



**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY**  
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES  
*Diversity and Inclusiveness Culture Assessment*

DECEMBER, 2019



COLLEGE OF  
AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

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An aerial photograph of a field. The left side is a dirt path with tire tracks. The right side is a lush green field. A dark green strip runs vertically through the center of the field, contrasting with the lighter green grass on either side. The text 'THE PROJECT' is centered over the dark green strip.

# THE PROJECT

In spring 2019, Dean Ajay Menon asked Caroline Turner to serve as an independent, objective reviewer of the culture of the College of Agricultural Science (“College”) at Colorado State University. Caroline is the founder and principal of DifferenceWORKS, LLC., which provides consulting and training around diversity and inclusion (“D&I”) with a focus on gender inclusion and balance. In particular, Dean Menon wanted an assessment of how D&I is viewed both internally and externally. Some incidents at CSU involving gender, ethnicity and race have, he felt, led some to believe that the College is led or populated by “racists” and “sexists.” He has demonstrated personal commitment to D&I, particularly in the area of gender. He wanted to know how those efforts and their results are understood and viewed.

Caroline felt that the project needed greater bandwidth and a second set of eyes with greater sensitivity to racial issues. DifferenceWORKS then partnered with Nita Mosby Tyler of The Equity Project, LLC. The Equity Project, a Denver-based organization, has expertise in D&I and in creating data analytics around actions required to create equity-based systems. The College entered into an agreement with DifferenceWORKS and The Equity Project dated August 30, 2019. At that time, it was known that Dean Menon would be leaving the College to serve as the CEO of the Research Foundation at CSU and that James Pritchett would be acting as interim Dean until a final selection is made. Interim Dean Pritchett was included in meetings about the project and endorsed it and the selected vendors.

**The project was designed to provide answers to the following questions:**

1. To what degree is there common understanding of the meaning of “diversity,” “inclusion,” and the espoused value of D&I as described on the website of the College?
2. What is the perception among faculty, staff and students of (a) the breadth and degree of commitment to the espoused value of D&I and (b) whether policies, practices and actions, and the resulting environment at the College, are consistent with that value?
3. In what ways are the experiences of students, faculty and staff reflective, and not reflective, of the espoused D&I value?
4. What suggestions, insights or themes do students, faculty and staff have that give us direction and clarity in how we might improve perceptions and realities of the espoused value of D&I?
5. What actions are recommended in light of the findings to enhance the perceptions and reality of D&I at the College?



# THE PROCESS

Prior to beginning the project, the team reviewed information about CSU and College efforts around D&I, including the 2018-19 Diversity Blueprint (Student Success and Diversity Strategic Plan), the President's Commission on D&I, Principles of Community, The President's Commission on Women and Gender Equity, and the College's Employee Climate Survey Results from 2018.

The project launched with discussions, focus groups and interviews conducted by Caroline Turner and Nita Mosby Tyler. Both focus groups and individual key informant interviews were based on the same framework of questions (below).

Both Nita and Caroline met (September 9-11) with a representative of the Office of the Vice President for Diversity ("VPD") for CSU and with the department heads of most College Departments. Both facilitated four focus groups: with undergraduate students, graduate students, the Ag Council and the College Diversity Catalyst Team. On those dates both conducted four key informant interviews with faculty and staff members and Caroline conducted two more with individuals from this group. Caroline then conducted 18 interviews (September 23-26) with faculty and staff members and conducted telephone interviews with two additional members of faculty and staff. A total of 26 interviews were completed.

Special thanks go to Kirsten Slaughter-Rice, who organized meetings, scheduled and re-scheduled focus groups and interviews and arranged logistics for Caroline and Nita.

Note: we use the pronoun "we" regardless of which of us observed what we report as we both agree on the content of this report. We may use the term "faculty" to include staff -- those who teach, those who counsel and members of staff.



# THE FRAMEWORK AND QUESTIONS

Each focus group and key informant interview included yes/no questions, open-ended questions, a rated question and a visual polling exercise. Questions were in four categories of discovery. Those categories were Awareness of D&I Initiatives, Definitions of Terms Related to D&I, Perceptions and Experiences, and Stakeholder Visions and Direction for D&I.

## **AWARENESS** (YES OR NO QUESTIONS)

1. Are you aware that “diversity and inclusion” are prominently featured on the CSU website?
  2. Are you aware of the President’s Commission on D&I?
  3. Are you aware of the Office/VP of Diversity?
  4. Do you know the role of the “Diversity Catalyst Team” of the College?
  5. Have you seen the term “inclusive excellence?”
  6. (After September 19) Have you heard about the (new) President’s initiative on Race, Bias and Equity?
- 

## **DEFINITIONS** (OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS)

1. What does diversity mean to you? Why is this hard?
  2. How do you define the word inclusiveness?
  3. What does inclusive excellence mean to you?
  4. How does inclusiveness impact you personally?
- 

## **PERCEPTIONS & EXPERIENCES**

In this category, we used open-ended questions, a rated question, and a visual polling exercise.

**PARTICIPANTS WERE ASKED TO RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS:**

1. Give an example of a time(s) when you have seen the department/college model inclusiveness well.
2. Give an example of a time(s) when the department/college did not model inclusiveness well.
3. What is the greatest challenge the College has in increasing inclusiveness? What are examples of things that get in the way of increasing inclusiveness?
4. What suggestions can you offer to improve outsiders’ perception of the college as being inclusive?

WE ALSO ASKED PARTICIPANTS TO RANK, ON A SCALE OF 1 (LOWEST) TO 5 (HIGHEST):

How important is inclusiveness to you as a member/student of this department/stakeholder in this College?

WE USED A VISUAL POLLING EXERCISE TO ASK PARTICIPANTS TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR ALIGNMENT WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS, USING HAND SIGNALS, TO GIVE:

A thumbs-up if they **STRONGLY AGREE** with a statement

A thumbs-to-the-side if they **MODERATELY AGREE** with a statement

A thumbs-down if they **DO NOT AGREE** with a statement

1. Cultural differences are valued in the Department/College/University
2. I feel I am a valued and essential part of the Department/College/University
3. The culture (unwritten social rules) allows everyone to feel valued in/at the Department/College/University
4. I have faced or witnessed prejudice or discrimination at the College/university
5. I believe perspectives like mine are included in decision-making in/at the Department/College/University
6. Policies, practices and actions and the overall environment are consistent with the espoused value of diversity and inclusivity in/at the Department/College/University
7. There is deep and broad commitment to diversity and inclusivity in/at the Department/ College/University
8. External perceptions of the culture are different from the reality I experience at the Department/ College/University

## VISIONS AND DIRECTIONS

If you had a magic wand, what would you do (or have the department/college/university) do to increase inclusiveness?



# **PARTICIPANT RESPONSES**

## **(STUDENT AND DCT FOCUS GROUPS)**

# RESPONSES - VERBATIM RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

( STUDENTS & DCT )

## 1. WHAT DOES DIVERSITY MEAN TO YOU?

- Avoiding discrimination
- Different backgrounds
- Different race and culture, values and opinions
- Shared space
- Not good or bad, just different
- Community of people from different backgrounds and experiences, thoughts, and ideas
- Uniqueness
- A variety of background, race, thoughts, perspectives
- Intention to represent all
- All people
- All identities
- Ableism
- Intentionality
- Groups represented equally
- Admitting differences

### 1A. WHY IS THIS HARD?

- Not knowing or understanding other's experiences
- Fear of change, the unknown
- Groups being represented equally is complicated
- Admitting differences is hard
- Too political

## 2. HOW DO YOU DEFINE THE WORD INCLUSIVENESS?

- Everyone has a seat at the table, a voice
- Safe space for all
- Mutual respect
- Accepting and prioritizing diversity
- Intentionally encouraging diversity
- Fundamental level of respect for all
- Cooperative actions
- Purposefully reaching out to others
- Intentional work to invite others
- Welcome and support all identities
- Leveraging to become more excellent
- Making sure people don't feel excluded
- Changing the past standards

- Treating everyone the same
- Being yourself, while welcoming others
- Compassion
- Acknowledging differences
- Expanding who fits in
- Differences should be seen as strengths

## 3. WHAT DOES INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE MEAN AT THE COLLEGE?

- Creating initiatives to increase student's awareness
- Regularity
- Don't be too quick to judge others
- The 'inclusive excellence' initiative feels like a marketing tool
- Creating initiatives to increase student's awareness
- Regularity
- Social justice and change
- Putting strategies for inclusion in place

## 4. HOW DOES INCLUSIVENESS IMPACT YOU PERSONALLY?

- Not having an agriculture background means I feel left out
- Having an agriculture background feels like I am being stereotyped
- Ag versus non-Ag comes from the top down - the divide doesn't occur from the students
- Being transparent to reach diversity goals
- It makes me feel like I belong
- No discrimination
- Not really sure if I always feel included

## 5. EXAMPLES OF INCLUSIVENESS MODELED WELL:

- Dean is approachable
- Dean admin staff also approachable
- College supports gender issues
- Grad students meet once a month
- Seminars available for students
- Advisors bring students together for socials
- Harmony in labs
- New hire, a woman in power helps females see their model

## 6. EXAMPLES OF INCLUSIVENESS NOT MODELED WELL:

- Students feel they are overridden by white males
- Department not connected
- Barriers in place so students don't collaborate
- Advisors don't offer proper resources for interests outside of the department
- Staff hides influence, creates microaggression

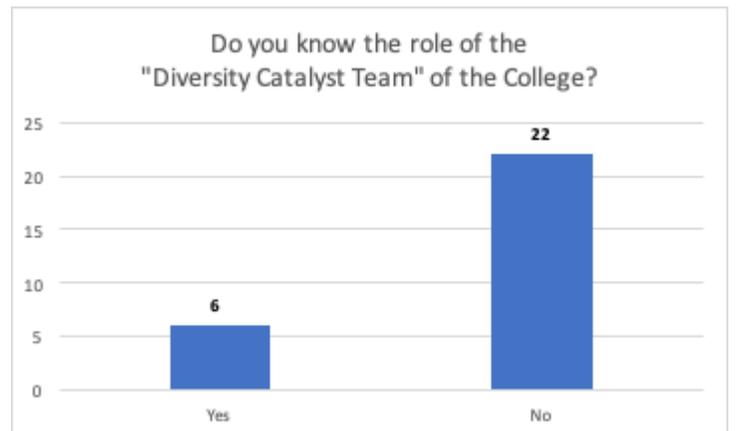
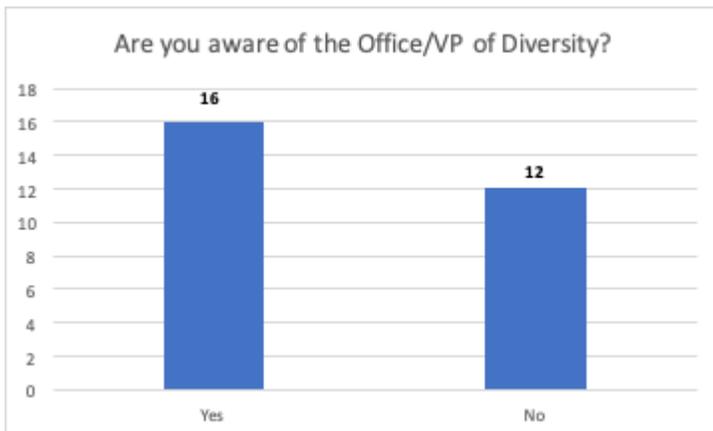
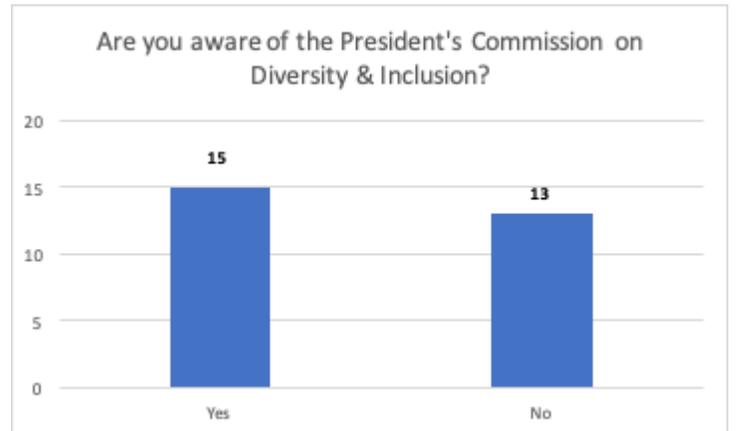
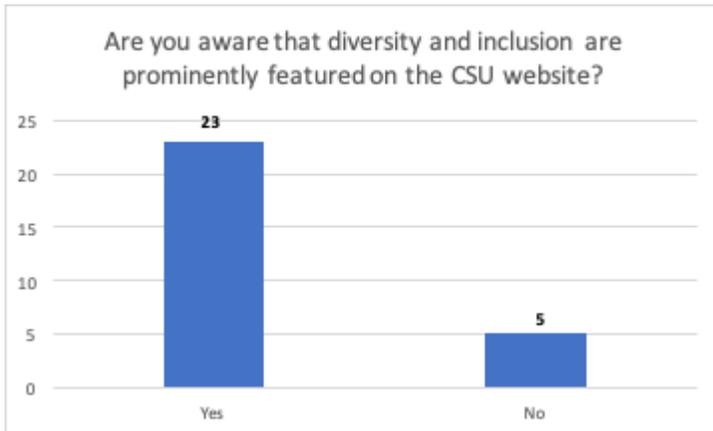
## 7. WHAT IS THE GREATEST CHALLENGE IN INCREASING INCLUSIVENESS?:

- Fear that pushing too hard may create push back
- Inclusiveness comes across as a negative consequence to an action
- Neutrality is hard to maintain for long periods of time
- Creates reverse prejudice
- Ego
- Unwillingness to accept new information
- Training feels like lip service
- Faculty is mean, need to show kindness

## 8. WHAT SUGGESTIONS CAN YOU OFFER TO IMPROVE OUTSIDERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE COLLEGE AS BEING INCLUSIVE?

- Not understanding the definition well
- No way to measure/evaluate if we are doing it
- Not understanding diversity
- Sometimes it is unintentional; we try hard to include everyone
- Lack of awareness

## AWARENESS OF D&I INITIATIVES





# **PARTICIPANT RESPONSES**

## **(FACULTY & STAFF INTERVIEWS)**

# RESPONSES - VERBATIM RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

( FACULTY & STAFF )

## 1. WHAT DOES DIVERSITY MEAN TO YOU?

- Differences
- All are welcome
- Different mainline power
- Variety of ages, backgrounds, culture, gender, race, experience, socio-economic, thoughts, worlds, identities and perspectives
- Not being penalized for how you look
- Opportunity for all to be valued
- Open-mindedness

### 1A. WHY IS THIS HARD?

- Expectations and connotations
- Can't quantify results
- Accidentally excluding people through the process
- Exploitive – loss of leverage
- Society puts expectations in a box, we can't break out

## 2. HOW DO YOU DEFINE THE WORD INCLUSIVENESS?

- Contributing fully
- Valuing/embracing diversity
- Decision-making open for all
- All treated equally, with respect
- Intention
- Adaptable
- Acknowledging and valuing differences
- Having equal weight
- I understand it, but it lacks some clarity

## 3. WHAT DOES INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE MEAN AT THE COLLEGE?

- Jargon
- Buzz word; but we are really good at being inclusive
- Making everyone feel included
- Best at being inclusive
- Treating everyone fairly
- Good job of being inclusive
- Being outstanding in efforts to be inclusive

- All actions to be inclusive – individual and collective
- Inclusion is a part of our excellence
- A step up from inclusive; really good at it
- Practical definition. No vision of this at high level.
- Excelling at making a seat at the table for all – action to match vision
- Feel welcome
- Awareness of D&I. Focus on educating on bias.
- Don't love the term. Implies we must strive for what just should be.
- I don't know
- Feeling a part of the bigger system
- Empathy
- Listening intentionally
- Create/provide environment where people thrive
- Expression without fear
- Practices and policies in place to standardize inclusivity

## 4. HOW DOES INCLUSIVENESS IMPACT YOU PERSONALLY?

- Jewish people miss meetings held during Jewish holidays. Jewish holidays not considered on school calendar
- Job satisfaction
- Being able to influence policy
- Aware of having to make extra effort to be noticed
- Concerned inclusivity will trump merit
- Needs change, so should views
- Effectiveness should outweigh inclusivity
- Helps to relate to students
- See tenured faculty as privileged and respected
- Ignorance more prominent than malice
- If not heard, become disengaged
- Better production if I feel authentic
- Women still feel underrepresented at college
- Not really sure if I always feel included

## 5. EXAMPLES OF INCLUSIVENESS MODELED WELL:

- Students becoming more diverse
- Faculty recruitment efforts
- D&I Committee meetings, respectful disagreements
- International faculty feels supported
- Department retreat – mission and vision with facilitation
- Unit functions as a family
- More options for vegetarians
- Ag week
- Strong voice in department strategic plan meetings
- Seeing vulnerability
- Effort to use gender neutral terms
- Social events open to all
- Syllabi list principles of community
- Faculty search committee cast a broad net
- Student body is seeing a larger female presence
- Equine Science Stewards
- Portraits of successful women will be hung in Shepard Hall

## 6. EXAMPLES OF INCLUSIVENESS NOT MODELED WELL:

- Inappropriate jokes at faculty meetings
- College events held on holidays other than Christian
- Professors can feel isolated due to insensitive remarks
- Cliques
- POC feel alone, no role models
- Favoritism
- Inaction, silence
- No compassion or support for mistakes
- Tenure=untouchable

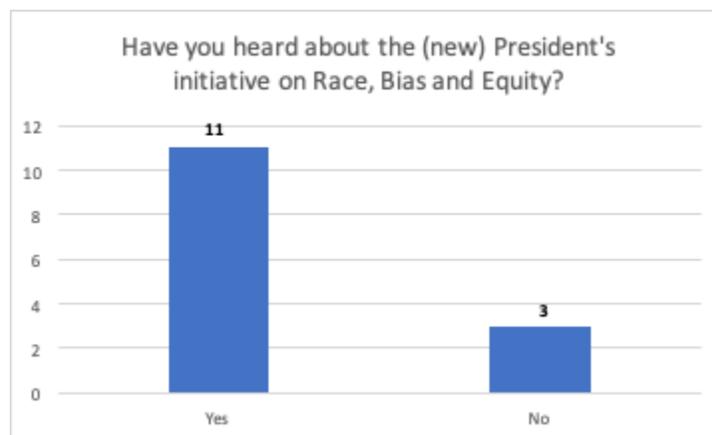
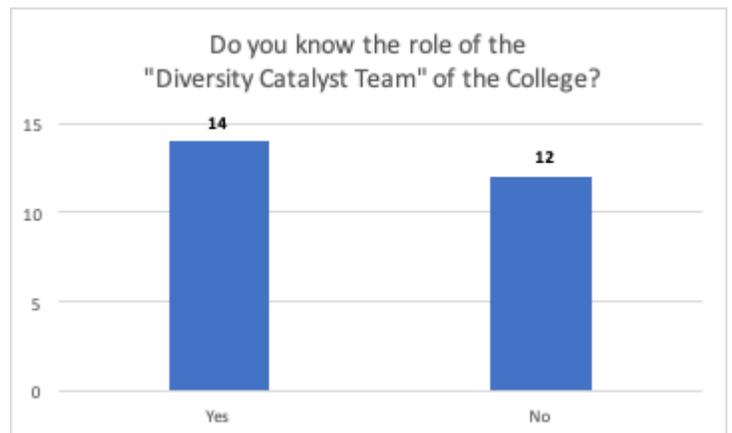
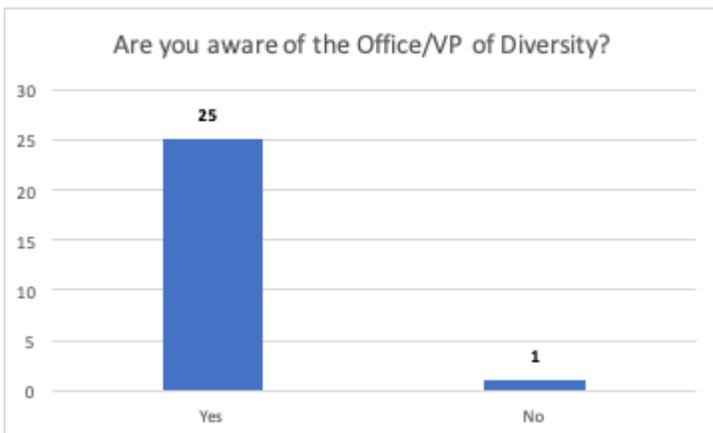
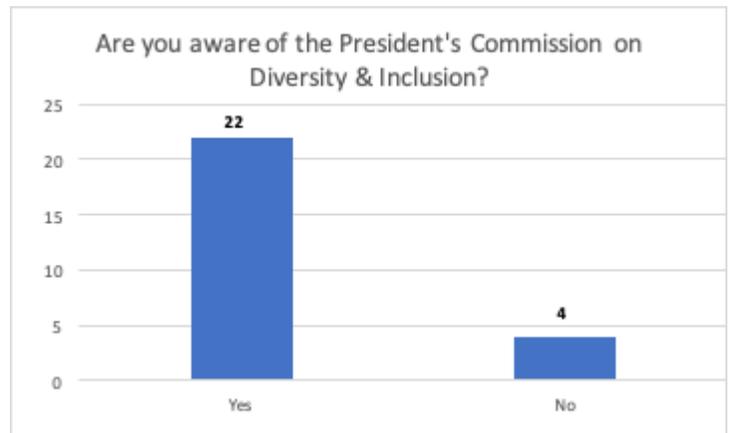
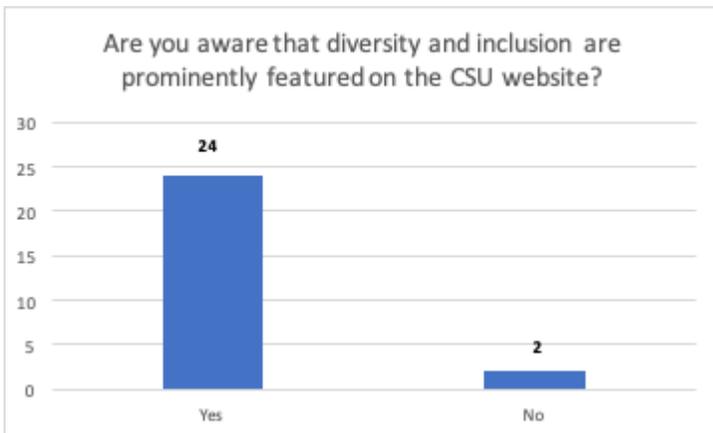
## 7. WHAT IS THE GREATEST CHALLENGE IN INCREASING INCLUSIVENESS?:

- Ingrained perception (white, male and conservative)
- Too much talk, not enough action
- Not able to attract diverse student body/faculty
- Lack of authentic dialogue
- Some see diversity as a liability
- No incentive
- White community
- Women/POC don't feel welcome in the "boots and buckles" college
- Difficult to engage students in D&I work
- Leadership more concerned with looking for outward diversity instead of creating a culture of inclusiveness
- Misinformation/gossip/rumors
- Getting people to buy-in

## 8. WHAT SUGGESTIONS CAN YOU OFFER TO IMPROVE OUTSIDERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE COLLEGE AS BEING INCLUSIVE?

- Actions speak louder than words
- Be relentless in progress
- Improve marketing
- Educate people where food comes from
- Tell our truth
- Stop worrying about perception and get busy
- Cross engagement with other CSO colleges
- Make efforts visible
- Publicize research efforts from CSU
- Accountability

# AWARENESS OF D&I INITIATIVES



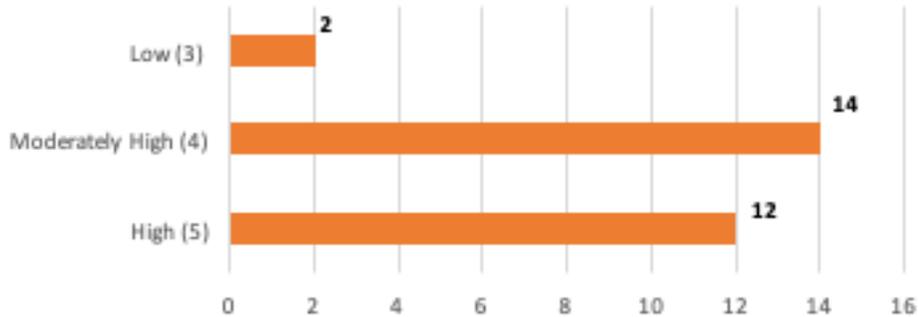


# PERCEPTIONS & EXPERIENCES

RATED QUESTION & VISUAL POLLING DATA  
(STUDENT & DCT FOCUS GROUPS)

## RATED QUESTION

On a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high), how important is inclusiveness to you as a member or student of this department or stakeholder in this College?



## VISUAL POLLING DATA

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES ARE VALUED IN:



I FEEL I AM A VALUED AND ESSENTIAL PART OF THE:



THE CULTURE (OR UNWRITTEN SOCIAL RULES ) ALLOWS EVERYONE TO FEEL INCLUDED IN/AT:



I BELIEVE PERSPECTIVES LIKE MINE ARE INCLUDED IN DECISION MAKING IN/AT:



POLICIES, PRACTICES AND ACTIONS AND THE OVERALL ENVIRONMENT ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE ESPOUSED VALUE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY IN/AT:



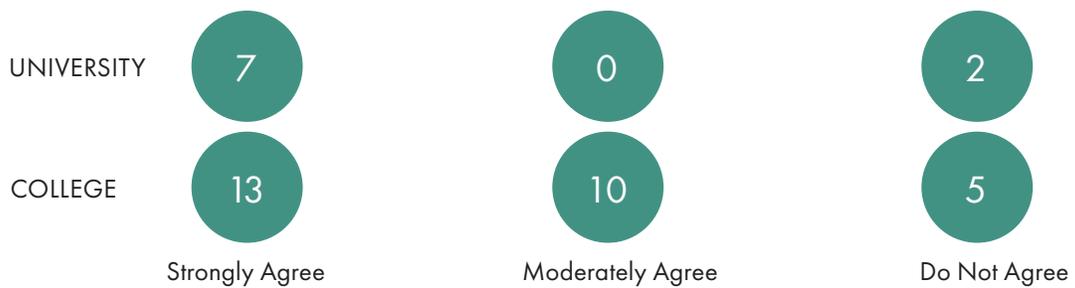
THERE IS DEEP AND BROAD COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY & INCLUSIVITY IN/AT:



EXTERNAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE CULTURE ARE DIFFERENT FROM THE REALITY I EXPERIENCE AT:



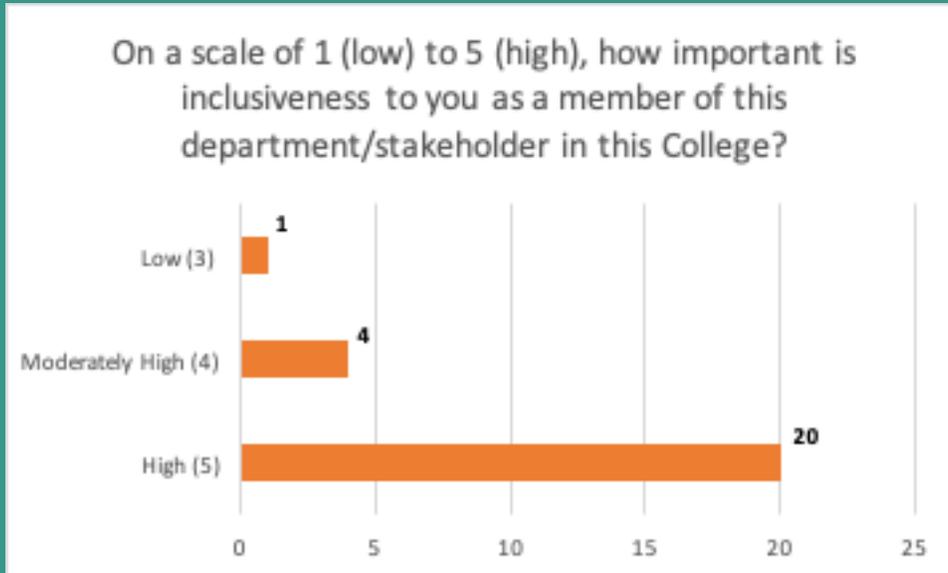
I HAVE FACED OR WITNESSED PREJUDICE OR DISCRIMINATION AT:





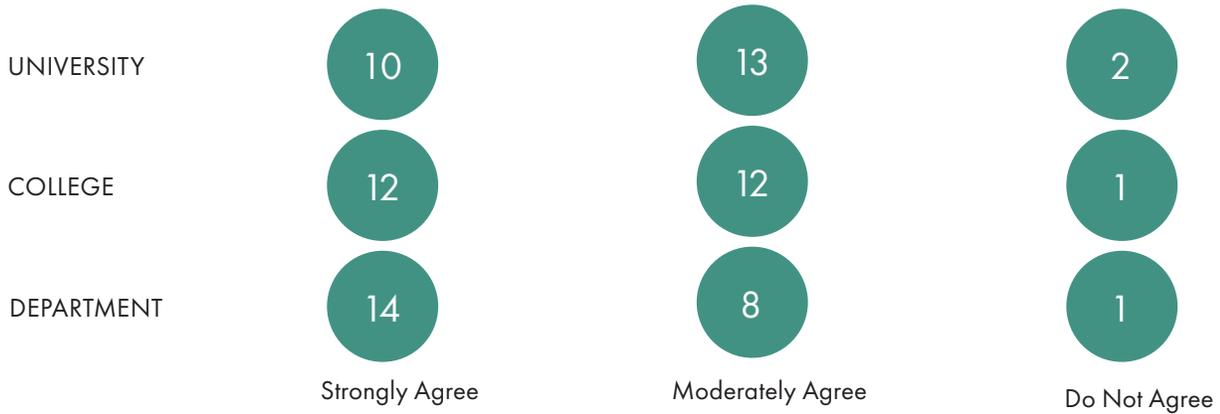
**PERCEPTIONS & EXPERIENCES**  
RATED QUESTION & VISUAL POLLING DATA  
(FACULTY AND STAFF INTERVIEWS)

## RATED QUESTION

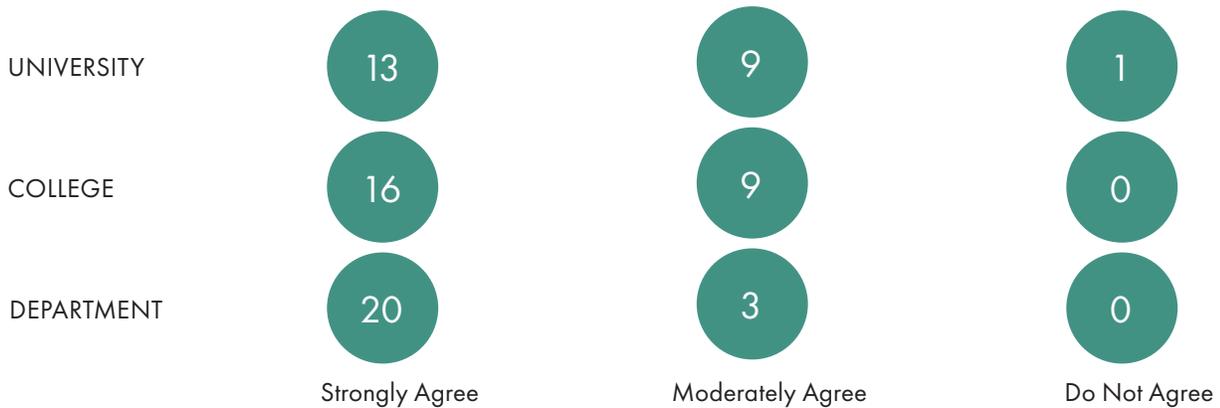


## VISUAL POLLING DATA

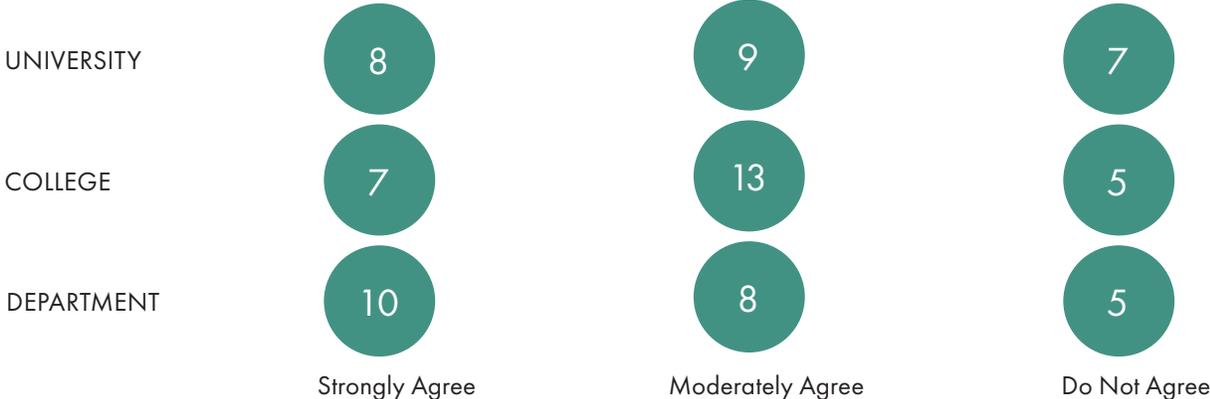
### CULTURAL DIFFERENCES ARE VALUED IN:



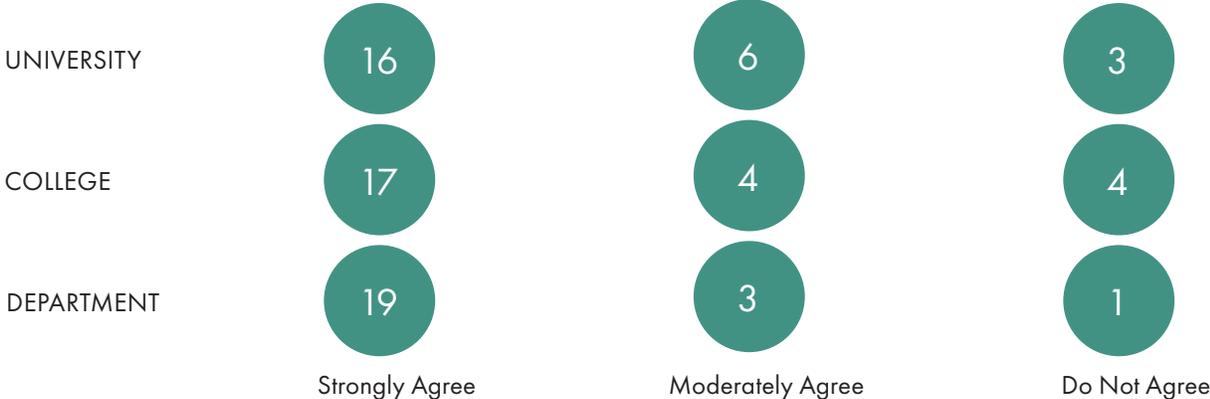
### I FEEL I AM A VALUED AND ESSENTIAL PART OF:



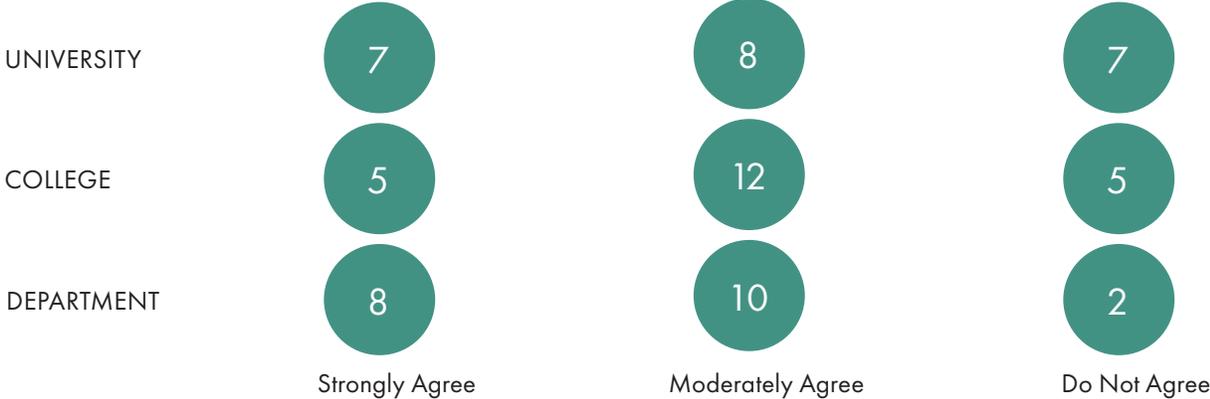
THE CULTURE (OR UNWRITTEN SOCIAL RULES ) ALLOWS EVERYONE TO FEEL INCLUDED IN/AT:



I BELIEVE PERSPECTIVES LIKE MINE ARE INCLUDED IN DECISION-MAKING IN/AT:



POLICIES, PRACTICES AND ACTIONS (THE OVERALL ENVIRONMENT) ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE ESPOUSED VALUE OF D&I IN/AT:



EXTERNAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE CULTURE OF THE COLLEGE ARE DIFFERENT  
THAN THE REALITY I EXPERIENCE (YES/NO)

YES

NO



IF YES:

External better than your perception? 7

External worse than your perception? 9

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I FACED OR WITNESSED PREJUDICE OR DISCRIMINATION AT CSU

UNIVERSITY





# **DREAMS AND VISIONS: A STAKEHOLDER LOOK FORWARD**

## IF YOU HAD A MAGIC WAND, WHAT WOULD YOU DO (OR HAVE THE DEPARTMENT, COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY) DO TO INCREASE INCLUSIVENESS?

- Recruitment needs to focus on diversity
- Cultivate passion for D&I work
- Prioritize D&I
- Need someone willing to see inclusivity through to the very end
- Hire someone to communicate in subtle and nuanced fashion to invoke and live the D&I goal
- Making staff and faculty understand the importance of this work
- Create a freshman course involving D&I standards so that the idea is with students at the start of their journey
- Panel discussion during Ag week regarding social justice and change
- Being able to use the resources at the Univ that are currently sitting idle to make advancement in diversity
- There are good people in the College community who want to see inclusivity advance
- People want to invest, but don't know how
- Diversity Catalyst Team has raised their hand in creating a class for Sophomores to better understand D&I, but the request has been ignored
- There is concern that legends and traditions will disappear along with change
- Leadership is created by a structure that benefits and values human capital
- Retention of marginalized students is only 32%
- Women told what to wear
- University tends to liberal, but the Ag students are generally conservative causing a great divide
- Ag kids feel marginalized, and sometimes threatened by liberal students and faculty
- Diversity Catalyst Team feels marginalized because they have the guts to openly talk about D&I issues, while others shy away
- Training done by people of color
- Power dynamic shift
- Clear boundaries of relationships between students and faculty
- Need realistic expectations from advisors
- Know that there will not be repercussions for speaking freely
- Examine TA pay versus the work being done
- More empathy



# OUR FINDINGS

We define “culture” as the collective character of the organization demonstrated by the beliefs and behaviors of members of the organization. It is to a group or organization what personality is to an individual. Therefore, we focused on the beliefs and behaviors, and perceived beliefs and behaviors, of students, faculty and staff of the College.

## AWARENESS

- **There is broad awareness of most diversity initiatives, particularly the Office of the VPD and the President’s Commission on D&I.** Participants had a general understanding of the purpose of each of these. Almost all participants know about the College’s Diversity Catalyst Team, but most were unclear about its role and purpose. Almost all have heard the term “Inclusive Excellence” (from the titles of two programs offered by the VPD), but none could say what this phrase means and most didn’t know the source of the phrase. Most guessed the term means being “really good” at demonstrating inclusiveness.
- **There is not good understanding of the roles/strategies of the various D&I support systems. Students, faculty and staff communicated either a lack of awareness about these support systems or were unable to describe, with clarity, the roles and purposes of the support systems.** This may signal a lack of alignment between the support systems or confusion about how they “fit together” or how to leverage the system. The breadth and variety of D&I initiatives and bodies is good in that it reflects broad and deep interest and an organic approach, which in many ways is better than a system where one department or function “owns” D&I. But it appears “uncoordinated” and is clearly confusing. We recommend doing some strategic mapping and alignment work in how each support system (1) aligns, (2) duplicates work and/or (3) fills a gap in the work of another support system.
- **There remains misunderstanding and resentment about the decision to eliminate the D&I position at the College. And there is lack of clarity around whether there is a preferred approach to D&I training.** A few years ago an experienced D&I person moved from the College to a position in the office of the VPD, and her position at the College was eliminated. Some read and continue to read this event as a reflection on the Dean’s commitment to D&I. We feel that his commitment (and that of the Interim Dean) are genuine. The decision appears, rather, to reflect a difference in approach to D&I. We recommend more transparency about the past decision, assuring that the change in leadership of the College is not seen as the solution to this old wound (and thus that it was a mere “personality difference”). Further we recommend high-level discussion about two different approaches to D&I, (a) one focused on injury and fault, and (b) the other on awareness and appreciation of differences and of unconscious biases (viewed as something all humans have). The words “Female Fight Club” come across as more attuned to the former; the title “Inclusive Excellence Program” sounds more akin to the latter. There are pro’s and con’s to both approaches, and the university and College could benefit from reflection and open discussion about which is needed to accomplish what goals.
- **The lack of clarity about the role of the Diversity Catalyst Team may reflect the lack of a charter or authority. DCT is a grass roots effort without sanction or charter.** There is very low awareness of its mission and limited visibility to its action. DCT is meant to be a “catalyst” rather than a “doing body” and to support actions led by others. We recommend that the Dean and/or DCT decide if DCT will exist and, if so, its role, and then publish that role and support the visibility of what the DCT does, supports or causes to occur.
- **There is opportunity for the new President to distinguish the goals and functions of her newly announced initiative and the former President’s Commission on D&I.** Most participants were aware that President McConnell in September announced a new initiative on racism and equity. Most were aware that the work of the former President’s Commission had been suspended. There was low awareness of the title of the new initiative or of what it would do, understandably because of its newness. See our discussion above on two basic approaches to D&I. We suggest that The Vice President make clear whether the Initiative on Race, Bias and Equity is to add to or pull together the somewhat scattered structures, programs and initiatives about D&I at the university. The new initiative can bring greater alignment of all the D&I “pieces.” Again, we suggest mapping work to assure there is alignment and that there is not duplication or gaps. The new initiative offers the opportunity to define the direction of D&I at CSU. It is also the opportunity to involve different people and perspectives. It offers the chance to openly explore the pro’s and con’s to the two approaches described above (or a combination of the two).

## DEFINITIONS

- **There is some disparity around how students and faculty define the word “diversity.”** The faculty/staff have a broader view of how the word diversity is defined, mostly reflecting on gender and race. The students don’t seem to have as broad of a view, mostly defining the word around race and ethnicity. This difference in definition is commonplace, as the word “diversity” is sometimes, incorrectly, used as a synonym for race or ethnicity. To create an inclusive system requires everyone to see themselves in the definition of diversity. Otherwise, the College will experience a system of “othering;” when students hear the word diversity, they will not identify with the word as related to them – but more about “others.”
- **Those who did define “diversity” broadly focused on kinds of “differences” that cause tension within the College** and have nothing to do with gender, race or ethnicity – political ideology, first generation students, urban vs. rural, those with and without a background in agriculture, different departments and disciplines, and even differences in rank (student vs. faculty, tenured vs. untenured faculty). We recommend more intentionally defining and illuminating the definition of the word diversity, not assuming or losing/burying it in the quest to define the word inclusiveness. This is particularly true because of the many kinds of “difference” that have nothing to do with race and ethnicity.
- **There is greater alignment in how stakeholders define the word “inclusiveness.”** We heard echoes of the phrase, “come to the table,” in how people think of inclusion. There seemed to be commonality that it means something to the effect that everybody is and feels welcome. Understanding the concept does not make “inclusiveness” a reality. As shown in the polling data, inclusiveness is highly valued and yet many don’t strongly agree that the culture allows everyone to feel included. Based on interviews, the College is not now truly a culture of inclusion. Discussions arose frequently about people across non-racial differences. We heard of tensions between different political values, students from rural vs. urban backgrounds, and students with and without agriculture in their backgrounds. And we heard separation based on departments and disciplines. We recommend that you begin by addressing the sense of division or separation between departments and disciplines. You could frame an effort to improve communication and understanding across departments and disciplines as focusing on the “low hanging fruit” in creating a culture of inclusion. Acknowledging differences in what people study, research and teach can provide rich material for modeling respect and inclusiveness among people who come from different backgrounds or are somehow “different.” Then the College could focus on acknowledging and bridging other differences that divide – political leanings, rural/urban, ag/non-ag, etc.
- **There is very little understanding of the phrase “inclusive excellence.”** Even those who have participated in the long or short version of the course from VPD (with this phrase in the title of the course) could not define it. We do not view this as important. While we heard very positive comments on these courses from participants, whether this phrase is used and understood or not will not affect the outcome of efforts to build a more inclusive culture.



## PROGRESS AND LACK OF SUFFICIENT PROGRESS

Progress in D&I varies depending on the sub-group at issue. Progress in “diversity” is not always commensurate with progress in “inclusion.” A troubling number reported having faced or witnessed prejudice or discrimination.

- **Gender diversity and equity have come a long way.** Dean Menon is given credit for dramatically increasing the number of women faculty members and department heads. We heard only one comment suggesting that women got their positions because of gender rather than merit. Others were uniform in their recognition of the excellence of women faculty and department heads. At least one department undertook a process to equalize faculty pay. There is evidence that CSU’s reputation in the area of gender diversity has attracted talent. The student body has more women than men in some disciplines. There is widespread belief that “mission accomplished” is an appropriate response. While Dean Menon championed the cause of gender diversity in leadership, he is seen by some as “tossing the ball” to women – giving them budget for initiatives but providing little guidance and not staying involved. We believe this accomplishment will be better understood when the issue of gender inclusion is better understood. We also believe the success in this area can provide a model for greater success in other areas.
- **Gender inclusion is still an issue.** This area illustrates that “diversity” and “inclusion” are distinct matters. While the increase in the number of intelligent, highly skilled women has done much to change perceptions about women in general, gender bias still exists at CSU as it does in the larger culture. We heard reports of several incidents where women were treated disrespectfully or even intimidated. Many attribute these events to the “old white guys” or “dinosaurs” who are tenured but will retire shortly. We believe there is more to do than wait for the retirement of those with outdated views or with habits of making inappropriate comments. Gender inclusion should be understood as a separate goal than gender diversity (diversity is about numbers; inclusion is about the culture). Behaviors that keep women from feeling included are evidence of (usually unconscious) gender bias. Ongoing training and open discussions on gender inclusion are recommended. It is also important to confront faculty members, regardless of status, for behaviors that offend women (or any other group).
- **LGBTQ+ issues reflect the speedy progress in the larger culture.** LGBTQ+ issues were not front of mind with people we met with, including people who are openly members of this community. Therefore, we saw no evidence of tensions related to the LGBTQ + issues. As in the larger culture, there is wide acceptance of diversity in sexual orientation within the university. In some discussions about outside perceptions of the College, it was noted that some stakeholders think the College is “too liberal.” That may reflect remaining discomfort with LGBTQ+ issues among some stakeholders.

The presence of all-gender bathrooms in newer buildings indicates progress in the area of sexual identity. Issues around sexual identity, however, remain confusing and somewhat divisive to some. Some simply don’t know the new rules about how to offer or ask for one’s pronouns. There was one remark that too much time and energy are focused on the etiquette of pronouns relative to larger and more important D&I issues. One person opined that the number of people who are uncomfortable with traditional “he/she” pronouns is small yet requires understanding and attention by the much larger number of “sis-gender” people. We recommend continuing to do what you have been doing in this area and including issues around gender identity in your open dialogues.

- **Religion remains an area needing improvement.** Some religious differences are not visible. We are aware of the incident involving graffiti with a swastika and heard from Jewish students and faculty that this caused them to feel fear. While we saw no evidence of overt religious discrimination in our interviews, we learned of behaviors that



undermine a sense of inclusion in this area. They exemplify unconscious thinking that “everyone’s needs are like my need,” thinking that must be brought to awareness. First, social events that are almost always held in bars or include alcohol may feel non-inclusive to Muslims, people in recovery, or others who do not drink alcohol. Second, the observance of high religious holidays is not equally respected for non-Christians. We recommend that you raise awareness that sponsored social events should vary in venue and activity, respecting religious and other differences. We recommend that the university and College calendar include high holidays of Jewish, Muslim, and other faiths (e.g., Yom Kippur and Ramadan) and that you announce the policy of (a) Not holding important meetings on these dates and (b) assuring that those excused from work for participation in non-Christian holidays experience no repercussions.

- **Racial diversity remains a major challenge.** Racial diversity is low at CSU and lower at the College than at most of the other colleges. We found no evidence of racial animus or people wanting to exclude people of color. To the contrary, we found deep commitment to achieving racial diversity. There is growing ethnic diversity (international students and faculty from non-U.S. cultures) but very little progress is creating either a student body or faculty that has proportionate representation of people of color – Latinos and African Americans. The challenge is to apply the successes in the areas of gender and sexual orientation to the areas of race and ethnicity.

There was some discussion about CSU having too few graduates of color to satisfy the demand from companies wanting candidates of color who look to CSU to supply the need. In our discussions, many are daunted by the challenge of attracting students of color in a state that is predominately white (the census shows Colorado is 87% white, 4.6% black or African American, 21% Hispanic or Latino) and distant from Denver, which has the largest percentages of people of color.

A pervasive view is that the lack of diversity itself is the biggest challenge to making progress in this area. There is broad recognition of the obstacle posed by historical roots of race in agriculture (i.e., slavery, immigrant farmworkers, and barriers to land ownership for people of color) that may deter students of color from seeking careers in agriculture. Many understand that prospective students and faculty of color do not see others like themselves and so are not drawn to CSU or the College. This is exacerbated by the walls of photos that include almost exclusively white men. Awareness of this has already led to a project in one department to showcase the accomplishments of women and an intention in another department to move an “all-white male” photo wall so it is not in a location where applicants are frequently invited. We recommend that the College and university examine where walls of photographs honoring faculty and graduates paint a picture of low diversity and where they are appropriately placed. And we recommend initiatives to honor and display female and non-white faculty and graduates appropriately and authentically.

The flip side of this perspective is that “diversity breeds diversity.” i.e., many believe that, as we bring diversity to our faculty and student body, more people of color will be drawn to the university and college. This poses a bit of a “Catch 22.” The numeric challenge is being met by doing outreach to traditionally black universities/HBCU’s and directing scholarship funds to students of color. We recommend increased focus on marketing to and visiting high schools with high percentages of students of color and traditionally black colleges. Using available grants or setting aside additional funding for scholarships for students of color may help “jump start” greater racial diversity at the College.

While most participants believe that the priority for the College is to attract students and faculty of color, at least one discounted this view and feels the priority must be on creating inclusion. We believe the College must do both.



- **Racial inclusiveness must be a priority.** It will be difficult to attract faculty and students of color if the culture itself is not inclusive. It is critical to understand that increasing diversity does not necessarily attract more diversity. Inclusiveness attracts diversity. Inclusiveness is critical to retaining students and faculty once they have chosen CSU or the College. In interviewing faculty of other ethnicities, we found evidence of a lack of inclusion. We do not have data on retention rates of students (or faculty/staff) of color. Does the College or university keep retention data? Does it interview students or faculty who leave or consider leaving to understand causes? If not, we suggest you do so.

Racial diversity and inclusion pose another “chicken or egg” challenge: How do you have racial inclusiveness when you have little actual racial diversity? Racial inclusion, or at least perceptions of racial inclusion, have been negatively impacted by several racial incidences on campus – the ram mascot handler who alleged racism and discrimination, the racial profiling of Native American students, the blackface photo and the swastika incident. These incidents have, of course, been covered in the media, perhaps contributing to negative external perceptions of D&I at CSU. Opinions in the interviews were mixed about whether external perceptions are worse than the experience of students and faculty/staff with regard to D&I.

In answering the question about external perceptions, the focus was on the image of agriculture more than on D&I issues specifically. There was a lot of discussion about how the “outside world” sees “ag” as, for example, “cowboys, tractors, and rednecks.” The College has a challenge to redefine agricultural science as what it is, highly technical and scientific. A few participants pointed out that external stakeholders think both that the College is too conservative and too liberal. We know this is not a new idea but support the effort to have brochures and other written and online materials display the scientific and technological aspects of agriculture. And they must display diversity. The latter must be done with integrity (not ignoring the true state of diversity) and with sensitivity (not imposing on faculty and students of color more of the “emotional labor” of being different or the suggestion that they pose as “representative” of the College). Emotional labor can be a symptom of both tokenism and microaggressions.

There is great sensitivity about how to talk about this issue, and therefore healthy dialogue has been absent, deepening the sense of separation. Dramatic incidents (like the blackface image) are seen by some as evidence of deep racism. Others think the incident arose from ignorance and insensitivity. For some, it was a “teaching moment,” the time to educate us and have open dialogue about the roots of racism and the historic and institutional elements that have held people of color back from what “privileged” white people enjoy. We recommend that leadership develop a plan for handling racist or other hate-based incidents in the future. Who should be informed and included in the process? What should the process be? What are appropriate consequences for those committing such acts?

In the state of racial diversity and racial inclusion, CSU and the College reflect the culture of the nation. This is not an excuse, but it does eliminate “blame” as the starting point for analysis and effective action. It is fair to acknowledge the slow pace of change in these areas nationally. (CSU exists in a nation in which a surprising segment of the population believe immigrants are “taking over,” that discrimination against whites is as big a problem as discrimination against “minorities,” and that men are punished just for “acting like men.”) And it is important to benchmark progress in racial and other kinds of diversity at other universities. Data from UNC and CU are available on their websites. Colorado Mesa University is an example of a university that has developed bystander responsibility policies for students, faculty and staff to mitigate microaggressions and exclusion.



- **Other kinds of difference.** There was a great deal of conversation about separation – between:
  - “Ag kids” and “non-ag kids”
  - People from urban vs. rural areas
  - First generation college students vs. those that are not first generation
  - Liberals vs. conservatives
  - Faculty of difference disciplines (even if within the same department)
  - Student vs. faculty (power and the ability to be heard)
  - Tenured vs. non-tenured (presumably a national issue)

These conversations linked being “different” to separation – not being or feeling included. These conversations indicated that there are many ways in which people feel “separate” vs. included. The separateness among faculty of different disciplines was captured by one interviewee who said, in effect, “They don’t know what I do in my lab, and I don’t know what they do in theirs.” We picked up undertones that such differences are linked with judgments of “better than,” “more important than.” While it is understandable that there is a sense of separateness between very different disciplines (e.g., animal science and landscape architecture), comments on this revealed a longing for greater connection. There is opportunity to address the kinds of differences that exist at CSU and the College and find ways to bridge and celebrate difference.

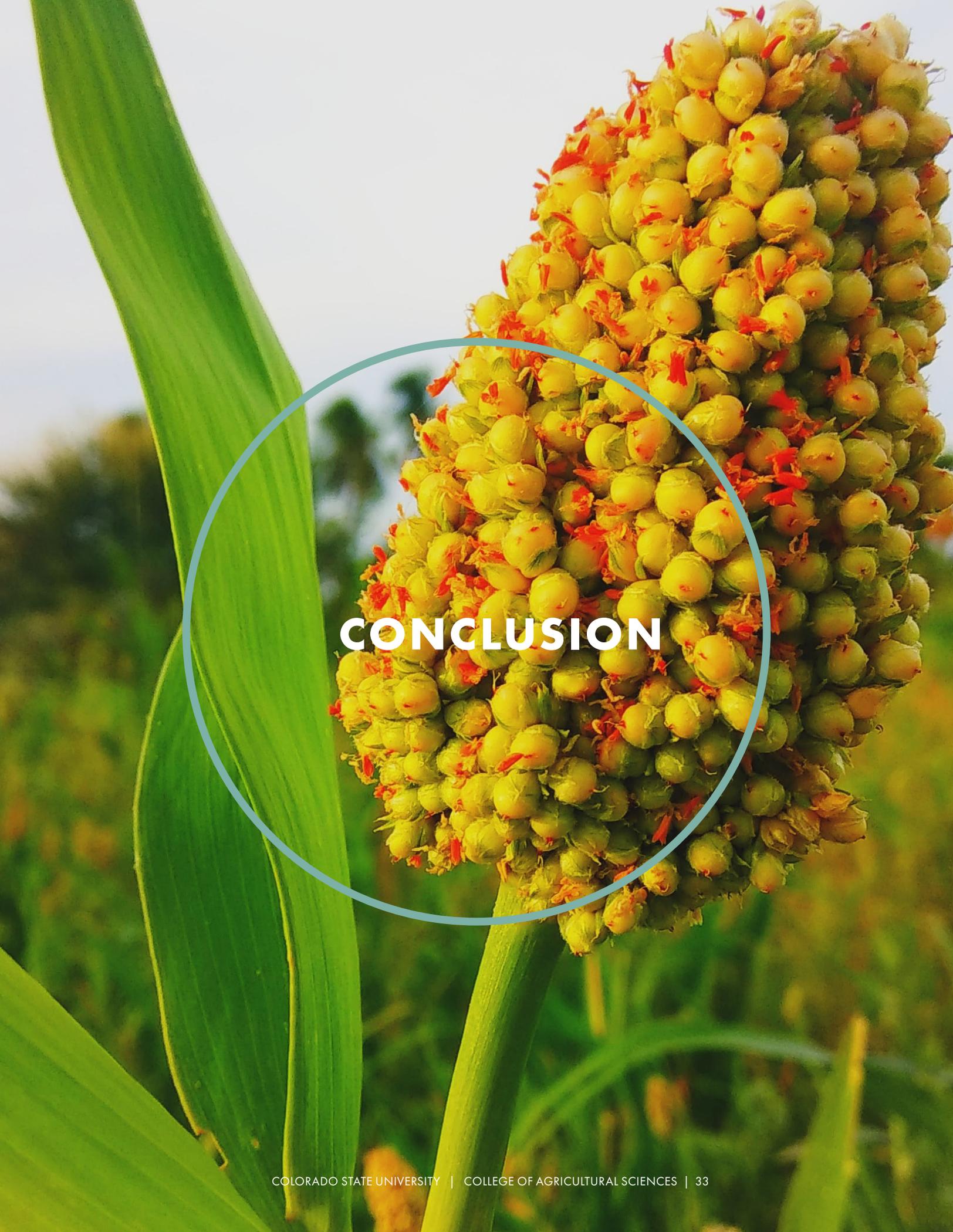
A starting point might be efforts to build teamwork among faculty members and to increase the sense of all belonging to one College. We suggest you create ways for experts in one discipline to have greater understanding and appreciation for the expertise of those in other disciplines. Consider a rotating “brown bag” or other gathering to showcase different kinds of expertise. Consider establishing “ground rules” that faculty from one discipline make an effort to get to know other faculty and that faculty speak respectfully to and about faculty from all departments.

There was discussion about a general loss of civility and connectedness as people rush about involved in their own work and lives – a common theme in our overall culture. A discussion on this element of the culture might move the needle on inclusiveness. There could be open discussion of how making eye contact and saying “hello” can make a difference. One person noted that a greeting and personal acknowledgement from the Dean or President made a huge difference in the feeling of belonging and being valued, which inspired this person.

Next, there is the opportunity to promote open discussions about other kinds of difference. Naming the sense of separateness between “ag kids” and “non-ag kids” and between those from urban vs. rural backgrounds could lead people to see these as “pseudo divides,” to find humor (lighten up), and to find solutions. The discussions could happen in classrooms or in sponsored open discussions.

Our entire country is struggling to create respect and dialogue across political differences. Nationally, we have come to see this form of difference as the source of judgment and enmity. Protests in many cities have pitted right-wing and left-wing groups against each other, where names like “fascists” and “socialists” are used to insult. So CSU is not unique in experiencing tension in this area. In both 2018 and this year, CSU has hosted events by Charlie Kirk of Turning Point USA (this year with Donald Trump, Jr.). We understand that both attendees and protestors remained peaceful. That, and the messages we have seen about free speech and respect for different positions, are good news.

We hope the January, 2020 event that Interim Dean Pritchett has announced is the first of an ongoing series of open dialogues. We will discuss with you what resources you have and what kind of facilitation you plan.



# CONCLUSION

Dean Menon asked if, or to what degree, there is a perception that the College is led or populated by “racists” and “sexists.” Our review gave us little evidence of such opinions. We found:

- The general view is that leadership of both the College and the university is committed to the expressed values of D&I,
- There remain significant challenges to creating an environment that is either diverse or inclusive,
- There is ongoing progress in making the College more diverse, but there is a long way to go, particularly in the area of race,
- Inclusiveness is lacking across all kinds of differences, including those usually associated with “diversity” (gender, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and expression) and other differences in background and specialty, and
- The College should continue, and consider increasing, efforts to address its image (emphasizing the “science” part of agriculture and avoiding displaying lack of diversity of students and faculty). It should increase its efforts to attract and retain students and faculty of color. And, at the same time, it should take deliberate and visible steps to increase the sense of connectedness among all who make up this community.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides suggestions on ways the College and/or the University can further advance the areas of inclusiveness. The recommendations, here and in the “Findings” section, are meant to be guidance based on what we learned from this process and with a context of understanding some of today’s most challenging issues around the topics of diversity, inclusiveness and equity.

- It is critically important to “publish” this report and make it or a summary available. We picked up negative feelings about the campus climate survey and the lack of public response to it. Interviewees who raised this topic did not know what the survey “said” or what is being done. There is a risk of decreasing rather than increasing trust if this report is “buried.” Several expressed appreciation for this project – a chance to talk about these issues.
- People long to have open conversations on these tough topics. Many do not know how or are afraid they will say something wrong and unintentionally offend others. Continued silence is not good. We recommend a series of open dialogues, in a variety of settings, where the ground rules are that everyone can speak without fear of retribution. These need to be facilitated by experts who can manage any offensive comments or conflict. We are pleased to see that Interim Dean Pritchett plans an event January 23 to “listen and learn” and hope it is the first of many.
- As noted above, we suggest both CSU and the College have open dialogue about what approach to D&I is best for the challenging area of racial diversity. President McConnell has replaced the former President’s Commission with the Race, Bias, and Equity Initiative. This is an opportunity to involve new people and consider new approaches to D&I. In our interviews we heard that diversity generally involves “the usual suspects.” We recommend that the President engage more broadly, including different people than have been historically involved in this initiative.
- We suggest that a good starting point to build a culture of inclusion is with divisions among disciplines and backgrounds. While the divide between, for example, those who work with cattle, those who work with horses, those who work in landscape architecture, and those who study insects, does not involve race or gender, it can serve as a public laboratory for addressing inclusion. In fact, it can serve as a foundation for conversations and actions to heal divides based on political opinions, gender, sexual identity and race.

While the divides we observed may be no greater at the College than they are at other institutions or CSU generally, it seems fair to ask how faculty and leadership can espouse inclusion when they are not inclusive of one another. We hope that the upcoming discussion hosted by Interim Dean Prichett can launch this effort.

- We recognize the complexities of large structures and organizations like CSU and observed current systems of support around the areas of D&I do not appear aligned. We suggest a formal mapping process to align the current work, rationale and objectives of the Office/VP of Diversity, the Human Resources Department, Diversity Catalyst Team, the President’s Initiative on Race, Bias and Equity and the general principles of the CSU Inclusive Excellence strategy. The mapping process should help with defining a more clear delineation between intent and tactics of each group. There is currently some overlap which leads to risk/lack of clarity in who gets involved (and when) during crisis or any area that calls for deep student or organizational support/messaging.

- We strongly suggest you consider ways to build more accountability into behaviors consistent and inconsistent with your D&I values. The old saying, “What gets measured gets done,” applies. CSU and the College say D&I is a priority. Our understanding is that there is no compensation or merit tied to a faculty member or staff’s contribution. We understand that the topic of D&I is not included in discussions around merit increases, tenure decisions and performance evaluations. Questions around inclusivity in the student application process (i.e., describe how you have modeled inclusivity in your life, community, etc.) or in the process of how we hire/award tenure (i.e., how have you modeled inclusivity in your work, classroom, etc.?) are important tactics in (1) ensuring all stakeholders understand the value of inclusivity at CSU and (2) all stakeholders begin to see the word as more relatable and personal. We believe that having D&I on the agenda underscores its importance and moves the institution closer to “walking its talk.” (The polling data shows much room for improvement in the belief that policies, practices and actions are consistent with the espoused value of D&I.)

While we don’t suggest a rigid “point system” for behaviors that do or don’t support D&I or alignment with the well-known Principles of Community, there could be conversation around whether the faculty member supports or does not support D&I values. We could help you generate a list of questions or activities to consider. You could ask faculty to report on classes they have taken, efforts to integrate topics around D&I in their classes and address D&I activities they have undertaken or supported. You could look at whether their hiring decisions reflect a value of diversity and discuss efforts to increase the diversity of candidates for open positions. Student evaluations may reflect whether the faculty member creates an environment of inclusiveness and open discussion. The Colorado Department of Higher Education Toolkit, which interim Dean Pritchett is introducing in early 2020, should provide a way to talk about and measure classroom environment. Initially, we would suggest rewarding progress in D&I rather than penalizing unsupportive behaviors. Specific incidents of inappropriate behavior should be discussed in review sessions.

We understand that the consequences of negative behavior must be kept private in many incidents. The risk, of course, is that some will think that no action has been taken. We suggest that, where appropriate, you make statements to the effect that details cannot be made public but appropriate action has been taken.

A word cloud featuring various social and political terms. The words are arranged in a roughly triangular shape, pointing to the right. The colors range from dark red to light yellow. The terms include: Conservative, Racism, Conflict, Politics, Anxiety, Acceptance, Team, Inclusion, Differences, Excellence, Diversity, Change, Race, Safety, Open-minded, Narrow-minded, Communication, Disconnected, Equality, Power, and Gender.

Conservative  
Racism  
Conflict  
Politics  
Anxiety  
Acceptance  
Team  
Inclusion  
Differences  
Excellence  
Diversity  
Change  
Race  
Safety  
Open-minded  
Narrow-minded  
Communication  
Disconnected  
Equality  
Power  
Gender









PRESENTED BY:

Difference  
WORKS

THE EQUITY  
PROJECT<sub>LLC</sub>