



# FACULTY INSTITUTE FOR INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

*Program Report, 2021*



VICE PRESIDENT  
FOR DIVERSITY  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY



## Introduction

In 2014, the CSU Office of the Vice President of Diversity (OVPD) and The Institute for Learning and Teaching (TiLT) created the Faculty Institute for Inclusive Excellence (FIIE), a unique year-long faculty development program designed to address the role that faculty can play in creating a more inclusive, equitable institution. A reconceptualization of the former [Multicultural Curriculum Project by Dr. Blanche Hughes](#), the goal of the FIIE is to create a learning environment for faculty to engage in topics of diversity and inclusion in pedagogy, curriculum, and university communities. Participants in the program explore civility, curriculum, and culture, with regard to diversity and inclusion best practices in the classroom. The purpose of FIIE is to transform classrooms and positively influence campus climate such that awareness regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is integrated within pedagogical practices. FIIE seeks to develop awareness, knowledge, and skills that promote equity and social justice in educational settings.

FIIE is a full-year program held January through December annually. Three-hour sessions are held biweekly during the first semester, then participants develop and implement a project with the aid of a mentor during the remaining time. In January of the following year, participants present their projects and are named Faculty Institute Fellows. Since its inception in 2015, FIIE has been administered five times and graduated 43 Fellows representing Tenure-track and Non-Tenure track faculty.

In order to examine the individual and institutional impact of the FIIE on CSU, we conducted interviews with faculty participants. Of the 42 Fellows still at the university, 30 agreed to participate. From those interviews, we can draw findings regarding the individual impact of the FIIE on participants' awareness, knowledge, and skills in regards to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), as well as some of the larger impacts on the institution and beyond.



## Framework

Across the country, educational organizations are promoting DEI, which in practice range from “celebrating diversity” to “engaging equity.” Adding a “J” to our DEI work to include justice, our research positions education through a social justice framework (Adams, et al., 2013) where “our challenge is to appreciate social diversity while working to dismantle social inequality” (Adams, et al., 2013, p. 1). In this view, social justice is both a process and a goal: full and equal participation of all members (Bell, 2013, p. 21). Moving an institution toward a multicultural organization that is Diverse, Equitable, Inclusive & Just in its policies, structures, practices, and culture requires all members to contribute to the transformative process (Holvino, 2008; Jackson, 2006). Recognizing that short-term diversity trainings have limited success in cultivating DEIJ practices (Jennings & Smith, 2006), the OVPD created several long-term professional development (PD) programs for different constituencies of CSU. The FIIE is a unique year-long program designed by the OVPD and CSU faculty to cultivate inclusive excellence in teaching specifically and to integrate DEIJ into the broader sphere of work engaged by faculty on campus and in their professions.

# Methods

To answer our research question, we employed semi-structured interviews. There are currently 42 Fellows still working at CSU, to each of those faculty members was emailed an invitation to participate. Of those 43, 30 agreed to participate, representing a 71% positive response rate. From these 30 participants, all 8 Colleges and 18 departments at CSU are represented in this study. Interviews were done in person or, after COVID-19 restrictions, through video meeting. Each participant signed an informed consent letter and was given or chose a pseudonym. No identifying data (e.g. participant name, department, rank) will be reported. Interviews were audio recorded for transcription.

The semi-structured interview protocol was organized around three broad categories: (1) experiences of FIIE participants in the year-long program, (2) the development and implementation of their FIIE project, and (3) the impact that their participation had on them, their work, and the institution. After interviews were done and transcribed, the research team engaged in a thematic analysis of the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006) using inductive codes, research memos, and collaborative meetings. We used a research team approach to collaboratively construct codes, categories, and themes through a 3-phase inductive coding process and analytic memos (Birks et al., 2008).

# Findings

## Overview

The findings are separated into four sections: (1) the types of projects that participants engaged in, (2) the impacts at the individual and institutional levels, (3) barriers to engaging with this work, and (4) feedback on the program itself including the impact that the facilitation and facilitators of FIIE had on the program and areas for the improvement of FIIE. First, the projects that the participants described covered a wide range of topics and affected all parts of the university. Many projects involved participants' classrooms, with Fellows revising syllabi, expanding content, and cultivating an inclusive pedagogy. Also, some participants created or revised curriculum in their departments or colleges beyond their own classrooms, including multiple courses being revised with a DEI focus). Participants also engaged in evaluation of their departments or colleges for issues involving DEI including enrollment and climate. Participants also created presentations and seminars for their departments or colleges on DEI topics, as well as DEI resources for their departments or colleges.

The impacts from the FIIE were many and varied, so we divided them into impacts on the Fellows themselves and the impacts that Fellows have had at an institutional level. Further, the individual and institutional impacts have been divided further to show the depth and breadth of the impacts of the FIIE program. To break down the individual impacts, we categorized them based on increased awareness, knowledge, skills, and action.

**Impacts of participants' awareness included a mindset change, gaining a better equity lens, and increased awareness that DEI work requires lifelong learning.**

- *"That's one thing I wonder about is, how do we get that across that you can't do this ... in your classroom space only or to do it in your departmental committees only, right? It's sort of that, once it's been seen it can't be unseen. I think if you really see it and you really do this work, you can't help but do it everywhere because you see it everywhere." Gabrielle*

**Impacts on participants' knowledge included increased pedagogical knowledge, knowledge of DEI topics such as social identities, implicit bias, privilege, microaggressions, multicultural organization development, and use of DEI language.**

- *(What aspects of the faculty Institute were most beneficial to you?) "I think there were a couple, again one was really the language, just understanding. It's not really about memorization but it's really about getting exposed to the different ways people think about inclusion and diversity. So that was valuable." - Bill*

Impacts on participants' skills included how they use DEI knowledge, the use of DEI in mentoring, and confidence having difficult conversations in class and in their personal lives.

- *"The other thing I learned is, if you notice [something] at that moment, or even if you notice it later, say something about it, don't just let it go. So that cognizance of that. And the willingness to just talk about it."* -Maggie

Impacts on participants' action included joining DEI committees, encouraging colleagues to do DEI trainings, incorporating DEI in department and college policies, practices, meetings, search processes, and professional organizations, and employing an equity perspective in research.

- *"I'm trying to think of other things that we have done or that I've done to move that work or take my knowledge from that work. I would say it's less of an isolated event and more of just taking information gained and continuing to apply it into the small details of everything that I do."* - Sara

In addition to individual impacts on participants, we also assessed impacts that FIIE had at the institutional level. We categorized these based on the part of the institution impacted and have been presented in ascending order of magnitude; these included the classroom, department, college, institution, discipline, and community. Additionally, participants described activities that they engaged in after their FIIE experience that they would not have participated in had they not participated in FIIE. We grouped these experiences into a category we called "Multiplier Effect" to show how participants' experience in FIIE made them more likely to continue their contributions to DEI efforts in the future.

**Classroom: teaching effectiveness; changes to syllabi/content; bringing one's own identities into the classroom**

- *"It has changed how I view my class, how I teach my class and my curriculum. It has very much changed my willingness to address, for example, when there was the Black face incident, to actually address in my classroom that there are instances of bias and just say it really publicly that there are opportunities to support each other and provide resources."* -Barb

**Department: committees; sharing information with faculty; creating new major or curriculum with DEI knowledge; develop departmental actions**

- *"It's allowed me insight into being able to help encourage colleagues to engage in the work... And I would say that's a role that I appreciate having and feeling like I can be a safe place for people who feel like they might be saying the wrong things or doing the wrong things."* - Sara

**College: committees; taking students abroad; integrating learning into college-wide curriculum; presenting to college-level audiences**

- *"Now, we did this training, I hope that will have an impact across the college. Some of the people who took the training were in administrative positions, dean's office, involved in admission and all that. We will see."* -Aaron

**Institution: university-level committees and programs; presenting at workshops**

- *"I think it's come a long way and partly because now we have these postdocs and faculty members who can contribute to that process, who have a much deeper understanding. I think there's a lot.... I think it's percolated upwards."* - Marta

**Discipline: research; conference presentations; editorials contributions**

- *"I would say probably that happens like through the choices I make about which publications to pursue, I try to coauthor with students whenever possible or with community members. It's just a representation of social justice and access. I mean those things are just kind of embedded in the work that we do."* -Tiffany

### Community: volunteering, church, talking to people in their lives

- *“Anything that I do, it has made me more aware of my church, and what I think my church should do with regard to social justice, and my family hears me ad nauseum.” - Emma*

**Multiplier Effect:** participate in other DEIJ trainings and conferences; applying learning in other courses; new majors, programs, trainings with the support of an FIIE mentor, FIIE Fellows created and implemented a project that integrated equity & diversity perspectives into their teaching and/or departmental work. These projects allowed Fellows to further develop DEIJ practices individually and to contribute to DEIJ practices throughout CSU.

- *“So we developed a new major from scratch, from the ground up because my department hasn’t had one. And we had three people who’d been through Faculty Institute around the core team developing that. And so because we’re building it from the ground up, we could build it the way we wanted and put inclusive and equity practices infused throughout the curriculum each year.” -Barry*

Many participants also had feedback on the program itself, including on how the facilitation and facilitators impacted them and the program and areas that the FIIE can be improved.

**Process:** the way that sessions were organized and facilitated. Participants talked about how they felt comfortable and safe in the environment created, the accessible way the content was delivered, and the ability to make mistakes.

- *“And having a safe space, that’s so important. Where you can come to terms with your white privilege and it be okay and you can make mis- you gotta be able to make mistakes.” Linda*

### Facilitators

- *“Well, [the facilitator] certainly changed my life.” Brady*
- *“I learned so much by watching [the] facilitators.” Gabrielle*

**Program Improvement:** participants suggested that the program be expanded beyond its US-centric context, that there be more educational opportunities after the program is over, that the program take more time to complete, and that they were able to get deeper into the discussions in the program.

- *“I honestly wish it had been longer...we were getting into good conversations, but then it was 4:00 and we had to go.” Lisa*
- *“I think in general our discussions didn’t get us far enough into the discomfort zone but there was one day where they did, and that was a memorable day.” Marta*

Lastly, participants described some of the barriers that they and others face when engaging in this kind of program. Specifically, some participants faced resistance from their department heads or others in administrative positions. This was often because of the time commitment that the program requires and administrators not prioritizing this kind of work.

- *“...when I told my department head I wanted to do it, the response was, ‘Why would you do that?’...I was actively discouraged because I was told it was a waste of time for me to do.” Barb*
- *“...they just don’t see its importance and they don’t want to spend the time.” George*

# Implications

The findings indicate that FIIE supported Fellows in deepening DEIJ work on an individual and institutional level in significant ways. In general, participants reported cultivating an equity lens that recognizes and addresses institutional practices, policies, and structures. They brought this equity lens to multiple contexts of their work, including their classrooms, search committees, and interactions with their colleagues. Beyond the impact of their FIIE projects on their classrooms, departments, and colleges, many Fellows have pursued additional opportunities to engage in DEIJ work that relates to their areas of expertise, thereby creating a multiplier effect of the impact of FIIE, particularly in units with multiple Fellows and supportive administration. These effects demonstrate an individual and institutional move from diversity & inclusion toward equity & justice (Stewart, 2017). Institutional impact is limited by resistance from colleagues and administrators reported by many Fellows, the small number of Fellows that can be supported annually, and limited opportunities for ongoing collaboration within and across FIIE faculty cohorts.

Participants' enthusiastic response to participate in this study along with their claims of the value of FIIE suggests that the impact of FIIE can be further multiplied. With additional investment, FIIE can support a larger, critical mass of Fellows within and across departments, with ongoing professional development and collaboration for existing Fellows as requested by most study participants.

On the individual level, the significant impacts were that participants reported their passion for lifelong learning, an increase in an equity lens that they brought to everything from their classrooms, to their search committees, to their research, as well as an understanding of the need to address structures and policies that are inequitable and unjust. Overall, these affects demonstrate an individual and institutional move towards justice (Stewart, 2017). On the institutional level, we saw important impacts, but we need to expand the program to reach a critical mass of participants to support the multiplier effect, demonstrate a sustainable impact, and remove the institutional barriers that we observed.

For the success of the program to continue and to see increased impacts in the future, the Vice President for Diversity Office will need more resources to expand the program by possibly having more cohorts, do follow-up meetings with Fellows (which was asked for often in the interviews), and support from administrators so that future Fellow feels able to take time away from research and teaching to invest in FIIE. All of these recommendations require that diversity not be seen as an add-on, but rather an integral part of the success of a faculty member. To create real and sustainable change, diversity, equity, and inclusion must be central to what we do, requiring financial and institutional support.

Further research should explore the extent of the institutional impacts within and across units. This work does show the FIIE is having a positive impact on Fellows and the larger campus community, but this data is only over 5 years and for 42 Fellows. CSU will need to reach greater critical mass of Fellows to see the benefit of that impact, especially because the findings suggest that there is continued resistance to faculty participating. This, along with other sources of data including the Employee Climate Survey, will prove the impact of diversity, equity, and inclusion professional development opportunities, including FIIE.

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