Humphrey School – Placing Diversity and Equity at its Core

The Diversity Community of Practice is pleased to present the Humphrey School's Diversity Strategic and Action Plan as our next Appreciative Inquiry.

Already generally aware the School has been doing some work towards improving equity and diversity, we reached out to Laura Bloomberg, Associate Dean of the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, to learn more.

By providing answers to our questions, Bloomberg offered insights on their Diversity Strategic and Action Plan and about recent actions taken by the School toward recommitting to equity and diversity efforts. We see this as a great example of a college advancing equity and diversity internally as well as externally.

Our Questions

Because of who they are, the Humphrey School is specifically called upon to lead in the area of public affairs. How does the Humphrey School describe their role in this area? Why did you feel there was a need to call out Equity and Diversity as part of the School’s strategic plan?

Tell us about the School having recently invited Glen Singleton to present “Courageous Conversations”. How have these conversations impacted the Humphrey School?

We wondered about recent events around racial inequity in the public realm that have produced deep concerns around policing and the community. How is the Humphrey School engaging in these dialogues?

Mission and Strategy

Bloomberg began by explaining the mission of the Humphrey School of Public Affairs is to inspire, educate, and support innovative leaders to advance the common good in a diverse world. “Quite frankly, as a school we believe the very mission of the School offers a mandate to make equity and justice central to our work”.

As part of its mission the Humphrey School recently released a “strategy refresh” document that outlines their core focus areas for the next 3-5 years. Equity, diversity, and justice factor significantly into every priority area identified:

- Promoting Hope, Opportunity and Inclusion in a Changing America and a Changing World
- Supporting the Institutions of Democracy and Civil Life
- Expanding our Global Reach and Impact
- Strengthen the pipeline of talented and diverse leaders

(Read the complete strategy statement to learn how Humphrey School is working forward in each of these areas.)
Courageous Conversations
Bloomberg told us how the Humphrey School is striving to make equity and diversity “everyone’s everyday work” through the efforts of their Diversity Committee, the Neighborhood Engagement Committee, and their regular Courageous Conversations dialogue series.

These Courageous Conversations invite the entire Humphrey School community (all staff, all faculty and all students) into regular informal lunchtime dialogues about race, equity and justice.

Bloomberg feels, “This creates opportunities for all to step outside of our policy research, teaching, learning and theorizing and to personalize the work of equity and justice in the world.”

The Courageous Conversation Compass identifies four primary ways that people deal with racial information, events, and/or issues:

- emotional,
- intellectual
- moral
- relational

The compass points are used to anchor the conversation. They help us to reflect on our feelings, beliefs, need for action or knowledge-based perspectives.

Participants are encouraged to discuss questions candidly and with respect to one another, engaging honestly and productively in conversations where people may hold differing views. Everyone gathers around four agreements.

- **Stay Engaged.** Listening for your partners’ benefit, not just for your benefit. Modeling the listening behaviors that you seek
- **Speak Your Truth.** Having the courage to share your experience/perspective and asking questions of your partners that will encourage them to share theirs
- **Experience Discomfort.** Searching our experiences/perspectives different from your own. Having the courage to ask your partners to ask questions of you.
- **Expect/Accept Non-Closure.** Not looking to solve/answer all the questions. Not looking for the solution/answer. Looking for a different question that will help us find a different solution.

Community Engagement
Bloomberg shared that most recently the Humphrey School community gathered and used these protocols to discuss matters related to immigration and refugees. “Specifically”, explained Bloomberg, “we grappled with these questions”:

*Who deserves to be an American citizen and who doesn’t? Who gets to decide? How does one speak “the truth” about something when your community does not typically support it?*

Another instance of the impact of these talks came from a fellow DCoP member who was present at the conversation held after the tragedies of Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge and Philando Castille’s shooting in Falcon Heights in July 2016.

She described how members of the Humphrey School community and some members from the larger U community gathered in grief and solidarity in a Courageous Conversation. Emotions were high. Some people were visibly in tears. They spoke to their sense of loss and outrage about the events and about the systemic change they wanted to see.

She feels this model for authentic deliberation and discussion provided a framework and method for addressing these difficult topics. It is “a steadying handrail of sorts” as the University community navigates recent national and local events that have affected our climate.
**Measurement**

As part of our Inquiry, we also reached out to Darren Hoff, Human Resource Manager with the College of Pharmacy, to provide a few additional questions from a different perspective.

Hoff wondered about how the Humphrey School measures progress in this area. Joel Mixon, Senior Academic Advisor for the Humphrey School, provided answers.

**Hoff: What are the goals for the initiative and how are they being measured?**

Mixon: The goals for the initiative are to provide the Humphrey School with the opportunity to engage in collegiate wide programs, events and collaborations that support and enhance the school's mission. They are being measured by student, faculty, and staff surveys and evaluations.

**Hoff: What are your expectations for employee action?**

Mixon: Our expectations are that employees participate as they are able, based on work schedule and professional development goals.

**Hoff: Are employees being rated or is this incorporated into the performance review process?**

Mixon: Employees are able to speak to their contribution, participation, and engagement in Humphrey diversity and equity related development opportunities in the annual review process.

Encouraging faculty and staff to actively engage in efforts around equity and justice is another example of how the Humphrey School of Public Health is placing diversity and equity at the core of their work.

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This DCoP Appreciative Inquiry was a collaborative effort by DCoP members, Laura Bloomberg, Joel Mixon, Darren Hoff, Virajita Singh and Amelie Hyams.