# Identity, Community and Professional Development: A Multicultural Approach to Learning

# **MULTICULTURAL** STUDENT AFFAIRS

#### **Divisional Level Learning Outcomes**

- Personal Development
- Social Responsibility
- Interpersonal Competence

# CONTEXT

Multicultural Student Affairs (MSA) has approximately 25 student employees each year, serving in one of three positions- Office Assistants (OA), Student Interns (SI), and Graduate Assistants (GA). This year, MSA sought to unify the Student Staff experience and maximize the training of these students by addressing four key areas: 1) Identity Awareness 2) Collaboration 3) Social Media 4) Professional Skills.

# **TEACHING STRATEGY**

We did this by engaging all student staff in a retreat at the beginning of the year and quarterly training meetings for all of the students, as well as monthly meetings for each of the positions (OA, SI, and GA) separately. We also ended the year with a final retreat. During the End of Year Retreat, learning was assessed using quantitative and qualitative methods.

# **ASSESSMENT STRATEGY**

#### **Formative Assessment** (Workshop Pre-Test and Post-Test)

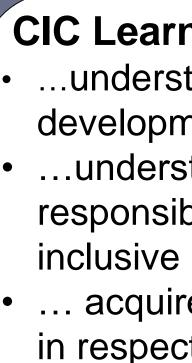
Student staff were given a pre-test and post-test during the April 1<sup>st</sup> training on Social Media application to their work in MSA and beyond graduation.

### Summative Assessment (End of Year Online Survey)

Student staff were given an online survey at the End of Year Retreat to capture qualitative and quantitative measures.

### **Focus Group** (End of Year Retreat)

Each student staff member was evaluated during the focus group using a rubric we developed from our learning outcomes.



Identity

- most.

- identity at NU.

#### **Collaborative project**

"How can I build community through the small things I do everyday?"

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#### **CIC Learning Outcomes**

- ...understand the impact of their identities on their development as leaders
- ...understand their individual and collective
- responsibility to create safe, equitable and inclusive communities.

Class

... acquire skills that will enable them to participate in respectful dialogue across difference and foster an inclusive community

### **MSA Program Level Learning Outcomes**

- ... utilize resources in order to navigate the communities and institutions in which they participate
- socially just campus community through empathy and understanding



# **MAJOR FINDINGS**

• On a 4 point scale when asked to identify salient identities and describing how one of these identities impacts one's experience, the average score was 2.56. We interpret from this that the majority of our students can list salient identities for themselves, while understanding how these identities impact their experience is less salient for

Race, Class, and Gender were most often listed as the 3 salient identities for student staff. Of those that scored higher (3-4), most identified race & ethnicity, gender & sex, and class as identities that impact group dynamics in their work. Some listed class standing as a salient social

Four student projects were produced and presented at the End of Year Student Staff Retreat. • Needs of MSA were identified by student staff and projects were created to address these needs. Learning about group dynamics and managing different schedules was expressed.

### Skill Building

When offered a scenario, and asked to list steps for bystander intervention student staff illustrated the following:

- 87% of student staff demonstrated (by a score of 4) the ability to effectively step up in an emergency situation while working in an MSA facility
- 13% of the student staff demonstrated (by a score of 3) the ability to identity and interpret a situation as an emergency and is able to call for help

#### **Social Media**

- 77% of students reported an improvement in their confidence in searching for employment with social media
- 44% of students increased their audience (identify)
- On a scale of 1 (not likely)-5 (very likely), students were asked in the post-test how they are likely to use social media in their future job search. Average score was 4.09.
- 55% were able to name 3 new strategies to use social media as a professional development and enhancement tool

# **IN THEIR OWN WORDS**

"(I learned about) Social justice issues, intersectionality and learning how to create spaces for people to openly speak about their identities."

> "how to engage in constructive conversations ...exposure to different resources available for minorities...I wouldn't have gotten that if I wasn't working for MSA"



# **CIC** CAMPUS INCLUSION AND COMMUNITY

...explore the intersectionality of their identities and how they contribute to personal success

• ... analyze cultural differences to create a more

*"My online brand is"* intrinsically tied to my identity"

"team work definitely. It can sometimes be difficult to work with people from different backgrounds and MSA helps a lot with that."

#### **Activity Level Learning Outcomes**

MSA Student employees that attend the student staff trainings will be able to...

- 1. Name three of their salient identities and identify at least one way that these identities impact group dynamic
- 2. Describe how their strengths influenced their work with others on the collaborative project with other student employees of different focus areas in MSA.
- 3. Demonstrate skills around bystander intervention and group dynamics.
- 4. Effectively use social media as professional development and enhancement tool.

### LIMITATIONS

- Over the course of the year MSA lost # of student staff (1 graduate assistant, 4 interns and # office assistants)
- Losing a significant amount of interns did not allow us to move forward with an intended end of year exit interview
- Availability of student staff prohibited some to participate in the student staff trainings
- 8 of the 15 that participated are first year students. While these students benefited a great deal from trainings, developmentally, they are just beginning to think about these things.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Create a separate training program for all Campus Inclusion and Community Graduate Assistants

Change the Intern position, to make all undergraduate student staff Office Assistants

Create year round opportunities for student staff to think critically about their identities and how it impacts group dynamics

Provide additional trainings so any Office Assistant can effectively work in all MSA spaces

Integrate more formative assessment during the following sessions: Identity Development, Step-Up, QPR and Professionalism

Provide additional community building and social activities for MSA student Staff



