



RENGA CONSULTING SERVICES, INC.

Committed to collaborative change processes in higher education to address social justice in a diverse democracy.
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Readiness Assessment for Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Executive Summary

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TO: Michelle Jones-Johnson, WPI Vice President of Talent Development/Chief Diversity Officer
Peter Hansen, Professor of History and Director of International and Global Studies and RSC Co-Chair,
Bonnie Walker, WPI Executive Director of Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

FROM: Alane Shanks, Renga President and Lead Consultant
Jenene Cook, Renga Consultant and Research Assistant

About Renga & NERCHE Self-Assessment Rubric

Renga focuses on collaborative change processes in higher education to address social justice in a diverse democracy. To advance diversity work on college campuses, Renga uses the “Self-Assessment Rubric for the Institutionalization of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion,” developed by the New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE) with a team of 22 Chief Diversity Officers from campuses across New England. In 2015-16, under the auspices of NERCHE, the Renga team piloted the rubric at four campuses that was called Project Inclusion New Hampshire.

The Project Inclusion process is a commitment to a long-term approach to structural and cultural change. Most institutions complete the first iteration of the process within an academic or calendar year. It doesn't look the same on every campus, but there are three core stages: Stage 1: Campus commitment and readiness review, Stage 2: Campus self-assessment, and Stage 3: Developing a logic model and work plan. See Appendix A for a detailed list of the stages and tasks.

Stage 1: Campus Commitment & Readiness Review

Stage 1 is an assessment of the climate of diversity, inclusion, and equity on campus, and of commitments by the leadership and stakeholders in advancing these efforts. The primary purpose is to ensure the campus is invested in doing the work required to improve campus climate for all students, faculty and staff. Data collected in Stage 1 will provide a starting point for the work of the WPI Rubric Steering Committee (RSC).

To facilitate this stage in the process, Renga reviewed pertinent documents (See Appendix B) and Bonnie Walker, Executive Director of Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, organized a series of focus groups that proved very productive. However, the first round did not yield any white male faculty or students. We added several more focus groups to hear from white male faculty and staff since white males make up the majority population on campus. No white students came to the focus groups although several had committed to do so. Appendix C provides a high-level description of focus group participants.



Focus Group Summary Findings

Throughout the various focus groups, the conversations were robust; participants were engaged in the process and the assessment initiative and eager to sit in a face-to-face focus group where they could connect and dialogue with one another. The full report includes a complete analysis of the data collected under each of the themes and categories regarding diversity, equity and inclusion at WPI.

Leadership Efforts	Strategic Direction
Events Staffing Outreach Communication	Vision Cross-cutting enabler: diversity & inclusion Connecting the Project Inclusion and the Strategic Planning Efforts.

Current Campus Culture	Desired Campus Culture
Disconnections noted Women faculty feeling overlooked Burden on POC Reactive Support Increased awareness Politics	Politics Robust conversations Recruitment of domestic POC Inclusion of women and POC

Current Initiatives	Ideas for Moving Forward
Staffing Organized dialogues Recruitment Training	Communication Best practices Inclusion Integration Recruitment

Challenges and Opportunities

Difficult challenges and opportunities ahead were captured in the focus groups. Examples include:

- The work conducted using NERCHE’s Self-Assessment Rubric has the potential to operationalize WPI’s cross-cutting enabler of diversity and inclusion stated in the strategic plan.
- Gender needs to be a central part of the diversity effort.
- Heavy burden on POCs - It's very hard being one of few on campus (diversity fatigue, less connected community of understanding/camaraderie, always targeted as spokesperson or committee seat, mentoring students).
- Students of color want to focus on their education like every other student – tired of educating.
- Engaging white faculty and students in this effort.
- Hearing the voices of the entire community including non-exempt staff and part-time faculty.

The themes and examples in the full report are key observations made during our campus visits. However, they are not meant to be exhaustive or to diminish our acknowledgement of the importance of other



successes and challenges that we observed. Every institution faces similar challenges. We are impressed that Worcester Polytechnic Institute is expending substantial time and financial resources on exploring ways to encourage expanded diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in all aspects of campus life. We know that there is much more to uncover. The intention of Project Inclusion is a **self-assessment** of the entire institution.

Readiness Assessment

Based on our findings **we recommend that the campus undertake a comprehensive assessment and planning process to improve campus diversity, inclusion, and equity with one condition.** The condition is that, given that the majority of faculty and students are white men, there needs to be a concerted effort to bring that population into WPI's Project Inclusion effort. Our suggestion is to recruit at least two white male students and two white male faculty to be on the Rubric Steering Committee (RSC). Preferably they should be respected on the campus so that their participation will positively influence how their peers view and participate. Working together on the RSC, with a cross-section of faculty, staff, and students, will allow the committee to model how the rest of the campus can work together.

Expectations

WPI, upon accepting the findings and recommendations of this Readiness Report, will form a Rubric Steering Committee (RSC) co-chaired by Michelle Jones-Johnson, CDO and Professor Peter Hansen. The RSC membership should include faculty, staff (exempt and non-exempt) and students from diverse backgrounds and different disciplines. Committing to long-term approaches to structural and cultural change and using the NERCHE developed institutional assessment rubric, this will allow the WPI community to engage in a process of self-assessment to understand the campus environment around diversity, inclusion, and equity. This self-assessment needs to be undertaken as an intentional, strategic process for planned change.

The work will be focused around two or three of the six dimensions outlined in the NERCHE Rubric. In each of the meetings and focus groups on campus, Renga consultants asked, "**which of the dimensions do you think WPI should work on this year?**" **Faculty Support was recommended by every group.** The **Student Support, Curriculum Support** dimensions were close seconds. The Staff Support received 100% of the vote from the Front-Line Staff focus group. The other two (Administrative Leadership, and Mission & Philosophy) received some votes as well, but were not mentioned as often. The RSC will have to make the ultimate decision about which dimensions will be their focus this year.

Once the campus has completed the self-assessment in the chosen dimensions, the next stage will be to determine strategic priorities and commitments, create a logic model and work plan, follow the work plan, and then return to the rubric and assess progress again noting areas of improvement and new areas needing attention and strategies to facilitate improvement. The RSC will provide an overview of the assessment at the 2017 All-College meeting and, at campus-wide meeting in December of 2017, the RSC will report on the work plan to be implemented in 2018 and beyond.

We appreciate your commitment to advancing diversity, inclusion, and equity at WPI. If you have any questions about this report, please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to supporting WPI's diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

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