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International Education and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: A Partnership for Equity and Social Justice

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ABSTRACT

While many institutions of higher education recognize that the field of international education must be more diverse, equitable, and inclusive, and know there is much to be gained by institutional cooperation between the fields of international education and diversity, equity, and inclusion, the challenge is in *how* to do this. In order to know how to act, the authors contend that international education units must first undergo a process of deep self-reflection and research to uncover and acknowledge history and unconscious biases on the part of its leaders and staff members, and inequities in the unit's policies and practices before identifying relevant and realistic opportunities for collaboration. In this article, the authors outline what this process involves and describe how international education and diversity, equity, and inclusion units at two large public research universities devised successful inclusive programs that were best suited to their respective contexts and ensured that these programs were collaborative efforts between the two units.

Keywords

Global learning; international education; internationalization; diversity, equity, and inclusion; social justice; reflection; collaboration

INTRODUCTION

The heightened awareness and upheaval about systemic racism in the United States (U.S.) during the early summer of 2020 has led the field of international education (IE) to engage anew with the institutional strategies and practices of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within institutions of higher education. These fields share fundamental values, deep commitments to inclusion and social justice, and an abhorrence of discrimination of all kinds. Between the two fields, there is fruitful common ground and natural intersections. Examination and reflection are hallmarks of IE and DEI, and both present opportunities for learning how to understand, live effectively with, and care for others; however, IE and DEI have different backgrounds, histories, motivations, and organizational structures, as well as varying levels of institutional support and visibility. While many institutions of higher education recognize the imperative to act on the reality that IE in and of itself must be more diverse, equitable, and inclusive and know there is much to be gained by institutional cooperation between the two fields, the challenge is in *how* we do this. What does meaningful collaboration look like? To know how to act, we contend that IE must first undergo a process of deep reflection--acknowledgement and accountability--of our own history, unconscious biases, policies, and practices before identifying relevant and realistic opportunities for collaboration. In this article, we outline what this process involves and go on to describe collaborative efforts between IE and DEI at two large public research universities.

OUR USE OF TERMINOLOGY

We use DEI to refer to policies, programs, and practices that recognize, value, and serve the needs of people of all backgrounds and experiences. We use IE as an umbrella term for policies, programs, and activities related to student and scholar mobility, the transfer of ideas across borders, and curriculum and co-curriculum infused with an international, intercultural, or global dimension. We choose the terms Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion because they are used on our



three campuses; yet, it is important to note that terms such as Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI), Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB), and Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (JEDI+B) are used at other institutions throughout the United States. We use the term “global learning” to describe active engagement in learning in and about the world and acknowledge that every institution should define “global learning” as it relates to its respective situational context.

WHY EXPLORE INTERCONNECTIONS AND WHERE TO START

Exploring IE and DEI for possible connections is not a new conversation for the field of international education. We have been engaging in these dialogues since the last millennium. Janet and Milton Bennett (1994), as well as Merry Merryfield (1996) and others (Cortes, 1998; Scott, 1993; Kymlicka, 1996), explored these connections in the 1990s. One of the early efforts in the early 2000s was the American Council on Education’s Initiative At home in the World. This national initiative brought together diversity and internationalization leaders at several U.S. institutions to explore areas of similarity, difference, and overlap between DEI and IE with the goal of increased collaboration. Over the last five years or so, the annual conferences of the American Association of Colleges & Universities, the Association of International Education Administrators, the American Council on Education, the Institute of International Education, and Diversity Abroad have all featured presentations that have focused on the possibilities of alignment and collaboration between DEI and IE.

Examining and promoting interconnections are important aspects of our responsibilities as international educators; however, before we can begin any process of alignment or collaboration, we must acknowledge the crucial role of self-reflection. The agendas of IE and DEI are essentially transformational, with goals that require an understanding and commitment of administrators, faculty, and students to be nimble with difference and to reject social injustice and discrimination. To reach such an understanding and to bring about such transformational changes at an institutional level require an examination of our own biases, prejudices, and vocabularies and how we deal with them.

For international educators and administrators, this means thinking about our transformational potential and that of our leadership, exposing our internal blind spots, reckoning with our institutional gaps, and reflecting on the lexicons we utilize. Whether we focus on more externalized campus collaborations or on a more internalized diversification of global learning, we must start with our own deep introspections into what brings us to these conversations and with an eye toward transformation. Ultimately, it is only by starting with our own motivations and histories of what brings us to this moment, and digging down into our own assumptions, evaluations, and explanations of the world that we can imagine and implement strategies, structures, and collaborations that transform. As always, institutional change starts with us; with you.

COMMONALITIES AND DIFFERENCES

The goals of global learning are in synch with those of DEI programs and activities. The similarities in learning outcomes are clear: both include the importance of critical reflection, action that leads to a positive impact in communities, and integrating diverse perspectives. Even



so, global learning is not automatically part of campus conversations around inclusive pedagogy, anti-racist teaching, or decolonizing the curriculum, even when these approaches cut to the core of what global learning stands for.

At many institutions, IE and DEI units may at times appear marginalized, with neither area able to get the traction, recognition, and comprehensive impact they need; yet, it is not surprising to find sentiments of protectionism rather than collaboration. Most institutions have diversity committees and international task forces, for example, but the two areas are often in separate worlds where it is much more difficult to contribute to or build a solid foundation of global diversity. Our goal here is to reflect on IE to consider what we are doing to contribute to or challenge this organizational bifurcation.

There is also occasional opposition to interconnections between DEI and IE units. Some say that DEI resistance to working with or considering IE is because IE lacks examinations of power and that those in IE de-historicize subject matter. Further, it is suggested that IE may focus too much on privileged groups and not enough on marginalized populations. Rather than sidestepping these criticisms or differences in approach, we need to learn from them and work to bring a DEI lens to international education as a whole. If IE is to be in the diversity conversations on campuses, we also need to engage in the ongoing work of making our field more inclusive and just.

For example, we can learn more from DEI about the importance of history and genealogy, learning to reflect on the historical roots of cultural lenses, many of which are laden with the perspectives of the dominant, of the majority, of the white, of the male. We can also learn more about how we can be conscious of power in our pedagogies and subject matter, by focusing as much on those who are marginalized as those who have voice. Incorporating anti-racism and social justice issues in classrooms puts faculty and students in extremely vulnerable positions. As global learners, we must objectify ourselves, make ourselves feel uncomfortable, be ready to take risks and unwrap our perspectives, ideas, beliefs, histories, and cultural values that define who we are. We also must dig into the hidden curricula within international education (Leask 2015). While this is not easy, it is critical to teaching and learning through an equity lens.

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY (FIU): TRANSFORMING GLOBAL LEARNING THROUGH A LENS OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Global learning has been a part of FIU's mission and vision since it first opened its doors to students in 1972. One of FIU's three founding goals is greater international understanding. FIU's first president, Charles Perry, committed to this goal by vowing to recruit faculty on the basis of their demographic, racial, and ethnic diversity and their international, interdisciplinary, and student-focused outlook. FIU's activation of its goal of international understanding was one that embraced a commitment to taking responsibility for addressing local and global challenges in research, teaching, and service.

At the end of Charles Perry's tenure as President in 1976, the university turned its full attention to growth as a public research university, expanding its portfolio of degrees, building its professional schools, and increasing its international research capabilities. A renewed focus on FIU's vision for greater international understanding came in 2008, when the campus leadership decided to reinvigorate the "I" in FIU by engaging all undergraduate students and the faculty



who teach them in Global Learning for Global Citizenship, an initiative that involves all undergraduates in collaborative efforts inside and outside the classroom to understand, analyze, and begin to address complex issues that affect us all.

GLOBAL LEARNING FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP INITIATIVE

On its simplest level, Global Learning for Global Citizenship is a two-course global learning (GL) graduation requirement for all undergraduates. All GL courses must include these three graduation-level GL outcomes:

- Global Awareness—an understanding of the interrelatedness of local, global, international, and intercultural issues, trends, and systems;
- Global Perspective—the ability to conduct a multi-perspective analysis of local, global, international, and intercultural problems; and,
- Global Engagement—a willingness to engage in local, global, international, and intercultural problem solving.

GL courses must also include a plan for assessing GL course outcomes; active, collaborative learning strategies, and evidence of diverse readings and content.

Qualitative and quantitative assessment results of Global Learning for Global Citizenship provide ample evidence that the initiative has not only met its own goals but has also successfully fulfilled parts of the mission of DEI, namely, inclusivity and diversity. In terms of inclusivity, the 280+ GL-designated courses that are available for undergraduates span all 72 undergraduate academic degree programs. Every year, over 95 percent of all incoming freshmen and 90 percent of incoming transfer students take GL courses. With fewer than a dozen exceptions per year, every undergraduate who has entered FIU since 2011 has been able to take at least two GL courses prior to graduation.

Assessment results also reflect FIU's commitment to diversity. In relation to global learning, Landorf, Doscher, and Hardrick (2018) posit that diversity at FIU encompasses demography, the curriculum, and a cognitive tool set (p. 43), which the authors view respectively as “learning among others” (p. 43), “learning about others” (p. 48), and “learning in collaboration with others” (p. 52). The Office of Global Learning Initiatives (OGLI) assesses the level of all undergraduate students' growth in their GL graduation-level outcomes by annually conducting a pre-test post-test model of the Global Perspective Inventory. One of the most salient findings is that the courses and co-curricular activities that are most predictive of global competency growth are those that include intensive dialogue among students with different backgrounds and beliefs. FIU has used this finding to augment the content, delivery, and strategies used in GL courses and activities.

AN EQUITY FOCUS FOR GLOBAL LEARNING

Global learning has thus far fallen short in relation to equity, broadly defined as “understanding students' needs and addressing those needs by providing the necessary academic and social support services to help level the playing field so students can achieve their goals” (McNair, Bensimon, & Malcolm-Piqueux, 2020, p. 2). During the racial reckoning of 2020, OGLI, which



facilitates Global Learning for Global Citizenship and its associated programs and activities, was among many IE units in institutions of higher education that publicly denounced the violence, hatred, oppression, and continuous injustice affecting African Americans throughout the U.S., and committed to engaging in critical self-reflection of its own actions and practices. Since then, the OGLI has taken several action steps in reflecting on race and equity blind spots and aligning DEI priorities with global learning. The OGLI team started by reading and discussing Derald Wing Sue's (2015) Race talk and the conspiracy of silence and participating in a 21-day Racial Equity and Social Justice Challenge sponsored by the Young Women's Christian Association of the United States of America (YMCA). These actions prompted deep self-reflection about race, racism, racial microaggressions, and whiteness and White privilege, and prompted strategies to map out the team's individual and collective journeys towards anti-racism. As a team, the OGLI articulated that even though its staff is diverse in terms of ethnicity and nationality, in Miami, each team member is considered White, and with that perception comes White privilege. And the team admitted aloud that the great majority of the 1,200 students who are active participants in the most highly populated GL program, the Global Learning Medallion, are predominantly White and Hispanic. To remedy these disparities, the OGLI committed to changing the racial make-up of its office staff as soon as the opportunity arose and to actively recruiting students of color for our global learning clubs and programs. For example, the OGLI hired a Black Student Union student leader as a student assistant in fall 2021 who was instrumental in devising a communications campaign on Tik Tok and Instagram to target diverse students for the Global Learning Medallion program. Within a semester, the percentage of students of color in this self-selecting program increased by almost 20 percent. The OGLI also created a multi-pronged plan to focus on equity in its work with faculty and students. The plan encompasses several strategies, including faculty development, research, and student engagement.

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH

All faculty who are revising a course for GL designation, developing a new GL course, or teaching a GL course that their colleagues have designed are strongly encouraged to participate in a half-day, hands-on workshop. The overall goal of the workshop is to sensitize participants to the development of their own global awareness, perspective, and engagement in order to move towards new ways of thinking about and implementing the content of their courses. To address equity in global learning, Sherrie Beeson, the OGLI Senior Coordinator, collaborated with Erica Caton, the Director of Educational and Faculty Development in the Center for the Advancement of Teaching, to add a module to these workshops that focuses on equity. The module includes engaging in a reflective activity around race as a socially constructed concept, discussing definitions of equity and equitable teaching, and identifying teaching practices that advance equity.

As for research, for the past year Hilary Landorf, the OGLI Executive Director, has been working with Dawn Whitehead, the Vice President of the Association of American Colleges and Universities' Office of Global Citizenship for Campus, Community, and Careers, on a multi-university study. The research aims to explore students' perspectives of the meaning, challenges, and possible intersections of global learning and diversity, equity, and inclusion. In the spring of 2021, Landorf and Whitehead conducted focus groups with students from seven institutions of higher education across the U.S., including FIU. There are three major preliminary findings. The first is that students associate global learning with learning that is woven into the curriculum and co-curriculum while they perceive diversity, equity, and inclusion as tied to the climate of the institution. Students use phrases such as "understanding different perspectives and viewpoints," "learning about different cultures," and "awareness of global issues" to describe what global



learning means to them. On the other hand, students use phrases such as “inclusive of all students,” “sense of belonging,” and “empowerment” to talk about DEI on their campuses. Despite these distinctions, students perceive DEI and GL as intricately connected concepts, one essential for the other. Students use phrases like “they go hand in hand” and “one is necessary for the other” to describe how they see the connections between the two concepts.

The second major preliminary finding from this research is that students know when DEI and GL are integrated in the curriculum and when they are not. For example, a student from a public urban university in the West said, “lots of times DEI seems very focused on the struggle going on within the United States, and there’s little to no global perspective at all.” Another student, from a public urban Hispanic-Serving university in the South said, “I work in the climate justice movement and so, a lot of my work revolves around how we protect vulnerable people, under-resourced communities, from climate-driven impacts in the face of climate change, and so with that comes an understanding of a global challenge, the science behind it, and its impacts.”

The third major preliminary finding is that students gave specific suggestions on ways to integrate DEI and GL in the curriculum and co-curriculum. These included hiring more faculty and advisors who look like them, providing training to faculty on how to weave GL and DEI into the curriculum, and learning the language of DEI and GL so that students can feel empowered to navigate white spaces.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

For the first time since the OGLI initiated the global learning fellowship program in 2014, they selected two DEI-specific GL Student Fellows for the 2021-2022 academic year. GL Student Fellows develop and carry out globally focused research projects with a faculty mentor during their fellowship term. One student fellow is examining the issue of police brutality in Brazil, and the other is exploring gender identities in STEM with an emphasis on equity. In addition to receiving financial resources and mentoring from the OGLI, GL student fellows receive DEI-specific training to carry out their research agendas.

Another student-led activity is the Global Learning Student Board, the official liaison between the OGLI and students. At FIU, the OGLI initiated such a board in spring 2021 to give more agency to students in their global learning and to engage students in recruiting and mentoring their peers in various global learning programs. The Global Learning Board at FIU is made up of eight students, each of whom has a specific role which includes an operations coordinator, external and internal outreach coordinators, a media relations coordinator, and a GL peer advisor. In fall 2021, the global learning student board collectively decided to develop an age-appropriate video series to educate Miami-Dade County public school youth about equity issues affecting South Florida. They are now working on a discussion guide that Miami-Dade County public school teachers can use.

A third activity in which students engage with equity-focused global learning is through the Millennium Fellowship Program. This program is sponsored by the Millennium Campus Network and the United Nations Academic Impact to help make the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) a reality (Millennium Campus Network, n.d.). Undergraduate students are selected based on their campus leadership and potential to pursue projects that advance the SDGs in their own communities. As Millennium Fellows, in addition to carrying out their projects, the students participate in a semester-long program in which they network with Millennium Fellows around the world and meet virtually with international experts. The



Millennium Fellowship Class of 2021 includes over 2,000 undergraduate students on 136 campuses in 30 nations, including 25 students from FIU.

Since FIU became a Millennium Fellowship Campus in 2019, action-based research has been at its core. For example, Raqqya Adside-West, 2021 Millennium Fellow Campus Co-Director, addressed SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities) and SDG 2 (zero hunger) by establishing LetsGrowUrban.com, an urban gardening blog in which Raqqya discusses strategies for creating and sustaining urban community gardens. She uses her own work securing locations and creating green spaces in planned gardens in low-income communities in Miami as evidence that it is possible for a 20-year-old with knowledge, determination, and grit to make a difference in achieving the SDGs.

Through these initiatives, the OGLI is successfully engaging stakeholders on and off campus to increase knowledge of and participation in work that advances DEI efforts. Similar to how diversity is explored across local and global contexts, this requires leaders to think through lenses of generality and particularity. This work is transforming FIU practices and programs, from teaching to research, and it was an imperative that began with deep reflection and reconsideration of how diverse global learning at FIU and OGLI truly was.

UC DAVIS: BUILDING COMMON GLOBAL AND DEI PRIORITIES THROUGH THE SDGS

The 17 United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), or 2030 Agenda, as they are known, provide a transformational framework for solving vexing environmental, social, and economic challenges at the international, domestic, local, and campus levels. Higher education can play an important role in achieving the goals. The SDGs require interdisciplinary approaches and new ideas from young people—areas where universities can excel. The SDGs hinge on partnership and collaboration because the problems are integrated and indivisible, and too complex to be solved by any one institution, sector, or country. Thus, this agenda can be used to bridge divides inside institutions, across disciplines and sectors, and across countries and cultures, while appreciating different contexts and needs. Within universities, the 2030 Agenda can also be used to bridge global learning and DEI, bringing them together for a common purpose.

The University of California, Davis (UC Davis) has taken this approach. During the last few years, UC Davis has embraced the SDGs and engaged in numerous activities to strengthen involvement from the campus community, with a focus on connecting to both the campus global learning and DEI priorities. UC Davis has approached its involvement in the 2030 Agenda both deliberately and organically, and this has provided opportunities for new ways to integrate the agenda within units, and campus partnerships that bring complimentary expertise to the effort. UC Davis has made strategic and programmatic decisions to elevate the SDGs and expand the number of individuals within the campus community that have access to SDG opportunities. The approach has also been flexible and inclusive, based on connecting, supporting, and amplifying the efforts of diverse faculty, staff, and students from all disciplines who want to contribute.

UC Davis has launched new programs for faculty and students that promote understanding and application of the SDGs. These have included a grant program to encourage faculty collaborations around the SDGs, efforts to assist faculty in integrating the SDGs into teaching, and various learning programs for students. For example, the Global Affairs unit launched an



SDG internship program for undergraduates that provides academic credit. This program creates an avenue for students to strengthen their knowledge of the SDGs as a framework and support UC Davis campus engagement in the global agenda while building professional competencies and taking advantage of mentoring for global careers. Students in the program have represented diverse backgrounds and majors—representation which has enriched the discussions about local and global challenges. In 2021, Global Affairs also piloted a summer course on the SDGs which attracted a diverse group of undergraduate students from countries around the world. The course enabled students to work virtually in groups to identify local and global challenges of importance for them, to anticipate communities that might be left behind, and to think about inclusive and participatory approaches.

Additionally, the Global Engagement Opportunity Living-Learning Community is a one-year residential living-learning community that provides students an opportunity to engage in cross-cultural exchange. Students in the program collaboratively learn about and address global issues in an equitable and sustainable way, and the SDG framework is directly incorporated into this learning. These and other SDG programs directly support the UC Davis Global Education for All initiative, which aims to provide 100 percent of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students with equitable and sustainable global learning opportunities.

UC Davis Global Affairs is also facilitating other opportunities for faculty, staff, and student understanding of the interconnections among the SDGs, diversity, equity, and inclusion principles and global learning. This includes integrating these concepts into the support that Global Affairs offers international students, scholars, visitors, and families from more than 140 countries. Global Affairs conducts training on cultural humility and understanding of differing cultural perspectives, and the Global Ambassadors Program integrates a focus on dynamics of diversity, equity, and inclusion into training students as mentors for incoming undergraduate international students.

To promote further internal reflection and strategic thinking about the intersections between global engagement for UC Davis and DEI, Global Affairs launched an internal DEI taskforce. The taskforce continues to partner regularly with DEI for training and dialogues to apply DEI to global strategy and operations. In addition to the ongoing efforts that bring together the SDGs and DEI principles within the portfolios of Global Affairs and other units across campus, one of the central features of the UC Davis approach to the SDGs has been through an unparalleled partnership among three campus units.

ENGAGEMENT ON THE SDGS: A CAMPUS PARTNERSHIP

UC Davis developed a tripartite collaboration among its Global Affairs, DEI, and Sustainability units to advance the SDGs, through a multi-faceted approach that builds on campus commitment to social, racial, and environmental justice. The three units began to work together on the SDGs in 2019-20. Global Affairs was spearheading global engagement on the SDGs through international networks and partnerships as well as global grants and opportunities for students, faculty, and staff. DEI was seeking to raise awareness on campus and to engage underrepresented scholars and connect their work with the SDGs. Sustainability was connecting the SDGs to its ongoing efforts to track progress and strengthen environmental and social sustainability in campus operations. The three units recognized that there were synergies in their individual efforts and that much more could be achieved to promote campus engagement by working collectively.



The three units began to build the partnership by meeting regularly, sharing information and opportunities, collaborating on joint presentations at conferences, and inviting one another to provide expertise in various networks and venues. The partnership opened new ways to inform DEI and global programming. For example, the units began to co-fund grants for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals. The partnership and joint funding have advanced global conversations and incentivized inclusive collaborations among interdisciplinary teams of UC Davis faculty and international partners to contribute to the SDGs. Due to the participation of the DEI unit, one grant each year is reserved for a project focused on reducing inequalities, and two grants are reserved for Center for the Advancement of Multicultural Perspectives on Science Scholars and for Center for the Advancement of Multicultural Perspective on Social Science, Arts, and Humanities Scholars. When considering which grant proposals to fund, the review committee also looks for an integration of diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout activities that the faculty principal investigators are proposing.

As the tripartite partnership on the SDGs has evolved during COVID-19, the three units have also developed new virtual events and gatherings to support and expand SDG awareness on campus. This included a three-part, virtual campus SDG Forum series in 2021-22 that brought together a campus-wide community of faculty, staff, and students. One of the events focused on the connection between diversity, equity, and inclusion and the SDGs, specifically the connections between racial equality and the SDGs.

One of the recent outcomes of the campus partnership on the SDGs was the completion of the first UC Davis Voluntary University Review (VUR) in September 2021 (UC Davis Global Affairs, 2021). The process itself, and the final result, demonstrated some interesting insights about current efforts on campus, and the various perspectives of faculty, staff, and students on the relevance of their work for this agenda. The VUR examined current activities across research, teaching, service, and operations. About 50 percent of the respondents to VUR surveys indicated that their SDG-related work occurs in the United States, highlighting that the SDGs are not only relevant to university projects in other countries but also to those at the local and national levels. Further, the majority of faculty who self-reported SDG activities identified that they were working on multiple SDGs, demonstrating that there is recognition of the interconnections that are inherent in this agenda. There is a strong foundation to deepen the UC Davis efforts on the SDGs by connecting SDG-relevant activities across disciplines and units and bridging the experiences in the U.S. domestic contexts and international environments. This is also an important opportunity for further integrating global learning and DEI principles.

RECOGNIZING SHARED GLOBAL GOALS AND DEI GOALS

The UC Davis tripartite partnership highlights the inherent connections between the 17 SDGs and DEI goals. The 2030 Agenda that established the SDGs reflects international commitments on human rights and gender equality, and articulates a global vision to address the root causes and manifestations of deeply embedded inequalities and discrimination. Within the 2030 Agenda, countries around the world also pledged to leave no one behind. This commitment is encapsulated in the “Universal Values” statement of the UN Resolution that established the SDGs:

We envisage a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination; of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity... A just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met. (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development, n.d.)



The 2030 Agenda is often called the “People’s Agenda” because of the extensive process of stakeholder engagement that occurred around the world to develop it, and the specific attention to marginalized people and communities during this input process. Terminology and frameworks in the global human rights and gender equality arenas, environmental spaces, and the U.S. DEI arena are often different due to these distinct histories, communities, and approaches. The UC Davis campus partners have recognized that the SDGs provide a framework to bridge the narratives and achieve deeper change at all levels—campus, local, national, and global. There are several important factors that shaped the collaboration among the three units, and that may offer lessons for other efforts to align global learning and DEI in university settings.

CHAMPIONING THE AGENDA

University engagement requires more than activities and events; leadership commitment is also pivotal. In the case of UC Davis, campus leaders from Global Affairs, DEI, and Sustainability are personally and professionally committed to the global agenda and to expanding opportunities for all members of the campus community to have a role. One of the necessary ingredients for bringing the partners together and maintaining a robust partnership has been a shared philosophical connection to the 2030 Agenda. This agenda resonates personally, but the leaders also see the relevance for their units and how the principles and themes within the SDGs help achieve campus priorities. The leaders speak about SDGs in their own venues and networks, and jointly in campus and external settings. The outreach is crucial for building campus support and broadening the tent of faculty, staff, and students involved in the SDGs. This has also led to mutual support for the other units’ mandates as they have been able to elevate the importance of global, DEI, and sustainability efforts across the campus in a variety of forums, committees, and initiatives. The leadership in Global Affairs, DEI, and Sustainability have demonstrated the institutional commitment by devoting time and resources to building campus engagement together, in the midst of many competing priorities. The VUR process took more than twelve months of sustained coordination and dialogue during the COVID pandemic and established a solid foundation for continuing communication and collaboration.

In addition to the leadership in the partnering units, joint efforts in awarding SDG grants, co-hosting campus conversations and forums, and collecting input for the VUR also revealed numerous other champions for the SDGs across the university. Champions come in many roles—administrative leaders, faculty, staff, and students. The VUR process has opened new opportunities for shared learning and support, to develop a diverse SDG community of practice on campus.

RECOGNIZING STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

One of the most important ingredients of the tripartite partnership is a shared view that the 2030 Agenda is an imperative for the university and a strategic priority for each of the units. UC Davis is a land-grant university, and the SDGs are clearly relevant to current challenges locally and state-wide. In 2018, UC Davis released a 10-year strategic plan, *To Boldly Go*, which is naturally aligned with this global agenda (UC Davis Leadership, 2018). The campus vision recognizes the role of the university to prepare students, to engage in research, embrace DEI, pursue partnerships, and support innovation in ways that improve the planet and people’s lives. Institutional diversity, systemic inclusion, and social equity are critical in all interactions and



areas of work for the university, as articulated in another key UC Davis document, Principles of Community (UC Davis Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, 2015). In 2018, the Chancellor of UC Davis created the new position of Vice Chancellor of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to lead this work for the campus.

During the VUR process, the three offices worked extensively to develop a shared narrative about the alignment between the SDGs and campus strategic priorities. Each unit brought a unique perspective about the value and relevance of the 2030 Agenda to the critical priorities for the campus. DEI also offered insights about diverse communities on campus and in underserved communities in the Northern California region, as well as the important location and role for UC Davis. The VUR challenged the three offices to co-create a narrative that connected many aspects of UC Davis' mission and identity with a commitment to solving local and global challenges, and the SDGs as an equity framework to support and strengthen the work. The tripartite partnership facilitated deeper discussions about the core aspects of the SDGs and why the agenda matters. The SDG partnership has paved the way for incorporating the SDGs in strategic leadership conversations about DEI on campus and for more opportunities to focus on DEI principles within the global efforts on campus. It has been fundamentally important to identify the common narrative around campus strategies, priorities, and the SDGs and to share a unified message about the relevance to the campus.

VALUING COLLABORATION

Within these three units, collaboration (with partners on campus and with external partners around the world) is considered valuable and necessary to achieve university priorities in research, teaching, and operations. The collaborative efforts on the SDGs have required the campus partners to understand one another's priorities and constraints, listen to concerns and resolve differences, and bring together different lenses for a common purpose. This has been a beneficial learning process for all. There is a recognition that the projects and initiatives will be more successful and sustainable with the multi-faceted approach. Since each of the units brings different relationships and stakeholders to the table, the SDG partnership has enabled sharing connections and opportunities on and off campus, which has further expanded perspectives and ideas about how to make research, teaching, service, and operations inclusive and globally relevant.

The three units continue to work together on emerging opportunities to support global learning and DEI through SDG engagement. For example, Global Affairs and DEI units are actively involved in a new Campus Advisory Committee on Sustainability. The partners continue to collaborate on activities that expand campus awareness and involvement in the global goals and provide space for exploration of such topics that have campus, local, domestic, and international contexts, including racism and inequality globally. For UC Davis, the 2030 Agenda provides a common vision and language to address complicated, interconnected challenges at the campus, local, national, and international levels. The collaboration among the three campus units has fostered working relationships and bridged institutional portfolios, mandates, and programs so that the social, racial, environmental, and global can be interwoven across campus and in partnerships around the world. A multi-faceted approach to the SDGs has provided a shared vision and language for connecting and strengthening the university's local and global contributions.



CONCLUSION

These individual stories show how two universities have grappled with aligning IE and DEI and how they ultimately landed on different ways to connect DEI with their international education programs. In practical and administrative terms, these two universities approached their work in distinct ways – one by using specific goals and values of the SDGs to create an overall organizational program infused with DEI, and the other by using an existing organizational structure to collaborate and connect with other groups to expand and infuse their IE programs with DEI; yet, both start with reflection and built on situational contexts and organizational infrastructures to transform their institutions by advancing this critical work.

Before one can determine what type of approach is the most effective on a campus to fruitfully align DEI and IE, one must challenge and overcome the perception and reality of DEI and IE as institutional units acting as isolated mechanisms. Transformation for IE and DEI in any institution cannot be just about building bridges; it has to be about reimagining an entire institutional infrastructure that supports the roles of IE and DEI from a common platform, utilizes existing organizational structures, and builds new structures to sustain the connections between IE and DEI.

Of course, DEI and IE have different starting points and likely have distinct senses of responsibility; however, we exist on similar scales. Our frames of analysis intersect and interconnect, and we need each other to be fully engaged in the re-imagining of higher education. This must not be transactional work. Instead, it requires that we roll up our sleeves, challenge institutional binaries, and dig deep into the systems, policies, biases, and our own internal framings. No institutional approach should or will look the same, but they always start with us, digging deep, listening, rethinking, and making connections that transform.



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