Wisconsin Center for Education Research

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

2023 Strategic Goals Progress Report

Goal 1: Identify the knowledge, skills and awareness of positionality needed to integrate DEI into the center's daily operations

Action 1. Determine how WCER will use insights from individual and organizational learning literatures

1. Engaged an external consultant for leadership team members to identify, create, and implement action plans around individual and organizational areas for growth.

2. Collaborated with the School of Education Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (OEDI) to introduce DEI training opportunities for the service units focused on race.

3. Made a financial commitment to Urban Triage, a racial equity, co-conspirators workgroup. Open for employees at WCER for partnership and growth opportunities.

4. Curated a list of campus-wide learning opportunities to create a single source of information.

Action 2. Develop an action plan to operationalize DEI at WCER

1. Supported service units and projects to create DEI goals tailored to the needs of each group. This included:

   a. Developed training materials to help service unit and project leaders identify appropriate and reasonable DEI goals.

   b. Collaborated with the OEDI to identify ways for projects to translate existing work into actionable goals.

   c. Created an FAQ document about the nature of the initiative.

   d. Fielded a supervisor preparedness survey.

   e. Created a conversation template for having DEI PD conversations in PMDP sessions.

f. Modeled "challenging conversations" in service unit supervisors meeting.

g. Held office hours to offer support for supervisors in creating DEI goals.

h. Created a plan development guidance document for projects, including decision trees, timelines, etc.

Action 3. Create an infrastructure to sustain DEI work

1. Solicited candid feedback from stakeholders about the failed search for a DEI leader to apply lessons learned to a future recruitment.

2. Continued support of Education Graduate Research Scholar (Ed-GRS) fellows to provide a wrap-around, holistic experience for School of Education graduate students, which incudes funding for tuition, stipends, professional development and travel.

Goal 2: Improve and expand the center's services equitably to students, academic and university staff, and faculty

Action 1. Improve the effectiveness of service units

1. Implemented the use of a project management tool, Asana, in many of the service units to provide consistent and predictable services, ultimately streamlining interaction between research projects and service units and improving the efficiency of service unit workflows.

2. Reimagined how hourly student work could be utilized by service units, resulting in a new approach to supervision, support, and the nature of the work.

Action 2. Operationalize a culture of learning and continuous improvement

1. Initiated the development of a cross-unit process to capture all information necessary to run grants through WCER.

2. Utilized structure role playing in the service unit supervisor meetings to understand and synthesize varying points-of-view around:

   a. Climate and culture

   b. Strategic initiatives

   c. Excellence

   d. Distributed leadership

3. Enhanced search committee process for WCER service unit positions by inviting people in a broad range of positions and skills to participate in search committees.

Action 3. Develop distributed service leadership

1. Defined roles and responsibilities for operations and service unit teams to roll out distributed leadership initiative.

2. Created the Operations Team, which consists of the directors of each service unit along with the COO.

3. Explored the distributed leadership model, identifying ways in which all staff can be leaders.

4. Developed goals for each service unit to differentiate transactional and strategic work.

Action 4. Address culture and climate issues

1. Analyzed pipelines for professional growth and leadership.

2. Examined representation in key positions.

3. Translated data from WCER climate study and other sources into strategic actions.

4. Used retention practices focused on belonging, satisfaction with current job, and future goals.

5. Created a comprehensive onboarding program to differentiate employee and supervisor tasks; consolidate information into a single source; set timelines, and; foster a relationship of open communication and shared expectations between new employees and supervisors.

Goal 3: Use problem solving, experimentation, learning from diverse experiences, and efficient transfer of knowledge to achieve our mission

Action 1. Design and implement professional opportunities for staff members

1. Supported ASAC to provide opportunities to share research interests and findings at center-wide functions.

2. Provided support for service unit staff to participate in professional development opportunities in areas such as project management, supervision and management, and post-award accounting.

3. Developed midyear PMDP preparation scenarios for supervisors to emphasize the continuum of growth and development.

Goal 4: Promote high-quality, community-connected local, state, national and international research on education

Action 1. Broaden and deepen research and development support

1. Hired an additional WCER grant management employee to help PIs organize large grant submissions.

2. Continued to support and strengthen relationships with key community and local organizational stakeholders (e.g., One City Schools, Urban Triage, MMSD).

Goal 5: Expand and diversify sources of funding for research

Action 1. Develop a strategy for winning high-return funding opportunities

1. WCER Director developed a partnership with the Associate Vice Chancellor in Social Sciences to support new high-impact research initiatives.

2. Continued to strengthen relationships with internal (e.g., Wisconsin Foundation And Alumni Association) and external (e.g., American Institutes for Research, organizations that will help expand and diversify funding.