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Culture of Inclusion
Assessment Overview

MARCH 2018

Inclusion in Action

Higher education institutions have long valued diversity and inclusivity. Recent events and the broader national discourse have forced higher education institutions to prioritize these long-held values and navigate the sometimes turbulent waters of promoting both diverse and inclusive learning communities. While many institutions and organizations advocate for the importance of diversity, there remains ambiguity about what, exactly, this means in practice. In fact, few institutions are effective at creating a culture that truly promotes, embraces and actively seeks out each community member's unique contributions. While diversity is about whom you welcome into your community, inclusiveness is about a living, learning and working community that values the different perspectives and contributions of all campus community members and seeks to incorporate the needs of all groups into the fabric of the institution.

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Inclusiveness is a strategy for drawing on each community member's individual strengths to increase an institution's potential to foster productive learning and growth environments for all members. Inclusive environments value, respect, accept and encourage community members to fully participate in the life of the institution. To this end, diverse individuals are appreciated for their unique characteristics and therefore feel comfortable sharing their points of view and other aspects of their true self and to be their whole and authentic self every day.

Based on decades of Gallup research in workplace engagement, environments that are both diverse and inclusive show numerous advantages, including increased job satisfaction, retention, organizational commitment, trust, well-being, creativity and innovation, as well as lower levels of conflict, intention to quit, stress, job withdrawal and organizational turnover. Moreover, Gallup's research on college students' well-being demonstrates that issues of inclusivity, acceptance and a positive campus climate strongly relate to student well-being and success. Such evidence emphasizes that although diversity itself is important, to reap the benefits of it, institutions must complement efforts to increase and support diversity with commitment to creating a culture of inclusion.

Five Elements Necessary to Creating Inclusive Environments

1 ARE ENCOURAGED TO BE THEMSELVES

2 ARE A VALUED PART OF THEIR TEAM

3 EXPERIENCE STRENGTHS-BASED DEVELOPMENT

4 HAVE INCLUSIVE CONVERSATIONS

5 TRUST THEIR INSTITUTION/ ORGANIZATION

Measuring Inclusion

Based on Gallup's study of more than 200 organizations and a review of existing academic research, Gallup has identified five elements necessary to creating inclusive environments. Building an inclusive culture is a responsibility that faculty and staff, workgroup leaders, institutional leadership, and students all must share. It takes intention at every level to sustain inclusive learning communities. These elements reflect the shared responsibility of all members of the community from students to the highest administrative leaders to support both diversity and inclusion. Gallup's Culture of Inclusion assessment represents each of these elements.

1) Are Encouraged to Be Themselves

For diversity to drive innovation, community members must feel comfortable speaking up and sharing new ideas. This environment of open dialogue only happens when there is a sense of freedom to be authentic and when psychological safety exists among other community members. Psychological safety refers to the shared belief that the group or team is safe for interpersonal risk-tasking.[1] In essence, community members need to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, ideas and values without fear of being punished. The most inclusive teams reward thoughtful contributions and encourage collaborative behaviors.[2]

2) Are a Valued Part of Their Team

When community members in inclusive environments feel that they are an integral part of their social and learning/working circles, they feel like they belong. To feel included, people need to agree that their unique value is appreciated and that they belong in the group. Traditional approaches to inclusion focus on acceptance, meaning others like or consider another person amiable. Although acceptance is considered an antecedent of belonging, success outcomes are influenced by the deeper sense of personal identification with groups that is demonstrated through a sense of belongingness.

3) Experience Strengths-Based Development

Strengths-based development involves identifying people's natural talents and combining these with the skills and learning to put them in a position to do what they do best — develop their talents into strengths. In a strengths-based culture, employees have the opportunity to do what they do best every day. Their development should focus on what they do right, not what they do wrong. Focusing on what people do right means they will look forward to their daily activities, achieve more and stay with an organization longer.

4) Have Inclusive Conversations

In the most inclusive learning communities, leaders have conversations with community members about diversity. Communities that proactively have conversations that convey their values in relationship to diversity and inclusion foster environments for members to express themselves freely and feel like their community is a safe place, even when national or international issues of diversity and inclusion emerge. Discussions about diversity have the potential to be tense; however, when leaders are open to learning about community members' differences and think about how personal and social identities influence these interactions, they can build an environment of excellence focused on inclusion.

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1   Kahn, W. A. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of Management Journal, 33*, 692–724.

2   Shao, Z., Feng, Y., & Wang, T. (2017). Charismatic leadership and tacit knowledge sharing in the context of enterprise systems learning: the mediating effect of psychological safety climate and intrinsic motivation. *Behaviour & Information Technology, 36*(2), 194-208.

5) Trust Their Institution/Organization

Trust is fundamental to an inclusive culture. In diverse communities, trust is essential to helping navigate the vulnerabilities and uncertainties of differences. Trust is community members' confidence that the institution will act in a manner that is not detrimental to them. Institutional processes and acceptable cultural behaviors are how individuals often evaluate their trust in the organization. Perceived bias in processes such as hiring, how work is assigned, compensation and promotion can erode community members' belief that the institution is truly committed to diverse and inclusive practices. Institutions must ensure that community members see them as fair, particularly when questions of diversity arise. If community members don't see institutions as fair, members will challenge them to build an inclusive culture and attract and retain engaged, diverse community membership.

Gallup's Strategy

When working with learning institutions on their diversity and inclusion strategies, Gallup focuses on the structural and cultural influences that affect day-to-day behavior and experiences. The Culture of Inclusion assessment can help establish the current state of inclusion in your institution. Gallup's advice and analytics can drive strategies and changes that foster inclusion within your institution's culture.

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