Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion as Action:
Designing a collective EDI strategy with library staff
Project Report for University Libraries Management Committee

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Executive Summary

The EDI @ OSUL pilot was developed to engage the organization in establishing clear definition around equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice that can guide employee implementation and practice at the individual, department, and organizational level. The pilot also sought to relieve the dependency of EDI from minority employees and committee leadership, in order to demonstrate that EDI work is the responsibility of all employees' day-to-day practice.

There is a need at The Ohio State University Libraries and within the LIS profession as a whole to focus on closing the gap between values and practice. The emergence of social justice as a LIS value challenges the Libraries to navigate new EDI initiatives that are inclusive of global viewpoints and different levels of cultural fluency to help to meet the broader goals of attracting EDI allies from all areas of the organization. EDI models that address systemic EDI organizational barriers and that can be enacted by average employees are needed. The Libraries is uniquely positioned to drive conversations in a meaningful and sustained way by seeking the perspectives of all in the organization, rather than relying on one committee or individual members interested in EDI.

EDI@OSUL tasked all library faculty and staff to think about and work through EDI challenges and opportunities and to tap into the problem-solving skills librarians and other library staff members already have. The initiative sought to re-center EDI conversations to focus on EDI practice instead of ideologies or beliefs, by facilitating exercises in which participants were directed to explicitly determine how EDI might be approached from their role, units or departments, and by the organization. Through this model, participants generated ideas and prioritized solutions and actions for addressing EDI in context at the local organizational level by collectively reflecting on EDI values, EDI definitions, existing practices, and gaps in order to generate ideas of practice that may shape future organizational EDI strategies. The success of EDI initiatives is dependent on continued institutional support and resources. This document reports a summary of participants' feedback.

In addition to supporting the generation of EDI organizational practices, the initiative sought to convey the message that EDI should be advanced by all members of the organization. The initiative dispels the myths that EDI should solely be the work of people of color, EDI leaders, or a EDI committee. In order to support the entry of new EDI allies, the initiative is designed to be accessible, inclusive, and applicable to participants with varying levels of cultural fluency. The project defines EDI work as iterative action developed through the process and practice of cultural humility. The project does not accept ideology, values statement, beliefs or intent as a substitute to or equivalent to EDI action.

The success of the pilot at OSUL has catalyzed organization members to enact their own EDI projects within their units and departments.

As a result of this pilot, the project leads will make specific asks of the Libraries' leadership to help move this work from ideas to practice.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Create an FTE position for a "Diversity and Inclusion Specialist". This position will focus exclusively on advancing EDI at University Libraries through an embedded model. Target hire before Autumn 2020.

2. Have formal collaboration between the Accessibility Coordinators, the Accessibility work group, the IDEAS Committee and other key stakeholders.

3. Prioritize outreach and support to the existing minority workforce in the organization. Continue to develop the Mary P. Key Resident Program to maximize the professional and leadership opportunities offered to residents.

4. Create a Student Advisory Council that can advise on EDI efforts throughout the library. Prioritize the recruitment of a diverse student workforce that better represents the campus community.

5. Incorporate EDI objectives into new and existing job descriptions and onboarding practices. Establish a strong on-boarding program. Develop re-boarding for current employees.

6. Offer staff and faculty high quality EDI training opportunities.

7. Embed EDI-related awards into awards events at the Libraries, with the IDEAS Committee leading these efforts.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The EDI @ OSUL pilot was an employee led initiative that facilitated equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) conversations for library units and departments using a workshop model. The curriculum and design of the workshop sought to help the organization to transition from discussing values to embedding them in organizational systems with strategic action. The initiative's workshops were led by organizational leaders from different backgrounds (e.g., minorities as well as individuals from majority groups), career levels (e.g., staff and faculty, managers, early-career, tenured/untenured), and library units (e.g., IT, HR, Public Services, Technical Services) with varying levels of expertise and experience in facilitating conversations around EDI.

The workshops were designed to be inclusive, applicable, and accessible to participants with varying levels of cultural fluency. The workshop curriculum also addressed international perspectives of EDI that are often missing from existing LIS research and curriculum.

A primary goal of the EDI @ OSUL workshop was to create a forum where library personnel could mindfully reflect and discuss definitions, practices, gaps, and goals of the organization. Another goal was to convey the message that EDI work can be advanced by all members of a LIS organization and not solely the work of minorities, EDI leaders, or a committee. Data and observations from each workshop were collected and analyzed here to help inform the development of a collective and transformative EDI strategy for the University Libraries.

WORKSHOPS OUTCOMES

The EDI@OSUL pilot initiative ran during the 2018-2019 academic calendar.

7 workshops were provided reaching a total of 114 participants from across 25 units and departments in the organization.

WORKSHOP SESSIONS IN 2019

	Location	# of Participants
FEBUARY 14	Thompson Library	30
FEBRUARY 28	Thompson Library	18
MARCH 6	Libraries Tech Center	14
APRIL 3	Libraries Tech Center	12
MAY 1	18th Avenue Library	15
MAY 7	Thompson Library	17
MAY 15	18th Avenue Library	8

QUICK GLANCE

▲ **7** FACILITATED WORKSHOPS
The workshops were two hours in length and conducted at three library locations. Morning and afternoon workshops were offered to accommodate employee schedules.

▲ **114** PARTICIPANTS Workshops were offered to library departments, working groups, committees, and individual employees on a voluntary basis.

▲ **7** TRAINED FACILITATORS
Each workshop was facilitated by a lead presenter, supporting co-facilitator, and observers who took notes throughout the sessions.

▼ **51** IDEAS COLLECTED
At each workshop the pilot team documented observations and collected qualitative data from participants based on self-assessments and group discussions that emphasize action-driven applications of EDI concepts at the individual, departmental, and organizational level.

WORKSHOP QUESTIONS

Participants addressed the following questions:

1. What does it mean to you to have an inclusive, equitable, and diverse organization?
2. What are ways you can personally advance equity, inclusion, and diversity in your department?
3. What have been University Libraries' biggest challenges in advancing EDI efforts? What are the library's gaps in resources for supporting EDI?
4. What EDI-related programs, activities or training have been successful and have made a positive impact towards EDI organizational goal?

BACKGROUND
Adoption of social justice as a value

In 2017, University Libraries adopted social justice into its strategic plan as one of its new organizational values. The addition of social justice as a value for University Libraries was received by staff with mixed reactions. Some welcomed its inclusion because they recognized libraries as a place where social justice is inherent. Others thought the term confusing or politically charged and struggled to see its relevance in an academic library. Still, others expressed concern about eroding or diluting the true meaning of the phrase. Despite the inclusion of social justice as an organization value, many employees continue to struggle in defining, identifying or assessing EDI (as well as social justice) work in their day-to-day practice. The inclusion of EDI values or the acknowledgement of EDI gaps on their own have not assisted in significantly advancing or enacting these values.

When EDI librarianship work, like social justice, is not explicitly defined, it is left to the subjective and ideological interpretations of individual organizational members. To enable systemic change, it is critical for organization members to agree upon common definitions, organizational focus areas, accompanying training/education, and understanding

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS & FOCUS AREAS

▲ Engage for broader impact: cultural programming and outreach

▲ Invest in people: equity, diversity, and inclusion

▲ Invest in people: workforce development and organizational learning

▲ Model excellence: increase effectiveness to achieve strategic and operational objectives

of how librarianship intersects with EDI. The EDI pilot assists the organization to collect information to inform the development of a collective EDI strategy.

Minority workforce and assessment of EDI programs/initiatives

The EDI @ OSUL pilot also seeks to address the uneven distribution of EDI work among faculty and staff members. Traditional organizational EDI work has been facilitated by internal library advocates from minority communities, self-identified allies with varying level of cultural competency, members of the organization's diversity and inclusion committee[1], or external consultants. The organization's EDI programs have included programs and initiatives such as training in human resource recruitment and retention practices, the Mary P. Key Residency Program, and cultural and outreach programs targeting special populations

Organizational EDI work is completed on a volunteer basis by employees in addition to their professional responsibilities. This work is often disproportionately distributed to or completed by a small minority workforce with limited assessment on its impact on employee's core work duties. To avoid the stigma of a "diversity" label or the detrimental effect of tokenization, other minority employees exclude themselves from participating in

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[1] Now IDEAS Committee

EDI work perceived as shallow, compulsory, or not aligned with their professional roles.

Another challenge, is the evaluation and acknowledgement of all completed EDI work as equal to each other, despite its level of complexity, depth, effectiveness, or impact. The hiring and retention of minority librarians continues to be a challenge. To date, we have lost several library faculty and staff who are recognized as EDI leaders in the LIS profession with limited reflection as to what the organization could have done to keep these employees.

NEW EDI METHODOLOGY

The pilot methodology ran counter to traditional LIS EDI practices and trainings. Below is a summary of the pilot's key approaches:

1. The workshop seeks to address EDI challenges like any other work problem using ideation, planning, follow-through, and assessment. By asking participants to articulate actionable or practical applications of advancing or addressing challenges of EDI in the organization, the importance of approaching EDI advocacy as action is demonstrated.

2. The goal of the initiative is to move the conversation on EDI in the organization from challenges or complaints to actionable solutions, identification of organizational roadblocks, and determine or define organizational priorities. To do so, the project gathers employee feedback on what EDI values will mean in day-to-day organizational practices including EDI ideas that can be accomplished in the existing organizational setting. The data collected and analyzed is intended to create a collective broad framework that will bring the objectives of equality, social cohesion, and social inclusion down to the level of the individual, department, and organization.

3. The project defines EDI work as iterative action developed through the process and practice of cultural humility. The project does not accept ideology, values statement, beliefs or intent as a substitute to or equivalent to EDI action. When evaluated as actions, EDI work quickly reveals its underlying values, explicit or loose definitions, overall purpose, and effectiveness.

4. The workshop presupposes that EDI gaps can be addressed by individuals from minority and majority groups working together. The project stresses that any perspective originating from isolation or a homogenous group can fall victim to groupthink, which may lead to blind spots and inequitable or fragmented decision making, assumptions and poor implementation. The initiative advances the idea that EDI work is best done when different voices are represented to identify, strategize, and act to resolve issues, which includes advocating for the necessary resources, expertise, and people to do the work.

5. The workshop is designed to meet participants where they are and encourage their development as EDI allies through repeated practice and education. Special attention is given to the tone of the session to encourage individuals to contribute their comments, questions, and voices of dissent. The workshop curriculum purposely does not center on white privilege, critical race theory, anti-white supremacy pedagogy, or intersectionality. Despite the prevalence of these approaches in LIS conferences, training, and articles, there is limited objective research addressing their effectiveness on the average LIS employee or how these methods support the practice of cultural humility from a global perspective. As an alternative to these practices, the workshop introduces systems thinking and organizational design that limit services and outreach to diverse communities. The curriculum asks participants to reflect on day-to-day human behavior and default patterns of thinking that may inhibit EDI advancement.

MAJOR THEMES
The following themes were culled based on workshop participant feedback

Building an EDI-Enriched Workplace Culture	Communication and Transparency
EDI Programs and Initiatives	Diverse/Multilingual Collections
EDI in Library Spaces	Connecting EDI to Employees' Work Roles and Practice
Professional Development	Accessibility

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION RISK & CHANGE

- Prioritize solutions (not taking the easy way); be more opened-minded and listen. Do what is right, not what current practice or university policy dictates.
- Prioritize meeting user needs by making the necessary adjustments
- Prioritize removing barriers for employees to start and pursue EDI projects/initiatives. "Historically, the administration has not allowed staff to initiative or advance their own projects/initiatives."

BUILDING AN EDI CULTURE

- A major challenge-bureaucracy and lack of direction
- Promote a culture of safety and trust among diverse staff. Make this a clear directive from the administration. Identify dedicated staff member to conduct workshops and seminars on this topic.
- Discuss work balance and time management practices, as well as expectations for employees
- Encourage connecting with people of different cultures, mitigate communication barriers that may be a result of ESL.

MITIGATING POSITIONAL POWER

- Employees feel the organization has a top-down culture
- Evaluate existing hierarchy dynamic between faculty and staff
- Add a representative from LSAC to Executive Committee
- Share Executive Committee minutes with employees
- Actively include and increase participation of staff in organizational activities and committees
- Explore ways to mitigate hierarchy across the organization.
- Increase transparency and communication between faculty and staff

ADVANCING DIVERSITY THROUGH DIALOGUE

- Encourage collaborative problem solving by encouraging employees to seek out multiple inputs and perspectives when making decisions.
- *Incorporate EDI into meetings and provide EDI training at meetings
- Cultivate processes that nurture a positive attitude towards EDI which can arise organically from within groups of employees, given the right conditions.
- Include or emphasize EDI in the organization's values statements

BUILDING AN EDI-ENRICHED WORKPLACE CULTURE

EDI INITIATIVES AND ACTIONS

- Consider including pronouns in signatures and/or identifying when it is important to use pronouns effectively (i.e. when interviewing candidates).
- Microphone use
- Anonymously collect ideas and suggestions for EDI needs/gaps.

COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

- Prioritize communication ("Communication is not prioritized") [Note: since this data was gathered, an internal communications environmental scan has been completed.]

- Make getting to know colleagues an institutional goal; manager [should] allow space for people to communicate functional information from more inclusive contexts.

- Diminish the challenge of OSU hierarchy (too many people and multiple agendas) by empowering staff to communicate with the goal of implementing change.

COMMUNICATION & TRANSPARENCY

EDI GUIDELINES AND REPORTING

- Create EDI guidelines for programming, research, professional development, communication, and promotion of programs

- Mechanism to report/discuss EDI issues (through a wiki page, internal survey, or as a constant agenda item in general/SAC/FAC meetings). Appoint or identify a mediator to support conflict resolutions.

NEW PROGRAMS

- Create a student advisory board that can select and host EDI speakers. Possibly have the student advisory board overseen by a faculty advisor. Use student diversity to bring changes to institutional thinking.

EDI PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

EXISTING EDI PROGRAMS RECOGNIZED AS VALUABLE

- Expand EDI displays and programs in the library's organization and spaces
- Expanding Vision Foundation high school intern placements and program
- Public programming (i.e. day of the dead)

DIVERSE/ MULTILINGUAL COLLECTIONS

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- Examine existing collection budgets
- Value subject specialist expertise
- Change attitudes about what content is collected and purchased in order to build diverse collections.
- Review and improve collecting and processing of diverse collections

COLLECTION PRESERVATION

- Examine and support and stability of electronic content (especially government and free resources).

WELLNESS ROOMS

- Increase visibility of wellness room in both the main and regional campuses. [Note-Thompson Library will soon have a wellness/meditation space.]
- Expand and adopt a flexible and permissive code of conduct for these rooms.

OFFICE SPACES

- Cultivate opportunities to celebrate cultural holidays and observances in office spaces

OTHER

- *Increase handicap restroom access
- Add lactation rooms

EDI IN LIBRARY SPACES

CONNECTING EDI TO EMPLOYEES' WORK ROLES AND PRACTICE

CONNECTING EDI TO EMPLOYEES' WORK ROLES AND PRACTICE

- Incorporate EDI into new job descriptions and onboarding practices.

- Incorporate into existing job descriptions and consider re-onboarding programs for all employees

- Provide unstructured professional time for staff to attend EDI discussions and programs.

- Provide opportunities for staff to participate in committees and get involved.

STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

- Create a diverse student advisory board to encourage deeper understanding of student perspectives and needs.

REQUESTED TRAINING

- Provide training on accessibility

- Practice responding to EDI incidents. Do activities that help to identify underlying assumption and talk about EDI. Facilitate programs that help employees to share and reflect openly.

- Training or workshops on non-confrontational conversations.

- Safe Zone training

- "Walk a mile in my shoes" training

- Implicit bias training

INCREASE DIVERSITY OF THE ORGANIZATION

- *Hire and retain multicultural and multilingual staff

- Increase and prioritize diversity in student hires-attend job fairs, focus on student organizations, leverage existing student workers' networks.

EQUITABLE PAY

- Pay scale/term positions: Shift from term priorities, compare to other Big Ten schools. With regards to pay conduct a cost of living analysis.

- Improve benefits and pay of staff

EDI DIALOGUES AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

- Incorporate EDI into meetings and provide EDI training at meetings
- What does an ally look like?
- Create more opportunities for EDI discussions
- EDI -How do we get there
- More brown bag presentations on individual experience and identity (culture and personal experiences) [similar to the EDI @ OSUL facilitator's introductions]

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ACCESSIBILITY OF OUR DIGITAL COLLECTION
AND PLATFORMS

- Prioritizing accessibility in our digital collections and platforms

- Create accessibility workflows with clear policies including resources available on campus. Design workflows with an understanding about what University Libraries can meet and accommodate regarding accessible resource requests. Communicate clearly what we can offer.

- Review new and existing digital resources for potential issues related to discoverability and access (ie. SML and Kanopy).

- Appoint or identify an accessibility liaison/expert within University Libraries

AUDIO

- Require microphone use for meeting and group presentations.
- Purchase lavaliers for classrooms and meeting spaces. [Note-A catchbox microphone has been purchase and used in Thompson Library Room 150]
- Make microphone use a requirement. Provide training how to use microphones and why they are important.

ACCESSIBILITY IN LIBRARY SERVICE POINTS AND SPACES

- Assess the accessibility of existing service points and services. Assess physical and online service points including their signage and wayfinding. Consider streamlining service point offerings, policies and overall set-up at different locations.

- Provide appropriate physical spaces and resources to support accessibility

- Increase and prioritize handicap restroom access in library buildings and locations

ACCESSIBILITY

ACKNOLWEDGEMENTS

This report and the project it describes were built by a diverse team from University Libraries, in consultation with over 114 employees. The EDI @ OSUL team included:

WORKSHOP FACILATORS

Stephen Cassidy

Sandra Enimil

Pamela Espinosa de los Monteros

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Elaine Pritchard (Administrative Lead)

Jennifer Vinopal (Executive Advisor)

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Workshop materials can be accessed on the project wiki at:
https://library.osu.edu/portal/confluence/display/libraries/EDI@OSUL

For more information on this initiative see the forthcoming chapter:

Espinosa de los Monteros, Pamela and Sandra Enimil (2020). "Chapter 2: Designing a Collaborative EDI Strategy for Library Staff," In Christopher Bombaro (Eds). *Diversity and Inclusion in Action*. Atlanta, GA: American Library Association.
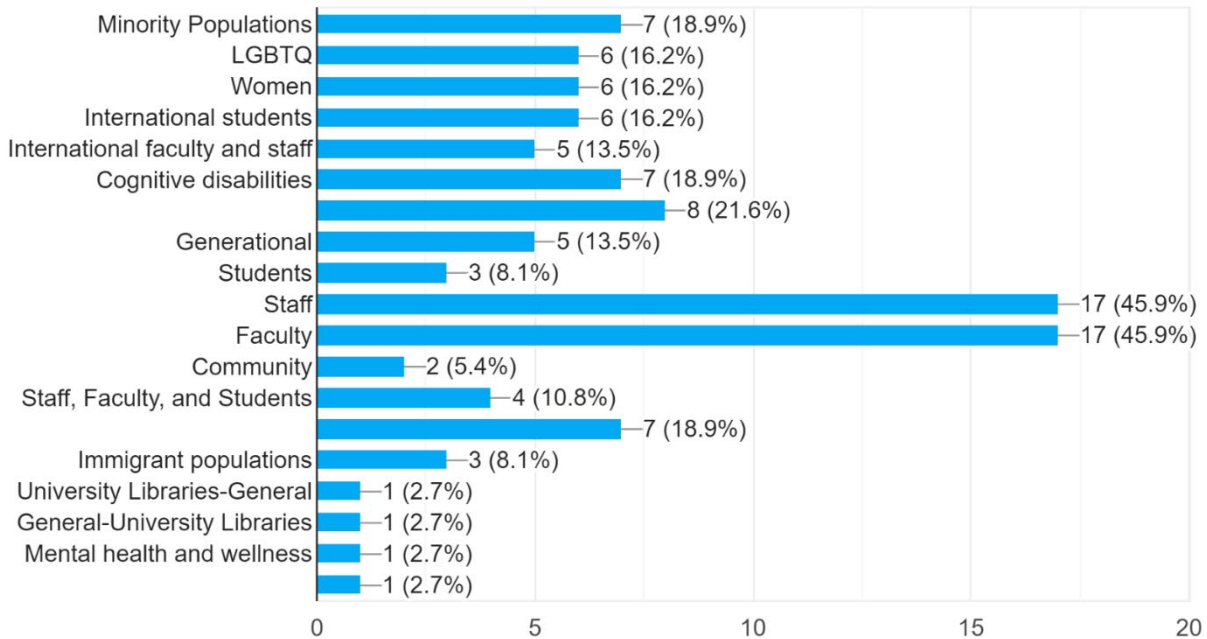
APPENDIX A:

ANALYSIS AND GRAPHS

Participants ideas were collected, transcribed, coded, and analyzed by EDI team members

IDEAS CODED BY AREA
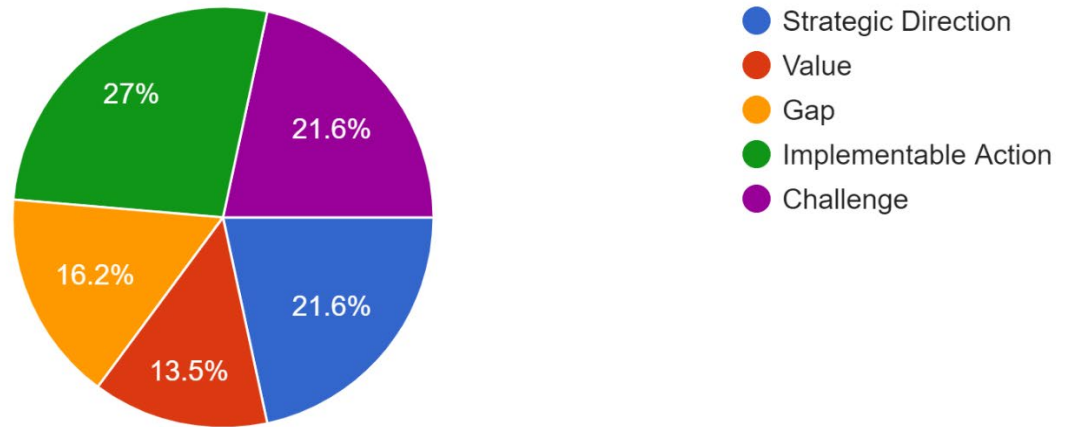
IDEAS CODED BY TARGET POPULATION

APPENDIX B:
QUOTES FOR WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

- "Social justice has been a buzz word since Damon came on board, but I've never really understood what it meant until I saw the cartoon." – February 26, 2019

- "The importance of making small changes that you can control rather than waiting for change to come from above" -March 4, 2019

- "I liked learning about invisible diversity because this is not something I had thought about when thinking about EDI. I think invisible diversity needs to be considered more when people think about EDI." – March 7, 2019

- "I will think about how to integrate EDI into my everyday work." -March 8, 2019

- "Issues surrounding diversity are complex. We talk about assuming positive intent in other aspects of our library culture and need to do it here too - we may not use the right words, but we want to do the right thing." -May 9, 2019

- "Everyone is working within their own reality. We need to be more cognizant of how we do our jobs within that reality. Some things we take for granted are not easy for some portion of the population (like the guy in the wheelchair trying to get a coffee)." – May 9, 2019

- "One of the things that sticks with me is Pamela's point that we can take what we've learned and immediately implement it as we see fit, rather than waiting for policy changes. Policy changes slowly and gradually. Our group's idea of trying to create pathways into MLIS programs for our undergraduates seems like a really practical way to create a more diverse workforce for the future. I'm still thinking about how this might be implemented, but I think it's an excellent idea." – May 8, 2019

- "The general tone of the training was as inclusive as possible, and I think this allowed for much more genuine dialogue than might otherwise have happened. Stephen and Sandra's technique of talking about their own backgrounds at the beginning made the presentation more interesting and more personal." – May 8, 2019