



An Overview of Project Inclusion for Colleges and Universities

A systematic assessment of campus diversity, equity and inclusion; generating strategic action to ensure a sense of belonging for all faculty, staff and students.

RENGA CONSULTING SERVICES, INC.

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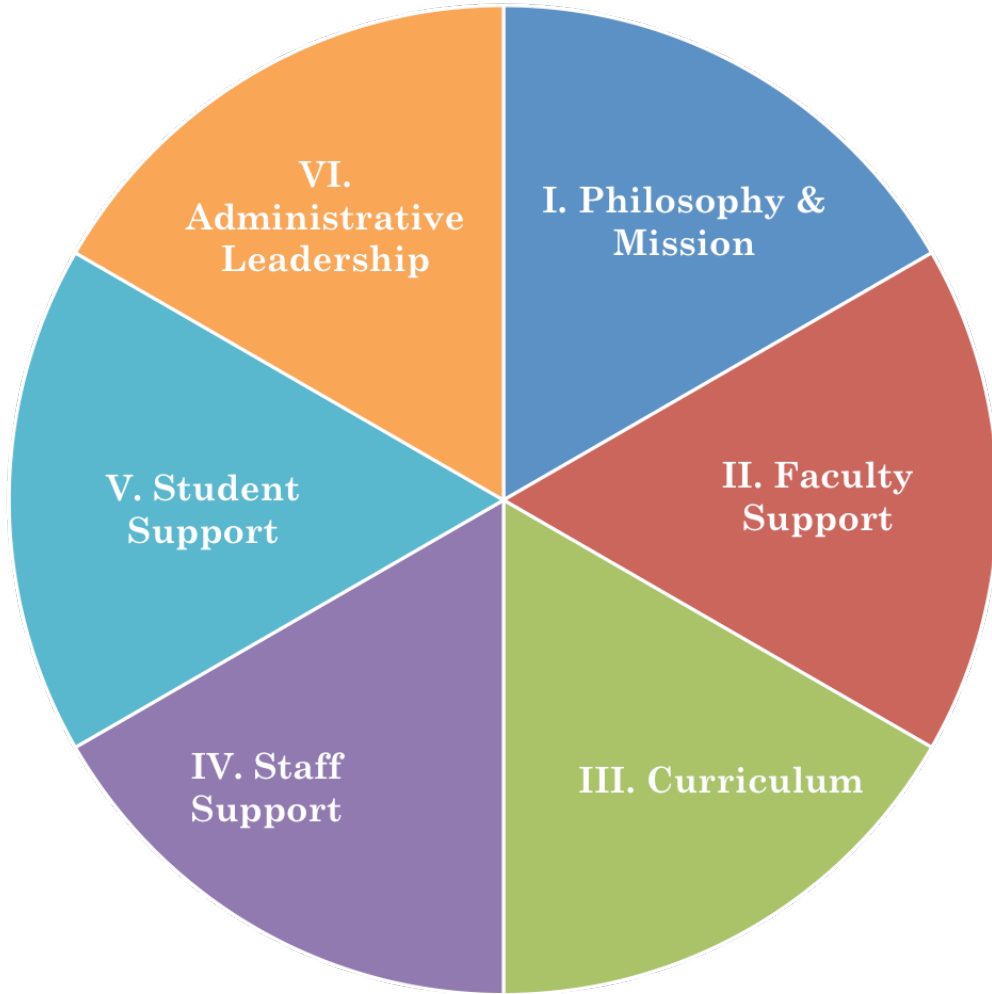
Authored by: Alane Shanks & Jenene Cook

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NERCHE's Rubric for the Institutionalization of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Higher Education



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About Project Inclusion

The purpose of Project Inclusion is to support colleges and universities to systematically assess campus diversity, equity and inclusion across the institution and develop strategic action to address identified gaps. This process is guided by the New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE) **Rubric for the Institutionalization of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Higher Education** (henceforth referred to as “the Rubric”).

Benefits of Project Inclusion

There are many benefits of Project Inclusion, both explicit and implicit. Some of the explicit benefits of conducting Project Inclusion on your campus(es) are to:

- identify your institutional commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity.
- agree upon a campus-wide definition of diversity, inclusion and equity.
- enhance knowledge regarding the many benefits of diversity and inclusion toward organizational excellence and competency regarding underrepresented populations in academia.
- develop skills to engage and equip members of the community to affirm and support diversity, inclusion, and equity in your colleges, classrooms, departments, and places of work.
- promote an inclusive environment where diversity, inclusion and equity are viewed as the key to maximizing organizational effectiveness, in creating engaging classrooms, and in providing a campus climate that fosters and supports every participant.

NERCHE’s Rubric

The Rubric was developed by a coalition of higher education leaders who participated in the NERCHE Multicultural Affairs Think Tank in 2011. Because of NERCHE’s commitment to the critical value of practitioner-based knowledge as a catalyst for meaningful institutional change in colleges and universities, the team emphasized an instrument that could be used in a variety of different settings within a college or university. As the structural foundation for its work, the team adapted an instrument developed by Andy Furco at the University of Minnesota focusing on the institutionalization of service learning. See Appendix A for additional resources that influenced the development of the Rubric.

The Rubric is divided into six dimensions, each reflecting a key area of college and university life. The Rubric offers teams of students, staff, and faculty an opportunity to assess the status of the institution and identify meaningful evidence of these assessments.

The six dimensions include:

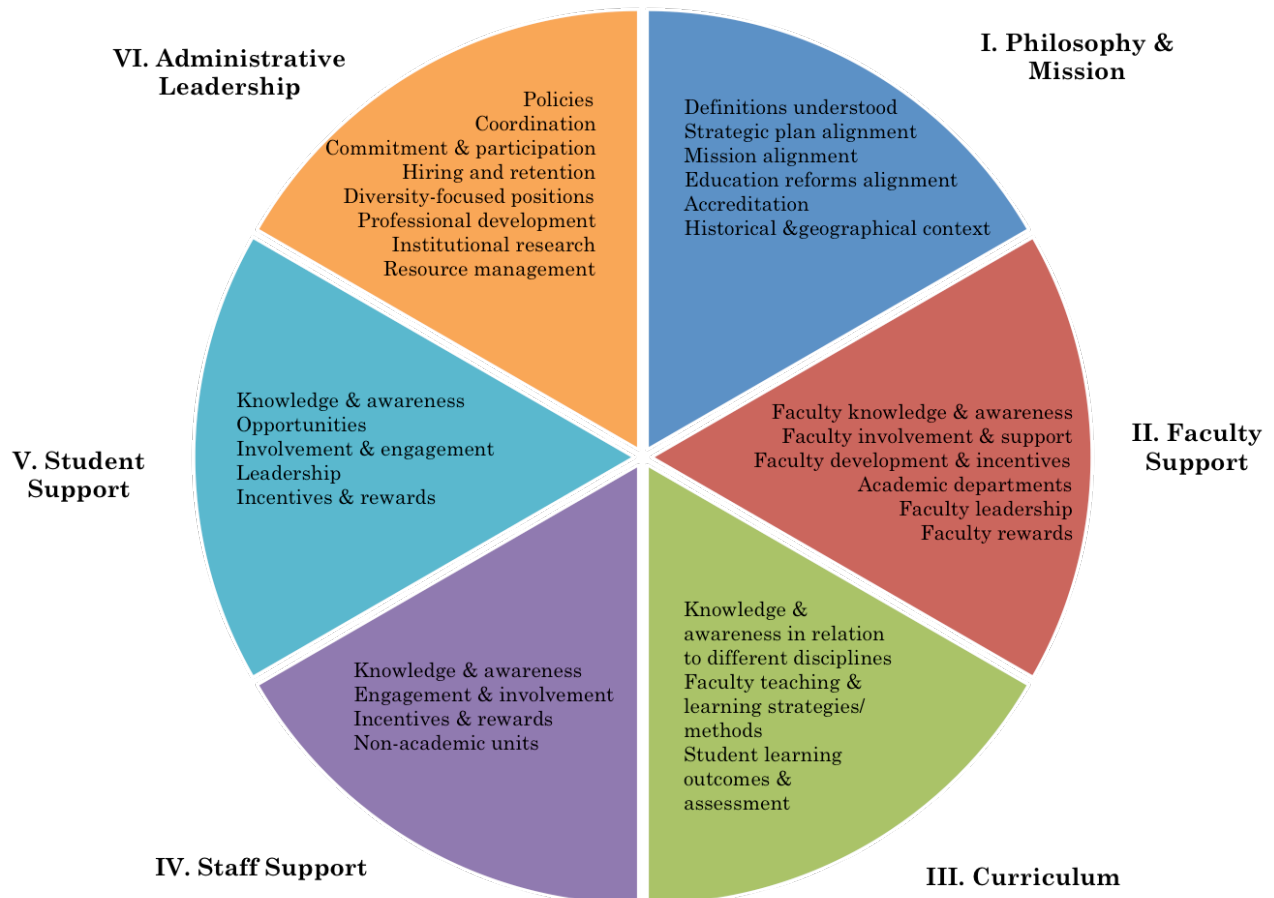
- Philosophy and Mission
- Faculty Support for and Involvement
- Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Research
- Staff Engagement and Involvement
- Student Support for and Involvement
- Administrative Leadership and Institutional Support

Rubric Dimensions and Components

The Rubric is a useful tool to collect data and it also provides a way to assess the impact of specific actions or policy changes. There are measures articulated to determine if the cultural climate in the dimension impacted by the change moves the dimension from **emerging** to **developing** or from **developing** to **transforming**.

The six Rubric dimensions each include a set of components that characterize the dimension. These represent the key areas to examine for institutionalized diversity, equity and inclusion. For each component, progression through the stages: emerging, developing, and transforming, suggests that the institution is moving closer to fully institutionalizing diversity, inclusion and equity on its campus.

Also, for each component, there must be accompanying indicators provided which is evidence of a change in policy, practices, structures, culture and/or climate. Indicators may range from formal indicators such as campus climate surveys, equity/diversity/inclusive excellence scorecards, IPEDS reports, and qualitative interviews to informal indicators such as collected data from anecdotal evidence and ad hoc focus groups.



Project Inclusion New Hampshire Pilot

In 2015, NERCHE facilitated a bold initiative aimed at ensuring that New Hampshire’s students graduate from college prepared for participation in an increasingly multicultural democracy. The initiative, called Enhancing Inclusive Excellence in New Hampshire Communities, was to create resources and models for “inclusive excellence”— that is, preparing students to live and work in a world that is multicultural, multilingual, and multiracial and whose borders and boundaries are blurring into an ever-expanding global community and economy.

Spearheaded by statewide higher education associations Campus Compact for New Hampshire (CCNH) and the New Hampshire College & University Council (NHCUC) in conjunction with the University of New Hampshire (UNH), the initiative aimed to build strong relationships between higher education and diverse communities both on and off campus. These groups have forged ties with a broad coalition of supporters, including the New Hampshire Inclusive Excellence Advisory Board consisting of education, business, and community leaders from across the state. These leaders took a proactive approach to meeting the needs of a population whose demographics are changing rapidly. The Lloyd G. Balfour Foundation generously funded the first year of Project Inclusion piloting the Rubric.

After a Request for Proposals, four institutions were selected to participate:

- Antioch University New England
- Keene State College
- Rivier University
- University of New Hampshire

Pilot sites were chosen based on their current efforts to assess the extent of their respective cultural engagement and their willingness and readiness to undergo broad-based, structural change to sustain and expand these efforts beyond the grant period.

After one year’s work on two to four dimensions at each of the sites, the following outcomes are a sample of deceptively simple but significant outcomes that the various campuses achieved:

- The president starts each meeting with faculty, staff, students and the Board with a diversity, equity and inclusion statement to remind people to consider all issues, proposals and decisions in that context.
- After a change of leadership at a satellite campus and the retirement of the Chief Diversity Officer, the structured and documented work of Project Inclusion provided the new dean with the background needed to carry forward the first-generation college goer support systems that had begun to show some impact across the campus.
- The mission and philosophy stated on one campus’ websites were not in synch with the actions they were taking in the classroom or internships. They set up committees within each department to redesign and realign them.
- Campus rediscovered work faculty had done in 2002 on making the curriculum more diverse and they were able to build on that work instead of starting from scratch.

About NERCHE

The New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE) was established at the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Massachusetts Boston (UMass Boston) more than 20 years ago. On December 31, 2016, John Saltmarsh stepped out of his role as NERCHE's director and into full-time teaching in the Higher Education doctoral program within the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) at UMass Boston. At this time, future leadership of NERCHE has not been determined by university administration.

In his letter on the NERCHE website (<http://www.nerche.org>), Dr. Saltmarsh states:

NERCHE HAS BEEN DRIVEN BY A COMMITMENT TO COLLABORATIVE CHANGE PROCESSES TO ADDRESS SOCIAL JUSTICE IN A DIVERSE DEMOCRACY AND HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED REGIONALLY AND NATIONALLY AS A UNIQUE AND INNOVATIVE CENTER CATALYZING CHANGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION. OVER THE LAST DECADE, NERCHE HAS BEEN AWARDED OVER \$3.5 MILLION IN FUNDING FOR MISSION-DRIVEN PROJECTS SUCH AS PROJECT COMPASS, A MULTI-YEAR REGIONAL INITIATIVE TO HELP MORE UNDERSERVED STUDENTS SUCCEED IN AND GRADUATE FROM FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN NEW ENGLAND; PROJECT INCLUSION, AIMED AT ASSESSING THE INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES, POLICIES, AND PRACTICES AROUND DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSIVENESS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE'S COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES; THE NEXT GENERATION ENGAGEMENT PROJECT; THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ELECTIVE CARNEGIE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CLASSIFICATION; THE ANNUAL ERNEST A. LYNTON AWARD FOR THE SCHOLARSHIP OF ENGAGEMENT FOR EARLY CAREER FACULTY; AND THE CONNECTICUT FACULTY WORKLOAD STUDY, AMONG OTHERS. THROUGHOUT MUCH OF ITS HISTORY, NERCHE HAS ALSO MAINTAINED A CLOSE ALIGNMENT WITH THE HIGHER EDUCATION DOCTORAL PROGRAM AT UMASS BOSTON.

Alane Shanks, previously a Visiting Scholar at NERCHE, and Jenene Cook, a Research Assistant supporting NERCHE projects, now independent consultants with Renga Consulting Services, Inc., have been granted exclusive rights to facilitate a Project Inclusion process using the NERCHE Rubric.

The Role of Renga

Renga's role in the Project Inclusion process is to serve as the external observer participant¹ and facilitator. Overall, the consultants will work with with institutions to:

- Make a commitment to a long-term approach to systemic cultural change.
- Complete a thorough assessment using the rubric.
- Determine strategic priorities.
- Initiate big and small changes based on the strategic priorities
- Assess again to determine what is working, how to support what is working, and identify areas where more intervention is required.
- Undertake short-term, and immediate actions to augment the long-term approach such as:
 - Unconscious bias awareness training
 - Diversity, equity and inclusion language training
 - Courageous conversations about race

Specifically, with the Project Inclusion Steering Committee (PI SC), the consultants offer resource and support, which includes:

- Teaching the PI SC how to use the Rubric, how to move from Rubric to logic model, from logic model to work plan, and from work plan to strategies for change.
- Sharing challenges and best practices that Project Inclusion efforts at other institutions have experienced or developed.
- Observing the institutional culture from a fresh, non-judgmental perspective.
- Doing our best to be unbiased and throw out any preconceived notions about the college community we are visiting.
- Working hard to ask good questions and to interpret the answers in a way that adds to the campus' data gathering, both quantitative and qualitative.
- Being sensitive and responsive to contradictory evidence.
- Being as adaptive and flexible as possible.
- Demonstrating what it means to encounter new situations and use them as opportunities, not threats.
- Using our personal backgrounds and literature to provide us with best practices regarding diversity, equity and inclusion on college campuses.
- Keeping the scope of the project to manageable proportions given the time frame.
- Supporting the PI SC to be good listeners and help members avoid being trapped by one's own ideologies or preconceptions.
- Encouraging the PI SC and sub-committees to move from data collection to analysis at the appropriate time.
- Encouraging the PI SC and sub-committees to move from analysis to logic model at the appropriate time.
- Encourage the PI SC and sub-committees to move from logic model to work plan at the appropriate time.
- Serve as a sounding board and coach for presentations prepared for All-Campus Meetings.

¹ Based on Yin, Robert (1984) Case Study Research: Design and Methods. Sage Publications.

- Answering any questions or concerns from the PI SC, President, Management Council, faculty, staff and students.

Renga Consultants

Jenene Cook

Jenene Cook is a graduate assistant and doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Doctoral program at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Her research focuses on factors that lead community college faculty to adopt or reject innovative online pedagogy. Jenene was part of the original NERCHE Project Inclusion team and has joined Renga Consulting Services to continue this important work. She also serves as the Area Reference Person (ARP) for the Dorchester/Roxbury area in the Boston Re-evaluation Counseling (RC) region (<http://www.rc.org/>), where she focuses on putting liberation theory into action for African-heritage people, people of color, women, young people, and care of the environment. She regularly leads classes, support groups, and workshops, and is active in the NGO “United to End Racism”; one of the most meaningful occurred in 2011, when she co-facilitated a “Healing the Damage Caused by Racism” workshop at the National Race Amity Conference. In March 2016, Jenene led a workshop titled “Eliminating the Effects of Racism in the Environmental Movement” at the 2016 Local Environmental Action Conference held at Northeastern University. In spring 2016, Jenene co-taught a graduate course in the UMB Higher Education program, “Effecting Changing in Higher Education: Strategies and Processes for Social Justice.” She is also writing a chapter for an Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) manuscript titled *Campus Sexual Violence: From Public Policy Development to Institutional Action*. Jenene can be reached at jenene@rengaconsulting.com.

Alane K. Shanks

Alane K. Shanks, Ed.D is the president and lead consultant of Renga Consulting, Inc. Dr. Shanks provides expertise in helping higher educational institutions become effective and inclusive multicultural environments. In 2015-16, she developed the Project Inclusion Action Plan and served as Director of Project Inclusion New Hampshire where it was successfully piloted at Antioch University New England, Keene State College, Rivier University, and the University of New Hampshire system. Dr. Shanks’ has overseen organization-wide strategic planning, facilitates the realignment of resources to strengthen institutions, builds strong and effective management and working teams, matching job duties to the overall mission of the organization, improving campus climate, and leading organizations through significant cultural change. She is also an executive coach, specializing in faculty transitions from academic to administrative positions. Dr. Shanks has held senior leadership positions in private and public institutions of higher education, serving as Associate Dean of Educational Administration and Finance at Harvard Medical School, Vice President/CFO at Roxbury Community College, and President of Pine Manor College. She has taught graduate-level courses in higher education administration and finance as well as strategies for systemic change. Her dissertation and continuing research focus on best practices for recruiting and retaining students and faculty of color. Alane can be reached at alane@rengaconsulting.com.

Renga's Commitment

Renga² Consulting Services, Inc. is committed to creating collaborative change processes in higher education to support diversity, equity and inclusion on campuses and building strong leaders through executive coaching. We will accomplish the project goals in a timely and professional manner and will actively seek comments and feedback as we move through the stages of the project. References from campus leaders are available upon request.

We look forward to facilitating Project Inclusion on your campus. Please call or email if you have questions or are ready to get started on this important work.



²We are often asked about our name. Renga, meaning “linked poem,” began over seven hundred years ago in Japan to encourage the collaborative composition of poems. Poets worked in pairs or small groups, taking turns composing the alternating three-line and two-line stanzas. The name was chosen because Renga Consulting’s approach is a collaborative one, facilitating and coaching colleagues to turn to one another and build on one another’s work.

Appendix A: Rubric Resources

- Furco. Self-Assessment Tool for Service-Learning Sustainability: http://nerche.org/images/stories/Furco_Self-Assessment.pdf
- AACU. Diversity and Inclusion Definitions: http://www.aacu.org/inclusive_excellence/index.cfm
- "A New Rubric for Assessing Institution-Wide Diversity," by Ande Diaz and Judy Kirmmse. In AAC&U's Diversity and Democracy, Summer 2013 (Vol. 16, No. 3): <https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/new-rubric-assessing-institution-wide-diversity>
- Inclusive Excellence Toolkit: University of Denver: <http://www.du.edu/cme/about/documents/InclusiveExcellenceToolkit-DUCME3-09.pdf>
- Assessing Inclusive Excellence PowerPoint: http://nerche.org/images/stories/Institutional_Diversity_Rubric.POWERPOINT_VTT22013_final.pdf
- Webinar Recording, February 6, 2013. "Assessing Inclusive Excellence.": <http://bit.ly/11egUsN>