2017 WEPAN Change Leader Forum

Transforming Engineering Culture to Advance Inclusion and Diversity (TECAID) (Part 1)
Small Group "Report-Outs"

This is a transcript of the Part 1: Small Group "Report-Outs" following the TECAID Overview and Outcomes (Part 1) workshop presented at the 2017 Women in Engineering ProActive Network (WEPAN) Change Leader Forum. *[Note: The Part 1 workshop and separate Part 1 Small Group Report-Out video/transcript, is followed by a panel presentation of representatives from the original TECAID Teams (Part 2), in a separate video/transcript.]*

[00:00:05]
Liz Litzler: OK. Great. Thank you all for engaging in this wonderful conversation at your tables and thanks for humoring us a little bit in being guinea pigs for trying this framework out. What we'd like to do, I know we started a little bit late. I'm hoping you could give us an extra three or four minutes of your time into the networking session, if possible. We'd like to have each table report out. What we'd like for someone to share are things like what does this make you think of about your own departments or that you might not have thought of, in terms of starting a process of making culture change within your departments. What AH-HAs might you have had or had someone at the table have that you want to share with us? If you can do that in 30-45 seconds, that would be lovely. A minute at the max. Maybe we can start with the tables over here? We're gonna run a mic to you so that people can hear you.

[00:01:24]
Report 1: We discussed the idea of what have we learned about our college's climate and I mentioned that we had just completed our first, in a very long time, climate survey at our college. From which we discerned that there were some issues in the experiences that the women, especially women faculty, were feeling versus the male faculty, who actually didn't think that there was much to change in terms of culture, versus the women who felt that there was. So that brought up a lot of discussion about our own individual institution's climate. And we wanted to learn from each other on who is in charge of effecting DEI change and do we have officers and at what level? We found that we had campus level as well as college level leadership. Then we sort of all agreed we all have work to do in this area.

[00:02:26]
Liz Litzler: Agreed. That's great. Thanks for sharing about the role of leadership, for example, and how you might think of your leaders. Would you mind if we go back to the table? I think we'll maybe try and serpentine, if that's okay with you all.

[00:02:43]
Report 2:   Do you just want us to talk through some of what came out of the conversation?

Liz Litzler: Yeah. Please do.

[00:02:45]
Report 2:   We basically introduced ourselves to each other and recognized that we all represented a very wide variety of representatives from a university. Everywhere from faculty to researchers to administrators and student support staff. So we basically talked through some of the things that were on the work sheet. So we started off with talking about identifying reasons for engaging and so we really spent a lot of time really thinking about the landscape to try to find reasons for engaging. We talked about the fact there are some places where performance-based funding models have been implemented. So there is an opportunity to catch people's attention or get their ear if they are operating a performance-based funding model environment, which is not necessarily everywhere, but it is happening in some states.

[00:03:30]
Report 2:   We also acknowledged the fact that the current reward structure for people who are on a tenure track environment. It was difficult for us to figure out how we would use language to really engage them because the work that we're talking about isn't necessarily what's valued in the space that they're operating in. We did actually acknowledge the fact that there might be real great potential to think about mid-career faculty who have actually just moved through the tenure process and really think about engaging those kinds of individuals because they are now at a point where they may have the time and energy and the desire to want to help us partner in this particular area.

[00:04:08]
Report 2:   That was also part of identifying the facts of the situation as well, when it came to identifying feelings about the situation. I brought up a comment that built on some of the conversations earlier on a session about feelings of discomfort whenever you're talking about diversity and inclusion. I think for me, as a former student support practitioner, I think, I feel like we've made great strides and we finally get our departments to really think about student retention data and to start desegregating that by different under represented groups.

[00:04:42]
Report 2:   But I think the part that is a place of discomfort or maybe a place of disappointment is when we start to see difference in students' performance related to their ethnic and racial background. It's disheartening when you have everybody look in the room at your diversity person and say "Look, this is a problem for you to solve." The reality is not one person is going to solve it, and it takes full hands on deck to really tackle those issues. That's as far as we made it but we enjoyed the conversation.

[00:05:09]
Liz Litzler: Thank you, Andrea. I see lots of heads nodding about what you had to say and I think Diane wanted to pipe in too.

[00:05:15]
Diane Matt: One of the things that comes up a lot, that maybe people don't bump into all the time, but I've had it happen on several NSF reviews. People would respond "Oh, this is great that you're gonna wanna work with the people who are ready to do this work, but what about all these other people?" One of the things that I think was unique about TECAID was that it focused on people who were ready. We had people suggest teams. We had them tell us about their teams. We had them tell us why they were wanting to work together and what they were wanting to work on. Now, once our teams were working in their own spaces, they were encountering people who were pushing back. We spent a lot of time in our learning about conflict, about resistance, about some of the ways those things are related. We'll have some resources about that, but if you have to choose, I'm going to say go for people who are ready. As a success factor.

[00:06:23]
Liz Litzler: All right. Thank you, Diane. If we can try to keep it to 30 seconds. I'm really sorry but I'd love to hear from all of you. Either that or we'll have to select.

[00:06:38]
Report 3:   Hi. We spent some time getting to know each other. We're from a very diverse range between industry and academia and at different stages of our careers. So that was useful. The other thing is, I think about the "Are you ready for change and what makes you ready for change?" These answers can be quite personal. So there's something but that's where the drive comes from. There's certain timelines each of us are on of when we'd like to do things in our lives or for others. That's interesting. I think there's maybe something to learn from that about different milestones in people's lives. There might be new motivation.

[00:07:17]
Liz Litzler: Absolutely.

[00:07:18]
Report 3:   When people have children. When their children are older. Whatever. Different life stages.

[00:07:22]
Liz Litzler: Great. Thank you.

[00:07:29]
Report 4:   We spent a lot of time focused on this number two item, number two consideration in the question of what is truly known. Had a good conversation

around really taking that step back to understand what is the data telling us, what is the research telling us. Because we might have these well-intentioned, excited, motivated people ready to jump into the space, but they're often operating from their experiences and their assumptions. That's not always what's truly happening if you really dive in and dig into the data. I share the example that our university and our school is going through a process to develop a diversity and inclusion action plan. We're creating solutions, we've had to create and parts of the plan that are counter to what the data is saying we need to worry about. They're solving problems that aren't even problems and that's going to waste our time. I liked that that question is right up front. We're gonna take this back because it really helps you take that step back. To say "What do we know? Let's pay attention to that and figure it out first."

[00:08:35]
Liz Litzler: Thank you for that feedback. That's super helpful to know that, that's an important part. You see that as an important part because we saw it as an important part. Please.

[00:08:46]
Report 5: Hi. At our table, we focused very much on number one, on identifying reasons for engaging. Once that question was posed, we were like, "Who are we speaking to?" Because depending on which population we're speaking to, faculty, administrators, deans, etc., they are going to want a different reason for saying why should they engage in this. Most of our time was spent just thinking about how we would present, how we would motivate them to even begin to want to get engaged in diversity and equity and inclusion.

[00:09:26]
Liz Litzler: Absolutely. I think we learned that everybody has different reasons, and so to strategize about how to engage them appropriately given that. We're hearing some common themes, I think.

[00:09:45]
Report 6: Our jumping in point to the conversation was talking about retention as a specific problem. As we were talking about that, we started discussing that retention of students and retention of faculty are both symptoms of a larger problem. So we ended up talking a lot about point five, looking at the difference between symptoms and problems, and that those both stem out of frequently a lack of sense of community, and talking about ideas for what could better create that sense of community and on what level that sense of community should be existing primarily, whether it makes sense to try to focus on building that at a departmental level, at a more institutional level, and that that's going to be different in different places depending on what your overall population is, what your population of female students and faculty, or faculty and students of color, or what not are.

[00:10:50]
Report 6: Then we also had someone who was not faculty or student but was staff and noticed that we were talking about all of this in terms of students and faculty. Then we started talking about what roles staff can play in that as well. You brought up this idea that staff can often be a useful go between, that students can often find faculty particularly initially to be intimidating and out of reach. Staff are uniquely positioned to be in regular contact with both and can really help to serve as a bridge there.

[00:11:21]
Liz Litzler: We had some staff on our TECAID teams who were really integral in helping move the projects forward at those places. You'll hear from one of those staff on the panel next, Nancy Barr from Michigan Tech. I want to touch on one more thing. Symptoms versus problems is one of the key exercises that the teams worked through. That's a really important thing to do. I think Andrea, you mentioned incentives, and resources, and barriers. That's another resource, an exercise that's useful to think through as you're working through a planning process for making change. Are there other tables that would like to share?

[00:12:10]
Report 7: Okay. So our table started out after we introduced ourselves, and we immediately jumped into identifying symptoms and motivations, why we do what we do. Then we automatically started talking about incidents that have happened within our departments, and our units, and our colleges, and how our students felt. Bottom line, we realized that the symptoms are there, the education is there, but we can't, it has to be inclusive, that we have to train our students, and our faculty, and our staff to work this problem from the bottom up and the top down. That for instance, if something happens to one of our female students, it can't always be the female in the department or the unit that has to approach the problem. It has to be everyone on the entire team. We just jumped all over, but we did realize that it has to be inclusive. Everybody has to be trained from the bottom to the top.

[00:13:1]
Liz Litzler: Collective responsibility for the problem.

[00:13:16]
Report 8: We took more of a helicopter view. We're really focusing one and two and looking at the reasons for wanting to do something. We looked at the need to do and the desire to do better engineering, better choice, better quality of staff. We discussed the engagement of staff. There's the Gallup Index in terms of engagement. If staff are more engaged, they're more productive, and it's a measurable quantity. We talked about the increased cognitive load and bias, and the need for education, but then we moved on and talked about increased stress that people who are under an increased cognitive load might be under, and that generically in the UK in particular, people don't understand the cognitive load and the burden of that on minority and underrepresented groups. We said that we

needed to have case stories and images and some kind of information about evidence of what that really means that's translatable to the average engineer that's not part of this engaged community. Actually, what we then realized after we'd been told to finish, that what we're really talking about is we're looking at well-being and mental health. Ultimately, that's got to be a really huge driver because if you're going to be able to address mental health and well-being of your staff, your students, your faculty, etc., you've got to be a on a winning streak.

[00:14:47]
Liz Litzler: Great, thank you, Jan. We're very excited to share this with you. We hope that you found some of these discussions helpful for yourself. We realize there weren't fully enough copies for everyone to have one of these, so if you'd like to contact any one of us, we could share that with you if you'd like a copy to work through on your own back at your own institution. Secondly, there are little half-sheet evaluations on the table, if you could take just two minutes to write a few words about what you got out of this session. As you all know, with NSF grants, we have to evaluate these things. We'd like to be able to report on what the participants are taking away.

[00:15:34]
Liz Litzler: Finally, we will I'm sure be sharing as this gets finalized information about what's happening with the model and with other parts of the TECAID resources on the TECAID website, and probably pushing that out through some emails on WEPAN-L and also maybe WEPAN social media channels. We look forward to, we hope you see that. Always feel free to come back and check in about what we've got going on. If you can take two minutes if possible or a minute and finish up your evaluation. Diane, do you want to say-

[00:16:12]
Diane: The session that's coming up next-

[00:16:13]
Liz Litzler: Oh, yes.

[00:16:14]
Diane: You understand this better than I. Why don't you talk a little bit about it.

[00:16:18]
Liz Litzler: Okay. After the networking break, there's another session with participants from four of the TECAID schools that were involved. Tom Perry, who's from ASME, is going to facilitate that panel. They're going to talk through some of the hard questions that they had to deal with, and some of the struggles, and some of the successes that they've had. So we think you'll find some, if you're interested in learning more about TECAID, we think you'll find that useful to get the on the ground stories from those participants. Thank you.