



## **Perspective/Opinion**

# **Reflecting the change you want to see – the importance of involvement in equity and inclusion initiatives**

By Michael Stout, Ed.D. – Master of Science in Anesthesia Program Director

*The importance of diversity and equity in our organization is demonstrated by our values. But how we invest our time is where real change is cultivated...*

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion goals are often easier to design than they are to achieve. We value their importance, yet gaps persist. These issues were seldom mentioned when I first entered graduate school. More recently, I would be hard-pressed to find a college leader who does not support DEI initiatives. It appears we renewed interest and enthusiasm for addressing gaps and inequality wherever they exist, including our college campuses. Creating a thriving community built on principles of respect and inclusion remains an institutional priority, but how can we make it imperative? The benefits of participation in DEI initiatives can extend beyond individual growth and development and promote positive change beyond our role.

Admittedly, I have struggled to find time to participate in development programs. There are countless instances when I have received an email and thought, “That sounds interesting. I would really like to attend that event” only to be pulled immediately back into the consuming list of my daily tasks. Inevitably, the date passes without consequence. While missing an opportunity is usually disappointing, the explanation that other activities were more pressing suffices to allay my concern. However, the impact my non-participation has on my team, and the larger organization, is often missed. A person’s priorities can be discerned by where they spend their most precious resource, their time. How could my faculty, staff, and students understand my support of DEI initiatives, if they do not see me participate?

These programs are designed to help move our organization. The resources dedicated to them aim to transform our campus community and achieve outcomes that align with our values. As an academic leader, I wish for everyone in my unit to attend these events. I welcome the transformational ideas they bring back to our team. But if I choose not to participate, why would I expect that anyone else will? Therefore, my decisions have expanding ripple effects. These decisions not only impact my own development, but can also impact my team, and the larger organizational culture.

There is growing evidence that improving diversity yields benefits in both private and public institutions. To this end, I pledge to attend an IWILL event to broaden my views on gender. These programs present opportunities to demonstrate our commitment to improving organizational culture. I am grateful for all the hard work, generously provided, by those who organize and attend them. While the demands upon our time are likely to remain unchanged, investing in these initiatives can help close the gap between the aspiration for change and its achievement.

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