

Assessing and Enhancing the Environment of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within the School of Social Work (SSW)

Marian Diksies

Associate Professor of Teaching

Director of Student Affairs- School of Social Work

About the School of Social Work

- Professional School offering BASW, MSW, Ph.D., and DSW.
- New Brunswick based, but offer classes on 3 campuses (New Brunswick, Newark, and Camden), as well as online and several off-campus locations.
- MSW program is the largest (over 1,500 students) and offered in various formats.
- One of the largest social work programs in the nation.
- Students in the BASW and MSW programs are required to complete an internship- field placement.
- Led by Dean Potter- (and my mentor for this project)

Project Overview

- Higher education institutions are expected to create campus environments that support individual students
 - In recent years, these conversations about campus climate have particularly highlighted the issues of diversity and inclusion
- Proactive approach
- Launched in spring 2018.
- Working group created-
 - Consisted of a cross section of the School's community- TT faculty, NTT faculty, student representatives.

Goals of the Project

- Tasked with evaluating our MSW and BASW students' experiences with issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the School-classes, events, and in their field placements.
- Shape policies
- Influence culture
- Recommend direction for future programming/ events

Benchmarking

- Within Rutgers
 - Division of Student Affairs at Rutgers
 - Director of Research and Assessment
- Online review of other Schools of Social Work
 - Michigan School of Social Work
 - Portland State University
- Phone conference with faculty member from McGill University- School of Social Work

Challenges Along the Way

- The working group needed to determine how to gather this data from our students, which ended up being an evolving process.
- Challenges
 - Program size and geographic location
 - Across 3 campuses
 - Different program formats- traditional, online, blended, and intensive weekend
 - New members joined group in fall 2018 and some members left
 - Change in project design

Accomplishments and Project Status

- Project went through IRB approval
- Survey created by the end of Fall 2018
- Survey administered to students at the beginning of the Spring 2019 semester
- 25% response rate
- In the midst of data analysis
 - Team of faculty and doctoral students

Next Steps

- Disseminate findings to faculty, staff, and students
- Present findings at professional conferences- i.e. Council on Social Work Education
- Write/ publish white paper
- Engage with the broader University in order to evaluate experiences for graduate students at Rutgers
- Explore ways to find out the experiences of faculty and staff at the SSW

Lessons Learned

- FLEXIBILITY!
- Leadership within higher education is unique
 - Power is distributed among many
 - Leader, but also doer
- Learned to negotiate my style when dealing with different committee members.
- Finding my leadership style and making it work with dynamics within the group
 - Often used a democratic approach to inspire and empower group members.

THANK YOU!

Questions?