



## Impact Statement

**Project Title: Assessing the Student Diversity Climate at Oklahoma State University**

**Issue:**

Leading diversity and shifting student culture to embrace diversity and inclusion is a critical challenge on some college campuses. The students of today are the food system workforce of tomorrow. If students cannot become comfortable in diverse environments while in college, their ability to be successful in more diverse workplace and community settings will be compromised. While diversity actions can be somewhat regulated or dictated, diverse attitudes cannot. Attitude shifts happen as students develop relationships with others from different backgrounds and cultures, learning that diversity of culture, socioeconomic class, faith, race and other characteristics contribute to the richness of our society.

While the demographics of Oklahoma State University are different from what I knew at New Mexico State University, students at both institutions have their own struggles with diversity issues. Allowing students to explore their attitudes – without judgement – is an important, but difficult, part of the change process. Modeling diversity in conversation and actions is also important – and this includes challenging the unintentional actions/words/attitudes that reinforce discrimination. I haven't figured out the perfect solution or leadership style, I just know I must not shy away from helping students progress in this critical area of their personal and professional development.

**What has been done:**

I began work on this project by volunteering to serve on two workgroups: an OSU Diversity Student Climate survey committee and the ESCOP Diversity in Leadership Task Force. Through both experiences, I learned a lot about current issues, research, programs and best practices surrounding diversity and inclusion.

The OSU committee developed a student climate survey to be implemented on campus. However, at the time it was proposed, OSU was also conducting other student assessments and felt that we should delay the implementation of the climate survey.

Work on the ESCOP committee continues through an implementation committee that is following up on the recommendations that were made by the taskforce. I continue to serve as the Academic Programs Section representative on that committee.

Also during the FSLI experience, I used a retirement to create a director position within the college to help us purposefully focus on addressing multicultural competency. Our intent is not to develop an abundance of standalone programs, but to infuse best practices within all areas of our college, from recruitment through graduation.

**Impacts/New Partnerships:**

1. Worked with department heads and university partners to develop the position description for the Director of CASNR Multicultural Programs and then, subsequently hired for the position.
2. Have partnered with other OSU units (for example, the Center for Sovereign Nations and the International Students and Scholars Office) to increase visibility and involvement in programming and student support opportunities.
3. Strengthened student engagement in the CASNR MANRRS chapter.

**Outcome of Project (societal impact/ measure of increased quality of life)**

The project is still in progress.

**How has your project been aided by your FSLI experience?**

Through FSLI, I have learned to be a better listener – to both verbal and non-verbal messages. Our sessions and readings on Emotional Intelligence continue to be very beneficial. I have also learned to communicate early and often, to seek input, and to take the time needed to this effectively. My project would not have moved forward without this important skill set.

**Contact information:**

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