

**Co-development initiatives with
University of British Columbia
Faculty of Health and Social
Development's objective to
advancing equity, diversity and
inclusion: A knowledge to equity
action case study**

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CONTEXT

In 2017, universities across Canada pledged to embed equity and diversity principles on their campuses, in their communities, and across the country (Universities Canada, 2023). Aligned with this commitment, the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Health and Social Development (FHSD) integrated Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) principles to fulfill its mission of promoting community's health and "well-being across the lifespan" (FHSD, 2023, para. 1). The FHSD is comprised of three schools (Health and Exercise Science, Social Work, and Nursing) and is committed to creating learning, teaching, and working spaces that are intentionally focused on celebrating, valuing, and respecting historically and systematically marginalized voices from equity-deserving groups (FHSD, n.d.). The FHSD developed an EDI committee in 2021 to implement their EDI priorities and initiatives based on the Indigenous Strategic Plan and the Strategic Equity and Anti-racism (StEAR) Framework. Such initiatives include hosting Indigenous speakers and organizing lunch and learn sessions for equity topics such as gender-inclusive care. Our community partner expressed interest in having their priorities, actions, and outcomes transparent and available for the public to enhance accountability to EDI initiatives across the three schools and beyond. Specifically, they wanted to focus on how knowledge translation and mobilization strategies were used to advance EDI within health programs at U15 Universities. Our partner also stressed the importance of including an indigeneity lens which they want embedded within the final report. Overall, they believe in the individual and systemic impact of equity in action and are concerned with not being fully accountable to EDI principles and concrete actions led by groups and individuals within their faculties.

WHAT IS THE EQUITY CHALLENGE?

As a committee, we co-developed strategies with the community partner to better support the FHSD EDI committee in facilitating transparency and addressing challenges of accountability related to EDI measures on campus. These strategies include a review of current EDI initiatives and/or indicators at the University of British Columbia and an assessment of implementation and its outcomes within the FHSD department. Further, the community partner desired for a summary of the final report that is suitable for publication on their website. This summary report could serve as a measure of accountability and a broad public commitment to address inequities on campus. While progress has been noted in implementing EDI principles at UBC-Okanagan's FHSD, a comprehensive understanding of how its three schools (Health and Exercise Sciences, Social Work, and Nursing) address EDI markers remain limited.

WHAT WAS THE EQUITY RESPONSE?

To address the equity challenge, we proposed employing equity-centered engagement practices, and indigeneity approaches to provide FHSD with a comprehensive understanding of how KT/KM initiatives can be used to advance EDI within health programs at U15 Universities. Our team endeavors to support the community partner through our service as we strive to advance equity in actionable ways.

WHAT WAS THE EQUITY RESPONSE? (continued)

Before delving into our proposed plan, there were two overarching themes to be considered to ensure an equity-centered approach to the identified need:

1. **Combatting Performativity and Virtue Signalling in EDI Work through Interests and Influencer Mapping**

Mere statements of commitment or promises often fall short of mobilizing and sustaining change (Al-Shaibah, 2020). Passive articulations of values can easily be dismissed as virtue signalling – a superficial attempt to showcase moral character without substantive action (Al-Shaibah, 2020). Over time, this gap between words and deeds erodes trust and confidence in the authenticity of any initiative (Al-Shaibah, 2020). To effectively address performativity and virtue signalling within EDI work, the utilization of interests and influencer mapping is imperative. This methodological approach facilitates the identification of pivotal stakeholders and influencers within the network of community partners, thereby enhancing organizations' comprehension of underlying motivations, interests, and potential ramifications (Gauvin, 2014; Plamondon, 2020). In this scenario, the key stakeholders include the university president, provost, vice presidents, deans, and other senior administrators who play a crucial role in setting institutional priorities and allocating resources for EDI initiatives; FHSD faculty members who are involved in implementing EDI initiatives within their schools; and students, who are the primary beneficiaries of inclusive policies and practices on campus.

Recommendations for Combatting Performativity and Virtue Signaling in EDI Work:

1. **Identifying Genuine Advocates by Mapping Interests of Stakeholders:** Employing influencer mapping enables us to discern genuine EDI advocates from those engaging in performative actions. This distinction ensures that efforts are concentrated on collaborating with authentic supporters who demonstrate a sincere commitment to advancing equity and inclusion.
2. **Engaging Critical Voices:** The FHSD EDI committee should actively seek out individuals or groups offering constructive criticism to challenge existing norms and ensure that EDI efforts remain focused on meaningful progress.
3. **Building Strategic Partnerships:** Prioritizing partnerships with influential stakeholders allow organizations to amplify the impact of their EDI initiatives and address root causes of inequities more effectively.
4. **Evaluating Impact and Accountability:** Regularly assessing the impact and outcomes of EDI initiatives is essential for accountability and transparency. Incorporating feedback from mapped influencers and stakeholders ensures that EDI efforts remain aligned with community needs and priorities.

Understanding the Contextual Landscape in which FHSD EDI Operates Understanding the contextual factors that shape EDI initiatives within FHSD is essential to address the identified need. FHSD exists within the broader ecosystem of UBC, an institution deeply embedded within the social fabric of Canada.

WHAT WAS THE EQUITY RESPONSE? (continued)

Consequently, FHSD's EDI efforts are not conducted in isolation but are intricately linked to the values, policies, and societal norms prevalent within UBC and the larger Canadian context. By comprehensively exploring sociocultural, historical, and institutional dynamics, FHSD can gain insights into the prevailing ideas shaping EDI discourse, understand the motivations of stakeholders, and the institutional structures governing its operations (Gauvin, 2014). Context mapping techniques can further enhance this understanding by visualizing relationships between different actors and policies involved in EDI efforts (Gauvin, 2014; Plamondon, 2020).

Proposed Products and Strategies:

1. Catalogue of UBC Recommendations and Implementations:

- Develop a comprehensive catalogue summarizing UBC's recommendations and actual implementations of EDI initiatives, including Indigenous strategic plans and other marginalized communities.
- Utilize the StEAR framework to guide the assessment of the three schools' EDI priorities, initiatives, common trends, and implementation.

2. Impact Assessment of EDI Initiatives:

- Obtain feedback for impact assessment to evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of UBC's EDI initiatives.
- Facilitate deliberative dialogue sessions to engage staff and students who have attended Lunch and Learn sessions in discussions about EDI initiatives.

3. Organizing the Case Study Report:

- Structure the case study report to show the EDI initiatives and priorities implemented by the three schools and their impacts and outcomes from primary stakeholders.
- Highlight initiatives demonstrating a commitment to genuine progress and paradigm shifts, emphasizing strategies that address systemic barriers and promote justice for marginalized communities. What does UBCO recommend for EDI policy and practices/initiatives? How are these initiatives implemented in FHSD? What are the outcomes for and/or impact on FHSD faculty, staff, students, and community?

4. Creation of Webpage

- Our discussions with our community partner led to the concept webpage/ infographic for their website.

5. Participation in EDI Committee Meetings:

- Attend the monthly EDI committee meetings to gain insights into the committee's priorities, needs, and ongoing initiatives.
- Collaborate with committee members to identify opportunities for advancing equity within FHSD's EDI initiatives and fostering substantive and sustained change.

WHAT WAS THE EQUITY RESPONSE? (continued)

By implementing these strategies and products, the FHSD can reach their objectives as they foster substantive and sustained change in advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion among their schools.

The results of this case study can be used to support the community partner in understanding the implementation and impact of EDI initiatives; identifying the gaps in knowledge and efforts; and advancing equity through the lens of social justice and intersectionality. Additionally, the results can be utilized to report back the outcomes (as a knowledge translation material), garner feedback, and receive recognition for the efforts of units within the FHSD. We believe our case study can guide knowledge to equity action in the form of knowledge mobilization, serving as an information sharing tool to advance equity for the benefit of marginalized populations.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

Through our collaborative efforts with the FHSD, we learned of the importance of transparency and accountability over what we claim to value and believe. Academic institutions should lean into their influences, power and leadership in eliciting change towards equity, diversity and inclusion. Voices of indigeneity should be amplified within our communities. We gained awareness into the harms that can occur when academic units fail to address inequities and discrimination on campus. When faculty, students and staff feel unheard, not recognized, and unsafe within academia, the associated harms can be vast and long lasting. Without concrete actions, the principles we profess and harms we acknowledge remain theoretical. We appreciate perspectives and insights gained from pairing with the FHSD. Our EDI committee shares their dedication to advancing equity, diversity and inclusion in the academic space through tangible actionable measures.

REFERENCES



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