

2024 CTE Faculty Fellow

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Office of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI)

In my role as Faculty Fellow for the Office of DEI, I have immersed myself in three main areas during spring 2024. First, I have participated in monthly team meetings with the office staff to learn about the visible and invisible work that the office is engaging to advance DEI efforts throughout the campus community. In addition, I have bi-weekly one-on-one check-ins with Emelyn dela Peña, Vice President for DEI. Spending time in these spaces lead me to discover that the office seeks to strategize, rather than fix, the many challenges around DEI. This distinction is important especially given the growing frustration that some faculty, staff, and students may feel about perceived institutional inaction via the Office of DEI. In other words, I have broadened my understanding and this is an important perspective to share with the wider campus community.

Second, the fellowship provided me with multiple professional development opportunities during the semester, including attendance at the American Association of Blacks in Higher Education conference, institutional attendance at a 4-hour webinar “Leading on Unsettled Ground: Navigating Anti-DEI Forces and Complexities on Campus”, and attendance at the Ignatian Q conference, which brings Jesuit universities together to better support the LGBTQIA+ community on their campuses.

Given the rising movement against DEI, anti-racism, and the LGBTQIA+ community in our states’ legislatures, and in institutions and organizations across the country, this learning is important. Even when working in a “liberal” state like California and at a private university, it is critical that anyone who is committed to DEI and anti-racist work take proactive steps to strengthen their initiatives and actions when there are clear signs that the political climate continues to be hostile towards our work. This is even more urgent as we will engage in a presidential election at the end of 2024 and one of the candidates has been a key figure in the attempts to dismantle our work. By the time this reflection is shared, I will have led a listening session for faculty to share their concerns, visions, and recommendations for action around DEI topics. In addition, I will translate faculty input to help shape the campus climate survey that the Office of DEI will launch in the fall of 2024. By translating and sharing faculty perspectives with the Office of DEI and the newly developed Office of Faculty Development, I can help them to identify immediate and future steps to implement faculty voice in our ongoing work to strengthen our DEI efforts. I look forward to the ways that my work as a Faculty Fellow this spring will inform the work I do in the fall and beyond.