

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Educational Framework

Project Report

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2016

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Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Educational Framework

Executive Summary

The University of Alberta’s new [Institutional Strategic Plan \(ISP\)](#) signals a strong determination to “BUILD a diverse, inclusive community of exceptional students, faculty, and staff” while valuing “diversity, inclusivity, and equity across and among our people, campuses, and disciplines.” In particular, the new ISP aims to “review, improve, and implement equity processes and procedures for recruiting and supporting faculty to ensure a balanced academy, representative of women, visible minorities, sexual and gender minorities, Indigenous peoples, and people with disabilities.”

The goal of an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Educational Framework is to establish the structure, content, and methods of delivery to educate employees about the value and skills required create a culture on campus that is welcoming and inclusive for all. This project is the starting point in the process to develop the educational framework as it outlines the foundational rationale for its design and provides insight into the factors that will contribute to successful and sustainable implementation.

A literature review of academic articles and grey literature (including existing policy papers at the University of Alberta) on developing educational frameworks was conducted. In addition, a selection of faculty and staff were invited to participate in individual interviews to capture their understanding of EDI principles and their perspectives on implementing an educational framework. Importantly, this project builds on the findings and recommendations in the Respectful and Inclusive Workplace Framework developed by Human Resource Services in 2010. The results of the literature review and interviews, and a close review of the Respectful and Inclusive Workplace (RIW) Framework suggest that an EDI educational framework requires integration and careful planning and implementation by senior members of the university. It also requires the direct engagement of faculty, staff, and students through consultative processes to ensure the curriculum meets the needs of the institution. An EDI educational framework must be a continual work-in-progress that is developed, implemented, and revised over time.

Introduction

Through the consultation process during the ISP development, as outlined on the [UofA’s strategic plan development webpage](#), the University community identified equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) as critical components of a public institution acting for the public good. A workforce that possesses skills and knowledge of EDI is necessary to achieve the ISP’s five strategic goals, as outlined below:

BUILD a diverse, inclusive community of exceptional students, faculty, and staff from Alberta, Canada, and the world.

EXPERIENCE diverse and rewarding learning opportunities that inspire us, nurture our talents, expand our knowledge and skills, and enable our success.

EXCEL as individuals, and together, sustain a culture that fosters and champions distinction and distinctiveness in teaching, learning, research, and service.

ENGAGE communities across campuses, city and region, province, nation, and the world to create reciprocal, mutually beneficial learning experiences, research projects, partnerships, and collaborations.

SUSTAIN our people, our work, and the environment by attracting and stewarding the resources we need to deliver excellence to the benefit of all.

Further, the strategies identified in the Build goal, such as the two indicated below, are directly related to the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

ii. Strategy: Review, improve, and implement equity processes and procedures for recruiting and supporting faculty to ensure a balanced academy, representative of women, visible minorities, sexual and gender minorities, Indigenous peoples, and people with disabilities.

v. Strategy: Foster trust through mutually respectful dialogue between individuals, faculties, departments, administrative units, and campuses, and create opportunities to learn from each other's cultural variations.

The mandate of the Employment Equity program is historically compliance based. It was formed to comply with the Employment Equity Act's Federal Contractor's Program (FCP) which identifies women, members of visible minorities, persons with disabilities, and Aboriginal people as groups underrepresented in the workforce. The UofA became a signatory to the FCP in 1987 and developed "Opening Doors: A Plan for Employment Equity at the University of Alberta" approved by GFC and the BOG in 1993/94. While Opening Doors provided data and recommendations around student and employee representation and drew important connections between the two, the Employment Equity Program has been specifically focused on equity in employment as it relates to monitoring the number of employees who self-identify as members of the four designated groups. Detailed charts by various occupations, such as the professoriate, provide specific occupational data that reveal a lack of progress in achieving equitable representation are available. The existing approach to raising awareness and skill is not part of an institution-wide educational framework on equity. Instead, employment equity-related educational initiatives are conceived primarily by a few individuals within Human Resource Services. The workforce demographic data, for continuing and recurring term operating-funded positions, demonstrates that the current structure has not resulted in increased representation of employees who self-identify as Aboriginal, Persons with Disabilities, Members of Visible Minorities, and Women.

With the addition of EDI into the University's strategic plan, it is timely to establish an institution-wide understanding and commitment to these concepts by faculty and staff. The Employment Equity Program, Human Resource Services identified this as an important opportunity in which the office can take the lead in developing a proposal to raise awareness and skills in the area of EDI to support the realization of the ISP. The enhancement of EDI on our campuses is central to the ISP and at the same time contributes to the University's social sustainability. The Employment Equity Advisor applied to the Sustainability Scholars Internship Program to create the opportunity for a graduate student to initiate the background research required to support the development of an EDI educational framework.

Methodology

The methodology for this project consisted of 16 one-hour interviews with a selection of faculty members and administrators and a literature review. The following questions guided both the interview process and the literature review in the fields of management, education, and EDI policies in Canada and other countries.

- What is your understanding of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion as a member of the U of A community?
- Why do we need an educational framework and on-going training on EDI?
- How, as an institution, should we implement an EDI educational framework? What are best practices to do so?

The interviews conducted for this project were limited to a fairly narrow scope and number of faculty and staff. Going forward, collecting responses on the above questions from a larger sample of University of Alberta employees through additional interviews, focus groups and a short survey, is necessary to have a broader-based understanding of employee familiarity with equity, diversity, and inclusion values, justification for the development of the framework, and to gain insight from colleagues to ensure the framework is a successful and sustainable institution-wide initiative. Additional literature reviews, especially in relation to conducting assessments of employee EDI learning needs and instructional design are recommended so that a more comprehensive proposal for the development of an EDI educational framework can be written.

Literature Review and Interview Results

The literature review reveals the following individual, institutional, and societal benefits of educational institutions striving for equity, diversity, and inclusion of employees and students (Wending, 1998; Milem, 2003). These benefits support the introduction of EDI as foundational principles of the recently approved ISP. In addition, they can also be incorporated into key messages about their importance to the University of Alberta to begin a consistent awareness raising campaign.

| Individual benefits | Institutional benefits | Societal benefits |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved awareness around diversity • Enhanced sense of commonality in values • Greater commitment to increasing understanding of diversity • More occupational and residential desegregation later in life • Enhanced critical thinking ability • Greater satisfaction with the university-work experience • Perceptions of a more supportive campus climate • Increased wages for graduates • Enhanced career development over time for underrepresented members | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attraction of best available talents • Cultivation of workforce with greater levels of competency • Enhanced marketing efforts • Higher levels of creativity, innovation, and problem-solving abilities • More organization flexibility • More student-centered approaches to teaching and learning • More diverse curricular offerings • More diverse research agendas • More involvement in community and volunteer service • Higher ranking of the University in terms of best places to work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More research on the effects of diversity in the workplace • Higher levels of service to community and civic organizations • Enhanced medical, technical, and social services provided to underserved communities • Greater equity in society • Students prepared for democratic citizenship |

The Importance of an EDI Educational Framework

The interviewees shared their impressions and experiences of the level of understanding of equity, diversity, and inclusion values and their implementation at the university. The primary issue raised is that there are challenges in defining the meaning and value of EDI on campus, the result is that there is no shared understanding. This is consistent with the results of the focus groups and interviews conducted during the “Respectful and Inclusive Educational Framework” development in 2010 by Human Resource Services. Of course, the difference is that the Respectful and Inclusive Workplace Framework project identified a lack of shared understanding of what constitutes respectful and inclusive behaviour, as opposed to equity, diversity, and inclusion. One can make the assumption, however, that there are similarities and overlap between the concepts of respect/inclusive and equity/diversity/inclusion. As a result, the introduction of skills and attitudes required to create a culture of respect and inclusion on our various campuses remain as an imperative.

The lack of shared understanding of EDI values contributes to the difficulty in identifying and implementing internal policies and processes that support and promote a more diverse academy. During the interviews, it was noted that current policies and processes are somewhat confusing and difficult to understand, develop, and implement. Interviewees also shared that they were often not familiar with how to remedy inequities and there is inconsistent messaging from senior leadership in terms of which aspects of diversity are priorities. An overarching theme from the

interviews is that faculty and staff require tools and methods to create a culture in which all individuals can realize their capabilities. In addition to gaining a better awareness of, and skill in, implementing EDI policy and practice, the development of a binding educational framework has the potential to bridge currently isolated EDI-related initiatives on campus.

It was also noted that integration of EDI into faculty and staff recruitment processes is essential to increase the diversity of new hires, especially in areas that have chronic under-representations of Aboriginal Peoples, visible minorities, persons with disabilities, and women. The application of EDI to faculty and staff recruitment, retention, and renewal plans to create a culture that seeks and embraces diversity by developing skills and identifying appropriate levels of conceptual and practical support for faculty, staff, and students.

Recommendations for Educational Framework Development

The results of the interviews and literature review provided insight into the variety of potential successes and challenges in the actual development and implementation of the educational framework.

1. A centralized unit should coordinate and administer the overall framework and deliver the formal learning opportunities while designated leaders administer informal learning opportunities within their respective faculties, departments, and administrative units. Sturm (2006) has coined the designated leaders as “Hybrid Leadership Roles”: individuals in managerial roles who, in addition to their primary role, are specifically trained to further EDI values and skills, bridge isolated EDI initiatives, and leverage change in their area of accountability. These roles can include, but are not limited to, Vice-Presidents, Associate Vice-Presidents, AVPs, Directors, Senior Administrative Officers, Deans, Department Chairs, and academic program administrators, administrative unit managers/directors, support staff supervisors, etc.. This need for hybrid leadership roles arises from the necessity of having champions and skilled change agents to influence culture shifts. In addition, the EDI values and skills must be embedded in the various leadership roles to influence practice at points where stereotypes, biases, and inequities operate. Further, a centralized structured that functions through the accountability of the hybrid leadership roles minimizes the risk of overspecialization, over burdening, and marginalization of members of the campus community who represent under-represented groups such as members of visible minorities, persons with disabilities, Aboriginal People, and women to be partners and mentors in their immediate environment and not judicial threats. These change-leaders will promote and distribute knowledge, collaborate with other hybrid leaders at strategic points and locations, and support demands for action through involvement with affected individuals and grassroots participation (Agocs, 1996).
2. Partner with subject matter experts, who are either internal or external to the University, to sustain and provide accountability for change since such individuals/organizations/university units can use their capacities to produce knowledge, introduce incentives, and support accountability.

3. Develop an implementation strategy that will function within the University's decentralized administrative structure to limit the impact of the distributed power structure that may complicate any effort to achieve and sustain institutional change.
4. Support and commitment for the educational framework must come from senior leaders.
5. Similar to other universities in Canada, a centralized Equity office/senior leader to regulate EDI-related programming on campus.
6. Should embed EDI curriculum into academic program curricula to ensure continuity.
7. To develop and implement an effective educational framework or policy, it is essential that there is an understanding of faculty, staff, and students experiences as they relate to equity, diversity, and inclusion. The implementation of a climate survey is one way to gain insight into the experiences of students and employees.
8. Review of existing climate or student experience surveys to gain insight and determine topics for education, for example the iSMSS safe spaces survey.
9. Recommendations to incorporate EDI values into various organizational events, with a focus on universal access.
10. Establishment of peer support groups to provide employees, faculty, and students with nourishing and supportive environments so that they understand their role and develop skills to enhance recruitment and retention.

Theoretical Perspectives and Pedagogical Strategies

In order to implement an EDI framework it is recommended that Adult Learning Theory, Transformative Learning, Critical Social Theory, Critical Reflection, Rational Discourse, and Policy Praxis are theoretical perspectives that should be combined with pedagogical strategies (Brown, 2004) to transform employee knowledge and skills:

Adult Learning Theory emphasizes the importance of taking into consideration the learners lived experience, existing knowledge and their ability to be self-directed learners who can engage in critical contextual reflection and experiential learning.

Transformative Learning is an open-ended process of meaning making that are culturally constructed and directly influence behaviours.

Through **Critical Social Theory** we understand individual subjects as reflective and involved in changing their immediate environment toward equity.

Critical Reflection examines personal and professional belief systems along with ethical implications and effect of practices.

The application of **Rational Discourse** results in the repeated engagement in conversations about justice and equity to explore available evidence, examine alternative approaches, and transform assumptions.

And lastly, **Policy Praxis** is based on inductive and deductive reasoning aiming to transform restricted structures to achieve social justice.

Based on results from interviews with UofA community members, the literature review, and analysis of other institutional plans, the following map reflects a top-down, lateral, and input driven approach to implementing the EDI framework:

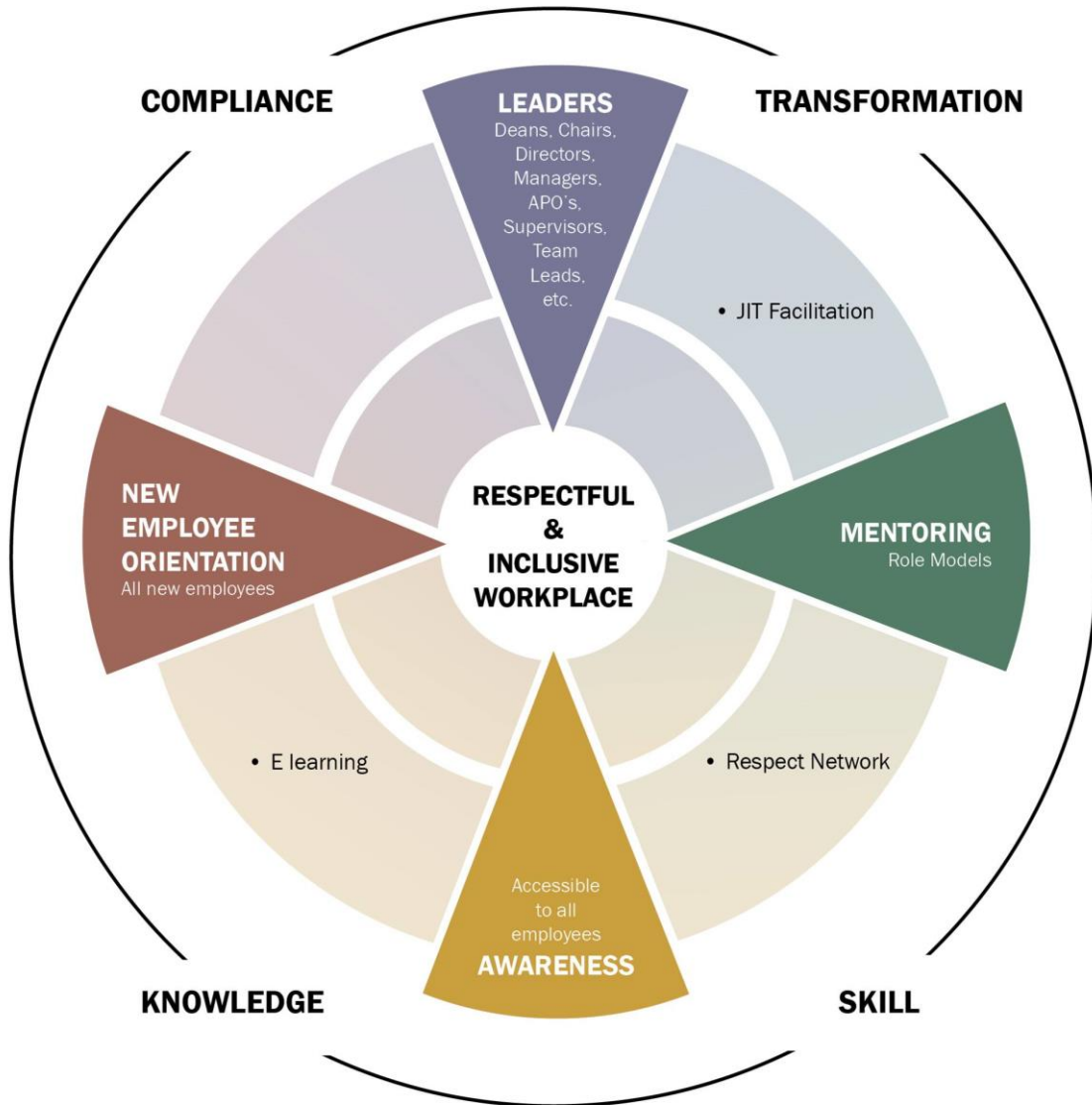
The EDI educational framework should be supported and resourced by senior executive such as the Office of President or the Provost. Further, the content of the EDI educational framework should be developed and delivered to the University's workforce through a centrally organized unit. This central unit identifies hybrid roles for target training, collaborates with other units and departments, and individuals to provide the required training around EDI values. This unit collects immediate feedback from senior managers, faculty and staff, and students to revise its ongoing training programs. Further, senior managers, faculty and staff members are required to report to the EDI unit and office of President/Provost every four years on impact of educational trainings, attitudinal changes, etc. for major revisions in EDI educational program content.

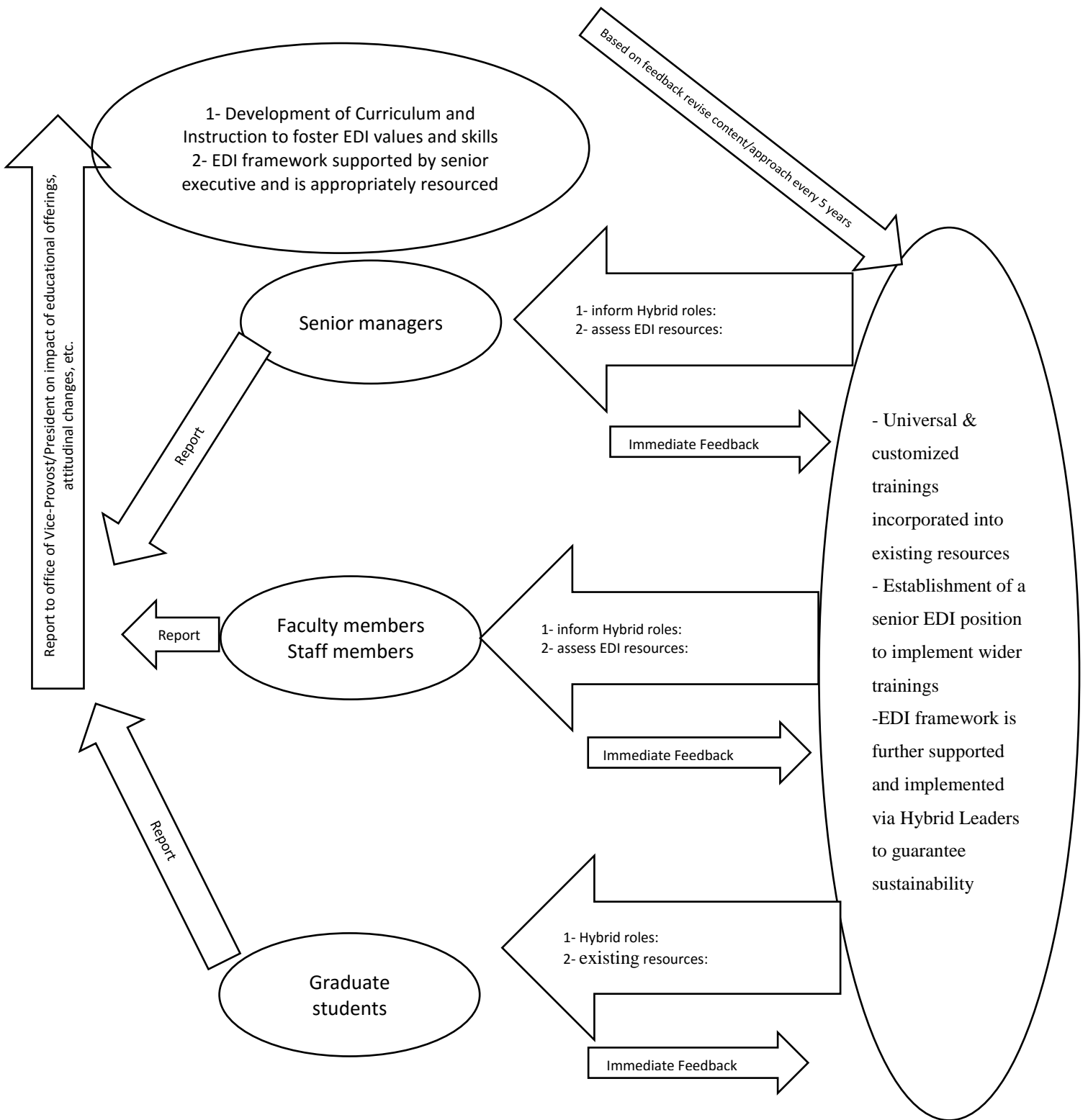
Implementation Strategies

The following snapshot presents all involved components of an EDI educational framework which aims to educate faculty and staff so that they may create an inclusive culture on campus. It was developed for the RIW framework and is also well-suited for the EDI framework. Next, we have mapped the road to implement the educational trainings in schematic format which is followed by a timetable to mark each stage of developing and implementing the EDI framework.

Respectful and Inclusive Workplace

Education Model

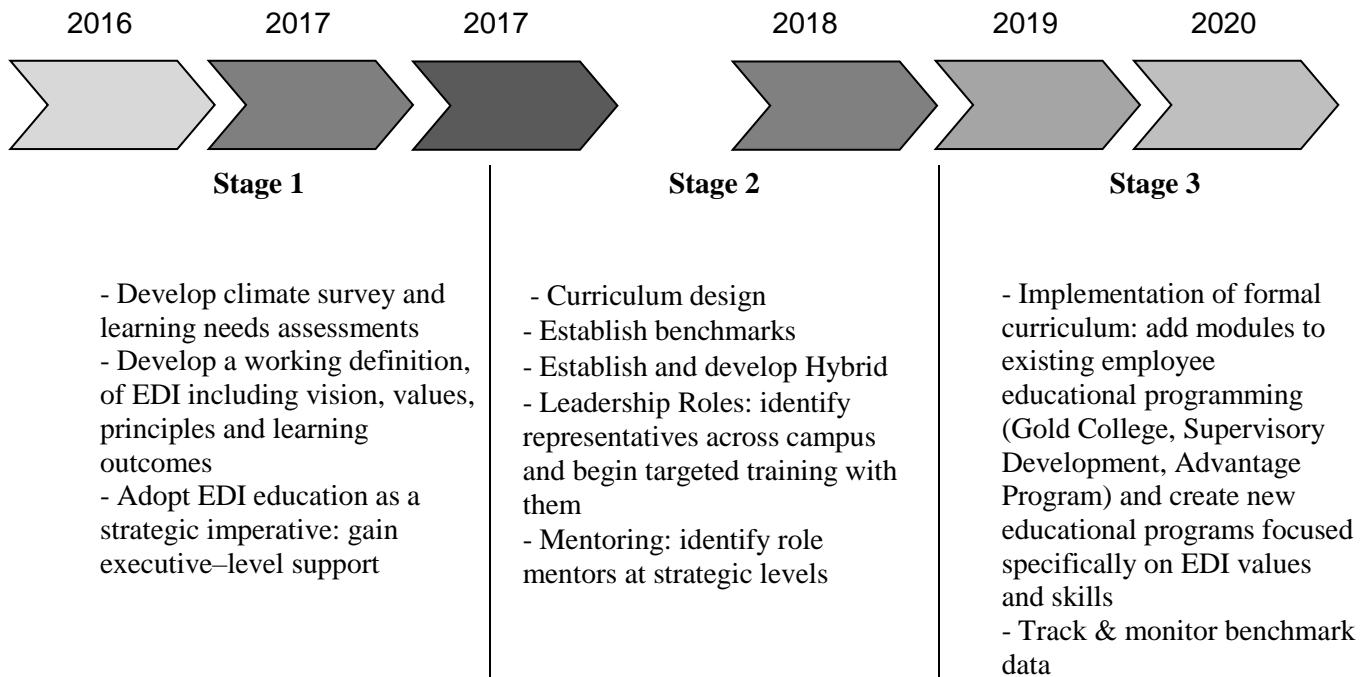




The models above consist of:

- Bottom-Up Approach: **All Staff**
 - Ensure all staff are provided accessible opportunities to learn about equity, diversity, and inclusive workplace practices and resources
- Top-down Approach: **Leadership**
 - Targeted training for leadership roles will leads to change/transformation
- Beginning-Forward Approach: **New Employee Orientation**
 - Ensure baseline information about legislation, UofA policy and expectations for compliance purposes and organizational due diligence
- Campus Community Investment Approach: **Mentoring**
 - Recognizing individuals, especially in leadership roles, who act as role models and coaches for others will assist in culture enhancement.

Once again, the RIW framework is a good model to follow while developing for the EDI educational framework. It takes into account the time needed to transition from the current compliance model guiding the Employment Equity Program to a proactive values-driven institutional model. Like the RIW framework, a **3-stage approach** over a four-year period is recommended for EDI:



The following elements from the RIW are additional recommendations outlined to capture the multifaceted approach that is needed for a transformative and sustainable culture shift at the UofA. Adopting the below components in the EDI framework will utilize active participation and long term goal setting and accountability for all faculties and units on campus.

The Respectful and Inclusive Educational Framework developed by HRS a number of years ago was grounded in the following values. Human Resource Services developed these values which served as the basis of the 2012-2017 HRS Strategic Plan and they should also be incorporated into the EDI educational framework. With the infusion of EDI into each of them, the values will become more responsive and relevant as the diversity of the workforce grows:

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Well-Being | We treat each other fairly, equitably and respectfully. We work in a safe and healthy environment, and take responsibility for maintaining work/life balance and developing the resilience to deal with change. |
| Innovation | We are engaged in a creative search for new and better ways of achieving excellence in teaching, research, administration and community service, and we are valued and recognized for our contributions. |
| Accountability | We understand how our contributions support Faculty and University goals. We have clear, reasonable expectations for performance and are accountable for meeting those expectations. |
| Growth | We have opportunities to develop our skills and abilities, and for career growth and change. |
| Teamwork | We work cooperatively and collaboratively to achieve the University's goals in an environment that reflects diversity, values different perspectives and encourages the free exchange of ideas. |
| Engagement | We participate fully in the life of the University. We understand how and why decisions are made and have opportunities for input into decisions that affect us. |
| Integrity | We strive for the highest ethical and legal standards and are committed to conscientious and productive performance. Working in a spirit of collegiality, we take responsibility for our actions and behaviors. |

Other important components of the RIW that should be applied to the EDI framework are the following (revised) recommendations:

Recommendation #1: Establish mentoring as an educational priority at the UofA and specifically identifying roles models at all levels in the organization who consistently demonstrate equity, diversity, and inclusiveness in the workplace.

Recommendation #2: Establish and bring together various groups and individuals throughout the UofA, from all levels of the organization, to serve as resource people concerning EDI matters to inform curriculum design.

Recommendation #3: Support an aligned and coordinated communications strategy

Recommendation #4: Identify EDI success indicators (both quantitative and qualitative metrics) and establish a comprehensive data tracking and reporting system for benchmark and progress metrics.

Recommendation #5: Create an intentionally collaborative system for changing workplace behaviours concerning EDI issues, including alignment of communications, awareness, education, support services, resource centres, and committees for UofA staff and students.

Recommendation #6: Create a systemic connection between EDI education for academic and non-academic staff which links to existing performance evaluation programs – embed core competency descriptors into performance management systems.

Conclusions – Recommendations

In addition to the results of the literature review and interviews conducted for this project, a broader campus consultation process and expanded literature review is required as the results at this stage in the project are based on a narrow scope. It will be important that many more faculty and staff have the opportunity to participate in interviews, focus groups to respond to the questions to gain broader input.

In order for the curriculum to be meaningful, timely, and relevant, a gap analysis is an important next step. The analysis will be between the existing working, learning, and living culture, the anticipated outcome of the training - skills employees need to transform the culture to one that is respectful and inclusive, and the current state of employee awareness and skills. Data for the gap analysis should come from an institution-wide climate survey or multiple smaller surveys conducted by individual units, such as the iSMSS safe spaces survey, to gain a sense of students and employees experiences of respect and inclusion on campus; a learning needs assessment – what faculty and staff need to know to create or foster the development of respectful and inclusive environments; and lastly, an assessment of the current EDI knowledge and skills faculty and staff possess to determine the starting point for curriculum development. One particularly relevant climate survey is the [“Diversity Climate Survey” conducted by the College of Information Studies](#). This survey contains a comprehensive set of questions that capture student experiences of respect and inclusion. Given that it is student focused, it is anticipated that the next literature review and environmental scan of other post-secondary institutions will uncover additional student surveys as well as those that were developed for faculty and staff. It is also entirely possible that the University of Alberta will need to develop its own unique climate survey.

As equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) has been identified as important values to be implemented at the University of Alberta through the [Institutional Strategic Plan \(ISP\)](#), a comprehensive EDI educational framework will be needed to insure that appropriate training and

skill development is provided to assist employees in ensuring they are actively working towards the realization of a diverse, respectful, and welcoming campus where all members of the community can fully participate. The outcomes of the literature review and interviews formed the recommendations outlined in this report. The most critical ones being senior leadership support and buy in, a comprehensive network of EDI allies or, hybrid leaders, in all levels of the organization, and having practical, relevant, and timely curriculum to help inform the processes, policies, and strategies needed to move forward in developing and implementing a multifaceted EDI educational framework. Essential in the above recommended process of developing an EDI framework is to have participation and collaboration from diverse voices and communities on campus through a climate survey and have institutional wide commitment and appropriate resources to move from a compliance focused model to a value based model.

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