I. Background

Our college's discussions on equity reframed when Ohio changed its funding formula from enrollment to completion. Extra "points," which translate into funding, are awarded for degree and certificate completion by students of color, underclassmen, and low-income students. This caused the college to delve into data and we were discouraged to find a large gap between the completion rates of underrepresented groups of students. In particular, we found that students of color graduate at a much lower rate than white students. While this is a national phenomenon, our college set out to address it.

Our way to approach the "equity gap" is to consider the idea that low-performing students have a deficiency in the mindsets for college success. Recent research on mindsets has determined that these deficiencies can be alleviated with various interventions. These interventions address growth mindset, sense of belonging, efficacy, and purpose for learning. Additionally, we can look at the college environment and ensure that it does everything it can to promote success for all students. In that regard, we can make sure that the college provides students with a belonging atmosphere, targeted and appropriate support and advising, and personal relationships. Our college can require professional development workshops on topics such as equity, implicit bias, and micro-aggressions for staff and administrators, but it is important to the organization and academic freedom, it cannot require faculty to participate in these workshops. Yet faculty are crucial in the effort to bring equity in success to our students. At Cuyahoga Community College, we are attempting to build faculty awareness through a Faculty Learning Community (FLC). Our FLC on Equity and Inclusive Excellence has its roots in a broader Title VI/Title III consortia on equity. This group is analyzing course data and asking questions about the best classroom practices for encouraging equity in success.

II. Value of the Faculty Voice in the Inquiry-Process

Retention is the greatest issue we face at our college. As our college president, Alex Johnson explains, "Retention is not merely semester to semester, it is month to month, week to week, day to day, or even minute to minute for some of our students." We also know that every student at our college spends the most time with our instructors. With that in mind, we are quite eager to gather data on those students, it is paramount that we involve faculty and recognize that they are the most valuable players in our effort to learn about, aspire to, and eventually reach equity. We have engaged faculty in this process in phases over the past four years.

Phase One: Data on achievement, defined by graduation rates, was presented at an end-of-year convocation. This helped faculty begin to look at the students in their classes in a bit more holistically as we asked them to reflect on their classes and think about the students who are the most successful.

Phase Two: We asked faculty to join us in creating an FLC to further explore achievement gaps and identify best practices.

Phase Three: We presented course-level data on success at counterpoint meetings.

Phase Four: We asked faculty to discuss student barriers they see in their courses and tell us about interventions they've tried.

Phase Five: We have begun to hold focus groups where we present our FLC goals, ask for barriers and interventions, and ask faculty to participate by trying an intervention and having our data and inquiry department compare the success rates for all students and, specifically, students of color that course pre- and post-intervention.

Phase Six: Survey will be sent to all faculty to gather more data on barriers that exist in the classrooms for some students and interventions and best practices used.

III. How the High Signal Courses are Identified

The Office of Evidence and Inquiry at Cuyahoga Community College identified 82 courses in May of 2018 which were considered "high signal" courses. These courses had the following attributes: high number of sections per term, many courses were required courses which had to be taken by students in all disciplines or were a "gateway" first course in a program/discipline that were taken by all students. The data used was Cristis and the resulting identified Iwas correct according to predictive analytics, suggest that students who improve their knowledge of the subject matter by a designated letter grade would be more likely to graduate than they would otherwise. Subsequently, improving a grade in any of these courses could, according to the predictors, improve the graduation rate. The predictive analytic component for example, suggests that if a student obtains at least a "C," or better in these courses they have a higher likelihood of graduating.

An additional factor to be explored is whether these predictors can be utilized to determine probability of success in subsequent courses to better indicate where roadblocks might occur during the students' enrollment at the college. The goal of the inter-departmental FLC project is to use a quantity approach to obtain information on student performance in those courses which are identified as critical to graduation, completion and success at the college focusing in on students of color. In addition to gathering student performance data, the FLC is also sharing best practices used in the classroom which faculty have identified as potentially having an impact on student performance in subsequent courses. These practices will be shared and replicated in other courses or countries or courses to these faculty who teach these high signal courses to begin to develop approaches to determine how to bridge the gap and improve learning outcomes for these students.

IV. Strategies Used to establish Outcome Goals

Initial information gathering occurred through provision of an initial data sheet by the Office of Evidence and Inquiry summarizing information on the identified "high signal" courses which included performance data, including data of students of color from Fall 2007 to Fall 2017. These data outlined performance gaps and provided benchmarks from which disciplines can proceed in their intervention work. The field that would they decide to proceed. Each data sheet also required participation to questions of inquiry by each counterpart group. These sheets were shared at a recent college colloquium event and discussed in individual Counterparts sessions. Each group was to provide a response to the following questions: 1) What hypotheses can you offer to account for these differences? 2) What issues do you want to know or want to ask? 3) What possible interventions should we consider? What can we do about this? How can we close the gap? Who in your department would be willing to serve in a Faculty Learning Community in the Fall to explore these topics further? These discussions provided the context for disciplines or those faculty who teach these high signal courses to begin to develop approaches to determine how to bridge the gap and improve learning outcomes for these students.

One example of how data was provided to help informs outcome goals was used in the "high signal" course Introduction to Management (BADM 1020). Information provided by the Office of Evidence and Inquiry indicated that during the period of Fall 2007 to Fall 2017 American African and Hispanic students who took the course had a 62% and 78% success rate respectively. Comparative, White students had an 84% success rate which represents a performance gap of 13% for African American students and 4% for Hispanic students. If there is an intervention that could help these students achieve an improved letter grade "C" or better, predict that they would be 20% more likely to graduate and the overall improvement in those who graduate from the discipline would be 21.8%. During the Fall of 2018 the Introduction to Business (BADM 1020) class was part of an assessment project at the College. This provided an opportunity for Counterparts to obtain some performance data in this course using activities which were designed by full time faculty members and made available on a self-identified Blackboard site to evaluate outcomes of an agreed upon course objective. Eleven courses were identified and one course outcome was used as a part of the project. During the Spring 2019 term the counterparts will be assessing the selected course outcome activities as well as examining overall course completion numbers. There were eighty artifacts collected which will be assessed. The Office of Evidence and Inquiry will be providing the demographic breakdowns so that the outcomes can further be evaluated. The hope is that these results will help establish the framework for future initiatives as the discipline begins to delve deeper into identifying ways to bridge the gap for students of color in this class and the discipline.

V. Identification of Next Steps and Institutional Change Recommendations

To sustain our commitment to equity and inclusion, the FLC proposes continuation of the current FLC along with a permanent and sustainable contract or governance committee in a multi-pronged approach including:

- Maintaining the FLC at Tri-C to ensure faculty involvement in Tri-C’s mission of success for all students.

- Establishing a permanent contract or governance committee to provide more resources and influence around inclusive excellence and to support faculty. As a contract or governance committee, the permanent structure would align with Tri-C’s commitment to equity and inclusion.

Structure, Mission, and Approach of contract/governance committee:

- A contract committee should include faculty members only. A governance committee should include faculty and administrators. Membership will change on a schedule of one year for contract, or two years for governance committees. Faculty serving on a contract committee will receive service credits whereas faculty members on a governance committee will earn ESIs.

- This committee would like to work closely with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, with a primary focus on faculty engagement, continuous education, and support services for faculty.

- The committee will set changes and goals each year.

- The committee will provide an annual report on work completed, achieved objectives, and future goals.

Mission:

- This committee will work with faculty to identify ways to ensure equity for all students.

- This committee will assist faculty in identifying and closing achievement and opportunity gaps in their own institution and will be committed to sharing a best practice approach to achieving goals.

- This committee will support faculty diversity and inclusiveness.

Approach:

- Provide cultural competency training for faculty.

- Recommend a structure much like the "Safe Zone" program, where faculty can be trained and identify themselves as people comfortable speaking about diversity/equity issues to provide safe spaces for students, faculty, and staff.

- Facilitate faculty conversations around equity concerns regarding diversity/equity, including hiring practices at Tri-C.

- Facilitate support by way of hiring a Career Coach or other professional to help faculty members deal with diversity/equity issues.

We plan to maintain the current FLC as well as the Inclusive Excellence Community. We propose that this committee will provide oversight for both of these committees and cut-rate faculty membership with the other committees, if the faculty member so chooses.

References

Toward a Model of Inclusive Excellence and Change in Post-Secondary Institutions-Scientific Figure on ResearchGate. Available from https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Inclusive-Excellence_Change_Model_Lg_2018060303/3-saved-24-Mar-2019

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