Everyone’s Job: How DEAL Builds Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Capacity On Campus

Overview
Diversity, Equity, and Access Leadership (DEAL) offers a unique example of how small liberal arts colleges can advance inclusion, and address the current challenges associated with leadership in this area without leveraging the presence of a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO).

DEAL Structure

Mission
DEAL is the umbrella entity that strives to create opportunities for innovative diversity work to flourish by fostering and coordinating leadership efforts across campus to ensure that Wheaton consistently provides a diverse, inclusive, equitable, and accessible learning community.

Institutional Leadership

DEAL and its co-chairs drive capacity building across campus using effective leadership strategies that are collaborative (Kezar & Eckel, 2002) and DEI-driven (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). We also use specific change strategies (Kezar & Eckel, 2002).

Collaborative leadership strategies include:
- Creating opportunities for campus community members to take ownership of DEI work in their own departments
- Working synergistically across campus to implement and monitor the progress of Wheaton’s diversity and inclusion strategic plan that was endorsed by the Board of Trustees in 2017

Change strategies include:
- Eliciting senior administrative support and collaboration
- Creating flexible structures that are nimble enough to respond to changing campus DEI needs

Committees and Their Roles

DEAL Education & Programming (E&P) Committee
- Ensures there is a variety of diversity, equity and inclusion campus-wide programming
- Organizes Wheaton’s MLK Legacy Arts Showcase

DEAL Senate Committee
- Builds diversity, equity and inclusion capacity among faculty, staff, and students and provides members with opportunities for reflection and professional development
- Identifies the diversity, equity, and access needs of our community and troubleshoots how to effectively meet those needs with campus resources

DEAL Strategic Planning and Accountability (SPA) Committee
- Reviews institutional data, and makes recommendations around strategic opportunities to advance diversity, equity and inclusion on campus
- Contemplates potential equity gaps and develops appropriate strategies to address these gaps

Capacity Building

Wheaton’s Diversity & Inclusion Strategic plan identifies DEI institutional challenges and provides recommendations for addressing those challenges. One of those recommendations was to focus on capacity building. According to Sobeck and Agius (2007), organizational capacity building involves “blending of capabilities, knowledge, and resources” and “informal and formal processes and procedures followed by individuals that facilitate the achievement of the mission” of an organization (p. 238).

Through the institution’s DEAL structure, we engage our campus community in developing capacity building in a variety of ways including:
1. Addressing underlying functions of the institution to support permanent transformation.
2. Supporting, promoting, and leading DEI educational activities.
3. Understanding and advising the DEI needs of campus constituents.

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References