Transcript - ATD Teaching & Learning Institute: Changing the Narrative: Advancing Culturally Responsive Professional Learning

4/21/22

SARAH KINNISON: OK. OK. Hi. We're live. Oh, great.
EMILY STUCKENBRUCK: Hello, Sarah.
SARAH KINNISON: Hello.
RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: Welcome, everyone. We'll get started here in a few minutes, just allowing time for folks to join the session. Thank you for joining us.
SUSAN ADAMS: All right, thanks, everyone for being here. We're excited to get started. We have a great set of speakers today, and we're going to be speaking about changing the narrative, advancing culturally responsive professional learning.
We've got some great strategies, ideas, and stories to tell today. And I am Susan Adams. I'm the associate director of teaching and learning at Achieving the Dream. And I'm joined with some colleagues of mine as moderators.
So we're going to set the stage for a discussion today with our presenters. So we've got Ruanda Garth-McCullough, who's our director of program development, and Sarah Kinnison is also here, who's our program development consultant.
And the three of us got to work with both of these presenters over the last year and really got to see some wonderful impacts of their work. And we're excited to share that with you today. Sarah.
SARAH KINNISON: Yes. Hi. So the intended outcomes for today's session are-- let me open these up-- identifying the elements needed to embed equity into professional learning initiatives, considering how to create brave and safer spaces for professional learning work.
Calling out the myths and barriers that often derail engagement and equity work, considering the skill sets, structures, and processes needed to support faculty to interrogate their practices and equip them to transform their instructional approach.
And we are working-- we have Emily and Stephanie. Emily Stuckenbruck and Stephanie Whalen.
RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: And I will-- I will have the honor to introduce Emily.

SARAH KINNISON: Yes, I was just saying we chose them because they do all of these so well.
RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: They definitely do. They definitely do. They do each of those things. They have done each of those things. And it is my pleasure to introduce our first panelist, Dr. Emily Stuckenbruck, the Executive Dean of Academic Excellence at North Central Technical College in Wisconsin.
She is a graduate of UNC Chapel Hill and a Fulbright student scholar. At NTC, Emily leads several departments, including the instructional design, academic technology, library, faculty coaching and mentoring, instructional and program accreditation, tutoring, and academic analytics teams.
Prior to her current role, Dr. Stuckenbruck served as a visiting assistant professor and the associate director of forensics for Loyola Marymount University in LA, and the dean of Liberal Arts and Business for Nicolet College.
During which, she brought tuition-free early childhood education classes to district tribal communities, advance the development of a competency-based education, and business management, and supported the efforts of the jump start program to help educate and employ individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
Among her many achievements, Dr. Stuckenbruck was named to the inaugural class of the American Association of Women in Community Colleges top 40 under 40 national list, and honored as woman of the year by Womanhouse.
So I welcome Emily Stukenbrock to the stage in a moment, and we will now introduce our next panelist.
SUSAN ADAMS: Great. I am also honored to introduce to you our next panelist, Dr. Stephanie Whalen. Stephanie is the chair of the Academy for Teaching Excellence and Professor of English and Interdisciplinary Studies at Harper College in Palatine, Illinois. Stephanie has been instrumental in supporting equity work at Harper, and has graciously given her time to support equity work in the field. I've had the pleasure of her working with-- I'm working with her to offer webinars, and most recently, a discipline-specific communities of practice, where her thought leadership and collaboration brought for deep and innovative thinking among her peers. Stephanie, thank you so much for being with us.
STEPHANIE WHALEN: Thank you.

SARAH KINNISON: Yes, thank you for being with us. And we've all had the honor of seeing Stephanie Whalen and Emily Stuckenbruck's progress at their institutions, and we just really look forward to having them share with us.

So I'm going to kick off the panel questions with our first question. What were your professional learning goals, and how did you structure the offerings for your staff?

EMILY STUCKENBRUCK: Well, good afternoon or good morning, depending on where you are in the country. I'm in beautiful central Wisconsin, so words that don't always go together, but I'm going to rock it today.

And our professional learning goals, actually, they're organized statutorily in our system office. North Central Technical College is part of a 16 technical college system throughout the state.

So we need to do ongoing professional development as a college for our faculty in the areas of curriculum and assessment, student success, teaching and learning, and diversity, equity and inclusion.

So we know generally the areas we need to support faculty, but what the specific outcomes look like, how we operationalize that. Those things are all left to the local colleges. So for us, we knew that we needed to do some work with our faculty around diversity, equity, and inclusion.

And we wanted to set-- we wanted to start specifically with doing some level setting, being able to identify where we are before we say, and here's the solution, identifying either the problem or the opportunity, I might say, before we started really leaning into introducing the solutions.

So we did a backwards design and knew that we needed to start with some professional development for the people who lead our professional development and do our curriculum auditing, which is our instructional design team.

So our learning goals were to be able to identify what we didn't know so that then we could go about starting to learn how to fill in those spaces and then structuring the offerings. We are achieving the dream college, and we knew that that's-- I mean, we're at the best of the best right now.

We're so lucky to get to work with these professionals. And so I contacted Ruanda and Susan, I believe, initially, and we set for two-hour sessions with time in between each session for our academic excellence team.

And that was crucial. Being able to do the really deep thinking together as a team and then being able to have time and space to digest before moving on to the next period of deep thinking, that was definitely an important aspect of the professional learning that we did as a group.

Went with a train the trainer-trainer model. And the last thing, I guess, I want to add before-- I'm getting a 20-minute introduction. But the last thing I want to add is that it was really important to our team that we do this as a team.

Wisconsin is fairly-- the part of Wisconsin that we're in, excuse me, is fairly ethnically homogeneous. And we had only a couple of individuals on our team, who self-identified as either people of color or identified as people of the global majority.

And so we wanted to make sure that we weren't leaving the work around diversity, equity, and inclusion to them, to that, we didn't want to other this work. We wanted to have ownership over the work as an entire team.

And so that was something that Ruanda, Susan, and Sarah were really crucial in helping us build.

STEPHANIE WHALEN: Thanks. At Harper, in our teaching and learning center, we call the Academy for Teaching Excellence, we tend to try to organize our work under the pillars of our strategic goal. And our main focus for this current strategic plan is equity. But of course, we have goals for teaching and learning, student success, partnerships within the community. And in the past, what we've done as a center is we've offered very high quality one-off workshops, graduate equivalency courses, some related to equity, some not, annual faculty retreat, our communities of practice programming.

We've built some really strong programming, but coachable as we are, in all of our work with achieving the dream, we knew that we're not going to have much impact if we don't create systems. Something that could really move our work to scale, something that as leaders in the community will tell us moves beyond the choir.

So in considering that, we realized we needed to build a program that we could run on an annual basis, that really centered equity instead of considering as additive, and allowed faculty as well as educators from our three large center high school districts to participate along with us, and allowed faculty from colleges of Education at a couple of our four-year partners to be on board as well.

So by bringing so many people together, we were able to design a curriculum for a program that has multiple points of entry and in which faculty will essentially be given

an opportunity to create an action plan and earn professional credit for doing that around course redesign that's evidence-based and equity-driven, and then can participate in a redesign for equity grant, which will also really incorporate strong data-driven change, as well as measuring the impact of that change.

So we feel really confident about that because we've had so much support from achieving the dream and Digital Promise to help us to vet the curriculum and create a model. And now, we're really scaling it up. So we're at the third course of the series, in the inaugural run.

The courses are examined for equity, reflect on equity, and redesign for equity. And we do have our partners from our center high school district and our partners from our four years involved in the course, as well.

So rising to the challenge, we're also offering it as high flex opportunity, but we're really excited because this is the first time we have something that we will run every year, that is really, truly data-driven.

And we have an assessment plan that is really long term, going into the launch of the redesign courses and then getting student feedback, faculty perceptions, and student success data.

SARAH KINNISON: Thank you both for sharing these strong and thoughtful exemplars. Susan.

SUSAN ADAMS: Yeah, so I know we've talked to you both about creating a brave and safer space for doing the work of equity. So in hearing your structure, how do you set the container for the structure that you put up, that you've set up for your staff to engage in professional development that centers the equity in all elements of their work.

EMILY STUCKENBRUCK: Stephanie, do you want to go first on this one, since I went first on the last one?

STEPHANIE WHALEN: Absolutely. Sure. So I think one of the things that we were lucky enough to have is this collaborative group between Harper administration and then the administrators at our center high schools is designed to create partnerships so that we can have stronger impact.

And what we did was we first started with going to them with our design and then going all the way up to the council, which has our college president and superintendents to get their stamp of approval.

And so I think going through them and going through to our shared governance committees, like our faculty development committee and our DEI shared governance committee, we are really able to get the buy in that we needed.
So everybody not only knew what we were doing, but they were a part and providing feedback and seeing us implement that feedback to create a stronger and stronger program. So I've never been a part of a program that's had so many different people and groups have a hand in the planning and organizing.
But still, when you're doing equity work, some would say that there truly is no safe space. So I think something that we also learned from in ATD Equity Institute is to always start with a preamble, which is we're really all here to try to find ways to better engage and support students.
That doesn't mean it will always be the same way, and it doesn't mean we'll always have consensus about how to do that, but we're all leaning in to do it, with that effort to really have a stronger impact that will affect students experience in positive ways.
So I think knowing that we had to get broad buy in, which we didn't always know in our last two strategic plans when we had a new initiative, making sure we didn't leave any stakeholder out, and then also start entering in that work, with always acknowledging that sometimes, it does feel uncomfortable to people because it is change.
And when you have long standing traditions and ways of doing things, that's not always comfortable space for people to be in. So I don't really think there is truly a safe space. There will be some discomfort along the way, but we've done everything we can to do our best to try to create a container where the work can thrive.
SUSAN ADAMS: Great. Thank you.
EMILY STUCKENBRUCK: Awesome. And at NTC, something that Ruanda and Susan and Sarah really helped me think through-- I'm an executive dean. I oversee our academic excellence team, which is like our single center for teaching and learning excellence and a couple other pieces added in.
They helped me understand the on ramps that we needed to build throughout our organization into this conversation. So some of the phrases that I have used along the way that have been helpful to building that consensus and that buy in are things like the conversation on inclusion here is inclusive.

We all belong in the conversation on inclusion. Now, I think if you've done some really advanced thinking and reading around diversity, equity, inclusion, and access, there's all kinds of ways that phrase can become problematic. I understand that can lead to the-- oh, well, we're talking about diversity of thought. And that's the diversity conversation. We know that can become very problematic. But I have found that what happened at our institution was there was so much fear, which, of course, I know is based a lot on white fragility.

But there was a lot of fear around even joining the conversation, that it's almost like I just needed to start from a place of saying, OK, team, and then people who interfaced with our team, this is a conversation we all have a stake in, we all belong in.

The conversation around diversity is not exclusively a conversation around race. We cannot have the conversation around diversity, without having a conversation about race. But let's understand that we all can participate in this conversation, and that we all can be leaders in the conversation.

So using some of those phrases was important. I did reading, and then more of my teammates joined me in doing the reading right, like reading white fragility, for example, which can, sometimes, of course, in my head, turn back on itself.

And I'm trying to lead a group. And then I'm saying-- and I understand that the discomfort I'm feeling right now is my white fragility coming forward. And also, I don't need anybody else to make that OK for me. But I also know that I would really like to get to a point where I'm OK with it.

All of this swirling, that was actually helpful for my team to see. And it was, I think, helpful also for my team to see me not making that somebody else's responsibility to comfort me and make it OK for me.

So creating that vulnerability and that safe space, showing, modeling that I, myself, want to do the work and that I know I'm not going to get it perfect every time, but that's not going to stop me from doing the work, that the work is always expanding and growing, that I will take the time to reflect intellectually, emotionally, mentally so that I can bring my best self to the conversation.

I think that's been really important. And then also sharing with the group, things like-- these conversations can be uncomfortable, but let's not engage in the discomfort Olympics, where we're trying to prove to each other that we are better because we're more uncomfortable.

Let's not be afraid of being uncomfortable, but let's not make that the end goal. So lots of those conversations, and then I think the simple things of after the conversation, walking around in my office, seeing my team face to face, having coffee one on one, checking in with the individuals on my team, making sure that they understood this was important to me.

As a supervisor, it's important to our organization. It's important to our area, to our district, to our society, connecting those bigger pieces back to the individual action, I think was really important as well.

SUSAN ADAMS: It was so powerful to watch you be so humble and honest in your own process with your staff. I just want to say that, really, that piece was so pivotal to all of our experience. So I just so appreciate you amplifying that need for modeling that, and not just I am the leader, right, but I'm right there with you. So that was really beautiful.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: I agree. I agree. I think both Emily and Stephanie, they really model reflective leadership. And I think that's so important for their teams to see that no one has the right answer. There's no silver bullet. There's no one-size-fits-all. And you all have both been very transparent in your processes. And I know your teams have responded well to that. And so I really appreciate that. The question I have is, where have you seen the greatest successes in your efforts to advance equity work through your professional development initiatives? What are your--

EMILY STUCKENBRUCK: So we have-- I think, one crucial piece, Ruanda, really, was bringing, achieving the dream in as an external professional development partner. I know we've joked in the professional development world, that somebody just needs to be from 50 miles away in order to say the things that you're saying, in order for your team to believe that it's true.

But truly, bringing in an external partner was key for us, because it allowed me to be a participant rather than a leader or a teacher in that moment. And so that I think was a crucial help, a crucial support.

Where we've seen our initial auditing work is that we developed just a basic rubric, which was, if you've seen the Achieving the Dream Culturally Responsive Scorecard, beautiful stuff.

That is where we are moving toward as an organization to be seamlessly using that work, as we look at our current curriculum, as we develop our curriculum. But we also

wanted to have something really tangible and manageable for all of our faculty to be able to grab on and use in their own work.
So we developed just a four category rubric to look at current curriculum, the faculty have built and used that as an on ramp into the DEI conversation. We currently have had 50% of our faculty use that rubric on their curriculum, with the goal of being 100% of faculty, having worked with the rubric on their curriculum by the end of next school year.
And the success there, I think, has been we have the rubric so that we have some accountability. We have a place to start in the conversation. We have some definitions. However, we don't end with the rubric and say, and now your curriculum is fully inclusive, and you're wonderful forever.
It's here's a jumping off point. Where's the plus one? How do we understand where we are, so we can make that initial change. Even just around just some very basic universal design for learning accessibility principles have come to the surface throughout this work.
And so that, I think, has been really powerful. And then the conversation with the designers, the relationship they've built with the designers. Sarah gave us some incredible links to images of individuals with different body sizes and people representing different cultures and different concepts of beauty.
And that was something really simple. Like our welding team could say, yeah, I have a lot of white, thin males in my curriculum. Can we start with thinking about how differently-abled people might be represented in our curriculum?
That was something that they could act upon and then make an improvement. So I'd say that has been a big success for our college.
RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: Awesome. Thank you. Stephanie.
STEPHANIE WHALEN: Yeah, I hear I heard a lot of key words there that really resonated with me. I think the biggest success that we've had in this work is identifying the need for community and mentoring when it comes to doing this work.
So, for example, in our development and facilitation team for the equity Teaching Academy, we have a whole crew, but we retain the senior faculty, that I mentioned, from the four year universities to stay on even when they're not teaching or facilitating, to serve as support and mentors for the people facilitating, the people taking the course that are encountering resistance in the equity work at their home institutions.

Because I mentioned, we had the high school partners in there for our own people at our own institution. So beyond that, being informal work, we've identified that we need to explicitly put that in their letters of agreement as consultants to continue to compensate them for that heavy work that they do as our colleagues of color, who are often leaders in this work and often, face the most difficult stressors and resistance because they're carrying around that burden a lot.

And so I think that initially, we didn't realize that that was going to be a need and going to be part of the program. And now, it's a formal part of the program. So the work originated out of a grant group, designing a curriculum with two other schools.

And then our communities of practice program, which again, we developed with support from ATD several years ago, it was another community that was serving to carry out this work. And then within that, another community that served to create the models and vet the curriculum.

So really just the need to have community, working on this, but also acknowledge some of the difficulties and actually build in support. So an example of that success would be we had a dinner last Tuesday night, where we brought some of the people from Harper and our local high schools and our two university partners to come and talk.

And we didn't get through half of the agenda because people just really needed to share. And we had people in tears, people clapping for one another, the building, the community has been the biggest takeaway for me.

But also, since we tend to know that, building in those opportunities for support, whether it's small group lunch, big group dinner, setting up a phone call between a couple of people who, could really help each other out and empathize and support, all of that is intentional part of our work now, and I wouldn't do it any other way.

SUSAN ADAMS: Beautiful, Stephanie, thank you so much. Yeah, that mentorship piece is key. And also reminding people to seek that out and setting the stage for that, it's great.

I have a question for you, Stephanie, in particular, is that you and I have talked about myths, right? Myths that can derail professional engagement in the equity work.

And I think you've alluded a little bit to this, but can you tell us what are some myths that arise for your faculty and staff, and how you've dispelled them.

STEPHANIE WHALEN: Yeah, we've seemed to encounter these myths really strongly in the last couple of years, now that we have sought to create some systems and

programs that are long standing. Because when you create the program, faculty who are already overtaxed and burdened are concerned, will this become an expectation?

Will this become a requirement of me? And then they also start to wonder about things like, is this work, like inclusive pedagogy and all the other wording that goes with that, is that a threat to our intellectual freedom?

So I think we have to do a lot of cultural work around helping faculty to understand that critical pedagogy in any discipline is really, actually, supporting intellectual freedom. Because it's helping to provide an environment, where students do learn to evaluate information and think for themselves, which is critical all the time, but especially right now when our nation seems so polarized.

But I think, also, a huge myth that we've encountered is that culturally relevant pedagogy will somehow reduce rigor. So faculty talk about if we cattle students or we water down the curriculum, this is going to really ruin everything.

So culturally relevant pedagogy is supposed to focus on ways to support students to meet learning outcomes, not change them. And we know that looks different for every faculty member, in every discipline, in every classroom.

And we're not trying to change that. We're just trying to gather evidence on what works so that faculty can find their way of doing that in their own additional ways of doing that are unique to themselves. So I think that just like the concept of microaggression can be an affront to whiteness because it implies like an individual as being aggressive.

I think we've sort of learned that individuals have the responsibility to understand that the system itself is hostile, and that actions or words can serve to perpetuate those destructive ideas and hurt individuals and groups.

So it's not even just the having that shared lexicon or understanding, but understanding how it plays out in this work, because, obviously, there is resistance. And I mentioned when we talked, in my whiteness, I've been able to cascade through much of my career without ever encountering resistance.

But as soon as I became part of something that threatens these ideas of intellectual freedom or content area pedagogy over something that's political or personal or inclusive pedagogy, I had a small taste of what it feels like to challenge privilege that maybe people don't even realize they have.

And so I think we're really learning that these myths about adding extra labor to faculty, who are already stretched thin, is problematic to this work. We can dispel that by explaining that community colleges are colleges of the people, and that's our central focus.

So we need to make sure that we're creating educational systems and environments and experiences that are for all the people. So I think we can read all kinds of books and articles about white fragility and equity work, but we can't really understand it, until we start to get in there as accomplices, not just allies, cheerleading, but as accomplices, like doing the work and taking part in it.

Then we start to understand how those concepts really do apply. So we've had a crash course in white fragility, having read articles and books about it years before. I had no idea what it really meant. So doing this work has been a really transformative experience, the way that we've been doing it in the last couple of years.

SUSAN ADAMS: Oh, I see Emily going like this. Emily, I just want to give you a chance to respond. I know you were going like this, and I wasn't sure if you wanted to share. Stephanie, thank you so much. These myths are super important and how do we actually dispel them. So, thank you for sharing those pieces.

EMILY STUCKENBRUCK: Oh, I just-- connecting with Stephanie, it's been such a joy. And I mean, this is why I'm so grateful for opportunities like this, this Institute. It's because having this opportunity to connect with others and to fill my own bucket.

And I'm so grateful. I'm so grateful because it is emotionally taxing work that I can, sometimes, feel guilty, that it is emotionally taxing for me, because as Stephanie pointed out, I've had a life of privilege.

As somebody who identifies as a white woman, that is a very particular spot. And it feels like I did some work on second and third wave feminism and this concept of traitorous identity, and what it means for a male to speak up when other cisgendered males are making sexist comments.

And how to do that in a way that's effective, to shut down sexist comments, without becoming so far outside of the circle as to be able to be pushed out entirely. And I always was like, oh, that's an interesting idea.

And I feel like in some of this work that we've been able to do around diversity, equity, inclusion, around multitudes of identities, I have an opportunity to adopt a traitorous

identity. And it's been really eye-opening. And I'm just really grateful for the grace and the patience that people have shown with me.

SUSAN ADAMS: Beautiful. Thank you, Emily.

SARAH KINNISON: Thank you. You've both alluded to challenges that have arisen, as you advance this equity work, such as Stephanie was just talking about myths and resistance. Something interesting I've heard about is hidden curriculum that can cause challenges.

There's many challenges that come up. So my question is, what has been challenging and advancing this work, or what else has been challenging in advancing this work. And what other barriers can you share, and how have you addressed the resistance?

EMILY STUCKENBRUCK: Well, in reading this question earlier, Sarah, I was thinking about-- of course, there are structural barriers to this work. There's time and resources barriers. There's the people who don't want to engage with the work because they think it's going to go away because there's going to be another conversation that's going to be more important. I mean, there's that stuff.

But what I wanted to point to was something that I experienced previously in my teaching life, that I'm now seeing in a professional development life, which is the difficulty of trying to strike the balance between and maintain the stamina around being able to do the very basic work to get everybody on board, to get those on ramps going so that we're all participating in the conversation to continue to have those really fundamental conversations without coddling privilege, without coddling people who are actively dragging their feet.

Because they don't think that there's even a problem that we need to be discussing. So trying to navigate in those spaces and to have allies that I can work with. So Stephanie has stuck with me now, whether she likes it or not.

But having allies in this work so that I can continue to help be a leader, help advance us as an organization. That's been really key, I think, to helping overcome that particular barrier.

STEPHANIE WHALEN: Yeah, this is actually difficult for me to talk about because there's been some sleepless nights in the last couple of years. But I mentioned that when you approach the equity work, as long as it's optional and paid, it's pretty smooth sailing. But as soon as you try to touch anything that's a regular part of faculty's development or processes that is built in as required. It's different. So we had an adaptation of SUNY's

OSCQR rubric that, contractually, the faculty senate has agreed to use for faculty to work with an instructional designer or peer reviewer to review their online course every five years.

So that really helps elevate the quality and awareness of our instructors of how to design and facilitate a quality online course. So in the past couple of years, we've been developing our own review rubrics and tools.

And one of them-- and it's in that website that I shared. But I'll share the page again in case anyone's late joining-- is the enacting equity guidelines. So we're looking at all of our own programs and materials.

And that Harper's adaptation of the OSCQR rubric, which is involved in a contractual process, is one of the things that we thought, hey, we should take a look at. So we recently hired an inclusive instructional designer to add to our team.

And he and I-- or they and I started meeting and working on reviewing the OSCQR to see, is there room to grow in terms of adding some connections to or descriptions of inclusive pedagogies and practices?

And so when we approached our senior peer reviewers, who worked with that process, they immediately sounded the alarm that the Academy is creeping into territory that is contractual, and this is not OK, and this is different.

And if we were to change that rubric to incorporate descriptive characteristics of inclusive pedagogy, we're basically creating a system, where faculty are forced to interact with these ideas. And that doesn't mean they're forced to change anything about their course.

They're really just forced to be aware that in addition to this standard, here's some descriptive language that speaks to evidence-based equity pedagogies so that became a committee under the Senate, with some other faculty appointed.

And when we asked to have just three faculty who are involved in DEI work added, that was difficult. But we got there. But initially, the group said, we don't want to talk about inclusive pedagogy. We're willing to talk about clarity of these standards.

But we're not willing to talk about inclusive pedagogy because we think that is political. It's personal. It doesn't belong in a rubric that faculty can actually interact with. So that was a hard blow back, and there was a lot, that went with that territory that was really difficult.

Ultimately, we did end up doing some revisions. We had a survey to the faculty about what items were less clear, and we are going to do some revisions, but they really were based on what SUNY had most recently revised.
And then also clarity, language, grammar, those types of things, because the majority of the group didn't want to look at the resources or informations we had compiled around inclusive pedagogy. And that's hard to say.
But I think we're going to be able to create resources to go with those standards for some of that work and material that we've put together. But it taught us that if something is contractually required, there's a line that people are trying to maintain, that we shouldn't cross.
So in building, even this equity teaching academy, there's concern among that same group of people, that it will become something that's written in a review rubric for faculty or as part of tenure and promotion and things like that.
But we still have to build it. But our plan is in building it, we'll get more and more people to come to the table and experience it, continue to contribute to the models and the data.
And over time, culturally, the institution and even those people, who I hope are still around because they're my colleagues and my friends, will say, you know what, this is worthwhile. And maybe this should be part of how we do faculty development and course development and redesign at our school.
So we decided to build it first and continue to gather evidence, continue to get more and more people through it, gain momentum that way. Then maybe, someday, we can circle back to those processes that involve contracts and evaluation. So we s have a long game in mind, but it hasn't been without tears on both sides.
RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: Stephanie, thank you. I remember when you shared that story before, and I want you to share also the part where you know how the long game works from your experience--
SARAH KINNISON: Yes, I was thinking the same thing.
RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: --adjunct faculty-- engaging adjunct faculty grant. Can you speak a little bit more about what gives you hope that the long game is the best approach.

STEPHANIE WHALEN: Several years ago, the academy, so our teaching and learning center was a part of an achieving the dream grant group, where several schools were seeking to engage and support adjunct faculty.

At that time and years before that, it was a very separate body of educators between our full-time faculty and our adjunct faculty. At one time, we even had a center for adjunct faculty engagement, where adjunct faculty had all of their own resources and PD and things like that.

So through a redesign of our programming and that grant, we were able to elevate the involvement of adjunct faculty by starting communities of practice that were integrated between full time and adjunct faculty.

And that was an important part of the Achieving the Dream grant. But we were also more cognizant of making sure all the programming was designed for both, and that they then became part of our annual faculty retreat, rather than just their own adjunct teaching and learning conference.

We had them as facilitators, presenters, leading faculty development, graduate equivalency courses, leading workshops. So over time, that has completely transformed our culture.

And I don't think many people can even remember a time when somebody would have said to an adjunct faculty member, oh, I thought this retreat was only for full-time faculty. What are you doing here? Which happened.

So the amount of collaboration and just visibility as equal colleagues, has transformed. So we have had a huge cultural shift. And yes, it took several years. And initially, I remember even hearing like, why are we funding communities of practice of adjunct faculty?

This funding typically goes to full-time faculty. So there was all kinds of questions about presence, funding, involvement, leadership. And now, it's a completely different situation. Adjunct faculty sit at shared governance committees and on most all committees and are at events.

And there's really only one event that is now just for adjunct faculty members. They're adjunct teaching and learning conference, because we want to give them a little more than what the full-time faculty get, because they need that sort of affinity space.

So it has transformed our culture, and so I believe that the long game with this will do the same. Sorry, this is the environmental light saving situation here. But that's why I have a whole lot of hope. And I know the territory is even tougher with the equity work.

But everything is lining up, and people are coming together. And through that, we're all pushing in the same direction. And I think that we'll continue to get more and more of those people who were initially concerned, as we dispel these myths.

And so we're trying to make sure that's a part of all of our communications and framing. We take the time to tell the story of why it's important and why it isn't a threat to our existence, as teachers and our intellectual freedom.

And what we have learned about teaching that does work well for us, it's a yes and proposition, like so many things are.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: Thank you. Thank you so much. That perspective gives me hope as well. And we, too, have the light savings at our ATD offices. So I am sympathetic to being at a webinar and having to move my arms around to get the lights back on.

But happy Earth Day, everyone. This is what we need to do. The final question is-- and then we'll open it up for Q&A. So participants, if you have questions, we will definitely have time for you to ask the panelists your questions.

But the final question is, what plans do you have now for advancing this work, from where you are now, where would you like to see it scale, what are those opportunities and plans for scaling.

So for us at North Central Technical College, very exciting after 100 years of being strictly vocational occupational programs. We were just granted permission to add the liberal arts mission to our college, starting in fall of 2022.

That was a big change, requiring approval by the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents. So a lot of this work, of course, is just so-- it's just in the DNA of the liberal arts. So I just think it's the perfect time for us to--

I'm so glad we started, when we were strictly occupational-vocational, and that we'll be able to expand through the liberal arts. I want to add quickly that we have a paid mentoring program for all new full-time faculty and adjunct faculty.

And so that has also been a key to helping to really integrate and then scale this work. I can talk all day, but a faculty member is always going to listen to another faculty

member, closer and more seriously than they will listen to me.
And then, finally, our an important part of the next phase is--
And this, of course, includes working with human resources on who is our faculty and staff and making sure that we are more representative for, perhaps, of our own community and then, more broadly, working with our grants departments. But one of the big next steps is really thinking about the voices that we're amplifying.
I know that you've heard a lot from me today. And my hope would be in the near future, that the person who would be speaking with you about the work that they're doing at NTC, maybe a person of the global majority, for example. So I think doing a lot of reflecting, as we continue to do the hard organizational work of advancing this.
STEPHANIE WHALEN: As I said before, I think, right now, we know we can't do everything at once. So we're focusing on the data-driven part and the gathering evidence right now. But we do have a vision that we will have a district-wide micro-credential about education as a laboratory pathway that we're working on.
And taking the equity teaching academy would just be one of the ways that you could aspire and earn that micro-credential. We also want to expand to other groups that work with students. So when we had a panel with the Black Student Union, they talked a lot about coaching.
And so we've had athletic coaches, where they don't have a lot of training and how to provide positive, enriching, supportive experiences to students. And we do have some coaches that really stand out and excel with that.
So when we get to the next step, that would be an example of another area, where we could have some redesigns of onboarding and community building and helping students grow in their own self-efficacy or leadership abilities.
There's so many areas, where students can get connected or disconnected, rather quickly and easily. And so I think that that's another example that we'd like to engage our coaches, not only from our school, but again, from our center high schools and our four-year schools.
In addition, we need to get with advisors. I mean, we know that our counselors and advisors have different roles across campus. And anybody that is student-facing, and that's really everybody can benefit from this work.

So one of the things that we did was in the first two courses, we built in assignments and activities, where participants can contribute to this online open educational resource that we have, called the Equity Literacy Project.

So as a community, we would like to continue to build that resource so that we can use it, hopefully, in all of our employee onboarding, but in these variety of programs and that as people interact with it, they also become contributors, so it continues to grow.

Throughout this process, one of the school districts said, can we add our middle school faculty to this invitation? We said, absolutely.

So I think, as we continue to gather models and examples and people start to see that there's a variety of ways that people infuse and really center equity pedagogies into their work, we can have more and more types of employee groups taking part and becoming part of that community by not just interacting with what we've built, but actually by contributing.

So that's the way we want to continue to make this alive and growing, by making people a part of it, not just a part or participant that experiences it, but somebody who feels like they've made it what it is, as it continues to grow.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: Thank you. Thank you. I love all of those next steps and pathways for scaling, and that those metrics that you've set for yourself, that is really powerful.

So we're going to transition here to the Q&A and open it up for participants to ask the panelists questions. So you can raise your hand or unmute, if you have a question.

And while you're gathering your thoughts, I'm going to ask Emily a question. Emily, you spoke about the vocational college experience. Can you say a little bit more about how the culturally responsive teaching strategies were received from different vocational groups, vocational areas?

EMILY STUCKENBRUCK: Absolutely. I mean, it's an interesting dynamic. Because on one hand, we've been having things, like the NTO, non-traditional occupation, conversation for a long time in career and technical education.

So thinking about women in welding, thinking about men in nursing, like that has been a part of our lexicon for a long period of time. So that was a natural way of extending the conversation to think more broadly.

But one of the, maybe, areas of resistance is that there's always a way of saying, Emily, you can be really excited about culturally responsive teaching. But my job is to not-- in an occupation, my job is not to create the next Democratic citizen. My job is to create the next welder, and to make sure that this welder is ready to weld and to be able to pass a band test and to go into the industry, that they're actually going into. But even then, I look at-- we have a welding instructor, who identifies as female. And she talks about how difficult it was for her to break into welding and how powerful it is for any of her female students to see a teacher who looks like them. So we try to use those grounded examples, so they can get their arms around why this is still important.

And without, of course, always going back to-- well, Veronica's over there. So why don't you ask Veronica why this is important. We don't want to make Veronica have to have this conversation a ton of times, right?

So I think it depended on the occupational area. In a lot of ways, actually, COVID helped some of this work, when we looked at representation and curriculum. Because, suddenly, we were doing a lot more interfacing, virtually.

And so we could say, as faculty, we're were rapidly building up curriculum for an online environment. We could say, hey, have you considered these images? Hey, have you considered including these identities?

So that was-- and I just saw a question in the chat about buy in, garnering faculty buy in. But that's one way we did it. It was by being help, being of service, being a servant leader. Those kinds of things, for faculty, helped them see us as an ally or, as Sarah pointed out, as a co-conspirator in this work.

SUSAN ADAMS: Being of service is a great way to phrase it, absolutely, Emily. Thank you. And Stephanie, we open it up to you, too, this question in the chat about the buy in. I mean, if you had more to say about that. Oh, I think you were answering it there.

STEPHANIE WHALEN: Well, I was trying to answer Ann's question a little bit. The community of practice program has been really strong for us at Harper, because it's faculty who come together around a shared interest, that they want to create an action plan and carry out some work, and then present at the end of the year.

And they get extra support from the Academy in terms of that structure and staff support, but also additional funding for common reads or conference presentations and things like that. So that's how it's incentivized.

And there's also the good old idea of bringing together people for community for food and social. So we tried to-- even though it's been difficult during the pandemic, that was always part of that program as well.

But the teaching for equity community of practice served as a core group that went above and beyond to do that work. But then, we also made sure we kept continually inviting people so that when we were creating a resource or a tool, we went around to some shared governance committees and said, would anyone like to look at this?

And then as far as making sure that we had all important stakeholders, and that we're using the funds of knowledge of our senior faculty and our faculty colleagues of color, we are able to ask for funding through our community of practice program to do things like have a workshop.

Where we paid one of senior faculty members, who's a person of color to come in and talk to us about what they've learned about our institution and its culture, and what they would advise in terms of some of the programming.

So the communities of practice program is a permanent program, but communities of practice only have to commit to an action plan for a year at a time. Whereas, at some schools, they really only can get funding year.

Our communities of practice can continue to get funding annually, as long as they participate in our "Shark Tank" like action plan at the beginning of the semester. And then a mid-semester check in, they just have to do one workshop of their choosing as a group.

We have some custom workshops or pre-identified workshops. And then they present out at the end of the year, which keeps them driven, knowing that they're going to come to this share-a-cell, where we go around and share what we've done as a community of practice.

So the teaching for equity community of practice has really been a group that has kept this work going. Even though some of the membership has changed over time, the core focus has not.

So, yeah, there's some incentive for being a part of the group in terms of those that funding when we do need to bring someone in or have a consultant or go to a conference. But there's also that sense of community.

So I would bring it back to that, again, is that we have a few different communities that work together on this, and that's what has allowed it to really go forward in a stronger

way than if you just have one group working on it, that equity literacy project I mentioned that started way back in 2016, was when that community of practice first formed.

We invited people from the high schools to come, and so that's a bigger group that has contributed to the Equity Literacy Project. But it's another group that convenes for dinner or for a workshop. And we have food, and we have connections.

So again, I would say, if you can find a way to create some communities that really have this shared passion and interest, that's when you get your most momentum. And those same people can be on some of those communities, but it takes multiple communities to really be able to have the time and the effort and the sustain the energy.

ANN LAFFEY: That's really exciting, thinking about what you said about inviting the high school, right? The high school, inviting the community in, because I think we're in the middle of our QEP and thinking of ways to connect to the community isn't always intuitive. And that's a fantastic way to go about connecting for a really good purpose for literacy.

SUSAN ADAMS: Thanks for your question, Ann. That's beautiful. And the interest in agency-driven, just amplifying that piece for the community of practice. Other questions or comments? We have about three minutes left, so I want to open it up further for anyone else that would like to contribute.

STEPHANIE WHALEN: I could add to something that Ann said, too, about having that shared sense of purpose. One of the ways that we got the right people on the bus, as they say, is we reached out to the teacher development people and/or DEI leaders, if they have one, in an administrative role, and said, can you please invite the people who are already shown interest in equity work?

And I think we were advised that when we were doing our initial course redesign with achieving the dream in Digital Promise, start with the people who are engaged in the work to create the models and vet the material, then you can start to branch out.

So I think that worked well for us, because when we got the people in the room, we were shocked, but they were so glad to be there with one another in one space, like, wow, we're all here with the same interest and passion and concerns around equity work. Let's tell our stories. Let's tell our experiences. OK, let's think of what we can do. So that's where you get that initial momentum. But then, of course, we want to have that

broader impact. But we were delighted and overwhelmed by the amount of people who took that invitation.
But we couldn't have done it without knowing who to reach out to at the high schools and say, who's involved in some equity work already, that you think would be interested? And then once we put out that invitation, our first workshop we had from the three high school districts and ourselves, like over 30 people.
And we were expecting, a couple people from each district. So we were only expecting a handful of people, but they were there to talk and share, and they wanted to do something. So shoulder tapping the right people is huge to get it started.
EMILY STUCKENBRUCK: Stephanie, I think, too, something that you're modeling that I talked to our team about and that our team talks to our administration about is asking the question, are we doing for our faculty what we ask our faculty to do for our students?
So if we are always about thinking about increased accessibility for students and increased flexibility and representing and amplifying their voices, are other administrators doing the same work for our faculty? So that's been-- I appreciate that you do that.
SUSAN ADAMS: Thank you everyone so much. We've dropped a survey link to give us some feedback about the institute and this session. We'd love for you to take a few moments to do that. And we just want to thank everyone for their engagement and their questions.
This has been a very rich conversation, with lots of ideas, and a special thank you to Emily and Stephanie for putting together this with us, sharing and amplifying, and contributing to the field in such a beautiful and graceful way.
STEPHANIE WHALEN: Thank you so much, Susan, Ruanda, and Sarah.
EMILY STUCKENBRUCK: Yeah, thank you so much.
STEPHANIE WHALEN: Looking forward to talking more, Emily. Thank you, everybody.
EMILY STUCKENBRUCK: Stephanie and I our buddies now.
RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: I'll see you all at the closing plenary. Thank you.
SUSAN ADAMS: Ruanda, I think you're host, so you can stop recording.
RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: Yep. All right, I will.