2021-22 CSU School of Social Work Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice Needs Assessment: Results and Recommendations

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Abbreviations

CSU – Colorado State University

CSJ – The School of Social Work's Committee for Social Justice

DEIJ – Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice

EPAS - Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards

The School – The CSU School of Social Work

Introduction

In the 2020-2021 academic year, student members of the Colorado State University (CSU) School of Social Work (the School) community approached the Committee for Social Justice with observations and suggestions about diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice within the School. They brought concerns about the ongoing centering of whiteness in our department, the need for more inclusion of transgender and non-binary people's voices in our curriculum and department functioning, and the exclusion of people of color in student and employee experiences. These concerns were echoed in other feedback mechanisms, including the CSU Employee Climate Surveys and student exit surveys.

The timing of these concerns integrates with new Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) from the School's accrediting body, the Council on Social Work Education (Council on Social Work Education, 2022), which calls Schools of Social Work to action on anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion in both their explicit and implicit curricula.

To address student-led concerns and align our department with the new EPAS, the School agreed to engage in a thorough needs assessment and strategic planning process, led by the School's Committee for Social Justice. As an organizing framework, we engaged with the **Planned Change Process** fundamental to social work practice in organizations (Netting et al., 2017). The steps in the process are outlined in Figure 1.

This report reflects on the methods and results of the *Assessment Stage* of the Planned Change Process: a comprehensive assessment of stakeholders' needs, ideas, and priorities. These results can be used in planning for strategic goals that reflect the results of the needs assessment, including the actions, resources, and accountability measures that will help us reach those strategic goals.

Our vision for the needs assessment was to engage in an iterative and equitable process that centered the School community. Planning for the needs assessment was housed within the Committee for Social Justice, composed of students and School employees. We consulted with the School Director, Charlotte Bright, the CSU Office of the Vice President for Inclusive Excellence, and the College and Health and Human Sciences' Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Michelle Foster, as we planned for the needs assessment. We engaged in partnership with the Center for Social Work Research Center for un-biased and confidential assessment of student survey data, and with Diversity Compass Consulting for the conducting of focus groups and interviews with students and School employees.

Figure 1. The Planned Change Process

Assessment
- identify needs and assets of the school
- understand the needs of all stakeholders
- establish baseline for evaluation

Maintenance
- intiate long-term plan to maintain identified strategies
- utilize feedback loops for constant advancement of DEIJ

Planning
- allow stakeholders to form the plan
- identify evidence based strategies across micro-mezzo-macro levels
- create a logic model for each planned change

Evaluation
- identify short and long-term outcomes
- transparently evaluate outcome indicators

Implementation + Monitoring
- implement change processes
- utilize formative evaluation monitoring and process-improvement mechanisms identified for each step

Methods

We utilized a mixed methods approach to the needs assessment process, engaging both quantitative data and qualitative data. Data sources included both existing secondary data from recent years and prospective primary data collected specifically for the needs assessment. All data elements are presented in the Appendices in a de-identified / collated manner. The results of each data element were summarized by the Committee for Social Justice within a framework that aligns with School functions.

Results from all 11 data sources were reviewed by 4 members of the Committee for Social Justice over the summer of 2022 (Shiloh Dailey, Quinn Hafen, Tiffany Jones and Paula Yuma). The findings from all 11 sources were organized into a functional framework, structured around 4 primary areas: School Climate, School Structure, Student Experience and Curriculum. Each of these 4 primary areas contains several sub-categories.

We attempted to assign every meaningful finding from the 11 data elements to one of these 4 functions. The findings were placed into a spreadsheet alongside the corresponding functional area. The spreadsheet also included a column to capture suggestions for actions made by participants during the needs assessment process. The spreadsheet includes room for the *Planning Stage* of the Planned Change Process to unfold, with columns for short-, mid- and long term-objectives, strategies, resources, markers of success and other elements common to planning via logic models. The results-specific elements of the spreadsheet are provided as Appendix 12, while the fuller version will proceed as a living document that will be used in the *Planning Stage* throughout the 2022-23 academic year.

Secondary Data

The secondary data elements included in the needs assessment were collected within the timeframe of 2018-2021 and are described in Table 1.

Table 1. Secondary Data Elements

Method	Vintage	Source	Authors	Appendix
Quantitative	2018 and 2021	Employee Climate Survey - School of Social Work Results	Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness	1
Quantitative	2020-2021	BSW and MSW Exit Survey Data (includes some qualitative responses)	School of Social Work	2
Qualitative	As of Spring 2022	BSW and MSW Handbooks and the School Code	School of Social Work	3
Qualitative	Fall 2020	Organizational DEIJ Scan by the Office of the VP of Diversity	Ria Vigil, Office of the VP of Diversity	4
Qualitative	Spring 2021	Action Items for Cisgender Allies, presented to the Committee for Social Justice and then to the School of Social Work School Council	Trans and Nonbinary Students and Faculty	5
Qualitative	Spring 2021	MSW Anti-Racism Group Feedback presented to the	MSW Students	6

Method	Vintage	Source	Authors	Appendix
		Committee for Social Justice and then to the School of Social Work School Council		
Qualitative	Fall 2021	Ideas and Issues Feedback presented to the MSW Program Director	MSW Students	7

CSU Employee Climate Survey – School of Social Work

CSU's Employee Climate Survey assesses the working environment at CSU. The survey assesses themes of culture, leadership accountability, respect, favoritism, communication, discriminatory attitudes, and performance review (Appendix 1). The report was provided by Lee K. Tyson, Senior Research Analyst with CSU's office of Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness. The report includes 2021 results as well as comparisons to the School's 2018 results. The Social Work response rate on the report was 43.3%, with 26 of 60 employees responding. This response rate was slightly higher than the College of Health and Human Sciences overall (35.9%). Data for the College can be located here.

BSW and MSW Exit Survey

In both the BSW and MSW programs, an exit survey is provided to students as they prepare for graduation. The exit survey assesses the implicit curriculum taught within the School and includes 22 items relevant to this needs assessment: diversity (3 items), student development (4 items), faculty (5 items), advisory (5 items) and resources (5 items) (Appendix 2). The exit survey is designed, administered and analyzed by the School's Outcomes Committee, led by Dr. Neomi Vin-Raviv.

Written Policies and Procedures

The Committee for Social Justice reviewed existing policies and procedures at the School, including the 2021-2022 BSW and MSW handbooks and the School Code (2022). These are provided in Appendix 3.

Organizational Scan, 2020

In Fall of 2019, Ria Vigil with the Office of the Vice President for Inclusive Excellence was asked to conduct an Organizational DEIJ Scan of the School (Appendix 4). Ria collected information through small group interviews with work teams, written feedback, and interviews by phone, using an Inclusive Organizational Culture framework. Ria's results are grouped into themes of variance of experience, financial transparency, internal communication, consistency in leadership, structure of school council meetings, and research vs. teaching.

Action Items for Cisgender Allies

In March 2021, post-doctoral fellow Dr. Jonah DeChants and students from the BSW program provided the Committee for Social Justice with feedback about their experiences within the School of Social Work. They included a list of 4 action items for Cisgender Allies at the School (Appendix 5), which was then presented to the full School Council in April 2021.

Action Items for Anti-Racism

In 2020-2021, MSW students formed an Antiracism Group, and provided the Committee for Social Justice email and face-to-face feedback on the program's existing structure and white lens. Members of the group then presented these observations in School Council. The email summary the students sent is provided in Appendix 6.

Ideas and Issues Feedback

In December 2021, MSW Program Director Amy Martonis received an emailed document from students in the MSW program containing ideas and feedback around "the exclusion of people of color in student and staff populations" and "the need for greater accessibility." That collective communication is provided in Appendix 7.

Primary Data

Primary data collection methods were developed by the Committee for Social Justice and student partners (Table 2), and were implemented by staff committee members, student committee members, and the consulting team from Diversity Compass Consulting.

Table 2. Primary Data Elements

Method	Vintage	Source	Collected by	Analyzed by	Appendix
Quantitative and Qualitative	Spring 2022	Student Needs Assessment Survey	Committee for Social Justice, School of Social Work	Social Work Research Center	8
Qualitative	Spring 2022	Focus Groups with Students and Interviews with School Employees	Diversity Compass Consulting	Diversity Compass Consulting	9
Qualitative	Spring 2022	BSW Curriculum Assessment	Riley Smith, BSW Honors Thesis Student	Riley Smith	10

Method	Vintage	Source	Collected by	Analyzed by	Appendix
Qualitative	Spring 2022	School Culture Assessment	Kate Peters, Steven Harvey, Justyn Smith, Virginia Smith, MSW Community Practice Team	Kate Peters, Steven Harvey, Justyn Smith, Virginia Smith	11

Student Needs Assessment Survey

The Student Needs Assessment Survey was developed by the Committee for Social Justice, primarily by Paula Yuma, Quinn Hafen and Shiloh Dailey with feedback from a sub-committee focused on the survey. The survey assessed demographic characteristics, including gender identity, sexual orientation, race-ethnicity, religious affiliation, military veteran status, first-generation student status, language, ability and caregiver status, among others. We assessed students' financial ability to meet their basic needs using the Concrete Supports subscale of the Protective Factors Survey, 2nd Edition (PFS-2) (Sprague Jones et al., 2020).

Primary dependent variables of interest included students' perceptions of the School's learning environment, including respect for all persons, respect for diversity, and support of persons with diverse identities. Most items used a Likert-scale with 3-4 response options. Support and acceptance within the school was measured using Factor 2 from the University Belonging Questionnaire (Slaten et al., 2018), and was modified slightly to fit the School's context. Perceptions of connections to faculty and staff at the school were assessed using Factor 3 from the University Belonging Questionnaire (Slaten et al., 2018). We assessed students' experiences of microaggressions (4 items) and how often they were addressed (3 items). Students were asked to respond to 9 items assessing inclusion of diverse identities, bias, and language in course content, and to 2 questions assessing how well the curriculum supports students desire and ability to engage in social justice pursuits. We asked students if our School's communication is timely, supportive, transparent, and relevant, as well as whether the communication is perceived as trustworthy, respectful, and authentic. A section of the survey assessed the extent to which students feel safe raising concerns about DEIJ in the School, their awareness of formal reporting processes, and how satisfied students who raised concerns were with the resulting responses and actions. In the final section of the survey, we asked each student 6 questions about the extent to which the School is making progress on social justice, antiracism, dismantling oppression of the LGBTQ+ community, gender inclusiveness, disability inclusion, and hiring and retaining diverse employees. Students were then asked to list what they believe should be the top DEIJ priorities for the School.

Qualitative and quantitative analysis of the responses to the Student Needs Assessment Survey was conducted by the Social Work Research Center. Analysis of student data was restricted to individuals who have no teaching role in the School to protect confidentiality and increase student comfort with provision of honest responses. Details of the analysis and results, and the questionnaire itself, are available in Appendix 8.

Student Focus Groups and School Employee Interviews

Qualitative analysis of data collected through focus groups and interviews with students and School employees was conducted by Diversity Compass Consulting. Students were invited to participate through a form at the end of the Student Needs Assessment Survey, as well as through classroom presentations and written invitations sent via school communication channels (e.g., email and social media). Employees were offered the opportunity to send written feedback as well.

Diversity Compass Consulting's report of their methods and results is provided in Appendix 9. *Note: This report includes a note on the edits we made to this report to increase accessibility and readability of the report, as well as to address quality concerns. We made no alterations to the quotes provided in the results section.*

BSW Curriculum Assessment

Azrael Reasons, BSW student, assessed antiracist content and assignments within the BSW curriculum by reviewing the syllabi of record for each course. This analysis was also Azrael's BSW Honors Thesis, chaired by School Director Charlotte Bright. Azrael's presentation and their full thesis are provided in Appendix 10.

School of Social Work Culture Assessment

MSW Students Kate Peters, Steven Harvey, Justyn Smith, and Virginia Smith assessed the culture of the School of Social Work as a course assignment in Dr. Anne Williford's MSW Community Practice Course. They used interviews with students and employees to gather qualitative information, using an interview schedule based on the characteristics of white supremacy posed by Okun (2021):

- *Either / Or Thinking*
- *Worship of the Written Word*
- *Objectivity*
- *Individualism*
- *Power Hoarding*
- *Fear of Open Conflict*
- *A Sense of Urgency*

- *Denial and Defensiveness*
- *Paternalism*
- *Progress is Bigger and More*
- *Quantity over Quality*
- *Belief in One Right Way*
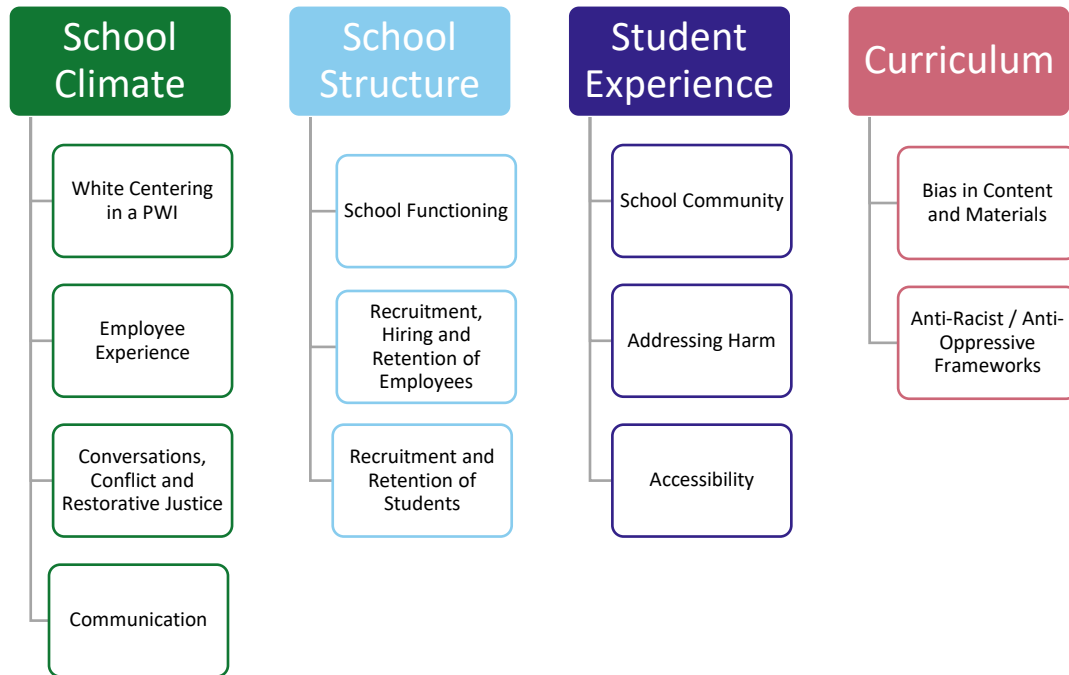- *Right to Comfort*
- *Perfectionism*

A link to their presentation and a transcript is provided in Appendix 11.

Data Analysis and Meaning Making

Several of the data elements, including the employee Climate Survey, the student needs assessment, and the focus groups and interviews, have detailed and specified methods for data collection and analysis described in their respective reports in the appendices. For overall analysis and summary of these 11 data elements, members of the Committee for Social Justice Shiloh Dailey (BSW graduate and MSW/MPH dual degree student), Quinn Hafen (MSW graduate and PhD student), Tiffany Jones (Assistant Professor) and Paula Yuma (Associate Professor) worked in the Summer of 2022 to map the findings from each data element onto 4 primary pillars, or functions, of the School. This functional framework was utilized to support

practical application of the *Planning Stage* within the Planned Change Process (Figure 1). We selected broad functions of the School to hold findings that reflect the need for action within each function, including: School Climate, School Structure, Student Experience, and Curriculum.

Figure 2. Functional Framework

School Climate	School Structure	Student Experience	Curriculum
White Centering in a PWI	School Functioning	School Community	Bias in Content and Materials
Employee Experience	Recruitment, Hiring and Retention of Employees	Addressing Harm	Anti-Racist / Anti-Oppressive Frameworks
Conversations, Conflict and Restorative Justice	Recruitment and Retention of Students	Accessibility	
Communication			

We asked for early stakeholder feedback from the School's representative to the College of Health and Human Sciences Committee on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (and former chair of the Committee for Social Justice), Marie Villescas-Zamzow, to provide key stakeholder feedback. Marie assisted us by reflecting on our initial findings and identifying areas we may have overlooked in our analysis. We also asked BSW and MSW program directors Dana Gaines and Amy Martonis to provide feedback on the utility of our framework for moving recommendations forward into action.

Results

The results summarized here are intended to support planning conversations within the School. This summary highlights the primary findings from the 11 data sources, which were grouped by functional area. When participants provided ideas for actions that the School could take, they were also included and summarized in each section. These should *not* be interpreted as a complete list of action items, but only as initial suggestions made by participants during the assessment process.

We encourage users of this report to dig deeper into the findings by referring to Appendix 12, which contains the data elements housed within each functional area, and to refer to the

original data sources as needed for additional context and information; these are all provided in the Appendices.

School Climate

White Centering in a Predominately White Institution

A predominate theme within discussions of the School's Climate is the **centering of whiteness, cis-heteronormativity and ableism**. Students and employees acknowledged that the School is a **Predominately White Institution** (PWI) grappling with the harmful structures of White supremacy, such as a **hierarchical structure** that supports **power imbalances**. The PWI culture drives the School's social norms around acceptable behaviors and compliance. This structure was acknowledged broadly by students, employees of all designations and administration. Participants identified that while individual employees may have anti-oppressive attitudes, group spaces in the department do not reflect this.

The impacts of the white-centered structure of the School are found across employee experiences, student experiences, and the curriculum. Those who are not members of the dominant identity group expressed not feeling accepted or valued, feeling isolated and feeling silenced. Members of the school community recognized recent progress and meaningful action toward DEIJ while simultaneously feeling like it has not been enough. Additionally, employees and students who are white and cis-heterosexual were more likely to express that the school is making progress in anti-racism, gender inclusion and dismantling oppression of LGBTQ+ individuals than those who hold marginalized identities.

Areas of action identified by participants included forming work groups with employees, students, alumni and DEIJ experts to address areas for improvement. Work of this nature should be inclusive of students and staff with diverse identities to create space for their voices to be heard and valued. External frameworks that reflect evidence-informed practices addressing areas of concern will be useful to guide future work and ensure accountability (such as racial equity frameworks). The School will need to identify these frameworks to support forward progress on identified areas of concern. Members of the School community clearly identified that current communication skills and strategies are too infused intertwined with the characteristics of white supremacy (defensiveness, fear of open conflict, etc.) to support the kinds of conversations on DEIJ topics that are needed for forward progress. As discussed below (see School Climate, Employee Experience, DEIJ Communication), our community members need support and training to engage in the conversations necessary to address the School's areas of concern.

Employee Experience

White centering was also a predominate theme in employee experiences. In qualitative responses**, employees with marginalized identities felt less belongingness and acceptance. Employee belonging was associated with whiteness, heterosexuality, status/role and education**. In the 2021 Climate Survey, nearly 40% of employees reported not feeling valued as an employee of the school. Tensions around role have been evident for some time in the school, namely that research roles are perceived as more valued than teaching roles. Those

holding research roles in the school also expressed not wanting to feel penalized for research success.

Only 30% of employees responding to the 2021 Climate Survey agreed that the School treats all employees equitably. In comparison to 2018, employee responses in 2021 indicate improvement in some areas, such as decreased fear of negative consequences as a result of raising concerns, and increased perception of valuing employee input in decisions. However, there were also areas where scores worsened from 2018 to 2021, including respecting cultural differences, understanding the value of diversity, feeling valued and a sense of belongingness, being willing to recommend the department as a place of employment and feeling leadership adequately addresses behavior and holds employees accountable. There were also declines in employee perceptions of recruitment, retention and support of employees with diverse identities and in the overall inclusivity of the department. **Taken together, the decreased threat employees feel about raising concerns, combined with the heightened awareness of inequity in the School, suggests we are well situated at this time to take meaningful action.**

Conversations, Conflict and Restorative Justice

Employees of the School recognized a significant **need for training on conversations about DEIJ** within employee spaces (as well as in classrooms, as discussed in the Student Experience section), including how to **productively call in / call out** in ways that can invite repair and learning and **dismantle defensiveness**. Defensiveness was identified as a primary hinderance to progress, and identified as the likely result of historical events that left employees feeling vulnerable to job-related consequences if concerns were raised. There was extensive discussion of historical events that have caused harm and disintegrated trust; these events remain unresolved and continue to impair the workings of the School. There are also significant concerns about bullying and fear of retaliation. Relationship-building and definition of behavioral expectations of one another were identified as areas for action.

Employees and students alike identified a need for a **commitment to a restorative justice process**, including training and practice on how the process could be formalized and implemented. While this need is identified within the School Climate function, it is also essential to the Student Experience function of the School. Feedback has often been met with defensiveness and denial and historical events in the department continue to influence the current climate. Restorative justice would support repairing and healing these harms. While the School has recognized this need for restorative justice and begun to codify it through changes to the School Code, there remains a need for clarity when this process is utilized, how it is administered, and how to determine successful resolution. Ideas provided in the data reflect that successful training on DEIJ conversations and restorative justice may require outside help as well as opportunities to practice.

Communication

Current communications about **School operations are unclear to students and stakeholders.** For instance, it is unclear to students how to engage formally in committee work and even *if* they can attend committee and School Council meetings. Possibilities for student involvement and related information, such as the School calendar, could be communicated in a more clear

and accessible manner. Employees expressed desiring more transparent communication around School finances and decision-making. Mechanisms and channels for communication and community-building should be developed and clear communication around employee roles and responsibilities is also warranted. These are especially important as the School has experienced rapid growth, and members are located in buildings across campus and/or working virtually.

As we proceed with addressing DEIJ within the School, communication about DEIJ efforts and commitments needs to be **timely and transparent**. Additionally, members of the School community feel the School needs to develop **stronger and more timely responses** to community, state, national and international events that impact members of our community; a failure to do so communicates a lack of commitment and caring about these events and the impact on affected members of the community. Additionally, students expressed wanting information about community social change efforts that they can join as social justice advocates.

School Structure

School Functioning

The entirety of the School's structure and function is based on its operation as a PWI that exists within a larger higher educational institution and system; at all levels, the School's processes and structures were built on the foundations of white supremacy. The pervasive discussion of white-centering in the School as a PWI indicates a need to **reevaluate the operational mechanisms of the School in order to decenter whiteness and advance equity**. This includes a need for school-wide functions, such as critical revision of the School Code; how committees are structured and charged; how employees are hired, retained and evaluated; and how students are engaged and retained.

Recruitment, Hiring and Retention of Employees

Across sources of data, **the need to recruit, hire and retain employees with diverse identities and lived experiences was elevated as a crucial priority**. Students need instructors and mentors who look like them and understand the circumstances they face navigating higher education. Progress to date on hiring and retaining diverse employees was rated very low by both students and employees. Additionally, qualitative results suggest **transparency around appointed positions**, and a re-evaluation of whether direct-appointed positions are equitable, is desired by employees. Participants suggested inclusion of students and employees with DEIJ expertise on hiring committees.

Ideas for progress on this topic include evaluating the hiring process to identify barriers and potential improvements that would increase employee diversity and identifying and addressing aspects of university operations that may be hindering equitable opportunities for diverse candidates. One explicit example was the processes required by the Office of Equal Opportunity.

Recruitment and Retention of Students

The School's ability to diversify its staff was seen as a crucial driver of the future of the School's success and as a major factor in **recruiting and retaining diversely-identified students –**

another priority concern. Students with disabilities, students of color, and first-generation students reported greater financial stress. Students of color and students with diverse gender identities reflected not being represented in course content and materials. Foreign-born and Latinx students were also more likely to report having experienced microaggressions in the School. Taken together, **students with marginalized identities in the School are experiencing higher degrees of stress and lower levels of belonging** than their peers, resulting in negative impacts to their health and mental health and decreased retention of these students to graduation.

Student Experience

Student Equity and Inclusion

Diversely identified students experience inequity in connection to our School. Across data sources, the assessment found students who are white, cisgender and heterosexual felt a sense of being welcomed and belonging in the School, while students who hold marginalized identities described feeling isolated and unsafe. Students with marginalized identities also rated our progress on DEIJ significantly lower than their white peers, and students with marginalized identities both notice and experience microaggressions more often. There is much to be done in this area; suggestions from the needs assessment on improving students' experiences in the School included: allowing for more direct conversations in class, providing tailored programming and affinity spaces (e.g., Queer Umbrella) with students and employees co-facilitating, and providing mentors who have shared students' lived experiences (i.e., by racial identity, first generation, etc.).

Students felt isolated from the School community and few students described having close relationships with employees of the School. Students want to engage more closely with the School community but identify barriers. Review of existing written documents and student feedback in both primary and secondary data demonstrated that **unclear policies in the School impede student engagement**. Review of the MSW and BSW program handbooks and the School Code identified areas where policies were unclear across documents or varied from actual practice. For instance, the BSW program handbook specified "Members of Social Work in Action [the Social Work Student Organization] are elected to serve on School of Social Work committees and represent undergraduate students at School of Social Work Council meetings." However, Social Work in Action does not currently elect such representatives and does not regularly send representatives to School Council. The MSW program handbook described a student association for MSW students (periodically active) and encourages student representation on School Committees, yet the School has no current process for integration of students on School Committees. School Code specifies that "Unless an executive session has been formally called, School Council shall be open to part-time faculty and student observers. Those in attendance are invited to speak on issues and, in the spirit of the values of social work, those comments will be duly considered by the Council;" no voting rule specific to student representatives is identified. Other examples highlighting how the lack of clarity in process impedes student engagement, include the informal and formal processes for addressing harm.

Students with marginalized identities, including those who are BIPOC and/or identify with the LGBTQ+ community report experiencing and witnessing microaggressions from both instructors and student peers more often than students who do not hold these identities; these same students felt less safe raising those concerns to employees of the School. Qualitative findings included that students' perceptions of the lack of safety is an overlooked aspect informing why they do not often raise these concerns through formal or informal channels.

In the student survey, students reflected that the **responses to their concerns are often ineffectual and unsatisfactory.** Of the 34 students who stated they had raised concerns in the past year, levels of satisfaction were 2.4 (on a scale of 1-4) for the School's response and 2.2 for the School's actions. In qualitative follow-up to this experience, students noted that responses took a long time or were non-existent or made them feel unsafe, punished or unheard. In some cases, students felt the School protected the harm-doer. Students expressed that these experiences negatively impacted their mental health and made them feel like their only option was to leave the program.

Informal Pathways

When concerns are raised through *informal* pathways, students and employees identified **difficulties around addressing microaggressions in the classroom and informally resolving microaggressions by employees**, especially as they hold power over students through the nature of the teaching or advising relationship. These difficulties echo those identified by employees, including not feeling confident about holding these difficult discussions and facing a level of defensiveness that discourages productive resolution. Students have felt unsafe and faced backlash when raising informal concerns. Students shared that classroom conversations about happenings in the School are tension-filled and leave them feeling voiceless. In order to ensure student safety and model effective DEIJ discussion strategies, instructors in the School need training and practice to address microaggressions when they occur in the classroom. Students voiced a variety of experiences with instructors' abilities to hold such conversation, and instructors themselves voiced wanting to learn more about navigating difficult discussions and addressing microaggressions. Classroom environments should extend enough safety to students that they feel they can point out when materials or discussions are not inclusive.

Formal Pathways

When concerns need to be addressed through *formal* pathways, **there is a significant lack of clarity about the process as well as a distrust that student safety is protected in the process.** There are also concerns about transparency and follow-through. On the student survey, only 28% of students reported awareness about the formal bias reporting process. A student grievance process is outlined in the School Code, yet it does not reflect the School's commitment to Restorative Justice, adopted by the Council in Spring 2022 as a part of the Pronoun Commitment, and it is designed primarily for academic concerns. Despite its ill fit to DEIJ work, the Grievance Policy is often referenced as the way concerns should be raised, which

reflects the 'worship of the written word' aspect of white supremacy culture. Students have no pathway to formally raise a concern if they wish to remain anonymous.

Employees also voiced that there is no clear process for addressing the concerns students bring to them about events that have occurred with other employees or in the School in general. Students elevating concerns to employees they trust, or to the Committee for Social Justice, has created tension and blowback as these entities try to move those concerns forward. Pathways for raising concerns directly to the School Director were encouraged in 2021-22, but this information has not been systematically circulated to students, resulting in higher awareness of this option among employees than among students.

Suggestions for actions included a clear need to **reevaluate our formal pathways for concerns, including the Grievance Policy.** In this process, the School may need to recognize that there are concerns that meet the criteria for formal academic grievances (e.g., grade disputes) which are different from those that involve DEIJ concerns (e.g., microaggressions or concerns with class content), which may be better aligned with restorative justice approaches. Additional ideas included anonymous feedback mechanisms, normalizing feedback between employees and students (with each other and across groups), providing regular opportunities for student feedback, such as town hall-style meetings, and engaging in practice opportunities, such as Theatre of the Oppressed.

Accessibility

Ability and Inclusion

Collectively, **the School community placed significant value on the idea of being accessible and inclusive, but students identified room for growth** in terms of accessibility and disability inclusion. **Data reflect limited focus on accessibility and lack of awareness of ableism in the program**. Students have to self-advocate when accommodations are needed, and university process requires them to pursue accommodation from the Student Disability Center; such advocacy and navigation can be especially challenging for the students who need the accommodations. Students share that instructors are not supportive if they do not already have Student Disability Center accommodations. Non-traditional students and caregivers face particular challenges in receiving the necessary accommodations and support to succeed in their programs of study. Students and employees also point out that resources for case management and mental health are not keeping up with demand, which has only increased over the past two years. Suggestions raised in the needs assessment data collection process included providing accommodations without requiring SDC navigation and promoting awareness of the services available in the SDC and the Assistive Technology Resource Center.

Financial Accessibility

Students with disabilities, first-generation college students, gender nonconforming students, and students of color experienced higher levels of financial stress. A common theme in the participant narratives was that the School of Social Work should prioritize providing financial support to students. Financial barriers listed included unpaid internships and MSW and BSW program costs. Some students shared that the program is a different, more stressful experience for those without financial means compared to those with such means. Some suggestions were

to offer funding to students who may not be eligible for federal aid, providing paid internships, and creating more Graduate Research Assistantships. Furthermore, there is a need to increase equity in the hiring of student employees.

Curriculum

Bias in Content and Course Materials

Indicators of white centering were found across assessment results concerning the School's current curriculum. As with the perception of progress on DEIJ in the school, **participants with marginalized identities perceived less progress than members of the white and cis-heterosexual identity group(s).** For instance, students of color were significantly less likely to agree that class materials represent diverse racial identities and are authored by diverse individuals than their white peers. Gender non-conforming students were also less likely to agree that diverse gender identities were represented in class materials. In direct contrast to white students' perception of diverse authorship, a review of textbooks and core assignments in the BSW program revealed 90% of texts were authored by perceivably white individuals, and only one assignment in the program required engagement with racism/anti-racism specifically, while some other courses made this optional. Students have also raised that white saviorism and Eurocentric epistemologies are embedded across the curriculum.

Participants suggest prioritizing curricular revisions that integrate more DEIJ materials and practice-based learning opportunities across all social work course, not only the designated DEIJ courses. They also indicated that curriculum should be evaluated to identify and eliminate tokenism of oppressed identities. There is a need for class materials to be updated to ensure they are neither outdated or biased. Additional suggestions were to greatly elevate diverse voices and experiences through course materials authored by BIPOC, LGBTQ+ and differently abled individuals. Participants also encouraged the utilization of paid guest speakers who can center a diversity of lived experiences.

Anti-Racist and Anti-Oppressive Frameworks

Consistent with the School's orientation as a PWI, courses have been developed with a white frame and course content does not adequately utilize anti-racist or anti-oppressive frameworks and skills. Integration of anti-racist and anti-oppressive frameworks has become a primary focus of the revised 2022 EPAS criteria, and desire for this is echoed across the needs assessment. There is a need for all courses to address dismantling white supremacy in some form. An analysis of BSW program content and assignments revealed a lack of content focused on race, racialization, and racism, and little diversity in the identities of textbook authors. (Note, these circumstances likely exist across MSW and PhD programs, but those programs have not yet been assessed). Class projects generally do not require students to reflect on the DEIJ implications of their work as part of the justification within the assignment.

Ideas raised in the assessment data include preparing instructors for more challenging and in-depth conversations on DEIJ, weaving anti-oppression and anti-racist teachings into all coursework, and revising assignments to reflect attention to racism and white supremacy, as well as anti-oppression more broadly. Revisions of School curricula should look for opportunities to shift from multi-culturalism to anti-oppression. Rather than observing cultural

differences students should receive training on how to practice as individuals holding diverse, intersectional identities and on how to support clients with diverse intersectional identities. Curriculum and benchmarks for success (e.g., field assessments, capstone experiences, progression, exit exams, comprehensive exams, thesis and dissertation proposals and measures of implicit curriculum) are written with a white frame and need to be revised to center anti-oppressive frameworks. The revision of curricular benchmarks is in alignment with the 2022 EPAS for accreditation.

Conclusions

This report presents the summary findings of a DEIJ needs assessment in the CSU School of Social Work, conducted by the School's Committee for Social Justice in the 2021-22 academic year. This mixed-methods needs assessment utilized 11 primary and secondary data sources to identify priorities for DEIJ that should be addressed in the second step of the Planned Change Process, *Planning*. The priorities were grouped into 4 areas: School Climate, School Structure, Student Experience and Curriculum. How the School goes about the planning process and implements necessary change should be a collective decision and should involve all aspects and functions of the School and should include students, employees and other stakeholders as necessary. While preliminary suggestions that arose during the needs assessment are summarized in this report, they are not intended to represent a complete list of the actions the School should take. In the *Planning Stage*, we encourage the School to also make use of ideas from the School community, evidence-informed strategies and consulting experts to identify actions that support change in priority areas.

This report should be considered in light of its limitations. In addition to the limitations inherent to each of the individual data elements, our process for identifying themes from the collective results from the 11 data sources is also limited. The results were analyzed by the author team, who are 4 white identifying members of the School. The findings are limited by our perspectives and positions within the School. We encourage those who proceed with forward planning to utilize both the summary report and the original data elements, which are provided in the Appendices. Additional interpretation of the original data will no doubt add further depth and perspective to the summary we have provided.

Appendices (linked)

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