

Equity-Mindedness and My Vision of How to be Equitable

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The quality of being fair and impartial is how equity is described by Oxford Languages (2020). This definition is quite short, but encompasses the main idea. I would define equity as providing the resources and support to everyone but tailored to each person individually – where each person gets the proper resources and support required for their individual success. Although this definition is longer, this definition applies more directly to the area of higher education. In Higher Education, administrators must provide resources and support to students to make them successful, but if students were treated equally instead of equitably, only some students would be successful where others would fall short.

As shared above, my version of equity as it applies to Higher Education is providing resources and support to every student individually, but tailoring the resources and support to each individual student to make themselves successful. When looking at equity versus diversity, equity is aimed more at the systems in place for creating successful students, where diversity looks at the individuals and what each individual needs. Diversity describes the breadth of individuals and what they bring, where equity describes what the institutions need to do to make the diverse individuals successful. Without diversity, equity wouldn't be needed. There is a balance – the more diverse the student population, the more equitable the administration and institution must be to those students.

When looking at why equity is important, I reflect back on my personal experience, and witnessing the experiences around me. I am a privileged cis white man – a lot of what institutions are geared towards supporting. But how does the support that I was provided help people who are disenfranchised, minoritized, or forgotten – it doesn't. These individuals need additional support and resources to get them “on par” with the individuals that the systems were

built for. As poor of an analogy as this is, think of it like a track race – now I am not a track runner, but I understand the gist – where if the privileged individual who was provided all the opportunities in the world has a clear path before them and the disenfranchised or minoritized individual has rocks, boulders, hurdles, forests, and more in their way, this creates an inequitable race. This “race” may be equal in the sense that both individuals start at the same start line, but very inequitable because there are blockages for the other individual that they need support to bypass. This is where equity becomes important – in providing the resources and support to navigate the terrain in front of them. How much training did this other individual do leading up to the race, what other paths are provided to avoid the hard parts, what bridges and detours are provided for that individual to reach the finish line, are all questions that equity acknowledges. Without having equitable practices and equity being constantly practiced, individuals who have “fallen behind” or who face disruptions ahead, may not reach their finish line in their race to success.

With the analogy above, equity becomes important to me to make sure that students don’t get left behind, forgotten, or lost due to their circumstances outside of the institution. It is my job as an administrator, educator, mentor, to support these students and to provide for them the resources and connections they need to make them be successful, graduate, land the career of their dreams, and to help them be who they want to be. If I don’t work in an equitable manner, I am leaving many students to be unsuccessful which may not end well for them. I must work in an equitable fashion, and with equitable practices to make sure that students get to that finish line of graduation, or career, or scientific breakthrough, whichever aligns with what they want.

In my current roles, and past roles, I am constantly learning and growing as an educator. I can reflect back on my experiences and see where I was not acting in an equity-minded manner,

but being able to reflect on these experiences allows me the opportunity to grow and to practice equity-minded work. In my current role as a Front Desk Security Monitor, I co-supervise the student staff that work in the building. With this, I have scheduled one-on-ones with my staff. In these meetings, I use the time to get to know each staff member on an individual level, but also to find out what support or resources each student needs. I always try to make sure that I am asking what resources and what support they need each week. Over time, I have come to learn where each student is in their academic journey and provide the resources applicable to them. Some of them are graduating – so providing resources or support of post-graduation life and post-graduation applications. Some staff are only second-year students – so providing them with on-campus connections and working with them on figuring out what they want to do in their lives.

As I look forward to my future, and my growth as an administrator, as a mentor, as an educator, I realize that I still have a lot to learn – we all have a lot to learn. But being able to constantly reflect on my past experiences – both good and bad – allow me to grow and be able to apply a more equity-minded approach to student success. For me to continue to grow in this area, I need to practice more often. I need to be able to be put in situations where I have to think and act equitably. Having first-hand instances and constant practices will allow me to constantly work on this and actively think about how equitable I am being. Outside of Higher Education, I need to be actively supporting equitable initiatives. When I was living back home, prior to moving to California, I connected with an equity-minded organization called Snohomish for Equity. This organization focused in the area of racial equity, and providing education and activism against racism within my local community. Although this was one organization that

focused in one facet, I believe that I should broaden my knowledge and experiences and join equity-minded organizations for me to actively practice and work on my equity-mindedness.

With everything shared above, and my desire to work in an equitable manner, I believe the active practicing and learning will help me grow as an equity-minded educator. It is with this passion and this motive that invigorates me to work with all students and finding the resources and support they need to get them to their finish line. With actively engaged equity-mindedness, will I be able to properly support all students in my student affairs journey.

References

Oxford languages and Google - English -. (2020, May 20). Oxford Languages | The Home of Language Data. <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/>