

WIP: ASEE Year of Impact on Racial Equity: Impetus & Vision

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Associate Professor of Engineering Education at Virginia Tech Chair of ASEE's CDEI during the Year of Impact on Racial Equity

Homero Murzi

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.

Elizabeth Litzler

Elizabeth (Liz) Litzler, Ph.D., is the Director of the Center for Evaluation & Research for STEM Equity (CERSE) at the University of Washington (UW) and an Affiliate Assistant Professor in UW Sociology. She was the 2020-2021 Chair of the ASEE Commission on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CDEI). She is a former Board Member of Women in Engineering ProActive Network (WEPAN) and the recipient of the 2020 WEPAN Founders Award. She has led social science research projects such as the UW portion of NSF funded Revolutionizing Engineering Departments Participatory Action Research (REDPAR) and the Sloan funded Project to Assess Climate in Engineering (PACE). She also manages program evaluations that provide actionable strategies to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in STEM fields. This includes evaluation of NSF ADVANCE, S-STEM, INCLUDES, and IUSE projects, and climate studies of students, faculty, and staff. Her social science research covers many topics and has used critical race theories such as Community Cultural Wealth to describe the experiences of systemically marginalized students in engineering.

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Abstract

This is the first of four WIP papers in a series on the ASEE Year of Impact on Racial Equity (YIRE). The ASEE Commission on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CDEI), with support from the ASEE Board of Directors, has designated the Society year 2021–2022 as the Year of Impact on Racial Equity (YIRE). CDEI seeks to build on the social and racial justice momentum of 2020, and equity work of ASEE members to truly impact racial equity in engineering, engineering technology, engineering education, and our professional organization. However, we embark on this initiative with the understanding that, though important, racial equity work is not easy; it requires collaboration and intentional action. This paper will summarize the activities and preliminary outcomes of the work of the volunteers who are making the Year of Impact on Racial Equity happen.

YIRE Impetus & Vision

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Members of the Year of Impact on Racial Equity taskforce are focusing on activities that engage three groups of stakeholders in the ongoing effort to make engineering and engineering technology (E&ET) education more equitable, regardless of race/ethnicity. The three groups of primary interest are: faculty and administrators in Colleges of Engineering and Engineering Technology; chapters of E&ET student organizations at colleges and universities across the country; and parents and guardians of K-12 children.

The expected outcomes for this year include:

- Increased participation and comfort among Black and brown K-12 children in pre-college engineering-related activities which communicate that an engineering career is an option for everyone;
- Empowered engineering and engineering technology student organizations to make engineering education more inclusive; and
- Actionable organizational policies and effective practices implemented in Colleges of Engineering and Engineering Technology that disrupt the status quo regarding who gets to participate in engineering and engineering technology education as a student and as a faculty member.

Figure 1 summarizes the activities and preliminary outcomes of the work of the volunteers who are making the Year of Impact on Racial Equity happen.



Figure 1. Overview of Year of Impact on Racial Equity

In addition to the activities that are happening within each of the three pillars described above, the Commission on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is also planning broader engagement activities which will primarily happen at the annual conference, but also in other venues. Examples of broader engagement include virtual webinars/workshops specifically focused on systemic and organizational change to improve the cultural conditions for BIPOC faculty and students, and CDEI blog posts focused on racial equity.

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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 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 about half way through the YIRE and are recognizing that there has been less bandwidth than we hoped to push this work forward. 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. 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.