



BENCHMARKING ANALYSIS

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committees

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October 2020

In the following report, Hanover reviews diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) committees at prominent higher education institutions in the United States.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3** / Executive Summary
- 6** / Tasks of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committees
- 7** / Responsibilities and Focus Areas
- 9** / Composition of DEI Committees
- 10** / Challenges and Achievements
- 11** / Goal Setting, Action Agenda, and Evaluation
- 12** / Offices of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- 13** / Benchmarking Summary

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on an analysis of diversity committees at ten national colleges and universities, Hanover recommends:



INSTITUTIONS SHOULD CREATE A TASK FORCE OR ADVISORY COMMITTEE, APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT.

Among the reviewed diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) committees, councils, or task forces, the most common structure is for the institution's president to personally lead the committee or appoint its members. Most committees include twelve or more members, primarily consisting of faculty and administrators but often with some student representation as well. Committees should coordinate with institutional leadership to define DEI goals and contextualize them within broader institutional missions, for example by ensuring that strategic plans include DEI goals.



THE COMMITTEE SHOULD ENSURE THAT INSTITUTION-WIDE DATA ARE COLLECTED AND EVALUATED.

It is the DEI committee's responsibility to facilitate communication, data collection, and new programming or initiatives across departments. For example, the committee can help recommend actions and responsible parties for DEI goals. Several institutions use systems to track data at the institutional level, ensuring that various departments or units are aligned with institutional DEI goals and allowing progress towards those goals to be tracked across the institution. Similarly, collecting and evaluating data systematically helps the committee to understand whether its programs or policies are effective in achieving DEI goals.



INSTITUTIONS SHOULD CONDUCT REGULAR CLIMATE SURVEYS TO IDENTIFY NEEDS AND ASSESS PROGRESS.

Many institutions conduct campus climate surveys to gain a better understanding of the attitudes, behaviors, and standards among their students, faculty, and staff. The survey results help identify current needs and issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion and, subsequently, help to define institutional goals moving forward. When re-administered annually, such surveys help an institution track its progress over time with respect to diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY FINDINGS



Advisory committees focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion streamline the oversight of campus-wide efforts. The reviewed committees (in some cases also called councils or presidential task forces) typically advise the President and other institutional leaders on best practices and provide strategic recommendations for DEI-related policies, initiatives, and programming. Simultaneously, the committees are charged with facilitating communication across existing initiatives, assisting in the creation of new collaborations, and soliciting feedback from members of the campus community. These tasks are critical in avoiding common pitfalls, namely lack of communication and collaboration between relevant stakeholders.



The assessment of the campus climate, the formulation of DEI-related goals, and the creation of a strategic plan are key elements of DEI committees' work. Many of the reviewed institutions conduct campus climate surveys to better understand the attitudes, behaviors, and standards of faculty, staff, administrators, and students. These and other findings help institutions to develop a coherent vision for DEI-related efforts, identify focus areas, and set clearly defined goals. Benchmarked committees pursue strategic plans that, for instance, intend to enhance the diversity of students, faculty, and staff; design curriculum and co-curriculum under DEI-related considerations; or assign personal, departmental, collective, or institutional accountability for the development of DEI-related programming.



Given these committees' oversight and facilitation responsibilities, it is necessary for them to manage or have access to consistent institution-wide data. Colby College and The Citadel highlighted the need to develop consistent data collection tools, and to implement processes to collect, evaluate, and track data across the institution. These tools and processes help ensure that the committee can evaluate progress and see whether specific programs or policies have the desired impact. Similarly, consistent data and reporting positions the committee to more effectively intervene and advise when challenges occur.



DEI committees usually consist of faculty, administrators, and staff, although at some institutions students also have committee representation. The reviewed institutions have DEI committees that range from three members (Lafayette College) to 19 members (The Citadel and Grinnell College) with most consisting of 12 or more members. Members are usually drawn from faculty, staff, and the administration but some institutions also include students (e.g., Smith College). Bucknell University and Colby College have a President's Diversity Council or a Presidential Task Force on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Brown University stands out for having established a Diversity and Inclusion Oversight Board and an Advisory Council on Diversity. The committees usually report to the President, Vice President for Equity and Inclusion, and/or other institutional leaders.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

To assist institutions as they explore committees that serve in an advisory capacity to leaders and help advance the institution's diversity and inclusion goals, Hanover reviews advisory diversity committees and councils at ten highly-ranked, small liberal arts colleges and universities in the United States.

The following report provides an overview of the tasks and responsibilities of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) committees, their composition, and their challenges and achievements. The report further provides an overview of central features of diversity, equity, and inclusion offices at seven out of the ten reviewed institutions.

BENCHMARKED INSTITUTIONS

Institution	Location
Brown University	Providence, RI
Bucknell University	Lewisburg, PA
Carleton College	Northfield, MN
The Citadel	Charleston, SC
Colby College	Waterville, ME

RESEARCH QUESTIONS



Institution	Location
Grinnell College	Grinnell, IA
Lafayette College	Easton, PA
Smith College	Northampton, MA
University of Richmond	Richmond, VA
Vassar College	Poughkeepsie, NY

TASKS OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI) COMMITTEES



Strengthen and streamline the oversight of campus-wide efforts promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion.



Advise President and other university or college leaders on best practices and provide strategic recommendations for DEI-related policies, initiatives, and programming.



Develop guidelines and generate campus-wide initiatives that support diversity, equity, and inclusion.



Bring together stakeholders, facilitate communication across existing initiatives, assist in new collaborations, and solicit feedback from members of the campus community.



Monitor progress of university-wide efforts, assess efficacy, and periodically report updates to President, other university or college leaders, and campus community.



Diversity



Equity



Inclusion

RESPONSIBILITIES AND FOCUS AREAS

Many of the reviewed committees (either independently or in collaboration with institutional DEI offices) publish a strategic plan for campus-wide efforts and identify key areas and populations for DEI-related initiatives and programming.



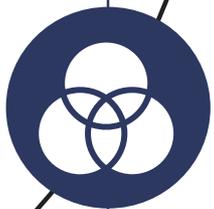
DEI committees must assess **campus climate** to gain a better understanding of attitudes, behaviors, and standards of faculty, staff, administrators, and students. Many of the reviewed institutions conduct campus climate surveys and consider relevant findings to inform recommended focus areas, strategies, and practices (e.g., [Brown](#); [Carleton](#); [Citadel](#); [Lafayette](#)).



Committees typically compose a short **mission statement** that captures the intended outcomes of their work and their desired impact on the wider campus community (e.g., [Grinnell](#), [Smith](#)). Relatedly, the reviewed institutions usually publish a diversity statement (e.g., [Colby](#); [Lafayette](#)).



Benchmarked institutions publish **strategic plans or action plans** that explain the role of DEI within the institutional mission, identify areas and issues that require attention, set goals and timelines, describe recommended actions, assign responsibilities, and outline how progress will be measured and evaluated. Notable examples include documents published by Brown, Colby, The Citadel, and Richmond ([Brown](#); [Colby](#); [Citadel](#); [Richmond](#)).



Some of the reviewed institutions include statements affirming **accountability** in their strategic plans. This consideration may include personal, departmental, collective, or institutional accountability for the development of or contribution to efforts promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (e.g., [Brown](#); [Bucknell](#); [Colby](#)).

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A central focus among profiled institutions is the identification, recruitment, and retention of a **diverse student body**. To that end, institutions, for instance, evaluate their admission standards for minorities and women, create new affordability initiatives for low-income students, or build mentoring and outreach programs (e.g., [Citadel](#); [Colby](#); [Carleton](#)).



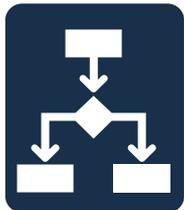
Curriculum and co-curriculum design is another vital focus area as the reviewed institutions seek to provide students with opportunities to learn about diversity, equity, and inclusion (e.g., [Bucknell](#); [Colby](#)). Smith College is considering whether students should be required to take an introductory class, such as “Thinking through Race,” ([Smith](#)).



The **recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty and staff** are declared goals at reviewed institutions. Recommended steps include strategic priority hiring initiatives, improvement of faculty search guidelines, or the provision of mentoring support and professional development opportunities (e.g., [Colby](#); [Lafayette](#); [Brown](#)).

COMPOSITION OF DEI COMMITTEES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND SIZE



At Brown University, Carleton College, Lafayette College, and University of Richmond the president appoints members to the DEI committee.

Bucknell University hosts a Presidential Task Force which is headed by the university president ([Bucknell](#)).



The size of reviewed committees ranges from three members (Lafayette) to 19 members (The Citadel and Grinnell College).

Members are usually faculty, staff, and administrators though some also include students (e.g., Smith College). The committees appoint at least one Chair.



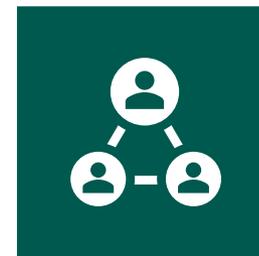
Brown features two entities: 1) Diversity and Inclusion Oversight Board and 2) Advisory Council on Diversity. While the Board is responsible for the oversight of DEI-related initiatives, the Council reviews programs and practices.

SCHEDULES AND REPORTING



Only limited information is available on the length of members' appointments or the frequency of meetings. Brown's Council is appointed for three years. Carleton's Board is charged annually by the President and meets bi-weekly during the academic year.

Lafayette's Council reports to the President. The committees at Grinnell, Richmond, and Vassar are convened by the President or work with them. Smith College's Council works with the Vice President for Equity and Inclusion.



Some of the committees publish annual reports or final reports on the progress of DEI-related efforts (e.g., [Carleton](#); [Colby](#); [Richmond](#)).

CHALLENGES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES



The Citadel points out that some “in the Charleston community have the perception that The Citadel purposefully ignores or resists diversity and inclusion” ([Citadel](#)). In response, The Citadel established a Diversity Advisory Board to improve diversity efforts.



The DEI council at Richmond found that the institution “lacks as yet a clearly articulated institutional vision for both [...] goals and how these relate to the overall mission of the university.” Such a vision is important for the “development of concrete goals and measures of progress.” ([Richmond](#)).



Some institutions see challenges related to communication and coordination. To avoid the development of silos and to increase awareness, institutional plans recommend structures and mechanisms that facilitate communication and make collaboration easier ([Carleton](#); [Colby](#); [Richmond](#)).



Especially during early stages of DEI initiatives, many institutions find they have insufficient tools and processes to collect data or measure the effectiveness of implemented programs ([Citadel](#); [Colby](#)).

PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS (SAMPLE)



- Host a website covering bias incidents of concern to broader campus
- Completed diversity resource catalogue ([Carleton](#))



- Bias-Motivated Response Team assembled
- Faculty chairs training on conflict resolution (ongoing) ([Grinnell](#))



- Office of the Provost “created the option to indicate one’s personal pronouns, preferred names [...]” for students and faculty. ([Colby](#))



- Initiated partnership with Cristo Rey Schools to strengthen pipeline of diverse students in secondary and new markets. ([Richmond](#))



- New and ongoing efforts have been focused on recruiting and retaining faculty from historically under-represented groups. ([Brown](#))



- Courses created that “enhanced the depth and value of the student intellectual experience in the context of community-based learning.” ([Colby](#))

GOAL SETTING, ACTION AGENDA, AND EVALUATION

Common Features and Actions Among Reviewed Institutions		
✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institution defines diversity, equity, and inclusion and contextualizes DEI within broader institutional mission (e.g., vision statement).
✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institution conducts campus climate survey or comparable measures to determine attitudes, behaviors, and standards among students, faculty, and staff. Several federal agencies and professional organizations (e.g., Department of Education; ACE) recommend pursuing such surveys.
✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DEI committee periodically solicits input from students, faculty, staff, and community members through social gatherings (e.g., ice cream social), surveys, and easily accessible online channels.
✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DEI committee publishes detailed plan that identifies goals and focus areas (e.g., increase student diversity), lists recommended actions, and assigns responsible units and agents.
✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutions and committees define goals which typically touch on campus climate, current and prospective students (e.g., admissions; equitable access to resources), faculty (e.g., cluster hires), and staff (e.g., strategically employed search firms), as well as curriculum (e.g., new courses relevant to diversity, equity, and inclusion).
✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Either DEI committee or relevant institutional office ensures collection of relevant data, measures efficacy of implemented programs or initiatives, and tracks progress towards goals.
✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DEI committee facilitates communication and collaboration between stakeholders and meets periodically to report to President, Vice President, and/or other institutional leaders.
✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DEI committee periodically publishes report that summarizes goals, actions taken, and outcomes to date.

OFFICES OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Seven out of ten reviewed institutions feature DEI offices that serve as central venues primarily for students and campus-wide initiatives, provide resources and information, organize events, and showcase progress.

Affirmation of Institutional Commitment

- ❖ DEI offices at reviewed institutions use websites to reiterate institutional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- ❖ The websites introduce relevant staff and provide visitors with contact information (e.g., [Lafayette](#)).

Access to Important Resources

- ❖ Prospective and current students can easily find information on relevant affinity groups (e.g., first-generation students; LGBTQ+; international students).
- ❖ Websites typically provide links to population-specific resources, scholarship and fellowship opportunities, as well as links to critical legal documents, such as Title IX (e.g., [Bucknell](#); [Colby](#); [Lafayette](#); [Richmond](#)).

Programs & Initiatives

- ❖ DEI offices inform site visitors about ongoing and projected programs and initiatives. Moreover, some include updates and progress reports on campus-wide DEI efforts (e.g., [Brown](#); [Smith](#)).



Examples of DEI-related events and training available to students, faculty, and staff:

- ❑ D & I Professional Development Lunchtime Series ([Brown](#))
- ❑ Staff Anti-Racism Awareness & Education ([Carleton](#))
- ❑ Leffler/Broom Lectures and Discussions on Race and History ([Carleton](#))
- ❑ Building Global Solidarity ([Bucknell](#))
- ❑ Ally Training ([Richmond](#))
- ❑ Heritage Awareness Months ([Lafayette](#))
- ❑ Safe Zone Training ([Lafayette](#))
- ❑ Training Programs on “Introduction to Social Justice Education Frameworks,” “Bystander Intervention,” and more ([Smith](#))
- ❑ Diversity Dialogue Dinners, Faculty Dinners, Radical Readers, and End-the-Year Banquets ([Colby](#))



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