**Impact Statement**

**Project Title: Developing practices to cultivate a climate of diversity and inclusiveness**

**Issue:** The many benefits of diversity are well established. Yet, despite our attempts to enhance diversity, improvements often have been only in small increments.   Furthermore, even when organizations have made progress in creating greater diversity, our environments often lack inclusivity.  Diversity and inclusivity are key aspects that affect communication, retention, recruitment, and functioning of an organization. How can universities promote greater diversity? How can we promote at atmosphere of inclusivity where people feel valued and respected, and have access to the same opportunities?

***The project objectives were:***

* To assess the current state of climate in university academic departments with a focus on Horticulture and Plant Science Departments.
* Identify best practices that can be used to actively cultivate a climate of both diversity and inclusion.

**What has been done:**  To assess the current state of climate at university academic programs, a survey on climate and inclusiveness was conducted at the 2018 NCAC-4 meeting of Horticulture and Plant Science Department Heads and Administrators held at the University of Iowa. The meeting was attended by representatives of 25 departments around the country. In addition to evaluating current status, best practices used by departments to cultivate a positive and inclusive climate were reported. Secondly, an in-depth assessment of climate was conducted of the Horticulture and Landscape Architecture Department at Purdue University. This assessment was conducted by the Provost Office of Faculty Affairs and included small-group and individual interview sessions. Departmental policies on promotion and tenure, mentoring practices, and demographics (gender, rank, salary, years, teaching loads) were collected.

**Impacts/New Partnerships:** This project built new partnerships among Horticulture and Plant Science departments around the country. The open discussion among university administrators reaffirmed the importance, advantages, and need for cultivating a climate of diversity and inclusiveness. New ideas shared by participants have been adopted.

**Outcome of Project (societal impact/ measure of increased quality of life):** A number of different climate dynamics were identified including *rank*: senior/junior faculty, faculty/staff/student; *gender and ethnicity*: male/female, international/domestic; *basic versus applied science*; and *mission roles*: teaching, research, extension. It was recognized that key individuals can set the tone of an organization, both positively and negatively. A number of best practices and actionable items were identified. Beneficial activities include themed retreats and educational programing on cultural awareness, implicit bias, inclusivity, microaggressions, cultural competency, team building, and student affairs. Diversity lunch and learn series, targeted seminar speakers, assistant professor mentoring lunches, clarification of the promotion and tenure process, women faculty lunches, and staff meetings (to provide this group a voice) were found to be valuable activities. Social interactions (coffee, social hour, cookouts, potlucks, holiday gatherings) and inclusive facilities such as ADA accessibility, unisex restrooms, and lactation rooms help to provide a welcome climate. Leaders and administration can do much to promote a climate where interactions are respectful and inclusive.

**How has your project been aided by your FSLI experience?** My experience in FSLI has been extremely beneficial. The program has helped me develop networking and communication skills. Strategies on how to build consensus among divergent groups and the importance of listening are valuable tools gained from the program.

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