

DEI Student Ambassadors Program

Dr. J. McLean Slougher, Seattle University

J. McLean Slougher is an associate professor of mathematics at Seattle University. He completed his PhD in Statistics from the University of Washington. His research interests include statistical forecasting and modeling, energy poverty, mathematical pedagogy, and diversity in STEM.

Brooke I Wynalda

Brooke Wynalda (she/they) recently graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Biology with minors in Philosophy and English from Seattle University ('21). Brooke is proudly part of the first cohort of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Ambassadors alongside three other undergraduate STEM students. In addition to working as a DEI Ambassador, they served on several boards for social change and integrated their perspectives on abolitionism, anti-racism, trans-inclusivity and accessibility into their work as a Bannan Scholar, Resident Assistant in the Kolvenbach Living Community, Ignatian Leader and Intellectual Traditions Honors Program Graduate. Brooke is a passionate advocate for both scientific literacy and deconstructing institutionalized racism and transphobia on college campuses and beyond.

Dr. Agnieszka Miguel, Seattle University

Agnieszka Miguel received her Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering in 2001 from the University of Washington, and MSEE and BSEE from Florida Atlantic University in 1996 and 1994. Dr. Miguel's professional interests involve image processing, machine learning, and engineering education especially active learning, diversity, equity, and inclusion, retention, and recruitment. Her teaching interests include MATLAB, circuits, linear systems, and digital image processing. She is an ASEE Fellow and a member of the IEEE, SWE, and Tau Beta Pi. Currently, Dr. Miguel is the ASEE First Vice President and Vice President for External Relations which gives her a seat on the ASEE Board of Directors. Dr. Miguel has held several other officer positions across the ASEE including: Professional Interest Council I Chair, Division Chair and Program Chair of the ECE and New Engineering Educators Divisions, and ASEE Campus Representative. Dr. Miguel is also a Vice-President of the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department Heads Association (ECEDHA) and a Conference Chair for the 2022 ECEDHA Annual Meeting.

DEI Student Ambassadors Program

Abstract

In this paper we describe the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Student Ambassadors program at Seattle University and the initiatives and activities that the ambassadors have been engaged in. This program drew inspiration from several Bias Busters groups created by industry and academia, especially the Bias Busters @ Carnegie Mellon University and the Bias Busters in the Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Department at University of California Berkeley. The student ambassadors were given broad objectives to improve the college community and educate the student population about diversity, equity, and inclusion. An initial planned project of the ambassadors was to organize a DEI Takeover Week during spring of 2020. This project had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The student ambassadors took this as an opportunity to instead develop programs focused on equity and inclusion issues that arose due to the pandemic and the transition to remote / virtual instruction. The DEI Student Ambassadors organized Zoom Town Halls that were open to all students, faculty, and staff in the college to engage in frank conversations about the challenges of the pandemic and how they connected to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Additionally, the DEI Student Ambassadors developed theater-based workshops about microaggressions and bystander intervention. These workshops were administered in a number of classes, and highlighted real-world scenarios drawn from student surveys conducted in spring 2018 as well as the DEI Student Ambassadors' own experiences. Response to the DEI Student Ambassadors and the programs they have developed has been largely very positive. We conclude by discussing plans for how to continue, adapt, and expand this program.

Index Terms

student ambassadors, interactive theater

I. INTRODUCTION

In the winter quarter of 2020, the College of Science and Engineering at Seattle University launched a new program of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Student Ambassadors. In this paper we describe the DEI Student Ambassadors program and the initiatives and activities that the ambassadors have been engaged in.

The student ambassadors were given broad objectives to improve the college community and educate the student population about diversity, equity, and inclusion. They were charged with organizing meaningful and impactful events for other students as well as providing feedback from students to faculty and staff regarding college climate. Faculty mentors from the college's DEI Committee helped to provide support, and guidance when needed, while still leaving the students with the autonomy to develop their own ideas on how to work towards these goals.

II. BACKGROUND

The DEI Student Ambassadors program drew inspiration from similar initiatives in industry and academia. Most student ambassador programs exist in engineering departments or colleges to assist with recruitment of new undergraduate students or with outreach to high schools [1], [2].

In [3], the authors describe an initiative where a group of students called Engineering Ambassadors visited a first-year seminar course in chemical engineering and made presentations about engineering majors, careers in chemical engineering, their experience as students, and how to be a successful engineering student. Jacobs and Thomassie report on the success of a student ambassadors program in the Mechanical Engineering Department at Texas A&M University where, in addition to participating in outreach to prospective students, ambassadors assisted the department in providing services to current students by, for

example, serving as peer mentors and advisers to new students [4].

Nazempour et al. report about a program where student ambassadors took a role of peer mentors for new students participating in a summer bridge program [5]. Similarly, in [6], the authors describe a student ambassador program that supported recruitment of new students and peer-mentoring of current students.

Our DEI Student Ambassadors program was inspired by the BiasBusters @ Carnegie Mellon University [7] and Bias Busters in the Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Department at University of California Berkeley [8]. Both programs mention the Google Bias Busting @ Work program as their model [9]. Currently, the Bias Busting @ Work program offers tools for those who want to host their own bias busting workshop. The extensive materials include slides that can be customized, a facilitators' guide, a list of questions to start conversations about unconscious bias, and links to research papers on topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

BiasBusters @ CMU engages faculty, staff, and students about issues of bias, diversity, and inclusion through sessions that include role playing. Role playing allows participants to practice ways in which they can act as allies in different real-life scenarios. Similarly, Bias Busters at UC Berkeley aims to address implicit bias issues in their engineering community. The group is run by graduate students and organizes workshops, reading groups, movie nights, seminar series, and certification for DEI leaders.

Other academic institutions list DEI Student Ambassadors programs. Most often, such groups are associated with the university's DEI office rather than with a specific college [10]–[14].

Many of the aforementioned groups organize unconscious bias workshops for faculty, staff, and students. Some of the workshops include role playing which engages the audience and makes the experience memorable. However, as Atadero et al. point out, traditionally, activities designed to educate students about DEI issues occur in extra-curricular settings [15], [16]. Unfortunately, this limits the number of students who are engaged and, frequently, students who attend such events are often those who are already knowledgeable about DEI. The authors describe changes to the first-year engineering courses designed to develop students with inclusive engineering identities. One of the activities introduced was an interactive theater sketch performed during the class by a professional theater troupe [17]. The sketch focused on the effect of interpersonal skills on the work of a team (including gender issues in STEM). After the sketch was over, students were invited to comment on how to improve the outcome of the interactions between the teammates. Then, volunteers participated in a second sketch where they tried to fix the issues presented in the scenario. It should be noted that the theater sketch sessions were part of several other interventions introduced into the first-year courses. It was the authors' conclusion that integrating 4-5 diversity activities into the coursework is not enough to increase students' appreciation of diversity in engineering. They suggest activities that are more explicit and direct in terms of their content related to diversity and allow for deeper and longer engagement with the topics. They also point out the value of having full support from course faculty regarding the importance of diversity in engineering. Additionally, such topics may cause discomfort for both the students and faculty and therefore not every instructor is comfortable discussing them. It is also important to remember that these activities were part of only one class - students are embedded within the larger context of their departments and college and it is challenging to know what other messaging about diversity in engineering they are receiving as part of their interactions with other students, faculty, and staff.

Because not all institutions have access to an interactive theater troupe, in [18], the authors present a different approach in which a professional theater troupe creates the interactive sketch but they train student actors to perform the sketch. Faculty and staff are trained to facilitate the discussion. The authors found that this approach was effective and that students who participated in the theater sketches as part

of their course had a higher appreciation for diversity in engineering than those who did not attend the theater sketches.

In [19], the authors discuss how the interactive theater sketches were adapted for virtual viewing using the Zoom platform. They note that student engagement increased compared to an in-person viewing of the theater sketch. Also, they point out that non-verbal cues are more apparent in an online setting. Note that the interactive theater sketch was only one of several intervention activities that first-year students were expected to participate in. Also, because this work was still in progress at the time of publishing, results are yet to be analyzed.

The interactive theater sketches introduced by Atadero et al. [15], [16] were inspired by similar activities implemented by Finelli and Kendall-Brown [20] at the University of Michigan. The authors asked an educational theater troupe [21] to create an interactive-theater sketch that addresses the value of teamwork and diversity on student teams and teaches students strategies for resolving common issues encountered by teams. The sketch was then performed during the regular class time and facilitated by a director of the theater troupe. After watching the sketch, students were engaged in various activities discussing their impressions from the performance. The actors stayed in their characters and responded to questions from students. At the end of the class period, the sketch was replayed using suggestions from students on how to improve the team interactions. The survey results indicated that students who saw the sketch improved their abilities to resolve common team dilemmas and increased their perception of importance of team diversity.

The interactive theater sketches organized by the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT) at the University of Michigan (UM) [21] were originally used for the professional development of faculty and graduate student instructors and focused on issues of diversity. Specifically, the sketches were of two types: 1) those that address ways in which instructors can serve underrepresented students and create an inclusive classroom environment, and 2) sketches that aim to improve the climate for women and other underrepresented faculty in their departments.

Other interactive theater programs include the Cornell Interactive Theatre Ensemble (CITE) that produces theater sketches focused on topics of diversity and inclusion (such as unconscious bias in faculty searches) for faculty and staff [22] and Theater for Change UW hosted by the University of Washington [23].

III. DEI STUDENT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM AT SEATTLE UNIVERSITY

In this section, we first give background about our institution, followed by a summary of our previous work. We then describe the organization and structure of the DEI Student Ambassadors program. We conclude the section with details about the specific events and activities that the DEI Student Ambassadors organized.

A. *Seattle University*

Seattle University is a small, private, religiously-affiliated and mission-driven institution located in Seattle, WA. Our urban campus is home to eight colleges and schools. One of them is the College of Science and Engineering (CSE) which hosts eight departments. CSE is in the midst of a multi-year project to develop programs and policies to better support students from underrepresented populations in engineering and computer science.¹

¹This section has been adapted from reference [24]

B. Previous Work

The CSE DEI Committee was established to 1) study barriers to successful completion of undergraduate engineering degrees amongst female-identifying and under-represented minority (URM) students at Seattle University and 2) develop programs that remove these barriers and improve the academic experience of all students in our college. The DEI Committee includes faculty representatives from the Departments of Computer Science, Civil and Environmental Engineering, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Mathematics, Mechanical Engineering, the Dean's Office, and a staff member from the College Advising Office.

We have previously presented the results of our longitudinal data analysis in [25]. We followed that study with a student survey that exposed students' feelings of preparedness, sense of community, satisfaction with their academic performance, and experiences of bias from both peers and faculty/staff [26]. Our examination of longitudinal graduation data and results from student survey and focus groups resulted in a development of new policies and programs within the college [24]. One of the most successful programs is described in the next section.

C. DEI Student Ambassadors

As mentioned above, the DEI Student Ambassadors program was partially inspired by the Bias Busters programs at UC Berkeley and Carnegie Mellon University. We were also motivated by the low numbers of students attending our DEI-focused extra-curricular activities. We felt that we need to work closer with students to understand what type of events will result in a higher engagement of their peers and create more interest in DEI issues.

To select our first cohort of DEI Student Ambassadors, we posted announcements about this opportunity to the student email list. We invited all students in the college to consider applying. We asked the candidates to fill out an application form. The application explained that our college is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion and, as part of that commitment, several paid student positions are being created to improve the college community and educate the student population about diversity, equity, and inclusion. The application encouraged students to consider the opportunity to be part of a small team that will organize meaningful and impactful events for other students as well as provide feedback from students to faculty and staff regarding college climate. We invited students with leadership experience or those with a strong desire to gain leadership skills. We promised to welcome students who have experience in facilitating a brave space and being an advocate for others as well as those who care for others but are not sure how to make an impact.

The application asked the candidates for the position to describe their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and why it is important for the College of Science and Engineering. It also asked them to describe their interest in a leadership position and any previous leadership experience. Finally, the application mentioned that we are considering organizing a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Takeover Week and asked the applicants to describe an idea for an activity that should be included.

The CSE DEI Committee reviewed the applications and scored the candidates. The top scoring candidates were invited for interviews with two members of the committee. Their performance on the interviews was scored. The committee discussed all interviewed candidates and selected five ambassadors based on their application and interview scores as well as on the desire to maintain diversity within the final group of ambassadors. These five ambassadors worked through spring quarter of academic year 2019-20. Four of them continued through the academic year 2020-21 (one decided to leave the group due to other commitments).

Because three out of the four ambassadors were graduating in spring of 2021, we had to select our second cohort of DEI Student Ambassadors at the end of the academic year. The process was very similar to how we selected the first cohort with one difference: current student ambassadors were involved in interviews of the candidates alongside faculty/staff members of the DEI Committee. As a result, we selected 8 students to be ambassadors during the academic year 2021-22. One of these students is a continuing ambassador from last academic year.

D. Takeover Week

An initial planned project of the ambassadors was to organize a DEI Takeover Week during spring of 2020. This project had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The student ambassadors took this as an opportunity to instead develop programs focused on equity and inclusion issues that arose due to the pandemic and the transition to remote / virtual instruction.

E. Town Halls

Soon after the university transitioned to virtual teaching and learning, the DEI Student Ambassadors observed that students from marginalized and underrepresented backgrounds might be impacted differently by the transition to virtual instruction, and potentially in ways that faculty might not be aware of. To address this, they proposed holding a series of virtual Town Halls.

These were open forums, held over Zoom, open to all students, faculty, and staff in the College of Science and Engineering. The Town Halls were an opportunity to engage in frank conversations about the challenges of the pandemic and the issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the college. The student ambassadors organized and facilitated these town halls throughout the remainder of the 2019/2020 academic year as well as during all of the 2020/2021 academic year.

Early Town Halls focused on challenges that virtual learning poses to students with disabilities and how to improve the experience for both students and faculty. The later Town Halls transitioned to discussions about how microaggressions manifest in a virtual learning environment, and ways to effectively implement bystander interventions in these virtual environments. Each Town Hall consisted of three main components: introductions and expectations, potential topics of discussion and open dialogue.

The Town Halls began with an introduction to the space and the setting of clear expectations. The DEI Ambassadors wrote and read aloud a Land Acknowledgement and a recognition of current events, celebrations and happenings (for example: a Black History Month celebration, or a statement of solidarity for students, faculty, and staff impacted by anti-AAPI hate crimes). A trigger warning was read aloud and, and finally, a conversation regarding community guidelines was facilitated before discussion.

A typical list of guidelines would include:

- Please put your pronouns in your Zoom name.
- Unless you are speaking, please mute yourself. Please wait to be called on before speaking (you can raise your hand physically or digitally).
- When you are about to speak, please introduce yourself with your name, pronouns, and your department.
- Assume positive intent and give people the benefit of the doubt.
- Speak in a way that is respectful of all around you.
- While we are looking to find solutions, do not feel that you need to offer a specific solution to the problems you present.
- Make space for people who haven't spoken as much.

- Please keep in mind that everything being expressed here is done so to improve the experiences of both students and faculty at this trying time.

Participants were also told that they could privately message the DEI Ambassadors with their questions or comments, so that could be brought up anonymously to the group if students preferred. These guidelines helped develop an intentional space for discourse while ensuring that an understanding of power, privilege, and care were crucial to the discussion.

Once these guidelines had been covered, a list of potential topics for discussion were then presented by the DEI Ambassadors as guiding questions for the conversations at the Town Hall. These questions drew from discussions that arose during previous Town Hall sessions or that were requested topics from students, staff, or faculty prior to the event. For example, after the DEI Ambassadors received an anonymous email around sexism and gender based bias in a classroom, the question, “Do you see gender identity or sexism present in our spaces? Where and how?” was posed at a Town Hall. Attendees could respond to any question at any point and questions were used as a loose structure for what could be covered in a meeting.

Some examples of question prompts used include:

- How is your mental health during this quarter?
- How are you working to be more inclusive in the classroom this quarter? (for students, faculty and staff)
- Have you thought critically about how abolition can impact your workspace? Do you know what abolition is?
- In what ways does the College of Science and Engineering endorse cultural ableism?
- As we transition back into an in-person space, what are your thoughts, comments, or concerns for fall quarter 2021?

One recurring theme throughout these Town halls was ableism. Many faculty, staff, and students had observed that the transition to a virtual teaching modality had highlighted for them a number of issues of accessibility that were either improved or worsened in a virtual classroom setting. Ableism in STEM was discussed in depth, specifically ways in which community attitudes and norms perpetuate ableism and what elements of curriculum and university infrastructure could be challenged to make STEM spaces more inclusive.

Many faculty were providing more thorough material online for their courses, including written course notes, digital copies of handouts and worksheets, and video recordings of lectures. In in-person teaching, these materials would often only be provided if a student made a request through the disability services office, whereas now these materials were being shared by default with the entire class.

However, it was also observed that for students with hearing impairments, it could be harder to clearly follow virtual lectures and discussions. Lip-reading is more challenging over Zoom than in person, and if a screen is being shared, the speaker’s face may not be visible at all. Live captioning was rarely available, and even automated captioning for pre-recorded video was often unreliable, particularly with technical terminology.

Gender bias (particularly as it related to sexism and misgendering of students) was discussed in depth. Participants brainstormed what actions we could take to make our college allied with those experiencing discrimination on the basis of sex and/or gender. Many noted that the use of Zoom for classes gave students a new level of control over easily presenting their names and pronouns. The option to allow students to self-select breakout rooms to work in, as well as the ability to move from one breakout room

to another, can potentially allow students an easier opportunity to find a group to work with that avoids uncomfortable gender or race dynamics.

At the same time, however, the virtual learning environment overall led to students reporting being more socially isolated. For students in marginalized or under-represented populations who might already have a lower sense of STEM identity, this lack of STEM community could exacerbate that.

The development of an anti-racist curriculum was explicitly approached following a racist Zoom-bombing at a Black Student Union meeting and how students, staff and faculty can ally together to begin to deconstruct white supremacy culture. There is a new initiative at Seattle University to support faculty in developing anti-racist teaching practices, and the discussion of these concerns at the Town Halls highlighted the importance of faculty in the College of Science and Engineering making use of this new University-level program.

It is important to acknowledge that some attendees were less apt to dive into topics related to white supremacy, trans-exclusionary violence within Seattle University, and cultural ableism on their own. Often times, the DEI Ambassadors had to step into the discussion and redirect conversations towards challenging issues and facilitate deeper community discernment around such topics.

Planning ahead for an eventual return to in-person instruction, participants also discussed how some of the new ideas tried out during virtual instruction could be used with in-person instruction to help us make the STEM curriculum more equitable and inclusive in the future. This included the increased sharing of online course materials, creating avenues for students to easily present their names and pronouns, being more mindful of dynamics at play in group work, and being flexible and accommodating with deadlines.

Many of these conversations and community-voiced concerns have informed the work of the DEI Ambassadors in developing their Theater-Based Workshops to build a more inclusive and safe community.

F. Theater-Based Workshops

In our previous work, we have observed that it is challenging to engage undergraduate students in DEI themed workshops and other activities if they are offered as an extracurricular activity. On the other hand, faculty are frequently reluctant to cover DEI topics in classes, either because they view them as not related to the course material, because they feel uncomfortable or unqualified to lead discussions about these topics, or because they are worried about losing class time that could have been used to cover course material in more depth.

To address these issues, the DEI Student Ambassadors developed mini-workshops that are designed to be run in online courses and take only about 15 minutes. These workshops were inspired by theater-based DEI workshops run by a professional theater group at Colorado State University [15], [16].

The mini-workshops start with a realistic theater skit in which the ambassadors act out a classroom setting in which various microaggression activities would occur. They then facilitated discussions around what had occurred, and how various people involved in the scenario could have acted or responded differently. Students participating in the workshop were encouraged first to identify the microaggressions, and then to brainstorm how changes in behaviors might be received.

The scenarios that the ambassadors developed are based on real-world scenarios that could happen in any STEM classroom. They were drawn from student surveys conducted in spring 2018 as well as the DEI Student Ambassadors' own experiences. One scenario explores misgendering and improper use of

pronouns. A second scenario addresses intersectional issues of racism and sexism in STEM.

For example, one of the skits includes an incident in which three students are working together in a Zoom breakout room. Student A accidentally misgenders Student B, who does not correct them. After the skit has ended, the DEI Student Ambassadors talk with the students participating in the workshop about how they think Student A might have responded if Student B had corrected them about their gender. They then discuss what Student C might have done or said, and how that could be received. They discuss what differences we might see if Student C brought up the misgendering in conversation with the whole group, versus privately contacting Student A.

In discussing the specific incidents in a given skit, the DEI Ambassadors would also tie in discussion of general take-away principles that could be applied to a variety of scenarios. They discussed the importance of focusing on impact rather than intent, of centering the person experiencing harm rather than the person causing harm, and the importance of embracing criticism as an opportunity for growth rather than a personal attack.

The DEI Ambassadors have continued working to develop more skits that address additional bias and microaggression scenarios, with particular focus on addressing hidden disabilities and their accommodations in STEM classrooms.

While the theater skit workshops were designed for a student audience, and the Ambassadors ran these workshops in a variety of classes, they were also approached by faculty who were interested in viewing the workshops, and they have now run these workshops several times for faculty and staff audiences too.

In three of the classes where the Ambassadors ran these workshops, a short student feedback survey was conducted. Unfortunately, the response rate was fairly low, probably due to pandemic-induced fatigue at the end of the academic year. While not statistically significant, the results are useful as a pilot study for our future work.

When asked what aspects of the workshop they found most useful, students mentioned the fact that they could relate to the classroom scenarios played. They appreciated the debrief after the theater skit. In response to a question about what aspects of the workshop they would have changed, students said that this workshop should be offered in all classes. They also thought that the workshop would benefit from more participation from students attending the class. Finally, they asked for written material explaining some of the DEI concepts discussed during the debrief.

When asked about aspects that they wished had been included in the workshop, one student questioned the choice of the topic presented in the theater skit. For their class, the scenario presented had focused on gender identity and pronoun use, and the student expressed a desire to see a workshop focusing on women in engineering and issues related to equal pay. The intention of these workshops is not that each scenario be exhaustive in its coverage of DEI issues, but rather that, as these workshops come to be offered in more classes, students will be exposed to a variety of topics as they participate in several of the workshops. As the DEI Ambassadors expand the selection of scenarios for these workshops, they will be determining what new scenarios to include based on student feedback about topics they feel are important.

To that end, the last survey question was about ideas for future theater skits. One student suggested a scenario where students are making fun of somebody who has an accent because they are speaking English as a second language. This confirms our findings from focus groups performed last year which showed that students who are not fluent in English feel marginalized by their peers [26].

In addition to conducting a survey of students who participated in the theater skit sessions, we also gathered informal feedback from students, faculty, and staff who participated in the skits during Town Halls, during student club meeting, or at a faculty/staff departmental meeting. Comments were generally positive. In particular, it was noted that students seemed very engaged in the discussions.

In summary, our pilot assessment showed that the workshops were positively received, and that faculty, students, and staff would like to see more of them and with an expanded range of topics.

IV. CONCLUSION

The DEI Student Ambassadors were mentored by two faculty members from the college's DEI Committee. There was a deliberate choice made, in interviewing and selecting students for these positions, to place a greater emphasis on their knowledge of and interest in DEI issues than in their leadership and organizational experience. As such, faculty mentors were able to focus primarily around practical issues of arranging meetings, connecting the DEI Ambassadors to appropriate resources on campus, and passing on communications from the DEI Ambassadors to faculty and staff mailing lists that students do not have access to, rather than having to work on teaching the Ambassadors about DEI. To this end, an emphasis was also placed on selecting a well-rounded team of DEI Ambassadors so that they could each learn from the specific areas of DEI knowledge and experience that the others brought to the team.

A key component to the success of the programs described in this paper has been that they are being designed and implemented by students. Our students themselves will always be the best source of knowledge regarding how students experience bias and microaggressions, and being able to have them directly turn that knowledge into relevant programs ensures that those programs are addressing the issues that are most impacting our students.

Moreover, by having the programs be designed and run by students, there is much better buy-in from other students. Our student ambassadors are able to very effectively engage our general student body, and to make them feel safe and empowered to discuss their experiences and concerns around diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Within their first year, the DEI Student Ambassadors have become recognized at Seattle University as valued leaders and resources in DEI in STEM. Outside of their structured programs, it has also become common for faculty to seek them out to discuss ideas or concerns that arise in their work. The DEI Ambassadors worked with several faculty outside of the classroom, primarily via Zoom meetings and email exchanges. This was sometimes related to topics that arose in the Town Halls, and other times related to specific curriculum issues that were being implemented in their classrooms.

For example, following a racist incident on campus, one of the DEI Ambassadors was approached by department heads about help drafting a statement of solidarity with the Black Student Union. In several cases, faculty contacted the DEI Ambassadors to let them know of changes they made to their everyday classroom space, in light of discussions from the Town Halls, to highlight folks in STEM who are historically left out due to institutionalized racism, sexism, ableism, xenophobia, and more.

At Seattle University's 2021 Lavender Graduation, the DEI Ambassadors were awarded the Office of Multicultural Affairs' Building Bridges Award for Community Building: "This award recognizes the effort of a person or organization that takes an intersectional approach to LGBTQIA+ inclusion on campus. They integrate diverse perspectives, promote solidarity, and embrace the multiplicity of ways LGBTQIA+ people exist at Seattle University."

While the DEI Student Ambassadors' efforts were largely well-received, they did find that there were times where some faculty were unfamiliar with particular DEI topics, as well as times when some faculty would push back on some concerns raised by students. Future work by both the DEI Student Ambassadors and the college's DEI Committee will attempt to address this.

V. FUTURE WORK

As we begin a transition back to an in-person university experience, the DEI Student Ambassadors plan to adapt their work accordingly.

While the Town Hall program was initiated in response to the transition to remote instruction due to the pandemic, all involved recognized that the value in these open and informal conversations between faculty, staff, and students extends well beyond the specific concerns of remote instruction. The DEI Ambassadors will continue to facilitate Town Halls, once or twice per quarter, to allow for ongoing conversations of challenges and successes that we all find around diversity, equity, and inclusion in our college.

After the initial pilot at the end of the past academic year, the theater-based workshops will be expanded, and adapted for use with in-person instruction. Now that the structure of these workshops has been expanded, it will be easier to advertise to faculty the availability of these workshops, so that faculty can plan their schedules with the potential inclusion of these workshops in mind. The DEI Ambassadors have already begun work on expanding the number of scenarios available for these workshops, and will continue to develop more scenarios as we hear feedback from students, staff, and faculty about topics they would like to see addressed.

In addition to expanding these theater-based workshops, the Ambassadors have identified unconscious bias as an important topic to engage with, and plan to offer workshops with a specific focus on this.

With a return to in-person instruction, it will be possible to now revisit the original idea of a Diversity Takeover Week. The intention is to dedicate a week to focusing on DEI within STEM. Specific activities have not yet been planned, but the DEI Ambassadors have discussed the importance of including activities with a variety of levels and styles of engagement, to draw in as many students as possible.

The DEI Student Ambassadors have proposed a new initiative in the coming year to collect stories of students from marginalized and underrepresented groups. Amplifying and recording such stories will build a sense of community and support amongst students. It will also help to address the concerns noted above about faculty buy-in. Previous work has found that faculty at Seattle University are generally responsive to qualitative analysis of students' self-reported experiences with bias.

One challenge faced by the DEI Student Ambassadors was the difficulty in networking with other student organizations during remote learning. With a return to in-person instruction, the Ambassadors anticipate being able to better collaborate with other student organizations to share resources and efforts around DEI work in our college and university.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The faculty authors would like to thank the first cohort of DEI Student Ambassadors for their caring attitude, perseverance, creativity, and resourcefulness while building the program from scratch and establishing its presence and legacy in the College of Science of Engineering. We are forever in debt to you for getting the DEI Student Ambassador Program off to such a great start.

REFERENCES

- [1] J. C. Tiernan, L. Peterson, R. Johnson, and J. Phillips, "Engineering student recruiters: A review of the role of women as peer recruiters for potential engineering students," in *Proceedings of the 2009 Annual ASEE Conference and Exposition*, Austin, TX, June 2009.
- [2] S. Woods, K. Baumgardner, and L. J. Howard, "Communications strategies to increase recruitment of women to engineering," in *Proceedings of the 2012 Annual ASEE Conference and Exposition*, San Antonio, TX, June 2012.
- [3] S. E. Zappe, M. Marshall, E. D. Gomez, E. Gomez, and A. D. Lueking, "Using student ambassadors to relay themes from changing the conversation in engineering first-year seminars," in *Proceedings of the 2012 Annual ASEE Conference and Exposition*, San Antonio, TX, June 2012.
- [4] T. J. Jacobs and R. E. Thomassie, "Professional and leadership development through undergraduate student ambassador program," in *Proceedings of the 2017 Annual ASEE Conference and Exposition*, Columbus, OH, June 2017.
- [5] R. Nazempour, P. C. Nelson, R. A. Revelo, Y. Siow, and J. Abiade, "Execution details and assessment results of a summer bridge program for engineering freshmen," in *Proceedings of the 2019 Annual ASEE Conference and Exposition*, Tampa, FL, June 2019.
- [6] T. L. Smith-Jackson, B. S. Benedict, G. T. Stewart II, and E. Smith Vinson, "Use of front-end evaluation to design an ambassador program (ISEAmP)," in *Proceedings of the 2014 Annual ASEE Conference and Exposition*, Indianapolis, IN, June 2014.
- [7] Carnegie Mellon University, "BiasBusters @ CMU." <http://www.cmu.edu/scs/scs4all/programs/biasbusters.html>. Accessed: 2021-08-27.
- [8] University of California Berkeley, "Bias Busters." <http://biasbusters.berkeley.edu/>. Accessed: 2021-08-27.
- [9] Google, "Bias Busting @ Work." <https://rework.withgoogle.com/guides/unbiasing-hold-everyone-accountable/steps/give-your-own-unbiasing-workshop/>. Accessed: 2021-08-27.
- [10] University of North Dakota, "Inclusion Ambassadors Program." <https://und.edu/academics/provost/diversity-equity-inclusion.html>. Accessed: 2021-08-27.
- [11] University of Arkansas, Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, "Ambassadors & Champions: Let the Transformation Begin." <https://diversity.uark.edu/leadership-initiatives/ambassadors-champions-program.php>. Accessed: 2021-08-27.
- [12] Florida State University, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Office, "D&I Student Ambassadors." <https://diversity.fsu.edu/get-involved/student-ambassadors>. Accessed: 2021-08-27.
- [13] University of New Haven, "Student Ambassador Program Empowers Students to Be a Force for Diversity and Inclusion." <https://www.newhaven.edu/news/blog/2021/jedi.php>. Accessed: 2021-08-27.
- [14] Marymount University, "DEI Student Ambassadors." <https://marymount.edu/student-life/student-affairs-administration/office-of-the-dean-of-students-equity-and-inclusion/staff-contacts/dei-student-ambassadors/>. Accessed: 2021-08-27.
- [15] R. A. Atadero, C. Paguyo, K. E. Rambo-Hernandez, and H. L. Henderson, "Building inclusive engineering identities: Implications for changing engineering culture," *European Journal of Engineering Education*, vol. 43, no. 3, pp. 378–398, 2017.
- [16] R. A. Atadero, C. Paguyo, K. E. Rambo-Hernandez, and H. L. Henderson, "Promoting inclusive engineering identities in first-year engineering courses," in *Proceedings of the 2016 Annual ASEE Conference and Exposition*, New Orleans, LA, June 2016.
- [17] T. Norman, R. Brown Adelman, and L. Batista Silverman, "Facilitating social justice dialogues after interactive theatre performances: An introduction to our methodology," *Arts Praxis*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 56–70, 2016.
- [18] K. E. Rambo-Hernandez, A. Roy, M. L. Morris, R. A. Hensel, J. Clinton Schwartz, R. Atadero, and C. Paguyo, "Using interactive theatre to promote inclusive behaviors in teams for first year engineering students: A sustainable approach," in *Proceedings of the 2018 CoNECD - The Collaborative Network for Engineering and Computing Diversity Conference*, Crystal City, VA, April 2018.
- [19] B. A. Pedersen, R. A. Hensel, S. A. Raisa, R. A. Atadero, A. A. Casper, R. R. DeLyser, C. D. Griffin, S. T. Leutenegger, M. L. Morris, C. Paguyo, J. Paul, S. Park, K. E. Rambo-Hernandez, and B. N. Roszelle, "Leveraging changes in engineering and computer science curricula to engender inclusive professional identities in students," in *Proceedings of the 2021 ASEE Virtual Annual Conference*, July 2021.
- [20] C. Finelli and M. Kendall-Brown, "Using an interactive theater sketch to improve students' perceptions about and ability to function on diverse teams," in *Proceedings of the 2009 Annual ASEE Conference and Exposition*, Austin, TX, June 2009.
- [21] M. Kaplan, C. E. Cook, and J. Steiger, "Using theatre to stage instructional and organizational transformation," *Change Magazine*, vol. 38, no. 3, pp. 32–39, 2006.
- [22] Cornell University, "Cornell Interactive Theatre Ensemble (CITE)." <https://hr.cornell.edu/professional-development/training/cite>. Accessed: 2021-08-30.
- [23] University of Washington, "Theater for Change UW." <https://teaching.washington.edu/programs/theater-for-change/>. Accessed: 2021-08-30.
- [24] A. Miguel, J. M. Slougher, J. M. Dorsey, R. Hartley, F. J. Shih, and J. Crevier, "What's next? from analysis to action," in *Proceedings of the 2021 CoNECD - The Collaborative Network for Engineering and Computing Diversity Conference*, January 2021.
- [25] N. Mariano, A. Miguel, M. Rempe, and J. M. Slougher, "Quantitative analysis of barriers to completion of engineering degrees for female-identifying and underrepresented minority students," in *Proceedings of the 2018 CoNECD - The Collaborative Network for Engineering and Computing Diversity Conference*, Crystal City, VA, April 2018.
- [26] J. M. Slougher, A. Miguel, M. Rempe, and K. Kuder, "Survey analysis of student experiences for underrepresented populations in engineering and computer science," in *Proceedings of the 2019 CoNECD - The Collaborative Network for Engineering and Computing Diversity Conference*, Crystal City, VA, April 2019.