



BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DEI Strategic Plan

2024-2027



BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION



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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Thank you for investing your time and energy in our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Strategic Plan. This initiative is the result of a collaborative effort involving our campus and the broader Berkshire community, reflecting our shared commitment to fostering an inclusive environment.

At Berkshire Community College, we believe that diversity strengthens our community and enriches our learning experiences. Our focus on equity means actively removing barriers that prevent full participation, particularly for those who have been historically marginalized. Inclusion is a guiding principle that shapes our interactions and decisions, ensuring that every individual feels valued and respected.

This journey requires us to engage in ongoing learning and self-reflection. We will challenge long-held beliefs and seek to understand diverse perspectives, creating space for dialogue. By promoting respectful conversations and meaningful connection, we aim to cultivate a culture of belonging.

Our strategic actions will prioritize safety, dignity and agency for all community members. Through education and professional development, increased feedback opportunities, and enhanced structures to foster community and care, we will create a climate that supports diversity and equity. Your voices are essential in this process, and we encourage you to share your insights through engaging in these efforts.

As we embark on this important initiative, let's embrace the opportunity to transform our College into a more equitable and inclusive institution. Together, we can build a stronger BCC community where every member thrives.

Thank you for your dedication to this vital cause. Your participation will make a meaningful difference.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ellen Kennedy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ellen Kennedy
President



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Berkshire Community College's institutional Strategic Plan 2022–2027 identified the need for the College's first Diversity and Equity Climate survey and called for the creation of a separate Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Strategic Plan.

The College decided to create a new role, solely focused on equity work. The inaugural Director of DEI started in September 2022 and hosted a series of focus groups that commenced the DEI Strategic Planning Process. In spring 2023, three co-leads joined the facilitation of the planning process.

An extensive and inclusive process (see appendix) included evaluation and assessment of the institution's internal needs with an awareness of external factors impacting students and employees.

The DEI Strategic Plan is deeply rooted in BCC's mission, vision and institutional values. It is strongly influenced by and aligned with the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education's Strategic Plan for Racial Equity and the Racial Equity and Justice Institute at Bridgewater State University. Both organizations are committed to closing racial equity gaps for students.

External studies (see appendix) show that results from BCC's internal analysis are highly aligned with broader state and national studies, reports, plans and frameworks, which provide the larger support and external rationale for BCC's priorities and commitments.

BCC acknowledges that students' success and well being cannot be addressed separately from that of the College's employees. Employees' well being and professional growth directly impact how faculty and staff can support and educate students. BCC is committed to closing equity gaps for both students and employees.

While the College's institutional Strategic Plan includes defined goals, the choice to work towards priorities was deliberate and based on the understanding that equity work is a lifelong practice — work that never ends. Instead of striving to simply reach a goal, we identified priorities that guide us toward equity and, eventually, justice. The Philosophy of Inclusion (see page 5), which was crafted from language collected from the College's community (students, staff, faculty, board and community members), is more than an equity statement. It is an organizational pledge toward cultural humility, lifelong learning and inclusion.

Different from BCC's Strategic Plan 2022–2027, the DEI Strategic Plan focuses on the College's culture. The assessment (see appendix) combines surveys and focus groups to measure the progress of each indicator and the plan overall. Evaluating the organization's culture is inherently difficult. Equity work is never-ending and always changing. BCC is committed to continuously evaluating the work and adjusting as needed.

Many strategies within this plan are strongly aligned with and directly support various foci within the institutional Strategic Plan (see table in appendix section titled "Internal Alignments"). Implementation of both plans will be combined and aligned to highlight the synergies that have emerged.



Berkshire Community College presents its first Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan 2024-2027 with two overarching priorities and five commitments:

● **Foster a Culture of Belonging for All Members of the BCC Community**

1. Cultivate opportunities for community through connection and recognition.
2. Promote a dynamic learning environment that demonstrates and encourages cultural humility.

● **Prioritize Safety, Dignity and Agency for All Members of the BCC Community**

3. Strengthen communication, trust and transparency.
4. Advance equity talk to equity walk.
5. Establish a community of care.

PHILOSOPHY OF INCLUSION

Berkshire Community College strives to enhance a culture of inclusion and belonging, and we are committed to prioritizing the safety, dignity and agency of all members of our community. Because a dynamic learning environment demonstrates and encourages curiosity, accountability, self-reflection and a willingness to consider new concepts and different perspectives, we recognize that safety and respect are essential to fostering an educational environment of meaningful engagement and growth. Individually and collectively, we endeavor to see and to value ourselves and one another, to cultivate authentic connections and to involve all voices in decision-making on campus.

INCLUSION IN ACTION

When we strive to create an inclusive campus environment, we make a commitment to:

- Advocate for a shared sense of responsibility for and with one another;
- Recognize that different kinds of cultural wealth and lived experiences strengthen our learning and our community;
- Nurture everyone's ability and willingness to question our own assumptions;
- Maintain awareness of the impact of our words and actions upon others; and
- Encourage one another in lifelong learning through respectful dialogue and active listening.



KEY TERMS DEFINED

Cultural Humility

Cultural humility involves an ongoing process of self-exploration and self-critique combined with a willingness to learn from others. It means entering a relationship with another person with the intention of honoring their beliefs, customs and values. It means acknowledging differences and accepting that person for who they are.

Source: *University of Oregon*, "[What is Cultural Humility?](#)" (accessed May 2024)

Cultural Wealth

An array of knowledges, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and used by communities of color to survive and resist racism and other forms of oppression.

Source: *MA DHE Strategic Plan for Racial Equity* (accessed June 2024)

Diversity

Individual differences (e.g., personality, prior knowledge and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin and ability as well as cultural, political, religious or other affiliations).

Source: *MA DHE Strategic Plan for Racial Equity* (accessed May 2024)

Equity

1. The creation of opportunities for underserved and racially minoritized populations to have equal access to and participate in educational programs that are capable of closing the achievement gaps in student success and completion.

Source: *MA DHE Strategic Plan for Racial Equity* (accessed May 2024)

2. The active process of identifying and eliminating or reducing the structural barriers related to race, class, disability and gender and other identities that limit access or prevent full participation in our institutions; it requires understanding the root cause(s) of disparities, identifying the barriers and redressing, particularly, the exclusion of historically underrepresented groups within our society. Equity works to ensure justice, access, opportunity and advancement for individuals within the policies, practices, procedures, processes and distribution of resources by institutions or systems.

Source: *NADOHE's Communication Guide* (accessed May 2024)



Inclusion

The intentional act to include difference and create environments where any individual or group is welcomed, respected, supported, valued and given the opportunity to fully participate. Inclusion fosters a sense of belonging through centering, valuing and amplifying the voices and perspectives of all individuals and includes eliminating practices and behaviors that marginalize groups of people or individuals.

Source: NADOHE's [Communication Guide](#) (accessed May 2024)

Sense of Belonging

The extent to which people know and feel that they are valued, respected, included and celebrated for their individual and unique contributions and identities.

Source: NADOHE's [Communication Guide](#) (accessed May 2024)

Shared Equity Leadership

In the shared equity leadership framework, a greater number of individuals engage in leadership across an institution and leverage multiple perspectives and expertise to transform conditions of campus inequity. The idea of this framework, informed by studying leaders at different types of institutions, is that broadly distributing leadership responsibilities and accountability helps equity work become less marginalized.

Source: American Council on Education, [Shared Equity Leadership](#) (accessed June 2024)

Additional terms are defined on BCC's website: berkshirecc.edu/deiglossary

AN INCLUSIVE PROCESS

OVERVIEW

2022

August

New Role at BCC- Director of DEI

September

October

November

December

“Sense of Belonging” SOAR Sessions

10

Student Sessions

7

Employee Sessions

2

Community Sessions



2023

January

February

March

April

HEDS Diversity & Climate Survey

May

June

July

August

President’s Cabinet Retreat



Philosophy of Inclusion Focus Groups

13

focus group sessions included

100

total participants

31

Students

20

Faculty

43

Staff

6

Community Members

261

Total participants representing

18.13%

of all employees & students

11%

of all students responded

19%

of all full-time and adjunct faculty responded

45%

of all staff and administrators responded



2023

Philosophy of Inclusion Feedback
and Climate Survey Results Sessions

41

Participants

September

October

November

Priorities & Commitments Working Session

13

Participants

December

2024

Five Strategies Sessions

30

Participants

January

Executive Council Meeting

February

Collaborative Strategy Drafts with Strategy Leads

March

President's Cabinet Presentation

April

College Campus Feedback

May

6

Sessions

50

Participants

In-depth Faculty Review (four faculty members)

June

25

Feedback Survey
Responses

July

President's Cabinet Final Review

STRATEGIES TABLE

THE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION ACTION PLAN

Nineteen strategies emerged from the inclusive process and discovery phase. The strategies were drafted by strategy leads through a SMART Goal process and were developed considering baseline data, benchmarks, and internal and external alignments as described in detail within the DEI Strategic Planning Report (see appendix).

Strategy leads (individual roles or departments) are responsible for ensuring progress and oversight of each strategy and are tasked to engage the appropriate stakeholders in the implementation. In all cases, strategies cannot be accomplished by the leads alone, but require commitment, time and expertise of the appropriate campus stakeholders as an integral part of their job responsibilities.



Priority 1: Foster a Culture of Belonging for All Members of the BCC Community

Commitment 1.A: Cultivate Opportunities for Connection and Recognition.

Strategy		Leads	Target Date	Progress Indicator
1.A.I	Launch a series of Connection and Belonging events designed to increase community belonging among BCC students and employees.	Coordinator of Student Diversity Programs and Belonging (SDPB) & Student Engagement and Communication Specialist	Launch 2025	Sense of Belonging Dignity Communication
1.A.II	Create a time block in the course schedule several days per week when there are no courses offered to increase access to community events and foster a sense of belonging.	VP of Academic Affairs (VPAA) & Director of Academic Operations	By fall 2026	
1.A.III	Establish and expand Employee Resource Groups.	Director of DEI & Employee Engagement and Talent Development Specialist	Continuing	
1.A.IV	Offer training and programs to recognize and support talent, skills and experience.	Human Resources	Continuing	

Commitment 1.B: Foster a Dynamic Learning Environment that Demonstrates and Encourages Cultural Humility.

Strategy		Leads	Target Date	Progress Indicator
1.B.I	Offer comprehensive personal and professional development, define equity terminology, and incorporate a commitment to equity in all job descriptions to promote a foundational understanding of Shared Equity Leadership across the campus.	Director of DEI & Title IX/ Affirmative Action	Continuing	Cultural Humility
1.B.II	Launch intentional, collaborative campus programs and events aligned with course curricula and in collaboration with faculty.	Coordinator of SDPB & Coordinator of Integrative Learning	Pilot in 2025	
1.B.III	Develop new equity-minded, student-centered and measurable General Education categories and outcomes.	General Education Task Force	By spring 2025	
1.B.IV	Remove barriers to accessing assistive technology and provide use of the Assessment and Testing Center for extended time on exams for all students (with and without documented disability).	Disabilities Resource Center & Dean of Teaching and Learning Innovation	By 2027	

Priority 2: Prioritize Safety, Dignity and Agency for All Members of the BCC Community.

Commitment 2.A: Strengthen Communication, Trust and Transparency.

Strategy		Leads	Target Date	Progress Indicator
2.A.I	Develop, introduce and provide training on an accessible framework and a process for decision-making that reflects equity-based best practices.	Strategic Initiatives & Office of Institutional Effectiveness	By 2026	Safety Agency
2.A.II	Identify and create a clear process by which students and faculty/staff can report incidents of discrimination and harassment.	Title IX/Affirmative Action & Dean of Students	By 2025	Communication

Commitment 2.B: Advance Equity Talk to Equity Walk.

Strategy		Leads	Target Date	Progress Indicator
2.B.I	President's Cabinet (PC) will participate in an online leadership circle with the American Council on Education on Shared Equity Leadership (SEL); equipped with this foundational understanding of SEL, PC will model and guide their teams in equity work across the campus.	Director of DEI & Assistant to President	By spring 2026	
2.B.II	Establish BCC's Social Justice Student and Community Advisory Boards comprising diverse groups of Berkshire County community members and BCC students.	Director of DEI & Coordinator of SDPB	Launch fall 2024	Accountability Dignity
2.B.III	Research and implement policy and process for inclusive demographic data collection and reporting to support transgender and non-binary students and employees as well as further disaggregated and expanded race/ethnicity categories.	Data Council & Data Stewards	TBD	Communication
2.B.IV	Develop a system for annual sharing of disaggregated course completion data with faculty and offer training in response to equity gaps.	VPAA & Assessment Faculty Fellow	Spring 2025	

Commitment 2.C: Establish a Community of Care.

Strategy		Leads	Target Date	Progress Indicator
2.C.I	Establish intergroup dialogue and healing/restorative circles for students and employees to build trust, foster positive relationships and promote healing, including an infrastructure to implement a mediation process.	Director of DEI & Faculty Lead	By 2027	Sense of Belonging Dignity Safety
2.C.II	Conduct a childcare feasibility study to explore and identify a variety of potential scenarios that can support students' and employees' needs for childcare.	Childcare Advocates Task Force	By 2026	
2.C.III	Identify the needs of, and benefits for, representatives of the Stockbridge Munsee, Band of Mohican Indians tribe members to cultivate a sustainable and meaningful relationship between BCC and the tribe.	Director of DEI & Coordinator of SDPB	Start fall 2024	
2.C.IV	Launch an employee mentoring program, including peer mentoring, to support professional development, growth, career satisfaction, employee recognition and meaningful relationships in the workplace.	Employee Engagement and Talent Development Specialist & Director of DEI	TBD	
2.C.V	Monitor and modify campus facilities, including but not limited to gender inclusive bathrooms and lactation spaces, changing tables, assistive technology, parking, ADA compliance, signage, furniture and more to reflect an inclusive campus for all members, with emphasis on historically marginalized populations.	Title IX/Affirmative Action & ED of Facilities	Continuing	



For more information about current and ongoing DEI efforts at BCC, please contact the Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Toni Buckley, abuckley@berkshirecc.edu.

APPENDIX

DEI STRATEGIC PLANNING REPORT

AN INCLUSIVE PROCESS

During the planning process of BCC's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan in the spring of 2022, and as a focus area within Strategic Goal 4, *Equitable Institutional Innovation & Sustainability*, under Objective C, *Diversify the College workplace and promote a culture of belonging*, the College committed to creating a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Strategic Plan. In March 2023, a team of DEI Strategic Plan Co-Leads was formed to support the College's Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the facilitation of an inclusive discovery process to design the College's first DEI Strategic Plan.

Milestones

“Sense of Belonging” SOAR Sessions

When the inaugural Director of DEI started in August 2022, they decided to facilitate a listening tour across campus by hosting a series of SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) sessions, a framework used during the strategic planning process in 2021 with which the campus community was already familiar. The Director of DEI facilitated 19 sessions during the fall 2022 semester: 10 student, 7 employee and 2 community sessions. This semi-formal process was a first touch point to listen to BCC's constituents and discover their perceptions of the College's strengths and opportunities regarding the culture and sense of belonging, the participants' aspirations for BCC's future, and what those results might look like.

The intention of these sessions was to get a first impression rather than an in-depth analysis. Participation was not tracked beyond the number of sessions and group affiliation.

SOAR Sessions Overview

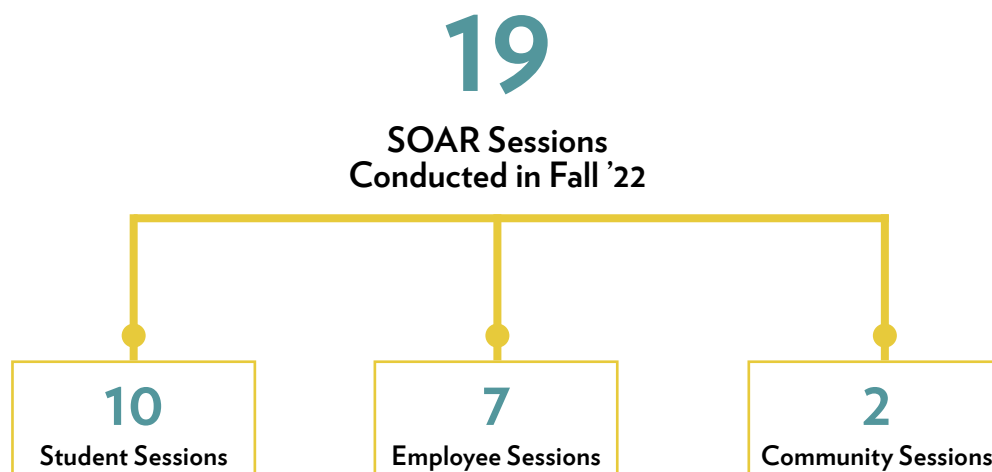


Figure 1: SOAR Sessions Details, 2022

Diversity & Equity Climate Survey

In April 2023, BCC administered its first Diversity and Equity Climate survey. Designed and administered by the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS), the survey asks students, faculty, staff and administrators about their:

- perceptions of their institution's climate,
- perceptions of how their institution supports diversity and equity, and
- experiences with discrimination and harassment at their institution.

The need for a self-assessment survey focused on diversity, equity and inclusion was identified during the strategic planning process in spring 2022 and included in the institutional Strategic Plan as Focus IV.C.1. After researching and reviewing various climate surveys, including the input and support of the Director of DEI, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, the Director of Strategic Initiatives and the Student Success Assessment and Research Analyst, the College selected the HEDS Diversity & Equity Climate survey (here referred to as the "Climate Survey") as the appropriate survey instrument for the needs of BCC.

To ensure sufficient participation and response rates, a comprehensive communication plan was developed and executed, including email communications to employees from the College President and Director of DEI, email communication from the Vice President of Academic Affairs to faculty, and email/text reminders to students from the Dean of Students. Presentations leading up to the administration period were given at all campus townhalls, Academic Assemblies and department meetings. In addition, details were shared with MCCC and AFSCME union leadership to ensure open and transparent communication. To encourage student participation, the DEI Strategic Plan Co-Leads conducted nine classroom visits to share the significance of the survey with students. In addition, the co-leads tabled at several student-centered events and hosted two pizza luncheons during which iPads were available for students to complete the survey on the spot.

The implications of the Climate Survey's responses are explained in further detail below within the rationale for Priorities 1 and 2.

Challenges and Limitations – Participation:

The participation rate in the Climate Survey was slightly below the national average at 11% for students, 19% for faculty and 45% for staff/administrators.

While the response rate to the Climate Survey was comparable to other institutional surveys (e.g., the participation rate for Great Colleges to Work for Survey), participation in the Climate Survey, as well as in focus groups and other engagement opportunities throughout the DEI strategic planning process, has faced challenges and limitations.

Berkshire Community College's students differ from traditional students at residential four-year schools. More than 55% of students are 23 years and older, and they often have many other responsibilities such as childcare and work. Students do not live on campus, and many attend the college for courses without engaging in extracurricular offerings. This results in competing priorities for BCC's students and creates barriers to engagements that are not directly connected to nor required for course completion and academic success.

BCC's students have also shown signs of "survey fatigue" due to increased requests for data for reporting purposes (e.g., for grants or state requirements). While surveys to students are often funneled through Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, there are other areas of the College that can reach students directly to request feedback and input via surveys. An institutional priority within the College's Strategic Plan 2022-27 (II.B.2) is to develop a data governance structure, including an institutional assessment calendar, that will streamline institutional assessment and increase data integrity.

In addition to challenges in engaging students, BCC's MCCC union employees (professional staff as well as faculty) have been on work-to-rule throughout the entirety of the DEI strategic planning process. This on-the-job action advises union members to fulfill the minimum college service requirements and not to volunteer for additional college service activities (click [here](#) for more information). This has not only limited participation in the planning process, but it might also impact union members' feeling of ownership and, with that, potentially negatively impact the implementation of strategies in the future. It is important to emphasize the complexity

of ensuring an inclusive process when many constituents do not have access to participation. In addition, the value of unions in the support of equity work, including reducing racial wage gaps, is aligned with the purpose of this plan. To be inclusive of all groups of employees, and to respect the right of union members to limit participation to minimum college service, DEI Strategic Plan Co-Leads offered opportunities to engage during regularly scheduled department meetings, Academic Assembly meetings and Professional Day sessions. A final in-depth review of the plan to provide feedback was conducted by a group of four faculty members who were compensated for their time.

Despite the challenges and limitations mentioned above, participation of staff/administrators was comparable to other institutional surveys in the past and can be attributed to the comprehensive outreach and communication plan as well as the general perception within higher education “that diversity on campus improves experiences and interactions within the classroom, the workplace, and the overall community” (HEDS Diversity & Equity Climate Survey).

Perspective on Diversity

To what extent do you agree that diversity on campus improves experiences and interactions within the classroom, the workplace, and the overall community?

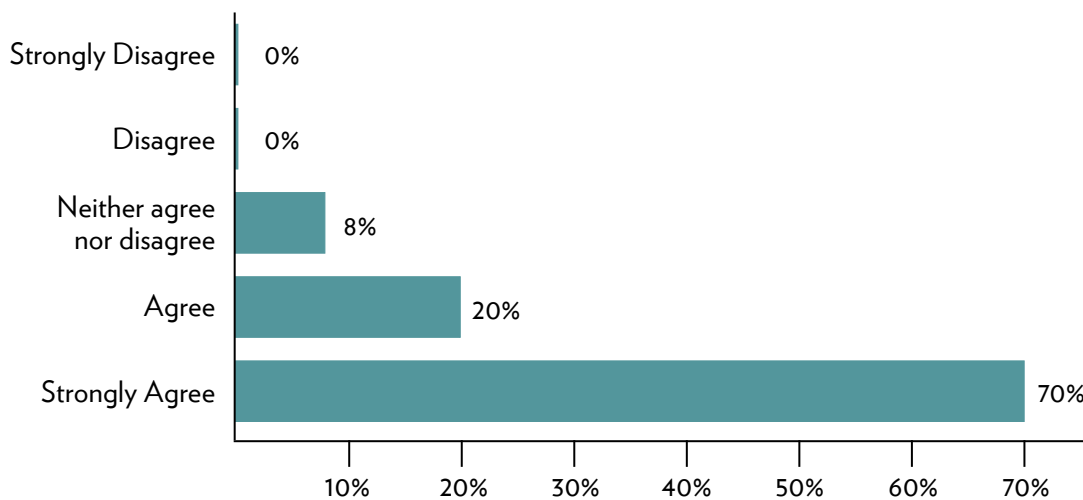


Figure 2: Perspective on Diversity, HEDS Diversity & Equity Climate Survey 2023

Philosophy of Inclusion Focus Groups

Between May and August 2023, the DEI Strategic Plan Co-Leads, with the support of eight BCC internal volunteer facilitators, conducted 13 focus group sessions with a total of 100 participants to collect qualitative data and language to inform the DEI Strategic Plan and to draft the College’s first Philosophy of Inclusion. The groups were separated by role (31 students, 43 staff/administrators, 20 faculty, 6 community members), and each session was conducted by one facilitator and one note-taker. To ensure a safer environment in which participants could share freely, sessions were not recorded. Community agreements were shared at the beginning of each session, and participants were asked to adhere to those agreements. Notes were taken without the recording of participants’ names to ensure anonymity. During each session, the following questions were asked:

- How does it feel to be included?
- How does it feel to be excluded?
- When do you feel included at BCC?
- When do you feel excluded at BCC?
- Is there anything else you’d like to share with us?

A theming process revealed four major inclusion/exclusion themes, and the emphasis on belonging and mattering for BCC's community members emerged. The four themes were:

- Safety / Lack of Safety
- Value / Devaluation
- Connection / Social Isolation
- Agency / Powerlessness

The notes from all 13 sessions, as well as the themes discovered in the analysis, informed the draft of BCC's Philosophy of Inclusion, collaboratively written by the College's Coordinator for Writing Across the Curriculum and one of BCC's English professors.

President's Cabinet Retreat

In August 2023, quantitative and qualitative data collected during the discovery phase were presented at the annual President's Cabinet retreat. The leadership team reviewed the findings and, through an interactive group exercise, created four draft versions of DEI strategic priorities.

Campus Feedback Sessions

In November and December 2023, the results of the Diversity and Equity Climate Survey were shared with the campus, and feedback on the Philosophy of Inclusion was collected through eight virtual sessions. In addition, three meetings with students were held to collect their suggestions and edits for the Philosophy of Inclusion draft.

"Equity Change Agents" Working Session

In November 2023, a group of 13 employees from across the campus, who were chosen based on their prior engagement in work that directly connects to the proposed themes and topics, gathered to finalize the two priorities and five commitments of the DEI Strategic Plan (see page 13).

Strategies Sessions

In January and February 2024, five sessions with a total of 30 college employees were hosted, each under the umbrella of one of the commitments. Participants discussed the opportunities they saw emerge from the discovery phase of the last year and brainstormed concrete actions and strategies to achieve the strategic priorities. Many of the strategies included in this plan emerged during these sessions.



Figure 3: Main Themes, Philosophy of Inclusion Focus Groups 2023



Additional Data

Achieving the Dream (ATD) Institutional Capacity Assessment

The Achieving the Dream Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT) is an online self-assessment to help colleges assess areas of strength and improvement in the Institutional Capacity Framework. Institutions may also use the tool to measure changes in capacity over time. Institutions that complete the assessment tool benefit from insight on the key capacities for success; engagement of stakeholders from all areas of the college in using a common language to share opinions and discuss perception gaps; prioritization of areas to improve; and the development of strategies to build strength (see [ATD Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool](#)). The self-assessment was administered in fall 2021, and 98 responses were submitted. BCC scored Level 3 on all seven capacity areas. Level 3 is defined as “strong level of capacity in place.”

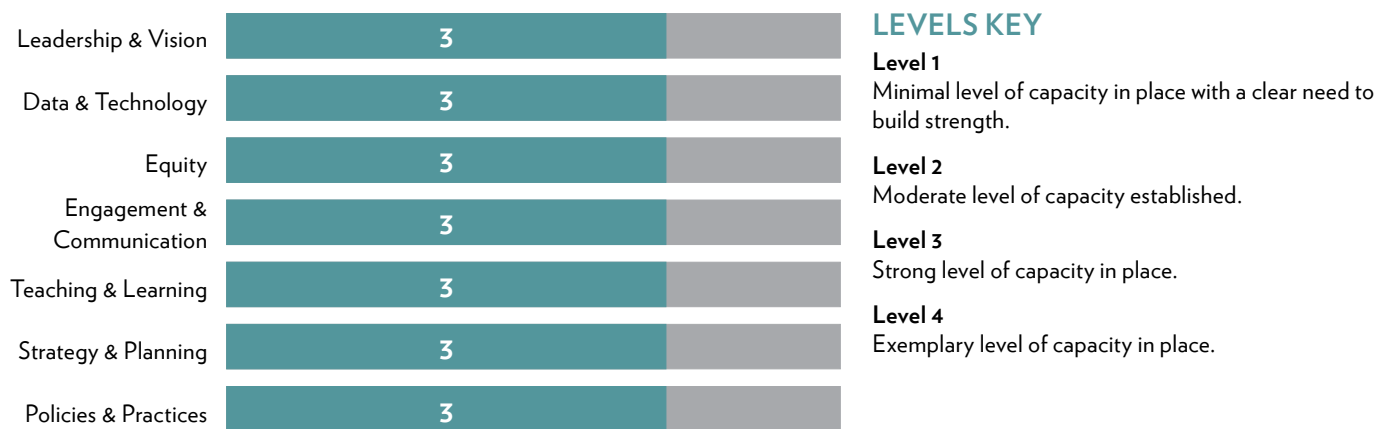


Figure 4: ATD Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool, Fall 2021

Great Colleges to Work for Survey

Since 2015, every other year, BCC has participated in the Great Colleges to Work for Survey, which is “designed to recognize colleges that have been successful in creating great workplaces and to further research and understand the factors, dynamics and influences that have the most impact on organizational culture in higher education” ([Chronicle of Higher Ed survey description](#), accessed April 2024). It is a faculty and staff survey measuring satisfaction across 10 core dimensions:

1. **Job Satisfaction & Support** provides insight into the satisfaction with job fit, autonomy and resources.
2. **Professional Development** measures acknowledgment and support of individual development needs.
3. **Faculty & Staff Wellbeing** measures employee wellbeing and ultimately employee engagement.
4. **Performance Management** measures the efficiency of policies, procedures and processes within the college, and evaluates the college’s efforts in employee recognition.
5. **Supervisors/Department Chairs Effectiveness** provides insight into the relationship employees report with their department chair or supervisor.
6. **Communication** assesses the quality of internal communications specifically related to transparency, clarity and interactivity.
7. **Collaboration** measures the perceived cooperation and collegiality within workgroups and across the college.
8. **Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging** gauges employee perceptions of the levels of diversity, inclusion and belonging at the college.
9. **Mission & Pride** evaluates the sense of pride and connection employees report regarding their affiliation with the college.
10. **Confidence in Senior Leadership** measures the confidence employees report in the capabilities and credibility of senior leadership.

In 2022, the response rate of employees was 34% with 96 respondents; in 2019, it was 48.7% with 134 respondents.

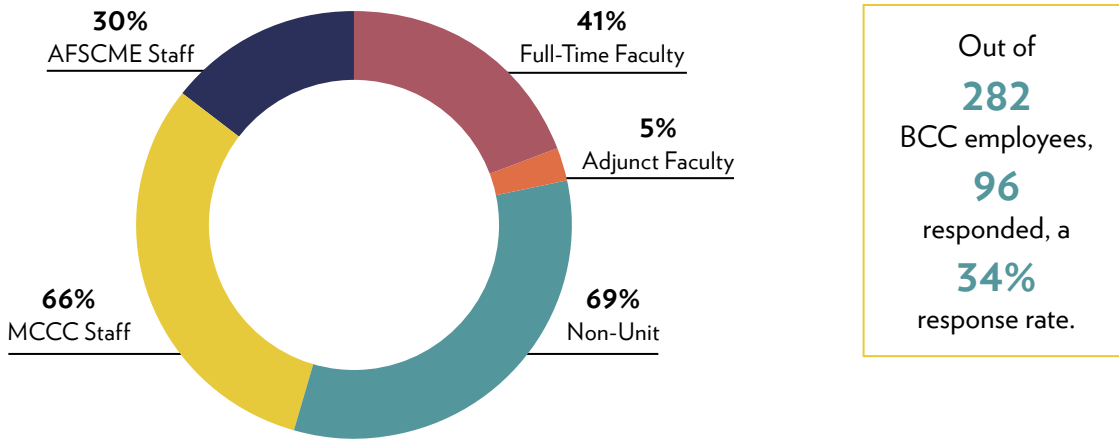


Figure 5: Great Colleges to Work For Survey Participation 2022

The HOPE Center: Student Basic Needs Survey 2023

The Hope Center’s Student Basic Needs Survey was administered for the first time at BCC in the fall of 2023 to students with a response rate of 25% (305 students participated). The survey is designed “to raise awareness about the types of prevalence of student basic needs insecurity on college campuses and to provide actionable data that partners can use to advocate for students and improve services” (see [The Hope Center Basic Needs Survey](#)). The Hope Survey, which is the only institutional survey administered by BCC that addresses parenting students’ specific needs for childcare, showed that 89% of respondents who are parenting students perceive childcare in the Berkshires as “unaffordable.” The survey also showed that parenting students are more than 50% more likely to experience housing insecurity compared to non-parenting students and more than twice as likely to miss or underpay their mortgage or rent.

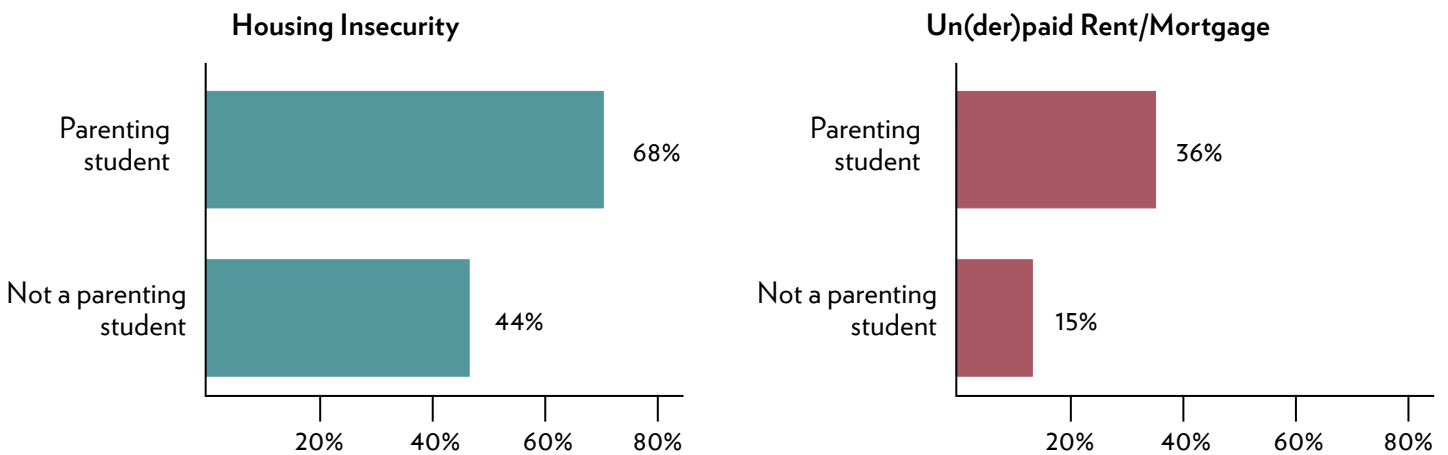


Figure 6: The Hope Survey, Housing Insecurity (left) and Un(der)paid rent/mortgage (right)

Massachusetts Community College Equity Consortium

Supported by the DHE's Higher Education Initiative Funds, BCC has been part of the Massachusetts Community College Equity Consortium since its inception in 2021. As part of that effort, participating colleges each completed an annual "Equity Inventory to explore current DEI/racial equity policies and practices across Massachusetts community college system" (see [Massachusetts Community College 2023 Equity Inventory Report](#)). Key findings across the 13 participating community colleges that were highlighted in the report and have informed this plan are:

- Opportunities to "increase implementation of many DEI policies and practices comprehensively by all stakeholders or institution-wide," rather than by individual faculty/staff or some departments.
- In general, the community colleges more frequently reported implementing DEI recruitment and hiring policies and practices compared with DEI practices/policies related to curriculum, instruction, and scholarship.
- In general, community colleges more frequently reported implementing DEI programs, policies, and practices intentionally serving their students of color compared with their employees of color.



PRIORITY 1 RATIONALE: **Foster a Culture of Belonging for All Members of the BCC Community**

Summary

Over the last decade, students' and employees' sense of belonging within institutions has suffered through myriad factors that affected organizations throughout the United States and beyond. The implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of students (see [BestColleges "College Student Mental Health Report"](#)) and employees (see [neaToday](#)) remain heightened amid "deepened pre-existing educational inequities caused by systemic barriers" (see [Gee, Asmundson and Vang, University of California, Davis](#)). The racial reckoning after the murder of George Floyd in 2020 and the #MeToo Movement in 2017 changed the awareness and expectations for equitable opportunities, treatment and justice of groups that have historically been marginalized, including BIPOC, women and LGBTQ+ and gender non-conforming individuals. With Generation Z entering the workforce, the expectation of work-life-balance has evolved, and the still ongoing retirement wave of the baby boomer generation paired with the "Great Resignation in Higher Ed" (see [Inside Higher Ed](#)) of the last few years has led to national trends of large turnover of employees and a loss of community within the workplace. The sense of belonging and community on campuses has also been impacted by the increase of courses taught online and hybrid work schedules that have decreased the presence of students and employees on the physical college campus. At the same time, classes taught online are providing increased access to learning, and hybrid work schedules have been shown to increase employees' job satisfaction and reduce resignation rates (see [Nature](#)).

To evaluate and discover the internal factors that impact a sense of belonging at BCC, the College, led by the Director of DEI and a team of DEI Strategic Plan Co-Leads, facilitated an inclusive discovery process as described in detail above.

Detailed Analysis and Strategic Response

Survey Insights and Strategic Implications

In April 2023, BCC administered its first Diversity and Equity Climate Survey through the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS) to students, faculty and administrators. Students indicated an overwhelming satisfaction rate (either very satisfied or generally satisfied) of 90% for the overall campus climate, and 82% for feeling a sense of belonging/community at BCC. That is 6% higher than the average satisfaction rate of other in the survey participating two-year public institutions. In comparison, 53% of faculty and 68% of staff/administrators reported being satisfied with the overall climate at the College. Compared to other two-year public institutions, BCC's faculty satisfaction rate was 23% lower and staff satisfaction rate was 7% lower for the overall campus climate. Faculty satisfaction rate for feeling a sense of belonging, compared to other public two-year institutions, was 8% higher, while staff satisfaction in this category was 2% lower.

“Offer more college-wide activities that are fun and include faculty, staff, and students. The Trivia event was an inclusive event that brought people together in a comfortable, fun atmosphere. I got to meet and interact with people I may not otherwise have the opportunity. Experience is as important as specific training.”

—HEDS Diversity & Equity Climate Survey 2023, staff/administrator

Overall Campus Climate by Role

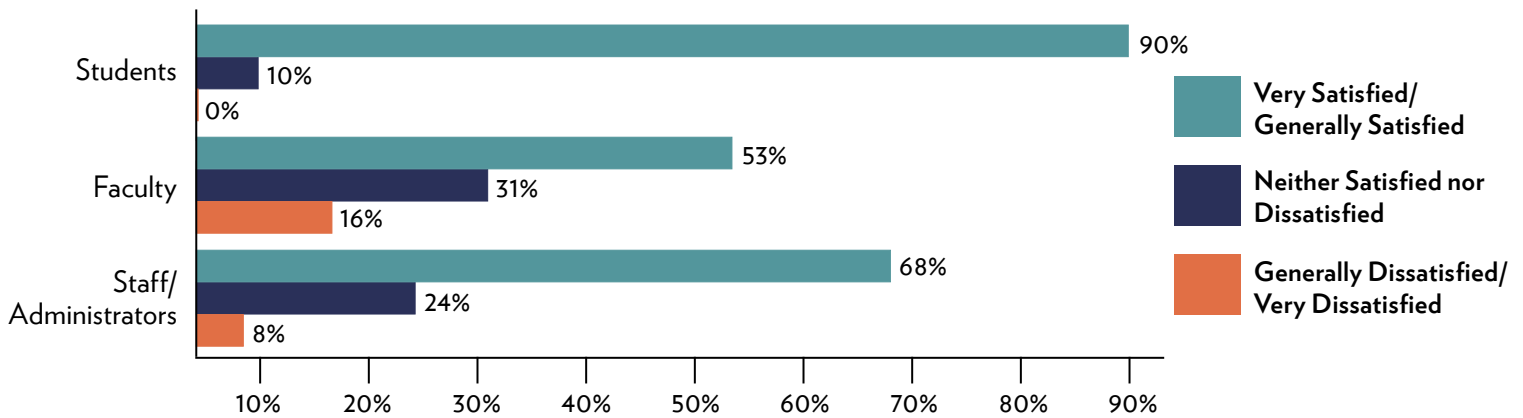


Figure 7: Overall Campus Climate, by Role, HEDS Diversity & Equity Climate Survey 2023

Overall Campus Climate Generally Satisfied and Very Satisfied

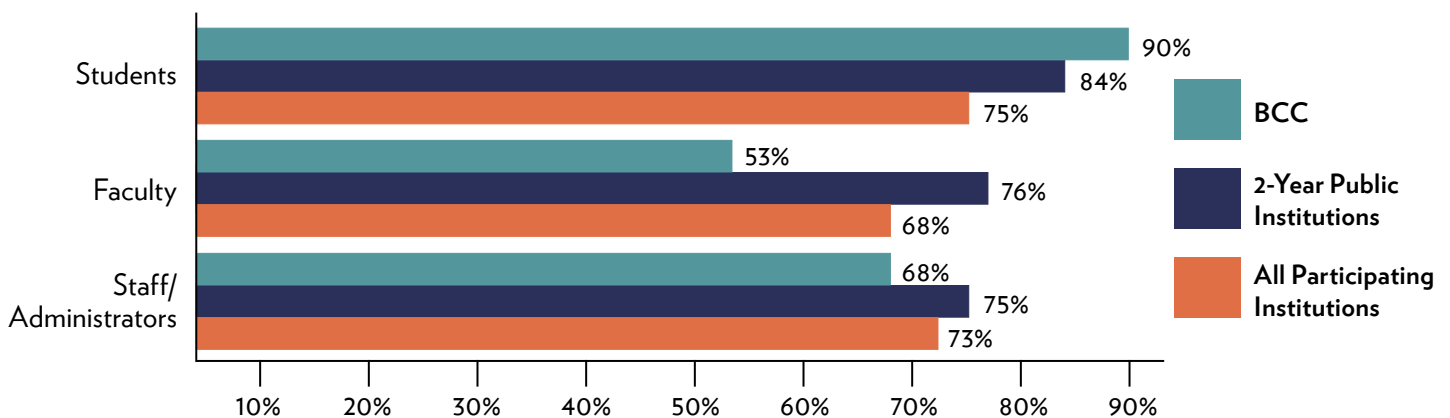


Figure 8: Overall Campus Climate, Generally Satisfied and Very Satisfied, HEDS Diversity & Equity Climate Survey 2023

Sense of Belonging/Community Generally Satisfied and Very Satisfied

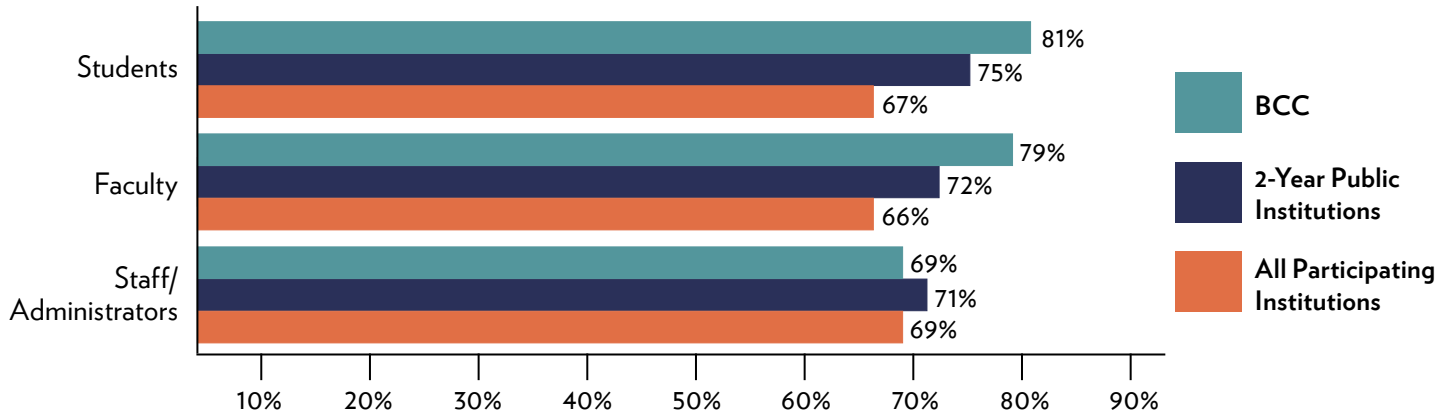


Figure 9: Sense of Belonging/Community, Generally Satisfied and Very Satisfied, HEDS Diversity & Equity Climate Survey 2023

Priority 1 emphasizes the need to foster a culture of belonging for all members of the BCC community and, through that, enhance the overall campus climate. Traditionally across institutions and sectors, organizational initiatives to increase a sense of belonging have been informed by a Eurocentric culture, focused on and executed for the dominant racial group. In alignment with state and national frameworks (see appendix section External Alignments), BCC acknowledges the necessity to center the needs of those community members who have been historically marginalized. Strategies 1.A.I “Connection and Belonging Events,” 1.A.II “Adjust Course Schedule” and 1.A.III “Employee Resource Groups” (see Strategies Table above) directly address the need to increase a culture of belonging and create opportunities for students and employees at the College. Strategy 1.A.I is directly aligned with and supports Foci I.C.3 in the Institutional Strategic Plan and builds upon the work already established within Student Engagement and Student Diversity Programming and Belonging. In addition to the Strategies in Priority 1, several strategies in Priority 2 will also contribute to an enhanced campus climate through strengthened trust and communication and a community of care on campus.

Recognition and Connection Enhancements

The Great Colleges to Work for Survey by the Chronicle of Higher Education has been utilized as an institutional evaluation tool at BCC and has been administered every other year since 2015. The survey was “designed to recognize colleges that have been successful in creating great workplaces and to further research and understand the factors, dynamics, and influences that have the most impact on organizational culture in higher education” (Chronicle of Higher Ed survey description).

The survey section “Performance Management” directly addresses employees’ perception of employee recognition at BCC. While BCC’s employee satisfaction rates have shown improvement by 7% from 2019 to 2022, the persistence of acute concerns indicates the need for a more robust approach. Some aspects of performance management for union members, like review process and promotion, are subject to union contracts and collective bargaining and are not within the direct influence of the organization.

“When my experience and perspective are valued and welcome, I feel like I have a voice, a purpose, a place, and a responsibility.”
–Philosophy of Inclusion Focus Group Notes, Open Campus Session

Performance Management

Warrants Attention	I am regularly recognized for my contributions. (54%)
Warrants Attention	Our review process accurately measures my job performance. (48%)
Acute	Issues of low performance are addressed in my department. (43%)
Acute	Promotions in my department are based on a person’s performance. (42%)
Acute	Our recognition and awards programs are meaningful to me. (37%)

Figure 10: Great Colleges to Work for Survey Results 2023

To address these concerns, BCC will incorporate best practices from institutions with successful recognition programs and adapt these best practices to the needs of the College (Strategy 1.A.IV). The survey was administered again in spring 2024 (results pending), and the College will continue to use this tool on a biannual basis to measure progress. The need for improved efforts to increase participation in the survey was identified after low response rates.

Employee recognition is an essential strategy that can drive employee engagement, productivity, and retention as documented in *“The Gratitude Gap: 2023 State of Recognition Report” by the Achievers Workforce Institute*. It is one of many factors impacting employee retention. In addition to strategies within Priority 2, and many other internal and external factors (not within the reach of the organization), employee retention data should be used cautiously as a proxy indicator to measure the impact of recognition programs and initiatives.

In addition to employee recognition, onboarding of new employees was identified as an area of acute concern in the Professional Development section in the Great Colleges to Work for Survey in 2019 and 2022: “Our onboarding process prepare new faculty and staff to be effective” (35% positive response rate). Onboarding was also consistently mentioned during the SOAR “Sense of Belonging” Sessions and within the Climate Survey as one change to increase a sense of community at BCC. These findings are in alignment with the strategic focus area in BCC’s 2022-2027 Strategic Plan to “recruit, onboard and retain a diverse workforce” (IV.C.5). Due to that prior strategic focus and the progress of creating a specific recruitment, onboarding and retention plan by the Human Resource department, onboarding was not included in the DEI strategic initiatives within this plan. Strategy 1.A.III “Employee Resource Groups” as well as 2.C.IV “Employee Mentoring Program” are directly aligned with Foci IV.C.5 in the Institutional Strategic Plan and support recruitment, onboarding and retention of a diverse workforce.

Four major inclusion and exclusion themes emerged from the Philosophy of Inclusion Focus Groups in spring/summer 2023:

- safety/lack of safety,
- value/devaluation,
- connection/social isolation,
- agency/powerlessness.

Informed by qualitative analysis of the focus groups as well as external research, the pictured Inclusion Model emerged and emphasized the interconnectedness of safety and connection to create a sense of belonging. A similar connection emerged for value and agency leading to a feeling of mattering for individuals.

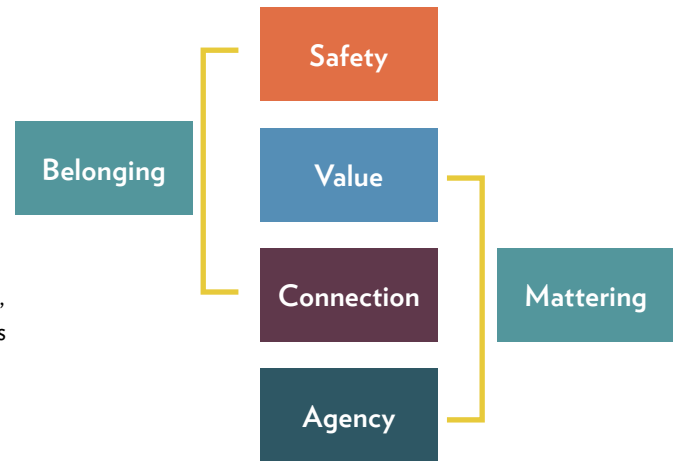


Figure 11: Inclusion Model, Philosophy of Inclusion Focus Groups 2023

Similar themes became apparent within the SOAR “Sense of Belonging” Sessions in fall 2022 and the open-ended responses in the HEDS Diversity & Equity Climate survey in April 2023. Especially within the April 2023 survey, responses to the question “What one change would you make in order to enhance the sense of community at BCC?” from students and employees alike emphasized the need for more opportunities to connect with each other.

“More functions that involve college as whole (dinners, movie nights, activity days).”
 –Student response to “What one change would you make in order to enhance the sense of community at BCC?” in the HEDS Diversity & Equity Climate Survey 2023

“I’d have more community-building events for fun, something where random people can work together towards a challenge/game and win some small prizes. I feel like we already do things similar to this.”
 –Response to “What one change would you make in order to enhance the sense of community at BCC?” in the HEDS Diversity & Equity Climate Survey 2023

Ageism is one negative theme identified in the HEDS Diversity and Equity Climate survey results in 2023. Strategies 1.A.III “Employee Resource Groups” and 1.A.IV “A Culture of Recognition” (as well as staff mentoring in Priority 2) address the value and recognition of more senior employees. Age diversity is essential to being an inclusive campus and can “improve operational efficiency, enhance innovation, and grow the bottom line” (see Harvard Business Review’s [Bridging Generational Divides in Your Workplace](#)”).

Especially when attempting to measure the impact of recognition and connection on employee retention, annual Philosophy of Inclusion focus groups will be important to identify potential changes resulting from the strategies of the DEI Strategic Plan. In addition, the College committed to administering the HEDS Diversity and Equity Climate survey every three years with its next administration in 2026 to measure the impact of the DEI Strategic Plan on the overall climate and the sense of belonging and connection for BCC students and employees.

Dynamic Learning Environment and Cultural Humility: Expanding DEI Training

“I would make DEI campus trainings mandatory and although I know that may not be possible, it seems the folks who don’t go to the training are the ones who need it the most.”

–Staff/administrator’s response to “What one change would you make in order to enhance the sense of community at BCC?” in the HEDS Diversity & Equity Climate Survey 2023

BCC’s Philosophy of Inclusion focus groups, together with the College’s mission and five organizational values that emphasize the importance of diversity and inclusion, seek to “ensure individuals are welcomed, acknowledged and celebrated for their authentic selves.” This emphasis has informed the commitment to a dynamic learning environment that demonstrates and encourages cultural humility – within the classroom as well as across campus.

Cultural humility is defined as “a practice of self-reflection on how one’s own background and the background of others, impact teaching, learning, research, creative activity, engagement, leadership, etc.” (University of Oregon, [What is Cultural Humility? The Basics](#)). Cultural humility, as an institutional commitment, emerged from the Philosophy of Inclusion Focus Groups and is an essential part of BCC’s Philosophy of Inclusion: “Because a dynamic learning environment demonstrates and encourages curiosity, accountability, self-reflection and a willingness to consider new concepts and different perspectives, we recognize that security and respect are essential to fostering an atmosphere of meaningful engagement and growth.”

The strategies designed to serve Commitment 1.B are best practices, including High Impact Practices (HIP’s) (Strategy 1.B.II “Launch intentional, collaborative campus programs and events aligned with course curricula” and 1.B.III “Equity-minded General Education”) and professional development initiatives focused on Shared Equity Leadership (SEL) (Strategy 1.B.I “Offer comprehensive Personal and Professional Development”) that have been proven to be effective through extensive external research (e.g., [American Council of Education and Pullias Institute Report Series on SEL](#)). Strategy 1.B.I aligns with and supports Foci IV.C.3 “A Culture of Innovation and Growth” in the Institutional Strategic Plan. The progress of these strategies will be measured through tracking of participation, participatory surveys and proxy indicators like student success and completion data, student artifact assessment, and HR recruitment, advancement and retention data.

The need for more DEI-specific professional development emerged from the HEDS Diversity and Climate survey, in which 14% of the open-ended responses to the question “What one word or sentence would you use to describe the sense of community you feel at BCC?” were coded as “In Process,” including responses like, “People use equity talk (occasionally) but are not fully committed to equity walk (yet)” and the request for “...ongoing comprehensive training in DEI.” The need for an increase of anti-racism content in coursework was identified within the Massachusetts Community College Equity Consortium Equity Inventory and is addressed in Strategy 1.B.III “Equity-minded Gen Ed Categories and Outcomes.”

In January 2024, BCC implemented a required annual “Recruitment Strategies: Implicit Bias and Culture” training for search committee members. Support for the training and requests for more DEI trainings have been voiced, as seen within the Recruitment Strategies feedback survey, which has been submitted by 46 of the 106 training participants.

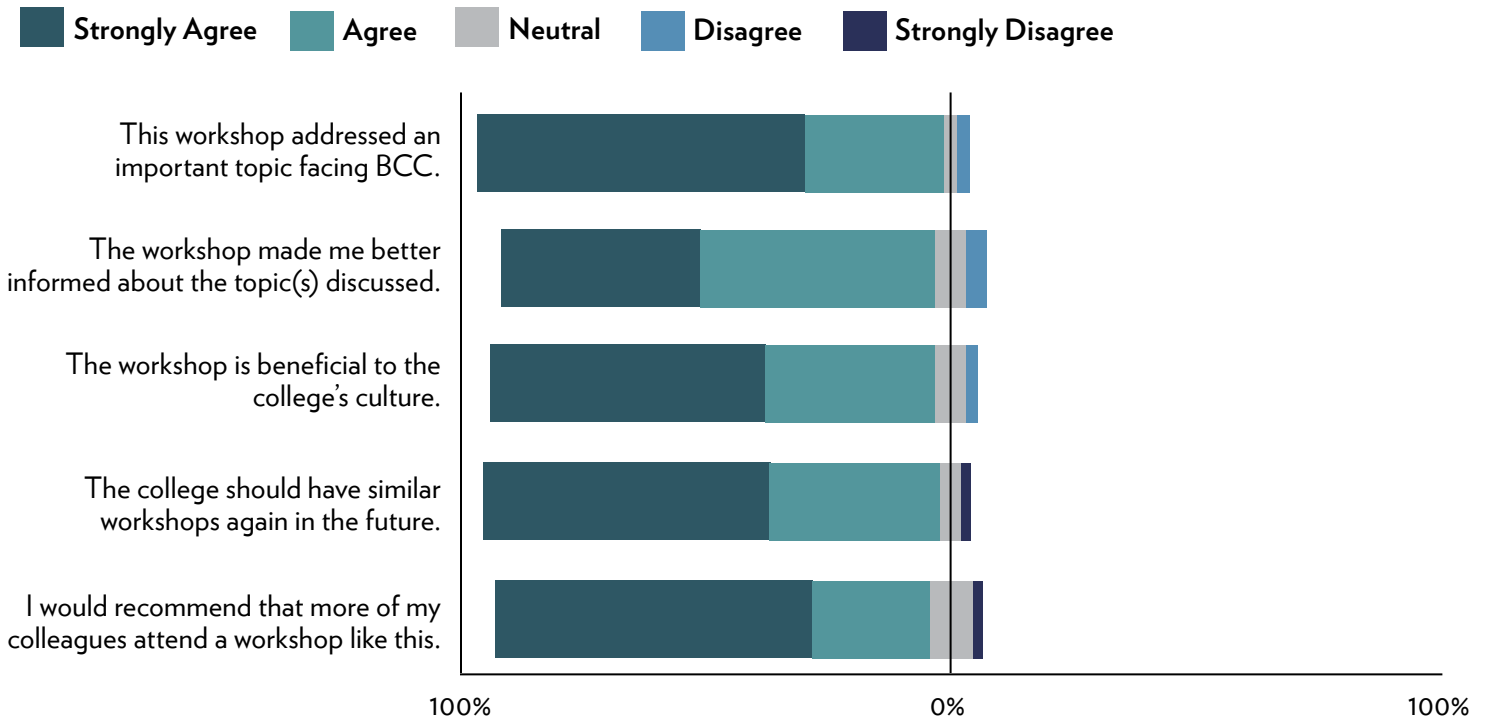


Figure 12: Implicit Bias Workshop Feedback Survey, accessed May 2024

Strategies 1.B.II “Launch intentional, collaborative campus programs and events aligned with course curricula” and 1.B.IV “Universal Access to Assistive Technology” are designed to increase access to experiential learning opportunities and assistive technology for all students and to remove barriers to student success. These strategies are based on historic numbers of participation in events on campus as well as a recorded increase in requests received by the Disabilities Resource Center, including an increase of students without documented disability. Both strategies are aligned with BCC’s institutional strategic plan and the Massachusetts DHE’s goal to remove barriers and increase access for students of historically marginalized backgrounds.

Strategies in Commitment 1.B build upon a strong foundation of past and present initiatives throughout the College. Examples range from strategic and cross-campus efforts to increase, encourage and resource the use of OER (Open Educational Resources) to the annual “Stories for Good” event, hosted by BCC’s DEI Council, and many more. OER has been shown to help close equity gaps for students from historically marginalized communities and to increase diverse and inclusive representation within the course curriculum (see [The University of Memphis](#), including research on OER & DEI). “Stories for Good” is hosted by faculty and staff volunteers to “highlight diversity on campus and celebrate the ways in which our diversity makes us stronger. By coming together, we can build connections through stories that explore, celebrate and analyze our different identities, and consider what it means to support each other in a diverse community” (see [Stories for Good](#)).

PRIORITY 2 RATIONALE: Prioritize Safety, Dignity and Agency for All Members of the BCC Community

Summary

While Priority 1 focuses on connection and recognition to foster a sense of belonging and community, this focus is also intertwined with giving people the opportunity to feel safe on campus. At the same time, safety, dignity and agency are essential to feeling a sense of belonging. These priorities are interconnected and dependent on each other. Strategies within each priority aim to support multiple facets of the DEI strategic priorities and commitments and cannot be fully separated or approached in silos.

Priority 2 emerged from the Philosophy of Inclusion Focus Group Sessions in 2023 after conversations with a total of 100 participants, including students, faculty, staff and community members. The recurring themes of safety, dignity and agency were also reflected within the responses to the HEDS Diversity and Equity Climate and the Great Colleges to Work For surveys.

Disentangling Safety from Comfort

Colleges are spaces that cultivate critical thinking, growth and change, and with that can and should create levels of discomfort. While safety and comfort are related, they are not the same, and it is important to distinguish and disentangle them from each other. Change is almost always uncomfortable, but it is the responsibility of educators to create a space and environment where students can feel safe to lean into that discomfort. Without it, change and learning cannot happen. “Feeling safe while feeling comfortable encourages the status quo. ... Feeling uncomfortable while at the same time experiencing a high level of safety allows for growth” (see Levy, *Disentangling Safety From Comfort*, Live Oak, 2017, accessed June 2024). While we often distinguish psychological safety from physical safety, we acknowledge that they are not separate from each other. Trauma, fear and (emotional) pain manifest in physical ways. Physical threats and harm can get stuck in body, heart and mind (see *Menakem, My Grandmother’s Hands*, Central Recovery Press, 2017).

Many strategies in this priority support creating an environment in which students and employees can feel safe to bring their authentic selves (see *BCC’s Institutional Value of Diversity & Inclusion*) to the College and allow them to be vulnerable. Establishing safety takes time and requires that vulnerability is encountered with respect. Only if we can create a space that is safe, respectful and uncomfortable, will we be able to create meaningful change within ourselves and for our students.

Detailed Analysis and Strategic Response

Survey Insights and Strategic Implications

Safety, dignity and agency are essential to students’ and employees’ sense of belonging, well being, and academic and professional success (see *National Center for Safe Supportive Learning Environments* and “*Project Aristotle*” by Google). Measuring these aspects of the human experience is inherently difficult. Sections within the HEDS Diversity and Equity Climate survey and the Great Colleges to Work For survey reflect these experiences and feelings and have informed many strategies in this priority. The Philosophy of Inclusion Focus Groups results highlighted the significant impact of safety, dignity and agency on the experience of students and employees on campus and will be used to continue to measure the progress of strategies.

From Structure and Practice to Culture Shift

“You give a part of yourself to the college and to your work, and when you’re included, you want to give more. I feel included when I have autonomy, I’m not micromanaged, and my expertise is valued, not treated like a cookie cutter.”

–*Philosophy of Inclusion Focus Group Notes, Employees*

“Express yourself without feeling like you will be judged.”

–*Philosophy of Inclusion Focus Group Notes, Students*

“There is a burden to explain why I should be included and there is a risk in speaking up.”

–Philosophy of Inclusion Focus Group Notes, Employees

“Transparency with making decisions even if it is not the one they wanted but to understand why. Explain the decision.”

–Philosophy of Inclusion Focus Group Notes, Employees

“Increase trust by improving the honesty and transparency of communication between different groups of people.”

–Faculty response to “What one change would you make in order to enhance the sense of community at BCC?” in the HEDS Diversity & Equity Climate Survey 2023

Strategy 2.A.I “Equity-Minded Decision-Making Framework” will help BCC employees on all levels and across the organization to:

- Ask strategic equity and inclusion questions at every decision point
- Engage and empower diverse teams to gather evidence, hear from the impacted community, and help identify viable and sustainable alternatives and recommendations
- Highlight core values
- Engage community members most impacted by the decision so that they have an authentic voice in the process
- Communicate early and transparently
- Assess the “equity impact” for decision-making (see [UVA, Inclusive Excellence, Toolkit for Equity-Minded Decisions & Policies](#)).

Strategy 2.A.I was informed by the responses of the Great Colleges to Work For Survey results in 2019 and 2022. “I can speak up or challenge a traditional way of doing something without fear of harming my career” decreased from 2019 at 52% to 47% in 2022. During the Philosophy of Inclusion Focus Group with President’s Cabinet, members reflected on general reasons for individuals feeling a sense of exclusion. Those statements, which were not specific to BCC but were examples expressing general human experiences, included “decisions without consulting those who have to implement,” “policy enacted without feedback” and “making decisions without seeking expert advice.”

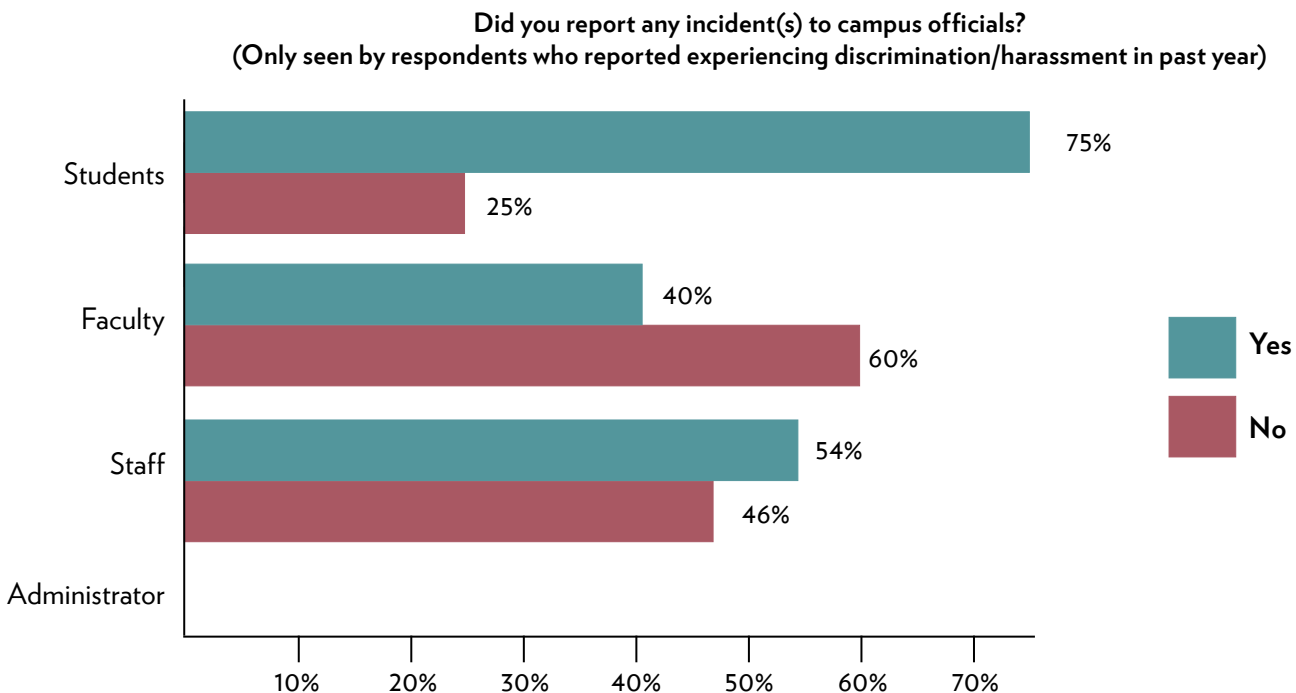


Figure 13: Discrimination/Harassment Reports, HEDS Diversity and Equity Climate Survey 2023

Clarity, transparency and trust are especially important when dealing with cases of harassment and discrimination on campus. Strategy 2.A.II “Identifying and Creating a Clear Reporting Process” was informed by the Great Colleges to Work For survey (specifically, the section including “This institution has clear and effective procedures for dealing with discrimination,” which at 52% fell under the “Warrants Attention” category) and the HEDS Diversity and Equity Climate Survey. The Climate Survey results showed that respondents were not likely to report incidents of discrimination and harassment due to fear of no consequences or retaliation, as well as lack of clarity of process.

Both strategies offer structures that support and drive culture change. As Dr. Estela Bensimon from the Center for Urban Education (CUE) said, “Actions first, minds will follow.” To shift organizational culture, we need to change our individual actions. We need to implement structures first that help people practice and embrace equity-minded values and practices. As mentioned above, the commitments in this DEI Strategic Plan cannot be viewed in silos and must support each other. Many strategies throughout Priority 2 contribute to strengthening communication, trust and transparency.

Building an Equity-Minded Campus Culture

“People use equity talk (occasionally) and are not fully committed to equity walk (yet).”

–Staff/administrator response to “What one change would you make in order to enhance the sense of community at BCC?” in the HEDS Diversity & Equity Climate Survey 2023

“Surface-level acceptance without deep commitment to actual change.”

–Faculty response to “What one change would you make in order to enhance the sense of community at BCC?” in the HEDS Diversity & Equity Climate Survey 2023

As part of BCC’s membership in the Racial Equity and Justice Institute (REJI), a group of campus members read the book “*From Equity Talk to Equity Walk: Expanding Practitioner Knowledge for Racial Justice in Higher Education*” by Brown McNair, Bensimon and Malcolm-Piqueux. The book “provides race-conscious guidance on designing and implementing effective campus change strategies” that go beyond performative expression of values. Equity work is a commitment to actionable change and institutional transformation.

Fourteen percent of open-ended responses to the question “What one change would you make in order to enhance the sense of community at BCC?” in the 2023 HEDS Diversity & Equity Climate Survey were coded as “in process,” meaning that the College “has work to do” to create meaningful change.

Strategy 2.B.I commits to an “Online Learning Circle for President’s Cabinet” and emerged from the strategies sessions in early 2024. It addresses the theme “*Leadership Criticism*” in the HEDS Diversity and Equity Climate Survey 2023 results and the Great Colleges to Work For Survey section titled “*Confidence in Senior Leadership*.” It is also aligned with the positive results of the Achieving the Dream ICAT Self-Assessment, in which 66% of respondents rated the question “Do leaders create a sense of urgency to improve student outcomes and narrow equity gaps?” with a strong or exemplary level of capacity at BCC, and the overarching category “Leadership & Vision” with Level 3, showing a strong level of capacity in place. The learning circles will be conducted entirely online, and members will meet for one-hour weekly sessions for six weeks. It leverages key concepts and tools from the Shared Equity Leadership Model and will help participants “share and grow their expertise with peers. ... They will help one another identify and build shared values and practices necessary to navigate and achieve their respective DEI challenges and goals for transformation” (see [ACE, Sharing Leadership for Equity Learning Circles](#), accessed May 2024). The expectation is that President’s Cabinet members apply and share the lessons learned within their departments and divisions to apply and strengthen Shared Equity Leadership at BCC.

The opportunity to include more voices, especially of community members and students, in college processes was identified in the Equity Inventory 2023 with the Massachusetts Community College Equity Consortium, which showed the need to “intentionally engage with stakeholders to learn about their experiences on campus/ with the college” and to “intentionally gather feedback and recommendations from stakeholders on developing a more equitable and inclusive community.” Strategy 2.B.II “*Community and Student Social Justice Advisory Boards*” will provide a structure to help ensure the voices of BCC’s stakeholders are being heard, valued and included in decision-making on campus and to help create sustainable relationships.

Collecting accurate and inclusive demographic data and giving individuals the opportunity to self-identify shows care and respect for these individuals and their dignity. The need for Strategy 2.B.III “A proposal for Inclusive Demographic Data Collection,” with a focus on gender and race/ethnicity categories, has been voiced by different departments across campus as well as during the Philosophy of Inclusion Focus Groups by students: “(You feel excluded) when you hear gendered forms of address that aren’t inclusive. Whenever anyone says: ‘Ladies and Gentlemen’ or things like that.”

Strategy 2.B.IV “System for Annual Sharing of Disaggregated Course Completion Data” aims to increase awareness of potential equity gaps on the course level and to help provide training and tools to address those gaps in the classroom. This strategy was identified as a need within the Equity Inventory 2023 with the Massachusetts Community College Equity Consortium, and its benefits are discussed in detail in the book “From Equity Talk to Equity Walk” published in 2020. Disaggregating data by race to reveal equity gaps can inspire practitioners to pose critical questions, dig deeper, and, after learning more, take action to close those gaps (Source: McNair, Bensimon, Malcolm-Piqueux, page 57).

As mentioned above, the DEI Strategic Plan builds upon a strong foundation of past and present efforts to reduce equity gaps and remove barriers, especially for students and employees of historically marginalized communities. Fourteen percent of responses in the Climate Survey were coded as “in process,” while 69% of codes were “positive.” Commitment 2.B does not imply that the College is not walking the walk. It is acknowledging that progress is not linear, and that the complexity of systemic change needs strategic direction, leadership support and organizational accountability to “move the needle.” It is essential to understand that equity work is a practice, not a destination.

Major Themes

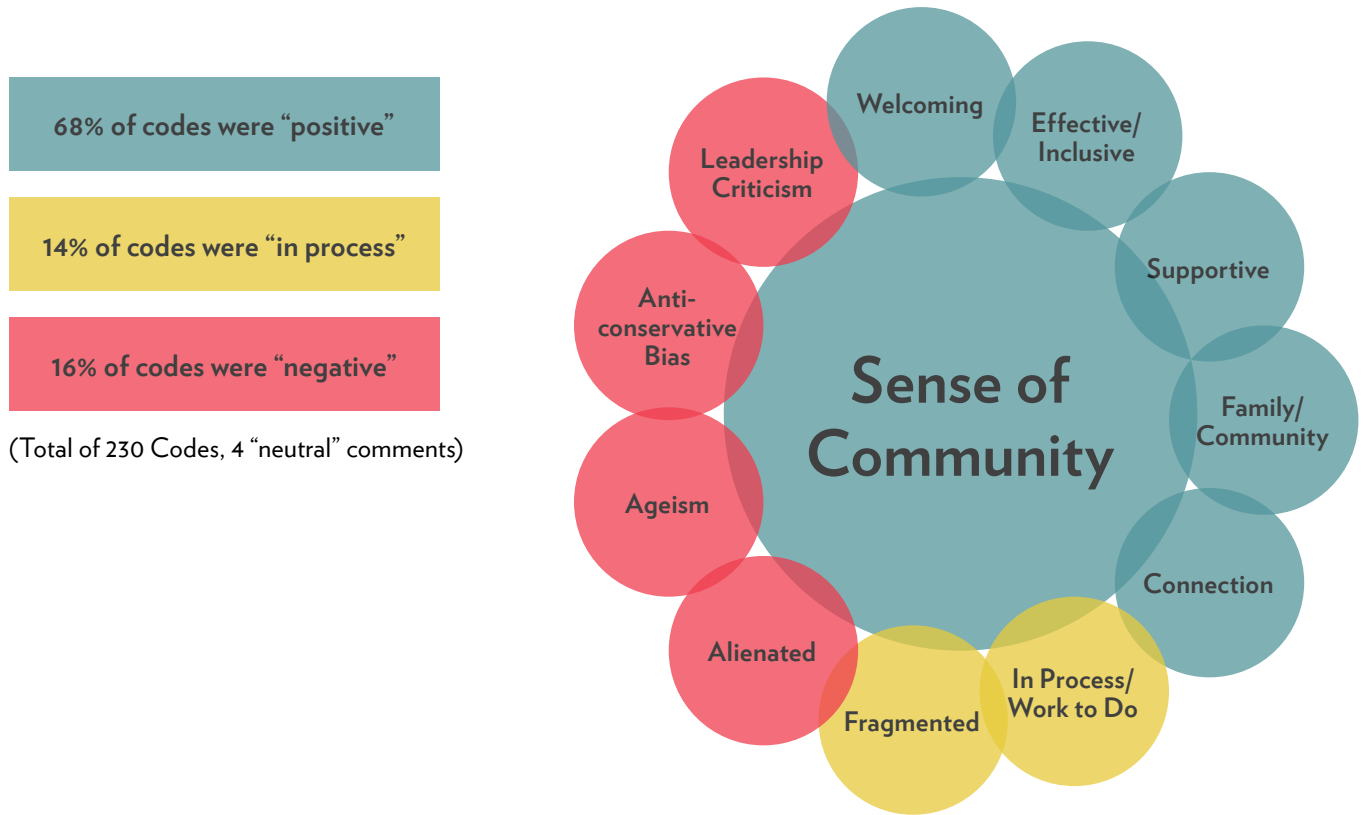


Figure 14: Major themes in open-ended responses to “What one change would you make to increase a sense of belonging/community at Berkshire Community College?” in HEDS Diversity & Equity Climate Survey 2023

A Community of Care

“A community of care underscores the personal nature of equity work and shared equity leadership” (*Shared Equity Leadership Values in Shared Equity Leadership Toolkit*). It is therefore an essential component of dismantling systems of oppression and increasing access for those who have historically been marginalized, and it can make sustainable equity work within institutions possible.

Intergroup dialogue “prepares students to live and work in a diverse world and educates them in making choices that advance equity and justice” (see *University of Michigan, About the Program on Intergroup Relations*, accessed June 2024). It is designed to help campus community members explore their own and others’ social identities and statuses, as well as the role of social structures in relationships of privilege and inequality; foster positive intergroup relationships by developing empathy and motivation to bridge differences of identities and statuses; build trust and foster positive relationships; and foster intergroup collaboration for personal and social responsibility toward greater social justice (see Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, Zúñiga, in *Diversity & Democracy, Evaluating Intergroup Dialogue*). Strategy 2.C.I “Spaces for Intergroup Dialogue and Healing/Restorative Circles” aligns with the Massachusetts Community College Consortium Equity Inventory, recommendations in the *“Emotional Labor in Shared Equity Leadership Report”* by ACE and the Pullias Institute, as well as the *“Framework for Advancing Anti-Racism on Campus”* by NADOHE. This strategy aims to teach “restorative responses to harm, community building practices, and concepts of shared responsibility for repair. ...” (see Amherst College, *The Center for Restorative Practices, Goals*, accessed June 2024) to students and employees at BCC.

“When you’re excluded, sometimes failure can be better than success.”
–*Philosophy of Inclusion Focus Group Notes, Students*

Employee mentoring can increase retention by up to 49%, as seen in a *case study by Randstad*, and decrease burnout during a time of heightened mental health challenges among the workforce. Identified as an opportunity for improvement within the Equity Inventory as well as a recommendation in the *Emotional Labor in Shared Equity Leadership Environments Report* by ACE and the Pullias Center, Strategy 2.C.IV “Employee Mentoring Program” can also help address the in the HEDS Diversity and Equity Climate Survey identified negative theme of ageism through recognition of experience and knowledge of more senior employees. It can also help bridge the gap between generations, as seen in the responses by age groups 25-34 and 55 or older (see figure 14). Mentoring should include peer-to-peer relationships as well as mentoring across different disciplines and areas of expertise. As recommended by the ACE/Pullias Center report, it is important to recognize mentors through formal and informal ways, including in performance reviews and through professional development and training.

Percentage of Age Group that has Experienced Discrimination or Harassment Based on Age

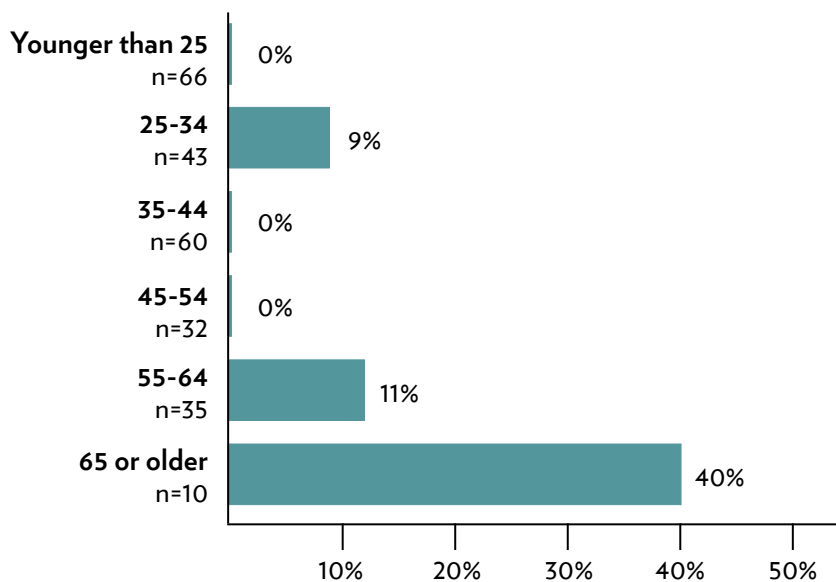


Figure 15: Discrimination & Harassment based on Age Group in HEDS Diversity & Equity Climate Survey 2023

The Hope Center’s Student Basic Needs Survey is the only institutional survey used by BCC that addresses the specific needs of parenting students. Thirty-one percent of survey respondents reported being parents, and 89% of those agreed with the statement “Childcare is unaffordable,” which is 3% higher than other two-year institutions. Childcare also showed as a recurring theme for students and employees in the SOAR Sense of Belonging Sessions in fall 2022. Strategy 2.C.II “Childcare Feasibility Study” looks at identifying all potential scenarios that could support students’ and employees’ need for childcare. Additionally, more than 50% of BCC’s students are 24 years and older and more likely to be parents than students of traditional college age at residential four-year institutions.

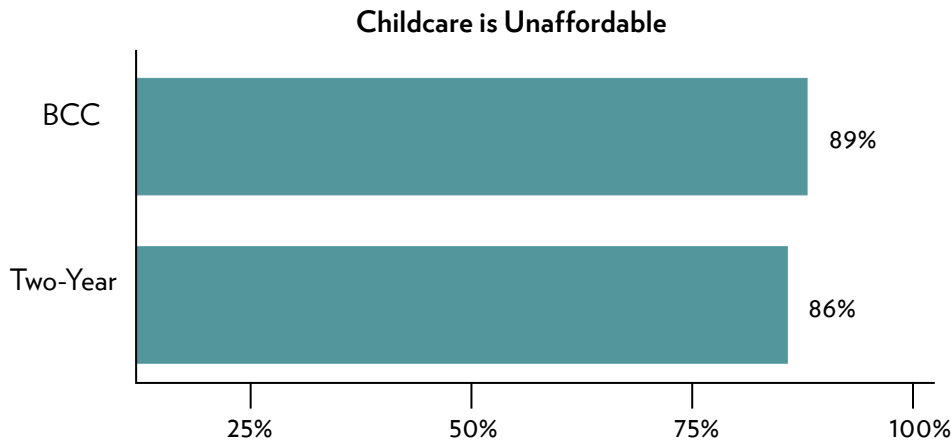


Figure 16: The HOPE Center, Student Basic Needs Survey Results 2023, “Childcare is unaffordable”

Strategy 2.C.III was directly informed by BCC’s Land Acknowledgement that was adopted through the College’s Shared Governance process in 2023. The statement specifically mentions “sustainable partnerships with the Stockbridge-Munsee Community and allies, diversifying curriculum, including experiential learning opportunities and events that create platforms for Indigenous voices.” This strategy focuses on the needs of and benefits for the tribe, acknowledges the historically held power dynamics, and aims to work towards a responsible, sustainable relationship with the original stewards of the land upon which BCC resides.

The need for continuous monitoring and modification of accessibility and inclusivity of facilities (Strategy 2.C.V) emerged during the strategies sessions and focuses on complying with and exceeding the expectations of state and federal policy, ensuring that all community members can feel welcome on BCC’s campus. This includes, but is not limited to, gender inclusive bathrooms and lactation spaces, changing tables, assistive technology, parking, ADA compliance, signage, furniture and more. These efforts reflect an inclusive campus for all members, with emphasis on historically marginalized populations.



INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ALIGNMENTS

As shown above, BCC’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan was created over a period of more than a year, with input from stakeholders from across the College and the broader community. This input, along with internal research and analysis, informed most of the strategies listed below.

External studies show that results from BCC’s internal analysis are highly aligned with broader state and national studies, reports, plans and frameworks. They provide the larger support and external rationale for BCC’s priorities and commitments.

Internal Alignments

BCC Mission, Values and Strategic Plan

Fostering a sense of belonging and prioritizing safety, dignity and agency for all members of the BCC Community is engrained in BCC’s organizational values of diversity and inclusion “in which we value diverse perspectives, identities and experiences to ensure individuals are welcomed, acknowledged and celebrated for their authentic selves.”

Developed during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic and following the racial reckoning initiated by the murder of George Floyd in 2020, BCC’s institutional strategic plan places equity at its core. The DEI Strategic Plan aligns specifically with the institutional Strategic Plan Goal II: Equitable Teaching and Learning and Goal IV: Equitable Institutional Innovation and Sustainability, Objective IV.C.: Diversifying the College Workplace and Promote a Culture of Belonging.

The following strategies within this plan directly align with and support foci within the Institutional Strategic Plan:

BCC’s DEI Strategic Plan 2024-2027		BCC 2022-2027 Strategic Plan	
1.A.I	Connection and Belonging Events	I.C.3	Expand Opportunities for Affinity-based Communities
1.A.III	Employee Resource Groups	IV.C.4	Recruit, Onboard and Retain a Diverse Workforce
1.B.I	Comprehensive Personal and Professional Development	IV.C.3	Develop a Culture of Innovation and Growth
1.B.II	Collaborative Campus Programs Aligned with Course Curricula	I.C.3, II.A.2	Expand Opportunities for Affinity-based Communities
2.A.II	Clear Process for Reporting Incidents of Discrimination and Harassment	IV.D.2	Teaching and Learning Professional Development (HIPs)
2.B.III	Research and implement policy and process for inclusive demographic data collection and reporting	II.B.2, IV.D.2	Strengthen Policies, Procedures and Practices
2.B.IV	Annual Sharing of Disaggregated Course Completion Data	II.B.1	Data Governance Structure
2.C.IV	Employee Mentoring Program	IV.C.4	Strengthen Policies, Procedures and Practices
2.C.V	Monitor and Modify Campus Facilities	IV.D.2	Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

External Alignments

Massachusetts Department of Higher Education

In 2023, the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (MA DHE) published the 10-year Strategic Plan for Racial Justice, with its overarching goal of “the elimination of racial disparities in the Massachusetts public higher education system.” The BCC DEI Strategic Plan’s priorities and commitments align with the DHE’s Strategies “*Transforming Institutional Cultures to be Equity-Minded*” (DHE Strategy 2) and “*Build a Culturally Relevant and Civically Engaged Educational Experience for Students of Color*” (DHE Strategy 4). The emphasis on “holistic student support” and its impact on a sense of belonging for students of color as well as the need for “equity-minded, culturally relevant, and civically engaged curricular, co-curricular, and pedagogical practices” are directly reflected within Commitments 1.A. and 1.B. The DHE’s Strategy 1: “*Establish the Infrastructure to Drive Racial Equity*” additionally aligns with the College’s DEI SP Priority 2.

The following two rights in the Student Bill of Rights within the Massachusetts DHE New Undergraduate Experience (NUE, published in 2022) are directly aligned with strategies within Priority 1: “Inclusive, anti-racist, and culturally responsive curricula and pedagogies” and “Welcoming, inclusive, and safe campus environments.” Furthermore, the NUE identifies the following recommendations: Curriculum, High-Impact Practices, and Co-Curriculum. Similar recommendations are made in the Massachusetts DHE Framework for Support Services for Student Success, which also emphasizes the need to “align curricular and co-curricular experiences that provide opportunities for students to apply concept and potential career interests.”

National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE)

The National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE), the leading organization in the United States to support and advise chief diversity officers in colleges and universities, identified 10 priority areas within their Framework for Advancing Anti-Racism Strategy on Campus. The DEI Strategic Plan’s priorities and commitments align with the areas focusing on *Institutional Structure* (Priority 1), *Institutional Programming* (Priority 7), *Education/Training/Employee Development* (Priority 8), *Campus Climate/Culture* (Priority 9) and *Admissions and Access* (Priority 10). In addition, the NADOHE letter in support of the Revision to Directive No. 15 directly aligns with Strategy 2.B.III.

New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE)

NECHE is BCC’s accrediting body and sets forth [Nine Standards for Accreditation](#). The strongest emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion is set in Standard Five: Students, in which NECHE prioritizes “a safe environment that fosters the intellectual and personal development of its students.” This standard also highlights the expectation that “institution’s interactions with students and prospective students are characterized by integrity and equity.” The DEI Strategic Priorities, designed to foster a sense of belonging and to prioritize safety, dignity and agency, are directly aligned with NECHE’s Standard Nine for Accreditation: Integrity, Transparency and Public Discourse.

Shared Equity Leadership Reports and REJI

BCC’s equity work and the development of this plan have been informed by BCC’s membership with the Racial Equity and Justice Institute (REJI) at Bridgewater State University. REJI provides the College with data, reports, toolkits and frameworks to support DEI at BCC. In particular, the Shared Equity Leadership report series, published by the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Pullias Center for Higher Education at USC Rossier, informed the focus on making DEI work at BCC sustainable and the framework of Shared Equity Leadership in this DEI Strategic Plan. Commitments 2.B and 2.C are aligned with recommendations in the SEL reports with an emphasis on care and emotional labor connected with Shared Equity Leadership.

ASSESSING PROGRESS

The inclusive process described above, including a detailed discovery phase, data-gathering and reflection, led to the priorities, commitments and strategies in this plan. The College has established progress indicators based on the Philosophy of Inclusion. The table below shows the instruments and specific sections to assess progress. A detailed assessment plan on commitment level is included below.

Progress Indicator	Instrument	Section	Details
Sense of Belonging	HEDS Climate Survey	Sense of Belonging/Community	
		What One Change Would You Make to Increase SoB? (Positive Themes)	
	Great Colleges Survey	Collaboration	All on the same team (Acute) Cooperate across departments (Acute)
		Mission & Pride	Institution's Culture (Warrants Attention)
Inclusion Focus Groups	Inclusion/Belonging	Value, Connection	
Safety	HEDS Climate Survey	Insensitive/Disparaging Remarks	
		Discrimination & Harassment	
		Reasons for Not Reporting	
	Great Colleges Survey	Communication	Speak up or challenge without fear (Warrants Attention)
	Inclusion Focus Groups	Safety	
Dignity	HEDS Climate Survey	Insensitive/Disparaging Remarks	
		Discrimination & Harassment	
		Reasons for Not Reporting	
	Great Colleges Survey	Performance Review	Recognized for my contributions (Warrants Attention) Recognition and awards program
		Communication	Discuss and debate respectfully
	Inclusion Focus Groups	Value	
Agency	Great Colleges Survey	Communication	Changes that affect me
	Inclusion Focus Groups	Agency	
Communication	Great Colleges Survey	Communication	
	Communication Survey	tbd	
	Inclusion Focus Groups	Connection	
Accountability	HEDS Climate Survey	Reasons for Not Reporting	
	Great Colleges Survey	Performance Review	Review Process, Low performance, Promotions
	Inclusion Focus Groups	tbd	
Cultural Humility	Participation	tbd	

PRIORITY 1: CULTURE OF BELONGING

Commitments	Evidence & Benchmarks	Progress Indicator	Targets by Fall 2027
1.a) Create Opportunities for Connection and Recognition	<p>HEDS Climate Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of Belonging/Community <p>Great Colleges Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Review: recognized for my contributions; recognition and awards program • Communication: Cooperate across departments, On the same team 	<p>Sense of Belonging</p> <p>Dignity</p> <p>Communication</p>	<p>Increase <i>Sense of Belonging</i> by <u>10%</u> for <u>staff/faculty</u> and <u>8%</u> for <u>students</u>.</p> <p>Increase <i>Positive Themes: Sense of Community</i> by <u>8%</u>.</p> <p>Increase <i>Performance Review</i> from <u>Warrants Attention and Acute to Fair</u>.</p> <p>Increase <i>Communication</i> from <u>Warrants Attention and Acute to Fair</u>.</p> <p>Increase <i>Collaboration</i> from <u>Acute to Fair</u>.</p>
1.b) Foster a Dynamic Learning Environment that Demonstrates and Encourages Cultural Humility	<p>Participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracking Participation • Participatory Surveys • Student Success Data • HR Recruitment Data • HR Advancement Data • HR Retention Data 	<p>Cultural Humility</p>	<p>Increase <i>availability of comprehensive DEI training</i> from one (OneStop) to <u>all departments</u>.</p> <p>Increase <i>participation</i> of DEI trainings.</p>

PRIORITY 2: SAFETY, DIGNITY AND AGENCY

Commitments	Evidence & Benchmarks	Progress Indicator	Targets by Fall 2027
2.a) Strengthen Communication, Trust and Transparency	<p>HEDS Climate Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfort Sharing Views on Campus • Discrimination & Harassment <p>Great Colleges Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Review • Communication • Collaboration <p>HR Communication Survey</p>	<p>Safety</p> <p>Agency</p> <p>Communication</p>	<p>HEDS: Decrease “<i>Discrimination & Harassment Experience</i>” by <u>4%</u>.</p> <p>Great Colleges: Increase “<i>Changes that affect me...</i>” from <u>Acute to Fair</u> by <u>11%</u>.</p> <p>Increase “<i>Speak up or Challenge...</i>” from <u>Warrants Attention to Fair</u> by <u>8%</u>.</p> <p>Increase <i>Collaboration</i> from <u>Acute to Fair</u> by <u>13%</u>.</p>
2.b) Advance Equity Talk to Equity Walk	<p>HEDS Climate Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Themes: Leadership Criticism, Fragmented, In Process/Work to Do <p>Great Colleges Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Review • Communication • Collaboration 	<p>Accountability</p> <p>Safety</p>	<p>Great Colleges: Increase “<i>Review Process</i>” from <u>Warrants Attention to Fair</u> by <u>7%</u></p> <p>Increase “<i>Issues of Low Performance</i>” from <u>Acute to Fair</u> by <u>+12%</u>.</p>
2.c) Establish a Community of Care	<p>HEDS Climate Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination & Harassment • Insensitive/Disparaging Remarks <p>Great Colleges Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Management • Communication • Collaboration <p>Participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracking Participation • Participatory Surveys 	<p>Sense of Belonging</p> <p>Dignity</p> <p>Safety</p>	<p>HEDS: Increase <i>Sense of Belonging</i> by <u>10%</u> for <u>staff/faculty</u> and <u>8%</u> for <u>students</u>.</p> <p>Increase <i>Positive Themes: Sense of Community</i> by <u>8%</u>.</p> <p>Great Colleges: Increase <i>Performance Review</i> from <u>Warrants Attention and Acute to Fair</u>.</p> <p>Increase “<i>Discuss and debate issues respectfully...</i>” from <u>Warrants Attention and Acute to Fair</u>.</p> <p>Increase <i>Collaboration</i> from <u>Acute to Fair</u>.</p>

APPRECIATION

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