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Educause

Anti-Racism in Academia: A Learning Journey - Act

Monday, November 2, 2020

1:30PM – 2:00PM Eastern

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>> Hello, welcome everyone to the "Anti Racism in Academia: A Learning Journey Act". This month we are going to be focusing on part four of the series which is Act. I see people still coming in. It is a minute after 1:30. My name is Sowmya Shankar. I'm the lead coordinator of part four of this learning journey. We are all thrilled to have you here with us today. So thank you for coming in. I am joined by multiple members of the ARiA coordinator team. I'd like to introduce them real quick. Tina Pappas, Jonathan B. Hardy University of Georgia. Desire white, Tonya Bennet, and Tracey Weber. The team will be helping to monitor and respond to the chat today. I also want to take a moment to pass the appreciation gratitude for the EDUCAUSE team for their continued support and giving us this wonderful platform for hosting the platform each month. This webinar is being recorded and will be available within the next week or so for those of us who couldn't attend today. We would like for you to engage with us during this session via the chat feature. Please feel free to introduce yourself and tell the weather is where you are. It is pretty windy and gusty here. I had a Plan B, C, D and E if my Internet goes down during this webinar. It is sunny. We would like to hear back from you after this session if you have any questions or feedback or comments via email. We also have a Web site that has more detailed information about the ARiA program as well as a wealth of resources that are organized by articles, books, and social media. Feel free to check that out and touch base with us. So I want to talk briefly about ARiA. The team is committed to individuals of antiracist efforts. And so we came out of our comfort zones. Some of us knew each other, some of us didn't. We created a small group within us and we met in early July of this year to kind of come up with an idea for ARiA. We formulated three goals. One to create safe spaces to explore, share, and learn and to have those open and honest conversations about ways. The second goal was to prompt personal and professional growth of the lived experiences of our colleagues. And third was to empower participants in individual such as ourselves to enact those changes and create a more and inclusive and empathetic. We wanted to replicate the experience that we were having as a core ARiA team with a higher ed community in a more structured way. So having identified the core ARiA goals. We moved further to create a program framework that consisted of five parts. Reach out, listen, learn, act, and persists. And each part of the series happens for a month with exception for this month because of the Thanksgiving and holiday break. It is a particular phase in their own learning journey. We took a three prong approach to how we address the framework. First is learn. So individuals are given an opportunity to have more deeper and more meaningful understanding of issues around racism. Typically we cover in our breakout sessions we cover the what, why, or how theme of the month. There are a lot of active learning that happens here and each individual is encouraged to use their critical thinking and analysis to be able to understand and empathize with the experiences of people. The next stage which is the growth stage. Individuals are empowered to feel confident to think about challenging the status quo or any discriminatory practices they have encountered. And finally we encourage individuals to lead so they can navigate those challenges and implement any strategies or takeaways they have learned to create a more inclusive environment. So this slide deck gives a good snapshot of the ARiA program. You are here at the kickoff webinar which is focused on to the higher ed. It is being recorded. This kickoff webinar is to launch the topic of the month and introduce ARiA. However, ahead of time about a month back we have begun the work for Act. We typically engage our volunteer facilitators who are higher ed employees. So we have an orientation meeting with them and they are provided with a resource tool kit. The tool kit consists of a slide deck which coffers the what, why, how of the topic. We also provide them with accessibility, best practices, tips and guidelines for facilitation and, you know on a topic like race. We also give them communication templates so they can engage their attendees ahead of time and get them all the logistical support. The event management, surveys and we give them the survey feedback group so they can incorporate that in their upcoming sessions. So following the kickoff web that which is happening right now, right here. We have breakout sessions which are open to all higher ed employees. They are not recorded. They are guided by a facilitator. So this month, November, is for Act. We began as I mentioned out with reach out, listen, and learn. And reach out began in August. For the purposes of ARiA, right out as we define it is making an intentional effort to respectfully engage in meaningful dialogue with people from different races. Attendees had a chance to discuss and explore about their own personal circumstances in the context of antiracism. Some people may have grown up in very little exposure to diversity. They may have challenges in speaking raise or bringing antiracism to their workplace. Those are some of the discussions points as part of reach out sessions. In September we moved on to listen. And listen is making an intentional effort to give attention to someone with the goal of understanding what is being shared. So listen with the goal of understanding instead of responding to what was being said. And in listen sessions attendees were able to each breakout session is very unique because of the unique perspective that facilitators bring into these sessions. Some facilitators they had like a coming or relaxing team as soon as the breakout sessions started that helps the mind to be more present and opens up to active listening. Some sessions there was we had to listen to spoken poetry and attendees had had a chance to react to that. Last month we moved into learn. Because learn is such a huge topic we decided to focus our attention on four themes which is systemic racism, allyship, and intersectionality. Typically these topics because they are learned you would think they were we made it very discussion oriented and attendees had an opportunity to respond to the discussion sessions and evaluate where they were in their own learning journey. If you wanted more information and if you are not attended any ARiA sessions so far. Please refer to our Web site so aria.uga.edu. You can find each of these sessions listed under it. So by the numbers I wanted to quickly highlight from August until now. We began with nine facilitators and quickly up. Then we had 27 sessions. Act as I mentioned would be happening in two phases. The first in November and the other one after Thanksgiving break. A rough estimate of 139 participants. So now for this month's topic Act. We defined Act to be making an intentional effort to ensure that attitudes, practices, and policies are inclusive and tuned to be more equitable to BIPOC. Intentional because we want to move out of our comfort zones. And attitudes. Action we believe started from individuals realizing their own bias and understanding their influence or maybe enacts so far. Practices. It could be your opportunity, it could be just your team or your, close network of colleagues. So you can think about what practices you can implement within that circle. You may not need to rely so much on institutional support. Last week at the University of Delaware we had an opportunity to interact with Dr. Kendy. In his talk he encouraged us to ask the question, are we upholding the system of racism or are we challenging it? Asking ourselves this question will help us analyze if there is any practices or policies out there that we need to challenge. So inclusion, driving, equity, driving diversity. We have decided to focus on themes for Act. I'll be talking on the upcoming slides. Act themes would focus on inclusion. No so much to diminish diversity. It is only inclusive environments that diverse talent can thrive and be retained. Equity. Ensuring that the voices at the table who feel welcomed and feel like they belong are listened to and argue a fair and equal opportunity to be part of the process that is being changed. So while acting, you may be creating new processes with the feedback from diverse voices at the table. Or you may reassign processes to make them more equitable. Impact versus intent. You may not be in a position to make or have a say in big policy decisions, but small cumulative actions can be very impactful. You could understand and identify your privilege and see how you may be able to use it for the benefit of others by being better and authentic allies. Why is Act important? Many most cases, systems and processes designs by the majority work very well for them. When you are acting to create an equitable design that ensures that these processes work for all. It insures growth and opportunities. It gives us all of us an opportunity to learn and relearn through the lens of those diverse voices that are at the table. There by it shows that we are making progress and improvements to creating a more inclusive environment. So as I mentioned we will be focusing on three Act themes for this month. Inclusive workforce, bias and technology, and inclusive language. Inclusive workforce will be an opportunity for participants to discuss and brainstorm deliberate and thoughtful strategies to ensure policies are inclusive. We are focusing again on three aspects of an inclusive workforce. Bias and technology will provide an opportunity for attendees to consider the impact of technologies we use for supporting our business processes or services to our campus community and look what inherent bias those technologies may be having. For example facial recognition software. For a campus security or testing locations then what bias do they have and how are they being addressed? Has that technology been tested with diverse data sets? Those are points participants will be engaged in. Finally inclusive language. That will provide a learning opportunity to be able to share, explore and share inclusive language. It is language that avoids, phrases, or tunes that discriminate groups of people based on race, gender and other factors. We have started a list. This is the initial list of terms that are discriminatory from what we have found. So what we are hoping through these sessions is that list will grow and it is available for all to look at and see. And so with that, welcome you to join us for Act phase 1 for breakout sessions. You should be able to join by going to the Web site and it should provide the November, December Act schedule. There is a breakout session. The cost is free and opened to all employees and higher ed. Each breakout session is typically 75 90 minutes. Phase one will be happening 11/9 next month up to 11/23. Just sign up for one. That will allow more people to be able to participate in these discussions. We have increased the minimum or the max cap to 6 people plus a facilitator if you are a facilitator and you have 90 minutes. It is still five people. There were a lot of last minute cancellation in learn. We have a total of 23 sessions. There is a wait list available. ARiA is fortunate that we have more than one institution partner with us. In collaboration with ARiA is having an encore event. On November 19th NERCOMP will be having a webinar with Andy, who is President and CEO of CUPA HR. That event is also free and open to all employees and higher ed. You can register by going to aria.uga.edu. So that's all we have. Tina or Jonathan, are there any questions that have popped up in the chat?  
  
>> No questions in chat so far.  
  
>> All right.  
  
>> So I just want to add quickly. There was a really good question. All the times that we show on our Web site and on the event page there is always an eastern time. We have done our best to highlight things. That is the number one observation we have had in the recent month of October for the learn part of ARiA. Folks were canceling because they didn't know. Everything we show is Eastern Time zone. The tools we are using are in the Eastern Time zones. We do have a question actually. We have Lily in the chat if you are still looking for facilitators?  
  
>> We can. The sessions that are left are part two of Act and January's persists. I'm not sure we can Act part two facilitators. We can take request for persists in January. As with event planning as it typically works although persists will be in January we will soon be reaching out to folks in being facilitators. There is a little bit of prep that goes into it. We provide most of the content but we do ask facilitators to go through a one hour or attention. So all that will be happening just next month. So you can go to our Web site and there is connect with us section or get in touch section. There is a contact us form. One of the options in that form is to share your interests for being a facilitator. You will be asked what topic to facilitate for.  
  
>> I saw one more question. In the sign up I see different Act sessions. Do we sign up for one? Yes, just one. Just one breakout session for the month of November for Act phase 1.  
  
>> Great question Eric. We strive to have a great answer in the future for that. How do choose? I think it is just a preference. You might decide you might to deep dive on a topic you learn least about. You may want to hear what people have to say for what is comfortable to you. We are getting the support of associations in various forms and hopeful I able to scale and make it so people don't have to choose one particular theme or one particular topic. I would say go with your topic what you think is most interesting and do know that shortly after the end of each month we go to on to our Web site and do a summary job. It will not be the same as having a small group discussion necessary. We put the key points that were meant to be covered in the breakout sessions up on our web page at the end of the month. Learn just ended and in the next week or so we will have a learn summary page completed. That is another way you can dip your toe in all of the topics while engaging in one of them. We do plan at minimum we want as part five of ARiA states persists we want ARiA to continue on a regular basis. We want to do it at a national scale. We hope to what we do this year with refinement and improvements to do it this year and again after that in addition to any other plans we have and contemplating like take home kits to do this locally or do the national cohort or stay in the same group month after month. We are exploring all those objections. So if you stay engaged and keep in touch you will be able to choose a different topic next time around. Any other questions?  
  
>> Someone is asking request you plain within the technology more specifically?  
  
>> Yeah, so bias and technology is a tough topic for us. We tried to frame it in the context of academia. We tried to cover three broad areas in technology. One was facial recognition software. And you know what set of vendor software products we are using on our campus that have a bias in them. And the other area and technology that we chose was analytics. We have a lot of data. What sort of questions do we ask when we are analyzing those data models? Are those questions how are we tweaking those questions and those models and what bias are we capturing in that. There is also chat box. If you are using slack or other software, how are we using technology to eliminate base and versus like embedded. Those are the things we are trying to cover in bias and technology. It will be an interesting discussion in that topic. I think.  
  
>> We have another question to Joel. The glossary is meant to be a repository. We heard a lot of different groups want something like this. It would be nice to collaborate nationally. We are trying to be the hub for that. We are trying to collect all people and having one space to come up with guide that may be adopted or used. As far as questioning the language, why it might be oppressive? What ways it would be oppressive? That's the conversation that will take place in the breakout session. That is what we hope facilitators come up and move the thoughts in conversation forward. Keith is offering advice. Another way to decide, pick something you know least about. It is an opportunity to grow. Jim, I love what you are saying here. I don't know if there is interest across the country. If you have interest I would say ARiA has interest and we would like to work with you how to take that idea and see if people would explore that further.  
  
>> I'd be happy to work with you in the future. We got a good diversity group here.  
  
>> Great. We will be in touch. Thank you.  
  
>> All right. It is 2:00. So thank you everyone for coming and being part of this discussion. So please join us for the ARiA breakout sessions and we hope to see you all soon. Thank you.