

Equity FIG Final Report

Winter and Spring 2022

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Educators are an important force in helping many people overcome the effects of societal bias and discrimination but schools also serve to perpetuate the inequalities and prejudices in the society. Thoughtful action with regard to curriculum, pedagogy and school policies and organization is necessary to overcome the effects on people and institutions of a long history of prejudice and discrimination.

- National Coalition for Equity in Education (NCEE)

Summary

During the Winter and Spring Terms of 2022, faculty from the division of College and Career Foundations, met to discuss antiracism education practices at the individual, division, and institutional levels. The two-term deep dive into equity principles in education asked us to examine our own practices as educators with an eye to adult learners. The foundation of this inquiry rests in the work of the Equity Literacy Institute and emerging research in equity education initiatives with the goal of building instructional and institutional awareness and action to improve the adult learner experience at LCC.

Our study is founded on Lane's Mission and grounded in Lane's Equity Lens work:

Lane is the community's college: we provide comprehensive, accessible, quality, learning-centered educational opportunities that promote student success.

Land Acknowledgment: Lane Community College is located in the traditional homelands of the Kalapuya people.

We continue to develop and implement a comprehensive Equity Lens framework for Lane Community College, to ensure considerations of equity and social justice are applied throughout the institution.

We want to see these guiding principles applied equitably to all students.

During the first term, we centered our inquiry around our own practices as educators with an inward look into our own concepts, ideologies, and pedagogies. Through this examination of our teaching practices, we identify several ways to increase equity in our own course delivery. See outcomes below.

The second term centered around institutional systems and structures that impact adult learning equity by examining programming and college-level practices and policies. We have developed several recommendations that address policies and practices to improve equity outcomes for adult learners. See outcomes below.

Guiding Questions

How do we define equity, and inequity in our educational roles, within our programs and institutionally? How does this understanding of equity help us work toward a more equitable educational experience for all students?

What would an equitable, accessible, and inclusive student experience look like throughout our programming and beyond? What would students be able to access, gain, and accomplish, and what would that require?

How do we ditch deficit ideology in teaching and learning practices, by reimagining our students through a strength-based equity lens?

In thinking about our equity work including accessible, equitable, respectful, student-centered, and strength-based engagement with students, what might an ideal syllabus look like? What would it include and what would it not include?

How can we engage and communicate with students in a humanizing way? Consider policies, practices, assignments, expectations, assessments, grading, and, as a point of entry and our first form of community to students, the syllabus, where we have flexibility and control.

How trauma-informed are we and how can we practice transformative trauma-informed education in our teaching practices and institutional policies through an equity lens?

Considering performative, mitigative and transformative equity work, what are examples of things that we do as educators and institutionally in the name of equity that might nibble around the edges of inequity but do not actually create more equity? What would transformative equity look like at LCC?

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What is the responsibility of the college in providing the resources and policy decisions to support equity work and be held accountable to these principles?

Outcomes

At the individual educator level, members of the group shared changes being undertaken in their courses including eliminating authoritarian and deficit language in our syllabi, student engagement, assessments, assignments, and lessons. We are committed to identifying student strengths in assessing student needs, moving us away from deficit ideology to strength and equity student assessment.

We have discussed developing a guiding principles syllabus template to increase equitable student communication and share during our in-service and department meetings in 2022-23. We also started to develop a resource page for students in our division with an emphasis on basic needs and academic support that noncredit students are eligible to receive, in one comprehensive and supportive list. Our goal is to make this available on our email taglines, and add to Moodle pages under resource sections. We will continue to bring our equity work to the forefront of our programming and curriculum development including creating professional development teams, presenting during our in-service, and division meetings.

Our discussions centered around the institution level of equity were the most challenging and, often discouraging, aspect of our FIG inquiry. In part, our teaching practices are within our sphere of influence for change. However, in examining institutional systems, we see our students consistently harmed by practices where we have little to no influence, or voice in terms of policies, and entrenched deficit thinking about noncredit adult learners, and nontraditional learners in particular. We all expressed feelings of equity fatigue, in that we are in constant advocacy roles to try and move the college in a direction that values our students and aligns with our core mission, access, inclusion, and equity.

We see the following policies and practices particularly harmful to noncredit adult learners and nontraditional students: college placement inequities; limited access to college services and support; exclusionary systems and practices across campus systems; resource allocations that provide access to funding and resources to some programs, while keeping our programming chronically underfunded, understaffed, and under resourced.

In isolation, we often expressed feelings of defeat, fatigue, and disconnection in our student advocacy and equity roles. In reflection, we concluded that we need to identify, connect, and collaborate with the different groups across campus who are committed to the same principles, moving equity from performative to transformative, for all students.

We are currently looking for groups to connect with and try to bring our efforts together so that we can support one another, and build strength in numbers. One goal we'd like to work on is to encourage the administration to shift decision making from a deficit zero sum mindset, toward the Equity Lens Tool kit by following the guiding questions that ensure stakeholder voices are included and potential inequities are identified. We will also continue to appeal to the board to redefine the decision to displace ABSE ESL at the downtown center to an equity and social justice lens. This will be an uphill battle and the more support we can elicit, the better chance we'll have to protect learning spaces for our most diverse Lane students, and set the tone that we are a college that believes all students belong at Lane.

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