Annotated transcript
Putting Equity into Practice Webinar Series
Equity-Centered Professional Learning
April 4, 2024

Speaker 1 (00:00:04):

Welcome to the Every Learner Everywhere, putting Equity into Practice webinar series for 2024. It's a pleasure to have you with us today. My name is Norma Holbeck and I'm the senior manager for network programs and Services with Every Learner Everywhere. Before I introduce our network partner and guests for today, I'd like to take out just a few minutes to tell you about every Learner Everywhere and the mission of our network. Every Learner Everywhere is a collaboration of higher education organizations with the expertise in evaluating, implementing, scaling, and measuring the efficacy of digital learning and its integration into pedagogical practice. Every Learner Everywhere is sponsored by the Bill of Melinda Gates Foundation and here at Every Learner we work with colleges and universities to build capacity among faculty and instructional support staff to improve student outcomes with digital learning, our mission is to help institutions use new technology to innovate, teaching and learning with the ultimate goal of increasing student success, especially for first generation college students, poverty impacted students, and racially minoritized students. A quick housekeeping note throughout the presentation, we welcome your questions in the q and a section. If participants raise their hand, we will not be able to unmute you. However, we will be monitoring the q and a section as well as the chat. And now I will hand over the session to Michelle Hampton, consultant with our network partner Achieving the Dream.

Speaker 2 (00:01:43):

Hello. Hello everyone. I think we are going to move on to presenters. Yes, here we are. So Ray Keith, I will introduce him clearly. I am not Ray Keith. He will be joining us a little later. He is the Associate Director of Teaching and Learning for Achieving the Dream. My name is Dr. Michelle Hampton and I'm a business Administration professor at Cuyahoga Community College. Located in Cleveland, Ohio, I'm also an Achieving the Dream Consultant.

Speaker 3 (00:02:18):

Hi everyone. Thanks for joining us. I'm Sarah Kinison. I'm the Associate Director of Program Development with Achieving the Dream. We also want to thank Norma Holbeck and every Learner Everywhere or ELE for being our partners on this initiative. Achieving the Dream is proud to be part of E E's network of partner organizations, bringing student-centered and equity-minded digital teaching and learning initiatives to ATDs network of 300 plus colleges in 45 states.

Speaker 2 (00:02:51):

We have two wonderful panelists today. First, we have Geneva Damper, who is an organizational practitioner with over 10 years experience in the higher education space. She formally has worked at US News and World Report, SHRM and the UMD Smith School of Business. She's the founding director of strategy and operations at the UNCF Teaching and Learning Center. And her visionary approach there has led to the creation of a training and development program that equips faculty and staff with the tools to develop culturally relevant, industry focused teaching practices, thereby expanding access and empowering students from diverse backgrounds. Geneva holds an MS in organizational development

from American University and a BA in Anthropology and Africana studies from Oberlin College. Thank you for joining us today, Geneva. Our next panelists is Eileen Tejeda. Eileen was born and raised in the South Bronx. She received a BA from Georgetown University and an Ed M from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She is proud of being a first generation college graduate. Eileen brings 16 years of experience working in and with schools as a teacher leader and coach. Currently, Eileen works as a consultant and an adjunct professor supporting K through 12 and higher ed organizations, and developing equitable wellness and culturally responsive solutions for their spaces. Her focus centers on exploring teacher identity, culturally responsive teaching, teacher mindsets, and restorative justice. Thank you for joining us today, Eileen.

Speaker 3 ([00:04:52](#)):

Thanks, Michelle. Land Acknowledgement. So the land acknowledgement, the city of Boulder where the every learner everywhere Maine offices are located is on the ancestral homelands and unseated territory of indigenous peoples who have traversed lived in and stewarded lands in the Boulder Valley for over 13,000 years who live, work, lead, and prosper there. Today, those indigenous nations include the Apache Arapaho, Cheyenne Comanche, Pan-Shoshone, Sioux and Ute. We honor and respect people of these nations, nations and their ancestors. We also recognize that indigenous knowledge, oral histories and languages handed down through generations have shaped profound cultural connections with Boulder area lands and ecosystems, connections that are sustained and celebrated to this day. Those now living and working on these ancestral lands have a responsibility to acknowledge and address the past. The city refutes past justifications for the colonization of indigenous lands and acknowledges a legacy of oppression that has caused intergenerational trauma to indigenous peoples and families.

Our labor acknowledgement, we respectfully acknowledge enslaved people, primarily of African descent, whose labor and suffering built and grew the economy and infrastructure of a nation that refuses to recognize the humanity of enslaved individuals, families, and communities. While the 13th Amendment to the Constitution technically ended slavery in the US, we know that slavery's ongoing impacts are still felt by countless people forced through violence, threats and coercion to work. In the us. We acknowledge that the theft of labor is the theft of generational progress. Nearly all people of color have been robbed of the opportunity and wealth that their ancestors might otherwise have passed on to them. We commit to ensuring that our programs and services center equity and affirm the culture and lived experiences of people from all identities and backgrounds.

The purpose of today's session includes exploring how professional learning experiences can foster a sense of belonging, center equity and leverage participant strengths and learning exemplars from our outstanding panelists, professional learning facilitators who strive to support faculty in becoming change agents in the education space.

Putting Equity into Practice: Equity-minded Professional Learning
https://www.everylearnereverywhere.org/resources/putting-equity-into-practice-equity-minded-professional-learning/

Speaker 3 ([00:06:46](#)):

The professional learning guide, which is part of our four-part series, has a similar structure to the other guides in the series. It begins with a culturally responsive framework that advances equity. Next shows the benefits professional learning frameworks. Oh, yep, yep, yep. That's the one. The culturally responsive frameworks that advance equity. And then next, the benefits to students, instructors, and institutions, followed by various examples of how equity-minded professional learning is put into

practice. Then we have resources, pop outs and links for added knowledge and context that readers may pursue independently. So what we're showing next is snapshots from the guide and we will share the link to the guide at some point during the session. So beginning with the definition, designers and facilitators of educator professional learning should model exemplary strategies so that faculty will in turn engage equitably with students. This means ensuring that professional learning fosters belonging centers equity leverages the strengths of participants and explicitly seeks to cultivate and sustain cultural ways of knowing and being for diverse learning to be inclusive of all students and faculty. And then in the definition in the guide, we talk about a paradigm shift. Next slide, please. Equity-minded professional learning offers an important perspective that models how to value, embrace and build inclusive learning environments, which is not always included in traditional professional learning environments.

Speaker 3 ([00:08:49](#)):

Next slide, please. Thank you. Equity-minded practitioners bring attention to patterns of inequity, take responsibility for the success of their learners and critically reassess their own practices. Being equity minded requires that educators be race conscious and aware of the social and historical context of exclusionary practices. And we'll learn more about the choices, actions, and strategies of equity-minded facilitators shortly when our outstanding panelists share. So in our guides, another framework that we use is the Zaretta Hammond framework that we adapted for use in higher education. We use her framework to highlight and support the culturally responsive elements of each strategy. For example, professional learning is reflected in the quadrant of the framework labeled awareness equity-minded facilitators bring awareness by knowing their own culture, recognizing cultural qualities of participants, including cultural backgrounds and language, and recognize cultural archetypes such as individualism and collectivism.

READY for RIGOR A Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching
https://crtandthebrain.com/wp-content/uploads/READY-FOR-RIGOR_Final.pdf

Speaker 2 ([00:10:23](#)):

Let's look at who benefits from being mindful of equity in professional learning. Well, both faculty and students benefit faculty benefit because they can engage as their authentic selves and genuinely share their lived experiences. They also are able to create learning spaces that invite, connect, and value faculty with diverse cultures, languages, and backgrounds. And this in turn creates robust pathways to engage with their students. There are three strategies that are contained within equity-minded professional learning. The first strategy is know yourself and others. Effective and equity-minded professional learning facilitators recognize their roles and their positionality, where positionality includes identifying how our identities seen through factors of race, class, education, incomes, et cetera, influence the results of our work and learning opportunities for our students. The next slide shows us an example of putting strategy one into practice while designing and facilitating professional learning. Here are some questions you can use to check in with yourself.

Speaker 2 ([00:11:51](#)):

You can ask yourself some people left out, does the motivation or engagement of some faculty seem lower decreasing? How might I be responsible for those trends? What can I do to reverse those trends? How am I being intentional about creating an inclusive professional learning environment? These questions are intended to resist using practices that may inadvertently create spaces that uphold dominant norms and values for participants with marginalized identities. Here we see an example for

strategy one. We're moving on to the examples for strategies two and three. And in each of the guides, not only do we list the strategies, but also examples for putting those strategies into practice. So it's a guideline that each of the guides follows. So for strategies two and three, strategy two focuses on centering learners.

Speaker 2 ([00:12:53](#)):

Centering learners is a strategy where faculty and agents and partner are partners in their learning. And actually Geneva's presentation that you'll see later will exhibit the use of both strategies one and two. Strategy three speaks to fostering belonging for professional learners. Intentional planning and intentional facilitation will ensure all students feel that they belong Eileen's presentation, she'll share her work using this strategy later on. An example of putting strategy three into practice is to offer ways for participants to share pieces or facets of themselves, their histories and communities as part of ongoing professional learning dialogue and projects. This can be done by inviting cultural assets, knowledge, experiences, perspectives, and just different ways of being as well as inviting learners languages, their literacies or ways of being into the content and dialogue.

Speaker 2 ([00:14:10](#)):

Another thing that's consistent through all of the guides in this series are pop-out resources, and Sarah mentioned them a little bit earlier. These supplemental resources may point you to websites, blogs, videos, and other digital assets that take you there where you can get other supplemental information about a particular topic that's included in the guide. In this case, there's a resource available by Paul Gorsky that talks about actions that can be used to interrupt harmful behaviors. And I think that link is being dropped in the chat as we speak. What is really unique and kind of cool about this guide is yes, the guide exists, but it does take you out to other supplemental resources that are new, that are emerging, that are trending, that are foundational in the area as well. Alright, the part we're all waiting for, right where we see all of the things that we've talked about, all of this foundational knowledge that we've talked about actually being put to work in real life, in real life scenarios and in real life training environments. So we're going to spend the rest of our time with a little bit of a panel discussion and also giving our panelists the opportunity to present the work that they've done in this area.

Avoiding racial equity detours
http://www.edchange.org/publications/Avoiding-Racial-Equity-Detours-Gorski.pdf

Speaker 2 ([00:15:59](#)):

So first we have a question, I think that's on our next slide. So for this question is directed for both of our panelists. And the first question is, what approaches or strategies have you used to design equity-minded professional learning spaces?

Speaker 4 ([00:16:20](#)):

Good afternoon everyone, and thank you so much for having me as a part of this panel. I really appreciate the opportunity to share the work that we've been able to do at UNCF. So for those that aren't familiar with our organization, so [United Negro College Fund](#) is an 80-year-old organization that is mission and focus is to support and uplift our HBCUs within the us. So HBCUs were founded as an opportunity for black students and black practitioners to teach and learn from one another at a time when black folks weren't necessarily able or capable of going to institutions that did not serve them in the United States. So my approach to that is because I did not attend an HBCU and I am a practitioner

within the space, I have to be cognizant and mindful of my lens and what experience, a vantage point that I bring to my work.

Speaker 4 ([00:17:11](#)):

So I am representing and I am a voice and a speaker on behalf of our member institutions. So we have 37 member institutions, private HBCUs within our network. And the gamut of opportunities and resources that exist within those 37 is pretty wide. So we have some significantly higher resourced institutions that may have support, may have staff, a lot of FTEs as it relates to faculty members. And then we have some institutions on the opposite end that have a significantly lower resource, whether it be a lower enrollment count, a lower number of FTE faculty members, or just on the lower number of support staff on those campuses. So when I am approaching developing and thinking about the professional development opportunities that we build for those faculty members across the 37 campuses, I'm cognizant that not because I did not attend those HBCUs, I may not be familiar with the struggles that exist on those campuses.

Speaker 4 ([00:18:07](#)):

So when I am developing and building, I try to include folks into our conversation that had that lens and that can speak to those voices. And I also do my own research. So I try not to allow ignorance by way of non-experience to be the bearing factor as to how I do my work. So whether it be doing research on how HBCUs look right now, how endowments imply or have implications on the resources that they have on their campus, or just generally speaking, what type of funding faculty members need and what type of time faculty members need to do this type of work. I make sure that I infuse those type of considerations into any of the training and development programs that we build here at UNCF so that we are centering those folks that necessarily haven't been a part of the conversation. And then thinking of the super minoritized folks, so those lower resource institutions thinking about bringing those conversations or those folks back to the table to make sure that they are at the peak consideration when we're thinking about developing professional development opportunities.

Speaker 2 ([00:19:10](#)):

Thank you, Geneva. Eileen,

Speaker 5 ([00:19:14](#)):

Thank you. Thanks for having me. I'm super excited to be here and to talk about equity centered professional learning so as to not overlap with what Geneva was sharing. Yes, of course. There's always a need to do a needs assessment. Like when we're thinking about equity, everyone's going to need something that's a little bit different based on where they're coming from, their lived experiences, all of that. So one of the things that I think about when I'm designing either sessions or working with faculty or working with K 12 teachers or higher education faculty is really being intentional about collaborative planning and inclusive design. Everything that we're doing is all about co-creating. I think oftentimes one of the pitfalls that we can fall into as faculty as facilitators is this idea of I am the gatekeeper. I know all of the things about whatever the topic is, and you are here to listen to everything that I have to say, and my word is the most important in this space, and that doesn't work and it doesn't feel fun, it doesn't feel joyful, and it doesn't really promote an exciting learning experience.

Speaker 5 ([00:20:25](#)):

I don't care if you're in kindergarten, I don't care if you're getting a degree or whatever kind of space that you're in. You want to feel that joy, that belonging, that idea that yeah, you're learning and also you have a voice in co-creating what the experience can look like. So that might look like co-creating a curriculum, having folks contribute to a list of materials and texts so that we are able to have a participatory experience and that folks are able to, we're able learn and grow together because my lived experience is just mine. I can pull from all other resources that maybe have had a really beautiful impact on me, but that's just my experience. If I'm in a space with 5, 10, 15, 85 people in the room and we're all adding to shared documents about whatever the topic is, I think that's just a way to continue to learn and push our development and also, and we'll talk a little bit about what belonging can look like, can also foster that sense of belonging.

Speaker 5 (00:21:33):

The second thing that I often think about is establishing norms and fostering those. I don't love using the language around safe space, but more around a brave space so that folks can come in and share. And sometimes we need to create that container of having those norms of beginning and ending well, that we'll talk a little bit more about so that folks can share their experiences, their learning, wherever they are with without judgment. And again, what I appreciate about thinking about professional learning in this way is that it's not limited to just my work with faculty or your work with faculty. This can be anyone. If you're learning, if you're ready to learn, no matter what age you are or where you're learning journey, these types of structures can be supportive to contribute to that professional learning.

Speaker 2 (00:22:27):

Great. Thank you both. Thank you. So now we will have the pleasure of listening to Geneva describe her work with using strategies one and two, knowing yourself and others and centering learners. Take it away, Geneva.

Speaker 4 (00:22:48):

Thank you. Yes. So next slide please. So I did wanted to dive a little bit deeper about the context of the work and how we have been able to formulate some of our faculty development initiatives. So for this slide, I'll be speaking about our faculty fellows program, and I did see one of my colleagues and one of our contractors, Dr. Bonnie Ores is here. So thank you so much. I just want to give her a shout out loud to thank you, Dr. Ores, for your work and for your partnership. And all of this would be invaluable or impossible to do without you. So I wanted to give you a shout out and then go into what we do. So we have a faculty fellows program here at UNCF that is open to all 37 of our member institutions. We launched that program about two years ago with the intent and the goal to ensure that our institutions were being intentional, especially coming out of the pandemic, knowing that they didn't necessarily have the most robust online curriculum or online courses to make sure that they had that opportunity to build out culturally relevant and responsive curriculum online.

Speaker 4 (00:23:46):

So we were able to partner with an organization on Strategic Education Inc, to develop and administer that program. And it's been a success thus far. We trained about 70 or so faculty members, a part of two of our initial cohorts, and in total about a hundred faculty members across three cohorts. So when we were developing and thinking about that program, we wanted to lead, as Eileen said earlier, we wanted to lead with the needs. So we did a pretty exhaustive needs assessment process. And that looked not only related to surveys and assessments in those ways to get an understanding of what the institutions

were grappling with at the peak of the pandemic. So this was in 2022, so right when we had the second resurgence of indifference going on. But then, so we looked at the surveys to make a determination of where there were gaps and where they needed the opportunities and support for faculty development.

Speaker 4 ([00:24:41](#)):

And then we also being cognizant of who our populations were. So HBCUs is a very community and community centric. So rather than doing surveys because that can be a little bit informal and not necessarily glean the most information from our learning population, we made sure that we were doing conversations and focus groups as well. So we tapped all of our institutions and their teaching and learning centers to make sure that when we were developing the opportunity that we were exhaustive as possible. We didn't want to limit anyone or limit any of the barriers or the opportunities that we would have for folks coming in at neither applying or registering for our program. Secondarily, we were making sure and intentional about infusing cultural competency into the program objectives. As I mentioned, we were working with a contractor to execute some of our work. So in building and developing and knowing that we would have to negotiate space with another vendor, we wanted to make sure that the core function of the fellowship was rooted in equity.

Speaker 4 ([00:25:44](#)):

So whether that mean who we select. So we made sure that we were exhaustive in terms of making sure that our institutions knew that this was an opportunity that was open to not only faculty or associate faculty, but also our adjunct faculty populations as well. Because a lot of our HBCUs rely very, very heavily on adjunct faculty. And sometimes those adjuncts don't get the professional development that they need and deserve because of the role at the institution. And we also wanted to make sure that we were inclusive of disciplines that don't necessarily get the same recognition. So in our first cohort, we focused on business and education because that was departments and institutions that all of our departments or centers that all of our institutions had. And then secondarily, we focused on general education because that was again, a discipline or a population of folks that would cast the widest net to make sure that we were able to be receptive and receive faculty members from as many different disciplines as possible.

Speaker 4 ([00:26:45](#)):

So then thinking about how we would be able to show up and support our faculty members, we had to make the determination of removing the barriers for full participation if we knew that they existed. So for our faculty members, that may be time barriers, that may be financial barriers, that may be engagement barriers on their campuses. So what we tried to do and what we were successful in doing is making sure that we were building out our curriculum so that faculty members could engage and participate at any stage. So we had multiple day during the day sessions that they could participate in. They could also attend sessions in the evening. We had sessions and opportunities on the weekends as well. And if that wasn't a capability for them, we also considered having them watch the recordings on their own time and still continue to do the supplemental work if that was what their schedule required.

Speaker 4 ([00:27:32](#)):

So having that level of flexibility allowed them to fully participate and engage and not feel like they had to choose necessarily their full-time job, whether it be full-time teaching or full-time job in another arena of work, along with being a full participant of our fellows program. And then another consideration that we had to factor in in terms of removing barriers was the financial constraints of

being able to participate in some of those things. So all of the fellowship programs that we administer within the Teaching and Learning Center at UNCF are paid opportunities. So contrary to other fellowships that we've seen where folks pay to be a part of those engagements, knowing that our institutions have folks that don't necessarily make enough money to have to pay for engagement, and we didn't want to require a payment for learning and development because you shouldn't have to pay to learn, really, if the goal is to learn.

Speaker 4 ([00:28:27](#)):

We wanted to make sure that they felt like they had a reason to participate and a reason to have a stake in the game since went above and beyond their expectations of their functions on the campuses. Number four, you'll see there that we leverage different learning formats and technologies. So in our program, we gave them an opportunity to learn a number of different LTI tools, some of which they may not have been familiar with on their campuses because they don't necessarily have the technology resources on their campuses. But we made sure we're cognizant that we were pulling in learning technology tools that were either open source or free or freemium opportunities for them so that they wouldn't have that barrier after they left our program to say that they wouldn't be able to use those tools in their curriculum or in their classes because of the constraint of having to support it financially.

Speaker 4 ([00:29:12](#)):

And then lastly, I wanted to point out that we less space for nuance. And what I mean here is that in our considerations for our application process, we were cognizant that there are institutions generally speaking, that have the opportunities and the resources and the scopes and what have you that allow their student or allow their faculty members to excel of above and beyond. What we didn't want to highlight or what we didn't want to draw a lot of attention to is that a lot of our institutions, I would say out of the 37, maybe there are 20 that don't necessarily have the same level of resources. So when we were looking at our application process and when we were looking at our submissions, not only did we pick schools or faculty members from some of our super, super high resource institutions, but we tried to level the playing field, the playing field, and acknowledge that some of our lower resource institutions, though they may not have scored necessarily the highest in terms of the caliber of their submission application, they may have been the highest at their institution.

Speaker 4 ([00:30:07](#)):

So that was again, worthy of excellence in that scope. So we were making sure to include those folks that were coming from some of the lower resource institutions that may not have scored necessarily when we're thinking about benchmarking scored necessarily the highest, but were still exceptional within the bounds of their work. So those are just some considerations and strategies that we considered and we implemented when we were building out our programming as well as the ways that we thought to engage the faculty so that they know that we were wanting them to be seen from whatever space they sat in, whether it be an adjunct or a full-time, or even administrator because some of our administrators are also teaching courses. So we wanted to make sure that they felt included and that they felt represented in each of the cohorts that we delivered. Next slide, please.

Speaker 4 ([00:30:56](#)):

And then secondarily, I wanted to talk about one of our newest initiatives, our TLC talks, which is a lunch and learn series. And thank you for dropping that link in the chat. So if you want to go and view any of our previous recordings, you can feel free to do so on our LinkedIn page, but our TLC talks is a lunch and

learn series that really centers and highlights the voices of HBCU faculty. What I learned in the research from our initial research engagement was that HBCU faculty don't feel seen when they are engaging in generalized professional development. So whether it be considerations about student population or the fact that wraparound services and diversity equity inclusion or second nature, some of our HBCUs, so they don't necessarily see it as an add-on or just being cognizant and mindful of the fact that on our campuses, a lot of folks, like I mentioned, have a lot of different roles.

UNCF Teaching and Learning Talks:
https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/uncf-teaching-and-learning-center/

Speaker 4 (00:31:45):

So you could be an administrator, you could be an academic chair, and you could be teaching a gen ed course. So a lot of different things could be happening for faculty at our campuses. So we wanted to make sure that in the work that we were doing in informal professional development spaces, we were leaving room for that as well. So as we developed the TLC talks framework and our engagement with our faculty, we looked first at opportunities to center what is going on in our campuses as of right now. So a lot is happening on HBCU campuses as it relates to diversity, equity, inclusion, and student success and student engagement and retention even. So those were some of the highlighted things that we wanted to make sure that we were including in our conversations. And if you look at the photo image on the right hand side of your screen, that is a screenshot from one of our most recent presentations.

Speaker 4 (00:32:34):

We had a presentation last week with Dr. EJ Edney where he led his engagement centered around having difficult conversations. And just to give a bit of background about this engagement. So I wasn't necessarily the most on board for this being one of our presentation topics because I didn't see it from my vantage point. I didn't see it as the most necessary. But I think that's when you lead with the learners or when you center the learners first and you make sure that the faculty members are the ones that are framing the conversation and framing how we move, then that's when these kind of things bubble up. Because I will say that his presentation was probably one of the best that we've had this semester in terms of engagement, attendance and the necessity of having that conversation. Because what I didn't realize, because I'm not again on the campuses, is that faculty members are really having a hard time engaging with this new generation of students, especially the new generation of students that came from a fully online or the covid graduates of our bar time.

Speaker 4 (00:33:31):

And because that there's a disconnect between their experience being in graduate school or being in undergraduate school and what has happened in the past four years. They needed this kind of conversation to happen so that they felt connected. And what I also wanted to point out about his presentation was because he is a verbose presenter and is an exceptional presenter, he came in to the conversation with a really robust slide deck. And what we had to have, or what I had to have in that engagement with him was a difficult conversation to say The moral and the center of the goal of the TLC talks is to make sure that we are not only thinking about content, but also thinking about community. So we need to build in within that container, like Eileen said, build in that container where we have space for people to not only learn and consume your content, but also be able to digest it and to think about what the implications are on their campus and have that conversation with peers from the different

institutions. So that's just something that I wanted to highlight and focus about when you center the learners and de-center yourself as a facilitator, as an administrator, we get to have those organic and synergistic situations where folks feel like they're being seen and they're being understood, and that there's resonance and peer engagement that I wouldn't have been able to facilitate on my own had I just led versus being led by our learners.

Speaker 4 ([00:34:53](#)):

Abby,

Speaker 2 ([00:34:54](#)):

Thank you, Geneva. I want to just go back to your first point, which was so important, leading with the needs. So often we lead professional learning solely with what we feel needs to be conveyed versus what participants want to learn. And so ascertaining participants' learning needs is essential to co-constructing professional learning. And Eileen is really going to talk about that co-construction and belonging when we get to what the work that she's done. I also want to welcome Ray. Ray is here. So welcome Ray, you're here just in time to jump right on in and ask the second question. So have at it, sir.

Speaker 6 ([00:35:42](#)):

Thank you so much. And thank you, Janelle, for sharing your expertise as it relates to professional learning. So we want to ask this question to our panelists. How can professional learning facilitators be intentional about disrupting dominant norms while affirming and elevating the voices and experiences of folks who are traditionally silenced in these spaces? And so what strategies or practices would you put in place to ensure that those spaces are inclusive?

Speaker 5 ([00:36:12](#)):

You can go first, I think in a bit. I'll talk a bit about how I structure my sessions. Probably the most important thing for me is to have those norms get really clear on what the norms are, co-creating what they look like. And I'll talk a bit more about what that can look like, but also it's taking some time to reflect on my own personal biases and privileges that I'm bringing into the space. It can be really easy to just assume, I mean, everything's fine and I'm not carrying any weird baggage with me as I'm coming into a space. But really being intentional and reflective on what energy vibes, biases, privileges I'm bringing into any kind of work that I am stepping into. And the thing about this that I think is challenging but really important is that it's ongoing. It's not just, I'm going to reflect on my privilege today and then that's it.

Speaker 5 ([00:37:09](#)):

I'm not going to think about it again. It's an ongoing process. It involves seeking feedback, finding critical friends, whether it's someone on your team, someone outside of your team, someone who shares similar identity markers as you, someone who doesn't. Sometimes the person that doesn't can see you in a way that you might not be seeing yourself engaging in that continuous learning, which I'm sure that the folks in the room are constantly doing considering the space, the education space that we're in, and also just being open to that change. And I think that that's something in the work that I've done with faculty members, there's often that resistance to changing the way that you've been doing things. Many of you are experts in your field, you're practitioners in your field, you've been doing something that has worked really, really, really well, and it can be difficult to turn around and say, oh, I'm going to do this a little bit differently.

Speaker 5 (00:38:03):

And as Eva mentioned, we are working with a population of students that has had a vastly different experience than we had when we were going to school, add in a global pandemic, a racial pandemic, and all of the things that we've been experiencing over the last four to five years, and the students that you have in your classrooms, they're caring a lot. And also, we are a lot because we also had that same experience, or we maybe experienced it differently, but there's something that we're carrying that it requires us to do some really deep reflection on. And not doing that reflection on our own, starting on our own, but really tapping into our community and network in order to untether some of that work. Geneva,

Speaker 4 (00:39:05):

Yes. And then two things I would add to Ellen's narrative is that one thing that I'm intentional about doing and we're intentional about doing because we do cast a wide net when we are doing our professional development opportunities, is to ensure that people and grounding principals know to leave their titles and their institutions at the door. So we are here to develop content or to develop learning opportunities or to just learn particularly on behalf of our students. So if the goal is to center our students and you as the faculty member are in service of your students, then all the work that we do in that container, in that space should have that motive in mind. So leaving your titles at the door, whether you be a VP or you be the academic chair, you be a dean, you have the same because you are in the same space.

Speaker 4 (00:39:51):

I try to remind people we are still in the same space. So even if you have those titles or those levels, you're still in the same space with an adjunct faculty member who is deserving and has earned their right to be in this space as well. So all conversations and all vocal points are valuable. And then second, I want to point out that I always leave space for a pause for reflection or for silence, acknowledging that folks process differently. Being one of those folks, I don't feel a desire or feel a need to rush, to rush comprehension or to rush reflection. So in those moments where there may be a dominant voice, or in those moments where you see that people are trying, whether it be just angst or agitation or excitement, really, sometimes it is just excitement. Making sure that we are leaving space for those folks that may not have the urgency, whether it be physically or just mentally, the urgency to progress further and giving them that time to process whatever it is that they learned or they received or that they heard from there from their peers.

Speaker 6 (00:40:58):

Thank you for those great insights. So we're going to move on to our next strategy, which is fostering belonging for professional learners. Eileen's going to share her perspective on that.

Speaker 5 (00:41:11):

So with belonging, I was thinking a lot about a cake. What do I want to share? What do I want to talk about? What are the things that are important? And one thing that comes up to me in any kind of professional learning space, I don't care if it's a professional learning space, if it's a seminar, a workshop, a yoga class that you're leading, I don't care what it is, but really being intentional about how we're gathering, how we're gathering with each other. What is the purpose? What is the intention, and how can we create a very beautiful full circle experience from beginning to end? One person that I, or expert that I lean on a lot is a Priya Parker who does a lot of work around gathering and just how do we create

these meaningful, beautiful spaces? It doesn't matter if it's dinner with friends or she mentions an international diplomatic negotiation.

Priya Parker
https://www.priyaparker.com/gathering-toolkit

Speaker 5 (00:42:06):

What are some of the key principles that we can bring into the space? So when I'm thinking about belonging in any kind of space that I'm leading in with established community norms or agreements that you're leading, being really clear, having some of those set norms that you can rinse and repeat, offering them to the folks that are in the room and also giving space to say, do these resonate? Do these not resonate? How can we commit to them? What are ways that you might not feel that you can commit to them? And what adjustments do we need to make so that we are understanding how we're going to be with each other here? I think it's especially important when you're working with faculty, when you're working with K 12 teachers, when you're working with any kind of professionals, really giving them the space to say like, okay, this is how we're going to interact with each other.

Speaker 5 (00:42:57):

Because sometimes the content that we're teaching, sometimes it's dry, but sometimes it can be really juicy and really spicy and can get a little bit intense. So how are we making sure that we're setting up again next so that if there is disagreement, there's challenge. If there's something going on that needs to be addressed, it doesn't feel personal, and we can lean on these community agreements that can help us fuel that conversation. Similarly, the second one, invest time in intentional community building activities. This doesn't mean that you need to spend all of your time doing those marshmallow things where you're building sticks, or I think there's this idea of what we have about community building that can feel maybe like, you know what, if I have 15 minutes, I'd rather focus on content instead of building relationships with folks, young people, educators, people learn best when they feel some sort of connection to either the facilitator, to someone next to them in the room.

Speaker 5 (00:44:01):

Sometimes it's just asking some questions, starting with how you're feeling today, maybe what's getting in the way of your learning, what's something that's been exciting for you this week? What's been a win that you've had for the week? It doesn't have to be this whole, I sometimes say it doesn't have to be Vegas. It doesn't have to be a full circus. It can be something really quick that can help folks feel like, great, we're not just jumping into the content, but this person who is leading or this person who's sitting next to me sees me in a way that feels validating. One small thing that can help with creating belonging in spaces is allowing space for folks to share the correct pronunciation of their name and also the preferred pronouns. It's a small thing that can really help with inclusivity. I don't know. I have a name that to me, it feels simple, but for others it's maybe not as simple.

Speaker 5 (00:45:00):

And from the time I was a little girl, I've had my name mispronounced or misspelled in emails at least once a week in my almost 40 years of living on this planet. And that doesn't feel good because it feels like, oh, this person doesn't see me. This person didn't take the time to just see that, Hey, it's Eileen. This

is my name. Just taking that first step to invite folks in so that they can say, this is how I want to be called. This is how I want to be addressed, and these are the pronouns that I'm using. Can really help create that space of inclusivity and also belonging, auditing your media. As I mentioned earlier, sometimes as faculty, as folks that are leading in spaces, we're so used to, Hey, I've done this session 10 times and every time it's worked really well and I've kept the same pictures, the same media, the same case studies because they work.

Speaker 5 ([00:45:59](#)):

Yeah, awesome. And demographics are changing. There are shifts in the young people that are in our classroom spaces. There are shifts on what faculty look like, what their lived experiences, and it doesn't take much. It might just take a little bit of extra research to change a picture so that it reflects the folks that are in the room. Maybe you have a quote that you've been using for a really long time. Maybe there is a black Latina or indigenous person who's got a similar quote that you can throw in there that will make it feel that much more impactful for the folks that are in the room. It's not to say that you have to fully audit every single thing and make all of these changes in a way that don't feel authentic, but really getting into that ongoing practice of, Hey, I might need to refresh a little bit. We refresh our wardrobe, we refresh our hair. There's so many different things that we refresh. We can also refresh our media, our syllabus, and it's not something that you need to do alone. You can again, connect with your faculty, with critical friends, with folks who are totally outside of the education space to say, Hey, does this look right? Is there something missing? Who's missing? Whose voices are here? Whose voices are not?

Speaker 5 ([00:47:18](#)):

The next one is sharing a little bit about yourself. I know that this one can be, it can be challenging. So you're like, well, how much do I want to say? I'm not saying you have to say everything about yourself, but I think it's really important to be vulnerable with who you are. There are some nuggets of information that you can share that can help folks see you as not just a facilitator, but as a human being, and can sometimes help with shifting those power dynamics and sense of positionality that we might be bringing into the space as facilitators. It might show up in the type of music that you're playing, in the type of gyps that you're using in your media, in the examples that you're using in the text that you are basing your presentation on. So just something to keep in mind.

Speaker 5 ([00:48:13](#)):

And then lastly, we begin well, but we also end well. One of the things that I've noticed in some professional learning spaces is that we're really kind of keen on rushing through the content. We want to get through all the content because that's what we feel is most important. And oftentimes it is very important, but just as important as making sure that we're allowing space for folks to process, for folks to offer feedback, whether it's through a survey to get so that you can understand, did they learn what they needed to learn? Do they feel?

Speaker 5 ([00:48:49](#)):

Is there space to express gratitude for how the time was? But really just being intentional about closing out that space so that it doesn't feel like, okay, the bell rung and now it's over time. Doesn't matter if it's a 30 minute session, a one hour session, making sure that you are starting well and ending well is really supportive of students in their belonging and in their learning. That next slide, one of the things that I was sharing earlier when we were prepping for this is that I am a very, my wardrobe is very black, gray, neutral colors, but my PowerPoints, that's where I'm able to have fun and feel a little bit brighter and

lighter, and it's one way to just feel like I'm expressing myself, and it's a small way for folks to just get a little bit of insight about my personality and the things that get me excited.

Speaker 5 ([00:49:49](#)):

So here you have a couple of samples from a session that I just led two weeks ago with a group of teachers and their clinical practice experience. We started with mindfulness and sometimes asking the question of, where are you today? What are you bringing into this space right now? What may or may not be getting in the way of your learning, of your focus, of your development? And this isn't always something that we need to share out loud because it might not be everyone's business, but it's an opportunity for us to just be clear on, Hey, these aren't just students. These aren't just faculty members that are coming into this space. This isn't just the vice president of something that's coming into this space. These are human beings with real lives, with real stories, with real energies that they're bringing in. And you know what?

Speaker 5 ([00:50:40](#)):

Sometimes they might not be ready to receive what you're giving, and that's okay, but being really clear about that is important. There's a slide also with some examples of community norms and also this idea of ending, well, just like with a quick closing circle, whip around does not have to take a lot of time. And then one thing I also wanted to share that Geneva kind of alluded to is I am so used to, I was trained to, oh, that first slide that you have when you're introducing yourself. It's when I'm showing all of the accolades and the schools that I've gone to and all of the awards that I've gotten and look at me and all of the things that I've done. Yeah, that's cool. That's important. You can go to LinkedIn and look at that. Who am I as I'm showing up in this space?

Speaker 5 ([00:51:26](#)):

So one of the ways that I've started presenting and introducing myself to folks in the room is around certain titles that I feel, or identity markers that I feel are important to me as an advocate, as an educator, and as a daughter. That's a role that's very important to me and that it shows up in a lot of the ways that I engage and talk and the things that I prioritize. And here are some of the books that if you see these four books, you will learn so much about me, my values, and who I am. So it's belonging. It's belonging for the folks in the space, but also I want to belong in the space and I want to feel like I'm accepted here. So what are the ways that I can insert myself in so that folks feel that sense of connection?

Speaker 6 ([00:52:11](#)):

Thanks, Eileen. So we have one other question for our panelist, and then we want to go into our q and a. So how has equity minded professional learning created transformative experiences for participants?

Speaker 4 ([00:52:26](#)):

Thank you for this question. As I was responding this, and as Eileen was just talking, so I don't see transformation as having to be seismic. So I think any moving of the needle, especially given what time constraint you have, whether it be a 60 minute, 90 minute, or a multi-day or multi-week engagement, if you can see a difference or a shift between the folks that entered the room and the folks that are leaving or departing that space, then that looks like transformation to me. So when I'm thinking about just initially some of the work that we've been able to accomplish in this last semester, we're thinking about the academic year. I've been able, and we have created spaces where people have been able to connect.

So if nothing else, I feel like we have made a transformation in the idea that being on your campus means that you were only considered to be a practitioner on your campus, especially thinking of the network approach that we have at UNCF.

Speaker 4 ([00:53:17](#)):

We try to create spaces where people can engage and learn from one another, but sometimes learning happens in different ways. So if I can't control, I can control the container where the people are doing the learning and then hence forth how they're engaging with each other afterward. Then I think that transformation for me, so just thinking about the folks that have been able to participate in our training and development opportunities and engage with each other outside of our spaces, I see a lot of that engagement happening on social media happening via email. Folks are doing. I've even gotten to the point where folks that didn't necessarily know each other for cross institutions that may have had the same discipline are starting to do panel presentations together at conferences. So when we're thinking about transformation, I think transformation for me, knowing the kind of organization and institutions that we serve is really just thinking about, are we truly making the connections and building the community where people feel safe and vulnerable and open enough to share and have a collective responsibility to engage with one another outside of the container of professional development?

Speaker 5 ([00:54:20](#)):

I love that. For me, the answer changes every day, but I think ultimately it's around empowerment. I want folks, whoever it is that I'm working with, to be able to see like, oh, there's another way that I can do this. There isn't just one way. There isn't just the way that I was professionally trained to teach a lesson, to present a syllabus, to talk about my work. There isn't just one way, oh, Eileen tried it this way. Cool. You know what? I think I'm going to try something new. And I feel empowered to do that. I also want to keep it real and know that there are some limitations, and in certain spaces you might not be able to show up the way that you want to show up because of whatever limitations have been placed on you or what is deemed professional versus what's not deemed professional, who is being professional versus who's not being professional. But really this idea of, you know what, I can do something in a different way and I am empowered to lean into who I am.

Speaker 6 ([00:55:30](#)):

Thank you for those responses. We do have a question that was in the chat. Is there a particular tool that you use to assess the need for professional learning? You mentioned surveys and focus groups. Are there other ways that you can assess folks' need for professional learning on our campuses?

Speaker 5 ([00:55:48](#)):

Eva, you have something

Speaker 4 ([00:55:50](#)):

You can go first if you have something thinking,

Speaker 5 ([00:55:53](#)):

I'll give it real. I don't have a specific, here's the tool that I go to, but oftentimes, at least in professional learning settings, I always will end with a survey. And oftentimes, especially if I'm seeing students frequently or I'm seeing faculty as part of a seminar or a workshop, if belonging is something that's

important to me, I will ask a question. Were there any times in the space where you felt like you belonged? There was, or the opposite. And many of these questions are open-ended so that I can then take all of the responses, throw them into chatGPT to do some analysis and see, okay, where are the places where I need to make some tweaks for the next session? So just this idea of having that ongoing feedback is important and asking a similar question each and every time is important to me. Also too, having the questions around the objectives, where the actual objectives and the content meant did you learn what you needed to learn? And also did you feel the way that I was hoping you would feel? So those are two things that I'm always thinking about.

Speaker 4 ([00:56:58](#)):

Yeah, I think those are fabulous points. So yeah, we do heavily use assessment in the form of evaluations from our participation in the work that we do. I think another thing that I try to be cognizant of is keeping my ear to the ground. So not physically, but I have a lot of stakeholders on our campuses that I have a very close relationship with that are, I wouldn't say they don't even have to be leadership per se, but it's just folks that have an inherent perspective and have enough of a vantage point that they would be able to inform some of the work that we do moving forward. So we have advisor so long and short of it, we have advisory groups for all of the work that we do. So I reach out to those advisory groups as I'm developing and as I'm building to make sure that I'm going in the right direction and that to make sure that the voices of those faculty stakeholders on our campus are represented in the work that we are doing within the UNCF. But in terms of technical tools, I don't think it has to be the most sophisticated. So we use Microsoft Forms to do our data collection and I use the phone or I use Microsoft Teams to make my phone calls. So I don't think when we're thinking about how we're doing our assessment or our needs analysis that it has to be the most sophisticated. I think it just has to be authentic.

Speaker 6 ([00:58:14](#)):

We have just a couple of minutes left. How can institutions assess the need for professional learning on their campuses?

Speaker 5 ([00:58:28](#)):

Focus groups I think is one of the best ways, especially if you're working with, you're looking to support marginalized groups or historically marginalized groups, like getting them in a space to just be able to talk, share, make sure that you feed them if you can pay them so that they can share their ideas. I think that that's a really great starting place for institutions to get a sense of what's going on, what do folks need. And then also, one small thing is yes, if you're going to gather people in person to share via these focus groups, when are you doing these things? Are you being cognizant of folks who are part-time, full-time students who are parents, faculty members that are caregivers? How are we thinking about when we're gathering them to be able to get that information from, to be able to get those insights from them and not have that barrier?

Speaker 6 ([00:59:23](#)):

I would also say once you've collected that data, also use that data folks. You've got to be able to, they want to see that you're using the data to then inform the professional leader that they need on those campuses. Alright, well I want to thank you all for being here today. We are at time. Thank you for being with us over the last four webinar series. It's been great participation and thank you to our panelists and I'll let Norma finish us out.

Speaker 1 ([00:59:52](#)):

So yes, we want to thank everyone for participating today, Michelle and Sarah and Ray from our network partners at Achieving the Dream and Geneva and Eileen for their insight to how to actually put these things into practice. We encourage our attendees to visit the Every Learner Everywhere website and our resources page where you can find the guidebooks that we were talking about today, as well as many other resources from our partners, including Achieving the Dream. All of our resources are free to read online or you may download them as well. So thank you to everyone for attending today's webinar. We look forward to seeing you at Future Every Learner Everywhere events. Keep an eye out on our website for what's coming next. We should be having some more relatively soon. So you all have a wonderful day and thank you very much.