Work Group Name: Diversity and Education   Executive Committee Review: April 30, 2019

Question 3: Integrity and compliance policies – What are the best ways to implement and scale cultural competency training for all employees and students, while acknowledging issues related to academic freedom?

What is the problem/situation? (See additional details in Appendix A)
Many universities struggle with what can or cannot be taught to faculty and how to make the curriculum more inclusive. Mandated training yields mixed results because it fails to meet people where they are and may provoke negativity, yet optional training may only succeed in reaching those who are already at level 2 or above in the rubric and fail at delivering the goals of Quest 2025. Limits of time and resources may present widespread and individual challenges to the practicality of providing training at scale for all university community members.

What does the literature/research have to say about it? (See additional details in Appendix A)
Research shows that by tailoring training (i.e., empirically supported exercises and activities) to the institution’s D&I goals and to the faculty, staff and students’ characteristics, the institution will succeed in training a more inclusive university member (Cheung, King, Lindsey, and Membere, 2017). A positive student experience for culturally diverse students does not arise from classroom diversity alone. Faculty need to welcome and encourage difference in the classroom so that diverse students also experience inclusion (Puritty et.al., 2017). Classrooms characterized by both diversity and inclusion encourage students to embrace, rather than “fragment,” their identities. Diversity and inclusion education creates “more positive interactions with culturally diverse students, more supportive classroom climates, and more student-centered practices” (McAllister & Irvine, 2002).

Mandatory diversity training seemed more effective for behavioral learning, yet voluntary training was perceived more favorably by training participants” (Perry, & Jehn, 2016 ). Also, studies show that certain types of inclusive training can create a backlash effect and have adverse psychological effects, i.e. resistance. Optional participation may be boosted by encouraging administration and higher ranks to attend training and then encourage their employees to attend as well. Research also reveals a “strong and significant relationship between the length of diversity training and scale, suggesting that diversity training programs that are longer tend to be more effective” (Perry, & Jehn, 2016). Peer-facilitated training produces a more inclusive faculty, student, and staff member (Cramer, Arroyo and Ford, 2012).

What does the work group recommend? (See details in Appendix A)
Our recommendation is centered around the necessity to teach and inspire a diverse population of students. This desired result is best achieved by rolling out a cultural competency training initiative to all employees and students. In our estimation, the current research and Quest 2025 present compelling arguments in favor of requiring or strongly encouraging diversity training for faculty, staff and students. It is imperative that we increase our awareness and understanding of the unique needs of a diverse student body and provide faculty and staff with diversity and inclusion education related to the lived experiences, backgrounds and challenges/aspirations of our students. We recommend a variety of stages and phases of training and incentivized educational opportunities to include: mandated baseline training, optional educational workshops, and D&I training, certification, service and leadership opportunities.


Problem elaboration
UAP and classified staff often note that their supervisors or managers do not allow them time to attend required or optional diversity training. Some problems related to implementing large-scale cultural competency training for staff is that many staff may not have access to computers to take online training modules.

While parts of the curriculum offer diversity training concepts to students, there is no single course that everyone is required to take, so it would be difficult to build D&I training for all students into the curriculum. While UNIV 111/112/200 come closest to this requirement, students with dual enrollment credit from high school or other transfer credit do not take these courses at all, and students with AP and IB credit do not take UNIV 111. If we roll this training into general education requirements more broadly, we will still miss some students--those with Associate’s Degrees and transfer credit, etc. The new GenEd30 will require 3-9 credits in Diversities in the Human Experience and 3-9 credits in Global Perspectives. UNIV 111 and 112 already include student learning outcomes in ethical reasoning and critical thinking that are relevant to D&I training.

Research elaboration
Concerns by the faculty based in academic freedom concepts may be addressed by involving the faculty in the process and design of diversity education and providing faculty members an opportunity to vote on the types of training that will be offered (Kovacs, K., 2015; Ceo-DiFrancesco, D., Kochleffl, M. K., & Walker, J., 2019). Further, faculty may be more likely to participate (even in required training) if they are involved in development of the training.

Recommendation Details
Rationale and Considerations. Approaching diversity and inclusion education as a component of student success would allow us to leverage the student success framework articulated in Quest 2025. Title IX training is an example of student-centered mandatory training in which faculty participate, and this training provides a model and template for implementation of a diversity and inclusion initiative. Inclusion, equity and access can be considered pillars of diversity, so there is also a direct connection between the need for Title IX training and diversity and inclusion training. Currently VCU employees--including faculty--must complete information security training and other modules throughout the year. Diversity training could be a similar requirement. Our review of the literature and best practices shows that a massive scale training may not be effective; rather, it needs to be done in stages. In order to scale training to all employees and students, we recommend a blended approach that incorporates both instructor-led training and web-based training. We need to consider what kind of training is optimal for various employees. We recommend considering different structures of training for faculty, UAP and classified staff, hourly staff, and students. Finally, we recommend including diversity and inclusion considerations as part of the unit and university curriculum review process and providing inclusive tools to those who design and evaluate curriculum.

Approach. We recommend a variety of stages and phases of training and incentivized educational opportunities to include: mandated baseline training, optional educational workshops (brief and extended), training and certifications (e.g., RIC, FLC’s, HHMI grant), D&I service and leadership opportunities. We recommend that the University should implement brief one-time mandated online “We Are One” training for all faculty/staff/students (similar to Title IX online training). This must include D&I terminology, VCU philosophy and values, ism’s and systemic bias, videos of VCU community members talking about their lived experiences of oppression at the university, and opportunity/encouragement for critical self-reflection.

VCU should also mandate that every new employee take this online D&I training within a year and engage further in D&I education in their first 3 years of employment. Lastly, we recommend that administrators collaborate with the VCU Division for Inclusive Excellence to develop a process for requiring certain faculty to participate in mandatory D&I training when needed. Faculty may be more responsive to mandatory training if there is a general departmental policy and process already established.
**Incentivizing and Scaling.** There should be a sufficient number of workshops, training, and forums for faculty, staff and students offered within the University as well as an effective way to communicate about these opportunities. Given what we’ve learned about some of the best practices we recommend the following to boost participation: there is a positive trickle-down effect when administrators take D&I trainings, providing a model and thus encouraging faculty and staff to participate as well (with less resistance). We strongly encourage engagement by all levels of administration and also suggest finding ways to incentivize faculty, staff and students to take D&I trainings. Provide incentives for attending optional offerings to include stickers, badges, credentials and certificates. For employees, D&I trainings could be part of performance evaluations by integrating D&I education goals into annual performance review and tenure/promotion materials. Arranging for workshops and guest speakers on topics of diversity during regularly scheduled faculty/staff meetings can be an effective means of painlessly increasing participation.

We also suggest getting buy-in from staff through Staff Senate and from faculty through Faculty Senate and the faculty caucus of UC. In order to promote faculty participation, we also recommend that the training be vetted and endorsed by faculty governance through the appropriate representatives and process. Ideas for scaling include:

- Leverage current expertise in D&I content and facilitation through volunteers and champions who teach or have undergone D&I training/certification and compensate them to teach workshops or courses.
- Do presentations for units and/or lead face-to-face discussions to augment online training.
- Collaborate with REAL.
- Review and recommend trainings from available online sources such as Lynda.com and open access resources.
- Eliminate silos and communicate better across the university about existing D&I educational offerings.