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'Educating for Equity' researchers to focus on diversity strategies

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(https://louisiana.edu/sites/louisiana/files/styles/large/public/news-images/2021-09/Educating%20for%20Equity.png?itok=mx4m_U7G)

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This fall, a group of faculty and staff members at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette will begin a professional development curriculum as part of a research-based initiative to examine diversity, equity and inclusion challenges in online and traditional learning.

UL Lafayette's Office for Campus Diversity (https://diversity.louisiana.edu/) is leading the Educating for Equity Fellows program. The Louisiana Board of Regents is funding the two-semester initiative with a $20,000 grant. University faculty and staff members who apply and are selected to participate will represent many areas of campus.

"The cohort will form a community of practice - a group of faculty and staff on campus who learn from each other about what's working well in their classrooms, student organizations and other cocurricular activities," said Dr. Taniecea A. Mallery, the University's executive director of Strategic Initiatives and chief diversity officer.

The group will implement strategies that center on transformative social and emotional learning as it relates to diversity, equity and inclusion - and assess those strategies' effectiveness, Mallery explained. "SEL is an emerging area of equity-minded research that centers on students and educators developing competencies related to managing emotions, making sound decisions and fostering healthy interpersonal relationships."

Evidence-based research conducted for the project will be disseminated, enabling other institutions in the University of Louisiana System and across the state and nation to adopt best practices discovered during the Educating for Equity Fellows program, Mallery added. "There's tremendous potential for a far-reaching impact that extends well beyond our own campus. The idea is to provide resources that other higher education institutions can tap into to strengthen their own diversity, equity and inclusion efforts."

At its core, the program focuses on intercultural education and engagement, which Mallery described as "finding ways to engage across difference, to engage with people who are not like ourselves."

"We naturally tend to gravitate toward people and situations that we're very familiar with, others with the same backgrounds and experiences - but there's enormous power in learning from people with backgrounds different from our own," she added.

That concept is central to UL Lafayette's Strategic Plan for Inclusive Excellence (https://diversity.louisiana.edu/news-events/news/20191022/university-gets-strategic-about-diversity-and-inclusion). The plan calls for developing policies and expanding educational and professional

development resources that advance equity and inclusion, and for increasing engagement across campus and in the community. It also sets forth strategies for recruiting and hiring diverse faculty members, and increasing enrollment and retention among underrepresented students.

Mallery is hopeful the Educating for Equity Fellows program will be "replicated every year, with each successive cohort building on work that's previously been done, which would considerably strengthen the University's ongoing commitment to an inclusive teaching and learning environment."

In October, Mallery will have an opportunity to begin detailing the merits of the program as one of 50 educators chosen for the Bridging Differences Community of Practice virtual learning community. The eight-month initiative will be hosted by the Greater Good Science Center at University of California, Berkeley (https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/?_ga=2.70136528.1196571234.1629733349-1259517302.1628171766), where researchers study the psychology, sociology and neuroscience of well-being.

Educators were selected to participate in the Bridging Differences Community of Practice learning community to share ideas and insights about innovative projects being coordinated on their campuses. The group will take part in about a dozen, 90-minute virtual meetings designed to contribute to "a growing body of research around diversity, equity and inclusion in higher education," Mallery said.

"I'm interested in both hearing about strategies people have tried and found successful and letting other institutions know about things we've found to be successful so they can bring fresh ideas to their own campuses."

Photo caption: UL Lafayette will begin researching diversity and inclusion this fall as part of the Louisiana Board of Regents-funded Educating for Equity Fellows program. A group of faculty and staff members will launch a professional development curriculum as part of the research-based initiative to examine diversity, equity and inclusion challenges in online and traditional learning. **Photo credit:** Rachel Rafati / University of Louisiana at Lafayette

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U.S. News & World Report (https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/louisiana/articles/2021-08-31/louisiana-university-creating-acres-of-urban-prairie)
The seeds are being planted for outdoor learning and research about erosion, native flowers, bees and soil quality.

ESPN.com (https://www.espn.com/college-football/story/_/id/32090749/why-methodical-football-coach-billy-napier-taking-louisiana)
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NPR (https://www.npr.org/2020/12/17/947552020/mirror-mirror-on-the-wall-can-you-reveal-an-animals-inner-world-at-all)
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Politifact (https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2020/dec/11/facebook-posts/chart-showing-deadliest-days-american-history-cont/)
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Sports Illustrated (https://www.si.com/college/2020/10/12/louisiana-football-billy-napier)
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Dr. Karl Hasenstein's radishes are growing in space. The researcher is studying ways astronauts can produce food during long missions.

Chattanooga Times Free Press
(https://www.timesfreepress.com/news/breakingnews/story/2020/apr/22/louisiana-restoring-island-where-cleaned-birds-were-brought-during-bp-spill/521249/)
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