



2022 DEI Community Dialogues Highlights and Themes

This document includes highlights and themes from the twelve community dialogues and insight survey held in September/October 2022. Any identifiable information has been intentionally omitted to maintain confidentiality of those who participated.



What do diversity, equity, and inclusion mean to you?

“DEI means to me something very special: to gather people together—people of all different types—and to create a sense of belonging to a community in which one can freely express oneself.”

“DEI involves creating a sense of belonging for everyone and sense of a community; it is treating people from where they are and knowing that there are many markers of identity that create access and barriers.”

“We thrive when we invite, include, and value diverse perspectives, experiences, and abilities. We must all be vigilant in our efforts to contribute to an environment where all have equitable access to feel and function at their best, to contribute the best of what our capacities and experiences uniquely prepare us to do.”

Themes

Improve access for all people	Be aware of intersectional barriers
Access to environments in which individuals can thrive.	Listen and learn from diverse experiences, perspectives, and identities.
Recognize power and privilege and their systemic impacts at all institutional levels.	Experience a sense of community and belonging

Highlights

- ❖ Diversity:
 - Acknowledgment and support of others’ differences
 - Intersectionality of DEI
- ❖ Equity:
 - Fair access to opportunities
 - Recognition of intersectional complexity in access
 - Continuous gathering of feedback for improvement in access
- ❖ Inclusion:
 - Creation or improvement of community spaces to facilitate increased sense of belonging
 - Recognition and revision of oppressive processes

- Support of invisible diverse identities, including neurodivergent and differently-abled
- Increased support for international students, including international graduate students
- ❖ Solidarity through the practice and use of inclusive language.
- ❖ Cultivation of spaces to practice cultural humility and grow in DEI.
- ❖ Importance of DEI institutional centrality to revise systems that perpetuate exclusion

**Have you felt a sense of inclusion and/or belonging at UCCS?
What have been your experiences at UCCS that have made you feel
included and/or excluded?**

“The times I felt most included were when the campus came together to create conversations to address negative marginalizing events with intent to correct them.”

“Development and use of inclusive shared language cultivates change towards inclusion.”

“Token inclusion feels worse than not being included at all.”

“It is important to be proactive rather than reactive in matters of inclusion.”

Themes	
Adopt a proactive approach to creating belonging and inclusion.	Address microaggressive behaviors.
Student clubs and events cultivate a strong sense of belonging.	Improve intersectional awareness in DEI spaces.
Minoritized students experience belonging mostly only in DEI spaces.	Non-traditional students, graduate students, and international students express concerns of not belonging.

Highlights

- ❖ Improve depth of DEI conversations.
- ❖ Staff express being disrespected by faculty.
- ❖ Participating in student clubs and affinity organizations improves sense of belonging.

- ❖ Improve intergenerational communication and relationship challenges affecting staff and faculty.
- ❖ Improve education and awareness regarding invisible markers of diversity to improve belonging among differently abled students.
- ❖ Improve support to DEI offices. DEI is the work of everyone on campus.
- ❖ Silos across colleges/departments impact sense of campus unity.
- ❖ Students find inclusion and belonging with peers but there are not many staff and faculty with similar lived experiences.
- ❖ Limited diverse representation across leadership limits opportunities for mentorship and leadership growth for staff, faculty, and students.
- ❖ Student club leaders are carrying the heavy work of creating sense of belonging for marginalized students.
- ❖ Creating a sense of belonging should be the intentional work of everyone on campus.

How would you envision creating a more equitable and inclusive campus community? What can we do more of? What is missing?

“At the campus level, we should be paying a lot more attention to designing inclusive policies and practices with disability in mind.”

“Have open conversations about the faults of the institution. Don’t shy away from the moments we fail to uphold inclusivity but openly address the failures and show through actions that work is being done to change.”

“What is missing is a sense of belonging and social connection. Along with the ability to hear and learn from different perspectives.”

Themes	
Numerous requests for transparency in the areas of pay and pay inequity.	Desirability of events that focus on community building and connection.
Decentralized policies are creating inequity.	Consistency of DEI policy and guidance for all areas of campus.

Improve intentional support of marginalized students, staff, and faculty.

Mentorship and development of students, staff, and faculty.

Highlights

- ❖ Every campus event should be an inclusive experience.
- ❖ Campus promotional materials should be intentional about featuring photos and stories of minoritized groups.
- ❖ Move DEI approaches from performative to strategic.
- ❖ Conceptualize and operationalize mentorships to improve retention:
 - marginalized students with marginalized staff/faculty
 - new staff/faculty with experienced staff/faculty
 - student peer mentorships
- ❖ Create intentional broader campus community connection practices to help minimize the silos across campus.
- ❖ Ensure a transparent and equitable promotion process.
- ❖ Create inclusive processes and policies at all levels.
- ❖ Support growing diverse student population by hiring and retaining a greater number of diverse faculty and staff.
- ❖ Increase support to diverse staff and faculty through equitable development opportunities.
- ❖ Offer consistent and centralized DEI educational opportunities.
- ❖ Address perceived relational challenges between staff and faculty.
- ❖ DEI relevance and engagement should be considered in promotion, tenure, and funding opportunities.
- ❖ Mitigate resistance to incorporating DEI practices.
- ❖ Recognize power and privilege and their systemic impacts at all levels.
- ❖ Increase engagement in diverse student programming events.

What change is necessary to create a culture where you can feel a strong sense of belonging?

What do you believe are the barriers/roadblocks?

“I feel like UCCS is on a great path, but that the work to create a more inclusive university for all is dependent on everyone's capacity to reach out and collaborate and connect. We can't do that when we are short-staffed, under-resourced, etc. The amount of amazing work happening in

this arena is a testament to the dedication and commitment of staff and faculty and our belief in our wonderful students.”

“I feel like systemic discrimination is very much impacting my life and career opportunities and is getting worse overall.”

“Inclusion and respect of certain food needs and restrictions; it is awkward to not be able to eat a lot of things critical to my dietary and religious restrictions.”

Themes	
Pay inequity is concerning to many and impacts belonging.	Develop common DEI language.
Improve flows in institutional accountability.	Protect and honor trusting communication.
Improve resources to support graduate and international students.	Improve proximity to develop from learning of others’ experiences.
Improve recognizing DEI failings and adjusting to address growth.	Improve sense of connectedness and affinity with UCCS.

Highlights

- ❖ Minoritized staff and faculty feel overextended with service and committee work.
- ❖ Improve intentional resources and support for graduate students to match undergraduate efforts.
- ❖ Improve leadership responsiveness when marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented groups raise concerns about their experiences.
- ❖ Improve inclusive practices in dining and catering for diverse populations’ dietary needs and restrictions.
- ❖ Create clear expectations on DEI work and hold individuals accountable for this work.
- ❖ Improve ways to create sense of community on campus for students that are not traditional undergraduate students.
- ❖ Create engagement opportunities to cultivate positive campus association for marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented students, staff, faculty, and alumni.
- ❖ Accept the mistakes that have been made in the areas of DEI as a university and create actionable plans for change.
- ❖ Define what is a sense of belonging and create clear goals on how the campus plans to actualize an ongoing sense of belonging.
- ❖ Address pay inequity and lack of growth opportunities that create roadblocks to connectedness and belonging.