



Awareness & Readiness for Engagement Audit (AREA)

Introduction

Many factors influence the progression or paralysis of institution and diversity administrations. While all aspects do not appear in a linear or prioritized display, groups of factors relative to institutional and diversity infrastructures need direct and focused attention. Other factors, such as human nature, overt and implicit biases, traditions, and community, have invisible but tangible impacts on the speed of transformation. All aspects take a toll on infrastructure alignments, which ultimately dictate who gets hired, fired, and retained.

The idea that drives the need for the AREA is not based upon adverse experiences by underrepresented groups. Instead, relevant auditing is essential for leadership awareness and empowered decision-making against traditional and well-ingrained processes and procedures that adversely operate against diversification.

Coop Di Leu endeavors to be catalysts of education about the cause and effect of campus climate circumstances. We strive to focus on specific components of institution life that impact efforts to transform traditional and well-ingrained patterns. The AREA presents a truth-seeking method of inquiry. The technique helps rethink why institutions behave the way they do, where staple behaviors exist, and how to change institutions and diversity paradigms.

Purpose

The AREA is an inquiry experience that helps the respondent envision and identify institutional behaviors. It targets essential components of infrastructure that support progress or paralysis toward transformative institutional and diversity leadership. A battery of questions helps institutions conceptualize pathways to conversion by assessing the resources available. The answers to these questions are revealed in digestible frames and in real-time.

Objectives

The AREA engages institutions for a transformation away from current anti-diversity paradigms. Objectives impacted during the engagement fall under one of four categories.

Institutional Leadership & Commitment

- Identify common expectations for integrated and intersected behaviors.
- Examined resource distribution and investment for diversity.
- Assessed public communications about diversity-related expansions.
- Alignment of mission significance with publicly declared diversity values.

Curricular and Co-curricular Accountability

- Compare the value placed upon collaborative versus individual achievement.
- Learning the degree to which the institution includes diversity components in its sponsored research.
- Assess if diversity work is synonymous with cross-cultural education.
- Identify senior-level administrators' level of exposure to plights of underrepresented populations.

Climate

- Realize the value of statues, paraphernalia, and symbols for impacting the campus experience.
- Differentiate a campus event from a cultural experience.
- Assessed marketing messages for inviting and invisible constructs.
- Matched community interests with campus aspirations for inclusion.

Representation/Composition

- Develop rigorous and concerted retention programs.
- Institutionalize hiring practices that attract underrepresented professionals.
- Showcase milestones for diversity initiatives.
- Assess the institution's reputation as a "place to work" for diverse, aspiring professionals.

Institutional Pillars for Transformation (IPTs)

Coop Di Leu's research and philosophy are grounded in its IPT framework. The framework was established after a national study on the lived experiences of chief diversity officers and strengthened via a series of inquiries to diversity professionals from 2017 to 2020.

The knowledge acquired from the many aspects of the research culminates into four distinct components of institutional life within higher education – Institutional Leadership & Commitment (Leadership), Institutional Curricular and Co-curricular Accountability (Curricular), Institutional Climate (Climate), and Institutional Representation/Composition (Representation).

Pillar Significance

Coop Di Leu discovered that ninety-eight percent of respondents, and issues experienced by diversity professionals, fall into one or more continuum categories. Each category can be “housed” under one of the four IPTs. Because only two percent of other concerns fall outside the IPT framework, an instrument is needed to lead clients to “smoking gun” experiences, processes, and initiatives. The tool helps identify where the root causes of systemic and historical diversity-related problems lie. Further, having four pillars to explore is less cumbersome than exploring an entire institution. It also makes for more concise communication, saves time and resources when transformative change is needed, but consistent resistance is present and unidentified.

Each IPT contains subcomponents that bring to bear the lived experience of diversity professionals and the life of an institution as it exists (climate) for all constituents. For diversity professionals, a continuum of experiences that impact the paradigm in which day-to-day responsibilities play out overlays each IPT. The continuum is – Attraction (to the institution), Recruitment, Onboarding, Retention, Promotion, and Pipeline Development. Each experience unfolds differently and invariably. Candidly examining the work-life and community affairs of a diversity professional helps find the “smoke”(inequities) from the gun (process) hindering success toward diversity goals and, ultimately, institutional transformation. For institutions, each IPT represents a set of broad-reaching underpinnings. The underpinnings personify ideals extracted from Coop Di Leu’s research about individual and institutional behaviors perceived to define excellence in diversity transformation.

- **Leadership** – Demonstrated ongoing commitment to expectations for integrated and intersected behaviors, resource distribution and investment, public communications, diversity-related expansions, and mission significance. (Content of planning and strategic documents, reward patterns, frequency and security of accountability assessments, etc.)
- **Curricular** – Integrated tenets for accountability throughout infrastructure that measure the progress of diversity-related scholarly, co-curricular, administrative, and programmatic activity. (Integrated activities, diversity pedagogy, promotion, tenure, award achievement, training, affinity, discipline, etc.)
- **Climate** – Intentional creation, publicity, and enforcement of events, messages, symbols, and values that impact the degree to which all students, faculty, and staff experience a welcoming environment. (Multicultural events, climate assessments, community-university partnerships, Title IX, ADA, EEOC, architecture, athletics, marketing, etc.)
- **Representation** – Intentional plans for attracting underrepresented faculty and professionals at senior levels and creating mechanisms for relevant recruitment, onboarding, retention, promotion, and pipeline development. (Diverse representation at the president, provost, VP, dean, department head, faculty, etc., levels)

IPTs help assess readiness to engage in transformative diversity innovation. A four-prong rubric associated with the IPTs is used repeatedly to reveal a pattern of thought and behaviors that make up the client’s current paradigm.