

AUCD
EMBRACING DIVERSITY IN RECRUITMENT OF TRAINEES, FACULTY AND STAFF
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>> Hello, it is 3:00 o'clock and we're going to get started now. Welcome to the "Embracing Diversity in Recruitment of Trainees, Faculty and Staff" webinar. My name is Maureen Johnson. And I am a Program Specialist here at AUCD. We would like to thank all of you for joining us today. Before we begin I would like to address a few logistical things. Because of the number of participants, your audio line will be muted throughout the presentation. However, you can also submit questions at any point during the presentation via the chat box on your webinar console. You may send a chat to the whole audience or to the presenters only. We will compile your questions throughout the webinar and address them at the end. Please note that we may not be able to address every question and may combine some questions.

This webinar is being recorded and will be available on AUCD's webinar library. There will also be an evaluation survey at the close of the webinar. We invite you to provide feedback on the webinar and also to provide suggestions for future topics.

I will now turn the microphone over to Dr. Eileen McGrath, Chair of AUCD national training director's Council, who will introduce our speakers.

>> EILEEN McGRATH: Good afternoon, everyone. Or good morning for some of you across the country. I really would like to thank all for joining us today for our first webinar of 2020. We will be having at least three more this year. Today our presenters for "Embracing Diversity in Recruitment of Trainees, Faculty and Staff" are Dr. Mercedes Avila and Laura Rodriguez Lopez. Mercedes is an Associate Professor of pediatrics, the health equity and inclusive excellence liaison, and the director of the Vermont LEND at the University of Vermont Larner College of Medicine.

Laura is the training director for the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities at the

University of South Florida UCEDD. The Program Director for Positive Behavior Support Graduate Certificate. And she coordinates the Master's Degree program in child and adolescent behavioral health. At the University of South Florida.

Additionally Laura is on the National Training Directors Council Steering Committee. Without further ado, I will turn this webinar over to Laura.

>> LAURA RODRIGUEZ LOPEZ: Hi, everyone, can you hear me clearly.

>> EILEEN McGRATH: Yes.

>> Laura, I messed up the order. Just give me a second. Sorry.

>> LAURA RODRIGUEZ LOPEZ: All right. No problem.

(Standing by).

>> You're all set. Apologies.

>> LAURA RODRIGUEZ LOPEZ: No problem. Thank you. All right, well, I'm going to start by providing a short introduction to FCIC and my role with the Center. I want to go over a few enrollment facts for graduate students in our field and review what the community has been doing so far to recruit diverse training cohorts. Additionally I want to talk briefly about two strategies that we are currently developing to continue to address this area of need for us.

All right. So first of all, I want to clarify that the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities, like mentioned before, the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities and it's importantly to know that we don't have a LEND. So we are a stand-alone UCEDD our areas of specialty revolve around Positive Behavior Support and behavioral health sciences I joined the team as Training Coordinator back in 2015 but have been serving as training director for a very short time actually, I only started the position in August. Now the area of recruitment focusing on diversity is a topic close to my heart for various professional and personal reasons. Before joining FCIC, I used to work in the enrollment mini grant field, focusing on international students. So that was the first time that I started looking outside of my experience as a student and realizing that a standard approach to recruiting students would only benefit the dominant majority. Every student that I interacted with have different wants, needs, goals and expectations. And based off of that I understood that recruitment should adapt to those wants, needs and goals so that we can attract a more diverse student base to our universities and our programs. Another important reason that I am invested in the topic of diversity and recruitment is that I am also a member of a minority group. And I had a very unique and challenging journey toward higher education. I'm originally from Puerto Rico and a first generation college graduate for my family. I attended public school throughout my entire life in rural areas. And my parents, though, really encouraging never prepared me to attend college.

In general, the rule for rural schools back home is that there's very little guidance and resources for introducing college as a next step possibility for students. And I was

a victim of that lack of underpreparation from our schools.

Lastly, I help raise my niece who has a number of developmental disabilities. She is now almost 20 years old. And as a caregiver for her, I have witnessed the struggles that she has faced in her journey towards autonomy and independence. So in an interest to help her navigate the difficult world of transitioning from high school to the workforce, I have identified some lack of system services and supports for kids in families that will lead them to meaningful careers and programs. So with all of that background, that's how I became interested in developing diversity guideline programs.

One of the first obstacles I've observed from students coming from representative minority bases is lack of awareness students don't know what's available for them or what's a possibility for them. Cassuto says that students from disadvantaged backgrounds may never learn about opportunities available to them at the graduate level and if they do go to Graduate School like I did, many will feel isolated within a community where few others, if anyone, looks like them or shares their experience.

Only 2% of the population, of the U.S. population, have earned a Doctoral Degree. And of those only 15% are awarded by U.S. universities to African Americans, Hispanics and Native Americans. Although those three groups together represent more than 30% of the U.S. population and about 30% of that population that might be considered for doctoral studies.

Narrowing those numbers down to focus on the social and behavioral sciences, which is what we focus on, I discovered that our field attracts a moderate number of students into graduate programs. So we attract about 34% of accepted graduate applications in the U.S. Our data still shows that minority students remain substantially underrepresented in graduate education overall.

In 2018, for example, of all graduate students enrolled in social and behavioral graduate programs in the United States, excluding dreamers, only 32% identified as part of a minority compared to 58% of their white peers. These numbers here are -- include master and doctoral level students. So that's important to know.

Our numbers here at FCIC are a bit higher than the averages that I just discussed with you. But we believe we can still do much better. FCIC trainees currently include 22% of Hispanic/Latino graduate students. Which is higher than the number of university Latino student population at 20% and close to the Latino population in our city, our areas here in Tampa Bay which stands at 25%.

20% of our trainees are African American. A number significantly higher than those enrolled at the university. 7% are Asian and we also, which I think is something that I've noticed since I entered the field, FCIC considers disability part of diversity. I don't see that number reported as much in other diversity statistics as I did my research. But for us it's very important to consider diversity. And we account for that as -- disability as diversity. And we account for that in our reporting.

So far we have 5% of our trainees identify as having a disability. And 25% have a

relationship with disability. We think this number is very low. And we would like to see it grow in future years.

One of the most important steps that we have taken as a center to enhance our diversity is utilizing a holistic approach to reviewing admissions applications while holistic admissions practices can look like many different things the most important factors are that it takes into consideration socioeconomic differences, cultural differences and that it addresses implicit biases of the application reviewers.

The journey of a minority student toward higher education can look very different than that of, for example, a white middle class student. Minority students may not have had the chance to earn as high of a GPA. Possibly because they had to work to help sustain their household. For the same reason they may not have had -- may not have involved themselves in a high number of extracurricular activities. Some won't have the luxury of experiential opportunities because they could not secure internships and many other similar situations that just don't allow them to prepare an application, maybe as competitive as that of a traditional student. Application reviews that are holistic allow states for considering the student as a whole and not just a reflection of their GPA or entry exam scores. This can attract and retain more minority students to different programs.

Some common practices of holistic admission include waiving GRE scores. This is something that's gaining population in different schools around the country. Allowing recommendation letters, not only from academic sources but also from supervisors or community members, such as pastors. And considering transferable fields if the students don't have direct experience in the field to which they are applying. Giving more weight to the last 60 credit hours of college work rather than the overall GPA for a student. And also interviewing students to learn firsthand about their experience and their journey toward higher education and how they came about applying to your particular program. Another area I think is very important in implementing holistic admissions practices is increasing the training for reviewers that addresses implicit biases. This is very important. Research has shown that reviewers tend to admit students that reflect their own journeys. Because reviewers, in many cases, are people that belong to the dominant majority, then their journey towards education has been very traditional. And they tend to disregard applications from applicants that don't necessarily reflect their own preferences. Of course this is detrimental to diversity recruitment. And should be addressed with the reviewers. So that they can keep themselves in check. And make sure that they are conscious of these biases as they are reviewing admissions applications.

All right, some of our programs -- I should say we have three academic programs that the center works with when we are reviewing students for admission at the university. The first one is a Graduate Certificate in Positive Behavior Support. How do we make

this program -- the admission to this program holistic and make it a flexible program? First of all, we have flexible GPA requirements. Experience for students applying into the PBS Graduate Certificate is one of the most important factors when considering applicants. It is open to different fields. So we won't make students come from let's say just psychology or just education. We will open it up to students coming from different fields and from different professional experiences. And also the certificate serves as a pathway to the Masters of Science in child and adolescent behavioral health programs for students who have lower GPA scores. In addition, all PBS students can become long-term trainees. And with that come all of the resources that help them build more stronger applications once they decide to -- if they decide to apply to graduate -- to the Graduate Program.

All right. The second program that we offer is a Masters of Science in child and adolescent behavioral health with a focus on developmental disabilities. This program is unique. Because it offers a non-clinical pathway into the field of social and behavioral sciences. The program, just like the certificate, is 100% online. The online programs attract or tend to attract more non-traditional students. And minorities tend to be part of those -- well, a big chunk of minority students tend to be part of those non--- what we call non-traditional students.

Additionally the program offers two tracks to choose from. One is research based. And the other one is practice based.

GRE scores are optional for those students that decide to apply to the field experience or practice-based tracks. And students with lower GPAs that don't necessarily need the university -- don't necessarily meet the university criteria can start as non-degree seeking students and we will consider their performance in the graduate courses as part of their application to the program at a later time.

All of our students in the what we call the CABH program, the Master's program, will become long-term trainees. And with that, all of the benefits that come with being trainees for the center.

The third program that we offer is the PhD. Now, the PhD is managed by the college. So it's a bit more traditional. But it offers a blended format of learning and a high degree of customization. It is also important to mention that care for minority students in promoting diversity within our UCEDD trainees includes offering the correct supports after students have enrolled in our programs. Students from minority groups tend to have higher attrition rates so mentorship activities, coaching, professional development, have all shown to have a positive impact on the retention of minority students. Moreover, research shows that attrition rates for online students, which is the format in which we offer our programs, are higher than those for students attending brick and mortar classes or courses.

This attrition right is height if any for minority students who often had difficulty navigating system services and supports at a big university.

A number of supports have been established here at our Florida Center for Inclusive Communities to help students with persistence. For example, I serve as a new student coordinator for all brand-new students and perform onboarding per an onboarding meeting for all students so we make sure they complete orientation and know how to navigate all of the resources that are available to them.

In addition, all of our students are assigned an advisor. And we connect with those students at least once, if not more, per semester, so that we can review academic progress and just touch base with them and offer assistance where we think they might be needing assistance, depending on their performance.

Tools such as predictive analytic software can aid in efforts to catch students who are presenting with problem behavior that results in attrition. And we also make sure that we perform a yearly program assessment that revolves around developing and improving practices to increase student engagement, persistence, and reduce attrition in our programs. So again, yearly, even if not by semester, we continue to try to identify where we can do better. And what we should be doing to help our students succeed in our programs.

All right. We are also -- offer core curriculum -- core curriculum training modules. We do that through an online community that we have created called the Trainee Commons this is an online community of scholars and it offers all of our trainees and our students a repository of resources and trainings that are categorized by topics of interest. One of the things that research has shown is that while there are many diversity pipeline programs created every year to try to attract more students, a lot of them fail to identify what the minority students are saying that they need in order not to only enter graduate programs but also remain there. One of the things that addresses this difficulty is making sure that we are offering individualized training plans for our students and our trainees so that we can help them reach their goals, their academic goals and their professional goals.

Additionally, all of our modules and trainings, that that is created by our training office, is being translated at the moment to Spanish. I am a native Spanish speaker so that comes a little bit easier to me. And the reason that we are doing this is so that we can offer this training not only to our trainees that come from minority groups but also to offer it to our community and professional course takers in the United States and from Spanish-speaking countries, as well.

This increases our dissemination and eventually helps with recruitment. A good example of this, of our modules being offered in a different language was that we recruited three students from Columbia last year because they found the online Spanish training modules that are free to the public and based off of that, they decided to enroll in our Graduate Certificate in Positive Behavior Support and again there are three international students from Columbia.

All right, lastly and I promise I'll be very brief, we are developing two additional

strategies for recruiting diversity students through a diversity pipeline program. Our pipeline program we hope will address the enrollment deficit at the Master's level by providing Graduate School preparation, support and resources to minority students. We hope that the pipeline activities will increase diverse enrollment in the department. But also by producing professionals that are coming from underrepresented minorities, we hope that those students will go back to their communities and help close the health equity gap in the Tampa Bay community which is where we are located but also beyond because our students are coming because we are an online program, our students are coming from all around the country and also from international locations.

Our diversity pipeline program would come in two stages. We have an undergraduate trainee, community trainee program. And then we are in the process of developing a graduate scholars training program.

The first initiative, which is the community Scholars Program is -- we just started it this last February. So it's a very new program.

And it is assigned to provide on-the-job training to youth with disabilities. We partnered with the vocational rehabilitation in our state. And with the -- with an agency called The Grow Group agency to recruit youth administrators in administrative skills, self-advocacy, policy and the behavioral health field overall. The community scholars received training and experience that helped them learn meaningful job skills that can prepare them to find gainful employment after they have completed their experience. Participating youth will also provide input to the center in developing a training curriculum in the areas of self-advocacy and policy as appropriate and relevant to the wants and needs of youth in the ages of 18 and early 20s. Gabby, who is pictured here in this slide is our very first participant. She's actually an artist that volunteered at FCIC prior to starting her OJT experience at our center. We are currently in Week 8 of her training. Her training has been a little bit disrupted because of the COVID-19 crisis. But we are trying to move forward with the program with the support of her vocational rehabilitation advisor. So far she has been able to learn and gain skills in things like Word, Excel, Outlook, Gmail, data entry. And she has also used her creative and artistic inclinations to help contribute to the creation of an Inclusion Florida Website that our center is working on. She is also -- she's also participated in recruitments, academic events. And we have also connected her with the Associate Dean of our College of Arts and sciences at the University of South Florida to help explore her academic interests as they are related to the arts and how she can apply that possibly in the future in the behavioral sciences.

The best part is that she is being paid to gain all of this experience and skill as she moves forward in her transition.

All right. Lastly I'll try to be quick so Mercedes can have her turn. Lastly we are currently developing our graduate scholars initiative. This program is aimed at

developing experts in the developmental disabilities field. The program will include a summer preparation program in which undergraduate students are introduced to Graduate School as a next step possibility. The program will be free. And it will include GRE preparation, introduction to the social and behavioral sciences, navigating graduate applications. And it will also include free breakfast and free lunch for participants.

Initially the workshop will be conducted by staff and faculty belonging to minority groups as much as we can. And once the summer workshop ends, students will be encouraged to apply to graduate programs in the social and the behavioral health field, including ours but not limited to our programs at the university. Those who decide to apply to our programs and are admitted will receive a stipend to help support them financially. And they will be trained to teach future workshops as part of a graduate assistanceship. The focus of the diversity program at the graduate level will be on recruitment, retention, professional development, and financial support for students that come to our program. And again, the hope for us is that these students not only attend and complete their graduate education, but that they take what they have learned and go back to their communities and help close those health and education equity gaps in our communities.

Students in this program will also become long-term trainees and will receive all of the benefits that come with the trainees at the Florida center.

So that's my presentation for the moment. I will hold questions until the end, if any. So that we can give Mercedes an opportunity to present. But also, if you have any questions and would like to communicate with me independently or after the meeting, I'll be happy to share my contact information. Thank you so much for your attention.

>> DR. MERCEDES AVILA: Thank you, Laura, can you hear me well.

>> LAURA RODRIGUEZ LOPEZ: Yes we can hear you.

>> DR. MERCEDES AVILA: Great, thank you. So I'm going to start by sharing some -- you know, I was listening to Laura and you reminded me of a couple of things. One is that any time that we think about doing diversity work, we need to start thinking about the demographic changes in the United States. We are a country that within a decade from now we're going to be majority racially diverse communities. So we do have a responsibility to ensure our programs at all levels, faculty, staff, trainees, leadership, reflect the demographics of the communities we serve.

I also want to acknowledge that we are living in very uncertain times of COVID-19. So I thank everybody for being part of the webinar during these times. But also to acknowledge that when we talk about diversity, there is a lot of privilege, also, that comes with being able to work from home and remotely. As not everybody has the capacity or the ability to do that in our society.

I also want to acknowledge before I get started, you know, Laura talked about biases that we see in interviews, in -- all along the way. And I always -- in every

presentation I do, I also mention that we have biases -- we all have biases and prejudices. And these should be addressed as early as possible. I always mention this we should start addressing biases, prejudices, stereotypes, as early as preschool because we are seeing these disparities early on from children especially racially diverse children in our society. So I want to get start by sharing what we have done in Vermont and also as a small disclaimer for those of you -- many of you know me because I see all of the names and many of you have seen my presentations and my work, we live -- Vermont is the second whitest state in the country. And just because we diversify .1 less than Maine, Maine is the whitest state. So we are the two whitest states in the country. We're here in the northeast. And I share this because we were able to diversify our program at all levels. It took a few years. And I will share that along the presentation. But I always say that if we were able to do it in Vermont, and we are the second whitest state in the country, everybody should be able to do this, as well.

And I'm going to start the history of how we got to where we are today. And many of you probably know that one of the best recommendations to advancing culturally responsive work in our organizations and programs is to have -- to undergo ongoing organizational self-assessments around cultural competency. So we do that in our program we started in 2011. And we do self-assessments every four years. Every four years.

We use tool tools actually we use the CLCADO, that is the Georgetown University Cultural Competency Assessment for Disability Organizations. And we use the TAACT for those of you that have LEND programs in schools of medicine, the TAACT is a tool for assessing cultural competency with the School of Medicine program. So it's very specific for that setting. So we do two assessments every four years.

And every four years we set up a specific goal that we're going to address in those upcoming, you know, three or four years.

So these were the results from 2011. And not surprisingly, which would be similar to many programs across the country, we found out that there was a lack of diversity at all levels of the program. Faculty, staff, leadership, trainees and in our curriculum. So in 2011, we found that there were three Graduate Class sessions that focused on cultural competency. And when you see the abbreviation CALC, CALC, that's abbreviation for cultural and linguistic competency. In 2015 we increased it to four seminars on focused on cultural competency and we conducted a three hour orientation training on this topic for all fellows, trainees, faculty and staff. In 2018 every LEND seminar includes core cultural and linguistic competency concepts. And every aspect of the program focuses also on these topics.

In the next slide what I wanted to share, as well, because I do this work at the national level. I've done hundreds of presentations in the last few years related to this topic. And I always talk about the importance of changing our programs. But the only

way we can change our programs is by changing ourselves. Changing the way we think. Opening our minds. Being able to engage in dialogue about complex issues in our society. What's happening in our country. I think it's a perfect example of the disparities and inequities we see for many of the populations that we serve. And how are we engaging in advocacy and in changing these disparities in our society?

So what we did in our program is what we define with each one of the best practices also in this type of work. We institutionalized cultural knowledge. And I will define this.

We also do targeted recruitment. And this sounds exactly as it is. Laura was talking about access, to be able to prepare an application, information about how to prepare a CV. I also want to acknowledge that we have highly qualified underrepresented students and community members who still don't have access to our programs. Which speaks to issues related to access to information. When I became the director of our program, one of the main changes that I made was to expand community engagement and community outreach. So all families have access to our program. And not just a few families of children with special needs.

We also made many curriculum changes. And I'm going to share some of those along this presentation.

We ensure that our faculty and staff reflect the demographics of our nation. And this is something that I always find fascinating in Vermont. Because when we cannot diversify our faculty and staff our responses because we live in the second whitest state of the country. Well, that shouldn't be a reason. Because we do national searches most often for our positions in our universities. And just to show you in 2009, 2010 the Vermont LEND program was 100% white. Everybody, faculty, staff, leadership, trainees and fellows. Since 2015 50% of faculty and staff are racially and ethnically diverse in our program. Trainee diversity was the same. You know, 2009-2010 was 100% white. And since 2015, 50% of our trainees and fellows are racially and ethnically diverse. And this is not just that they are racially diverse. But we made a commitment when we wrote the competitive renewal of our HRSA grant that that was going to be the target for every single year of our program. And it can be a challenge. You know. It takes much more work in our program, in our staff and faculty to be able to recruit and retain trainees. But we believe that this change is essential to be able to ensure that all communities have equitable access to our programs.

And also I'm going to talk about our Advisory Council. Because as a parent of a child with special needs and a child with autism, I was also fascinated when I joined the Vermont LEND program Advisory Council. And saw that most of that Council were state leaders. State leaders, whether they -- they were Title V leaders, Disability Council leaders. And then there were one or two parents in that Council. And I was very interested to learn the experiences of parents sitting in a room where most of our children might not be accessing equitable services in our communities. And those --

the directors of those programs were sitting on an Advisory Council. So most of the parents were very quiet in those sessions. So what we did was we created two advisory Councils. We still have our state leaders on an Advisory Council but we now have what we define is a health disparities and Community Advisory Council with 15 community members and 95% racially diverse members in that Council. And I will share a little bit more about that in the next few slides.

So this is just to share, we have two graduate courses that our trainees have to take every year. And these are online. They have been online. We have 100% a distance accessible program. So the two courses are completely online. And these are the changes that we made. We integrated cultural competency in every class session. The readings by researchers from underrepresented groups and we also incorporated videos from people with disabilities and families from different cultural groups.

We increased the number of classes that have cultural competency content as primary focus. And we ensure that guest lectures from culturally diverse faculty from other LEND programs. And we also utilize decolonizing perspectives so looking at stories from different communities, listening to the voices of underserved communities. And the language -- also we pay very close attention to language that's used to teach about disability and to define underserved and unserved communities.

And these are some of the topics that we teach in our classes with each of our -- we teach racism, health disparities and cultural competency with each of our health literacy health equity and language access. Life course and social determinants of health and equity. Bias awareness. Public health and eugenics. We have very important responsibility as higher education institutions, some of our institutions were involved in the eugenics movement. The University of Vermont was one of them. And one of the reasons that we have a big distrust in the disability community and in other underserved communities, including native communities, was this movement, the eugenics movement. And the impacts in those communities.

We also teach about cultural perspectives of health, disability and self-determination from an American Indian focus. We have two colleagues who are faculty members, speech-language pathologists, from the University of Kansas. George used to work from University of Kansas and Chris from the University of New Mexico LEND who are two SLP faculty members in our network. We also teach about Caribbean native focus. The Vermont LEND program, we partner with the U.S. Virgin Islands. So we believe that if we have trainees from the U.S. Virgin Islands in our program, we have a responsibility to provide the perspectives of disability health from a Caribbean native focus and we have a faculty member who is now the dean in the College of Education, Karen Brown, who teaches in our program, as well.

We work -- we teach about working with cultural brokers and interpreters. And we ensure that the home visits that our trainees engage in with parents also reflect the

demographics of our communities. So we have parents from underrepresented groups who have children with disabilities.

I mentioned this earlier. But Vermont LEND, we are fully distance accessible. Somebody just asked in one of the questions whether we have always been distance accessible. And the answer is no. We were 100% in-person. And we made the decision in the last competitive renewal four years ago to be fully distance accessible. To the point that this year the majority of trainees and fellows are actually distance. So we have trainees from different states. We work with a tribal nation in Upstate New York. And we have trainees this year -- we have in the past from Rhode Island and from Pennsylvania and from New York and from other states across the country. Most often they see our presentations at the AUCD conference. Or in our network. Or in different areas. And they apply for our program from different states.

I mentioned earlier that we have a two-part Advisory Council that has allowed us to have a more meaningful representation of the communities that we serve. And also to create a safe space for parents to share about disparities, inequities, and exposure to any type of oppression, whether it's racism or ableism or classicism or any aspects of the social determinants of health.

I also wanted to mention that one of the most important pieces about recruitment of racially and other diverse -- culturally diverse trainees and families in our program is to be able to retain trainees. And we see this -- I work in the School of Medicine, we see that we have put a lot of efforts many times in recruiting trainees, fellows, faculty and staff. But we don't often retain them. You know, which speaks to the climate in our institutions, in our programs. And our environments that our trainees are exposed to.

So these are some of the things that we have done in our program. We ensure that faculty, staff and leadership reflect the demographics of our trainees and fellows. Community. And the United States.

We provide mentoring, one-on-one mentoring for all of our trainees. And we incorporate during these mentoring sessions key aspects of cultural humility, structural competency, social determinants of health and national CLAS standards. We ensure, also, that faculty, staff and leadership receive ongoing education and training around understanding systemic oppression, isms, and also understanding the decolonizing approaches.

Trainees and fellows access to brave spaces and here you see I mention that the disparities Council is a safe space for underrepresented communities. Our trainees and fellows, we create brave spaces. Because it's actually impossible to have 100% safe space when we are talking about systemic, racism, classicism or ableism. So what we expect from our trainees and fellows is that they are able to be uncomfortable. But also stay in that discomfort. Which we define it as a brave space.

We also -- I hope that our trainees and fellows become agents of change and advocates to address and dismantle systemic oppression in the community and at the

community level Vermont LEND works with communities and not in or on communities. And we continuously work to build meaningful partnerships with our community partners and our community members.

So these are some highlights of our progress report that for those of you who are LEND faculty members, you know that -- or staff members, you know that we just submitted our progress report to the Federal Government. And this is just to show you some of the activities that we do related to this work. Not only in Vermont but also across the network.

So we offer 55 continuing education activities, reaching 3645 participants. And I would say more than 80% of these activities have to do with topics related to cultural competency, structural competency, cultural humility or addressing disparities. We have 35 products, most of them also related to these topics. And to this date, we have provided technical assistance and training to more than 27 other UCEDD and LEND programs in our country around cultural competency.

So these are some lessons learned. We know that the weekly mentoring sessions that faculty and trainees engage in, we have learned that at least 50% of time trainees and faculty spend discussing cultural competency related issues. We recognize the many disability concepts in the United States may not fit into other cultural values or views, for example, independence is a goal of adulthood, but not necessarily in every culture.

And ways that teams respond to conflict is very different across cultures.

We infuse information on social construction of race, racism, social determinants of health, health disparities and inequities within class sessions. And training. Which means that we share more information and discuss these topics throughout the training year. Twice a year we have intensive trainings for faculty staff and leadership on bias, racism, privilege, white fragility, class inequalities and disparities. And we believe this is a critical aspect to be able to support trainees in their cultural competency growth.

Finally, these are some trainee reflections and most of these trainee reflections are by the way from white trainees who identify as white in our society which are half of our trainees every year. Some of them said initially they thought cultural -- they thought they were culturally sensitive and aware but after the program they realized they had a lot more work to do.

It is a very strange space to be culturally competent. Not only do you have to know the culture, so you need understand power and privilege dynamics and our role in perpetuating these systems.

And also many trainees acknowledged that cultural competency they thought it was a finite process before coming to our program but now they realize it's an ongoing lifelong journey and I want to leave you with this slide I love to share in all of my presentations I do across the country this concept of diversity and inclusion, we talk about diversity and inclusion all the time. And I always say that those words are

important. But they are not comprehensive enough to describe the work that we need to do in our society to address systemic issues.

So diversity asks, who is in the room? Equity responds, who is trying to get in the room but can't and whose presence in the room is under constant threat of erasure very different concepts. Inclusion asks, have everyone's ideas been heard. Justice responds, whose ideas won't be taken seriously because they aren't part of the majority or the ones holding power in our society, programs or institutions.

So one important final recommendation or reflection is to ensure that any time we do diversity and inclusion work, we also ensure that we do diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice. The four terms are necessary to be able to do meaningful work in our programs. And many times diversity and inclusion alone doesn't reflect the need or the need for the work that needs to happen in our institutions so we need to focus more strongly on equity and justice.

Thank you so much again for having me. And I know we are going to open it up for questions now. But I hope if we run out of time at the end, that you all are able to stay safe and be safe in these times. Thank you.

>> MAUREEN JOHNSON: Thank you, Mercedes and thank you, Laura. We now have time for questions and answers. If you have questions and you are using your computer microphone please raise your hand to be unmuted. If you are on the phone, please press star and then pound on your telephone keypad to be unmuted. You can also type questions into the chat box below the slides. I will read questions aloud for the presenters.

I will start with a question in the -- earlier in the webinar. Do these statistics include international or domestic students? And I believe this was for Laura.

>> LAURA RODRIGUEZ LOPEZ: Hi yes the statistics I provided in my presentation only talked about domestic students. I did not include information about international students.

>> MAUREEN JOHNSON: One chat also was also what is the source of student stipend specifically?

>> LAURA RODRIGUEZ LOPEZ: For the community scholars, which are the youth, the money for paying them while they work is coming from vocational rehabilitation. Because we are now a site approved to offer OJT. For the graduate scholars, we are in the process of creating proposals for applying for grants. Related to training graduate students in the behavioral health sciences. So the stipend for their participation would come from the grants. But I want to clarify that those have not been secured yet. We are in the process of writing the proposal so that we can start applying in the next Fiscal Year.

>> MAUREEN JOHNSON: Next question comes from Beth Fondell. Have your university centers put any specific supports in place to aid various individuals to navigate the application process for any of your respective programs, particularly for

students living with a disability? Would that occur within the inclusion scholars workshops?

>> LAURA RODRIGUEZ LOPEZ: So right now we are working -- well, we started working with our first OJT participants Gabby, and then with some other students in our program that have identified as having a disability. And they have felt comfortable sharing that with us. So we are taking their feedback so that we can create as part of the workshop tools to help students navigate the application process. Both students without disabilities and students with disabilities. And that would be included in that workshop. And then we would hope to have it as well online so that students that don't necessarily have the opportunity to attend the workshops would also gain access to those resources through our Website.

>> MAUREEN JOHNSON: Next question comes from Djenne-amal Morris. How have you ensured and encouraged faculty buy-in?

>> DR. MERCEDES AVILA: I'm happy to answer. And I also wanted to share that for the previous questions, in the last competitive renewal Vermont LEND we created a full-time position which is an educational coach position. So we have a person that the role of that person is to ensure that all of our information is accessible to all of our trainees and also helps with application preparation and support along the program. Related to faculty buy-in, we provide ongoing education and training around these topics.

When I do presentations, I always share a very short story about when I became director, I met with every one of our faculty members in the LEND program specifically talking about cultural competency and equity and diversity. And when I met with one of our faculty members, I specifically said to him, from now on, I want from the ten families that you recruit to work with our trainees, I would like two or three of those families to be racially diverse. And he looked at me and he said no.

So I restated the question because it wasn't a question. It was more like a requirement from now on as I was the new director. I said, you know, from now on, it wasn't a question, it is this is what I would like to happen moving forward. And he said, you know, all of these cultural competency, who cares about this, and this is what our PhD psychologists faculty said and I said, well, I care about this and many people do care about this. So from now on, this is how things are going to change and he said okay.

So then I'm just quitting. I said great.

So I think -- the reason I mention this story is because as directors, we have a responsibility to hold people accountable. We also have a responsibility to provide every opportunity for professional development. But we also need to make those tough decisions of separating. If we have 50% of our trainees that are racially diverse and we have a faculty member that doesn't understand the value of diversity or the value of ensuring that everybody receives equitable services and programs and access to

opportunities, then that's not the place for them. And we have a responsibility to ensure that those changes take place.

>> MAUREEN JOHNSON: Great, thank you for sharing. Rebecca Dosch Brown asks, is the Vermont LEND both asynchronous and synchronous delivery?

>> DR. MERCEDES AVILA: Hi, Rebecca, thank you for your question. Yes, so we are asynchronous for our graduate programs and we are synchronous for the training days.

>> MAUREEN JOHNSON: Great. Thank you.

As a reminder, the slides can be downloaded below. And also we have the captions going on under the slides, as well.

Laura just shared her email address it is Irodri11@usf.edu.

And Mercedes shared her email address. It is Maria.Avila@med.uvm.edu.

Another question from Rebecca Dosch Brown, any advice on recruitment for department based graduate students from underserved communities?

>> DR. MERCEDES AVILA: I'm happy to answer briefly that question. I think one of the ways we were able to recruit graduate students from underserved communities was to have faculty and staff that reflect the demographics. That's one of the most important aspects of recruitment and retention of the graduate students to have a place and mentors and advisors who they can go to to discuss issues that they are experiencing in our institutions.

So I think having faculty diversity. And if we are not able to have diversity in faculty, mentors and advisors then providing ongoing education and training on how to best support these students, their experiences in higher education are going to be very different than students that we're most often used to working with.

>> LAURA RODRIGUEZ LOPEZ: I also want to add to that that being very available and open to questions is very important, as well. I have experienced that people, as soon as they find out that I am Latina tend to respond very well to communicating with me. But also how quickly I reply to those inquiries for information. And have an impact on whether or not students will end up enrolling in my program. I always, also, assure them that no question is silly. Because I know that a lot of times they are at the beginning very confused about how to move forward or intimidated to reach out to staff and faculty and academic institutions. So again, being open, responsive, and making them feel comfortable about asking any type of questions when they are inquiring about the application process is very important.

>> MAUREEN JOHNSON: We have another question from Beth Fondell she's hoping to have a more in-depth conversation with Mercedes about creating brave space and community advisors. And this could possibly be a next webinar topic. Great idea. Thank you.

>> DR. MERCEDES AVILA: Yes and I'm happy to connect with you, Beth, any time. I have more time now because I'm working from home. We can Zoom any time.

So email me, please.

>> MAUREEN JOHNSON: Any remaining questions?

I'm going to wait 30 more seconds for any more questions.

The transcript is available in the -- you can save the transcript by hitting the save button. It will also be available on the events page for this webinar.

So it is now 4:00 o'clock and I want to thank you all for attending the webinar. This webinar has been recorded and will be archived in the webinar library at AUCD.org. Please take a few minutes to complete our survey. I have placed it in the chat box. You can access the survey at [SurveyMonkey.com/r/PKTRH6L](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PKTRH6L).

It will also appear on the screen when we close this webinar.

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