



# INSIGHTS REPORT

## When Intentions Lead to Action: How to Promote Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion with Primary and Secondary Sources



“The inclusion of diverse voices, perspectives, and authors in primary and secondary source materials is central to the EDI transformation of the teaching and learning environment.”

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### ABOUT THIS INSIGHTS REPORT

This insights report focuses on how librarians and faculty can promote equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) initiatives in the classroom and support today’s complex campus environments with the help of primary and secondary sources. Participants were asked to consider what they see as the role of EDI today and offer advice to other universities and colleges that want to incorporate EDI strategies into their education community.

### OVERVIEW

Where educators lead, change follows. The movement to promote EDI in the classroom and on campus is a prime example. Before you take the lead on your next initiative, consider the circumstances that both challenge and support your learning community. In this report, you’ll hear from an academic librarian and two faculty members who are key leaders of their campus-wide EDI initiatives. They’ll share insights on how to promote EDI through more purposeful use of primary and secondary source materials; the biggest challenges in developing an EDI program; their thoughts on the future of teaching and learning; how to find allies across your institution; and much more.

## HOW EDI IS CHANGING THE TEACHING & LEARNING LANDSCAPE

The current emphasis on the importance of EDI is a continuation of conversations and processes that have been in motion since the U.S. civil rights movement of the 1960s. Academic librarians and faculty are now tasked to not only add depth and breadth of information on these complex historical topics but also provide a learning environment that embraces EDI principles. As more colleges and universities work to build or expand their EDI initiatives, it's useful to hear from those who have initiated change on the landscape of teaching and learning.

**Dr. Sarah Handley-Cousins, clinical assistant professor of history and associate director for the Center for Disability Studies at the University at Buffalo**, states: "It has become an absolute priority for administrations and hiring committees that faculty are not only familiar with EDI, but actively incorporate it into their everyday teaching practices." In fact, "students are increasingly conscious of the need for equity and diversity in teaching, and make their needs known in student evaluations and other feedback. Students want a rich, diverse education, and are often no longer content to see their professors teaching the same old same old."

This could mean taking steps to revise syllabi, incorporate new reading material, and edit or update lectures regularly. **Dr. Jade G. Winn, MLIS, Ed.D., associate university librarian at the University of Southern California**, agrees that curriculum and pedagogy are being looked at more closely. "We addressed vocabulary issues and provided a living document that is always being added to as terms change and are added to the discussion. We held dozens of meetings asking stakeholders from students to administration to include as many voices as possible, and we keep this an open dialogue.



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**Jade G. Winn, MLIS, Ed.D.**  
Associate University Librarian  
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We also took time to self-reflect on our own inherent privilege, and what that means as we craft policy and procedures. We view DEIA+AR (diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and anti-racism) as an ongoing process that needs to be a high priority and always adapting to current events and cultural climates."

As a historian and educator, **Dr. Lisa Miles Bunkowski at Texas A&M University-Central Texas** looks at the teaching and learning landscape through a historical lens. She shares the view that the central point to consider as librarians, faculty, and administration support EDI is that the classroom is a politicized space. "It has always been a politicized space because it is there that systems of thought, cultural, and political hierarchies are affirmed and denied." (McKenna, p. 36). It has taken several decades for this notion to spread beyond limited groups of higher education leaders. Now, the trend in professional development and formal training of higher education faculty and staff is to address EDI more fully in the teaching and learning environment. This movement comes from all directions—faculty, staff, administrators, community members, and students."

## CONSIDERING THE FUTURE OF EDI AND TEACHING & LEARNING

For academic librarians, Dr. Winn believes that actionable and measurable recommendations for pedagogy and curriculum as well as programmatic suggestions are paramount to a successful future. “[We must also be] mindful of different disciplines, courses, and programs and understand the need for faculty to have agency in what they choose to incorporate in their own practice while offering the tools and the support to assess their own pedagogy and curriculum. We can also work programmatically with administrators on how to instill DEIA+AR constructs into the programs at a higher level.”

Dr. Bunkowski sees the future of EDI in teaching and learning spaces as promising. “There is increasing national attention on the importance of EDI principles (Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, 2016) and evidence-based practices (ACUE, 2020; Center for Research on Learning & Teaching, 2020). There is every indication these transformative efforts will continue. However, there are concerns that need to be addressed so that



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EDI efforts are not dismissed as a passing educational fad. Efforts need to be embraced more fully at higher education institutions to be part of the larger institutional approaches that extend beyond the confines of the classroom—including student admissions, the recruitment of graduate students, and the recruitment and training of faculty and staff (Masterson, 2019; Nunes, 2021; Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, 2016).”

It’s also important for colleges and universities to be transparent. “For these efforts to be successful, they need to be supported from the top-down, with resources, staff, and accountability (Anderson, 2019; McInnis, 2020) and supported from the bottom-up, by the faculty, staff and students who will help drive their success and make these efforts authentic and effective (Byrd, et al., 2021; Gannon, 2018; Nunes, 2021).”

For Dr. Handley-Cousins, she’s not quite sure what administrations will require of faculty in the future. “What I hope the future will look like is more faculty crafting meaningful EDI statements for their syllabi and then following through on them, with accessible policies, diverse readings and topics, and an awareness of what students need and deserve.”

## UTILIZING PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES TO SUPPORT EDI INITIATIVES

There is an unlimited opportunity for faculty and instructors to use primary sources in their curriculum. “Because the voices of vulnerable, under-represented, and marginalized groups have been systematically omitted from the mainstream secondary sources, primary sources are of the upmost importance,” says Dr. Winn. Also, “Using primary and secondary sources as a comparison tool to illustrate the lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion in resources is a very powerful learning opportunity.”

Dr. Handley-Cousins agrees. “Including diverse sources—in the sense they are written by diverse authors and written on diverse topics—is a relatively easy way to diversify classes and class materials. And when materials are accessible to faculty, the likelihood that they will make it into classes and syllabi increases.”

“The inclusion of diverse voices, perspectives, and authors in primary and secondary source materials is central to the EDI transformation of the teaching and learning environment,” says Dr. Bunkowski. “However, we also need to focus on pedagogical strategies to conceptualize and transform the learning environment. Faculty and learners should engage in self-reflection, consider implicit bias—their own and that of the standard literature in their field—and address the notion of a hidden curriculum in higher education (Leu, 2021; Orón Semper and Blasco, 2018; Sathy and Hogan, 2019). We need to transform the context in which we implement these sources.”

## ASSESSING BARRIERS TO USING PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES

The two major barriers to using primary and secondary sources are linked: availability and resistance to change. If primary and secondary sources are not readily available or easy to access, finding and incorporating them into coursework and projects requires a significant amount of added work and preparation.

“A shift would require all stakeholders to prioritize DEIA+AR lessons and provide diversity of voices. It is not always an easy task to challenge faculty to change the way they teach and how they teach it,” explains Dr. Winn. Yet the landscape has never been more poised for these changes. From her vantage point, she remains cognizant that “it is our responsibility to educate our faculty and students

about primary versus secondary sources. Unless a faculty member is from the discipline of education or information science, they have not necessarily been trained in pedagogy or in primary source materials. We [academic librarians] need to offer professional development opportunities in these areas.” In her experience, and that of other information scientists, she has been asked to teach one workshop on primary versus secondary sources. “This illustrates that many professors are not confident to teach this subject matter. It is trans-disciplinary and has significantly different impact on different disciplines.”

Dr. Bunkowski expands on this challenge with a solution: “Having adequate time and support for professional development and course design practices that support EDI concepts and a careful review of new primary and secondary sources that reflect EDI principles could be more widespread.” She offers additional suggestions, such as an occasional early release time or a stipend for course redevelopment, as persuasive ways to encourage faculty.

Regarding availability, Dr. Bunkowski adds: “Accessibility and cost of primary and secondary sources that reflect EDI principles [is a barrier]. Although progress has been made, it can be challenging for faculty to locate quality materials that are appropriate to the specific course topics and level for the classes they teach.” Another factor related to availability and cost is time.

If availability is scarce, faculty are not able to effectively use their time to revamp syllabi with updated EDI material. Dr. Handley-Cousins shares her experience as an instructor: “Incorporating new materials often means an extensive search process and lots of planning. Even when you might have the perfect source in mind, it might be a challenge to get an accessible copy: a PDF that embeds well in an LMS [learning management system], or a source that

isn't too long, or too challenging, or is on just the right aspect of the topic. Assigning a reader (i.e., book with many primary sources in it) is a way around this because it ensures everyone has access to the sources, but it often means that students pay for a book that isn't always used extensively. The alternative, gathering public domain or open access sources, is more accessible to students but means more work for faculty."

## **CONFRONTING THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPING AN EDI PROGRAM**

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Regardless of size, colleges and universities face similar challenges. The desire and the potential to face those challenges is dependent on support, buy-in from decision makers, and participation. For Dr. Winn and Dr. Bunkowski, finding time to take action and working against the silo effect have been difficult.

"It cannot be a one-size-fits-all solution," explains Dr. Winn. "Standardizing across all schools would fail, hence the a la carte approach we are taking in our program. We also need backing from the highest level of administration and a consistent message about the importance of this work. Results can be spotty, which means some programs and departments embrace this work and others do not. Also, each school, department, and program are working separately, causing uneven outcomes and mixed messaging, which negatively impacts buy-in."

Like many small universities, Texas A&M University-Central Texas has encountered several challenges in developing EDI programs, despite the university community being committed to EDI principles. "Early on, our EDI programming was managed to limited success by various individuals and offices. Without a centralized office to help track what was happening at the institution, there was duplication of effort and a lack of awareness about who was engaged in these activities."

Over time, that changed. A university-level EDI committee was established, housed within Student Affairs, and the president prioritized EDI and recognized the need for an institutional leader. With a chief diversity officer (CDO), the structure of the Texas A&M University-Central Texas EDI initiative was modified to be more effective. The committee was disbanded and a council was formed, including faculty from all colleges, staff, students, and community members. Along with the CDO, the council advises the university president, promotes centralized communication within and beyond the institution, deconstructs silos, and monitors and measures EDI work.

As part of their institutional EDI initiatives, the council emphasizes collaboration across the university and embeds EDI principles in work with students. The allocation of dedicated resources with strong institutional leaders focused on EDI initiatives and formal programming has raised awareness of these efforts. The statewide Texas A&M University System (TAMUS) supports their local efforts. Through this partnership, Texas A&M University-Central Texas is able to offer professional development courses to faculty and staff that emphasize equity and inclusion. Still, like all faculty, they have limited time to invest in EDI programs.

## **FINDING OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE EDI PROGRAM**

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For Dr. Bunkowski, the most promising unexploited opportunities to develop an EDI program are the people and the work already in place. "We have administrators and staff who support this work as well as parts of the strategic plan and academic master plan that align with EDI goals. Some faculty members teach EDI concepts with EDI-based materials, and some students lead and advocate for EDI changes on campus."

For Dr. Winn, her most unexploited opportunity is taking some of the top work from the many committees and promoting it without encroachment on faculty choice—the center for excellence in teaching and the library’s special collections department.

## TAKING ACTIONABLE STEPS TO LEVERAGE OPPORTUNITIES

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Like many in her position, Dr. Winn knows that great work is being done on campus, but because of silos, no one is sharing and support across the campus suffers. “I would love to see a retreat for those of us who chair committees on DEIA+AR where we share what we have been doing and generate new innovations. In the bigger picture, a conference or institute where leaders who are doing innovative work could share actionable items with other institutions.”

At Texas A&M University-Central Texas, it was necessary to overcome three impediments to the development of EDI programs. The first challenge was to establish centralized communication. By establishing a CDO with a council that advises the president, Dr. Bunkowski noticed that communication has greatly improved. “Not only do we all have a better idea about EDI work within the university, we have stronger collaboration with the community, with our regional educational partners, and across the Texas A&M University System.”

The second challenge was funding. As a result of the new CDO and council, there is now institutional and system-level support for efforts like guest speakers and large-scale faculty training initiatives. Plus, the council is working on increased funding through community-based grants.

The third challenge was large-scale faculty support. Although faculty members are supportive of the concepts and goals, the issue is one of time.

There is progress in this area. Faculty are engaged in courses to promote equity and inclusion in their learning community. Dr. Bunkowski believes that celebrating faculty successes and showcasing their application of EDI concepts and principles will help to achieve the school’s goals.

## IDENTIFYING AND ENGAGING ALLIES ACROSS YOUR INSTITUTION

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Dr. Winn suggests creating “focus groups, town halls, surveys, and panels to consistently be listening” to identify and engage with potential allies.

“When enlisting allies in our efforts to build our EDI program, we look for champions who are already engaged in this work,” says Dr. Bunkowski. “For us, this meant reaching out to staff and students in our student success programs, faculty engaged in high-impact practices, and members of the initial diversity committee. We connect with the Student Government Association, the Staff Council, the University Council, and the Faculty Senate for input.” For a new perspective, Dr. Bunkowski visits with new faculty and staff members and encourages faculty, staff, and students to engage in external EDI development opportunities.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

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Increased access to diverse voices is key to the advancement of teaching and learning. Our faculty and librarian participants agree that, now more than ever, students are not only asking but demanding there be more focus on EDI content and programs from their educational leadership. The addition of primary and secondary sources can help accomplish this, but it’s only part of a bigger picture. Engagement, institutional support, funding, collaboration, and a solution or workflow that everyone can use are all factors.

When considering next steps in teaching and learning, Dr. Bunkowski puts her emphasis on three main areas: diverse voices, low-cost resources, and pedagogical support. “My first concern would be the expansion of primary and secondary source materials that include diverse perspectives by authors from a variety of backgrounds,” she says. “In keeping with the emphasis on equity and inclusion, it is also important to consider the cost of these materials. Finally, it is important to provide pedagogical support materials or ancillaries for the primary and secondary source materials. It cannot be assumed that all faculty members have experience or formal training in EDI concepts.”

Dr. Winn adds to these insights by acknowledging that with an increased focus on EDI, there is an opportunity for content providers to offer webinars, professional development opportunities, and product tutorials, which faculty could use as both professional development and as a way to learn the differences between primary and secondary sources.

For Dr. Handley-Cousins, curated resources on a web-based platform where faculty and students could easily access content would be the most beneficial. “Including scholars in that process, to ensure that those curated materials are properly contextualized and connected for students, would make this an even more powerful resource.”

**Gale Research Complete** is one of the ways content providers like Gale are addressing the need for affordable content at scale, along with greater access to diverse voices. On one platform, students and faculty can access millions of pages of primary sources, e-reference, and periodical content to find a rich store of relevant information that brings previously unavailable content to light. Plus, this package offers curriculum support for faculty, reduces spend for academic libraries, and increases student engagement by aligning content to meaningful, contemporary topics.

## PRODUCT HIGHLIGHT

**Gale Research Complete** empowers users at all academic levels. It is the world’s largest package of primary and secondary sources, available at an affordable price to suit the needs of most academic library budgets. With **Gale Research Complete**, you can:

- Provide resources that are **universally accessible** to meet the needs of diverse learning communities. *Gale Literature Criticism*, for example, includes articles that can support diversity initiatives.
- Increase access to interdisciplinary content to enhance **diversity, equity, and inclusion** initiatives across campus and the curriculum.
- Offer tools and services that support online, hybrid, and in-person **teaching and learning**.
- Create **easier paths of discovery** and integration of library resources into course materials and classrooms.
- Connect library investments to **student outcomes**, like academic performance, skill development, and career readiness.

Thank you to our participants for being part of a discussion that inspired this insights brief.

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## ABOUT US

Academic libraries support faculty and students by offering access to academic resources that can strengthen research and instruction. We partner with college and university librarians to collect, preserve, and organize rare content as part of our extensive collection of primary source archives and educational databases—making knowledge more accessible across campus and furthering research efforts.

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Learn more about using primary and secondary sources at [gale.com/grcinsights](https://gale.com/grcinsights)

This report was completed from written interviews. All ideas and suggestions are those of the participants. No one from Gale or the associated universities was consulted to influence these responses. The comments above are solely based on the individual experiences of each participant.

