Transcript - ACAO Town Hall: DEI in the Classroom: Teaching & Curriculum Considerations

1/28/2022

CONNIE JOHNSON: --opening could talk about ACAO to start us off, as you normally do, and then I can frame up the discussion. How about that?
DOREEN MURNER: Perfect. Welcome, everyone to ACAO's January Town Hall, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the classroom. We are starting 2022 off with a bang. We're so glad everyone is here and able to be on this town hall today. ACAO is the Association for Chief Academic Officers in higher education.
And one of the differentiating factors about ACAO is we represent all institutions, large or small, public, private, international. So we get a compendium of innovation and collaboration when we're all together. Glad you're all here.
I'm going to invite you all to join ACAO. These town halls are free for you. And we do it with support of dues, so I'm going to ask you all to please take a moment and join ACAO at acao.org. And with that, I'll let Connie introduce the session today.
CONNIE JOHNSON: Thank you so much. And welcome, everybody. If you have not done so, would you place your institution in the chat? I see we've got colleagues joining. And for those that might be here for the first time, these town halls are a little informal, which is why we like them, gathering of chief academic officers for the most part, or other colleagues that are working directly with chief academic officers.
And my name is Connie Johnson. I have the honor, actually, and the fun time of leading the Professional Development Committee for the ACAO Board. And we had an offering last year that was diversity, equity, and inclusion from an administrator's standpoint. And there was interest in the organization then to continue the conversation, so this is part two, diversity, equity and inclusion in the classroom, as is noted by the title.
And so also, ACAO partners and is part of Every Learner Everywhere. And so this is where our speakers are from. And I will ask them to provide their bios and anything they want about every learner everywhere. But this is meant to be a discussion. So Jessica Williams and Jeremiah Sims will have some opening comments and then I'll help to facilitate a discussion.

We encourage you to place any questions or comments you have in the chat as we go along. And I'll make sure that our presenters hear those questions. And this is a topic that is of interest to us all, is with work, with diversity, equity, and inclusion, how do we bring this to the classroom with teaching and curriculum considerations? So it is my pleasure to introduce Dr. Jessica Rowland Williams, who is the director of Every Learner Everywhere. Jessica, floor is all yours.

JESSICA ROWLAND WILLIAMS: Thank you so much, Connie. Such an honor to be here with you all today. I'm really excited to talk to you and to tell you first a little bit about Every Learner Everywhere, tell you about our network, and who we are, and the work that we do.

And then we're going to get into a really exciting conversation, I hope, with one of my good colleagues, Dr. Jeremiah Sims, who is the Director for Equity at the College of San Mateo and also the author of several books, including Revolutionary STEM Education, Critical-Reality Pedagogy and Social Justice in STEM for Black Men-- Black Males, sorry, and also Minding the Obligation Gap in Community Colleges and Beyond, Theory and Practice in Achieving Educational Equity. So super excited to be here with him as well.

But first, a little bit about Every Learner and who we are. Every Learner Everywhere, as Connie Johnson said, is a network, and ACAO is one of our network partners. And we have 12 partner organizations in total that have expertise in higher ed, ranging from course design, to research and evaluation, to institutional business models, and everything in between. And our partners leverage these areas of expertise to support institutions in using digital technologies to provide personalized instructions to students in blended and online learning environments during their introductory courses. And the work of our network really centers around the development of equity-centered digital learning solutions and services in introductory courses because we know, of course, that these courses are the ones that have the most impact on student's long-term success in higher ed.

We also focus our work on Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students, poverty-affected students, and first-generation students. And our goal is that they perform to their fullest potential in gateway courses. Our understanding of equity begins with an acknowledgment that the systems of higher education were intentionally built to exclude these marginalized student populations. And we understand that this will not just be undone by chance.

And we believe, of course, that the time is overdue for us to critically evaluate and change those systemic inequities that are built into our teaching and learning practices and understand how they contribute to the quality of service gaps that we see for marginalized students.

Large bodies of research, as many of you know, have shown that marginalized students face a range of discriminatory practices in traditional classroom settings. And we owe it to our students to do more than just digitize or ignore the inequities in traditional classroom settings, especially as we navigate the difficult times caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and as we move beyond the pandemic into an era of teaching and learning that we know is going to rely more heavily on technology.

And so just a little bit about the work of our network, we began in 2017, and we started with a focus on adaptive courseware. And one of our first major projects was done in partnership with ATD, or Achieving The Dream, and APLU, which is the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities. And that project was to support 12 institutions in the redesign of introductory courses using adaptive courseware. And you can see the institutions on this slide.

Our services to these 12, we call them lighthouse institutions over five semesters resulted in the redesign of 193 sections of 62 courses that were taught by 432 instructors and ultimately impacted 24,715 students. And most of the pilot courses that were redesigned were in chemistry and biology section.

So since that early initial project, the demand for our work has increased significantly, especially over the last 18 months, and we have now served over 600 institutions in all 50 states and in 14 countries. Currently, our network works to build and promote digital learning solutions that center the effective interpersonal and situational needs of Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and poverty-affected students. And we do this in three ways.

One, we do it by positioning Latinx, Indigenous, and Black students and those who share their lived experiences as experts and we incorporate their voices in all aspects of our work and research. And we do that through one our Student Fellows program. So we actually have a group of students that work alongside all of our network partners throughout the year. And certainly, I can give you some links. You can go on our website and find out more about our Student Fellows and our Student Fellows Program. And we use those fellows to help us design research projects, and design services, and review resources. We truly do leverage their expertise and view them as experts.

We also do qualitative research projects. One example is the Student Speaks Project that we conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, where we sit down and conduct two-hour focus groups with over 100 racially-marginalized students, including students who were veterans, and living in rural areas, and raising dependents because we really wanted to understand what their experiences were like and what they were struggling with. And we used that information and incorporate that in the work that we do.

The second thing that we do is we provide the field with solutions, and tools, and services that support race and equity-conscious implementation of digital learning tools. And thirdly, we collaborate across network partners, such as ACAO who share our equity focus and advocate for racially marginalized communities and value diversity and network representation. We also collaborate, of course, with scholars who are leading the field in this work, such as Dr. Jeremiah Sims, who you'll hear from in a minute.

At Every Learner Everywhere, we believe that just, and equity-centered, and anti-racist digital learning environment is one where we are changing systems and structures and practices and attitudes to create a fair learning environment for all students. And we believe that equity-centered teaching practices are those that begin with an awareness that all students do not have the same time access-- sorry, the same time, space, and resources needed for success.

We believe that these practices do not place the burden on students solely to identify and address their own needs. We believe that these practices are ones that create accountability for course designers and instructors to check their own biases. And we believe that these teaching practices also involve an investment in the professional development to build cultural competency.

We also believe that an equity-centered digital learning environment begins with an understanding of the impact of digital tools on different student groups. We believe that that also comes with accountability for the unintentional consequences of digital learning implementation. And that's important because a lot of times we measure our success or we measure our work by our intent and not always our impact. And so that's also why we think it's important to measure the positive and negative impact of digital learning implementation and also continue to raise accountability for digital tool providers to build solutions that truly are equitable for all students.

Of course, one thing that we hear all the time is that a lot of folks, especially at this point, are understanding why this is important and understanding why this work is going to be critical going forward, but having a hard time translating that into how. How do we do all those things? Even what I just said, that sounds good, but how do I actually do that? How do I do that tomorrow? How do I do that in the classroom?

And what we're finding is that how is often very context specific and requires that work be done on a personal and professional level. And so we do the translation work within our network of the why and how by designing and delivering services specific to the needs of institutions by developing resources and also by sharing expertise and insights across organizations.

And so we know that creating these type of equitable digital learning teaching and learning environments don't happen overnight. And so I wanted to start sharing some of those resources with you. Two that I'm going to highlight today, one that we're going to dig deep into. The first one, though, is called Getting Started With Equity.

And the idea for this resource actually birthed out of that exact kind of sentiment that I just shared, people hearing about equity, hearing about understanding the why but really not knowing where to even start with how. And so we created this document as a resource designed to spark necessary dialogue within academic departments around how we can work towards equity and justice in our curricula and teaching. And this is also designed to support department chairs in developing and curating an educational environment that is simultaneously justice centered and equity advancing.

The process that's outlined in Getting Started With Equity requires intentional steps to identify and analyze policies and practices that may be driving towards inequitable access, experiences, and outcomes for racially-minoritized and poverty-affected students. And so if-- oh, I was going to say maybe someone on my team can put that in the chat, but looks like they already have.

And so as a next step to build on that initial foundational resource, we also had the opportunity to further this work by bringing in Dr. Jeremiah Sims and using his impact framework to create this resource, which is entitled Improving Departmental Equity Using the IMPACT Framework.

And what this resource does is provide step-by-step instructions and worksheets for experts and novices alike to anticipate, and acknowledge, and redress racism perpetuated by academic departmental policies and practices.

We know that improving equity requires acknowledging where and why inequities exist and actively working to eliminate them. And so this is a resource that was designed to accompany the Getting Started With Equity Guide which walks with academic leaders like yourself through conducting the process of conducting an equity audit of the department's teaching policies and practices and also laying out evidence-based teaching practices that support educational equity, and outlines inequity, and how to redress them in specific academic disciplines.

And before I turn it over to Dr. Jeremiah Sims to walk us through this framework a little bit more, another thing that I want to point out that we've heard a lot is that when it comes to doing equity work, some of this work can be very academic discipline specific. There are some things that we can just share broadly and tips and tricks that are general, but addressing issues of equity in math, for example, can be very different in some cases than addressing issues of equity within maybe an English course.

And so along with this work, we have also drafted academic discipline-specific briefs to provide support around equity considerations in ways that are academic specific-- I'm sorry, academic discipline specific. And so I will pause there. And talking about Every Learner Everywhere and the work that we do, I do encourage you to look at our resources, check out our work. But I really want to dig deep into the IMPACT Framework and the work that we've done with Dr. Jeremiah Sims. So without further ado, I will turn the floor over to him to walk us through this incredible resource.

JEREMIAH SIMS: Hey, it's good to see all your lovely faces. I'm fresh off of a knock down, drag out bout with COVID. And so my energy is much better. And so I'm going to give you what I got. And hopefully, we'll be able to really dig into this conversation. And so I want to talk a little bit about the genesis of this tool.

So I've been blessed to have opportunities to speak to people far and wide throughout this country around anti-racism, equity, justice, pedagogy, different types of things. And so what continued to come to the fore in these conversations, especially with my European American brothers and sisters, people who have been racialized as white in this country, is that they don't know where to get in.

They don't know how to situate themselves in this work because they're afraid that, and this is not universally true, but in my experience, a lot of people have shared this with me, they feel like they could get in and do something wrong and then run the risk of being canceled, something along those lines.

And so it's very difficult to be vulnerable when you're not in a place where you feel safe because it feels like a one strike and then you're out kind of atmosphere in equity work specifically for people who are not hyper-marginalized peoples, people who have experienced and are beneficiaries of a system that is slanted in a really particular way towards white supremacy.

And so the reality is when we think about the life and work of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, what he was working towards was creating a space where people, irrespective of where they are, could commit to doing good work and commit to justice. And so this tool was built as a call in, not so much a call out. I spent a fair amount of my early career as a Fanonist. Some of you are familiar with Frantz Fanon's work.

My mother was on the fringes of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. I had a very particular political bent and I wanted to burn it all down. Because Audre Lorde argued what? We'll never dismantle the master's house with the master's tools. And so I was trying to figure out what type of theoretical Molotov cocktail I could design to tear it all down.

And I realized that if we actually want to see change, if we actually want to see real shifts with regard to justice, then we need to work together in solidarity. And here's the amazing thing about solidarity, because we've all heard that term before, you don't have to arrive at solidarity before you do this work. Solidarity actually is fomented, solidarity arises from doing the work. So what do we need? We need everybody to feel like they can do the work. And so that's what this tool was designed to do.

I've oftentimes-- and I have five little boys and I apologize if they're loud in the background, but I don't want to start yelling at them because I lose my voice and I wouldn't be able to speak with y'all. And so I like to tell this story, I used to work on cars. I had a bunch of Firebirds. I had a '67 Firebird. I dumped all the money I could make into it just so I can drive from gas station to gas station and be really, really loud and really, really shiny.

And no matter what I did with this car and I was fairly handy. Understand this is 25 years ago, before the internet. I was fairly handy. I could work on a lot of things and fix a lot of

things myself. That was the only way I still had money left over for food. But this car, even though I dumped all this money into it, would smoke. And it was really upsetting for me because I couldn't identify the source of that smoke.

And so I had a buddy come over-- for months I couldn't identify where the smoke was coming from. I had a buddy come over. He listened to it. Within five minutes he was able to identify where the smoke was coming from. It turned out that there was a divot in the oil pan and we replaced the gasket. We fixed it. We're good to go.

The reason he was able to do that is because he had a particular level of analytical training as a mechanic. He knows that these types of cars, these engines only make maybe five noises. So if you can recognize what that noise is and you can trace it back to the kind of chronic disease and not just diagnose the symptom itself.

And so I'm saying that to say in using a tool like the IMPACT Equity Evaluation Toolkit, what happens is that your analytical framework becomes sharpened to the point where you can recognize the source of symptoms and not just fixate on the symptoms. Because a lot of work that we've done, a lot of work that brilliant folks continue to do in the interest of equity and justice is still a kind of triage.

We're not addressing the chronic diseases, but instead we continue to treat the symptoms. And what happens with chronic diseases, we see this with COVID, is that it permutates. It changes. You get a delta variant or Omicron, you get these different things, and it can shift. So if you only ever fixate on symptoms, you'll never actually address the chronic diseases that are causing, in our space, the achievement gap.

The achievement gap we've fixated on for years, for decades. But the achievement gap is a byproduct of racialized, late-stage, profit-driven capitalism working in concert with white supremacy and heteropatriarchy, and all these different things. And so we need to address those things while also addressing the symptoms. And so now I want to talk a little bit about the tool.

So it's an acronym. And actually, version 2.0 Mindful has shifted to measurable. And so we'll have that conversation later. And so we use measurable because we work with bureaucracies. We have to be honest about that. And things need to be measurable in order to make an argument. And so we felt like it was important to include that.

So Innovative, something is innovative if and only if it moves us away from our current white supremacist status quo. And so I just want to be very clear, that I'm not saying that people who are racialized as white in this country don't face difficulties, but they

don't face difficulties because of their pigment. They face difficulties because of late-stage, perverse, profit-driven capitalism.

And so I just want to be clear, when I'm talking about innovative and moving us away from a white supremacist model, I'm talking about white supremacy that is sutured to an almost indistinguishable from something that folks have termed racialized capitalism.

So if it moves us away from a status quo that is oppressive, then it's innovative. I don't care that it's new. In this particular context, innovative doesn't mean new because we can come up with some new stuff that's just as problematic as the old stuff. It's innovative if and only if it's moving us away from structures, and systems, and institutionalized policies, practices, and procedures, and pedagogies that disproportionately marginalize certain groups of people simply by virtue of the families that they're born into. Is it measurable? Can we measure it? Can we measure the efficacy?

Purposeful. Does it intentionally challenge our Eurocentric status quo? How is it meeting the need it was created for while positively impacting minoritized groups? Because here's the thing, y'all, there's no middle ground in this space. Everything that we do positively impacts some of the students we serve and negatively impacts others.

If it's arbitrary, we still need to address it, but the exigency is not there. But in reality, y'all know, you brilliant folks know that it's not arbitrary. The same peoples continually are hyper-marginalized. And I like this word better than just marginalized. And I'll give you a definition.

So it's exactly what you think it is. If you are a Latina who is first in family to go to college, who lives in a poor community, who doesn't have access to adequate healthcare, you live in a food desert, each one of those individual kind of identity contingencies can lead to a level of marginalization. When they're stacked on top of each other, there's an exponential marginalizing effect. So that's hyper-marginalization. An intersectional analysis of inequity will lead to uncovering hyper-marginalization, all the different kinds of nodes that-- so when I say hyper-marginalized, I mean people who are not just marginalized because they're women, but these are poor Black and Brown women. So there's a different level of marginalization associated with that.

Actionable. It's actually anti-racist. And so this is version 1. Version 2, we moved over to anti-racist. It calls out and challenges deeply entrenched anti-Blackness and other

forms of racism. Is it caring, is predicated on holistic care and concern for Students' real lives in and out of school? and It's transformative. It radically reimagines education and student support.

So I just want to talk about this kind of radicality. I think this is really important, especially in light of honoring and remembering the work of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King. And so what Dr. King was all about was a kind of radical love, a love that is-- Cornel West describes it as a love that was interested in realizing a beloved community. In order for that love to be radical, and not just-- because a lot of times the work that we do, because that's the way that the system is set up, is transactional. It's not actually radical. Even our love, our, quote-unquote, "love" or care, consideration for our students is oftentimes transactional. We're trying to give them what they need. And we've been led to believe that that's what love and care looks like.

But I want to push back on that and say that what this tool is trying to help us arrive at is something that I've termed love as praxis. And so you're all familiar with the term "praxis." I'm using a Freirean definition of praxis, where you have the theory. You get the theory, you marry that with action, and then you reflect on it. And that reflection piece is key.

John Dewey, who is a foremost educational philosopher, argued that you don't actually learn from experience, as the adage says. You learn from reflecting on your experience. And so this whole process, right? And we know that or even I found myself in the same situation over and over again when I was young and crazy. The experience didn't deter me but it wasn't until I began to reflect on those experiences.

And so the idea is that this is a reflective process. You look at a policy. And so I can give you all an example. We were looking at a policy on my college. When we were fully in-person, obviously, we had some online offerings, but prior to COVID, during the first two weeks of a given semester, if you're a student, you can't make an appointment to see a counselor. Even though you need to see a counselor in order to get your classes, it's just first come, first serve.

So I'm in the College of San Mateo. San Mateo is on par with Manhattan. To rent a studio in San Mateo is about $4,000 a month. They just sold a house for a million dollars over asking price here. It's insane. I don't live there. It's insane. And so what happened--

So it's a really affluent area. The school itself is surrounded by these $10-$12 million homes and gated communities all the way on the top of a hill. It's not easily accessible by public transit. And so the reason I say that is because these students, it was taking them, on average, three to five hours to see a counselor.

So if you don't have three to five hours-- who doesn't have three to five hours to spare? Students who have to work. Low-income students overwhelmingly have to work while they're in school. There's nowhere in the city of San Mateo where you can get in your car, if you have a car, come to our campus, find a parking space, go see a counselor, and be back at your job within 30 minutes. It's not possible.

So even though this policy seemed like a good policy because it was casting a wide net and it seemed like it was not problematic, seems fairly innocuous policy, it turned out that the students that were being penalized, after we took a deeper look at it, were low-income students, were poverty-affected students. Because they don't have three to five hours, they can't miss out on those wages, they can't sit there. So the students that could sit on our campus for three to five hours were students who had economic means and were able to do it.

And so that bump in the road was enough to deter some students from continuing in that semester. So we've since revisited that. And we're trying to make it so that students can make appointments. And there's certain ways that they can go about that process. And that policy had been in place for years. It wasn't until we took a deeper look at it.

Is this policy innovative? Well, initially people thought it was. But when we took another look to see whether or not it was anti-racist, turns out it wasn't. It wasn't moving us towards a more anti-racist reality. But instead, it was penalizing poor students, poor students who are disproportionately Black or Brown.

And so I want this to be a conversation. So I just want to lay out the way it works. And so if you all got together, the way that it works is you create a task force or an inquiry. I personally don't like task force. But you create an inquiry group.

And so say that, I'm just going to read the screen, Jessica, Jason, Rodi, Connie, and Peter, and I are a team. Each one of us can have our own issue that we want to take up. I might want to stick with counseling. Jessica may want to talk about student grievance process. Connie may want to talk about something altogether different, whether or not our college should have an ombudsperson. So there are different conversations.

And so what we're going to get together-- we're not going to get together and fight it out because we love each other and our work is predicated on radical love. But what we're going to do is we're going to talk about why it is that our issue needs to be addressed by this particular group. And so you're making an argument using the tool, using the acronym to argue for which of the policies-- because any inquiry group, even brilliant folks like yourself, you don't want to take on more than two a semester. It's a lot of work. That's why you want several inquiry groups.

And so what you want to do use the initial process to identify which policies you're going to take up. And the thing that you're looking for is magnitude. So it may happen that whatever it is that Jessica is championing is going to positively impact 35 students. But guess what? What Jason is talking about is going to positively impact 500 students. So it doesn't mean that what Jessica is saying is not important, but we're first worried about magnitude, how many students, how many people are going to be positively impacted.

So the first step in this process is essentially what do you think about a given policy, practice, procedure, or pedagogy. You don't have to come armed with, and I know that's hard for some of y'all folks, you don't have to come armed with the kind of statistical analysis or any of those things. You just get together and we're having a conversation. And we may determine that we're going to tackle this one first and then we're going to-- Because Jason's is 500. But we're going to get to Jessica's. We're just going to do this one first. And later on, in the second half-- excuse me, second half of the semester, we're going to tackle this one.

So the first step is what do you think. The second step is what does the data say. Because sometimes, what we think isn't commensurate with what the data says. And so it may be that we've been led to believe because Jason fully believed that if he did this particular thing, it was going to impact 500 students. But it turns out, it's not actually 500 students because the data says something different and there's some confounding variables that we didn't account for.

So the process is what do you think, what does the data say, and then after you go through and do a deep dive, a deep dive right where you actually are prescriptive and you say, this is how we can positively shift this policy so that these hyper-marginalized students are no longer marginalized.

But instead are given an opportunity to reach their fullest human and academic potential, then you reflect on the process. There's an individual reflection and a group reflection. And so that's what it looks like. And so I know that I've said a lot and I appreciate y'all listening. So I can pause and pass it back to Jessica if there any questions or considerations that I can try to address.

JESSICA ROWLAND WILLIAMS: No, thank you, Jeremiah. I'm hoping we can open the floor and have a discussion. But before we get rid of the slides, I just wanted to give you guys an opportunity to connect with us. Jeremiah, did you want to your Twitter handle, or your email, whatever in the chat so that folks have your information as well? And I will stop the share. So, Connie, I know you have some questions for us and you want to spark a conversation, so I will turn it over to you.

CONNIE JOHNSON: Well, I think the conversation has been sparked.

[LAUGHTER]

And great, great information for us practitioners and provosts. Before I start with any questions, I would love to open this up to anybody. This is an open forum. It's a town hall forum. So just come off mic and jump on in there if you have any questions, comments, feedback, thoughts that were provoked by this discussion so far.

AUDIENCE: So this framework seems so straightforward and useful for departments. What have you seen as the biggest barriers to adoption of the framework?

JEREMIAH SIMS: That's a really good question. And so I have not seen this type of pushback that I'm used to because the idea is that once you go through this process, what's happening is that you're developing something that I'm calling an anti-racist growth mindset.

And so you all familiar with Carol Dweck's work, and then Jo Boaler extended her work, professors at Stanford, on growth mindset. Growth mindset is defined in juxtaposition to a fixed mindset. And so a racist mindset is the epitome of a fixed mindset because you believe that every person is the same irrespective of their individuality based on their phenotypical, melanated appearance.

And so there are things that-- and I'm going to give a somewhat long answer, but I'll try to make it as brief as I can. There are things that this tool is designed to address. There are things that I call the four As. There are Axioms, these things that we consider to be unquestionably true. Some of those things, unfortunately, are that Black and Brown

folks come from cultures that don't value education. And so we need to challenge those things. Those are based on deficit model thinking.

Because there's a linear process. If we don't question individual and institutionalized axioms, what happens is we become Ambivalent. And so that ambivalence, I'm kind of on the fence about that. You've heard that, I'm kind of on the fence about this thing. Well, what happens if you sit on a fence? You fortify the way to the fence. The fence is a barrier. If we're on the fence, we're fortifying the way the fence becomes more difficult to move.

So we can't be ambivalent because if ambivalence goes unchecked, then we become Apathetic. My undergraduate degree is on rhetoric, rhetorical triangle, you have logos, logic, ethos, credibility, pathos is emotionality, where it's disassociated now, it's not my problem. I wish people would just stop playing the race card, or the gender card, or any number of things. Those are the types of things that come out when we become apathetic, when we no longer have feeling. And this happens institutionally and individually.

And then finally, if that goes unchecked, then we develop a kind of Antipathy, which is a disdain for people who remind us that we are privileged. Why are women always talking about their wages, like it's 2022? But in actuality, Black women still only earn $0.63 on the dollar that white men do. But when we don't want to wrestle with our privilege, when we don't want to wrestle with cis, hetero, patriarchal privilege or white privilege, or any number of privileges conferred in this society, what happens is that we then disallow actual transformation to take place.

So this tool is designed to address those four A's. But the thing is, I'm not didactic about it. So if Jeffrey Lewis, I'm just looking at my screen, wants to participate in this and for whatever reason-- I don't know Jeffrey, so this is not true what I'm saying, it's purely hypothetical, Jeffrey is uncomfortable getting into this work, I'm not going to tell him about how he's developing the anti-racist growth mindset because he may not be interested in doing that. But I'm going to saying, Jeffrey, here's how we make positive changes for the students that we serve.

And so I'm not trying to be underhanded or even surreptitious. But the point is, I want to develop solidarity by doing the work. And in doing the work, what happens is people begin to develop an anti-racist growth mindset. And I've kind of delineated that process.

There's a continuum of things that you can look for to see and to gauge whether or not you're advancing on that continuum.

And so I have not encountered, thankfully, the same type of resistance that I have in some of the other equity and justice efforts that I've tried to catalyze. I've actually had a great deal of success leading IMPACT trainings for different schools and colleges. And people are able to just jump in for whatever reason.

But it was designed that way. It was designed intentionally to help people just jump in. You don't have to know what Jessica knows. You don't have to know what I know or what Doreen knows to begin to do this work. You just have to understand these definitions.

And we spend time talking about innovative, measurable, purposeful, anti-racist, caring and transformative, and then you're ready to go. So I'm sorry, that was a really, really long answer. But I can honestly say that I've had wild success helping people use this tool to vet their policies, practices, procedures, and pedagogy.

CONNIE JOHNSON: Thank you. And then, Doreen, I do believe that we will be sending these slides out or because I know that framework was outlined in one of the slides, is that right?

DOREEN MURNER: Yes, we can attach the slides. Also, we can attach the actual IMPACT Framework document that Jessica has. It might even be on your slides, Jessica. I can't remember. But we can certainly get all that.

CONNIE JOHNSON: OK. Well, thank you.

AUDIENCE: Connie, I have a question. It's a question for both Jeremiah and Jessica. And that is, I really like the idea of getting a task force together and saying, how can we help students who are marginalized or hyper-marginalized, in other words, students who need help in particular environments.

And I wonder if you could give me an example of how we could connect that with adaptive digital courseware, which we talked about using in the lighthouse institutions and also in the institutions in the ACAO Grant Initiative earlier, we talked about using those efforts to help students. And now we're taking it a step deeper, and that is how do we help these particular students. Can you brainstorm with us about how you put those two things together?

JESSICA ROWLAND WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think some of the things that come to mind right away is that what we know about adaptive courseware is it helps to personalize learning

for students. And we also know that adaptive courseware is really beneficial to faculty because it gives faculty insight into students' progression in the course that they wouldn't otherwise have.
But I think now on the flip side of that, though, is along with adaptive courseware comes policies and practices that are being developed around how the courseware is used, how much the grades count for, and so on. And so I think that, to Jeremiah's point, this would be a great case study to walk through the framework.
So honestly, we can maybe do some of that work right now, Jeremiah. I don't know if you want to maybe guide us through how we might use something like implementation of adaptive courseware and start thinking about the answers to some of these questions, even with that specific example.
JEREMIAH SIMS: Yeah. So I'm not as familiar because I'm not in the classroom. I know what adaptive courseware is. I'm not on the pulse of the conversation. But we can take a look at it.
JESSICA ROWLAND WILLIAMS: We'll do it together.
JEREMIAH SIMS: So adaptive courseware, is it innovative? So not just new. Remember, we're not worried about whether or it's novel. We're worried about whether or not it has the potential. Right now, we're worried about potential. And so I would ask you all, does it have the potential to move us away from a problematic status quo that values, and here's a very specific question you can think, about values a very particular kind of epistemology which is connected to a white supremacist lived reality?
So the type of value, the type of education, the type of epistemologies that are valued in our current educational system promote a very particular lived reality. So does adaptive course technology hold the potential to move us away from that? So that's the first question we need to think about as to whether or it's innovative. So I'll pause and let's hear from some folks.
JESSICA ROWLAND WILLIAMS: And feel free to put it in the chat if you have a yes or no. Sorry, Jeremiah, I didn't mean to interrupt you.
JEREMIAH SIMS: Oh, no. We're tag teaming. If I'm talking too much, you just let me know. So I'll give y'all-- oh, sorry. Go ahead.
AUDIENCE: Peter, Connie, Beth?

AUDIENCE: I was just-- I think that's actually a really interesting way to frame the question. I don't know that I have an answer to that particular question. It's probably situationally dependent on what adaptive courseware we're looking at.

JESSICA ROWLAND WILLIAMS: Sure. And for what purpose. Because see, there's some presuppositions that you have to start with. So some of you brilliant folks have spent part of your career, like me, trying to fix a system that's not broken. And we became frustrated. And Jessica spoke to this earlier, the system is not broken. It's working the way that it's designed.

So that's one of the initial presuppositions we have to start with. If something is going to be innovative, it's going to take into account that the system is working optimally. People are being situated commensurate with capitalism. And so listen, I'm not trying to-- I went to Berkeley for a long, long time. There's some Marxist tendencies there, whatever it is. You can ignore that for now.

But I'm telling you that as analytical framework, you can't understand race until you understand capitalism and how those two things work together. So what I'm saying is this, is it moving us away from a model of education that sifts certain people so that they're identified as physical sites of surplus value extraction and other people who are then capable of accessing the necessary accreditation where they can accrue that capital? If we're moving away from that, then it's innovative.

Because we don't do stuff just for the sake of doing it, not if we want to be transformative. We can't just come in and do things the way that we've always done them. So we know that it's measurable. So we can come back to innovative. You don't have to answer these questions before you can move forward, but these questions are supposed to make you think.

We know that it's measurable. We can measure it. We can measure the efficacy of these types of programs. So that's a plus because if we couldn't measure it, it's going to be hard to make an argument. And everything can be measured but not everything can be measured well. And so we have to be really intentional about that.

And is it purposeful? So if we're going to do it, Laura, have we thought through what the implications are? We're doing this not because some salesperson came in and sold us on how awesome this thing is, but because we know that it can positively impact students looking at different data.

And so that's been the second stage, is it anti-racist? Now that's a big question. Is it moving us not just to being non-racist, but anti-racist. Are we actually working against the wages of white supremacy and the effects that it has on poor, ethnoracially-minoritized students of color. Is it caring? Does it demonstrate that we care about students? And is it transformative? And so I know, again, I'm talking too much, so what do y'all think? Give me something from I-M-P-A-C-T. So measurable I'll give you, no problem. But what else? Which of the other ones can we speak to?

CONNIE JOHNSON: Well, I'll read you some of the comments. Adaptive courseware, if implemented well, it's potential to move classrooms away from lecture and passive to more personalized learning. And then there's also from Patty O'Sullivan, who's very experienced in adaptive learning. And then adaptive courseware gives some digital freedom to students that can move them away from oppressive practices.

JEREMIAH SIMS: Yeah, that's innovative. That's a yes. That's innovative. Because right now, we're only worried about the potential. Because on the second stage, we're going to look at the data. So I would say yes. I know Patty knows her stuff. So for me and this team, that's innovative. But again, we have to always be considerate of a magnitude question, too. So how many students are going to be positively impacted by this?

CONNIE JOHNSON: Yeah, I was wondering if I might maybe not talk about the framework, but bring in another question that was in the chat and also, it actually goes right to what Beth was talking about technology. As provost, of course, working with many of the colleges, we support digital technology. And so I wonder and what comes up is the move to digital technology, do we make some assumptions that everyone has the same access?

And then is that in fact true? Because what I think many of us saw during the last two years with COVID is that beyond the digital divide, there were some students who actually had equipment at home, some were sharing bandwidth, some didn't have equipment, some had mobile phones, some had laptops. And so is that even a factor in the discussion when you're looking at equity for students.

JEREMIAH SIMS: It better be if we want to do it right. Because listen, we need to have high expectations for all of our students. Nobody would argue otherwise. But high expectations without proper support is a burden. It's not an opportunity to grow. And so I just want to be clear, I've done this. So I have a program in Washington State, Patty knows about this, and it's called the Washington State Guided Pathways IDEAL

Fellowship. Ideal because what you all know the more time we spend together is I'm all about acronyms. IDEAL stands for the Initiative and Diversity, Equity, Anti-racism, and Leadership.

So we've had over 1,000 applications for 90 spots for community college students. And what we've done is we've created an entirely online environment where these community college students are led for a semester to use the IMPACT tool. If you all shoot me an email, I can send you the videos that they did. These presentations were incredible. And we have conversations around anti-racism, settler colonialism, all these different things, things that I'm interested in, things that I teach. And they spend time with me. We bring in guest speakers. And here's the thing, the whole thing is predicated on radical love.

Radical love, as defined by Cornel West, is made up of two primary components, radical integrity and radical humility. And so what he talks about is the goal of that, the goal of radical love is to lead to a radical analysis of inequity by people who are negatively impacted by inequity.

So I've done this. And the students I do this with along with my life partner Rachel, they call us equity mom and dad. I mean, it's just unbelievable the things that have come out of this because we focused on radical love. And there are students who will say, I've been in other educational spaces and so-called social justice spaces but I've never felt like this before. I have never felt as safe as I feel now. I have created, along with my team, an entirely online, engaged educative atmosphere for community college students. So many students are also in four-year colleges.

So I know that is possible. And what catalyzed that right was this heavy reliance on radical love. So I know it's possible because I see it. I'm actually writing a book about that called Love as Praxis, just because I don't have enough going on.

AUDIENCE: Jeremiah, real quick question, thank you for this stimulating conversation. I wondered, as I listened to you, and you did speak to the multiple arenas where the framework that you share with us could become very relevant and valuable, yet I also know that there's this other arena that has to do with curricular revisions.

It's not just the student learning component of it, but the overhauling the entire curriculum to reflect the kinds of things that you've talked about. I wondered to what extent that particular framework that you have discussed with us could apply to overhauling the academic curriculum of a department?

JEREMIAH SIMS: Oh, yeah. Absolutely. And that's the guidebook, I just want to speak to, that's the guidebook that has been provided. All right, listen, pedagogical practices can't be separated from curriculum material. It doesn't matter how adroit you are at being a critical pedagogue, if the curriculum material is stultifying, Europacentric, and spiritually deadening for-- because now you're speaking my language. My PhD is in education. We can talk.

And so the whole idea that there is a hidden curriculum, we know that to be the case, that hidden curriculum espouses Europacentricity at the cost of, because you can't espouse something without diminishing something else, at the cost of denigrating the cultural realities for non-Europacentric students, non-hegemonic, mainstream students. And so absolutely we need to take a look at our curriculum. Is the curriculum innovative? And what does innovative mean? Innovative means that it encompasses the epistemological kind of ontological realities of students who are non-Europacentric. I've done this before. We've done curricular analysis using this tool. Listen, this tool, and it's hard for me because I'm not one to self-aggrandize, man. All glory to god. I'm just here. This tool has worked for cities. We've used this to vet policies for actual city government. And we've also used it with fifth graders so that they can look at their syllabus.

So one of the professors at my college assigned his students to use the IMPACT Equity Toolkit to vet his syllabus. You understand how beautiful that is? And so what happened, because he's totally vulnerable now, and the students understand that their voices matter. And so what came out of that, I asked him, I said, well, what did you get from this? He said, well, I realized more than any other time-- he's been teaching for 30 years in STEM-- I realized more than any other time that my students' voices matter. He said, I wasn't always aware of that. This is someone who's racialized as white in this country, cis, hetero, patriarchal. And so he's like, listen, and I realized that if my students' voices don't matter, my voice doesn't matter. He said this with tears in his eyes. He's been doing all this time. And so the students were able to point out to him areas of the syllabi that made them feel like they couldn't be successful in his STEM course. And he changed it.

As a result, he wrote a syllabus statement, he said, listen, everybody struggles, but not everybody struggles the same and not everybody struggles for the same reason. And so he talked about I want you to be successful in this class, what can I do? And then he

rewrote the plagiarism section. Because right now, it's punitive. If we look at our syllabi, most of the time it's punitive, right? Don't do this, don't do that, this will happen.

Listen, I know none of you all want to copy anybody else's work. I know that you want to do your best work. That's why you're here. And there's a certain level of presumed innocence that some students have that other students don't have based on their ethnoracial identity or whatever else. So here's what I want you to do. I want you to make sure to avoid these particular pitfalls.

And so you see how just changing that totally changes the orientation that students have with that space. And so now they know that their voices matter, that they're part of this co-constructive meaning-making process, and who they are is important to the person.

And so the a syllabi is just like this kind of outward manifestation of the curriculum, but the curriculum needs to be commensurate with that. And so we're doing that type of work. So we can absolutely use that tool to have these types of conversations. Absolutely.

And some of that, I have a new book coming out, it's called The White Educators' Guide to Equity, Teaching for Justice in Community Colleges. It should be out March, something like that. And so it actually speaks through some of the examples of folks using that. You don't have to wait for the book to come out. We can have that conversation anytime. Absolutely can use the tool for that.

AUDIENCE: Thank you.

CONNIE JOHNSON: Jessica, did you want to add something to that? It looked like you came off mic.

JESSICA ROWLAND WILLIAMS: Oh, no. No, I was just going to-- Jeremiah already pointed to the Getting Started With Equity as a great resource that you can use for some practical tips on reviewing and revising curriculum to be more equity focused.

CONNIE JOHNSON: OK. We have a few more minutes, maybe for one more question or one or two more questions if they're quick.

AUDIENCE: I just want to point out that going back to adaptive digital courseware, if you are looking at students individually, you're gathering information on whether they're passing the course or not. So you're turning on its head the more Eurocentric

assumption that students either get it and get a good grade or they don't and get a bad grade. So you are really doing something different there.

And then also, a lot of the ELE partners are using learning analytics, getting that information. And if you can see if you disaggregate your data by race, or gender, or however you'd like to disaggregate it, are those students that you care about, are they doing better?

And if they are, you can say that it's at least a transactional win because what Jeremiah is saying about the racialized capitalism, and if I could take that apart, I would, too. On the other hand, if I'm talking about a shorter timeline, if I can help students get where they want to go even using some of the structures that we have, I might call that a win of some sort.

JEREMIAH SIMS: I can see that as well. But the question always becomes, this access question is vitally important. And so a lot of the ways that we gauge whether or not students are successful students are different type of preset student learning outcomes, whatever the metrics are. But what if Jessica, and I'm sure Jessica has had to endure some things looking at her educational trajectory, what if she got A's in all of her classes, wouldn't surprise me, but she was spiritually dead the whole time because she's the only woman of color in her classes, only woman of color in her coursework.

So there has to be a holistic accounting for the students. I'm not impressed just by student learning outcomes. None of you all should be. But we need to figure out what type of metrics we need to design to see if our students are actually whole.

My first book, my dissertation was around STEM education. So everybody wanted to fix the leaky pipeline. And problem was, the pipeline was never leaky. It was designed to do what it was-- it was doing what it was designed to do. And what would happen is that you would get these Black and Brown folks to these STEM spaces but the STEM spaces were super bro'd out. They were super cis, hetero, patriarchal white spaces.

And so you get them to go get a degree, take on all these loans so that they can get this degree to get a job in tech, and then they didn't stick it out. Black and Brown folks just didn't stick it out because they were coming into spaces that were inimical. They were coming into spaces that didn't value them as human beings.

And so we always have to think about if we actually want to do good work, and I'm not saying that you're arguing this at all, Laura, but I just want to caution us. It's never just

about what those metrics determine. If we want to see real justice, we have to do more. We have to make sure that our students are coming out of this process whole.

CONNIE JOHNSON: All right. I think we're at the last few minutes here. So any final questions? And then we can ask our speakers to make a closing comment. OK, Jessica, closing comments?

JESSICA ROWLAND WILLIAMS: I'm just really reflecting on that last point, Jeremiah. I think that was spot on, spot on. In fact, I've been in conversations with folks recently, ironically, it's so funny that you brought that up, who were in graduate school with me, talking about how traumatic the experience was, Black and Brown folks, and how many of us are still really reeling from that experience.

And so I think this whole notion of there being more to educational experiences than just learning outcomes, I think it's so critical. And how do we rethink learning, even as we're thinking about the incorporation of digital tools, to a win for us in academia. A win for us is more than just a grade, but actually setting that student up for success, not just in a course, but for the long term, and what the cost is for that student. That's something that we've been talking about a lot, is sometimes, the cost, the price that students pay to be in these spaces, it's a lot more than just tuition and fees.

CONNIE JOHNSON: Jessica, you and I were in a webinar last week and we talked about that, that there can be one variable that happens and that psychosocial component of education that the students say, I quit. I knew I was bad at this and I can't do this. And it may not be a barrier that we would stop at, but it certainly is a barrier that a student is. So I think that that is something many of us are talking about now in the classroom as well. All right, Jeremiah, final comments?

JEREMIAH SIMS: So I just want to-- listen, I want to say this for you leaders, for you folks who are in positions to make decisions that impact students and the folks who are in service of students, your word and your deed always has to match because without that, truth is not present. And so what do I mean?

So in 2020, we saw a kind of racial reckoning. There are people who kind of-- it was a kind of racial reckoning cosplay, if we're being honest. I have a book recommendation for y'all. Check out The Devil You Know by Charles M. Blow. He talks about that at great detail. Beautiful book.

And so listen, what came out of 2020? We got a lot of statements of solidarity. We got some kind of other platitudes. And I understand that people were trying to do things that made them feel comfortable and made them feel like they were contributing to the work.

But here's the thing about a statement of solidarity, or a mission statement, or a vision statement, your budget is your mission statement. Let's be clear about that. Your budget determines and identifies what it is. I can see Peter is nodding along. That identifies what you value.

I don't care what kind of mission statement you have, or statement of size, stand with Black Lives, if you are not equitably allocating resources to prove to me that you stand with Black Lives, then you're not telling the truth. Your word and deed do not match. And so if your word and deed don't match, the truth is not there. If the truth is absent, there's no way you can have radical love.

And so I just want to be very clear, folks, it is incumbent upon you all to hold the line, to hold on so that truth has a place to cling to. And if you can't do it, if you're not ready as an institution, you need to be clear about it. But don't put out statements, don't put out mission statements without saying that they're aspirational because your students and the employees that work there in service of these students expect you to do that. But if you have no intention of doing it, then be clear. Don't let this age and what's happening lead you to be disingenuous.

And so that would just be my caution to you all. I appreciate each and every one of you. Thank you for spending this time with us. I hope that you got something out of it. And that's my parting thought, your word and deed have to match if you want to do actual justice work, because without truth, there is no justice.

CONNIE JOHNSON: Great words to end this by. So with that, I want to thank the speakers and everyone for attending the town hall. We know that you're busy. And hopefully, you got some great ideas here to talk more about. Doreen, if you want to close us out and let everyone know what's next, that'd be great.

DOREEN MURNER: Sure. Thank you, Jeremiah. Thank you, Jessica. Thank you for everyone who participated. Appreciate you being here. This is being recorded. It will be up on our website probably sometime next week. So we can get this great information out to more than just the 30 or some-odd folks that were on this today. Thank you again. And I wish you all a great week. Bye, everyone.