



COLLEGE OF BUILT ENVIRONMENTS  
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

# College of Built Environments EDI Initiative

## Interim Summary of EDI Goals and Challenges

Prepared by julius erolin, Erolin Solutions  
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## Overview

The College of Built Environments launched a college-wide initiative on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI). EDI has been identified as one of the key priorities for the college, the University and professional communities.

The EDI initiative is a partnership with the University's Office of Minority and Diversity and Undergraduate Academic Affairs. The University hopes to learn from the CBE approach and create a model for achieving University-wide goals on equity and diversity.

The initiative is focused on measuring and building intercultural competency across the College. Intercultural competence is the ability to accurately understand and effectively adapt to differences. It reflects the degree to which differences in values, expectations, beliefs and behaviors are effectively bridged in order to achieve learning, research and workplace objectives. This approach to EDI has been shown to be one of the most effective ways to achieve EDI goals and has been adopted globally across sectors and higher education institutions.

A summary of the initiative and its components are summarized in the appendix to this report. The initial phase involves identifying individual, group (e.g. department) and college goals and challenges related to EDI. Focus groups were conducted on September 27th and 30th. Approximately 65 faculty and staff attended one of the six 45-minute focus groups. Additional perspectives will be gathered through a brief survey and a separate PAC focus group in October. This report provides an interim summary and key points from the focus groups.

## EDI Goals

Focus group participants were asked to identify individual, group (e.g. department) and college-wide goals related to equity, diversity and inclusion. The following goals were identified:

### 1. Faculty and staff diversity

- More diverse faculty and staff, particularly people of color.
- Systems and processes that support recruitment and retention (e.g. promotion criteria that support EDI).

### 2. Student diversity

- Attracting, recruiting and retaining a diverse pool of students, e.g. students of color and "non-traditional" students.
- Awareness of our biases when evaluating student applications.
- Increasing access to funding, support and resources for students from outreach to graduation.
- Systems and processes that are equitable and inclusive.
- Students from diverse backgrounds attracted to CBE degree programs as both a place where they feel they gain valuable skills in professions and feel heard and supported in their experiences.

### 3. Diverse and inclusive curriculum and programs

- Individual and collective - infuse EDI in all curriculum vs separate topics.
- Curriculum across departments with a wide range of perspectives, broader works and canon.
- Collaborative and engaged research with a clear understanding of EDI and collaborative and equitable skills.
- Exposing students to diverse voices and perspectives.

### 4. Influence the professional communities towards equity, diversity and inclusive

- Preparing students to be change agents for effective and inclusive practices.
- Reshaping the profession to be more diverse, equitable and inclusive.
- Increasing "cultural competence" in the professions.

- Increasing the capacity of the design community to serve diverse communities.

## **5. Inclusive learning, research and workplace**

- A place for students to learn and thrive.
- Creating/fostering curriculum and classroom experience that are engaging, safe and equitable.
- Providing appropriate support to students.
- Integrating EDI into our daily work.
- Improving student, faculty and staff wellbeing and resilience.
- CBE to be perceived by communities, prospective students, etc as equitable and inclusive and positive force for these values.

## **6. Preparing students for the professions**

- Preparing students to be change agents for inclusion
- Reshaping the profession to more diverse, less biased and more inclusive
- Increasing student consciousness.

## **7. Increasing individual and group awareness, understanding and competence**

- Preparing students to be change agents for inclusion.
- Long term and transparent engagement of EDI.
- "Scaffolding" of learning on EDI.
- Learn other models of EDI.
- Skills for responding to issues such as "pushback" from students and other groups against EDI.
- Understanding the limits of what we can do.
- Optimize teaching through differences.
- Identify personal incompetence.
- Being an adaptive educator/colleague, approachable, able to relate and educate to the broad range of students/people.
- For EDI to become the culture and value of individuals, departments and the college vis-a-vis requirement.

## 8. **Transparency, accountability and long term engagement of EDI**

- Individual and group accountability - has not been there in the past.
- Reshaping the profession to more diverse, less biased and more inclusive
- Long term and transparent engagement of EDI.
- Resources to build and follow-up.
- Moving the "collective needle" and not just individuals.
- Include part time faculty in the conversation and process.
- Culture of openness and learning around EDI.

## EDI Challenges and Barriers

Focus group participants were asked to identify individual, group (e.g. department) and college-wide challenges and barriers to achieving EDI-related goals.

### 1. **Slow pace of change**

- Low and slow turnover of faculty positions.
- Students more vocal about the need for more diverse and inclusive curriculum, but changes do not keep up.
- Students more interested of EDI than faculty.
- Much more rapid change in student population that that of faculty and staff.
- Lack of motivation and/or resistance to change.
- Engaging the whole college in EDI; equitable implementation across the college.
- Encouraging conversation and open and safe dialogue for all voices regardless of status/experience.

### 2. **Policies, systems, requirements, accreditation and standards that limit accessibility and flexibility**

- University systems.
- Requirements/standards of disciplines and professions.

- Multiple "language" barriers such as technology barriers.
- Students have a hard time navigating systems to suggest or initiate change - e.g. where to start.
- Interdisciplinary barriers.
- Faculty disincentive to "do EDI".
- Dominant/status quo systems prevents understanding of effective outreach and recruitment of students of color.
- Perceived or actual conflict between course content needed for accreditation and breadth of what might be taught.

### 3. **Limited pool of faculty, staff and students**

- What disciplines students are attracted to.
- High tuition, high cost of Seattle living, length program.

### 4. **Limited time and resources**

- Time, priority and leadership.
- Time and resources needed to recruit in communities.
- Time and resources for faculty to make curriculum changes.
- Retention issues for international students due to higher stress and mental health issues.
- Lack of coordination with community partnerships.

### 5. **Change fatigue**

- Lots of big changes at the same time.
- Challenge of changing things given bureaucracies.
- Takes a lot of emotional energy.