

00:00:01:17 - 00:00:39:18

Michelle Sylvester

On behalf of the Campus Climate Research Committee, I would like to welcome you to our presentation today. I invite you to pause for our UWL land recognition statement. We would like to recognize that the University of Wisconsin La Crosse occupies the land of the Ho-Chunk people. Please take a moment to celebrate and honor this ancestral Ho-Chunk land and the sacred lands of all Indigenous peoples.

00:00:42:03 - 00:01:04:09

Michelle Sylvester

We began by exploring the question what is campus climate? Essentially, it is a measure of experiences on campus, perceptions of campus, and for the purposes of this study, perceptions of the institutional commitment to diversity or university support for diversity. I'll hand over to Grace.

00:01:06:00 - 00:01:40:21

Grace Engen

How did we get here? In 2021, UW System asked all of the UW campuses to send our students the Diverse Learning Environments Survey or DLE, which is a campus climate survey from the Higher Education Research Institute, also known as HERI at the University of California, Los Angeles. This survey measured many of the facets related to campus climate, including the university's support for diversity, or what they call in the survey institutional commitment to diversity.

00:01:41:16 - 00:02:14:19

Grace Engen

The results showed large gaps amongst our BIPOC, LGBTQ plus gender nonconforming nonbinary students with regards to institutional commitment to diversity. But the survey instrument itself had only four questions within this factor and gave no operational definition of institutional commitment to diversity. In order to grow in this facet, the university had to learn two things in order to improve.

00:02:15:18 - 00:02:54:01

Grace Engen

1. how do UWL BIPOC LGBTQ plus gender nonconforming nonbinary students define institutional commitment to diversity, and 2. what are their experiences? So methods. After the quantitative data from the survey was analyzed, a group of us set out to conduct focus groups with the students. Focus

groups create opportunities for participants to share experiences and perspectives in their own words about a particular topic.

00:02:54:18 - 00:03:37:08

Grace Engen

Focus groups elicit participants to interpret their own experiences through shared dialog, while empowering their voices. In these focus groups, we sought out the knowledge to define institutional commitment to diversity at UWL and to learn the students perspectives of UWL's institutional commitment to diversity. We recruited students via OMSS and the Pride Center. Each of the 27 participants were paid \$25, and once the focus groups were completed, we began the qualitative analysis to find common themes in the students words.

00:03:37:23 - 00:04:15:10

Grace Engen

We found five major themes surrounding relationships, campus communication, inclusive teaching, environment (places and spaces), and representation. We also learned that institutional commitment to diversity is seen as fractured and often invisible at UWL. The following slides come from students. Voices were themes emerged as a team. We summarized the words of the students, and we also found quotes for this presentation.

00:04:16:00 - 00:04:45:16

Grace Engen

The quotes capture the concepts the students were conveying. These are what students are saying and not our interpretations. We are here to elevate student voices and their feedback may make us feel uncomfortable. This is not a reflection on any one person, but rather student feedback on a broader scale. And now Mita will begin talking about these things.

00:04:46:18 - 00:05:24:24

Nabamita Dutta

Thank you, Grace. So as Grace said, I'm going to start talking about the first of the five things, which is relationships. And on the left you can see the summary based on the focus groups, the analysis that was done by the team. Of summarizing and expressing and clarifying what the students wanted to how they felt and how they felt about all of these issues on campus.

00:05:25:02 - 00:05:59:16

Nabamita Dutta

And on the right within the code, that's actually a quote from students in this context of what exactly they said. So, for example, in the context of relationships, they talked about fostering connection between and amongst underrepresented groups. They, of course, want to be seen valued hard without judgment. They are longing for reciprocity as stakeholders. So they want to listen and they also want to elevate their voices.

00:06:00:07 - 00:06:34:17

Nabamita Dutta

They also feel that more action definitely is needed across campus related to diversity and inclusion. And they definitely want to see greater participation, greater attendance in student led diversity events. So reading one of the quotes by a student in this context, a relationship, there is a difference between being tolerant and accepting. And right now I feel like we are operating at a tolerant level.

00:06:35:03 - 00:07:15:19

Nabamita Dutta

You can handle being in a room with someone different than you, but are you accepting their differences? That's in the ideal world. We would all be on a level of acceptance and allyship. But right now we are just tolerating. The next theme is on campus connection and there they are really craving empathy. Want to connect to the human side of the enterprise to see more of that are being nurtured and fostered.

00:07:15:19 - 00:07:51:10

Nabamita Dutta

Lack of awareness about diversity initiatives across campus. That was also one of the things definitely they talked about. They want more coordination in terms of diversity initiatives, but also in terms of that being communicated across campus so it can be D&I events and other related things. Be responsive to bias incidents that emphasize community values while also upholding accountability.

00:07:52:03 - 00:08:20:19

Nabamita Dutta

So campus incidents in the classroom that should be dealt with, that should be talked about, that should be reported, and that all of this should be done in a more transparent and accountable manner. In this

context, something they said, I think I personally just feel like maybe we don't get informed enough about what necessarily that commitment is and the actions that are being taken.

00:08:21:03 - 00:08:42:21

Nabamita Dutta

Or maybe it's just information I happen to be missing. I just don't feel necessarily included in all the process at all. So that's exactly what we are talking about. For the next theme, I will pass it on to Bryan and Bryan will continue.

00:08:42:21 - 00:09:21:21

Bryan Kopp

Yeah. In the next theme relates to student experiences in the classroom. So students called out with praise. Some instructors really exhibiting leadership in this area, but there were inconsistent practices across campuses in terms of the use of pronouns, the inclusion of experiences, diverse experiences and diverse identities. There was a wish. Multiple students expressed a wish for D&I topics to be integrated into all subjects, not just the ones where it's most like directly aligned.

00:09:22:02 - 00:09:58:23

Bryan Kopp

Explicitly aligned, and also there was acknowledgment that there are efforts underway to educate all students and employees about diversity, but that these need to be expanded to extend their reach. Sample student voice here is integrating that into course material too, and I understand that that's not going to be relevant to every subject. There's a ton of subjects that you could use examples of people who don't fit inside that dominant projection to use as educational examples.

00:10:00:07 - 00:10:39:00

Bryan Kopp

The next theme relates to environment, which we can break down as places and spaces. A number of students commented on the beauty of lacrosse, the area, but the challenges of navigating campus within a diverse identity came up multiple times. Diversity is emphasized is occurring within D&I offices, as all OMSS and the Pride Center were mentioned multiple times as highly utilized spaces on campus.

00:10:39:09 - 00:11:13:02

Nabamita Dutta

But there was a limitation on how much space was available. These spaces are often full or packed and other campus offices, co-curricular academic units were not mentioned as much in these focus group conversations. Students were outside concerns about facilities on campus, specifically gender inclusive housing and restrooms, and also really the way we think about identity. Focusing more on intersectionality, white being white passing.

00:11:13:02 - 00:11:44:00

Bryan Kopp

Where do I belong? Not enough trans non-binary and fluid representation and inclusion and also size inclusive desks not being present in classrooms. Sample Student Voice Here : I am in OMSS 24/7, there are days where either no one can fit in there and then you walk in, just walk out because all the seats are taken because everyone feels welcome and that's amazing.

00:11:44:07 - 00:12:10:24

Bryan Kopp

Then it's like, Oh, I just wish there was a little more room. Now we migrate to the cove and then there's only a few couches in there, by the way. Okay, that's our little corner. So this sense of small, really important spaces, but not, not big enough. And the final main theme here we like to highlight is representation.

00:12:12:01 - 00:12:50:00

Bryan Kopp

Navigating a predominantly white institution is challenging. There's a number of ways that is challenging, ranging from microaggressions and bias and belittling jokes, as well as lack of consistent inclusivity in various spaces and concerns about trust. Many students participating in these focus groups wanted to increase the diverse students and employees on campus and through admissions and hiring. And also they expressed an appreciation for movement in the right direction.

00:12:50:00 - 00:13:17:11

Bryan Kopp

But asking for sincerity as we as we move forward. They called out to the land Acknowledgment and the Truman Lowe Center for the Arts as being examples of steps in the right direction. Sample Student Voice Here is, I feel like in my classes I'm always the one offering the opinion of, well, coming from someone from a background of being queer or being a person of color.

00:13:17:18 - 00:13:38:18

Bryan Kopp

Growing up in the Milwaukee area, where you always see this, it's always me bringing the diverse side. So there's this this burden that it would be nice for more people to be involved in these efforts of representation.

00:13:42:06 - 00:13:43:23

Bryan Kopp

Turn it over to Aaron.

00:13:45:13 - 00:14:18:08

Aaron Wainman

All right. So then where does where do all of these five themes take us? So what we did as a committee was talk about how those five themes could be operationalized into an operational definition. So the definition we've come up with here is a university's ongoing efforts to authentically steward transparent practices, policies, procedures and places that embrace intersectional identities through quality connections, relationships in community.

00:14:19:20 - 00:14:49:22

Aaron Wainman

We arrived at this using a grounded theory process and building out each of the different themes that we were able to take from the transcripts of the focus groups and thinking about how those different themes would fit into a definition that we could use to create the OR to help us reach the goal of cultivating campus belonging. To encapsulate our operational definition of institutional commitment to diversity.

00:14:50:04 - 00:15:13:23

Aaron Wainman

We wanted to pull out two quotes that we really felt really encapsulated everything that we talked about. The first quote is diversity kind of just means as a minority, you don't really feel alone in a space. You don't want to feel like you're the only person of color and you want to kind of feel safe. You kind of want to feel like you have people around you that you can relate to and trust.

00:15:14:20 - 00:15:33:11

Aaron Wainman

And the other quote I don't want to just be more people that look like me on campus, but I want it to feel like everyone's a part of the community. And it's not just like, oh, the numbers are up of people of color, but that's the community is up as well.

00:15:37:03 - 00:16:07:00

Becki Elkins

Before we move into specific action items, we want to share a thought experiment about climate and culture change. Many researchers on campus climate view colleges and universities as fragile ecosystems, where actions of individuals, teams or collective units influence the overall campus environment. The inverse is true as well the larger campus and thereby decisions can have lasting impacts down to the individual level.

00:16:07:14 - 00:16:42:06

Becki Elkins

In some ways, we can consider the campus as a relational chain. What's most important here, as we review action items, is to consider what is possible at your individual level, how you can engage in conversations at your department, or potentially use your roles and or positionality to move the campus in a direction towards equity and inclusion. While there is a division of equity and inclusion on campus, the work cannot be done alone or in isolation, which is apparent in the research in this project.

00:16:43:04 - 00:17:01:14

Becki Elkins

Rather, student participants want to see action and behaviors that demonstrate institutional commitment to diversity, as well as equity and inclusion in all aspects of campus life, including in your work and department at the micro-level.

00:17:03:15 - 00:17:38:05

Becki Elkins

So that leaves us with the question of what can you do? And we have some recommendation that fall out along the lines of the themes. So in keeping with the relationships theme, some ideas that emerge for things you can do within the context of campus leadership, asking folks to really leverage student

diversity organization coalition to share campus goals, to report progress, and to provide feedback on initiatives.

00:17:38:05 - 00:18:08:10

Becki Elkins

And so really engaging with with that coalition. Training UWL all employees on cultural competency. Dismantling a culture of fear by really leaning into our vulnerability. Perhaps through a common reading. Thinking about boundaries and how we can be clear about what is or is not acceptable. And in addition to that, when those boundaries are violated, holding one another accountable for that.

00:18:09:15 - 00:18:45:00

Becki Elkins

Attending diversity events. Students want to see you your support at these events and also want you to learn from them. With relation to the theme of campus connections, some of the recommendations include a centralized and coordinated communication channel. In other words, a one stop shop for communications. Promoting D&I events. We might, for instance, embed these into our curriculum, into extra credit opportunities, etc..

00:18:45:21 - 00:19:28:24

Becki Elkins

Developing a crisis response team to respond to large campus incidents. Having units craft and share newsletters to students with students, adding events to university calendar and then promoting those events on digital signage throughout campus. Really more advertising of diversity organization, coalition and diverse student orgs. And then leveraging the Equity Liaison Program to disseminate information across campus. All of those are strategies for addressing the theme related to campus communications.

00:19:28:24 - 00:19:34:16

Becki Elkins

And I will turn it over to Will to address the remainder.

00:19:37:01 - 00:20:17:12

Will Van Roosenbeek



Thank you, Becky. So under the theme inclusive teaching, here are some of the recommendations that we had. We'd like to for folks to include in your syllabi, your pronouns. And maybe talking a little bit about how the process of pronouns will be utilized in your class. We want people to learn to pronounce the names of students in their class, fellow faculty and staff, and encourage students to, you know, add that pronunciation of names onto canvas if they would like to.

00:20:18:21 - 00:20:48:17

Will Van Roosenbeek

We are very fortunate to have some wonderful offices and programs on our campus. So attending CATL, inclusive teaching events, participating in the ADL bias workshops. We also want to focus on training equity liaisons to facilitate some of the ADL implicit bias workshop information. So kind of the train the trainer program to get that out there to everybody. We hope that people invite the Center for a Transformative Justice into your classes.

00:20:49:14 - 00:21:23:01

Will Van Roosenbeek

And lastly, to incorporate diverse paradigms and researchers into curriculum, as was kind of stated earlier, under the theme of environment. Our recommendations are developments of a campus wide tracking policy. Expand the Office of Multicultural Services and Pride Center Spaces, educate our students on intersectionality, invite biracial and multiracial speakers to campus. Some things that we need in the classroom our size inclusive desk.

00:21:23:14 - 00:21:59:21

Will Van Roosenbeek

So get rid of those seat and desk combinations that are attached. Also to the need for more left handed desk in the classroom and mobility in the classroom so that people with disabilities can get through the classroom easily. And it also has was noted that we need a few more left handed desks. But if we got rid of those deaths that are attached, we wouldn't necessarily need those. And then increase participation in gender inclusive housing through promotion and increase the number of gender inclusive restrooms throughout campus.

00:22:03:24 - 00:22:36:09

Will Van Roosenbeek

And our last thing is representation. And here are some of our recommendations to address bias immediately. So really encouraging folks to speak up. Expanding the financial aid and scholarships for

our BIPOC and LGBTQ students. Noting that a lot of these students are working two or three jobs. Department strategies and implementation would be very important to talk about and then increase student and faculty of color.

00:22:36:18 - 00:22:49:01

Will Van Roosenbeek

So reevaluating maybe some of what we do in the hiring process and reassessing some of our recruitment in admissions. And now I will turn it over to Tara, who will discuss where we go from here.

00:22:50:01 - 00:23:27:07

Tara Nelson

So these are action items that are part of our campus ecosystem, that there are pieces that drive our strategic plan already as well as can drive where we go into the future. Where we are right now with our strategic intentions as a campus, is that we've paralleled what the intentions are to some of the themes in hopes of helping making a pathway into why this research is relevant and how it can help push our university forward in our mission.

00:23:27:23 - 00:24:24:18

Tara Nelson

So really thinking about the way in which relationships are translated into investing in our people here at UWL. The ways in which the campus communication can help us achieve excellence through equity and diversity. And we've paralleled that inclusive teaching can help advance our transformational education here at UWL. And again, the academic environment also plays a role in how we can achieve academic excellence through equity and diversity, and then thinking about how a diverse representation and reevaluating and reassessing some of our policies and practices can help bring in and investing in our people, but also how that is a marker to investment of identities for the individuals who are already here.

00:24:25:06 - 00:24:56:01

Tara Nelson

So what is next? We hope that you take what you've learned from today's presentation back to your unit. And again, think about that call to that thought experiment that Dr. Elkins posed in this presentation. What are pieces that you think that you can do in your own lens or role, as well as what could be possible within the unit, knowing that those can directly influence our campus culture and climate.

00:24:57:05 - 00:25:27:00

Tara Nelson

The other thing to note for where we go is we've also noticed that there is a need for addressing and studying the climate for our international students here at UWL. The 2021 Diverse Learning Environments Survey, a lot of our students, international students, were back home in their home countries. And so we were not able to capture their experiences.

00:25:27:18 - 00:26:01:17

Tara Nelson

And so we know that that is a limitation in that study and a limitation in our current study and feel that it's necessary to start understanding what those experiences are here at UWL. So that is the the what's next for the committee. All of our work is grounded in research. We can share in resources with you if you would like, you can contact me for those resources and this is the information.

00:26:02:16 - 00:26:15:05

Tara Nelson

If you would like to connect with any of the members of the research team. But at this point in time, I would like to open the floor for any questions regarding this study. Thank you.