



Office of the Executive
Vice President and Provost

Inclusive Excellence Report and Recommendations

Submitted by the Inclusive Excellence Planning Committee

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Provost Inclusive Excellence Planning Committee

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1. Introduction & Executive Summary

1.1 Executive Summary

Over the past several months, the Provost's Inclusive Excellence Planning Committee has engaged the provost organization as a whole in an IE assessment and planning process. Summarized below and discussed more extensively throughout this report are the themes identified through that process along with recommended actions. More details can be found below in sections two, three, and four.

DEI Commitment & Expertise

- There appear to be little to no collaboration or sharing of DEI expertise or best practices across units even when those units report up to the same individual.
- Many units identified DEI skill building and professional development as a need for all employees.
- To build additional skills and facilitate the sharing of expertise, the Provost's office should offer regular DEI and related professional development opportunities to all provost office organization employees. This would include sessions specific to managers, directors, and vice provosts. Such opportunities should be ***organized for the upcoming academic year***. Offerings should be refined over subsequent years based on assessment.
- In addition, the provost organization may benefit from broader organizational development. This would include providing opportunities for employees as individuals and teams to learn from one another, while building community across the organization.

Administrative & Operational Policies & Practices

- There is a perceived lack of organization-wide policies and procedures around a variety of operational and administrative work. Specific areas that were identified as in need of structure and clarity include: recruitment and hiring practices; onboarding/welcoming new employees equitably; staffing planning and decisions across various units and vice provosts; bonus allocation and merit raises; promotion processes and decision-making, including criteria.
- Policies, as well as standard practices and workflows should developed, written down, and shared with all directors and employees. Ideally, this work would start ***this year*** using the findings in this report to plan and prioritize.

Assessment

- There is a lack of basic information on and thus an identified need for the assessment of climate within the provost organization.
- Many units identified implementation of a climate survey as a priority in their IE plan.

- As such, one critical and timely action that should be considered for implementation **as soon as possible** is a climate survey. Such a survey could be developed and implemented in the provost office and offered as an opt in for all units in the broader provost organization.

Accountability

- Ongoing accountability was an expressed concern of the directors and other provost unit staff.
- The provost office should incorporate DEI and IE into annual reporting and assessment processes as an important signal and first step towards accountability. At every level of the organization, employees should be asked about their contributions and work in relation to DEI and IE. **This could be implemented this year.**
- Accountability should be paired with support. Recommended support includes funding for professional development opportunities and offering mini grants for units to engage in DEI projects.
- More importantly, the provost's office should allocate paid staff time (which may include hiring) to organize professional development opportunities, oversee mini-grant process, and to evaluate, support, and oversee ongoing inclusive excellence efforts within the organization.

Communications

- There is an absence of broad and inclusive communications and information sharing that spans the entirety of the provost organization.
- **This year**, the provost's office should implement some form of regular communication with all employees, highlighting relevant updates and announcements, with regular shout-outs from the Provost for units' positive work around Inclusive Excellence as part of that communication.

2. Process and Timeline

- **Initial Planning:** In August of 2020, at the request of the Provost, Maggie J. Pena Harden and Jennie S. Knight developed & proposed an Inclusive Excellence planning process for the Provost's Office, to be led by an Inclusive Excellence Planning Committee composed of individuals representing the diversity of the 500-plus staff and faculty members who make up the Provost's office including the 34 associated reporting units.
- **Committee Recruitment and Selection:** Solicitation of IE committee member volunteers and nominees commenced in September, with selection in early October. The IE committee began their work in late October, focusing on research, analysis, planning and the creation of provost office specific IE resources during November and December.

- **Launch:** In early February of 2021, the IE committee held a series of meetings with provost unit directors, as well as town halls for all employees, to orient the provost organization to IE and begin the unit specific assessment process.
- **Assessment and Planning:** IE committee members provided ongoing support and assistance as each unit undertook preliminary assessments and unit specific planning. By the end of May, all 34 units had completed initial IE assessments and submitted multi-year IE plans with specific commitments.
- **Feedback:** IE committee members reviewed each plan and the committee provided written feedback to each unit. In addition, Jennie and Maggie met with each of the Vice Provosts and Associate Provosts individually to discuss the feedback for their reporting units, relevant connecting themes across their reporting units and with other Vice Provosts' areas, and to gather their input about the Inclusive Excellence planning process and the plan itself.

3. Findings

As a result of the process outlined above, several consistent themes emerged across the organization. These themes are listed below. Recommendations for potential actions related to these themes follow. It should be noted that the qualitative data from which we distilled these themes came primarily from unit plans and was informed by information participants shared during the town halls as well as the more individual discussions held with the vice provosts and directors.

3.1 DEI Commitment & Expertise

There is a strong stated commitment to IE and DEI across the Provost Office organization, much of which predates the current process. There is significant and notable DEI expertise, and efforts underway, within specific units. Some of these efforts are outward, or University, facing, and some are internal to the units.

Although there is significant and notable DEI expertise within specific units, across the provost organization such expertise is inconsistent.

There is little to no collaboration or sharing of expertise or best practices across units, even when those units report up to the same individual. For some areas, this is admittedly due to lack of imagination and effort (i.e., it never occurred to anyone to share). For other areas, climate and resources may be an issue. Thus, although there are individuals within the provost organization with significant and notable DEI expertise, supporting units beyond their own in this area may be untenable at present.

Many leaders and managers lack the expertise necessary to lead, communicate, and hold others accountable for Inclusive Excellence work. More broadly, both managers and individual contributors lack a shared vocabulary and a shared understanding around DEI.

This inhibits their ability to work together effectively. Not surprisingly, many units identified DEI skill building and professional development as a need for all employees.

Notable, despite University-wide resources and provost staff expertise related to best practices for diversity, equity, and inclusion in the recruiting and hiring process, there is a lack of standardized practices and inconsistent uptake of resources within the provost organization.

Expertise: Considering DEI Holistically

As a service-oriented organization, all of our offices and programs serve constituents either within UVA, external to UVA, or both. Some units struggled to assess and to think about diversity, equity, and inclusion outside of their staff relations. Others, such as all of the Arts organizations, were exceptionally thoughtful about how to improve engagement with their programs along the lines of equity, inclusion, and diversity while also being attentive to internal DEI matters.

Expertise: DEI Leadership Communications

Leaders within the organization (both Directors and Vice Provosts) appeared to lack an understanding of the impact of their communications around inclusive excellence. In particular, leaders failed to understand the damaging, differential effects on underrepresented employees of communicating through words and actions that there is not enough time to work on inclusive excellence/DEI, thereby suggesting that it is a less important add-on that could be addressed at a more convenient time.

3.2 Administrative & Operational Policies & Practices

There is a perceived lack of organization-wide policies and procedures around a variety of operational and administrative aspects of our work. We found a wide range of practices and quite a bit of confusion around specific aspects of how the organization functions. It is important that all of these practices not only are fair but appear fair. Areas that need structure and clarity include:

- **Recruitment and hiring practices**, particularly best practices for diversity, equity, and inclusion
- **Onboarding/welcoming new employees equitably**, providing the same information about benefits, policies, practices, to all new employees and communicating our commitment to inclusive excellence.
- **Staffing planning and decisions** across various units and vice provosts
- **Bonus allocation and merit raises**
- **Promotion processes and decision-making**, including criteria.

3.3 Assessment

Almost every unit asked for or otherwise indicated a need for additional assistance with DEI assessment. The requested or needed assistance ranged from being conceptual to very concrete. For example, some unit directors needed additional help literally thinking

through how to assess various aspects of their work. Other units pointed to a lack of meaningful data and indicated a need for such things as a climate survey and procurement data with the intent of creating benchmarks for accountability in relation to IE.

Notably, there is a lack of information on and thus an identified need for the assessment of climate within the organization as a whole. Several units undertook their own internal climate assessments, revealing varied results. Some units included their intent to conduct a climate survey within their plans. Other units revealed tensions within their offices that need to be addressed.

3.4 Accountability

We heard repeated concerns that this process would not lead to actual change unless leaders at all levels are held accountable for prioritizing inclusive excellence throughout their work and for following through on the goals in their plans.

3.5 Communications

There were several recurrent issues related to communications that came up throughout this process. Chief amongst these is the absence of broad and inclusive communications and information sharing that spans the entirety of the provost organization. This is an area that clearly elicits frustration and other negative feelings. As one person wrote in the anonymous feedback form, “information is power.” Others indicated that the absence of basic information about the organization (such as an open position is open) except through non-provost sources or by chance was a source of frustration and alienation. There is a sense among directors and staff that they are missing out on important information by being excluded from either Provost Office/Booker House only meetings or from the Friday newsletter that only goes to unit directors.

At the most basic level, there is some expectation amongst staff within our units that high level information will be shared through a provost office internal communications mechanism (such as a newsletter). It should be noted that expanding something like the Friday email, without giving adequate thought as to content, is likely insufficient to allay tensions in this area.

4. Recommendations

The following specific recommendations are based on the themes above and are not exhaustive. These recommendations emerged out of our conversations as the IE committee, the Co-chairs’ conversations with the Vice Provosts and Associate Provosts, and out of the unit level assessment plans. Although we have aligned these recommendations to the findings above, it is also useful to think about these recommendations as falling into three necessary and interrelated (or overlapping) areas:

1. Clarity of commitment

Clarity of commitment is about both communications and consistent action. It is important for leaders to articulate a shared commitment to DEI; and to then follow that up with actions that mitigate the impact of structural and historical forms of oppression.

2. Support

As we undertake this work, units, teams, and individuals at every level of the provost organization will need various types of support. This may mean communication about the availability of University resources (from those offered by FEAP to those offered by EOCR), professional development opportunities (around DEI and IE, as well more general), and concrete financial resources.

3. Accountability

In order to make change and move the provost organization towards a more inclusive and equitable model, support must be paired with accountability. Although this accountability may take various forms, one key component will necessarily be some level of transparency. As such, accountability may mean including DEI goals in annual evaluations, one-on-one difficult conversations, and/or posting shared goals and progress publicly.

4.1 DEI Commitment, Awareness & Expertise

We recommend actively cultivating DEI and IE commitment and expertise at every level of the provost organization. There are a variety of ways to accomplish this.

All staff opportunities

Offer regular professional development opportunities to all provost office organization employees around diversity, equity, and inclusion—particularly around topics that could improve our workplace climate and ability to engage in different aspects of our mission more equitably.

The development of awareness and expertise need not be workshop based. This could also occur through communications and/or facilitated practices such as the 21 Day DEI Habit Building Challenge, which asks participants to spend 21 days selecting ONE action to further their knowledge of diversity, equity, inclusion and justice work.

Leadership Development

Offer leadership development opportunities for managers, directors, and Vice Provosts around diversity, equity, and inclusion. This should include opportunities to communicate and make sure that everyone is operating from shared understandings of and vocabularies around diversity, equity, inclusion, inclusive excellence, and systemic, organizational change. Leadership development around communications and prioritization is needed as well.

Specific programs might include:

Leadership and Race at UVA. This would be a version of the Teaching Race at UVA Place-based Seminar which could be offered to leaders within our organization (and possibly opened up to other leaders across UVA such as LAM alumni). The place-based content would be largely the same, but the emphasis of contemporary actions would be around leadership for racial equity rather than around teaching.

Empathy Workshop. Modeled after a workshop created by educators at the Fralin, this workshop would engage participants in discussion to challenge bias, and share strategies for practicing empathy.

Mitigating Bias & Creating More Equitable and Inclusive Organizations. Provide training and support in relation creating processes that mitigate bias and are more equitable and inclusive. The following could be offered together, or as stand-alone workshops.

Re-Imagining Diversity in Our Institutions. Offered as a part of the current Leadership in Academic Matters program, this workshop conducted by Prof. Sophie Trawalter uses research to explore some of our assumptions around Diversity, what it is, why we want it, how we get it and how we maintain it.

Performance Evaluations. This session would provide training and support for managers around bias mitigation and best practices for equitable performance evaluations.

Hiring manager/search committee training. This session would provide training and support for hiring managers/search committees around bias mitigation and best practices for inclusive, equitable recruitment and hiring.

Assessment & Evaluation Basics. Provide a workshop focused on basic principles in relation to assessment and evaluation. The degree to which some units struggled with the assessment part of the IE process was related to both a lack of expertise or experience with assessment, as well as a lack of expertise around DEI and IE. In addition to better serving our DEI and IE goals, increased facility with assessment and evaluation would also support other areas of strategic importance.

In addition to the programs above, which would mostly be focused on individual development, the provost organization may benefit from broader organizational development. This would include providing opportunities for employees as individuals and teams to learn from one another. There are strengths and areas of expertise and best practice that could be shared and would serve to build community and communications across the organization.

4.2 Administrative & Operational Policies & Practices

We recommend that policies, practices, workflow plans, and criteria be developed, written, and shared with all directors and employees around staffing planning (like the faculty hiring plan process required of schools), onboarding/welcoming of all new employees, the allocation of bonuses, avenues toward promotion and decision-making around promotions and accompanying pay raises, and merit pay raises. This should be done through consultation with HR and EO/CR/Division for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to make sure that the adopted policies, practices, and plans are best practices for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Many of these processes and decisions are currently vague, uneven, and shrouded in mystery throughout the organization, leading to speculation and frustration, which negatively impact climate.

In addition, the provost organization should consider establishing and publishing DEI related standards that build on and/or point to already established University guidance. For example, some of our units currently use land and labor acknowledgement practices. As a broader organization, the provost office should provide further guidance and/or endorse a specific land and labor acknowledgement practice as well.

Greater clarity and standards in other areas, such as accessibility (across multiple dimensions) are also needed. In the area of inclusion, one staff member suggested the creation of a communications and style guide that would provide standards while also dismantling some of the nomenclature that “can become another kind of secret code that separates insiders and outsiders.”

4.3 Assessment

Ongoing longitudinal assessment in relation to DEI and IE should be established across the provost organization. In conducting their assessments, units and the IE committee itself were limited by the data that was available. We recommend providing some resources to focus on provisioning a more robust and holistic data set around DEI indicators. This should include better information from UVA HR regarding the search and recruitment process, as well as data from procurement, and the administration of a climate survey (discussed below). Notes on the data gathered during this process, as well as what was not available were kept by the IE committee and may be a helpful starting place for future efforts.

Climate Survey. One critical and timely component of any future assessments is the implementation of a climate survey. We recommend implementing an organization-wide climate survey, conducted by an office outside of our organization such as EO/CR, so that we can gauge progress over time and remain aware of continuing and emerging issues. In addition to implementing a survey this year, we recommend committing to future climate surveys every two to three years.

4.4 Accountability (& Support)

Although we recognize that annual reporting and performance evaluations are insufficient in and of themselves, we believe that incorporating reporting on DEI and IE into these processes to be an important signal and first step. At every level of the organization, employees should be asked about their contributions and work in relation to DEI and IE. Asking employees to think about their own priorities and work in this way, using a DEI or IE lens, will be educational while also creating some level of ongoing accountability. In this model, Vice Provosts would ask directors to report out on progress around their unit's IE goals (while providing support and guidance throughout the year) in their annual reviews. Concomitantly, the Provost would ask Vice Provosts to report out on their own work as well as the DEI work of their reporting units.

Support. In order to hold individuals and units accountable, some level of support is needed. This support should come in at least two ways. The most obvious way is the provision of some level of resources to support assessment and implementation of IE goals across all of the units. This would enable all units and offices, regardless of size and budget, to feel like they are supported to do their best work. Financial support should include such things as funding professional development opportunities and creating a mini-grant program for units to engage in DEI projects.

Beyond the provision of temporary or operational resources, the implementation of any additional work would require the allocation of adequate paid staff time. It takes committed time to do things like organize professional development opportunities, oversee mini-grant processes, create resources and otherwise evaluate, support, and oversee ongoing inclusive excellence efforts. As such we strongly recommend that this work be prioritized through adequate paid staffing support so that it does not become an add-on that is a burden for those who are most committed. As the recruitment process for this committee—as well as the makeup of the University-wide Diversity Council--demonstrate, diversity, equity, and inclusion work is primarily taken on by women at UVA, unless it is a paid leadership position with authority. Those positions (at the level of Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) are more equitably divided across genders. We don't recommend replicating this gender power imbalance in creating a committee or a staff position without much authority.

Additional recommendations in this area include a designated DEI leadership position as well as an ongoing organization-wide Inclusive Excellence Committee (with paid time allocated).

4.5 Communications

We recommend developing a provost organization communications strategy that prioritizes being as inclusive as possible, whenever possible. At a minimum, an early "win" in this area should include the creation of a provost organization newsletter or some other regular communication mechanism to all employees, highlighting relevant updates and announcements. In implementing such a newsletter, we strongly recommend some level of creativity and thoughtful mechanism(s) for engagement. In addition to sharing information

about such administrative and operational matters as open searches, this could also be a venue for sharing priorities and goals, and recognizing unit implementation of best practices or other “wins” around Inclusive Excellence. This in turn would reinforce DEI as a permanent priority.