

Equity and Inclusion at St. Olaf College: Assessing, Enhancing, and Sustaining the Vision

St. Olaf College Quality Initiative, September 2020 – May 2022

Final Report to the Higher Learning Commission Executive Summary – May 2022

Equity and Inclusion at St. Olaf College: Assessing, Enhancing, and Sustaining the Vision aimed to move St. Olaf closer to its [vision](#) of being a diverse community where all can thrive and find meaningful belonging. Our goal was to develop and implement a durable approach to holding ourselves accountable for our DEI progress through assessment, reporting, action, and celebration (Goal 5 of the college's [2019 Plan for Equity and Inclusion](#)). Our Quality Initiative yielded four substantive, sustainable, and shareable accomplishments. First, we developed and publicized a [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Theory of Transformation](#) that defines our intended DEI aspirations and explains our collective work to achieve them. The Theory provides a coherent framework for communicating within and beyond our community about the goals, substance, and impact of the college's ongoing DEI efforts. Second, we developed and implemented the [Co-Creating an Inclusive Community](#) model of DEI institutional change, engaging students, faculty, staff, and leadership in working together to envision and create a campus community where people of all identities experience belonging, connection, and agency. More than 1500 staff, faculty, and students met in small groups led by trained peer facilitators in Spring 2021 to articulate their vision for "inclusive community" at St. Olaf and identify actions at every level of the college to help realize it. A team of mentored student researchers summarized the insights and recommendations that emerged from the Co-Creating groups, and their [report](#) launched a wide range of individual, departmental, and institutional actions throughout the subsequent year. Third, we conducted a systematic inventory of our current and anticipated institutional research and assessment data and built an interactive [DEI Dashboards and Additional Data](#) website keyed to the outcomes identified in our Theory of Transformation. This resource enhances the transparency, comprehensiveness, salience, and actionability of our DEI data. Finally, we hosted an inaugural [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Symposium](#), featuring the DEI work of more than 60 St. Olaf students, staff, faculty, and alumni, and involving more than 300 participants from across the college community.

Our two-year initiative engaged upwards of 90% of St. Olaf faculty and staff, 75% of our students, the Board of Regents, and the executive leadership team in one or more of its elements. It has yielded an innovative model of institutional change, a systemic approach to tracking and reporting on our progress, and a clear way to link data to action in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion. Of our four major accomplishments, only the development of the DEI Dashboards was anticipated at the time we submitted our proposal; all the other elements were imagined and implemented over the course of the initiative. All the key elements of our project are readily available on the St. Olaf website, and we look forward to sharing them through publications, presentations, and professional associations.