CONNECTING THE DOTS:
Next Steps on the Journey to Inclusive Excellence at TCU

Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the fall of 2019, Dr. Teresa Abi-Nader Dahlberg, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at Texas Christian University, asked researchers from the Center for Strategic Diversity Leadership and Social Innovation of Atlanta, Georgia, to inventory the strategies, structures, programs and actions that drive inclusive excellence at TCU. Her question: "What do we already have, and how can we make that better?" The goal of this report is to uncover those elements, synergies, innovation and potentials at TCU that will enable the university to connect the existing points of light together into a greater whole.

Admirably, TCU's mission statement and strategic plan recognize the need for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) strategies. Now TCU must leverage and optimize its current DEI operations (an impressive 300+ ongoing programs) to be as evidence-based and effective as possible. The university is ahead of the curve with a DEI strategic plan and a dedicated Chief Inclusion Officer. With the COVID-19 pandemic lashing society with a new set of DEI issues, this report and its findings take on additional urgency.

Study Methodology. In October 2019, representatives from TCU's 22 schools, colleges and divisions responded to a comprehensive survey documenting the programs and span of each unit's DEI strategies and structures. Phone calls and meetings collected more information. We also engaged in a bonus benchmarking survey of four of TCU's competitive peers for further perspective. This report's insights and recommendations rest on a solid foundation of current DEI research and best practices as well as insights gained from our experience working with hundreds of institutions of higher learning and companies across the United States.

Section 1: The Strategic Diversity Leadership Framework

To conceptualize this review, we lean on the five-element Strategic Diversity Leadership framework (Williams, 2013), which champions evaluating DEI efforts in terms of efforts to:

(1) Achieve access and equity (recruitment, retention) for historically underrepresented groups.

(2) Create a multicultural and inclusive campus climate for the entire institutional community.

(3) Enhance domestic and international research and scholarship around issues of diversity.

(4) Prepare all students for a national and global society that is diverse and interconnected.

(5) Create strategic diversity leadership infrastructure in the forms of DEI strategic plans, committees, officers, analysis scorecards/tracking and other forms of accountability that can transform the first four elements into more than the sum of their parts.

In this model, *Inclusive Excellence* becomes the ideal. Far more than a mere set of numbers, IE features a broader definition of diversity that includes many social dimensions. It affirms the interdependence of inclusiveness and excellence, where to practice one is to practice the other. It works toward a vibrant community that embeds, respects and enjoys diverse cultures, identities and lived experiences. And it distributes responsibility for Inclusive Excellence to every member of the extended campus community.

Section 2: Demographic Benchmarking of Peer Institutions

Recruitment, retention and outreach efforts affect campus experience and build a high-caliber learning environment in multiple ways (Chang, Milem, & Lisling, 2005). To glean a context for TCU's DEI efforts, we compared faculty, leadership and student demographic profiles at four peer institutions similar to TCU in size, research intensiveness, geographic location, decentralization and prominence (Baylor, Southern Methodist, Tulane, Vanderbilt). Data came from the Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data Systems (IPEDS), which was current through the 2018/19 school year.

(1) *Undergraduate Student Diversity.* TCU experienced meaningful growth, from roughly 17% URM students in 2013 to nearly 21% in 2018, largely in the explosive growth of Latinx students on campus. The percent of Black students at TCU also grew noticeably while other groups held steady.

(2) *Graduate Student Diversity.* TCU ranks last (near Baylor) in URM graduate student diversity, though its numbers have increased since 2013, from roughly 4% to 6%, yet trailing peers. For women grad students, TCU (57%) is second only to Vanderbilt (59%), yet above parity.

(3) *Tenure-Track Faculty Diversity.* TCU maintains the highest percentages of women and of racially and ethnically diverse tenure-track faculty, at roughly 9% URM and 45% women. All five schools saw jumps in URM faculty 2013-2015 with declines since 2017. TCU should explore these trends with 2019 and 2020 data.

(4) *Leadership Diversity.* For many US institutions in addition to TCU, racial diversity of faculty and leadership stands as key opportunity areas. Monitoring the diversity of senior leadership roles as well as succession processes driving roles are important DEI indicators.

TCU's leadership in gender and URM student diversity is a strategic point of difference and a competitive advantage. A campus climate survey could provide valuable insights into the actual lived experiences of TCU's diverse community members.

Section 3: The TCU Strategic Diversity Leadership Inventory

DEI commitment is clearly a guiding principle at TCU with 95% of all responding units agreeing that their unit had a "strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion." We asked leaders to report their DEI commitments in terms of accountability, infrastructure, incentives and resources—"AIIR:" **A**ccountability parameters shape behavior; DEI **I**nfrastructure guides and supports change; **I**ncentives elevate DEI; and resource **I**nvestment ensures that change happens.

(1) *DEI Strategy and **Accountability**.* Integration of DEI into TCU's overall strategic plan is a best practice, one that must be translated into a clear DEI plan and activation strategy in all campus units. To diffuse here is to lose. Only a third of units reported having a DEI strategic plan, an opportunity area for TCU. For accountability, only about 14% of responding units produce an annual DEI report and another 14% have incorporated a DEI component in performance reviews.

(2) *DEI **Infrastructure**.* Most units campus-wide reported having a DEI committee (55%). We were pleasantly surprised by the number of units (82%) reporting DEI officers or point persons (100% of academic units). Portfolio, title and seniority varied tremendously from unit to unit, however, which can dramatically affect impact, as can a lack of strategic DEI plan.

(3) *DEI Training and Leadership Development (**Incentives**).* We all have unconscious biases that can lead us to commit microaggressions, making training essential. Only 23% of units reported sufficient DEI training and growth opportunities for students. Roughly 50% reported sufficient opportunities for staff, and 40% for faculty. More can be done here. HR is doing exemplary work.

(4) *DEI **Resource** Allocation.* Clearly, TCU is investing in DEI. Yet most units do not feel they are allocating adequate financial resources to support diverse student (27% overall), staff (27%), or faculty (22%) success. Innovation funds are critical. Leaders must discuss financial prioritization of DEI.

Expressed commitment to DEI is strong at Texas Christian, whereas DEI strategy, accountability, infrastructure, training and resource allocation could be improved to create a stronger lived reality.

Section 4: The TCU DEI Program Inventory

Today, DEI definitions include many factors and their intersectionality, including: race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, nationality, economic background, religion, disability, military service and more. *DEI intensive* programs advance an aspect of DEI as an institutional priority, while *integrated DEI efforts* directly infuse inclusive excellence into academic and administrative efforts. Both are needed.

Across academic and administrative units, TCU's nearly 370 reported programs were largely noted as evidence-based in design and with impact assessment, both best practices. We organized them into six interrelated categories:

(1) *DEI General Infrastructure (n=11).* Discussed in Section 3, students were largely the focus of these efforts (54%). DEI efforts in administrative units in this category should be recognized as elevating DEI as a campus commitment and priority.

(2) *Recruitment, Retention and Outreach (n=122).* With more programs than any other category, over half of these largely DEI-intensive initiatives focused on students, another quarter on pre-college outreach, and 12% on employees. Many elevated specific disciplines; consider focusing them on quantitative skill development as well. Overlaying an integrated framework across these programs could drive educational outcomes and value. Employee diversity programs in particular may benefit from increased rigor of implementation. Finally, folding LGBTQIA and Muslim outreach into current programs could prove both meritorious and effective in driving recruitment, retention and campus climate.

(3) *Preparing Students for a Diverse and Global World (n=101).* With most initiatives falling under Academic Affairs (87%) these are courses, majors and minors, leadership programs, study abroad and community service learning efforts. International and multicultural programs could benefit from cross-pollination to ensure a DEI angle. The College of Education and the common book program stood out as positive. Interdisciplinary Studies could play a growing role in building cultural competence as can the school's Idea Factory. Adding intergroup dialogue methodology to these and other programs will enhance their efficacy while better preparing students to bridge difference. Notably, the COVID-19 global pandemic has clearly demonstrated the importance of comingling STEM and pre-health studies with a deeper understanding of social challenges and DEI skills.

(4) *Multicultural and International Research and Scholarship (n=22).* Faculty must engage in scholarship critical to understanding our increasingly diverse and multicultural world. These programs were likely undercounted. Post-doctoral fellowships and DEI research awards represent important opportunities for scaling across TCU.

(5) *Affirming Diverse Identities and Building Community (n=70).* This category of initiative affirms diverse identities, building cultural, faith and identity spaces of belonging that nourish specific groups and build connection between groups. Leaders can contribute by asking, "How can I incorporate DEI aspects?" into every program on campus.

(6) *DEI Training, Campus Climate Research and Policy (n=42).* This DEI intensive category focuses on specific DEI training, campus climate research and policy improvement to enhance inclusivity and climate. Largely employee-focused, these programs are ripe for scaling and expansion at TCU, supported by tool-sharing between units, an evidence-based focus and institution-wide tracking and impact measurement. A DEI certification program would shift training into a higher gear of impact and capacity-building. After the inventory was completed, we learned that HR and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion are partnering on a new certificate program. Finally, a regular cadence of campus climate research should be tracked and DEI policy efforts enhanced.

Section 5: Recommendations

Recommendation	Activation	Description	Key Concepts
1. Make culturally relevant decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic	Immediate & Ongoing	Put inclusive steps in place during the pandemic.	• Immediately offer affirming guidance and support for DEI during pandemic. • Protect DEI in budget and decision-making. • Hold space for diverse communities to speak out. • Consider disparate impact of all layoffs, budget cuts, and furloughs.
2. Identify "low-hanging fruit" fall DEI commitments	Summer-Fall 2020	Build on current existing efforts.	• Require faculty and director and above DEI search plans. • Require diverse finalist to interview. • Require faculty to illustrate DEI background in searches. • Scale up 1 training for the fall. • Amplify current DEI scholarship programs. • Strengthen DEI infrastructure campus-wide. • Coordinate pre-college programs.
3. Develop campus-wide Inclusive Excellence framework, plan, and accountability systems	Summer-Fall 2020	Set up an overall strategic framework for the campus community to develop alignment and coordination plans that drive consistency, accountability, and impact.	• Design the IE strategic framework for campus. • Define diversity, equity and inclusion. • Articulate five-year DEI priorities. • Require implementation in all 22 major units. • Articulate DEI big-bets and financial allocations. • Make part of the performance review for leaders. • Prioritize during summer leadership retreats. • Provide planning and alignment tools for units. • Identify DEI committee to lead process. • Establish a plan for communication.
4. Develop local IE activation plans	Winter 2021	Develop local DEI activation plans that align to the university's central framework and goals.	• Align local planning with the campus IE framework (#3). • Identify a clear activation leader and committee. • Develop unit-specific DEI rationale. • Develop unit level goals and alignment plans. • Identity local big-bet strategic action steps.
5. Develop a faculty, recruitment and retention initiative	Winter 2021	Build a faculty diversity recruitment and retention initiative focused on the needs of women in STEM, racial and ethnic diversity, and more.	• Create a target of opportunity hiring program. • Build a faculty diversity initiative office. • Set up a future faculty diversity symposium. • Implement a post-doctoral fellow program.
6. Establish a campus-wide DEI training and leadership development program	Winter 2021	Develop and implement a shared DEI training plan and certificate program	• Establish a campus-wide DEI training plan. • Set training adoption growth goals and metrics. • Build a DEI training certificate program. • Put a premium on unconscious bias, microaggressions, allyship and everyday inclusion. • Apply to real-world scenarios and skill-building goals. • Place a premium on women & minorities in leadership.
7. Convene an annual Inclusive Excellence campus forum	Winter 2021	All leadership Inclusive Excellence campus wide event	• Create an annual IE leadership forum. • Build from the February 2020 event. • Leverage the event to give a campus-wide update. • In 2021, each unit kicks off their planning. • Create an online contingency plan.
8. Develop an Inclusive Excellence innovation and partnership fund	Winter 2021	Leadership fund to support Inclusive Excellence campus-wide	• Align to IE Framework priorities (Section 1). • Spark DEI innovation energy on campus. • Fund to support small DEI projects • Funds to support larger multi-year partnership projects that must be used in matching partnerships.

Section 6: Final Thoughts and Next Steps

From all of us at the Center for Strategic Diversity Leadership and Social Innovation, thank you for the opportunity to serve your intentions and efforts to strengthen your Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work. We look forward to your next steps and are proud to be a friend to your work.
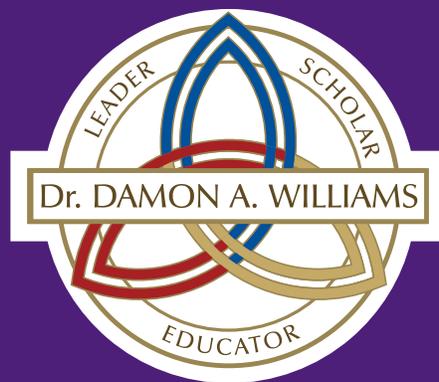
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