

T3: Transformative Team TED-talks

Building community, one team at a time



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Funded Project Amount: \$15,000

Abstract

- Dialogue around DEI can be sensitive and lead to divisiveness; yet avoiding these conversations impedes trust, growth, and innovation. We originally proposed building a set of interdisciplinary tools for a University of Utah audience of faculty, staff, and students to bridge this challenge using TED-style talks. These 6 talks would together form a voluntary curriculum that could be used in different workgroups, organizational units, or learning collaboratives over a span of 18 months.
- In January 2024, the anti-DEI HB261 was passed affecting all public employees. The passage of the law escalated concerns about these sensitive topics.
- To decrease risk to the University community, while still maintaining utility and the spirit of connection, our talks were restructured better facilitate constructive dialogue as well as sharing of viewpoints and perspectives as University guidance and policies were shared over the course of 2024. We feel this important curriculum still has an important role in helping us form and understand our communities. Given the barriers encountered in 2024, we have not piloted the curriculum and want to be stay sensitive and safe in optimizing it for our communities over the course of 2025.

Materials

- Faculty and staff
- Podcasting equipment
- Filming team
- Webhosting resources



Methodology/Timeline

- Content expertise:** We examined the resources available at the University including the expertise of faculty and staff. We invited them to share their expertise not just with their students, but to use these talks as a opportunity to share their work with all members of the University community
- Education expertise:** We assembled a team of University educators using a reverse-curriculum model to build themes and facilitation questions for each of the Talks
- Passage of HB261:** Following passage the anti-DEI law, we engaged with the Office of General Counsel and applied the University of Utah Administrative Guidance released in May 2024, and created a general disclaimer to confirm that this work does not represent an operational arm of the University but instead collaborative scholarship and research to develop innovative tools for building community
- Reframing dialogue:** The T3 team also returned to the original materials, reframing content and facilitation tools so that they may comply with HB261 and maintain utility to the University community
- Narrowing the focus:** Given the sensitive nature of the curriculum, as well as Marketing and Communication guidance for public facing websites it was felt that it would not be ideal to host this curriculum on the broad platform such as University Connected Learning - but rather within structures for professional development, leadership, and relational toolkits such as the Accelerate or the New Leadership Academy.

Disclaimer:

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T3: Tranformative Team TED-talks

Inclusion for every body

Angela Marie Smith, Ph.D.
Professor of English and Gender Studies
Director, Disability Studies



Navigating and sharing power

Gretchen A. Case, Ph.D.
Professor of Theatre, Performance Studies, and Health Humanities
Director, Center for Health Ethics, Arts, and Humanities



When assessment tools fail

Juliana Simonetti, M.D.
Professor of Internal Medicine



Belonging is a difficult and necessary conversation

Keith Embray, B.A., M.S., M.B.A.
Senior Associate Athletics Director



Patient safety, innovation, and diverse teams

Quang-Tuyen T. Nguyen, M.D.
Professor of Pediatrics



Moving through mistreatment into community

William A. Smith, Ph.D.
Jon M. Huntsman Presidential Chair and Distinguished Professor
Department of Psychiatry, School of Medicine
Department of Education, Culture, and Society Ethnic Studies Program



Introduction

Dialogue around diversity equity and inclusion can be sensitive and lead to divisiveness; yet avoiding these conversations impedes trust, growth, and innovation. While the University supports these values, it is difficult to translate them into staffing and education. We originally proposed a set of interdisciplinary DEI tools available to University faculty, staff, and students to bridge this challenge.



PROBLEM:

- Work around equity requires a transformation in thinking.
- Leaders reluctant to engage in work around DEI are often ill-equipped to see the personal or business case for innovation, cognitive and experiential diversity, and inclusion
- Framing diversity though a moral obligation can increase barriers and resistance
- Staff/leaders may struggle to guide discussions in a productive manner and can increase risk of harm

SOLUTION:

- Build a curriculum of TED-style talks with facilitation materials
- Talks should transform perspectives on an "old think"
- Facilitation materials to follow from momentum of talks
- Staff/leaders to use curriculum in team development

Conclusion

Many social, political, legislative, and financial forces can affect and alter the content of conversations. To comply with HB261, the University must navigate previously uncharted waters to balance its role in protecting academic freedom, education, and research with its commitment as a public state institution working with policy makers to facilitate growth and opportunity for the state.

This project was particularly challenged as its target audience was community and operational units within a state institution. As such, it was necessary to collectively adapted perspectives and language to avoid triggering or misunderstood language and concepts. At the same time that our project has had to be restructured, many other University offices have also had to be restructured. New positive additions for instance include the Brave Conversations program under Student Affairs.

We anticipate that going forward, it will be challenging to recruit for this project in the short term but as our community stabilizes, we still believe these conversations to be still be critical to our development and understanding of our missions of service, education, and research.

Recommendations

- Avoiding these difficult but necessary conversations affect the long term growth of an institutions especially as they may pertain mistreatment, bias, opportunity, and faculty/staff engagement
- Difficult conversations require tools and facilitation especially in sensitive and volatile times
- Institutions will need to continue to invest in tools to have these conversations in safe, constructive, and useful ways



Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible without the patience, graciousness, and support of faculty and staff leaders as well as the broader University community.

Deborah Feyek-Franssen
Rachel Griffin
Hannah Keating
Rena Lawless
Jose Rodriguez
Gloria Slattum
Bart Watts

