WIP: ASEE Year of Impact on Racial Equity: Faculty and Administrators Engagement

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Dr. Homero Murzi (he/él/his) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Engineering Education at Virginia Tech with honorary appointments at the University of Queensland (Australia) and University of Los Andes (Venezuela). Homero is the leader of the Engineering Competencies, Learning, and Inclusive Practices for Success (ECLIPS) Lab where he leads a team focused on doing research on contemporary, culturally relevant, and inclusive pedagogical practices, emotions in engineering, competency development, and understanding the experiences of traditionally marginalized people (e.g., Latinx, international students, Indigenous students) in engineering from an asset-based perspective. Homero is interested in understanding how to develop effective and culturally relevant learning environments that can promote the sustainable competencies engineering students require to succeed in the contemporary workforce. His goal is to develop engineering education practices that value the capital that traditionally marginalized students, bring into the field. Homero aspires to change discourses around broadening participation in engineering and promoting action to change. Homero has been recognized as a Diggs Teaching Scholar, a Graduate Academy for Teaching Excellence Fellow, a Global Perspectives Fellow, a Diversity Scholar, a Fulbright Scholar, an inductee into the Bouchet Honor Society, and received the prestigious NSF CAREER award. Homero serves as the VT Engineering Education Chair for Equity and Inclusion, and the American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE) Incoming Chair for the Commission on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CDEI). He holds degrees in Industrial Engineering (BS, MS) from the National Experimental University of Táchira, Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Temple University, and Engineering Education (PhD) from Virginia Tech.

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This is the third of four work-in-progress (WIP) papers in a series on the ASEE Year of Impact on Racial Equity (YIRE). Three pillars can describe the major tenets of this initiative. The pillars are focused on engaging engineering and engineering technology students, faculty and administrators in colleges of engineering and engineering technology, and P-12 parents and guardians. This paper focuses on the second of these three groups.

To explain our rationale and goals for the ASEE Year of Impact on Racial Equity, we quote content from the Summer 2021 ASEE Prism article published:

> "In light of ASEE President Sheryl Sorby's acceptance speech at the 2020 Annual Conference, in which she outlined a vision for ASEE and an engineering education experience that reflects more diversity and equity, as well as the societal momentum toward dismantling white supremacy and racism, it is time for a Year of Impact on Racial Equity. Many aspects of the current engineering culture have origins and practices that center whiteness and exclusivity. However, we are all caretakers of this engineering culture and can either protect exclusionary traditions or strategically design models that better meet the current diverse challenges and needs for our society.
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> In order to improve the field's diversity, adaptability, and competitiveness, the Year of Impact on Racial Equity is focused on making organizational change to address the culture, policies, and racial/ethnic representation within engineering student organizations, colleges of engineering, and pre-college outreach efforts, respectively. This Year of Impact will move us beyond action to focus on the <u>impact</u> of the actions we take.
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> We expect that actions in these domains will result in three concrete forms of impact: (1) **Empowered engineering student organizations** to make engineering education more inclusive at the level of peer-to-peer interactions; (2) **Actionable organizational policies and effective practices implemented in Colleges of Engineering** that disrupt the status quo regarding who gets to participate in engineering education as a student and as a faculty member; and (3) **Increased participation and comfort among Black and brown K-12 children** in pre-college engineering activities which communicate that an engineering career is an option for *anyone.* These outcomes map to three strategic pillars of the Year of Impact on Racial Equity."

This paper focuses on the "Actionable organizational policies and effective practices implemented in Colleges of Engineering," which we also call the "Faculty and Administrators Pillar." A few of the Faculty and Administrators Pillar subcommittees have been especially active, and we think we will have some results around creating inclusive classrooms; learning

from existing diversity recognition programs, DEI initiatives, and accountability programs; workload, promotion, and pay; exploring ways to divest from white supremacy culture; and our challenge to deans of engineering and engineering technology. Finally, we will share the products and learning that have come out of the active groups.

This paper summarizes our activities thus far in more detail and presents the preliminary outcomes and future plans for the work of the volunteers of this Faculty and Administrators Pillar.

Our Process
During early meetings of this Faculty and Administrators Pillar, attendees discussed the areas they wanted to focus on. After this discussion, Pillar leaders created a survey to get people to formalize their commitment to the areas that were described. Many of the taskforce members ended up signing up for more than one of the areas of focus. We were able to secure agreement from one or two people to lead or co-lead each focus area. Because of this process, the focus areas are and have been truly community generated and driven.

Our Areas of Focus
The Faculty and Administrators pillar of the Year of Impact on Racial Equity began with ten different areas of focus with small subcommittees for each. The areas of focus we began with are indicated below; the items in bold are groups that have been able to create some momentum for their work and have had 2-3 meetings so far and/or a plan for action going forward.
1. supporting contingent faculty;
2. **workload, promotion, and pay;**
3. retention and self-care;
4. identifying racist structures;
5. supporting underrepresented faculty;
6. faculty mentorship of diverse graduate students;
7. **creating inclusive classrooms;**
8. **learning from existing recognitions programs;**
9. **exploring ways to divest from white supremacy culture;**
10. **And our challenge to deans of engineering and engineering technology**

Our Collective Engagement
A total of 41 people signed up to be part of this Faculty/Administrators taskforce, and 33 have attended at least one meeting. The list of active taskforce members overwhelmingly leans toward faculty/lecturers with 19 in those roles, but also has representation from ten staff members, five deans or associate/vice deans, and three department heads. A total of 25 participants identify as women, two as non-binary, and six as men. In terms of race/ethnicity, 20 identify as White, seven as Black or African American, four as Hispanic/Latino/a/e/x, and three as Asian/Pacific

Islander (people are included in all categories they indicated). We have had nine meetings of the whole taskforce so far and attendance has varied from 27 attendees to 7. There is a core group of 16 folks who have been able to attend four or more of the meetings, 12 people have attended two or three meetings, and five attended one meeting.

Our Subcommittee Actions
In this section, we dive more deeply into the areas where there has been more action or concrete plans for action.

Our Work on Creating Inclusive Classrooms (Jordan Jarrett Lead)
This subcommittee aims at providing resources for professors to help them start and continue incorporating anti-racist teaching and practices. The subcommittee will compile existing practices and success stories from the subcommittee members. These pedagogies could include inclusive syllabus language, classroom activities, assessment techniques, incorporation of social justice themes, addressing history of our disciplines, and so on. Although many of the ideas will have benefit to general inclusiveness, this work should be focused on racial equity. The presentation of resources will aim to amplify the work and voices of black scholars and have an engineering focus.

The end goal is to develop an online resource page that contains each pedagogical idea as individual entries. Engineering professors could access this resource page and use it to start implementing or expanding their anti-racist and inclusive pedagogy. The approach would allow educators to start small or incorporate numerous resources and ideas at once. Ideally, this page would be a living resource that could be expanded as more entries are compiled. Each entry would describe an anti-racist and inclusive pedagogy with a summary and reference links. Time and resources permitted, the entry could also include a testimonial of implementation and a discussion thread aimed at developing community and motivation.

Learning from existing diversity recognition programs (Carmen Sidbury Lead)
This group has been discussing how to learn from existing diversity recognition programs, DEI initiatives, and accountability programs in order to share what has been effective in places and incorporate this at more institutions. The group is hoping to partner with the ASEE Diversity Recognition Program (ADRP) to see if there is a way to do some data mining about what works at institutions. It is considering how to reach out to Bronze status ADRP schools, and have discussed looking at recent papers from regional conferences. The challenge here has been creating the connections to these existing programs in ways that support collaboration. A key point of why this working group was created is so that we don't continue to "re-invent the wheel" and we make sure the learning that is happening around what works is shared more broadly.

<u>Workload, Promotion, and Pay</u> (David Knight and Kris Billiar Lead)
Our subcommittee has been grappling with how to generate a set of resources that contain ideas and best practices for equitable workload, promotion, and pay procedures. Because each college of engineering and institutional context varies, our subcommittee believes pulling together a set of resources will require some leg work from an individual or individuals within different colleges, or potentially at the department level depending on the institution's budget model. One of the great ironies that we have been grappling with for this topic is the notion that asking for individuals to submit their best practices would not be rewarded unless tied to mechanisms that are valued by promotion systems, and so we have not engaged in widespread data collection as of yet. Rather, we propose to organize a session at the 2023 Annual Meeting in which members from the ASEE community can share their best practices so that submitters would receive appropriate credit for their work via the ASEE submission. Following the session, we will collate all contributions and share them with appropriate leaders across colleges of engineering and engineering technology.

<u>Divestment from cultures of white male supremacy</u> (Linda Vanasupa Lead)
This effort was a monthly virtual dialogue for white-identified people to reflect on how we participate in white supremacy cultures. The form this took was a Bohmian dialogue (https://www.bohmdialogue.org/) in the spirit of models of dialectic reflection that is central to participatory, praxis-based social change that challenges unconsciously-held, unjust power dynamics in social systems [1]. As text for consideration, we used the website by Tema Okun, Divorcing White Supremacy Culture (https://www.whitesupremacyculture.info/about.html) which allowed us to examine a different cultural theme at each dialogue. People were invited to join the conversation throughout the academic year through an invitation process that explicitly identifies entrance criteria for choosing it, largely highlighting the belief that we are participants in the reification of such cultures and the agents of choosing otherwise.

The intent was to foster participants' agency in taking personal action to divest their participation in white supremacy culture. Initially, the monthly meeting times, collectively chosen, were highly unpopular, ranging from 0-1 attendee and the host, but more recent participation has picked up and the last dialogue session had 5 participants. A working theory is that our participation in academic systems, themselves based on white supremacy culture values of a narrowly-defined productive output, are displacing peoples' interest in doing this personal change work together. There may also have been barriers to broadly getting the word out about this activity, and COVID-19 time pressures affecting participation.

<u>Our Challenge to Deans of Engineering and Engineering Technology</u> (Liz Litzler Lead)
The ASEE Commission on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, as part of the Year of Impact on Racial Equity, is working to compile effective DEI practices from institutions. We are working

with the Engineering Dean's Council (EDC) and Engineering Technology Council (ETC) to ask deans to tell us about work that is happening to advance the cultural conditions for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) on campuses across the country.

The ask is relatively simple and deans can delegate the response to one of their staff, but we really want to have some great examples that we can highlight and share at the annual conference and on the CDEI website. Those schools that have been part of the ASEE Diversity Recognition Program may already have content they can copy from those applications. We tried to make this a really easy task and participation from schools across the country will help show our commitment to racial equity in engineering and engineering technology.

The question we want an answer to is: Given all of your efforts to improve DEI in your college, what do you feel have been the top 1-2 most effective programs or actions to improve conditions for BIPOC students, staff, and faculty in recent years and why?"

The form has only three questions and the first two are about the school itself and the contact person. We plan to share the responses with the broader community via documentation on the CDEI website, and we plan to highlight the schools that respond in the CDEI booth at the annual conference, and possibly at other conference events.

Conclusion
The work of all of the Year of Impact on Racial Equity pillars has had the express purpose of continuing to keep racial equity front of mind and front of hand. We want to ensure that the momentum that was created in the Spring of 2020 with the murder of George Floyd does not wane back to the point of the status quo. This requires that we continue to push forward our initiatives both at our own institutions and at the national level.

We are almost finished with the society year and recognize that there has been less bandwidth than we hoped to push this work forward. In this pillar, we started with ten action areas, and our action and activity have narrowed down to 5 areas. We are not surprised by this given the additional stress and disruption related to Covid-19 and new variants of the virus that are sapping people's extra time and energy. It seems that everyone is being expected to do more with less during this time, and many team members have hit a breaking point and had to step back from volunteer work. We do not think that the slower progress is a result of the areas we chose to focus on but may be related to the large number of areas of focus that were chosen at the beginning. We wonder if we might have been more successful if we narrowed the focus areas down more, although that would have meant that some of the taskforce members would have been asked to work on items that they were not instrumental in originally creating.

While much of the work this year has been about action, we expect to be able to assess impact later. We chose the areas of focus because of the potential for impact on racial equity, but impact sometimes takes time. We plan to share information about these initiatives on the CDEI website and also at the annual conference in the CDEI booth in the diversity pavilion in the exhibit hall. We also expect that there will be even more progress on some of these issues by the 2023 ASEE Annual Conference, and we plan to submit papers to document the work that was done and the impact we have had. We also think that the work we are doing to document effective practices in inclusive pedagogy and racial equity will be things we can continue to add to in the future as new people want to contribute to the effort.

Bibliography
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