Chapter 13
The Inclusive Leader's Toolkit

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ABSTRACT

This chapter provides basic definitions of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and identifies skills and competencies necessary for the chief diversity officer (CDO) in higher education, post-2020. Specific concepts from research and industry provide strategies and tactics for the professional stepping into "the work." This chapter enters the dialogue about DEI from the entry point of consulting as change manager with faculty experience. It proceeds from there to discuss the five terrains of inclusive excellence that offer a new foundation for equity of policy and practice in higher education. The terrains lead into an examination of intersectionality and the work of creating an intentionally diverse community. Decision quality and critical thinking and other competencies for inclusive excellence leadership, such as emotional intelligence and cultural competence, round out the dialogue with specific observations from and suggestions for research and practice.

INTRODUCTION

At the organizational level of analysis, the challenge of influencing established higher education policy and altering the established direction of a culture's momentum (like changing the direction of a cruise ship or an aircraft carrier) requires a multifaceted, multiphase approach. At the individual level, this approach by the Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer, may require much more than one skillset. One may need to access the entrepreneurial training of an experienced consultant, the patience, psychological armor, and agility of a change management facilitator, the expertise of a faculty member in marketing and management, and the political acumen (or, at least, caution) of a person of color navigating the halls of power in a predominantly White institution (PWI). In such an environment, the explicit message may be, "we are so glad to have you in this new role, and we support this new office." Still, one must carefully avoid any real or perceived messaging that the institution has committed any atrocities against its students, alumni, or employees. Allowing a "table-flipping," in-your-face confrontational style demanded by some seeking to move PWIs toward equity could be disastrous. Winters (2017), calls this movement as shifting from polarization towards inclusion, and any fundamental shift such as this

requires voluntary participation, not force. In 1940s America, the United States government pursued entertainer Billie Holiday until her death because of the emotional impact her song, "Strange Fruit," had on Black and White audiences alike. The diversity officer must sometimes navigate similar messaging: Don't tell us about ourselves; we don't like it, and we will silence you rather than changing the behavior and the impacts of the behavior. In this essay, the terrains of inclusive excellence form the backdrop for essential leadership competencies, supplemented by concepts from management and marketing literature and consulting practice, to consider the policy and practice challenges for equity in a small, young, state PWI embarking upon this work.

DEFINITIONS

In an online dialogue forum in March of 2021, a participant asked, "Can you define equality and equity and give examples?" The panelists gave answers from their areas of expertise, but none offered a definitive answer until the Chief Diversity Officer spoke. This question frequently arises in the United States because "equality" according to the 14th amendment to the US Constitution provides broad guidelines for treating minoritized groups of all kinds; it does not explicitly teach "equity," though, and few would know if it did. Before addressing this distinction, though, one must create a shared understanding of diversity and inclusion.

Winters (2017) has stated that "[d]iversity is more than race. It includes age, gender, gender identity, background, religion, sexual orientation, and so on" (p. 133). Others have described diversity in terms of surface-level or visible identity differentiators, and deep-level (McShane & Von Glinow, 2008) or those invisible factors that influence cultural affiliation and engagement, like neurodiversity. In a recent podcast, research professor Brene Brown described diversity as character traits that reflect *protected class* identities, often factors that lead to disparities (Brown & Bethea, 2020). While these definitions of diversity suffice to initiate the conversation, like the popular metaphor of diversity representing being invited into a space (a meeting, a party, or a dinner), one must also remember that diversity may become diluted, that leaders may become distracted, by this weakening. To combat this effect, Myers (2014) offers scientific evidence from the Harvard Implicit Association Test and compelling imagery to help predominantly White audiences to see Black men differently. This leads to the next important definition, "inclusion." Many professionals focused on inclusion suggest, metaphorically, that if diversity is (identity-based) being invited into the space, then inclusion represents being engaged in the activity by those who created the context. For example, Myers has referred to one's experience of a party: "Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance" (Sherbin & Rashid, 2017). Other diversity professionals argue that this oversimplifies the complicated dynamics of inclusion and minimizes power dynamics in corporate interactions (Juday, 2017).

If one uses the party metaphor, as if diversity is being invited to the party, then inclusion means being asked to dance or engaged in conversation by the party hosts. Juday's (2017) criticism reflects the centering of one group as the party planner and host, and that group holding power to (condescend to) invite the Other, engage with the Other, dance with or eat with the Other. It may be that Juday has conflated inclusion and equity. Inclusion, defined, is employees' ability to bring their whole selves to work (Winters, 2017). Metaphorically, inclusion is attending the party and being made comfortable there. Inclusion is consideration. Inclusion is understanding and listening with empathy, receiving and

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