REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE
SB 5227

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Antiracism Training and Assessments

DECEMBER 30, 2024

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Executive Summary

In 2021, the state Legislature approved SB 5227 to address equity gaps in higher education, particularly gaps impacting students from historically marginalized communities. Among other things, the legislation requires colleges to conduct campus climate assessments, hold annual EDI (equity, diversity, and inclusion) listening and feedback sessions, and provide EDI/antiracism training to faculty, staff, and students.

SB 5227 also requires the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), and public four-year institutions, to report progress toward meeting the requirements for professional development and campus climate assessments. This December 2024 report is the first biennial report required under the legislation, RCW 28B.10.151.

The implementation of SB 5227 across Washington's 34 community and technical colleges represents a significant step toward fostering equity, diversity, and inclusion in public higher education. Our state's community and technical college system served about 290,000 students in the 2023-24 academic year, about half of whom were students of color. Colleges aim to address systemic inequities and create inclusive campus environments by focusing on professional development for faculty, staff, and administrators. This report highlights key strategies, challenges, and outcomes while underscoring the importance of sustained innovation and resources to ensure long-term success.

Community and technical colleges have adopted comprehensive training programs to embed EDI principles into institutional practices. Programs include mandatory and optional sessions, such as annual in-service days, EDI-focused onboarding, and accessible online modules on topics such as unconscious bias and cultural humility. Colleges like Bellingham Technical College and Clark College require consistent participation, while institutions like Bellevue College expand accessibility through asynchronous learning platforms. These strategies promote cultural competence and provide a foundation for systemic change across campuses.

Along with EDI training programs, colleges have conducted campus climate assessments. The assessments revealed critical issues for colleges to address, such as belonging, discrimination, and institutional support for EDI. While many students and staff report a sense of belonging, gaps persist among underrepresented groups. Some student populations within the colleges experience discrimination to a greater extent than others, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions. The climate assessments have given rise to impactful reforms, such as enhanced hiring practices at Columbia Basin College and the establishment of inclusive support structures, such as the multicultural center at Walla Walla Community College.

Despite progress, challenges remain. Low response rates, resource limitations, and historical mistrust among marginalized communities hinder the effectiveness of EDI initiatives. Institutions address these barriers through culturally sensitive engagement strategies, collaborative resource-sharing, and innovative outreach. Future directions include expanding participation, aligning assessments with long-term strategic goals, and ensuring equitable resource distribution to sustain momentum and foster systemic transformation. By prioritizing transparency and collaboration, community and technical colleges continue to make strides in advancing equity and inclusion under SB 5227.

Introduction

This report delves into the comprehensive implementation of [SB 5227](#) across Washington's community and technical college system. As mandated in sections 5.1 and 5.2 of SB 5227, this report details efforts to integrate EDI principles into professional development for faculty, staff, and administrators and to conduct campus climate assessments.

This report begins by examining how community and technical colleges have designed training initiatives, such as annual in-service days and mandatory EDI-focused sessions, to address systemic inequities and promote inclusive practices. With examples like Bellevue College's accessible online modules and Bellingham Technical College's DEI certificate program, this section underscores the adaptability and innovation required to foster equity.

The next sections navigate the findings from campus climate assessments, including disparities in belonging and experiences of discrimination among historically underrepresented groups. The report highlights actionable insights from these findings, such as Green River College's Title IX reforms and the establishment of inclusive spaces like the MOSAIC multicultural center at Clover Park Technical College. These initiatives demonstrate how data-driven decisions translate into meaningful institutional changes.

Challenges and solutions are thoroughly explored, providing a candid look at barriers like low survey participation, resource constraints, and historical mistrust among marginalized groups. The report illustrates how colleges like Spokane Falls Community College employ culturally sensitive engagement strategies and incentives to address these issues.

Concluding with a vision for the future, the report outlines pathways to sustain progress through expanded participation, equitable resource allocation, and alignment of EDI goals with strategic plans. By providing a detailed account of current efforts and a forward-looking perspective, this report serves as a comprehensive guide for stakeholders committed to advancing equity in higher education.

Background

Systemic inequities in institutions of higher education

Washington's higher education institutions have long faced challenges related to systemic inequities. Despite efforts to create inclusive environments, disparities persist across multiple dimensions, including access, belonging, and representation. Historically underrepresented groups — such as students of color, non-binary and transgender individuals, and low-income populations — continue to encounter barriers that impede their educational and professional success.

Campus climate assessments reveal significant variations in experiences of inclusion and equity among students, faculty, and staff. While many students express feelings of support and respect, a sense of elitism and individualism often undermines broader inclusivity efforts. Faculty and staff, especially those from marginalized backgrounds, report challenges in collaboration, equitable treatment, and representation. These findings underscore the urgent need for systemic reforms to address inequities and foster a more inclusive culture.

Overview of SB 5227

Senate Bill 5227 was enacted to address persistent inequities by embedding EDI principles into the core operations of Washington's public higher education institutions. Key components of the legislation include:

- **Professional development and training**: Colleges must provide EDI/antiracism training to faculty, staff, and students. Many colleges also offer supplemental, optional modules to deepen engagement.

- **Campus climate assessments**: Colleges must conduct a campus climate assessment regularly (at least every five years) to understand the current state of EDI on campus for faculty, staff and students. These surveys measure perceptions of inclusivity, belonging, and equity, providing a data-driven foundation for reforms.

- **Listening and feedback sessions**: Colleges are required to conduct annual EDI listening and feedback sessions for the entire campus community.

- **Transparency and accountability**: Institutions are required to publicly share findings on their public websites.

- **Reporting**: Beginning December 31, 2024, SBCTC and public four-year institutions are required to submit biennial legislative reports that provide information on professional development programs and the results of campus climate assessments. Starting on December 31, 2026, the reports must also include information on student diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism programs implemented at higher education institutions. This report is the first biennial report from SBCTC.
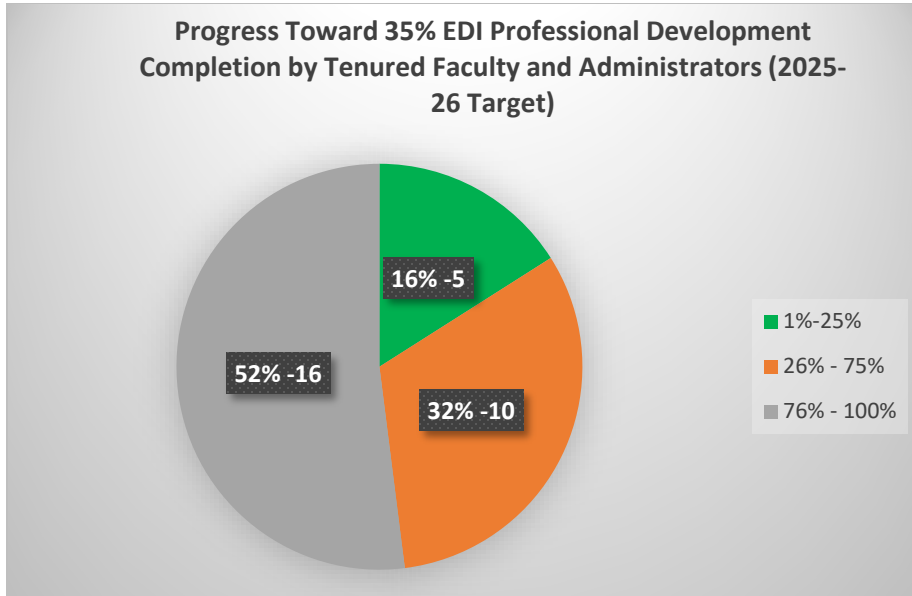
Legislation Implementation

Professional development focused on EDI and antiracism

Washington's community and technical colleges are focused on equipping faculty, staff, and administrators with the tools to address systemic inequities, cultivate inclusive campus environments, and embed EDI principles into every facet of institutional operations.

SB 5227 requires that, beginning in the 2022-23 academic year, all new faculty and staff, whether full or part-time, participate in EDI and antiracist programming. The legislation requires institutions to set a goal that at least 80% of their total faculty and staff complete a professional development program every two years. To support that goal, the legislation requires that, beginning with the 2024-25 academic year, 35% of tenured faculty and 35% of administrators complete a professional development program every two years and that institutions report their progress in meeting the mandate.

To gather data for this report, SBCTC surveyed all 34 community and technical colleges, some of which are governed under district-wide offices: Community Colleges of Spokane (Spokane Community College and Spokane Falls Community College), Seattle Colleges (North, Central, and South Seattle colleges), and Pierce College (Pierce College Puyallup and Pierce College Fort Steilacoom). Of the 31 responding colleges and/or districts, 52% (16) reported that between 76% and 100% of their tenured faculty and administrators had completed EDI training. 32% (10) reported that 26% to 75% had completed training, while 16% (5) reported that 1% to 25% had completed training. This demonstrates substantial, systemwide progress toward meeting the required thresholds by 2025-26.

Progress Toward 35% EDI Professional Development Completion by Tenured Faculty and Administrators (2025-26 Target)

Legend:
- 1%-25%
- 26% - 75%
- 76% - 100%

Pie segments: 16% -5, 32% -10, 52% -16

Comprehensive training programs

Comprehensive professional training programs form the cornerstone of college efforts to effectively implement SB 5227. These structured and ongoing professional development activities ensure faculty, staff, and administrators are equipped with the tools to foster inclusive and equitable educational environments. Colleges have developed a blend of mandatory and optional training sessions to address systemic inequities, promote cultural competence, and engage participants in meaningful discussions about EDI and antiracism.

Annual in-service and development days serve as pivotal events for these efforts. For example, Grays Harbor College builds EDI and antiracism training into their "Fall Kick Off Week" and "All College Day," a noninstructional professional development day for faculty and staff. Clover Park Technical College mandates full-time employee participation in EDI-focused in-service days while providing optional attendance for part-time staff. These events offer a platform to discuss antiracism and equity topics, supplemented by yearly workshops that deepen understanding and commitment. Similarly, Bellingham Technical College integrates equity education into its professional development calendar, featuring its DEI certificate program to support faculty and staff in adopting antiracist practices.

Mandatory annual training ensures consistent engagement across all institutional levels. Clark College and Edmonds College require all employees to participate in these sessions, focusing on dismantling systemic inequities and fostering a culturally competent campus community. At Centralia College, foundational EDI training is embedded in the onboarding process and reinforced through continuous learning opportunities. This approach ensures that equity and inclusion are woven into the fabric of institutional culture from the outset of employment.

Modular and online offerings make professional development accessible and flexible. Colleges like Wenatchee Valley College and Bellevue College use platforms such as Vector Solutions to deliver asynchronous EDI training, covering topics such as unconscious bias, microaggressions, and cultural humility. Bellevue College's expansion of online resources, funded by state initiatives, exemplifies a commitment to ensuring that all employees have access to essential EDI education. These flexible learning options accommodate diverse schedules and support the broader institutional goal of fostering an inclusive culture.

Faculty role in fostering inclusive educational environments

Faculty serve as pivotal agents in creating inclusive and equitable educational settings, shaping not only the learning experiences of students but also the broader campus culture. Recognizing the vital role of faculty, community and technical colleges have implemented tailored professional development initiatives to empower faculty to advance EDI and antiracism at colleges. Events such as Skagit Valley College's "Cardinal Community Day" and Pierce College's "All District Days" provide opportunities for faculty to collaborate with colleagues, engage in workshops, and participate in discussions focused on equity and inclusion. These events foster a collective commitment to addressing systemic inequities and ensure faculty are equipped with the tools to bring inclusivity into their classrooms and professional interactions.

Beyond events, colleges have developed innovative programs to support faculty in embedding equity principles into their teaching practices. At Lake Washington Institute of Technology, a cohort model supports faculty as they integrate antiracist content into curricula, enhanced by peer mentoring and stipends to encourage active participation. Workshops at Whatcom Community College and Green River College focus on equitable teaching strategies, culturally responsive pedagogy, and inclusive grading practices. These initiatives ensure that faculty are aware of EDI principles and are adept at applying them to foster a more equitable and supportive educational environment for all students. Through these targeted efforts, faculty are positioned as leaders in advancing institutional equity goals and cultivating a culture of inclusivity across their campuses.

Leadership and supervisory training for administrators

Recognizing the influence of administrators in shaping campus culture, colleges have implemented robust programs to ensure that leaders are equipped with the tools to address EDI challenges effectively. Highline College exemplifies this effort by mandating equity-focused training for supervisors. These sessions are designed to align leadership actions with institutional EDI values, ensuring equity becomes integral to decision-making processes. Similarly, South Puget Sound Community College reinforces accountability by embedding EDI goals into staff evaluations, making equity a measurable component of administrative performance.

Beyond accountability, many colleges integrate leadership training into their strategic planning frameworks to ensure sustained progress toward equity goals. Clark College, for instance, aligns leadership training outcomes with its equity-centered strategic plan, using tracking systems to monitor participation and effectiveness. This alignment ensures that leaders actively engage in EDI efforts and promotes consistency between strategic objectives and day-to-day administrative practices. Community and technical colleges are cultivating a leadership culture that prioritizes inclusivity, equity, and long-term institutional transformation by emphasizing accountability and strategic alignment.

Innovative and accessible programming

Colleges have embraced innovative and accessible programming to deliver EDI and antiracism training. Hybrid and flexible modalities are key to this approach, with colleges such as South Puget Sound Community College and Yakima Valley College offering training sessions that accommodate both in-person and online participation. This flexibility ensures that employees with varying responsibilities and schedules can engage with these critical professional development opportunities, fostering widespread involvement and accessibility.

In addition to flexible scheduling, institutions have prioritized accessibility features to ensure inclusiveness for all employees. For instance, Centralia College and Seattle Colleges incorporate ADA-compliant resources such as live captioning, accessible slides, and sensory-friendly training environments. By consulting with their disability services experts and proactively addressing accessibility needs, colleges are removing barriers to participation and creating equitable learning environments for diverse staff and faculty members.

Recognition systems also play a significant role in motivating participation and highlighting individual commitment to EDI efforts. Spokane Community College has implemented a badge recognition program where employees earn and display badges upon completing training modules. These badges symbolize engagement and dedication to equity principles, fostering a sense of accomplishment and encouraging others to participate. This approach enhances individual motivation and contributes to a culture of accountability and continuous learning across campuses.

Through these innovative strategies, community and technical colleges are demonstrating their commitment to delivering accessible, inclusive, and impactful professional development programming. By addressing logistical challenges, prioritizing accessibility, and incorporating recognition systems, these institutions set a high standard for equity-focused training and ensuring meaningful employee engagement.

Progress tracking and evaluation

Tracking and evaluation mechanisms are essential to ensuring the effectiveness of EDI programs across colleges. At several colleges, such as Lower Columbia College and Seattle Colleges, participation metrics play a significant role in measuring progress toward SB 5227's goals. Colleges like Bellingham Technical College and Everett Community College use pre-and post-training assessments to evaluate learning outcomes, such as enhanced confidence in addressing bias and promoting equity. Additionally, post-session surveys offer valuable feedback that informs future program refinements, ensuring that training sessions remain relevant and impactful for participants.

Campus climate surveys provide a comprehensive view of institutional progress and areas requiring further attention. For example, Shoreline Community College conducts regular surveys to identify barriers and opportunities for growth, tailoring EDI initiatives to evolving institutional needs. These surveys enable colleges to adapt their strategies effectively, ensuring alignment with broader equity goals while addressing specific community challenges.

Collaboration and community engagement

Collaboration and community engagement are key to advancing EDI initiatives within community and technical colleges. Cultural events and speaker series play a significant role in fostering cultural awareness and strengthening connections within campus communities and the broader public. Columbia Basin College and Bellevue College exemplify this effort by hosting events highlighting diverse perspectives and creating opportunities to celebrate cultural diversity while deepening understanding of inclusion and equity. These events spark meaningful conversations and allow faculty, staff, and students to engage with critical issues and build a shared commitment to equity.

Similarly, Clark College's Northwest Regional Equity Conference (NWREC) is a powerful community engagement and professional development platform. By bringing together diverse voices and fostering collaboration, the conference offers innovative training rooted in antiracism, anti-oppression, and social justice principles. NWREC equips participants with the tools to drive meaningful change while promoting equity and justice as central themes. Focusing on practical engagement, the conference enhances personal and professional growth. It strengthens community ties across the colleges, the Pacific Northwest, and beyond, making it an essential contributor to the state's ongoing equity work.

Strategic partnerships further strengthen the impact of these initiatives by connecting colleges with local and national organizations. Collaborations between Columbia Basin College and the Hispanic Serving Institution Advisory Council align professional development programs with community goals, ensuring relevance and broader outreach. These partnerships allow institutions to access specialized resources, expert knowledge, and best practices, enriching the campus EDI programming. Together, these efforts underscore the system's dedication to fostering inclusive environments within colleges and the communities they serve.

Challenges and the need for continuous resources

While community and technical colleges have made substantial progress in implementing SB 5227, several challenges underscore the critical need for sustained resources and innovation to achieve full compliance and maximize impact. One notable challenge is equity fatigue, where prolonged engagement with EDI topics can lead to resistance or disengagement among participants. This highlights the importance of developing innovative and engaging program designs that keep faculty and staff motivated while addressing the complexity of equity issues. Tailored approaches, interactive workshops, and varied content delivery methods can help combat this fatigue and maintain momentum.

Resource limitations present another significant hurdle, particularly for smaller institutions with constrained budgets and staffing. These colleges often struggle to offer tailored programming or expand access to EDI initiatives. Ensuring equitable resource allocation across the system is essential to support smaller institutions in delivering impactful training programs. Additional funding, shared resources, and collaborative initiatives can help bridge these gaps and create more uniform opportunities for faculty and staff development.

Program development remains an ongoing priority, as several colleges are still finalizing their EDI frameworks, with plans for full implementation by 2025. Crafting comprehensive and adaptable EDI strategies requires time, expertise, and sustained investment. Institutions must also remain flexible, adapting their frameworks to evolving societal and institutional needs. Supporting these efforts with continuous professional development opportunities and updated training materials will be critical to ensuring long-term success.

Future efforts should focus on expanding access to EDI training and enhancing program content to keep pace with changing dynamics. Consistent engagement across all colleges is crucial to achieving the systemwide goals set by SB 5227. This includes leveraging innovative technologies, fostering inter-college collaboration, and prioritizing data-driven improvements. By addressing these challenges and committing to continuous resource allocation, colleges can build on their progress and further embed equity, diversity, and inclusion into the core of their institutional practices.

Campus climate assessments and related outcomes

SB 5227 requires Washington community and technical colleges to develop strategies and provide transparent reporting on their efforts to meet the goals of SB 5227. The legislation also requires findings and results be published on the institutions' public websites. Among the 31 survey respondents, 68% (21) have made public the institution's campus climate assessment and listening feedback sessions. Several colleges have not yet publicly published findings because they are updating their websites to comply with the ADA Title II federal regulations.

Published Results of CCA and Listening Sessions
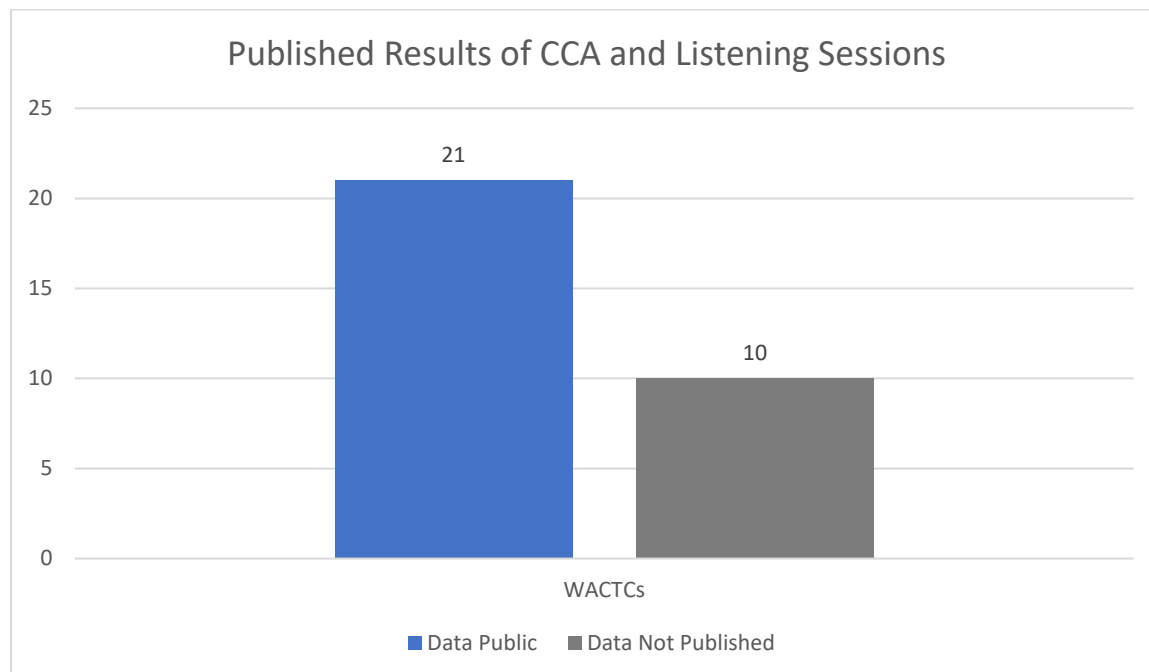
Methodologies and approaches

Community and technical colleges employ diverse and systematic tools to assess campus climate effectively. Standardized survey instruments are widely used, including the Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey employed by institutions like Clark College, Green River College, and Bellingham Technical College. These surveys focus on institutional support for EDI and individual experiences with discrimination. Additionally, colleges such as Grays Harbor College and Spokane Falls Community College use the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and the Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) survey to measure student engagement and employee satisfaction, providing a broad view of campus dynamics.

In addition to standardized instruments, colleges like Renton Technical College tailor surveys with customized questions to address specific campus concerns. This approach ensures that assessments capture local nuances, making findings more relevant and actionable. Everett Community College exemplifies a comprehensive approach by combining HEDS survey data with qualitative insights from consultant-led focus groups and listening sessions. This mixed-methods strategy offers a deeper understanding of campus climate.

To enhance participation, community and technical colleges use innovative engagement strategies. Colleges like Clover Park Technical College boost response rates through targeted outreach and incentives. Multilingual survey options, as seen at Centralia College, further increase accessibility and inclusivity, ensuring diverse voices are represented in the data. Together, these methodologies provide a robust framework for understanding and improving campus climates across the 34 community and technical colleges.

Findings and applications

The results of campus climate assessments reveal several critical themes that inform strategic initiatives across the college system. Belonging and inclusivity remain key priorities, with most institutions reporting moderate to high levels of belonging among their stakeholders. For example, 70% of respondents at Highline College felt part of the community, while 82.6% of Edmonds College students expressed a sense of belonging. However, disparities in these experiences persist within colleges, particularly for historically underrepresented groups, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to bridge these gaps.

Discrimination and equity gaps also emerge as significant concerns. For example, data from one college found that 18% of respondents reported experiencing discrimination, with faculty and staff reporting higher incidences than students. Similarly, findings from another college indicated that LGBQ+ individuals and employees of multiple racial backgrounds face discrimination at rates exceeding national averages. These insights highlight marginalized groups' ongoing challenges and emphasize the need for systemic changes to foster equity and inclusion.

Institutional support for EDI is widely acknowledged, though there are growth opportunities. Campus climate survey respondents identified areas for improvement, such as establishing more equitable hiring practices and ensuring that faculty and staff reflect the diversity of the students they serve. These gaps point to actionable areas where colleges can align hiring and retention strategies with EDI goals.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated feelings of disconnection among faculty and staff. For instance, 78% of faculty and 65% of staff at one of the colleges reported isolation during this period, indicating the necessity of intentional efforts to rebuild the community and find innovative ways to re-engage in post-pandemic environments.

Institutional Improvements

Assessment findings have driven transformative policies and practices across community and technical colleges, reinforcing their commitment to creating inclusive and equitable campuses. Policy reforms have been pivotal in aligning institutional frameworks with EDI principles. Green River College, for instance, revised its Title IX reporting structure to address potential conflicts of interest, ensuring a more equitable and transparent process. Similarly, Columbia Basin College adopted bilingual hiring practices and signage, enhancing accessibility for Latinx students and fostering a more inclusive environment.

Enhanced support structures have also emerged as a key outcome of these assessments. South Puget Sound Community College streamlined processes for chosen name visibility, an initiative that significantly bolstered the sense of safety and belonging among transgender students. Centralia College implemented practical solutions like integrating food pantries into high-traffic areas, addressing the critical food insecurity needs of marginalized student populations, and promoting greater engagement.

Data-driven professional development initiatives have further institutionalized EDI efforts. Bates Technical College used survey results to develop tailored training programs focusing on implicit bias and cultural competency, equipping staff and faculty with tools to foster inclusivity. Pierce College expanded its Inclusive Practices framework, embedding cultural responsiveness into faculty training and teaching evaluations, thus reinforcing EDI values in academic and administrative practices.

Infrastructure investments also highlight the tangible impact of campus climate assessments. Walla Walla Community College established a multicultural center, creating a dedicated space for fostering inclusivity and providing resources for students from diverse backgrounds. Clover Park Technical College installed its "Male Engagement Center" geared towards targeted academic and non-academic support for African American male students. The center was designed to foster a sense of trust and belonging, building students' resolve as they pursue certificates and degrees. These improvements underscore the importance of translating assessment findings into actionable strategies that enhance campus climate and community well-being.

Challenges and solutions

Despite significant progress, colleges face several challenges in conducting and leveraging campus climate assessments, particularly regarding participation, resources, and stakeholder trust. Low response rates remain a recurring issue, often stemming from survey fatigue and skepticism about anonymity. Spokane Falls Community College addressed these barriers by offering incentives such as gift cards and using aggregated reporting methods to ensure confidentiality. However, another institution reported a mere 4.5% overall response rate, highlighting the need for enhanced outreach strategies and participant engagement.

Resource limitations significantly impact smaller institutions. Many lack dedicated EDI officers who report directly to college presidents or sufficient staff to effectively manage assessments and implement initiatives. This absence of executive leadership and authority to enforce strategies per SB 5527 hinders the development and execution of comprehensive EDI strategies, limiting the institutions' ability to address systemic inequities. These challenges highlight the critical need for greater investments in EDI resources and the exploration of innovative solutions, such as cross-institutional collaboration and shared resource models, to bridge these gaps and expand the reach of equity-focused efforts.

Building trust and engagement with marginalized groups is another critical challenge. Historical mistrust among these populations necessitates culturally sensitive methods to ensure meaningful participation. Such strategies improve data collection efforts and build stronger relationships between institutions and their diverse communities, paving the way for sustained EDI progress.

Future Directions

To sustain progress and address identified challenges, community and technical colleges must prioritize expanding participation, equitable resource allocation, continuous feedback mechanisms, and strategic alignment. Expanding participation requires innovative outreach strategies to engage diverse populations more effectively. Incorporating EDI discussions into classroom settings and leveraging digital platforms can significantly broaden engagement, particularly among underrepresented groups. Enhanced participation is critical for ensuring that campus climate assessments reflect the experiences of all community members.

Equitable resource allocation remains a pressing priority, especially for smaller institutions that often lack the staffing and funding to implement EDI initiatives fully. Collaborative efforts, shared resources, and transparent and targeted state funding are needed to help colleges meet their EDI goals. This approach not only strengthens individual campuses but also enhances the collective impact of the community and technical college system.

Transparent feedback and iterative reporting processes are vital for maintaining trust and accountability. Regularly sharing assessment findings with campus communities and clear action plans for improvement can foster a culture of transparency and inclusivity. Institutions can strengthen this trust by actively involving stakeholders in developing and refining EDI strategies based on the feedback received.

Strategic alignment of assessment results with long-term planning is essential for sustainable impact. Renton Technical College's "Be the Place Strategic Equity Plan" exemplifies how integrating EDI goals into broader institutional frameworks ensures systemic progress. Aligning these goals with academic and operational priorities will embed equity as a core institutional value, fostering lasting cultural transformation across all campuses.

Evaluation of Implementation

The evaluation of SB 5227's implementation reveals a concerted effort by colleges to integrate EDI into institutional practices. Survey submissions indicate that while SB 5227 has catalyzed important progress, there is still work to be done to address gaps in implementation, foster trust, and create a more uniform and equitable approach to EDI across the state's colleges. Several key takeaways emerge from the detailed submissions provided by colleges that are valuable for SBCTC, individual colleges, and their partners.

Many institutions have developed robust training programs that emphasize accessibility and relevance, employing various formats such as in-service days, online modules, and targeted workshops to engage faculty and staff effectively. These approaches demonstrate a commitment to making EDI education a priority across campuses. However, the submissions from individual colleges also highlight disparities in the depth and consistency of these efforts, which stem from uneven resource allocation and varying levels of strategic alignment. This inconsistency suggests a need for statewide frameworks that ensure all institutions have equitable access to resources and support for implementing comprehensive EDI initiatives.

Campus climate assessments have emerged as critical tools for identifying systemic inequities and informing institutional responses. These assessments have provided valuable insights into the experiences of students, faculty, and staff, shedding light on issues such as belonging, discrimination, and institutional support for EDI efforts. Many colleges have used this data to drive impactful reforms, such as revising internal processes and establishing dedicated spaces for multicultural engagement. These actions illustrate the potential of data-informed decision-making to enact meaningful change. Nevertheless, challenges persist, including low survey response rates and a lack of trust among historically marginalized groups. These barriers highlight the need for culturally sensitive approaches to engagement, as well as sustained efforts to build trust and ensure that EDI initiatives are inclusive and responsive to the needs of all community members.

Recommendations for Legislators, SBCTC, Colleges, and Partners

The implementation of SB 5227 has demonstrated significant strides in embedding EDI across Washington's community and technical college system. However, opportunities for refinement and growth require action from legislators, SBCTC, individual colleges, and their partners.

Legislators are encouraged to consider increasing funding allocations to support EDI initiatives, particularly in smaller colleges with limited resources. Additional state funding can help address disparities in implementation by enabling these institutions to expand their professional development programs, hire dedicated EDI leadership and staff, and improve infrastructure.

To reduce administrative burdens on colleges, SBCTC should streamline reporting requirements to ensure consistency. Additionally, the Office of EDI at the SBCTC should establish a centralized framework for integrating EDI principles across the system, ensuring consistency in implementation. This framework should include best practices, standardized evaluation metrics, and guidance for aligning EDI initiatives with strategic plans.

SBCTC could also facilitate collaboration among colleges by hosting forums for sharing resources, strategies, and lessons learned, fostering a unified approach to equity.

Individual colleges must prioritize hiring dedicated executive EDI leadership and staff to implement the requirements of SB 5227. Colleges should also prioritize transparent communication with their communities by regularly sharing the results of climate assessments and their action plans. Creating feedback loops that incorporate stakeholder input will enhance trust and accountability. Additionally, colleges should continue innovating their professional development offerings by leveraging flexible modalities such as online modules and hybrid sessions to engage a broader audience. Addressing equity fatigue through engaging and tailored training content will encourage sustained participation.

Finally, community and organizational partners can play a critical role by offering expertise, resources, and support for campus EDI initiatives. Partnerships with local organizations, cultural institutions, and EDI experts must collaborate to enrich training content and provide real-world perspectives that resonate with diverse campus communities. By fostering these collaborations, colleges can strengthen the relevance and impact of their programs.

These recommendations aim to build on the progress made under SB 5227, ensuring that community and technical colleges continue to lead in fostering inclusive and equitable educational environments. Legislators, SBCTC, colleges, and partners can achieve long-term, systemic transformation through sustained efforts and a continued shared commitment to equity.

Conclusion

The implementation of SB 5227 represents a critical milestone in advancing EDI across Washington's community and technical colleges. This legislative effort has mobilized colleges to develop robust training programs, conduct meaningful campus climate assessments, and foster institutional practices that reflect a commitment to equity and antiracism. Through tailored professional development initiatives, data-driven decision-making, and community engagement, colleges have made notable strides in addressing systemic inequities.

Despite progress, challenges such as resource disparities, low assessment participation rates, and historical mistrust highlight the need for sustained effort and innovation. Colleges have shown resilience and creativity in navigating these barriers, employing strategies like culturally sensitive engagement, incentivized participation, and leveraging community partnerships. These approaches demonstrate that meaningful change is possible and impactful when institutions focus on inclusivity and adaptability.
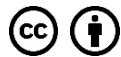
Legislators, SBCTC, individual colleges, and their partners must work collaboratively to address persistent gaps and ensure equitable resource allocation. Expanding participation, aligning EDI goals with strategic frameworks, and maintaining transparency in outcomes will be key to fostering trust and accountability. With the continued support of all stakeholders, colleges can build on their successes to create inclusive and supportive environments that empower students, faculty, and staff alike.

Community and technical colleges have established a strong foundation for fostering inclusive educational environments by prioritizing systemic change and sustained commitment. As these efforts evolve, they will serve as a model for embedding EDI values into the core of higher education, ensuring meaningful and lasting impact for all.

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