Center for Community Engagement | Presentations

Center for Community Engagement

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Decoding DEI: Liberatory Practices Grounded in Community

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Decoding DEI:
Liberatory Practices Grounded in Community

The academy is not paradise.
But learning is a place where paradise can be created.
The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a
location of possibility. In that field of possibility, we
have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of
ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and
heart that allows us to face reality even as we
collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries,
to transgress.
This is education as the practice of freedom."

––– bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*

CODED DEI PRACTICES

- Vague institutional policy
- Legal compliance
- Mixed institutional signaling
- Moral policing
- DEI as one "office" or entity
- Celebrate the arrival of DEI
- "Good intentions" & "inclusion" are enough
- Virtue gesturing
- Tokenized/performative/essentialized representations
- DEI as work on top of existing work

DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY *of* CALIFORNIA

- Service-Learning Program with **18** years of community-engaged experience and long-term partnerships focused on equity.
- **15-20** SL-designated courses each semester, mostly in Core Curriculum (GE).
- **500+** students in the community working with **25+** community partner non-profit orgs, schools, government agencies each AY.
- Social Justice major Community Action & Social Change minor, Latino Studies minor
- **Critical & Asset-Based Approach to community engagement**

We are NOT all the same—why community member perspectives should be prioritized

Grounding Concepts & Strategies

- Critical Race Theory
- Collectivist Approach
- Critical Consciousness
- Institutional, Systemic, and Structural Lens
- Community Cultural Wealth
- Cultural Humility Principles
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Counterstories

"Starting the discussion and work with the premise that structural racism and histories of oppression are present and central rather than an ending place grounds the work on a commitment to truth-telling."

Our partnerships with community and students teach us accountability and show us that DEIJB must move beyond mere good intentions to prioritize community vision, assets, and advocacy for structural change.

COMPLEX LEARNING

Initiative Building & Capacity Building

Program development & implementation

Community Knowledge & Agency

Critical consciousness: Centering lived experience & cultural capital

Relationship Building

Interpersonal communication: culturally responsive, trauma-informed

Complex Learning and A New Sense of Belonging

CASE STUDIES

DIGITAL LITERACY WITH THE CANAL Community

How do we create spaces and processes, in and out of classrooms,
that value and highlight students' and community members'
Cultural Wealth/knowledge and lived experience?

Call to Action at the Fall '20 Service-Learning Orientations

Community members identified interests for **CO-DESIGN** of Digital Literacy Support

Voces del Canal with Latin American & Latino Studies

- Linguistic and Cultural Knowledge
- Adaptive to Community Needs
- VdC Community Leaders, Canal Alliance, Students, Faculty, Center for Community Engagement

Related Development & Outgrowth

- Data from Digital Literacy Training (Angelica's thesis)
- Expanding Support & Outreach : Rental Assistance, Covid Education, Civic Engagement Efforts
- Institutional level MOU with Canal
- Public Lighting Advocacy project with Voces del Canal

REFLECT on the promise of the institution as a liberatory space and praxis, as a practice of reflection and thoughtful action, within and beyond the permeable boundaries of the institution.

How do people feel if their institutions don't provide the resources they need to do the work; or when things don't work out as expected?

Beyond Representation

We need to create **genuine** inclusive space and safety net for BIPOC students, faculty, and staff to enter White spaces.

Legend:
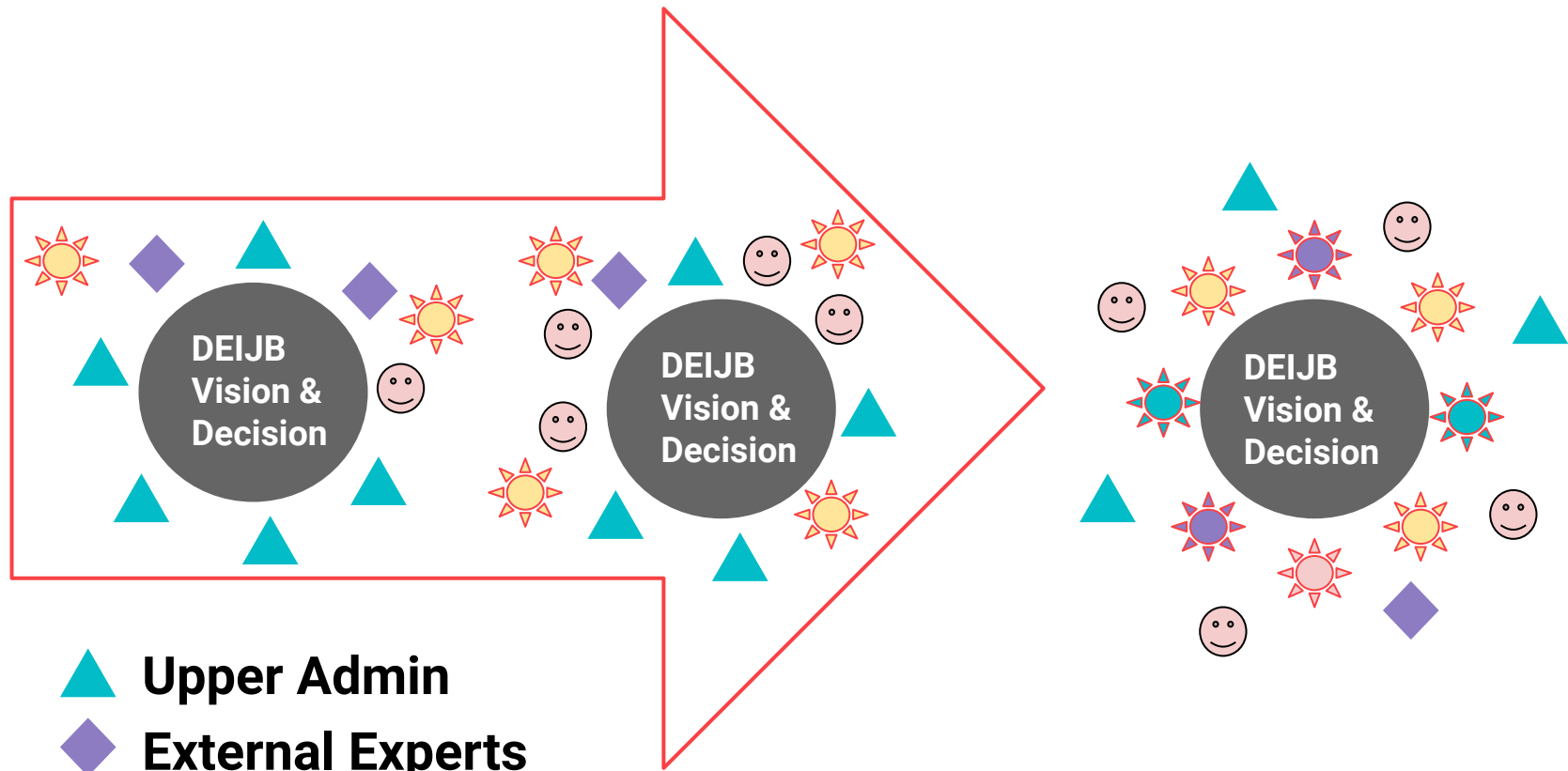
▲ Upper Admin

◆ External Experts

☺ Allies & Partners

☀ Marginalized Folks (Students, Faculty, Staff)

DISCUSSION

How to support BIPOC students, faculty and staff in their navigation within White institutions and spaces:

What are the commitments, preparations and training for institutions and White space-holders?

What are effective spaces, strategies, or practices to shift the existing racial power dynamics?

What considerations should be included in developing partnerships and/or non-performative allyships?

Liberatory Practice

Critical Community Engagement is DEIJB work:

- Critical CE has long history of navigating the tensions between the need to "institutionalize" while challenging the status quo/shifting institutional paradigms.
- Community members are the experts in their own lives and the structural issues that impact them.
- We are accountable to students/community.
- The work is not static, we evolve as critical practitioners through praxis grounded in respect for community strengths and commitment to acting on hard truths.

THANK YOU

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- Mathie, Alison & Gordon Cunningham (2008). *From Clients to Citizens : Communities Changing the Course of Their Own Development*. Bourton on Dunsmore Rugby Warwickshire UK: Practical Action Pub.
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- Tania Mitchell (2008), "Traditional vs. Critical Service-Learning: Engaging the Literature to Differentiate Two Models." *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning,* 50-65.
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- Yosso, Tara J. (2005), "Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth." *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, 8(1): 69-91.
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C I T A T I O N S

Faculty publications from collaborative community initiatives:
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- Lucko, Jennifer (2019), "Reframing Success: Participatory Impacts of Storytelling in PAR Collaborative with Latinx Middle School Students." *Educational Action Research*, 28(4): 1-18.
- Van der Ryn, Julia, et al (2014). *Building Safe Communities Through Strong Partnerships in the Canal.* Oakland: Data Center.
- Wu. Emily S. (2014) "Teaching Asian Religions from Within Asian American Community." *Spotlight in Teaching*, American Academy of Religion.
- Wu, Emily S. (2018). "Crossing Boundaries with Narratives: Making Space with Oral History in Community Service-Learning." *Interreligious Pedagogy: Reflections and Applications in Honor of Judith A. Berling.* Ed. Emily S. Wu and Jung Eun Sophia Park. New York: Palgrave Pivot.

Decoding DEI: Liberatory Practices Grounded in Community
Before celebrating solidarity, DEIJB (DEI+ Justice and Belonging) work must purposefully examine the hard truths and realities of structural racism and inequity. The equity frameworks of critical and asset-based partnership development—paired with the strategic, liberatory decentering of academic expertise and hierarchies—provide a model for institutional shifts toward authentic DEIJB goals. Our partnerships with community and students teach us accountability and show us that DEIJB must move beyond mere good intentions to prioritize community vision, assets, and advocacy for structural change. Participants are invited to explore effective practices cultivated through centering the voices and knowledge of racially and economically diverse communities.

This workshop will provide concrete examples of community-engaged DEIJB curriculum and practices. Presenters will share lessons-learned through close collaboration with students, community members, grassroots and non-profit organizations. Participants will:

● Discuss centering the knowledge and lived experience of BIPOC staff, faculty, student and community stakeholders.
● Apply principles of Cultural Humility to map where DEIJB practices are authentically occurring versus DEI language. (How to normalize DEIJB works so that it doesn't stay only within the designated spaces?)
● Brainstorm approaches/trajectory, responses to different phases of paradigm shift, with Cultural Humility principles as assessment tool and baseline. (graphic representation to show as 3 areas to assess and balance; could be the ending activity)
● Reflect on the promise of the institution as a liberatory space and praxis, as a practice of reflection and thoughtful action, within and beyond the permeable boundaries of the institution. (How do people feel if their institutions don't provide the resources they need to do the work; or when things don't work out as expected?)

Background and evidence of the effectiveness of work being presented

The equity frameworks of critical and asset-based partnership development (Filapek & McKnight, 2018; Yosso 2005; Yosso & García, 2007; McKnight & Block 2010; Mathie & Cunningham, 2008)– paired with the strategic, liberatory decentering of academic expertise and hierarchies (Tervalon & Murray Garcia 1998; Mitchell, 2008)–provide a model for institutional shifts towards authentic DEIJB goals. Collaboration with racially and economically diverse communities teaches us how to do the ongoing work of DEIJB. This workshop traces the learning and practices that evolved over the 18-year history of building critical and asset-based community-engaged curriculum and programming at our institution. Centering community knowledge and interests has been concretized through our intensive, hands-on involvements (Lucko, 2018 & 2019; van der Ryn 2014; Wu, 2014 & 2018). Driven by extensive program assessment and student surveys, we established a Community Action Social Change minor, Social Justice major, and a Latino Studies minor to cultivate a student cohort model centered on cultural wealth, linguistic skills and cultural knowledge. Further, two Institutional Community Partnerships for Equity with non-profit organizations and two Participatory Action Research projects with community members were co-created. Our commitment to building trusting, mutually beneficial relationships and co-creating community initiatives became crucial when COVID-19 pandemic started. While many community-engagement programs paused or disbanded, we grew our course offerings and community partnerships to address the crises that arose in the predominantly Latinx neighborhood and in 2022 received the Campus Compact Impact Award for Institutional Transformation.

Community Cultural Wealth

Seeing the glass filled with Awesome Juice

Family Capital
Cultural knowledge developed through family (immediate, extended, or chosen)

Aspirational Capital
Maintain hopes and dreams in the face of barriers

Linguistic Capital
Intellectual & social skills attained through communication in more than 1 language

Resistant Capital
Knowledge & skills developed through challenging inequity

Navigational Capital
Skills of maneuvering through institutions

Social Capital
Networks of stakeholders within your community that can provide resources and support

The combined wealth from the different types of capital becomes the community's **Cultural Capital**

CULTURAL HUMILITY PRINCIPLES

1. Life-Long Learning and Critical Self-Reflection: Understanding that **we are all complex, multi-dimensional beings**.
2. Recognize & Challenge **power imbalances** within [racialized] dynamics
3. Build **Institutional accountability** and **mutually respectful partnerships** based on trust.