

Inclusive Excellence Report - June 2019

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Introduction/Overview

The Office of Organizational Culture, Inclusion & Equity (OCIE) team at Simmons was formed in September 2018 amidst numerous other changes at the University. This restructuring of our equity and inclusion efforts underscores that change often responds to necessity and positions Simmons for longevity as we prepare for the students of the future. We are committed to making Simmons the most inclusive campus in New England. This will take time, talent and resources as we make progress by thinking and working differently, and building and enhancing relationships -- all in the interest of inclusive excellence.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) continues to be critical to establishing a culture that values the presence and contributions of all community members. With a focus on who we are, how we live and work, and who we are becoming, OCIE is facilitating this important work, creating the enabling conditions for Simmons to achieve the goal stated above over time. In our [midyear update](#) in January we shared the OCIE department's mission, philosophy, team membership, DEI strategy, partnerships, community engagement and future plans.

Since our midyear update, we are now ready to share the progress of our first nine months, partnerships and initiatives building on the foundation of our earlier DEI work. This communication provides an update with regard to the University's commitment to inclusive excellence as an integral part of strategy 2022. The full realization will bring us past 2022 but this timeline serves as benchmark for us to mark/measure our progress.

As we reflect on the landscape of higher ed and college campus events, we remain appreciative of the courageous students in the Class of 2016 who asked the College to take a hard look at our campus culture. We are grateful for their activism and we thank all students, faculty, administration, staff, and alumnae/I who have helped ensure progress on making Simmons a more inclusive community. Many people have approached this work with passion and energy because they recognize the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion at Simmons. As with any sustainable effort, we recognize that meeting all ten demands takes time. While we acknowledge that there is a great deal more work to be done at Simmons, we believe, and hope, everyone can agree that we are on a path to being the Simmons community we all know we can be. Please see [A Reflection on the 2015 Demands](#) for a look at our progress to date.

Language: Toward a Common Understanding

OCIE recognizes the importance of clearly defining the language of DEI. Different definitions can lead to different outcomes, and by sharing a common understanding of “diversity,” “equity,” and “inclusion,” OCIE is establishing the foundation for this work moving forward.

- Diversity is who and what we are; it includes race, color, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, disability, veteran status or class/SES.
- Equity is the condition of fair and just inclusion into a society. Equity will exist when those who have been most marginalized have equal access to opportunities, power, participation and resources and all have avenues to safe, healthy, productive, and fulfilling lives. It requires restructuring deeply entrenched systems of privilege and oppression that have led to the uneven distribution of benefits and burdens over multiple generations. Society will be stronger when the promise in all of us is actualized. *Adopted from State of Equity for Metro Boston Policy Agenda Update*¹
- Inclusion is the active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity — in people, in curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities (intellectual, social cultural, geographical). This engagement with diversity has the potential to increase one’s awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathetic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions. *Adopted from the New England Resource Center for Higher Education*²

Strategy 2022: Community Culture Redesign

Every college and university in this country is grappling with numerous higher education imperatives; not the least of which are diversity, equity and inclusion. This past year, we rededicated time, talent and resources to the following Simmons University Diversity, Equity & Inclusion goals outlined in [Strategy 2022](#).

Foster a diverse, welcoming, and inclusive community.

¹ Keppard, Barry. Weyant, Lizzi & Guerrero, Partridge Jessie. (2018). State of equity for metro Boston: policy agenda update. Retrieved from: https://equityagenda.mapc.org/uploads/9.10%20SOEREPORT_FINAL.pdf

² New England Resource Center for Higher Education. (2016). Self-assessment rubric for the institutionalization of diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education. Retrieved from: https://www.wpi.edu/sites/default/files/Project_Inclusion_NERCHE_Rubric-Self-Assessment-2016.pdf

3.1. Establish leadership and responsibility for fostering diversity, inclusion and equity at Simmons.

Action	Status as of May 2019
Establish and articulate a University diversity and inclusion philosophy, mission, and vision.	Complete
Develop a formal, universally accepted definition for diversity, inclusion, equity, and inclusive excellence at Simmons.	Complete
Develop and finalize elements of the Diversity Strategic Plan as a part of Strategy 2022.	Complete

3.2. Create a campus climate, a welcoming culture, and clear policies to ensure that each member of our community experiences regard for their humanity, diversity, dignity, and contributions—and that there are clear protocols for action when policies are violated.

Action	Status as of May 2019
Clearly define diversity goals for faculty and staff hiring and for student recruitment.	Prioritized and in progress
Develop and implement a bias protocol for the University utilizing a bias response team structure.	Bias Response Protocol in place
Prepare and submit a proposal for Simmons Multicultural Center reflecting private University best practices.	Multicultural Center opened in January 2019; currently staffed by director and program coordinator.
Regularly review our policies	President Helen Drinan and Provost Katie Conboy approved a diploma policy change suggested by a Simmons senior. Beginning with the 2019 commencement, Transgender students can have their chosen first name on their diplomas (to be used in combination with their legal last name).

3.3. Increase the knowledge and skills of faculty, staff, and students to meet the challenges and seek opportunities to build and sustain a diverse and inclusive community.

Action	Status as of May 2019
Decide on a shared baseline of knowledge about diversity and inclusion across the community and create appropriate educational training and experiential opportunities for faculty, staff, and students.	Equity statement endorsed and publicized; training and professional development available for all constituencies. Additional awareness, educational, capacity and skill-building opportunities being developed.

3.4. Review the curriculum and co-curriculum in order to enhance, develop, and implement programs and activities designed to foster inclusive excellence for all constituencies and enhance diversity in various forms.

Action	Status as of May 2019
Implement comprehensive approaches to address diversity and inclusion in the classroom and school experiences of students. Fill curricular gaps.	Eight Teaching for Inclusive Excellence Seminars (I&II) offered during 2018-2019. CET Programs have integrated DE&I components to help faculty create learning experiences based on equitable teaching strategies and inclusive excellence. Plan for extensive curricular review to be outlined for a process report out in fall 2019.
Revise student course evaluations to include feedback about the inclusion of DEI content and the student experience in the classroom environment.	Additional questions under consideration for a revision to the existing evaluation form.

3.5. Design and implement a comprehensive and collective system of responsibility, accountability, and recognition for all diversity and inclusion efforts to sustain a campus culture that promotes our values and mission.

Action	Status as of May 2019
Develop and implement an ongoing communication plan including updates to key constituencies.	Complete and ongoing.
Assess and track the progress of the University's goals for diversity and inclusion; evaluate the impact of initiatives as a part of the University's strategic plan and implementation.	Ongoing. OCIE is meeting with each ULT member and their department/unit heads to establish DE&I goals across the University. This includes establishing metrics for measuring impact and outcomes.

DEI Vision: Core Architecture

As a part of Strategy 2022, a core architecture has been established that identifies the appropriate goals, tactics, implementers, and accountability partners for our work. The following framework identifies how the work is currently outlined in the five-year vision and will serve as our foundation as we operationalize specific tactics and actions.

Who We Are

Demographics/Data

Begun in the fall 2018 semester and as ongoing effort, OCIE and community partners gather, review, and present demographic data of all constituencies to the Student Government Association, Staff Council, Faculty Senate and other appropriate campus constituencies. As we continue to seek more data on all of our demographic categories, we did want to share [data](#) (see pgs. 53-61) from 2017-2018 on race, ethnicity and gender.

T.H.R.I.V.E.

T.H.R.I.V.E., a committee convened by OCIE and HR, meets regularly across departments to establish programs and services that support recruitment, retention, engagement, and the experience of faculty, staff, and administrators of underrepresented groups. This committee and its members engage the community in Simmons's effort to create and recruit from more diverse pools of candidates and to participate in creating a more inclusive environment that helps us develop and retain employees from under-represented groups. The goal of this committee is to enhance best practices in each area of the employee experience. Membership includes Office of Organizational Culture, Inclusion and Equity, Human Resources, and representatives from our faculty, staff, student and alumnae/i populations.

Inclusive Excellence in Hiring

Related to the committee work and scope of T.H.R.I.V.E., a University-wide effort is in place to ensure the adoption and execution of inclusive hiring practices. While we are committed to developing, promoting, and enhancing these practices at all levels for all positions, we have engaged Romney & Associates to work with search committees and search partners to ensure diverse talent pools and the delivery of a consistent candidate experience at the more senior levels of the administration. We are already seeing impact when Human Resources is involved in searches, resulting in more diverse pools and thus an increase in the hiring of diverse candidates.

Professional Development

Faculty

- Over the past three years Romney & Associates, Inc., in partnership with the Simmons Center for Excellence in Teaching, provided professional development for faculty to explore diversity, equity, and inclusion in their

pedagogy and the learning environment utilizing AAC&U's Teaching for Inclusive Excellence framework.

- The Teaching for Inclusive Excellence Seminars are participant-centered and utilize a dialogue-based approach to explore equity and excellence in teaching and learning. Faculty will have the opportunity to reflect on how their identities have affected their experiences and will discuss challenges faced by marginalized, underrepresented, and other students for whom attention to equitable approaches is especially important in teaching and learning.
- Teaching for Inclusive Excellence is part of faculty development and core to our How we Work strategy. Since 2016, 217 faculty have participated in TIES I. Another 133 faculty participated in TIES II. OCIE is in the process of developing TIES III with a focus on promoting respectful discourse and managing intergroup dialogue in the classroom.

Adjunct/Online Faculty

- In partnership with the Provost and Strategic Initiatives, we plan to promote both adjunct and online faculty participation in DEI. We will use Everfi modules as the primary workshop for adjunct and online faculty complemented by real-time discussions led by OCIE conducted in person and online in the upcoming academic year.

Staff

- In fall 2018, HR identified a new online platform, Diversity: Inclusion in the Modern Workplace to assist staff in ongoing personal/professional development in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion. A diverse campus must also be inclusive. By focusing on key concepts that shape our world and inform our shared values and experiences, this course explores the nature of diversity and provides practical strategies for workplace inclusion.
- This interactive training further illustrates the benefits of an engaged and inclusive campus community. OCIE will be offering additional support, opportunities, and trainings to build our capacity as a community committed to social justice and advancing an equitable and inclusive culture. While in-person experiences are ideal, this is a self-paced module to allow participants to engage in deeper conversations aligned with our mission.

How We Live and Work

Respectful Discourse

HELIX

This semester we launched intensive work on respectful discourse. We engaged a group of faculty and staff to explore inter- and intra- group dialogue, experiential approaches, activities and trainings/professional development. The groups meet separately in ally (white) and affinity (faculty and staff of color) subgroups and come together for joint meetings. This preparation will inform a meta-curriculum designed to advance how we mitigate the impact of discrimination, racism, bias while creating a practice of community, belonging and collaboration. Together these efforts contribute to putting Simmons University on the path to inclusive excellence.

Undoing Racism

OCIE and a representative from HR attended the COF coordinated 2.5 day experience presented by the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond. This experience is being considered for its utility more broadly in the Simmons community. A second cohort will be attending Undoing Racism in June. After the June session OCIE will host participants to discuss the possibility of becoming a community of practice for undoing racism at Simmons on how to operationalize the tools and lessons learned.

Racial Healing

On April 19, 2019, a cohort of the Simmons community (faculty, staff, students) participated in a racial healing circle and experiential session facilitated by Dr. Gail Christopher. This experience is being considered for use more broadly in the Simmons community.

Curriculum & Pedagogy

T.I.E.S. I & II

These seminars provide a foundation for faculty to diversify curricula at both the course and program level, as well as integrate equitable teaching practices that support students from marginalized groups and all students. As reported previously, faculty seminars have put emphasis on curriculum enhancement strategies as follows:

Faculty participants in the TIES I seminar:

- Reviewed AAC&U's inclusive excellence framework as well as a framework for designing an inclusive course/curriculum, with the aim of designing an "explicitly centralizing" course as part of the Inclusive Excellence Framework.
- Discussed how diversity, equity, and inclusion are included in their courses and disciplines.
- Considered approaches to operationalize the concept of a "curricular thread" related to inclusion and equity in program learning objectives and curriculum maps.
- Analyzed course climate in relationship to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and discussed ways to make their courses more welcoming and supportive of marginalized students.
- Discussed strategies to diversify content within their individual courses and disciplines, including (1) both the content itself and the diversity of the authors; (2) selecting examples, metaphors, case studies, project topics, etc. that incorporate diversity; and (3) creating assignments that integrate diversity concepts.
- Discussed how privilege, stereotype threat, implicit bias, and microaggressions can impede learning, and how to mitigate their impact in the classroom.
- Reviewed recommendations for next steps in continuing these conversations and curricular changes within their departments.

Faculty participants in the TIES II seminar:

- Reflected on the impact of their identities on their experiences both as students and as faculty, and the impact of these experiences on teaching and learning.
- Learned about types and characteristics of Simmons students for whom attention to equitable approaches is especially important in teaching and learning, including students from under-represented and/or marginalized identities.
- Gained a more complex understanding of equity and power within the context of larger systems and structures of inequality, particularly within the education system.
- Discussed the implications of and how to operationalize equity in teaching.
- Identified current, evidence-based pedagogies, equitable practices, and opportunities for equitable practices for teaching and student support.
- Discussed and practiced principles of democratic dialogue and their application to classroom discussion.
- Applied equitable strategies to case studies derived from actual equitable teaching challenges at Simmons and their own contexts.

Center for Excellence in Teaching Programs

A variety of CET programs in 2018-19 have focused on topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the design of or teaching of individual courses. Integrating DE&I into courses and creating learning experiences based on equitable teaching strategies and an inclusive excellence framework is also integrated throughout our programs.

Colleges/Schools (Program-level curricular work)

Broader, deeper and more comprehensive work will be outlined and progress communicated in the fall. This will include:

- Leadership by the deans of the four colleges to operationalize DE&I work at the program level
- Identify processes and policies to ensure that a focus on DE&I is ongoing and embedded in the curriculum; and operationally, in the regular work at Simmons, rather than an “add on” or one-time initiative.

Who We Are Becoming

Community Culture

OCIE conducted a series of **focus groups** and an online survey of faculty, staff and students between October 2018 and January 2019. The purpose of the focus groups was to gather community feedback about the experience of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) at Simmons. In addition, we wanted to gauge the level of support for the goal of making Simmons the most inclusive campus in New England. The OCIE office also offered community members the opportunity to complete an online survey of open ended/short answer questions, for those who did not attend our focus groups. The online survey questions were the same as the focus group questions. Findings and recommendations were grouped under the following categories:

- Perceptions of Becoming Most Inclusive Campus
- Experience with Respectful Discourse and Emotional Labor
- Lived experience of individual racial/ethnic identity and intersections
- Inclusion in and Outside the Classroom: Curriculum and Pedagogy
- Participant Takeaways/Other Observations

Findings excerpt:

Final Participant Takeaways and Observations

- An appreciation for the opportunity to engage in this conversation, excitement and hopefulness about what lies ahead, and recognition of the people who are thinking about DEI.
- Ongoing need to do more work at Simmons on equity and inclusion as well as clearly articulate its value/importance to Simmons, especially for White students and faculty.
- A small number of White online survey participants felt their concerns were not being addressed by Simmons and also felt excluded due to the increased efforts by the University to become more racially equitable and inclusive.
- The observation that Simmons community members of color, especially students, are the ones educating the rest of the community about these matters and the toll it is taking (i.e., emotional labor).
- The request for a broader definition of diversity that includes other types of diversity (ability, veteran status, immigration, socio-economic status, religion, etc.), and the need for more acknowledgment, training and honest conversations.
- Making clear what is meant by “equity” and “inclusivity” and ensuring there are goals in place for accountability.
- Considering the differences between our online and on-campus communities in relation to this work.
- Continuing to address gender inclusivity, particularly the importance of considering the needs of the transgender community at Simmons.

For more information, see the full [summary report](#). The data from the focus groups and online survey will be used to provide insight to University leadership, and inform the activities of the OCIE Office in support of the University’s mission to become the most inclusive campus in New England.

Just/Inclusive Student Leaders

Student Multicultural Leadership Conference: Building on the success of the last two years, several offices in Student Affairs and OCIE have partnered, again, to create a multiple-session, undergraduate student leader training series. Aspiring student leaders were required to participate in the Student Multicultural Leadership Conference in late January 2019 held over two days. Simmons staff and external experts facilitated these sessions.

The Student Leader Training in May occurred over several days and the objectives included:

- DEI Relevance to the leadership positions
- Why is DEI an essential value of the community at Simmons?

- Community Building; Critical Thinking; and Resilience

New Initiatives/Events/Student Group Partnerships

- Undergraduate Admission
 - OCIE presence and participation in reimagined M.O.S.T. Program hosted by Undergraduate Admission Office
 - Hiring of Kaeden Thompson, Assistant Director, Multicultural Recruitment (July 2018)
- First Generation Committee: An ad hoc committee was convened and meets regularly to address the needs of first generation and low income students; we are currently looking at new initiatives for FY'20 to complement the existing 'First to FINish' program led by Undergraduate Advising.
- Inclusive Excellence in Hiring (Just in Time Training)
 - All senior search committees and search partners have engaged in training and exercises to minimize bias and establish best practices for inclusive hiring at Simmons
 - All other searches are encouraged to partner with HR, whose involvement increases the likelihood of developing a diverse pool of candidates
- Welcome Reception for Accessibility Services co-hosted with Student Affairs
 - Hosted in the Multicultural Center, this was an opportunity for students, staff and faculty to meet our new colleague, Lisa Bauer, Director of Accessibility Services
- BSO Partnership: February 21, 2019, Peyton Head, Black History Month Speaker
- OLA Partnership: March 22, 2019, Bitter Brown Femme Event
- Cultures of the Fenway: April 4, 2019, COF Multicultural Showcase
- Toxic Ivory Tower Speaker Series with Ruth Zambrana
Dr. Zambrana led a series of conversations exploring how various dimensions of identity inequality are expressed in the academy, how these social statuses influence the health and well-being of underrepresented minority (URM)

faculty, and how institutional policies and practices can be used to transform the culture of an institution to increase rates of retention and promotion so URM faculty can thrive

- Spring Social for Employees of Color May 21, 2019
 - We hosted an end-of-year gathering in the Multicultural Center to connect faculty and staff of color and affirm their presence in our community.
 - A presidential search listening session was held immediately before the social.
- *Rachel Cargle*: On April 25, 2019, Rachel Cargle gave the lecture, "Unpacking White Feminism," which explored the history of feminism through the lens of race. Her presentation uncovered layers of unlearned details, revealing the problematic effects that white-centered activism has had on the past and present state of the feminist movement.
- *Sisters of the Academy (SOTA)*: On April 29, 2019, a one-day symposium was held at Simmons University in conjunction with OCIE. Sisters of the Academy is a professional development network of Black women in higher education fostering success in the areas of teaching, scholarly inquiry, and service to the community.
- *Community Iftar*: On May 8, 2019, the Simmons Islamic Society and OCIE hosted a Community Iftar. Fasting is one of the five pillars of the Islamic faith, and during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, Muslims fast every day from sunrise to sunset. The fast-breaking meal eaten after sunset is called Iftar. It was a great community event with over 200 people in attendance.
- *Chica Project*: On May 9, 2019, OCIE hosted the Chica's Project's: Dinner Party with a Twist. This 8th year anniversary event featured three outstanding young women of color and Ayodele Casal, tap dancer extraordinaire. Simmons alumna Erika Rodriguez '14 serves as the new executive director of the Project.

OCIE FY'19 University-wide Goals

Partnerships & Unit Goals

Work closely with colleagues to operationalize, regularly monitor, update and implement unit-level and university-wide DEI Strategy

- Built more visibility on campus for the OCIE office through pop-up meetings, participation on key committees, numerous programs and events as well as strategic outreach; updated and communicated Strategy 2022 goals. Created core architecture for implementation of Strategy 2022 identifying “leads” and “primary and secondary implementers.” Convened meetings with senior leadership and their direct reports to guide and assist in establishing DEI departmental, area, or college goals.

New Office Structure

Establish new role and determine new structure for the Office of Organizational Culture (OC), Inclusion (I) and Equity (E)

- SVP Debra Perez was hired and established the office in September 2018. The OCIE team was expanded to include an EA. Additional positions will be added to focus on programming and evaluation efforts of the office.

Establish Inclusive Hiring Practices

In partnership with HR, establish and implement new inclusive excellence hiring practices

- The Committee for Inclusive Excellence in Hiring, Employee Engagement, and Experience was established to support inclusive practices for faculty and staff hiring at all levels. Adopting the name T.H.R.I.V.E. (Transformative Hiring, Retention, Inclusive Excellence and Engagement), we have done the following: 1) External training on inclusive excellence for committee members participating in a senior search, 2) One-on-one advising for ongoing searches (faculty and staff), 3) Outreach to senior leadership on Committee initiatives, 4) Data-supported success of recent initiatives on diverse hiring practices, and 5) Developed a statement with committee membership and charge to be posted on simmons.edu. [Learn More](#)

In an effort to facilitate fundamental cultural and institutional changes necessary to establish and maintain a fully inclusive campus, and to promote ongoing, meaningful, and engaged diversity we are approaching this work holistically and through the core architecture as outlined by the vision strategy. Annual DEI goals are being developed by departments, areas and units. OCIE has convened the University Strategy Team, the University Leadership Team and their direct reports to assist and facilitate this process. Goals are currently being submitted to an electronic database creating a University-wide set of DEI goals to inform the community of shared and complementary goals encouraging greater partnership and synergy around achieving

goals related to improving our community and culture. This work must be integrated in all that we do, intentionally, as to afford us the most beneficial outcomes for the Simmons community and beyond.

Next Steps

The OCIE team continues to be excited to facilitate this work with all members of the Simmons community. During the summer we will learn from what we did this past year and plan for an even more impactful academic year in 2019-20. There will be a concentrated effort to continue to make strides in the operationalization and implementation of the tactics to accomplish our strategic goals. Additionally, we look forward to establishing the roadmap for our journey to respectful discourse with a programming launch in the fall semester and the identification of student groups interested in working alongside faculty and staff in this endeavor.