

University of Washington 2006 Diversity Implementation Project:
Changing the Socio-political Climate of the School of Nursing¹
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Executive Summary

The overall goal of this SON Diversity Implementation grant was to improve the socio-political climate by making explicit and changing the way unacknowledged norms, beliefs and behaviors inhibit our efforts to be inclusive of students, faculty and staff of color. My intention was to create a cadre of faculty and staff knowledgeable about White privilege and oppression, able to function as change agents in the organization in order to promote recruitment and retention of underrepresented faculty, staff and students. By participating in an eight month series of anti-oppression workshops, this cadre of faculty and staff would have the ability to recognize how climate negatively impacts diversity and have the self-awareness and anti-oppression skills necessary to transform the climate in a positive direction. Initial **grant objectives** were to:

- *implement faculty-staff development workshops that address how unacknowledged norms, behaviors and practices adversely impact climate;*
- *use innovation-diffusion methods and sustainability principles to implement a system of action plans to transform the organizational climate of the SON;*
- *develop and institutionalize more explicit, inclusive, and comprehensive definitions of diversity and climate at the SON.*

This project was developed to contribute toward attainment of two of the seven SON 2005-2010 Strategic Plan goals: *to promote high quality of work life and supportive environment, and to recruit and retain a diverse student body, faculty, and staff.*

Eight SON faculty and staff persons were paid to attend a Winter, Spring and Summer 2006 workshop series on White privilege, taught by Dr. Robin DiAngelo, multicultural education consultant. Dr. DiAngelo and I developed the series together. Dr. DiAngelo led each session while I moderated. In addition to the workshop series, participants attended a two-day People's Institute conference, *Dismantling Racism*. Because we were aiming for institutional climate change, an innovation-diffusion and sustainable change consultant led a school-wide workshop on change. He also led a session with workshop participants on developing action plans and indicators to track institutional change. At the end of the series, participants developed seven action plans designed to transform the SON climate. These plans are currently being implemented. Evaluation of the series was very positive; more importantly, participants documented change in their understanding, thinking and to a lesser extent, behaviors, regarding race, privilege, power and oppression as a result of the workshops. A final evaluation of success in meeting indicators for the action plans will be conducted Spring 2007. A full report of the series follows, with recommendations for change for future workshops.

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Report of Process and Progress

The overall goal of the SON Diversity Implementation grant was to improve the socio-political climate by making explicit and changing the way unacknowledged norms, beliefs and behaviors inhibit our efforts to be inclusive of students, faculty and staff of color.

In Fall quarter 2005 I posted a school-wide email message asking for SON faculty and staff to participate in a series of workshops focused on socio-political climate change at the SON. Out of 11 applications, four faculty and four staff persons were chosen to participate based on their written applications and positions as leaders and/or potential leaders of the School. They were paid \$2000.00 for participation. The initial grant objectives were to:

- *implement faculty-staff development workshops that address how unacknowledged norms, behaviors and practices adversely impact climate;*
- *use innovation-diffusion methods and sustainability principles to implement a system of action plans to transform the organizational climate of the SON;*
- *develop and institutionalize more explicit, inclusive, and comprehensive definitions of diversity and climate at the SON.*

Participants included

- Julie Katz, MEd, Assistant Dean, Academic Services;
- Laura Mason, Manager of Operations, Academic Services;
- Carolyn Chow, MA, Director of Admissions and Multicultural Student Affairs, Academic Services;
- Donald Berg, Academic Personnel Officer, Dean's Office;
- Debbie Ward, RN, PhD, ARNP, Associate Professor and Director, Master's Entry Program in Nursing, Psychosocial and Community Health;
- Patti Brandt, RN, PhD, ARNP, Professor, Family Child Nursing;
- Maggie Baker, RN, PhD, Assistant Professor, Biobehavioral and Systems;
- Annie Bruck, RN, MN, Lecturer and Acting Director, Occupational and Environmental Health Nursing, Psychosocial and Community Health;
- Travis DiAmico, RN, master's student Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner, Research Assistant.

Participants were paid to attend a series of anti-oppression workshops focusing on White privilege during Winter, Spring and Summer quarters, 2006. This participation included attendance at a two-day national workshop sponsored by the local chapter of The People's Institute on *Dismantling Racism*. Attendance at the People's Institute combined with the ongoing workshops equipped participants with strategies for advancing racial and social justice, and enabled us to move much more quickly toward creating and implementing sustainable plans for climate change at the SON.

Consultant Dr. Robin DiAngelo, Multicultural Education, was hired to work with me to develop the series of 12 workshops focused on transforming the climate of the SON. During the academic year, participants met for eight half day sessions, following a formal curriculum with required readings developed by Dr. DiAngelo. During the workshops, participants analyzed the psychological, behavioral, and structural dimensions of institutional climate from a historical perspective. They explored the institutional context of the SON, and discussed how institutionalized beliefs, behaviors, prevailing group norms, processes, and policies negatively or positively impact SON recruitment, retention, scholarship, pedagogy, and personal and professional learning. They analyzed the dynamics of White privilege, engaged in critical self-reflection on Whiteness, and examined the role of the individual and cultural, economic and socio-political institutions in racism and other injustices in the United States. They learned how US socialization, historically-driven perspectives, and behavioral norms engender unwitting collusion with racism and other oppressions. Workshop content was centered on racism and privilege; the concepts discussed were also applied to the dynamics of other oppressions such as sexism, heterosexism, ableism, anti-Semitism, mentioned as other ways of understanding Whiteness. A variety of learning approaches was used, such as films, required readings, exercises, group discussions, and guest speakers.

In Spring 2006, two additional workshops were led by a sustainability consultant, Mr. RL Hatcher of *Optimal Niche*. The first was a health sciences-wide session on *Innovation Diffusion Training: A Simulation and Training Workshop on Effective Change*. About 40 faculty and health sciences staff attended this lecture and role playing workshop that taught participants how innovative change becomes adopted in organizations, including how new ideas are adopted by groups and how to recognize and utilize archetypical roles such as innovators, change agents, transformers, mainstreamers, and reactionaries, and others. The second workshop, attended by climate participants only, concerned developing action plans and sustainability indicators. A third workshop will be held Fall, 2006 on use of sustainability indicators to track institutional change.

During Summer quarters 2006, climate participants attended two more workshops led by Dr. DiAngelo on issues of race, racism, White-alliance, and climate in the School of Nursing. Participants developed action plans with timelines to apply the skills they had acquired in the workshops to change the climate of the SON. These sessions also accomplished the important work of keeping the group connected to one another, providing one another personal support, sharing resources, and building a network base, all of which are critical to anti-oppression work. Action plans were centered on building needed SON infrastructure to support anti-oppression work, networking with others involved in these efforts, and training other key SON personnel. Examples of action plans are below.

Examples of Action Plans

Action plans developed and currently being implemented Fall, 2006 include:

1. Form a health-sciences wide nursing activist group, NARN, Nurses Against Racism Network (Debbie Ward).
2. Form a liaison of the Climate group with the SON Diversity Committee to better integrate goals regarding diversity actions school-wide (Patti Brandt).
3. Reconfigure the Virtual Neighborhood for Geographically Diverse Students website to be more inclusive of diversity (Maggie Baker).
4. Work with Dr. Butch DeCastro, Director, Occupational and Environmental Health Nursing, regarding recruitment, adding new content in OEHN classes on the topics of environmental justice and racism, and including environmental justice and anti-racism content in the new Healthcare Without Harm website (Annie Bruck).
5. Academic Services (AS) action plans: (Julie Katz, Carolyn Chow):
 - send three AS staff members to the People's Institute conference on *Dismantling Racism* each year;
 - arrange work-release time for key AS staff to attend SON Diversity Committee meetings and report back to AS during monthly meetings;
 - teach AS staff about institutionalized racism by assigning readings or having each member bring an example of racism in the media for discussion at monthly AS meetings;
 - update the SON Diversity History on the Diversity Web page to ensure the Web site's usability and viability;
 - explore the formation of an "Accountability Group" of people of color to advise and hold accountable the ongoing work of the Sociopolitical Climate Change group;
 - build an alliance of the Climate group with OMA and GOMAP.
6. Dissemination of Climate group activities to key persons at the SON and UW (Carole Schroeder, Robin DiAngelo):
 - development of a Web site for the Climate change group (completed) <http://www.son.washington.edu/eo/spclimate/default.asp>
 - post the workshop syllabus, readings, action plans and this report on the website to disseminate this work school wide;
 - submit a report to SON Dean Nancy Woods, SON Deans and Chairs, and to Dr. Shiela Lange of the UW Office of Minority Affairs.
7. Seek additional funding to continue the workshops with SON faculty and staff in Winter/Spring 2007 (Carole Schroeder).

Revision of SON Climate Statement

In addition to the Action Plans, the five-year-old SON Climate Statement was updated by the climate workshop participants and SON Diversity Committee in Winter/Spring quarters 2006 to reflect current diversity issues. These changes were brought to the October Diversity Committee (which I co-Chair), and will be brought to all SON curriculum committees, Faculty Council and Governing Council for discussion and approval.

Evaluation of the Workshops

Evaluation of the workshops occurred three months into the series and at the end of Spring Quarter 2006. The aim of this evaluation was to explore participants' personal processes and changes in understanding, thinking, and behaviors due to the workshops. We also evaluated Dr. DiAngelo's consultation using a focus group, and evaluated the content of the workshops using the standard qualitative yellow sheets used for UW course evaluations.

Change as Result of Workshops

In March 2006, after the first 3 months of workshops, participants were asked to fill out a two-page survey developed by CIDR, Dr. DiAngelo and me to assess their progress in obtaining the necessary knowledge and skills to take an active stance against oppression. We asked about changes in understanding, thinking, and behaviors, and for examples of these changes. Four participants returned the survey, rating their changes as a result of the workshops on a 0-5 scale (not at all to all the time):

- *change in understanding* of concepts such as Whiteness, racism, climate, privilege and power as result of workshops: **4**
- frequency of *thinking differently*: **3.7**
- frequency of *behaving differently*: **2.5**

Qualitative comments regarding examples included statements such as

- "My position as a classroom teacher has become more inquiring, less afraid, I hope more humble."
- "My understanding of institutional racism has deepened most dramatically...impacting me is how educational institutions reinforce the racism we all learn from the very start."
- "I lapse back to my default (unconsciously White and 'the standard') position all the time still. I have to work to move off that position. I was able to do that in several student conversations."
- "I notice when I encounter minority persons...I make more of an attempt to make eye contact and greet them. I try to focus more on the person now instead of the service being given so I am more engaged and less detached."

In May 2006, the same evaluation form was used after 10 of 12 sessions. Four participants returned the final evaluation survey. Ratings of changes in understanding, thinking and behaviors were higher than at the 3 month evaluation:

- *change in understanding* of concepts such as Whiteness, racism, climate, privilege and power as result of workshops: **4.5**
- frequency of *thinking differently*: **4.25**
- frequency of *behaving differently*: **3.25**

Comments regarding change included

- “I am less complicit with racist comments, attitudes, and jokes by expressing my discomfort at what is said or speaking up....”
- “Working with a Chinese doctoral student, I realize I am taking over her project – acting as a colonial overlord (albeit friendly).”
- “(I am) questioning my sense of mindfulness/intent about ways I do things, ways of interacting with others.”
- “Classroom interactions with students of color and International students (are different). Building in their experiences/views and ways of learning into the course as a central approach to learning experiences (new behavior).”

In May 2006, I also moderated an informal focus group with all participants to evaluate Dr. DiAngelo’s teaching. Participants were overwhelmingly positive in their comments:

- “Thank you – this is a difficult topic for all of us, and the facilitator is able to get the feel of everyone’s comfort level, draw people out, in a safe, supportive environment” (person of color).
- “This is useful for everyone...I want to learn how to do this facilitation work you do. It is an honor to be in this” (person of color).
- “Dr. DiAngelo does very important modeling how to be involved in this work. It has always been people of color saying racism exists, having Robin involved is very important. I value seeing that there are people doing this work and helping others do this work” (White person).
- “The race analysis is wonderful, I can take it back to my own life and work” (White person).
- “I enjoyed this – Robin takes us all so seriously, well organized, makes me look at the world differently and understand myself more. Great to see White women so passionate about this cause” (person of color).
- “This workshop made me go “Uh oh.” Robin’s ability to be open and her article were (both) so important” (White person).
- “I am impressed with how elegant Robin’s work is” (White person).
- “Robin’s vulnerability on race, class, gender, heterosexism, is really important and very moving” (White person).

The paper and pencil evaluation using UW teaching evaluation yellow sheets was also overwhelmingly positive about the workshops overall. The workshops were considered extremely intellectually stimulating, with comments such as

- “It took me on a journey I had no idea I was headed on, both emotionally and intellectually captivating /stimulating” (White person).
- “I was constantly challenged to move to a deeper level” (White person).

Several respondents asked that the series be school-wide and continued for a longer period, and as one person stated “Open this to all, so we have a common language.”

Summary and Suggestions for Change

Overall, the project was a success. It is clear that we are meeting the overall grant goal of making explicit and changing the way unacknowledged norms, beliefs and behaviors inhibit our efforts to be inclusive of students, faculty and staff of color. The SON Diversity/Climate statement was changed to reflect current thought on anti-oppression. Participants completed the workshop series, attended the People’s Institute *Dismantling Racism* 2 day workshop, and learned innovation diffusion and sustainability skills to facilitate institutional change. All but one participant is currently working on action plans designed to transform the climate of the SON.

Implementing this anti-oppression climate project provided some invaluable lessons that will help future efforts. If this series should occur again, the racial makeup of the participants should include a cohort of people of color, at least 1/3 of the group. White privilege operates in groups, and in groups dominated by Whites talking about privilege and oppression, people of color can become isolated. A cohort of people of color would provide strength in numbers and group support regarding their experiences and knowledge of White privilege and racism. Individual and group check-ins should occur periodically, for the workshop content was often emotionally and intellectually challenging. Participants, particularly people of color, should be supported to deal with painful issues as they arise. Faculty/staff power differentials were also apparent, with faculty sometimes dominating discussions. Institutionalized power differentials are even more obvious and debilitating in a workshop such as this because of the content of the workshop sessions (equality, anti-oppression, anti-racism). In the future, I would consider having separate faculty and staff groups due to institutionalized power differentials that inhibit group learning, participation, and cohesiveness.

It is also clear that changing the sociopolitical climate of the SON, or anywhere, requires the diffusion of many innovations, almost all of which are long term and often subtle. The benefits of these innovations are also difficult to demonstrate immediately. Such change can and does occur, but requires patience, long-term strategies, short-term actions, and adaptability. Strong administrative support will help accelerate the change, as will continued use of sustainability methodologies and innovation diffusion techniques.

In summary, this project met its objectives and created a cadre of anti-oppression and anti-racist faculty and staff who are working on action plans designed to transform the sociopolitical climate at the SON to better recruit and retain diverse faculty, students and staff. Further evaluation of attainment of action plan goals and indicators of success will be important to document change.