counselor on staff is a white male and that is also true for the Title IX representative.

We need to focus on hiring period. Rather than a months long process, focus on getting people in chairs & make them into good employees.

We need to support the needs of our community - the DEI concerns locally have to do with poverty regardless of ethnicity.

Working with data. There is a push in some areas to address equity gaps in places where we may be chasing shadows of statistical insignificance due to small numbers. We have to not only collect our data, but better understand it and how it justifies the actions we select.

Table 2. Institutional Barriers Responses

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Qualitative Question 2: What are the barriers to improving issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion at your institution? (**n=58**)

Table 2.

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A lack of representation at the higher level. Our students don't see themselves in historic representations of privilege. We need diversity in leadership.

A lot of talk occurs, but little action is taken. We have trainings, yet we continue to lose our diverse hires. There is still a strong campus culture that perpetuates white male leadership and those who go against the grain are isolated and actively worked against. Change cannot come without holding up a mirror to what we do to further maintain the status quo. We are in a cycle of privilege and ignorance that will take work to recognize and change.

Admin needs to learn to communicate and actually work as a team with their co-workers, faculty, staff and students.

This institution has the potential to be a great asset to our community but our leadership continues to fail. Every time I think it can't get any worse, I'm proven wrong. Our leadership has absolutely no idea what we actually do nor have they ever shown any genuine desire to learn. If there is any hope of improvement, Admin must change and learn to build relationships.

All talk no action. I don't know what the actual barrier is but that is the result.

An E-Team more interested in patting themselves on the back and making sure they get everything they want, than doing the hard work to fix the culture. Why should they change? They rarely have to be on campus, can demand hours of work at the snap of their fingers, and can save money by piling three or four jobs on most people. Sweet deal.

There's also the issue of diverse people not wanting to move to Grays Harbor because it is a right-wing hotbed with all the issues that come with that. Plus, nowhere to live.

Table 2.

Barriers include selecting mentoring due to the lack of diversity and resistance to change/ adaption.

BIPOC and people with other identities who come to work at GHC, but find that they are threatened by residents of the rural, conservative community who lack acceptance for different identities and attitudes.

Continue to welcome all.

continuing education/professional development specific to instruction, financial aid, and advising issues, housing, poverty, and lack of mentorship

EDI work needs dedicated leadership. The College cannot afford to hire an administrator to oversee this work, but does need to assign this responsibility to someone.

Equity is our biggest barrier. I am not seeing this applied across all human levels of the college.

Expectations and qualifications for employment opportunities do not appear to be appealing to a diverse population.

Funding, willingness to listen

Funding. Lots of good ideas, you gotta back it up with funding.

Table 2.

I do not see barriers. What I see is we are moving too far in the direction of race, ethnicity, and gender. Let's start thinking about humans. We are all different in one way or another. What does it matter the difference? Again review my previous answers.

I don't see the barriers. I think we are inclusive.

I don't think we have barriers to improving DEI, other than the development of student housing. Currently, without student housing, we can only offer services to our local community, so our DEI has to be measured against the demographics of our local area. Student housing would open up opportunities to bring in a more diverse student body, but this is something we have been looking at for years and there are good reasons that the college has not invested in student housing yet.

I think the focus has been to hire, but it needs to be retention - it also needs to be to create a culture different than what we currently have and the recruitment and retention won't be that big of a deal...

I would say funding and community feedback.

Identifying how and where we can make the most difference for student success.

In a word, honesty. We have to be honest with each other about where we really are with this. We have to be honest with recruits. Why are we telling them we are close to Seattle? We are not even close. Be truthful with these students or it will come back to bite us.

Inefficient use of data and resistance of faculty to adapt.

Table 2.

It can take a long time to make positive changes in this area, and I think different areas of the college have different expectations about what we can do NOW and what we can work toward in the future. This causes people to get frustrated and burnt out when things move more slowly than they would like. A lack of resources (employees and funding) also makes it harder to improve these areas.

Keeping staff at the college that don't put much time or effort into their work. Simply, keeping staff at the college that don't do good work.

Listen to staff and faculty. As a faculty, I am undervalued and not heard.

Many discussions on oppression focus on the individual and, as a result, are threatening. This is a critical step, yet a discussion of the context and the racist system that is around us and formed us would be a more useful starting place.

More representation among employees and no student housing for out-of-town students.

None.

not enough minorities represented in faculty, staff & admin.

Ongoing support is needed. There has been such a change in employees over the past three years. It is difficult to impact change when the turnover is high.

Table 2.

Our location is in a more remote area with no other colleges/large cities nearby. Our lack of diversity stems from our location, and the fact that we can't pay competitive wages.

People. I'm unsure that long held beliefs can be changed overnight, if perhaps at all. If someone believes strongly and with all of their conviction that a homosexual person is "less than" a heterosexual person then that person will likely never be fully inclusive of the LGBTQ community.

Politicization and a misguided idea that our area isn't very diverse

Poor community involvement and outreach.

Qualified job candidates may lack diversity. We live in a rural community that may not attract as many applicants as our campus would prefer for job postings. Outreach and promotion to our community partners is essential.

Requiring everyone to think the exact same way.

Space, funding, staff..

Support students.

Supporting students in the educational pursuits as nurses.

Table 2.

The area we are located in is not very diverse.

The barriers are manifold. Virtually every way that the institution currently describes and imagines itself. The overwhelming philosophical and ideological bias of the body of employees. The State legislature. Of course, identifying these barriers presupposes a different understanding of diversity and inclusion than the College currently has. The College, however, is wearing blinders that will not allow it to see these barriers.

The barriers are that some people really do not understand how pressing these needs are and that the action needs to take place now, not in the future. There are a lot of things working against the good people that do work here and we cannot continue to lose those good people without there being some type of recourse.

The college serves a population of students that closely matches our area and success is comparable for all groups - both dominant and historically marginalized. Maybe we magnify some barriers in order to feel badly about our performance allowing us to pat ourselves on the back for our enlightenment and our noticing of barriers.

The community is a challenge—we are not economically robust, and yet housing is very expensive here. This artificially reduces our potential pool of hires. The diversity in our community is also deceptive with agency and resources tending to be pooled in the majority community. A sense of welcoming can be difficult.

The community is still behind the times on DEI issues so it makes it difficult to attract candidates. Top leadership is not very diverse which could make it more difficult for a candidate during the interview process.

The constant focus on it as if it were the major concern on campus. If students of any race, sexuality, etc. cannot get their basic needs met at the Financial Aid office, they will not come and they will not stay.

Table 2.

- The county that we are located in is lacking in diversity. It is difficult for diverse people to feel like they belong in this area.
- There is no help in relocating spouse/partners/family members to this area. There is limited job opportunities for spouse/partners/family members

The institution is doing the best it can considering we live and work in a predominately white, Christian community. That likely leads to implicit bias, and the existing demographics it very well might dissuade a more diverse GHC.

The institutional barriers is the fact that DEI are not a top priority for the institution.

The principle barrier, I believe, is in adequate research into potential solutions, and their impacts, which is vital to be done prior to implementation.

There seem to be some in the local community who are not welcoming and perhaps even racist in their actions. The college campus seems to have much less of this, but we could do more to be aware and welcoming of diverse employees and students.

This institution needs a Diversity Department that is independent from Campus Life. It is not possible to run both as the same person as there is naturally some conflict, needed conflict even, between the two objectives. It puts the Director of a joint department in an impossible situation of not being able to present opposing viewpoints effectively.

Time. We need time carved out to do this work in a purposeful way. People are too overloaded with work and it shouldn't all fall to the diversity CP.

Table 2.

unknown

We are a predominantly white institution, in terms of employees. Based on what the college is able to pay, individuals of color are able to get better paying jobs in areas/at colleges that already have diversity, so it's going to be hard to attract diverse applicants from outside the area.

We have instructional leadership that truly misuses this. We need instructional leadership that uses this effectively. Use this as not a "check off to give themselves a pat on the back" but truly make a difference.

We live in a small town where a lot of people do not want to move to because it rains all the time and there is nothing to do. When people do come here, they leave because they are not supported.