

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Program Learning Outcomes Considerations

Based on an analysis of 2020-2021 submissions of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) program learning outcome (PLOs) and feedback from curriculum developers, we developed this handout in order to facilitate the development of future impactful outcomes (K. Lybeck, J. Schomberg, K. Scott, May 2021). We hope that our advice for conceptualizing, writing, and reviewing DEI PLOs is useful to faculty. This advice will not resolve DEI problems in the curriculum, but it may help us work toward change.

Included here are:

- definitions of DEI
- outcome types along with encouragement for developing more consequential learning activities
- a critical take on Bloom's taxonomy
- example language that may help facilitate more substantive outcomes.

Definitions of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Diversity is the act of recognizing and valuing the intersection of identities that different groups of students and faculty bring to a university. Diversity in this sense helps us understand “the relationship between broader multiple marginalized social identities (e.g., sexual and gender minorities, racial/ethnic minorities), how they intersect, and how oppression shapes an individual’s worldview.”ⁱ

Equity is the act of critically reflecting on historical and continuing processes of oppression, of systemic domination and subjugation, and working against that pattern to create opportunities for historically underrepresented populations. It is both a mind-set and a praxis. Equity-informed practice does not approach students from a deficit perspective and instead looks at institutional failures that need to be addressed.

Inclusion is the act of ensuring that everyone in the community is recognized and considered when making decisions, crafting curricula, and building social networks. Inclusion works with diversity to increase empathy, knowledge, and awareness by using an asset model of difference.

Types of Existing Program Learning Outcomes

We identified four current categories of DEI PLOs developed to date:

1. *Knowledge* generally requires students to learn about facts, ideas, contexts, theories, perspectives, etc. commonly through content reading, lecture, scenarios, and discussion.

2. *Skills* refers to practicing tasks, communication, or activities in the classroom that are potentially applicable or required in future careers or other engagement in the content area. Practice is largely done through group work, leadership, and roleplay.
3. *Self-reflection* usually entails introspection into one's beliefs, values, and biases in order to clarify one's judgements and to build empathy for others. This work is often done through discussion, journaling, or creative activities in reaction to personal narratives, interviews, etc.
4. *Action for change* moves students outside of the classroom to address problems in the community. Often knowledge, skills, and self-reflection underpin and culminate in this work. Some programs list one or more of the other categories as well, while others identify actions for change as their DEI PLOs.

Unfortunately, most programs focus only on knowledge, or knowledge and skills, while very few require self-reflection and/or working as agents for change. When conceptualizing DEI program learning outcomes, we encourage programs to not only consider course content, which generally leads to *knowledge/skills*, but also consider what problem-solving activities students could be involved in leading to critical questioning, introspection, developing empathy, and acting for change in the community.

Terminology to consider in program and course proposals

Criticism of Bloom's taxonomy

Faculty have been encouraged to use Bloom's taxonomy of action verbs to specify learning outcomes. While the taxonomy aids in considering activities that can be clearly assessed, faculty are encouraged, particularly in light of the definitions of DEI (provided above), to be aware of the following issues:

1. Learning is not linear; that is, it does not follow a hierarchy from foundational knowledge to critical thinking. Therefore, while the hierarchical nature of the taxonomy would indicate that "lower-level" actions need to take place before "higher-level" ones, learning through asking critical questions and problem solving requires higher-order thinking skills. It is as a result of this problem-solving that students find the need for vocabulary, categorization, theories, etc. "Hence, it would be more productive to consider all the "levels" of learning objectives in the taxonomy not as separate objectives, but rather as different aspects of problem-solving activity."ⁱⁱ
2. What is learned is often not, or at least not limited to, what is intended or assessed. With this in mind, consider those critical issues that students will encounter, rather than simply those lower-level tasks that may be limiting to student learning and to showing what they have gained.
3. Actions in the taxonomy tend to remain at a surface level, without questioning power structures and contexts. Critically analyzing existing systems of oppression requires actions such as deconstruct, unmask, interrogate, subvert, etc.

- The meaning of these verbs differs significantly by context, so one should additionally consider the nouns and other phrases that contextualize the actions. Examples of how language has been used in writing these PLOs is provided below.

[How to Use the Language Tables](#)

The following are examples of language used in previous DEI PLOs. Table 1 shows general DEI language that is encouraged. Table 2 shows the language used in each of the outcome types outlined above. Table 3 shows useful examples of three types of PLOs. It is our hope that programs will move toward outcome types that both allow and expect students to ask critical questions about the status quo and take action to change oppressive systems. Such outcomes may also show how instructors seek out diversity and engage in equitable and inclusive teaching practices.

Table 1: Suggested General Terminology within DEI

Here are examples of terms that may help faculty identify what concepts and populations are centered in their outcomes.

<i>Nouns/Noun Phrases</i>	<i>Social Categories</i>	<i>Adjectives:</i>
all learners, asset lens, cultural appropriation/theft, cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, cultural values and traditions, developmentally appropriate, differentiation, dis/empowerment, disparities, dignity, health equity, human rights, human well-being, in/equality, marginalization, oppression, reciprocal relationships, respect, silencing voices (vs. respecting voices), social justice, systems of oppression, teamwork, welfare, worth	age, citizenship status, dis/ability, economic status, ethnicity, gender, indigeneity, identity, language, national origin, race, religion, sex	Anti-oppressive, antiracist, diverse, environmental, ethical, global, inclusive, intercultural, interlocking, intersectional, racially conscious, responsive, safe (for whom?), student-centered

Table 2: Current DEI PLO Language Use by Type

Here are examples of terms that have been used in each of the four categories that may help faculty move beyond describing knowledge and understanding toward more self-reflection and taking action for change.

<i>Knowledge or understanding</i>	<i>Skills</i>	<i>Self-reflection</i>	<i>Taking action for change</i>

<p><i>Content-area terms:</i> artifacts, assessments, audiences, contexts, canon, conflicts, cultures, data, dynamics, factors, foundations, frameworks, implications, issues, literature, opportunities, organizations, outcomes, paradigms, perspectives, practices, products, properties, patterns, roles, scholarship, services, settings, sources, standards, strategies, systems, themes, theories, topics, tools, traditions, viewpoints</p>	<p><i>Where/with whom:</i> a diverse environment, a diverse team, clients, patients, students</p>	<p><i>Nouns:</i> beliefs, commitment, global and local citizen, identity, judgements, lens, personal & cultural biases/assumptions, sensitivity</p> <p><i>Pronouns:</i> self, own</p>	<p><i>Nouns:</i> advocacy, communities, community partners, communication, connections, public, an environment, families and children, human experiences, needs, social change, social impact, solutions, universal design</p>
<p><i>Actions:</i> apply, analyze, articulate, assess, categorize, communicate, compare, consider, defend, define, demonstrate, describe, discuss, display, elaborate, enhance, evaluate, examine, explain, explore, identify, inspect, interpret, interrogate, investigate, listen, recognize, reflect, relate, report, review, select, synthesize</p>	<p><i>Actions:</i> advocate, align, apply, collaborate, construct, craft, create, design, demonstrate, develop, interact, manage, model, practice, provide, refine, support, treat, use</p>	<p><i>Actions:</i> appreciate, become, compare, engage, enhance, evaluate, examine, explore, make, reflect, refine, use, value</p>	<p><i>Actions:</i> address, advocate, assume responsibility, collaborate, conduct, create, design, develop, engage, facilitate, implement, initiate, integrate, justify, model, produce, promote, support, teach</p>

Table 3: Examples of DEI PLOs

Here are model examples of the types of DEI PLOs suggested.

<i>Skills</i>	<i>Self-reflection</i>	<i>Taking action for change</i>
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<p>Use a variety of assessment tools and practices to plan and evaluate effective reading instruction for all learners including those marginalized by culture race, language, and/or ability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Construct clear and accurate health information that is tailored to audiences taking into consideration race, gender, culture, and language. - Collect, store, retrieve, manage, analyze, and effectively communicate geospatial data involving social, economic and environmental equity issues. - Develop usable skills in feminist activism. 	<p>Make informed judgments which must consider the impact of engineering solutions in global economic environmental and societal contexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage in personal learning and critical reflection to inform instructional practices - Use a sociological lens to examine inequality from a variety of intersectional perspectives to become better informed global and local citizens. - Apply cultural competence by evaluating the impact of students' own set of cultural and linguistic variables and synthesizing interaction to maximize delivery of effective care. 	<p>Support learners in oral language development including viewing racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity through an asset lens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initiate and assume responsibility for health promotion and disease prevention in a diverse population. - Analyze, evaluate, and apply educational technologies to promote digital equity for diverse learners. - Successfully implement a semester long project that provides social impact and gives back to the community within diverse teams of students with different backgrounds interests and levels of experience.
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ⁱ Fuentes, M.A., Zelaya, D.G. and Madsen, J.W. (2021). Rethinking the course syllabus: Considerations for promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion. *Teaching of Psychology* 48(1), 69-79, doi: 10.1177/0098628320959979 ; citing Association of American Colleges and Universities. (n.d.). *Making excellence inclusive*. <https://www.aacu.org/making-excellence-inclusive>

ⁱⁱ Arieivitch, I.M. (2020) The vision of Developmental Teaching and Learning and Bloom's Taxonomy of educational objectives. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 27, 1-6.