

SUMMARY OF ACE 2020 REPORT

OVERVIEW

In 2017, a research team from the American Council on Education (ACE) began a multi-year case study of the University of Missouri (MU) which was focused on our navigation of the racial crisis of 2015 and our initial steps towards recovery. The team returned in 2019, and their examination of our progress and recommendations for the type of leadership necessary for our success is summarized in the 2020 ACE Report, "[*Leading After a Racial Crisis: Weaving a Campus Tapestry of Diversity and Inclusion*](#)". Both reports ultimately address how institutions can build their diversity and inclusion capacity and address histories of racism.

OUR CURRENT STATE

The research team's assessment of MU is that the institution has moderate capacity for D&I work. This assessment was based on the presence of the following factors at MU and steps taken:

- Strategic plan and mission, working to fully reflect the values of campus
- Leadership expertise on DEI issues
- Building trust with diverse communities
- Educational programs and offerings
- Initial evaluations of efforts to improve campus climate
- Time and resources invested in DEI work
- Development of opportunities and support for marginalized populations

FRAGMENTED PERSPECTIVES AND TENSIONS

While the report acknowledges that MU has accomplished many goals since 2015 and 2017, it noted that community-members have varying opinions of the institution. While some Tigers celebrated our successes, other Tigers expected greater progress. Some Tigers were fatigued by D&I work, while others were deeply invested.

In the initial ACE report in 2018, the research team described MU's collective trauma and proposed a framework to address it. In this report, ACE points out that the racial crisis brought heightened attention to diversity issues and a sense of urgency that has now subsided. Some parts of our community have moved on psychologically, and new students, faculty and staff have joined our community, so the initial shared trauma has dissipated. Additionally, tensions have emerged – to be critical versus celebratory; speaking out versus fear of repercussion; and moving on versus respectfully remembering.

NEED FOR WEAVER-LEADERS

The research team indicated that these tensions, emotions, and fractured reality are common for institutions recovering from a racial crisis and/or building their D&I capacity. The report proposes that institutions can only recover by embracing hard, intentional, and unpredictable D&I work.

The report uses the metaphor of *weaving a tapestry* to "convey the current complexity, tensions, opportunities, and successes" at MU. Every institution "creates its own distinct and unique cultural tapestry that emerges from its values, experiences, vision, and investment" in diversity and inclusion.

This type of work requires a certain type of leadership provided by "weaver-leaders", who will identify different fragments and connect them, and help to connect "ideas, beliefs, activities and feelings".

WORK OF WEAVER-LEADERS

1. Over-communicating
They will find personalized ways to communicate the progress being made and inform about the approach so that communication is "proactive, personal, caring and transparent". Weaver-leaders will acknowledge mistakes. This type of communication builds relationships, and eventually trust – so it will get ahead of crises.
2. Setting expectations

This is how fragmented worldviews and tensions are addressed. Expectations influence the pattern of the tapestry the institution is weaving in its D&I efforts.

3. Relationship building

Institutional recovery requires multiple levels of engagement between “leaders, key stakeholder groups, and members of the community”. Senior administrators need to be “on the ground” connecting with all parts of the university.

4. Shared expectations

Weaver-leaders at our institution bring all sections of our community – their “emotions, perspectives, needs and possible solutions” to produce our inclusive vision.

CONCLUSION

The University of Missouri is moving in the right direction, however, we had low-to-moderate capacity when the racial crisis hit, so our recovery will have more pronounced challenges. While we have tensions and fragments in our community now, they are actually signs of progress, as well as opportunities to move forward.

Our community members expressed feelings of fear, distrust, anger and fatigue in the 2018 report that were still present in 2020. Therefore, it is crucial for leaders to create space for the community as a whole to process trauma, and address our collective emotions. Additionally, creating a foundation that normalizes D&I work is crucial, because our shared sense of crisis and attention to D&I out of necessity will fade.

*This summary was produced by the Office of Inclusive Engagement. Read the full [2020 ACE Report](#) to learn more.