



President's Commission on Inclusive Excellence

Community Forums Feedback

December 7 and 9, 2015

On December 7 and 9 of Fall 2015, the President's Commission on Inclusive Excellence hosted two community forums, which were focused on two specific groups to gather their feedback and experiences related to inclusive excellence at UVM. The two groups represented the following:

1. **Identity Centers/Organizations**
2. **Diversity Committees/Councils/Task Forces (in colleges/units/divisions)**

This forum was designed within a framework of Appreciative Inquiry, where participants were asked to answer the following questions both in small and large group discussion format:

- 1) *As you think about or imagine a campus community that upholds/fosters a culture of "inclusive excellence," what does that look like for you?*
- 2) *How might inclusive excellence be woven into students' holistic college experience academically, personally, socially, culturally, spiritually, etc?*
- 3) *What do you believe UVM does well in terms of diversity and inclusion on the individual, group, and institutional level?*
- 4) *Finally, what do you think would be helpful from PCIE to support/compliment/enhance/uphold your specific areas of focus?*

Between both groups, there was a total of 45 staff and faculty, where 90% of the invited participants were in attendance [see participant list attached]. The responses to the questions were collected and organized by 6 themes:

1. Faculty and Staff Training and Development

- Training faculty and guiding them on handling difficult conversations when they come up in class (race, gender, sexuality, religion, etc. address rather than ignore or moving on; possibly more work during new faculty orientation around diversity and inclusion.
- Mandatory diversity trainings and professional development for all faculty/staff.
- Set a consistent bar and expectation for faculty and staff regarding cultural competency.
- There is a perception that the university values certain disciplines over others, and recognize scholars doing STEM research, for instance, as opposed to those doing Diversity scholarship and research.
 - Propose funding resources – challenge in pursuing tenure when your career is not held to the same value.
 - Seems an inability to envision what these funding resources and support could look like
 - Mobilizing resources and spaces.
- How to review faculty RPT
 - Training for people who are evaluating these RPTs, especially RPTs of faculty who are teaching D1.

- How do reward staff that are working on programs that support inclusive excellence? Staff are not “protected” by tenure and some do not receive the support, such as time for training and cultural competency.
- Largest increase in international student population, specifically Chinese students, in Grossman School of Business Administration; faculty are not prepared to effectively work across cultures and need more support in this area.
- More comprehensive and strategic plan around working with international students for faculty/staff/students.

2. Curricular Expectations

- Change D1 & D2 courses-limit attendance (15-20) and require to take in first year for early conversations.
- Cultural competency is part of the fabric of classes and learning spaces; not a separate requirement.

3. Community and Inclusion

- Create space for hard conversations & dialogue; continue to have spaces
 - Representation: “Everyone has a space:” Faculty, Staff, Student
 - Engagement: conversations across groups, restorative practices
 - Access: Affordability, universal design
- Importance of space to make mistakes, take risks, and engage with difference; support broader engagement and comfort.
- Areas of difference in religion, Muslim students in particular, no place to pray; have a university-wide place to pray.
- Military as cultural difference; commitment to community first rather than self; not forgetting about personal experience in how they experience higher education; staff/faculty (dis)comfort around having difficult conversations w/veterans.
- How are we holding third-party contractors/vendors accountable to our standards of inclusive excellence?
- Supporting people with a strong desire and intention to do this work- don’t know what we don’t know; need to have devoted time from other work to engage in these conversations.
- Remembering that differences can be invisible/non-apparent.
- What are we doing to support refugees/New Americans in addition to international students?
- Great support services exist on-campus (ALANA Student Center, Writing Center, etc.)
- The fact that we’re having these conversations is something UVM is doing really well
- Creating the spaces where these conversations can happen.
- Things exist in silos – we need to make sure units and offices are working together in this work
 - PCIE should play a critical role in this

4. Institutional Accountability

- Accountability: ALL levels, use “Our Common Ground” more
 - *Ask: “Is this supporting inclusive excellence?”
 - Does this get asked? Should make this our mantra.

- Transparent about what we can/can't do (but may work toward in collaboration)---obstacles; patience
- Need for university-- expectation to help carry out these policies, goals, objectives--- view diversity as ongoing process and need, resources for diversity work in order to do well, find resources to meet unmet needs
- Willing to call a failed search when there is not a diverse pool of qualified candidates
- We should assess employees on their commitment to diversity and inclusion work throughout their careers at UVM
- PCIE can help creatively think about ways to share what is happening across academic and administrative units
- Explicit conversations with Faculty Senate and United Academics to promote the celebration of diversity work

5. Recruitment & Retention: Faculty, Staff, and Students

- *Staff/Faculty*: Importance of having representation of diverse faculty in classrooms across campus
- *Staff/Faculty*: Staff and faculty onboarding around inclusive excellence; build into culture in deeper way
- *Staff/Faculty*: Having single question on applications for ALL applicants and interviewees around what inclusive excellence looks like
- Have people who are highly involved in diversity work celebrated in tenure and appreciation processes
- Inclusive excellence can provide an avenue for promoting diversity work honored as a part of the tenure process with the concept of excellence in teaching

6. Assessment and Transparency

- Measuring engagement in diversity work, i.e. attendance at diversity trainings, task force meetings, etc.
- How do we learn about bias incidents that are not Clery-related? How can we communicate this with transparency and clarity?
- Grossman School of Business Administration is looking to cut some of the general education requirements and adding more industry-specific courses because IBB allows more of those dollars stay in-house
- Academic units are looking for a tool (like Starfish) to communicate all kinds of information about students and make it easier for faculty and staff working with students to become aware of student challenges