



College of Communication

DEI-related Actions During the Fall and Winter Quarters 2023-24

Goal 1: Inclusive College Climate.

Create a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable college community for faculty and staff.

- During the fall, the **DEI Advocate** conducted interviews with faculty going up for formal reviews with the intention of making sure the college experience is as equitable and supportive as possible for all faculty.
- In the fall, the **Dean and DEI Advocate** ensured that all faculty members serving on search committees had completed the DEI training provided by Academic Affairs. This is a crucial step in promoting diversity, equity and inclusion in the hiring process.
- In response to the outbreak of conflict in the Middle East and the strong emotions it evoked globally, as well as in our campus and college, **the Dean and DEI Advocate** released a statement to the college community reaffirming our institution's commitment to upholding the principles of free speech. Additionally, the statement emphasized that the safety and well-being of every member of our community remains our highest priority.
- Dean **Lexa Murphy** has continued to host "Caffeine with the Dean," a regular space for students, faculty and staff to meet with her in an informal setting to discuss any concerns they may have. This initiative promotes open communication and fosters a sense of community within the college.
- During the fall quarter the **DEI Committee** developed two surveys: one for faculty and staff and another for students. These surveys were administered during the winter quarter, and the results will be compiled and reported in the spring. The findings will provide valuable insights into the college's progress on DEI initiatives and help identify areas for improvement.

Goal 2. Support For Students.

Recruiting, Retaining, and supporting a more diverse student community

- **DEI Student Fellow** Madison Comeau created a bi-weekly newsletter to keep students informed about DEI-related news, events, scholarship opportunities and deadlines.
- Prof. **Martha Irvine** has worked to bring in speakers from diverse backgrounds, including AP photojournalist Julio Cortez, who tells them his story of coming to this country as an undocumented immigrant, working his way through community college and eventually university and starting in Chicago with the AP as an intern. Cortez is now a Pulitzer Prize winner who covered the George Floyd protests and Jan. 6 takeover of the US Capitol.



- In her Reporting for DePaulia classes during both the fall and spring quarters, **Prof. Irvine** consistently incorporates discussions on the AP Stylebook's chapter dedicated to Inclusive Storytelling. This chapter provides essential guidelines for journalists to ensure their reporting is respectful, accurate and free from bias.
- **Prof. Robin Hoecker** made a significant effort to increase student memberships in Journalism organizations for underrepresented groups. In the Winter Quarter, with **Carrie Don**'s valuable assistance, they were able to register 21 students for NAHJ, NABJ, AAJA and SAJA.
- **Prof. Rick Brown**, while guiding students broadcasting at Good Day DePaul, has emphasized the team's commitment to covering diversity issues, particularly those relevant to the DePaul community. In March 2024, the team produced a significant story on a DePaul Faculty and Student Diversity Report. Here is the link to the story (:41): [Diversity Report](#)
- **Prof. Paul Booth** taught sessions of his "Virtual Reality and Empathy" lecture to 8th graders and high schoolers from Chicago through the [After School Matters](#) program. These sessions involved young people from diverse backgrounds (many of whom weren't planning on going to college) and focused on discussions around cross-cultural understanding.
- **Prof. Booth** hosted a weekly event called "Sweets, Treats and Deets," which featured various multicultural and inclusive student organizations from DePaul University. These events provided a platform for students to learn about different cultural and identity-based groups on campus while enjoying some refreshments.
- **Prof. Booth** organized the Voices of Communication event, which featured diverse student speakers from different programs in the college.
- **Prof Booth** worked with Grad Admissions and Recruitment Management to develop a more robust international student recruitment strategy (including getting STEM designations for DCMA and JOUR).
- **Prof. Booth** is developing a new D2L portal specifically designed to cater to the needs of international graduate students. This platform will provide resources, support and a sense of community for students from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

Goal 3. Professional Development and Support.

Promoting and supporting inclusive teaching, scholarship, and professional development for faculty and staff.

- In February 2024, The DEI Committee hosted a professional development panel titled "Peer-to-Peer: DEI Strategies in the Classroom." This event featured five faculty members from the college, including **Prof. Kelly Kessler**, **Prof. Kristen Pengelly**, **Prof. Elissa Foster**, **Prof. Christina Steed** and **Prof. Robin Hoecker**, who gracefully shared their valuable insights and



experiences on pedagogical approaches to DEI. You can find a recording of this event at, [Peer-to-Peer](#)

- The **DEI Committee** created a “DEI Incentive program” to encourage faculty and staff to gain knowledge, skills, competencies, and understanding necessary to promote and implement DEI initiatives within our college. The application for this incentive can be found at, [DEI Incentive Program](#).
- The **DEI Committee** continues to offer the Course Resources Diversification Program, an initiative aimed at enhancing the diversity of perspectives and experiences represented in course materials. This program encourages faculty to incorporate a wider range of voices and viewpoints into their curriculum. To apply for resources, please follow the link at, [Course Resources Diversification Program](#).
- **Prof. Jay Baglia** updated his Health Communication courses to include readings on reading intersectionality and critical race theory in the unit on patient/provider communication, people of color in medical school, and racism in medicine.
- **Prof. Paul Booth** organized the Pop Culture conference "A Celebration of Star Wars," which makes a significant effort to emphasize diversity and inclusion in its panel composition and keynote speaker selection. Prof. of Latin American Studies at Columbia College Carmelo Esterrich and writer Claudia Gray will be the keynote speakers.
- In an effort to discuss diversity and inclusion in the entertainment industry, **Prof. Booth** invited Maureen Ryan, a renowned speaker on DEI topics, to give a talk to students and faculty. Ryan, an experienced journalist and author of the book, *Burn It Down: Power, Complicity and a Call for Change in Hollywood*, shared valuable insights on the challenges and opportunities for creating a more inclusive and equitable industry.
- **Prof. Booth** invited Aaron Trammell, a distinguished speaker on DEI issues within the realm of board games, to share his expertise. Trammell is the author of *The Privilege of Play: A History of Hobby Games, Race and Geek Culture*.
- **Prof. Carolyn Bronstein** is teaching a diversity-focused class she developed for the Public Relations and Advertising core curriculum, Diversity and Current Issues in PRAD, in Winter 2024 and is scheduled to teach it in Spring 2024.
- **Prof. Jason Martin** Revised materials for CMNS 349 Digital Media & Laws focusing on DEI implications of AI ethics; including the need for human-centered design in AI and related technologies, systematic biases in current iterations of AI deployment, and concerns about gaps in attention to potential harm to marginalized communities by current AI company policy and government policies.
- **Prof. Matt Ragas** confirmed PRAD’s support to and membership of the Diversity Action Alliance (DAA). As described on their website, the Alliance is the Public Relations and Strategic Communications profession’s only industrywide non-profit coalition combatting the lack of racial and ethnic diversity in the field as measured by recruitment, retention, and representation

- **Prof. Tim Cole** found some preliminary research on individuals who identify as nonbinary and relational communication, as this is an issue that sometimes comes up in his classes. The research so far, however, shows that there aren't significant differences in how nonbinary individuals communicate in their close relationships.
- **Prof. Daniel Makagon** offered the Sound and Vision course in the fall quarter, and the Audio Doc course in the spring. Both place a concerted emphasis on showcasing photographs and audio pieces created by or focused on individuals from diverse backgrounds, beyond the traditional middle-class white demographic. Both courses involve extensive listening exercises, with Sound and Vision additionally incorporating a significant visual component through the analysis of photographs. While the racial or ethnic identities of voices within an audio piece may be more apparent to listeners, the background of the producer behind an audio work can be less obvious. These courses dedicate time to discussing such considerations and how the public radio and podcast landscape has evolved to become more inclusive and representative of various communities.
- Under **Prof. Amy Merrick's** guidance, students published the story "[The Long Shadow of White Supremacy at DePaul](#)," in *14 East*, a publication at DePaul University, which delved into the institution's history, and garnered significant recognition for its efforts in promoting diversity and inclusivity. It was honored as the winner of the Best Organizational Diversity Initiative in the national Pinnacle Awards sponsored by the College Media Association. Additionally, the same story was named a finalist for the Diversity Story of the Year in the prestigious Associated Collegiate Press awards, further underscoring its impact and contribution to fostering diverse perspectives within the academic community. Furthermore, the story was a finalist for Best Reporting on Race and Diversity by the Peter Lisagor Awards, sponsored by the Chicago Headline Club (Society of Professional Journalists).
- Through the following activities, **Prof. Amy Merrick** demonstrated a steadfast commitment to promoting diversity, inclusivity, and equitable representation across various platforms and initiatives,
 - a. On January 10th, *14 East*, under **Prof. Merrick's** guidance, organized an event as part of its Public Newsroom series, focusing on mental-health reporting in marginalized communities. The event coverage was featured in *14 East's* newsletter *In the Loop*.
 - b. **Prof. Merrick** participated as a speaker in the DEI in Pedagogy Workshop: Promoting Equity through Inclusive Teaching Practices on February 5th, emphasizing inclusive teaching methodologies.
 - c. On March 5th, *14 East* hosted another event in its Public Newsroom series, highlighting the trailblazing efforts of Black women in independent media. This event was also [covered](#) in the *In the Loop* newsletter.
 - d. To improve accessibility, *14 East*, under **Prof. Merrick's** guidance, initiated a project to introduce audio versions of its stories on the website. Efforts are underway to research and implement this accessibility enhancement during the spring quarter.

- e. Throughout the year, **Prof. Merrick** advises [Pueblo](#), *14 East's* bilingual journal of reporting and creative work, as part of her service as faculty advisor to *14 East*.
- **Prof. Leah Bryant** is actively engaged in an ongoing series of initiatives that revolve around her research and efforts to promote diverse perspectives within academia and various other domains. Her work demonstrates a steadfast commitment to advancing inclusivity and amplifying underrepresented voices across multiple spheres. Here are a few examples,
 - **Prof. Bryant** has continued to advance an international perspective of relationship science by editing the International Section of the journal, *Personal Relationships*. (see under heading: [International Section](#)).
 - She has continued to research marginalized populations, specifically GLBTQIA+ adolescents who are estranged from their families. Recently, she brought on a person who is trans to provide veracity checks of her analyses.
 - She has been reading more work from authors with diverse perspectives and experiences. These include,
 - a. James, Percival Everett (attended a talk by this author)
 - b. *Open City*, Teju Cole
 - c. *How We Fight For Our Lives*, Sayeed Jones
 - d. *Unbound*, Tarana Burke (attended a talk by this author)
 - e. *Unmasking AI*, Joy Buolamwini (attended a talk by this author)
 - **Prof. Bryant** sought out sessions at academic conferences to expand her understanding of DEI-related issues. These include,
 - a. First Year Experience (FYE) Black Women in Stem
 - b. Building a Blueprint to Support Student Veterans
 - c. Infusing DEI into the FYE Course
 - She attended multiple training sessions that have covered DEI related content. These include,
 - a. Best Practices (Chicago Quarter) sessions
 - b. Faculty Learning Communities (Mindfulness and Joy, Gamification, etc)
 - The following activities are less academic, but they expanded **Prof. Bryant's** understanding of other cultures/perspectives:
 - a. World Music Wednesdays at the Old Town School of Folk Music
 - b. Chicago Humanities Festival events: Rhiannon Giddens, Screening of Shirley and Q&A with director and star, Zadie Smith, Charles Blow
 - c. Theatre: seeking out shows that are written from diverse perspectives (e.g., *Bald Sisters*, *Choir Boy*, *Sanctuary City*, etc.).
 - **Prof. Michaela Winchatz** invited Matthew Amador, LCSW, Psychotherapist and owner of Matador Behavioral Health, to her Gendered Communication class to speak on queer identity and mental health related issues to our graduate students. Amador works with LGBTQ+ youth as a mental health counselor.

- **Instructor Kristen Pengelly and Coordinator of Scheduling and Student Records Ashlyn Lozano** taught a Chicago Quarter class called Chicago Stages that explored physical and ad-hoc stages (sites of protest, organizing, and strikes). During Immersion Week, the class traveled to a variety of Chicago neighborhoods, including Pullman and Humboldt Park. Course content discussed the AIDS crisis (specifically the impact it had on Chicago theater), gentrification (in Lincoln Park and Humboldt Park), and workers movements (Pullman Strike of 1894). Dr. Jesse Mumm, faculty in Latin American and Latino Studies, visited class to lead an article discussion about gentrification in Humboldt Park.
- Throughout the year, **Prof. Elissa Foster:**
 - Has been supporting the Vincentian Pedagogy Project through the Office of Mission and Ministry. After participating in the year-long program for tenure-track faculty last year, this year she has been helping with the year-long workshops for part-time faculty. This work has involved email planning and coordination, minor facilitation responsibilities, and attendance at the workshops (2 each in the Winter and Spring). Responding to diversity and social justice is an essential theme of this work.
 - Since January, she has been working with an interdisciplinary group of university faculty to address suffering on campus related to the situation in Israel and Palestine. The group meets weekly for 60 - 90 minutes to strategize and initiate helpful action to support students and faculty. It has been difficult work. This week, we pilot our "Lunch. Listen. Learn" event for faculty and will repeat it later in the month.
 - As an extension of her involvement with the interdisciplinary faculty group, she was invited to and attended a two-hour session with representatives from The Parents Circle Family Forum—an international organization dedicated to peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine. Two of the core facilitators—one from Palestine and one from Israel, both of whom had lost family members in different permutations of the war—spoke about how they overcame their own suffering in order to see the humanity in "the enemy" and work towards peaceful resolution.
 - In February, she participated in the DEI panel for the College, focusing on micro-behaviors that can be incorporated into teaching environments in order to encourage diverse perspectives and respectful dialogue. She continues to expand her DEI efforts in the classroom, including my ongoing work with the folks offering the "Communication Fundamentals for College Success," which was designed and is intended to support students who are struggling for any number of reasons—neurodiversity, first-in-family students, mental health challenges, and so on.