

Decolonizing Pedagogy: Engaging in Disciplined Inquiry in Higher Education

An Improvement Initiative by the equity task force at the University at Albany's School of Education

Kristen C. Wilcox, Associate Professor Educational Policy & Leadership, School of Education, University at Albany and NYKids Research & Development Director,

Tammy Ellis-Robinson, Assistant Professor Educational & Counseling Psychology and Director of Equity and Inclusion, School of Education, University at Albany,



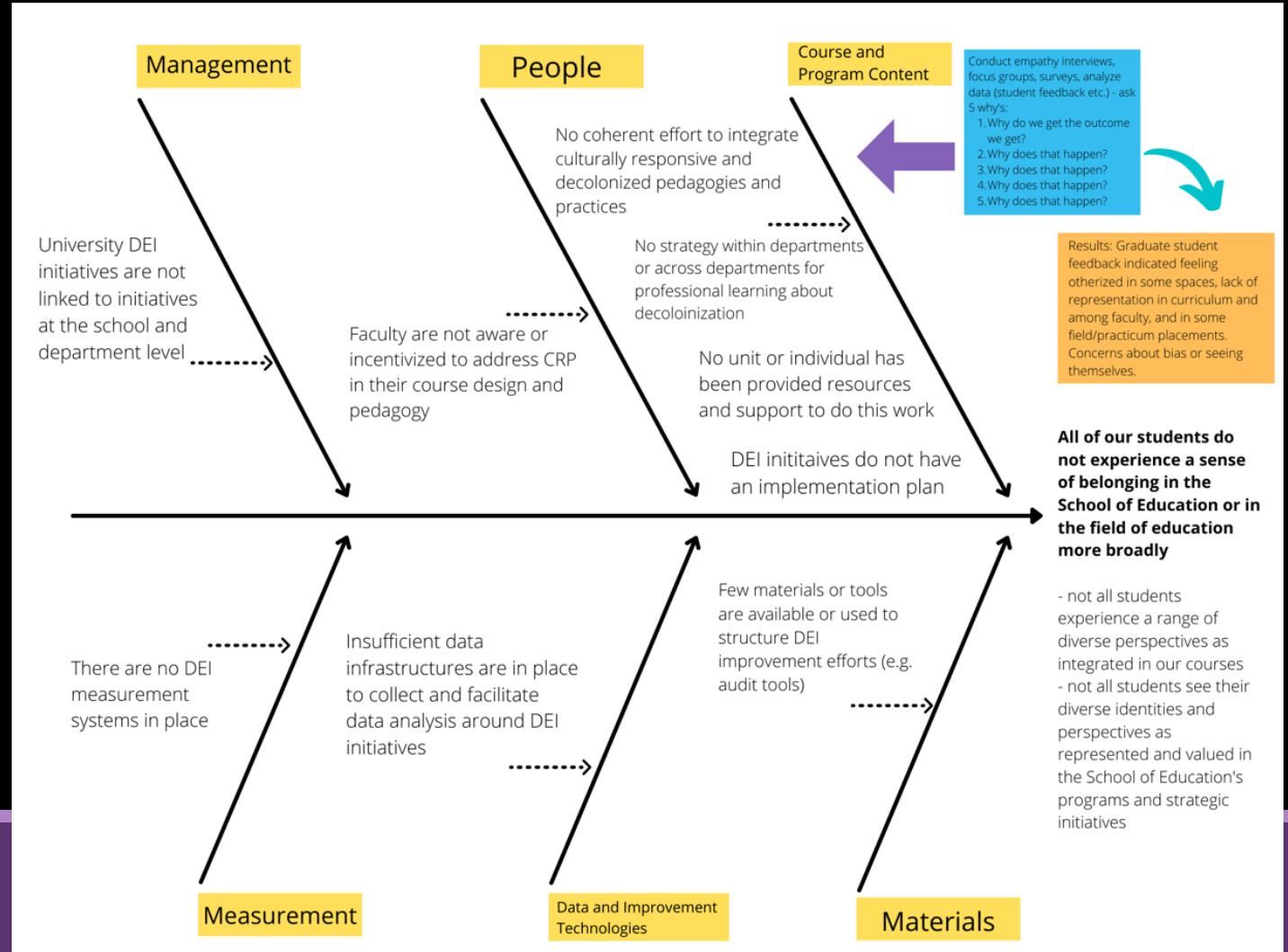
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY State University of New York

Root Cause Analysis

University at Albany faculty, students, and staff became increasingly aware of the lack of diversity within the School of Education and in the field of education.

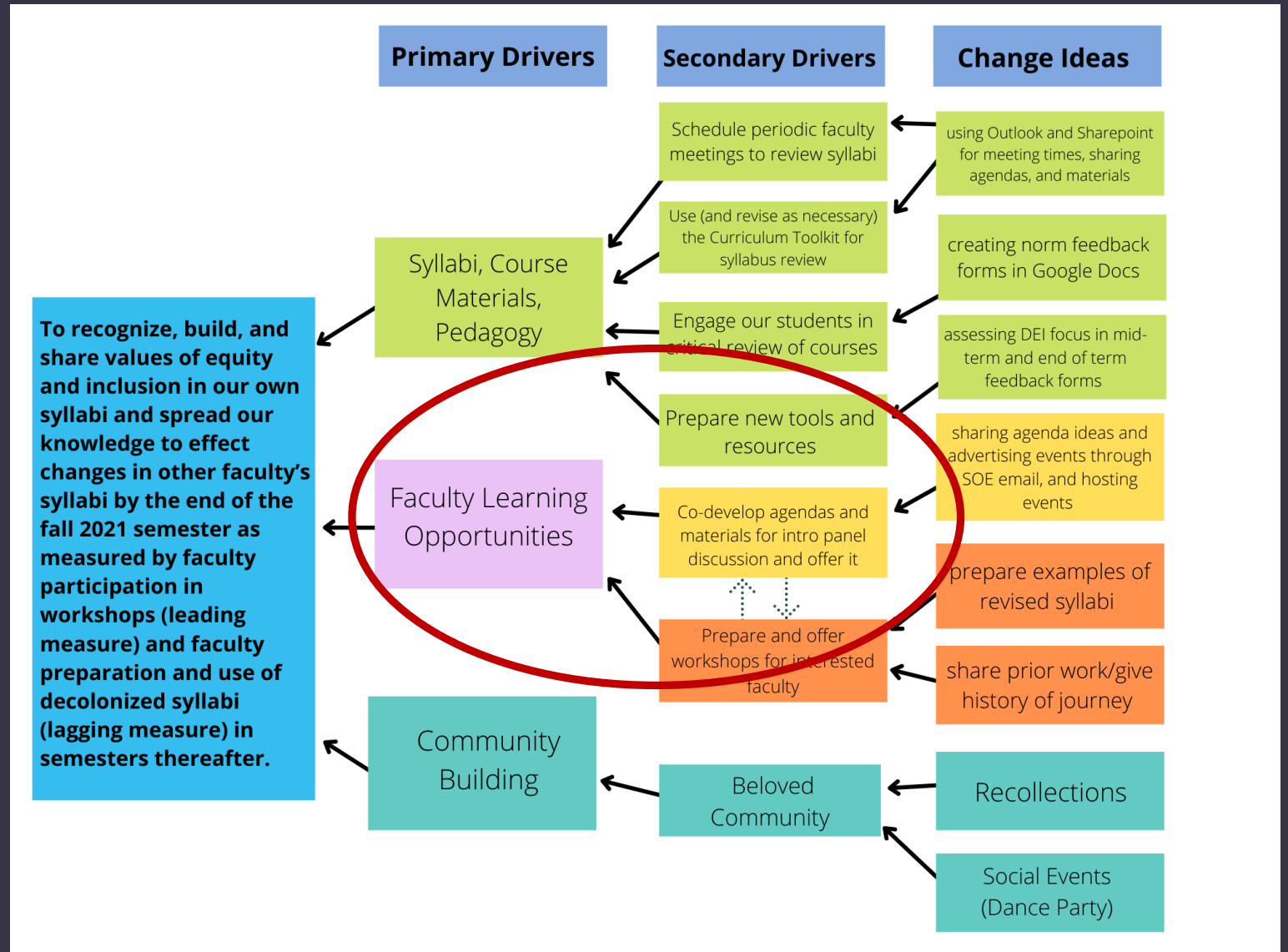
Through student surveys and focus groups, faculty learned that students have felt concerns over being otherized in some spaces as well as not being represented by the faculty themselves. An Equity Task Force, started to form to address the problem



Theory of Improvement

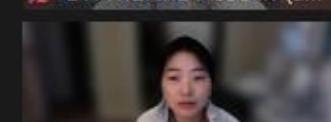
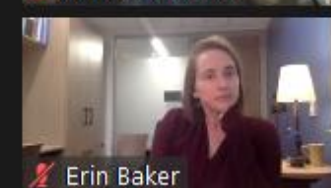
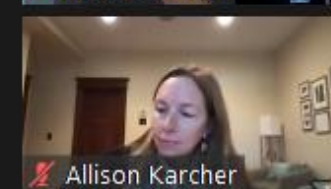
Faculty Learning Opportunities

- Panel Discussion
- Workshop



The Why and How of Decolonizing Our Syllabi: A Facilitated Conversation Among Faculty

Reflections and an Invitation

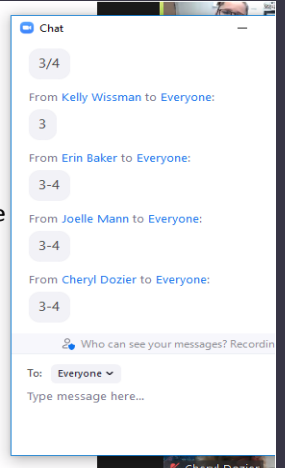


Panel Discussion

Panel Feedback

Polling

1. What is your level of comfort/familiarity with decolonization
2. I know nothing about decolonization
3. I have heard of decolonization and I am interested in learning more
4. I have done some reading and research about decolonization



Key findings and lessons learned

The majority of faculty (n=12) had some interest, knowledge, and experience with the term and idea of decolonizing

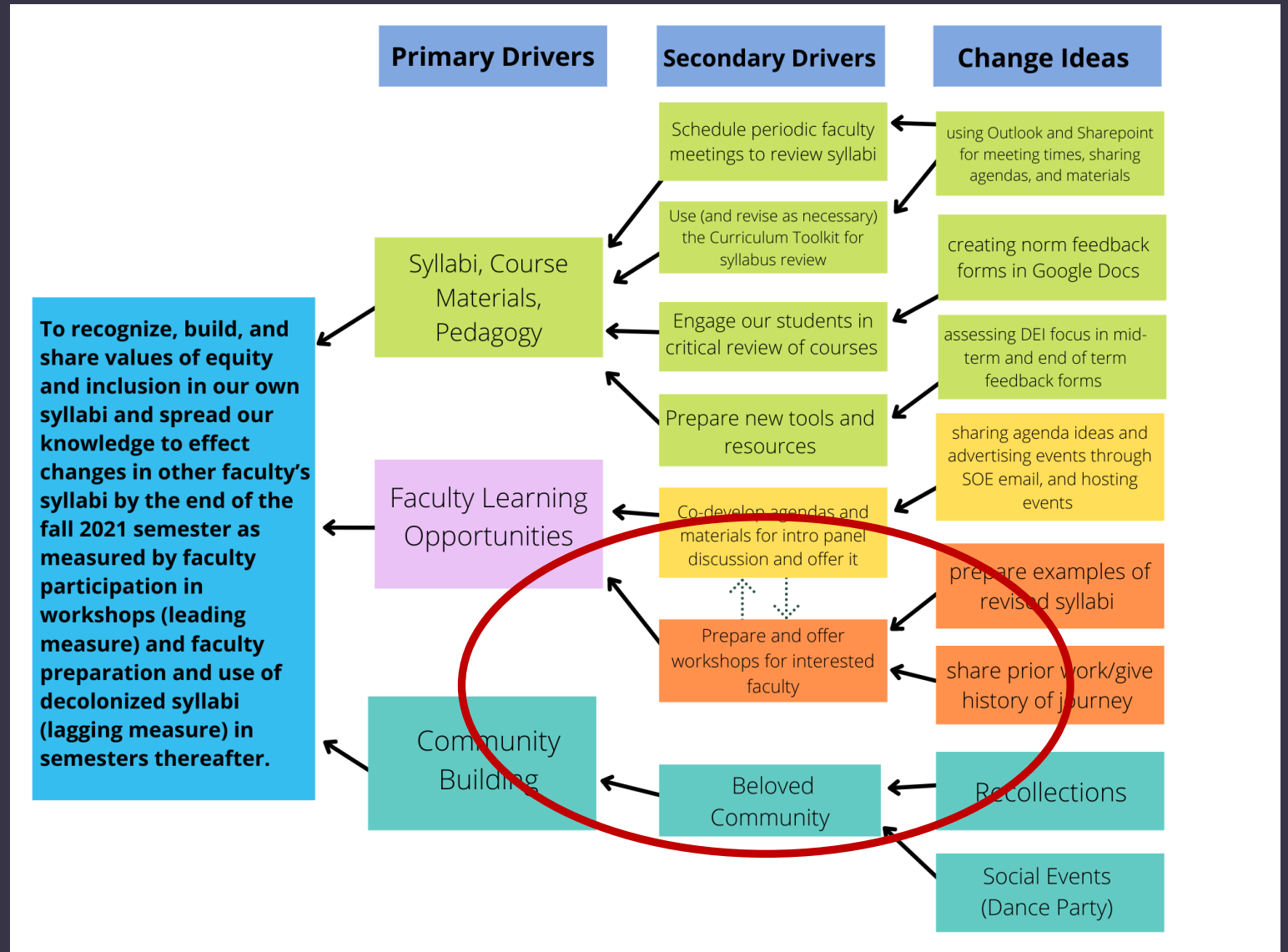
Most shared an interest in learning more about how to engage in the process of syllabus review.

Since most participants had self-assessed relatively high in terms of knowledge and experience, we would need to find a way to engage those who are less familiar and comfortable with decolonizing.

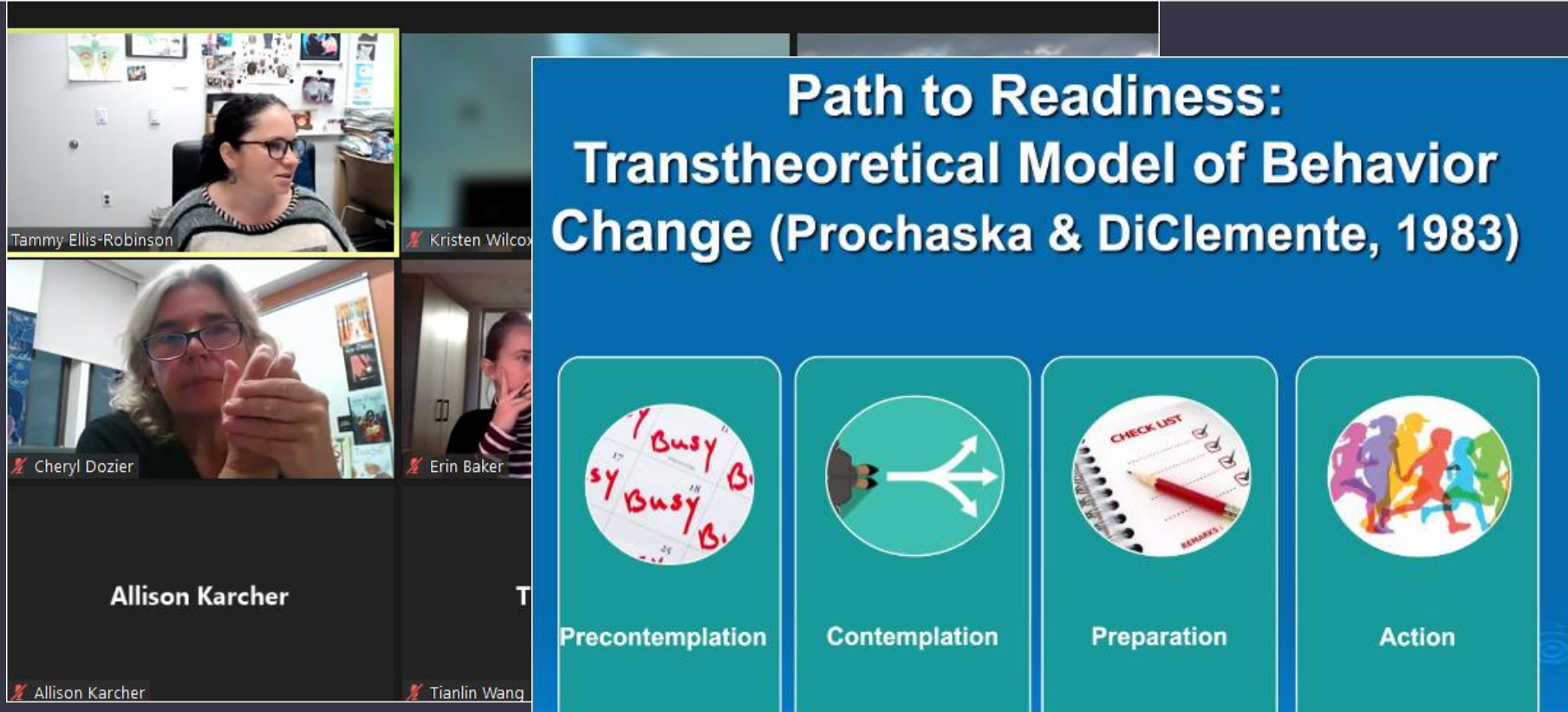
Theory of Improvement

Faculty Learning Opportunities

- Panel Discussion
- Workshop



Workshop



**Path to Readiness:
Transtheoretical Model of Behavior
Change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983)**

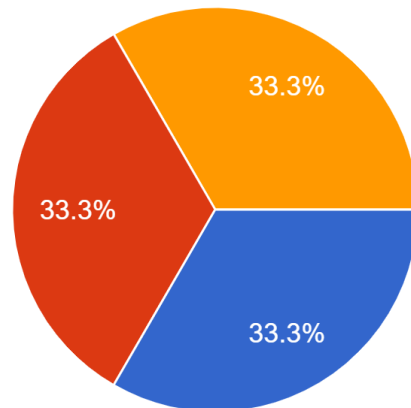
Precontemplation Contemplation Preparation Action

Participants in the Zoom meeting: Tammy Ellis-Robinson, Kristen Wilcox, Cheryl Dozier, Erin Baker, Allison Karcher, Tianlin Wang.

WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

What Department are you From?

3 responses



- Educational Policy and Leadership
- Educational Counseling and Psychology
- Educational Theory and Practice
- Educational Literacy Teaching and Learning



Decolonizing workshop feedback

Thank you for participating in our workshop. We hope you had as much fun attending as we did organizing it.

We want to hear your feedback so we can keep improving. Please fill this quick survey and let us know your thoughts (your answers will be anonymous).

kwilcox1@albany.edu (not shared) [Switch account](#)

* Required

What Department are you From? *

Choose

Did you attend our panel discussion? *

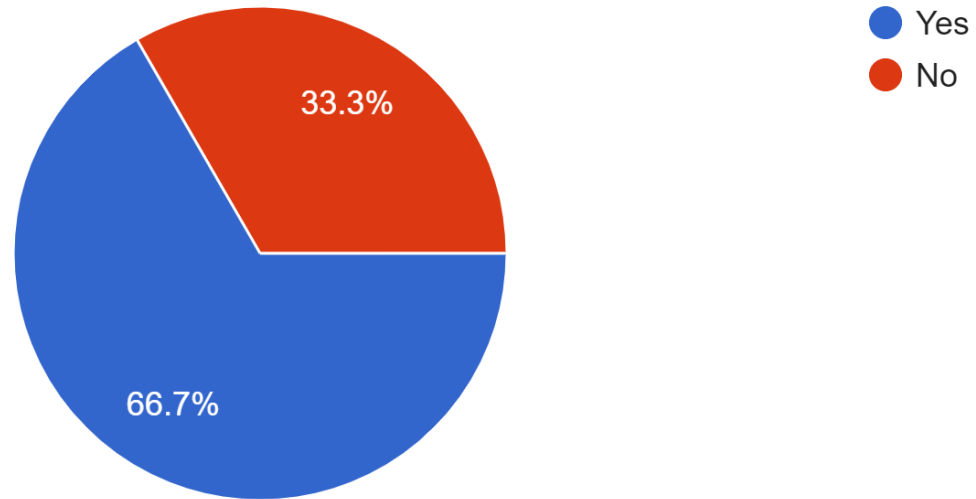
Yes

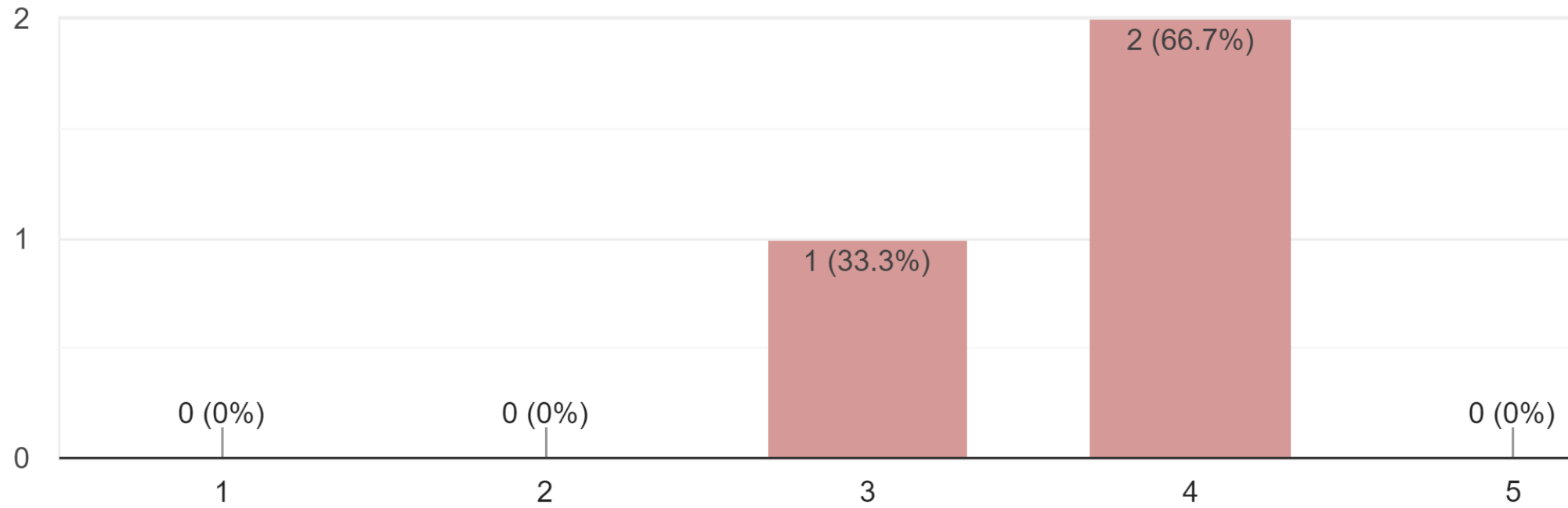
No

WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

Did you attend our panel discussion?

3 responses



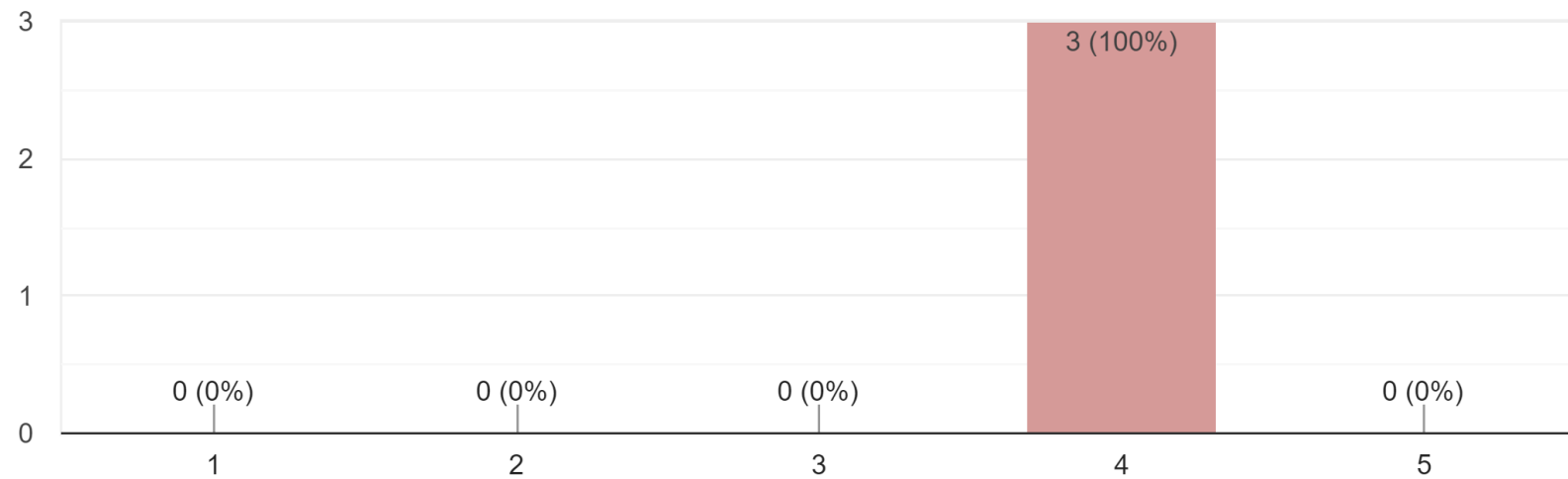


WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

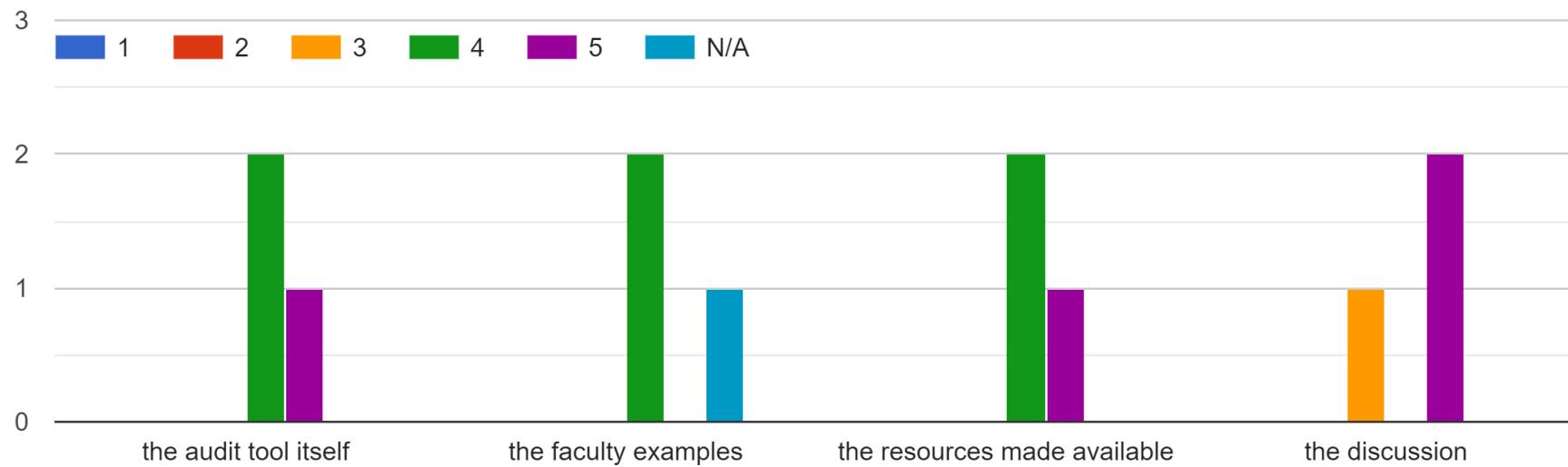
How relevant and helpful do you think it was for your teaching?

3 responses



WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

How satisfied were you with the resources and discussion?



WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

Any overall feedback on this experience and suggestions for the future?

Nothing specific. However, I recommend that few questions be "required." I wasn't sure how to respond to the panel discussion question.

Loved the conversation and the transparency of the process of the group.

More concrete examples would be great. This is such an important conversation, but it would be super helpful to see (in detail) several examples of different types of courses.

Key findings and lessons learned

We discovered that only a couple of faculty from the panel continued on in the workshop.

Department distribution was EPL, ELTL, and ECPY - this echoes the representation on the original task force team.

One of the three participants mentioned the audit tool remarking that "it seems good".

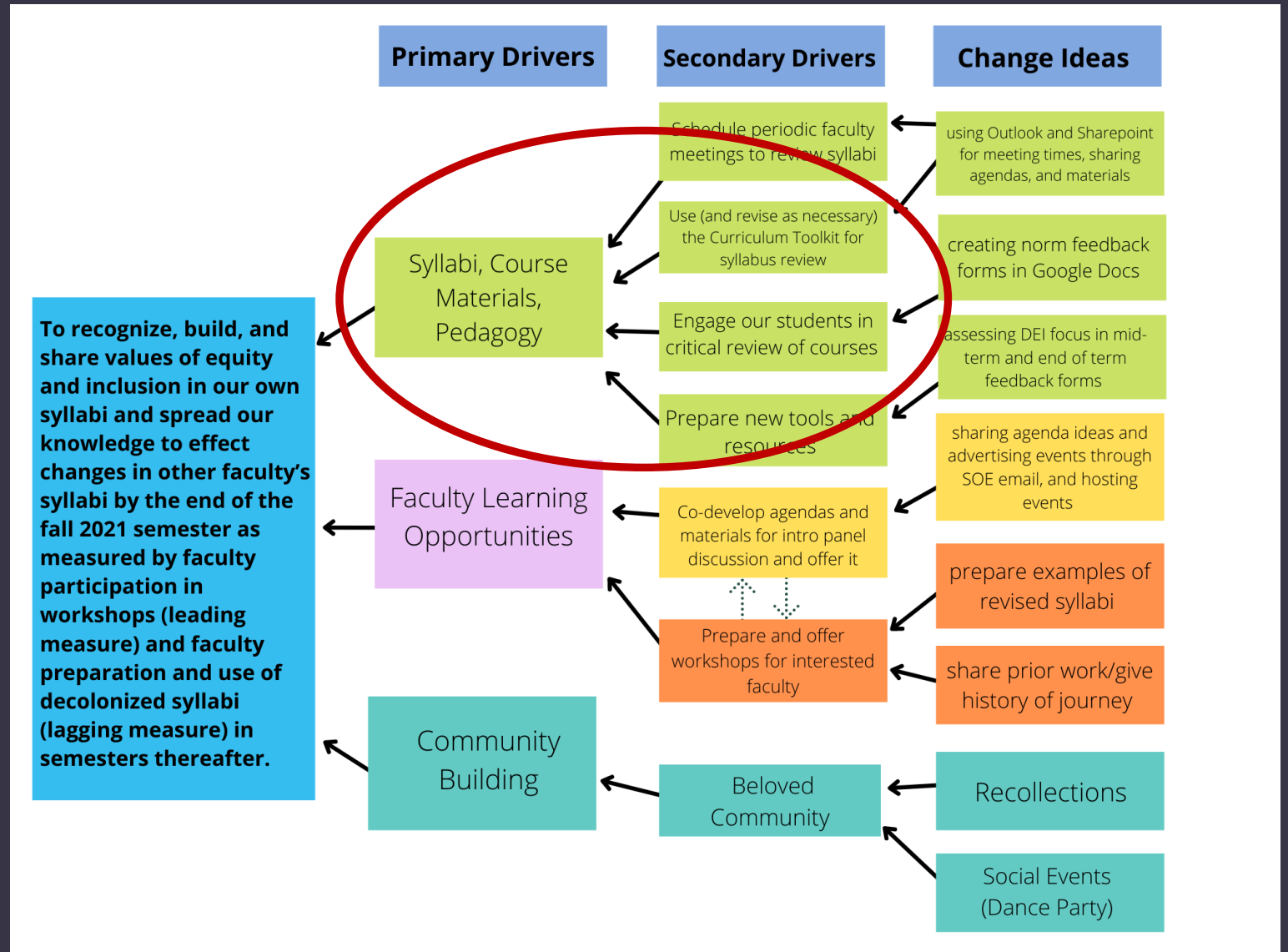
On a scale of 1 (not very helpful) to 5 very helpful, two participants responded 4 (i.e. helpful) and one responded 3 (i.e. somewhat).

In terms of "relevance" to teaching - all 3 participants responded 4 (i.e. "helpful").

Theory of Improvement

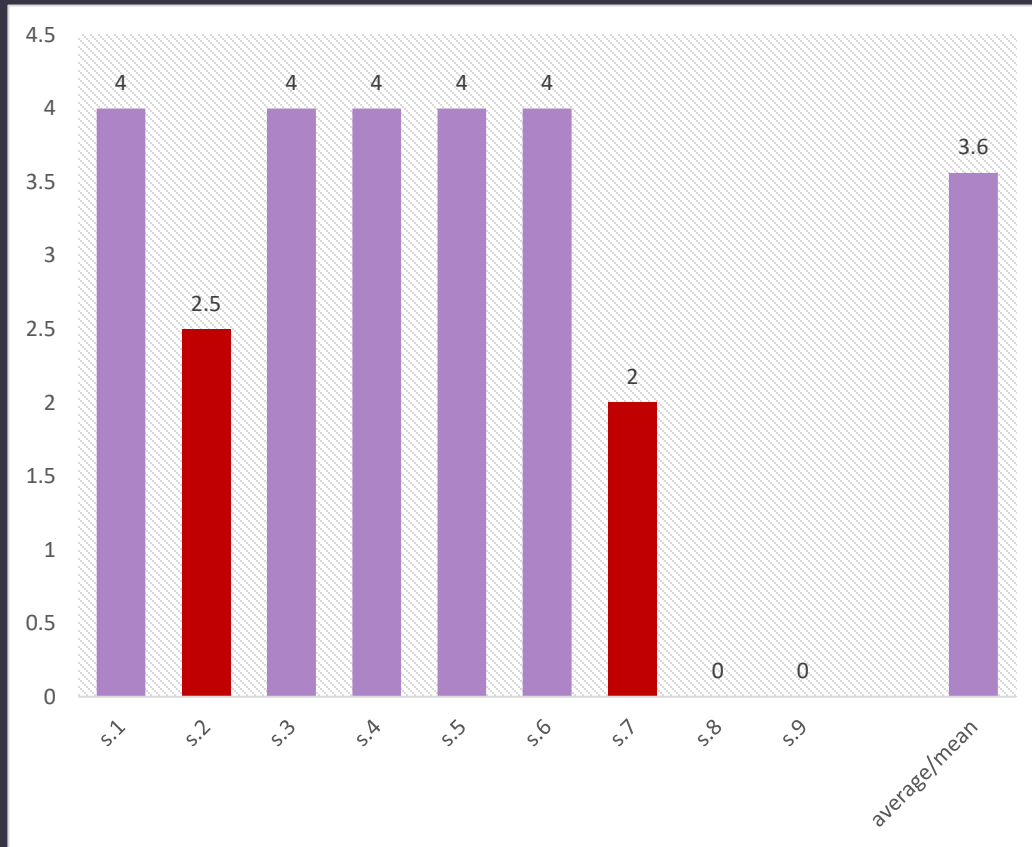
Syllabi, course materials, and pedagogy

- Mid-semester feedback
- Discussion norm feedback



Student Mid-semester Feedback

To what extent did your instructor center attention on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in learning materials and classroom activities



(0-almost never; 1-seldom; 2-as often as not; 3-very often; 4-almost always)

- The tool itself gave valuable information, but not all participated.
- The average of 7 of the 9 students (2 did not respond) was 3.6. The median was 4.
- Results indicate that the course is moderately successful overall in meeting aims to center attention on diverse stakeholders' needs and issues of inclusivity and equity in our improvement work, however two participants did not provide feedback and two outliers were identified with s.2 marking 2.5 and s.7 marking 2.

Key findings and lessons learned

I wish that we were able to have more discussions in class about the importance of these topics

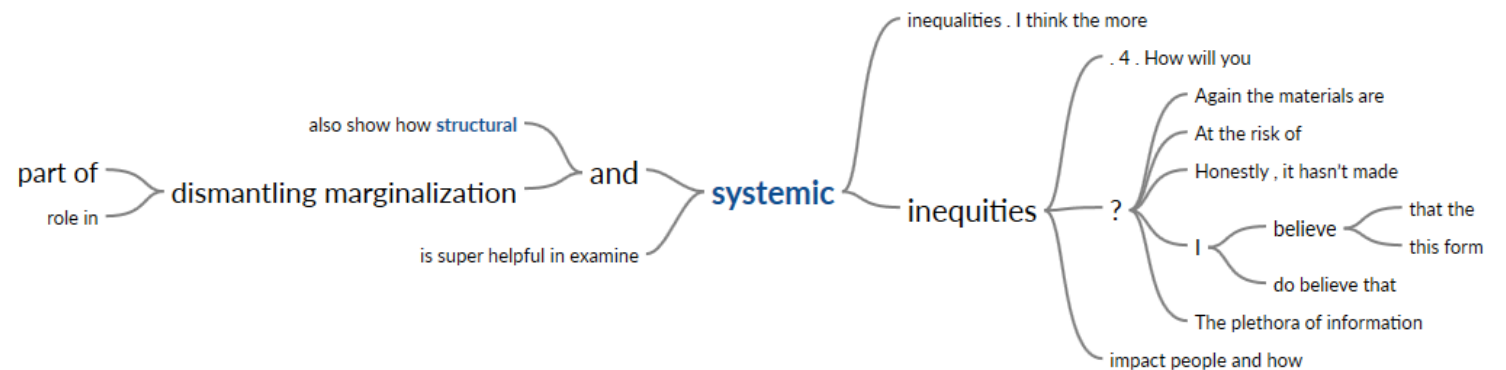
- ✓ The tool itself gave valuable information, but the questions could have been worded better. For instance, some students responded similarly to multiple questions - merging ideas around the pedagogy and course materials.
- ✓ One student didn't see the focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion coming through in our discussions and another didn't see that it was connected to improvement science.

I wouldn't say you're leaving it out I would just say it is not all that relevant here

Key findings and lessons learned

The improvement science principles and structures offered in this course very much improve inclusion of diverse voices and considerations in my work, both in reminding me who to include and why to include them, which should have a more meaningful and lasting impact on the work. Supplemental materials reinforce the aim of our work to be user-centered.

- ✓ Two students highlighted the importance of user-centered designs to address marginalization and inequity.
- ✓ All students mentioned the "systemic" nature of inequity in their responses.



Key findings and lessons learned

- ✓ The tool itself provided valuable information, yet a multiple-choice question outlining specific activities, resources, and assignments might have been more useful.
- ✓ Overall students expressed feeling better prepared to address marginalization and inequity.



This course does a great job in supplying a diversity of assignments and activities such as discussions with guest speakers where we discuss factors of marginalization of others and how to improve

Key findings and lessons learned

- ✓ The tool itself provided good information, yet a multiple-choice question outlining specific things they might carry forward in their future work or do - would be helpful.
- ✓ Overall students expressed a desire and intent to carry forward their improvement work to address marginalization and inequity with one using the word "empowered" to express the learning that she will take forward.

I think the course and the materials are helping me to become more empowered within this improvement process. I think that now I can actually picture me being a part of the improvement process and having power. I think that this course is helping me to become a better person and educator. It also is helping me to create a better classroom environment.

Feedback on values and norms

Values	Meeting	Needs work	Appreciations/Suggestions
1. Gain an appreciation for taking an inquiry orientation as a facilitator for grander aims: serving others, enhancing the common good, and promoting equity.	Amanda: For the most part this is happening	Ndeye: In reading better because I am a very slow reader and take too much time to process	Kate: What we're learning can be applied to pretty much anything we want to improve.
2. Gain an appreciation for disciplined inquiry in improvement efforts			Sadie: Definitely feel like i have gained an appreciation for improvement science, having learned more about it. Kate: This course walks us through, ensuring each piece works into the next so we are successful in the process.
3. Gain an appreciation for taking an evidence-based approach to system improvement	Sadie: 100 % agree with this value		Kate: Being able to present results in a factual way will help our colleagues recognize the importance of an evidence-based approach.
Discussion norms	Meeting	Needs work	Appreciations/Suggestions
Exemplary: Posts are additive and/or challenging, reflecting developing knowledge with support from both required reading and outside information.	Ndeye: amazing opportunity for me to know better the american school system and learn from your experiences; Sara: I think that examining each others' projects if helpful in the sense of applying our knowledge and is additive and challenging		Alex: I appreciate the opportunities we are given to observe our classmates' work on their projects; it it grounding and makes the project feel more "doable" when we see our peers' improvment work in their chosen areas. Kate: Everyone brings so much to the table (whether in their own projects or commenting on others), which really helps us to grow.



Scheduling for decolonizing work can be inhibiting some faculty from engaging in this work. The implication is that we need to redouble efforts to schedule opportunities at different times when faculty are most likely to be able to prioritize the work.



Starting points for our discussions in panel discussions and workshops oftentimes started with and could get bogged down in needs to clarify language and perspectives, and these learning experiences tended toward presentation of material and ideas rather than collaborative working with each other.



Creating opportunities for idea/conceptual learning to occur, while still moving forward with active improvement work in our course designing and delivery is an area for continued learning.



Pedagogy changes and faculty learning opportunities (our initial two foci for primary drivers) is needed to encourage what Dr. Ellis-Robinson has termed a “a beloved community”. To this end, our theory of improvement (as shown in our driver diagram in Figure 5), incorporates this new driver and several related change ideas on the

Recommendations for future action (faculty learning opportunities and beyond)

Learnings and Next Steps

- Continuing commitment from faculty
- Tailoring learning opportunities for faculty and graduate students with recognition for the need for broader stakeholder input
- Continuing summer workshops
- Making the conversation more public and ongoing
- Ensuring that decolonizing syllabi is understood as one piece of a larger equity and inclusion agenda
- Connecting DEI work across multiple entry points and multiple efforts (systemic changes)

Thank you!

Kristen C. Wilcox, Associate Professor Educational Policy & Leadership, School of Education, University at Albany and NYKids Research & Development Director, kwilcox1@albany.edu

Tammy Ellis-Robinson, Assistant Professor Educational & Counseling Psychology and Director of Equity and Inclusion, School of Education, University at Albany, tellis-robinson@albany.edu

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & JUSTICE - ABOUT US

