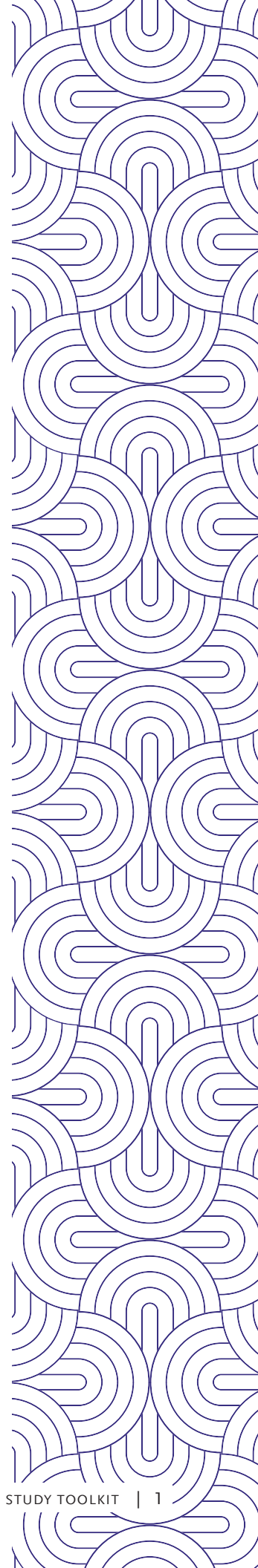


# ADEA CLIMATE STUDY

**2022 CLIMATE STUDY  
COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT**  
*Dental Schools & Allied Dental Education Programs*


*Developed by*  
**NonprofitHR**





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**"It will allow us to gauge perceptions of our efforts to optimize resources across academic institutions. The climate study will also assist us in evaluating the quality of our programming designed to educate future health care professionals to ensure that they are having a direct impact on the communities we serve."**

— Dr. Jeanne Sinkford, Dean Emerita and Professor Emerita of the Howard University College of Dentistry

# OVERVIEW OF ADEA CLIMATE STUDY

## Introduction to the ADEA Climate Study

In August 2021, the **American Dental Education Association** (ADEA) launched its inaugural dental education-wide climate assessment. This climate study is a crucial step to ensure all voices in academic dentistry are heard, and baseline data collected will be used to develop strategic initiatives at the ADEA and campus levels in support of diversity, equity and inclusion for all persons. Consistent with Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) standards, collecting baseline data will allow U.S. and Canadian dental schools and allied dental programs to measure dental education's efforts to foster a humanistic environment and glean insights on the perceptions of students, faculty and staff in areas of well-being, diversity, inclusion and engagement. For the first time in dental education, campuses will be able to self-evaluate through anonymous, comparative and aggregated peer-to-peer data.

This climate study report is the culmination of several years of commitment to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) from leaders within ADEA and throughout dental education in the United States and Canada. This report reflects many individuals and groups who have contributed to this immense data collection, provided guidance and feedback throughout the process and invested in future dentistry leaders and practitioners. This study was funded and commissioned by Karen West, D.M.D., M.P.H., ADEA President and CEO, and the ADEA Board of Directors. Phase II of this project was co-chaired by Sonya G. Smith, Ed.D., J.D., Chief Diversity Officer and Todd V. Ester, D.D.S., M.A., Assistant Dean, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, University of Michigan School of Dentistry.

## Climate Study Conducted by Nonprofit HR

ADEA selected Nonprofit HR to gather and analyze campus climate data and create a combined campus climate survey for its dental schools and allied dental education programs in the United States and Canada.

Nonprofit HR led, designed, conducted and analyzed all climate study-related data, culminating in a report that represents the experiences within U.S. and Canadian dental schools and allied dental education programs, individualized campus-level reports and will facilitate multiple presentations for key stakeholder groups on findings from the study. Nonprofit HR is the creator of this guide.

This report delivered to ADEA President and CEO will explain its methodology, present collected data, furnish insights rooted in research and driven by evidence and provide clear and actionable recommendations to assist ADEA with developing strategies for more inclusive, welcoming, equitable and diverse spaces in support of its member institutions and programs. The campus-level report will provide participating dental schools and allied dental education programs with an understanding of the environment.

This comprehensive study ascertains how faculty, students and staff engage with the campus culture and the degree to which these audiences feel included, safe and valued within that culture. The ADEA member dental schools and allied dental programs are provided data to illustrate the degree to which they are delivering a humanistic, safe and welcoming environment; living up to the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion; and providing a cultural infused-curriculum and culturally competent training.

## Participation Criteria

- CODA-accredited U.S. and Canadian dental schools and allied dental education programs both ADEA members and non-members.
- All full-time and part-time students, faculty and staff at ADEA dental schools and allied dental education programs are eligible to take the climate survey.

## Campus Participation Benefits

Participating U.S. and Canadian dental schools and allied dental education programs received the following benefits by participating in this study:

- No cost associated with participating or receiving a campus-level report;
- For the first time, the opportunity for dental school and allied dental program self-evaluation through anonymous, comparative, aggregated peer-to-peer data;
- Support reporting on CODA humanistic environments, cultural competence and diversity standards;
- Confidential and customized individual reports for participating dental school and allied dental program to assist with strategic planning and programmatic initiatives;
- Development of a synthesized analysis of DEIB perceptions for students, faculty, administrators and staff;
- Identification of perceived gaps and disparities in student, staff and faculty recruitment/retention programming;
- Use of evidence-based data to develop strategic initiatives at the association and campus levels to foster improvement; and
- Baseline data collection for future surveys and on-going monitoring and evaluation of strategic initiatives adopted for improvement.

**“With this data, dental schools and allied dental education programs will gain insights that will help them adopt initiatives to further inclusion, diversity, and create a stronger sense of belonging for everyone.”**

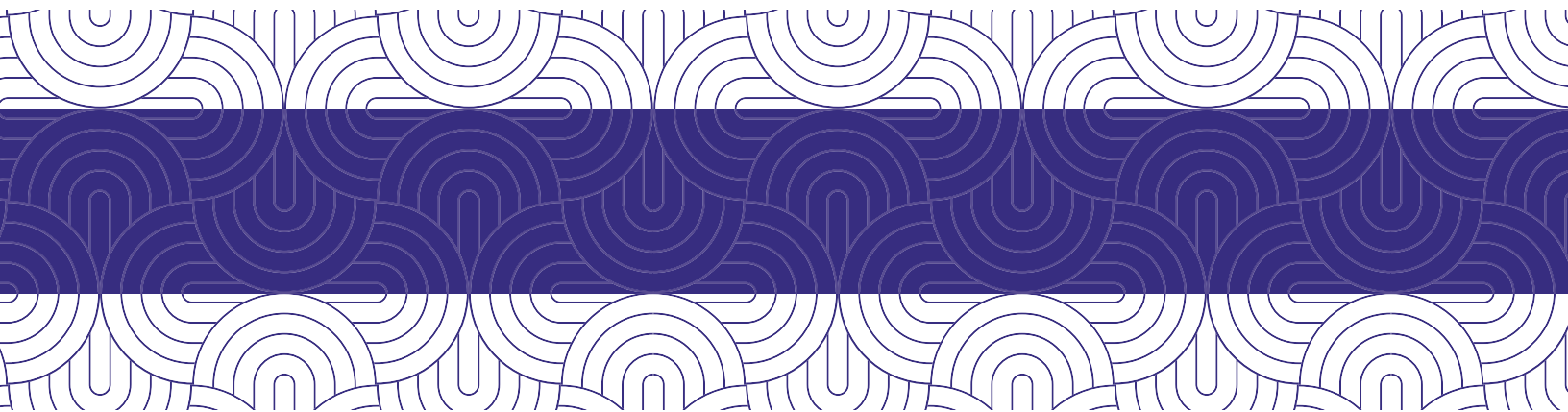
– Dr. Karen P. West, ADEA President and CEO

## GETTING STARTED

Creating a more equitable, diverse, inclusive and humanistic environment within dental education is a process and a long-term commitment. A total of 258 dental schools and allied dental education programs throughout the United States and Canada participated in the inaugural ADEA Climate Study, each in their own setting and location. This accounted for participants that belong to a multitude of social identity groups, internal and external influences that shape the environments, and histories that have culminated in the current environments within dental education. While there are many similarities across dental schools and programs, each is unique. Some schools and programs have invested in advancing DEIB for decades and are examples of success and progress, whereas others are beginning their journey. Whether your school is just starting this work or has been doing it for years, this toolkit provides tools and resources to build momentum. Therefore, and as your school advances its DEIB initiatives, keep these tips for success in mind.

- **Be authentic and intentional:** Your DEIB goals should reflect your campus community. They should reflect the current identities that are represented and the identities that could join your community in the future. Develop intentional and authentic goals and be sure to align them with your organizational values.
- **Be data-driven:** Utilize the climate study findings to drive strategic priorities and outcomes. Use the data to establish buy-in where it doesn't exist and build measurable growth trajectories.
- **Be aspirational:** This is the moment to create substantive and sustainable changes to your culture and to advance DEIB. Be visionary about the environment you want to establish; further the behaviors you want your people to display and the impact your campus wants to have within academic dentistry.
- **Set measurable goals:** Develop realistic, achievable, timely and measurable goals. Consider using a SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timely) goal framework.
- **Align goals with values:** Align your strategic goals with the mission of your program or school. If DEIB is not a current value that goals can be tied to, work toward co-creating with important stakeholder groups a DEIB value that is reflective of your mission and community.
- **Adopt a systems thinking approach:** DEIB initiatives and goals should be integrated into the inner workings of your campus and should not be treated as a checklist. Understand what systems are at work and how those systems are interrelated. Systems thinking means seeing and understanding interrelationships in complex systems, knowing how systems work over time and challenging assumptions about how change occurs. Use systems thinking to better understand the root causes of organizational issues and how they connect to overall operations.
- **Anticipate barriers:** As you develop your goals, brainstorm what internal and external factors could slow down or detour progress. Design a strategy to address those barriers from the start.
- **Understand the historical why:** It is important to understand the historical perspectives that have shaped societies' norms, values, practices and behaviors. Without understanding the historical background of identity-related experiences, you risk causing additional harm to the communities you're trying to serve and support. For example, it is nearly impossible to develop an anti-racist organization without understanding the complexities and impact of racism within society. Understanding what issues your campus has experienced in the past that have shaped members' experiences today is essential.
- **Seek guidance:** Throughout dental education, there have been and remain trailblazers who have advanced DEIB initiatives at the campus level and across dental education. Replicate successful initiatives and tap into the community of change agents advancing DEIB through practice, research, policy and scholarship.
- **Provide and seek grace:** The adage, "Rome wasn't built in a day," also goes for your DEIB efforts. This will be a learning journey for your campus, and mistakes and missteps may be made along the way. Be mindful that your campus can respond to missteps by centering DEIB, which includes transparency, accountability, thoughtful reflections and intentional action.

- **Share accountability:** Without developing strong accountability partners across all stakeholders, DEIB efforts will often fail or lose traction. Competing priorities can often take precedence, especially in fast-paced environments. It is also historically common for DEIB initiatives to be the first area of work to be discontinued when budgets are cut. Having accountable parties engaged in the development and execution of initiatives will ensure this work remains a highly focused area. This accountability group should make sure DEIB is embedded across dental education and that initiatives are being tracked, measured and reported to essential stakeholder groups.
- **Share power:** Historically, organizations and higher education tend to be hierarchical. Finding a balance between different levels of power-sharing can be challenging. Be intentional about understanding the structure within your school/program/campus and adapt strategies that can provide space for students, faculty and staff to invest more substantially in your outcomes. Sharing power can create more equitable outcomes around decision-making, innovation, design, problem-solving and implementing change.
- **Model transparency:** A transparent organization creates and maintains a culture of openness internally at all levels and externally with constituents. Be clear about your results; suppressing results can further perpetuate bias and not highlight the lived experiences on your campus. Being transparent even with challenging results is an opportunity to create change. Be clear about what your campus wants to accomplish, communicate decision-making rationale, provide a clear direction and share what is required to meet your objectives.
- **Address resistance:** Resistance in some form is inevitable. Prepare your leadership, teams and self for the situation. Often resistance can manifest as a threat at the individual, group or societal level. When faced with challenges, it is often easier to fall back into old practices and ways of thinking, being and behaving. However, centering DEIB will require true allyship, at all times, in all situations, and when risks are high. Be prepared to remain firm in your organization's values and reaffirm DEIB as a shared value.



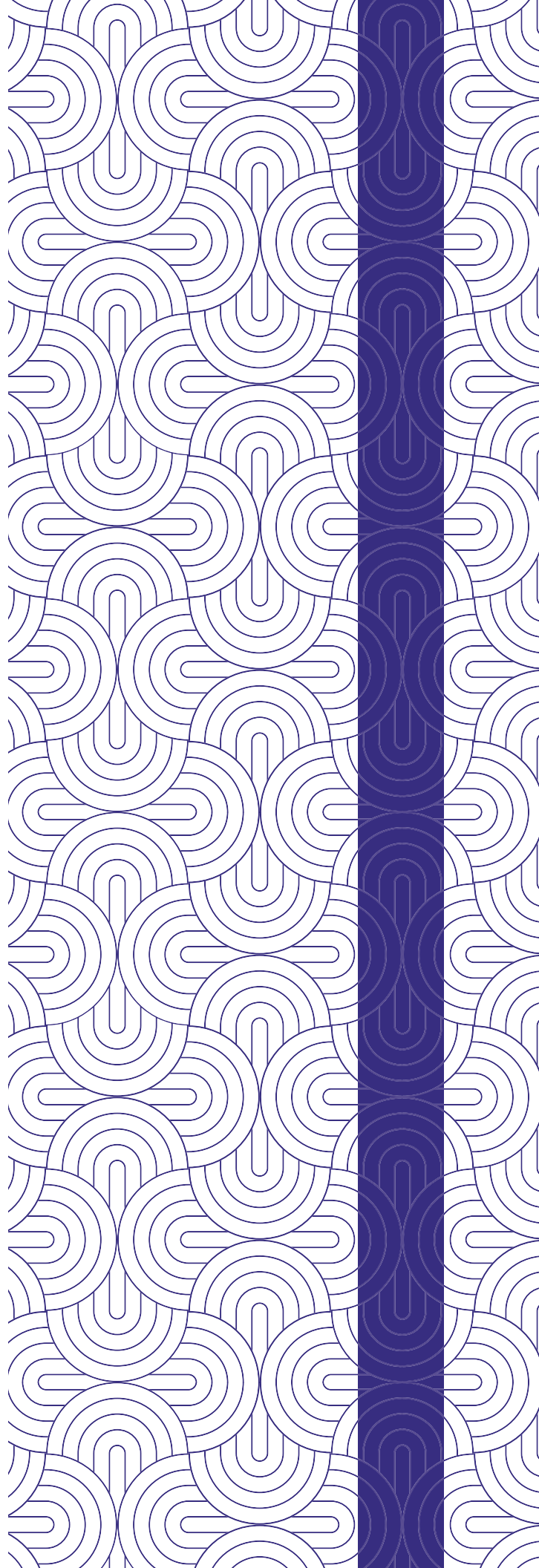


## COMMON TERMS

Below is a list of common terms used throughout this toolkit and ADEA Climate Study Report. The terms provided below were defined and utilized within the ADEA Climate Study. We encourage each dental school and program to use a shared working definition.

- **Administrative** – Performs office or non-manual work directly related to the management or general business operations; salary/fee basis.
- **Anti-harassment/Anti-bullying policy** – A written policy that prohibits acts of harassment. Usually has consequences for violating policy.
- **Authentic self** – Context: Authenticity is the daily practice of letting go of who we think we are supposed to be and embracing who we actually are. This means we are comfortable being our true selves in the education environment through our thoughts, expressions, words and actions.
- **Bias** – Prejudice or attitude toward certain groups.
- **Community** – Other students, faculty and staff.
- **Cultural competence and culturally responsive** – Ability to provide care to patients with diverse backgrounds, values, beliefs and behaviors.
- **Dental school or allied dental education program** – CODA-accredited school/program providing education, certificates or experiences in dental education.
- **Discrimination** – Unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people.
- **Diversity** – Context: Diversity recognizes that each individual is unique with multiple dimensions of diversity that intersect, whether seen or unseen, and that society and community life benefit from the engagement of these differences regardless of culture, values, beliefs, race, ethnicity, language, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, military/veteran status, disability, religion, economic status, geography or other characteristics or ideologies.
- **Equity** – The guarantee of fair treatment, access and opportunity for all, where individuals are not at a disadvantage because of their background, race or social position.
- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) office** – Any office whose designated purpose is to support diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.
- **Executive** – Manages the enterprise, department or subdivision of the enterprise; regularly directs work of other employees; has authority to or makes recommendations as to the hiring, firing, promoting, advancing or other change of status of other employees; salary.
- **Gender non-conforming** – People who do not follow societal ideas or stereotypes about how they should look or act based on the anatomical sex they were assigned at birth.
- **Harassment** – Unwanted, offensive, intimidating conduct that causes harm, or interferes with work or learning.
- **Humanistic environment** – Context: A humanistic environment is one that ensures collaboration, mutual respect, cooperation and harmonious relationships between and among members of the community in support of professionalism, diversity, open communication and scholarship.
- **Inclusion** – Individuals with different identities feeling and/or being valued, leveraged and welcome within a given setting.
- **Inequity** – Injustice/unfairness/inequality.
- **Leadership** – Exec Level Admin: Deans, Asst/Assoc Deans, Director-level, Dept Leads/Chairs or similar.
- **LGBTQ+** – An inclusive term for those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning.
- **Marginalized** – Relegated to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group.
- **Microaggression** – Everyday slights, indignities, put-downs and insults against members of marginalized groups.
- **Professional** – Performs work requiring advanced knowledge; work is predominantly intellectual in character and includes work requiring the consistent exercise of discretion and judgment; advanced knowledge is in a field of science or learning; salary/fee basis.

- **Result of reactions or responses to contemporary societal events** – Examples include COVID-19, MeToo, Black Lives Matter, Stop the AAPI Hate, U.S. Supreme Court holding sexual orientation protected employment class, etc.
- **Sense of belonging** – Whether the individual feels included in the dental school/allied dental program community.
- **Social cohesion** – Refers to the strength of relationships and sense of solidarity among members of a community.
- **Student academic policy** – Grading, progress and promotion and other academic/clinical assessment.
- **Transgender** – People whose gender identity is different from the gender they were assigned at birth.
- **Well-being** – The state of being happy, healthy or prosperous.
- **Whistleblower anti-retaliation policy** – A written policy that prohibits someone to seek revenge after reporting any act of discrimination and/or harassment.



## IDENTIFYING KEY STAKEHOLDERS & NEEDS

As your campus shares findings, establishes committees and workgroups, develops strategy, and creates internal and external communication and marketing, it is important to consider your potential audience(s) and their needs. It is recommended to create a list of stakeholder groups reflective of your U.S. and Canadian dental school or allied dental education program and brainstorm a list of potential barriers, needs and hesitations that may exist. Preemptive planning can help you anticipate questions and create an inclusive and equitable strategy.

### Potential Stakeholder Groups Within Dental Education

- Students (prospective and current)
- Faculty (prospective and current)
- Staff (prospective and current)
- Academic Deans
- Allied Dental Education Program Directors
- Administrators
- Patients
- Caregivers
- Advocates
- Dental Professionals and Alumni
- State and Local Policymakers
- Funders
- Researchers
- Larger Campus Community
- Board of Directors/Regents
- Advisory Boards
- Medical Community
- State Medicaid Agencies
- Health Systems
- Community Organizations
- Underserved communities
- Participating Peer Dental Schools and Allied Dental Education Programs
- Professional Associations and Accreditors

### Guiding Questions and Thought Starters

#### *Who will have access to the campus-level data?*

- Campus-level data findings will only be shared with the dean or allied dental education program director. After the data findings are reviewed, it is recommended that findings are then shared with key stakeholders and action planning begins.

#### *How much data should be shared with key stakeholders and how?*

- It depends on the stakeholder group and what is most relevant to their roles. Transparency is encouraged. Sharing the areas where your campus is excelling should be an opportunity to celebrate the work your campus has done thus far while recognizing that there is still room for improvement. Use the positive findings as an opportunity to recommit your campus to furthering DEIB. When sharing data that showcases areas of opportunity and growth, determine if the data will create additional harm, affirm the experiences of others or create momentum for change. Sharing areas of growth provides your campus the opportunity to reconcile mistakes and experiential challenges while creating new initiatives that will course-correct and drive substantive change.
- Throughout the analysis process, data was suppressed in instances where a low number of participants would jeopardize participant confidentiality and anonymity, making it easier for findings to be shared.
- Several social identity groups were suppressed for each school and program due to small group size ( $n < 10$ ). Disaggregating findings for these groups would have jeopardized participant confidentiality and anonymity.

### *Who decides what data findings are shared?*

- Deans and dental education program directors. It is recommended that senior leaders meet to discuss how, when and what findings are shared with key stakeholders.

### *How should the data findings be presented?*

- Some schools and programs will make the entire report available to their students, faculty, staff and other key stakeholder groups. Others will share high-level key findings via campus-wide convenings, websites, infographics, dashboards and/or executive summaries, etc. It is recommended to host several data findings presentations.
- If data is not shared, the likelihood that students, faculty and staff will participate in future climate studies may diminish. Trust will also be jeopardized as groups begin to speculate about why data is being hidden.

### *What action needs to be taken?*

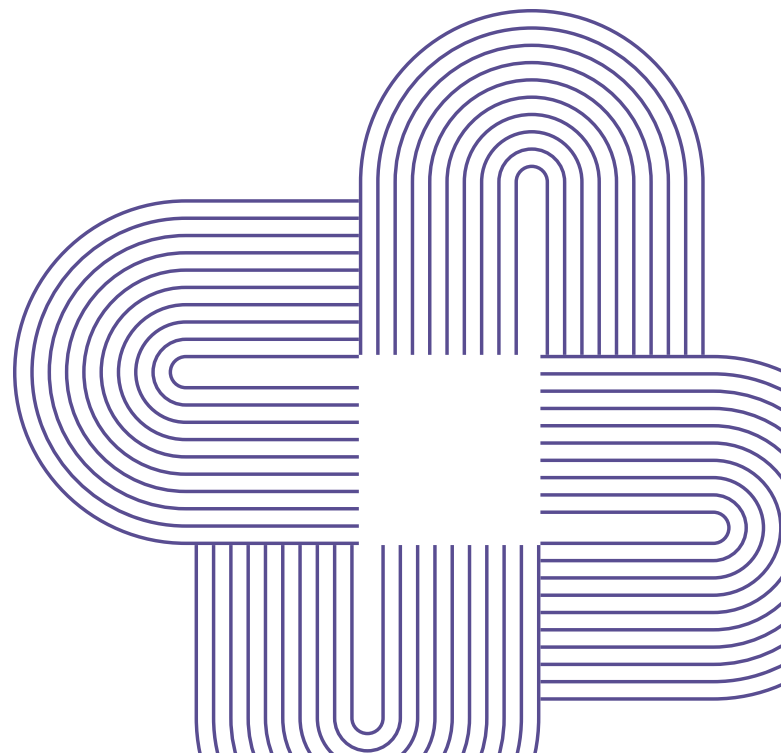
- Use all of the data to drive positive growth and change on your campus and within dental education. ADEA will provide additional resources for those working to build out DEIB initiatives on their campus and across dental education. In the meantime, sharing findings is step one. Step two is assembling a diverse team of students, faculty, staff and administrators who will assist in further analyzing the data findings provided and determining the next steps for action planning. The data may require additional information gathering on your campus, so use the data to develop focus groups, listening sessions or further quantitative research. Step three is developing action plans, measurable goals and tracking progress.

### *What is at stake?*

- Inaction can further perpetuate harm, negate the experiences of community members, exacerbate inequities within your campus environment, policies and procedures, create distrust within identity groups, and lead to a diminished sense of care about DEIB. Long-term impacts can affect recruitment, retention and reputation..

### *Who needs to be involved in making key decisions about DEIB within your school and program?*

- If your dental school or allied dental education program is part of a larger university or system, connect with administrators and departments that focus on DEIB to explore available resources and ensure the work your school/program will develop aligns with overarching DEIB strategies. Representation is important when developing and executing DEIB measures, therefore, ensuring a committee is established across roles and social identities will create a strong foundation. Set expectations and accountability metrics with this committee and be sure to determine a reporting structure, meeting cadence and executive leadership sponsorship. If expertise in DEIB is not represented on the committee, seek guidance from an outside vendor, ADEA, other dental schools and programs, or online resources.



## COMMON CHALLENGES & BARRIERS

Over the last several years, there has been a shift to embrace DEIB data and initiatives. However, there are still societal barriers and operational challenges that could prevent schools and programs from implementing DEIB initiatives. There are also pitfalls to keep in mind as new DEIB programming and structures are implemented. As the climate study findings are shared, it is important to note past and current challenges that are mirrored in and by society.

### Current Societal Challenges

- **Increased pressure to be accountable:** Educational systems have been held responsible for their actions and inactions by their campus community and constituents. There has been an international call to action to address the pervasive historical and structural inequities that have benefited institutions and that continue to impact communities of color within education.
- **The COVID-19 pandemic:** The COVID-19 pandemic has “led to a substantial rise in depression, psychological distress, anxiety, and other mental health illnesses among the general public” (Elharake, 2022). Behavioral and physical health disparities continue to be a rising concern.
- **The lack of representation:** In its current state within dental education, representation across social identity groups such as Black, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities, etc., is lacking. Often schools and programs do not reflect the communities of patients they will serve in practice. Researchers and policymakers have been tracking the racial makeup of the United States and Canada, and, by 2045, this makeup is predicted to shift to majority people of color, which will require campuses to diversify their learning environments to fit a wide variety of needs both inside and outside the classroom and in the health care setting.
- **The deep political division of the United States:** DEIB has been interpreted as a political agenda item in some states. The far right and far left have taken radically different approaches, which have a tremendous impact on educators and the environment they can cultivate. Budget cuts and funding restrictions, board appointments, training and development opportunities, academic freedom and curriculum principles, accreditation, legislation, and the demonizing of marginalized identity groups have created compounding challenges for educational leaders to navigate and solve (Gardner, 2022).
- **Lack of shared responsibility and vision for DEIB:** Effectively ingraining DEIB into a culture requires shared responsibility and accountability at all levels and roles. It can be challenging to successfully embed equity into student success for campuses that do not have the expertise of best practices within faculty and staff, funding availability, or that face challenging workloads, people shortages and competing priorities. For years DEIB, in some instances, has been in the foreground but not centered in all areas of academia, including identity-based theory-to-practice curriculum, recruitment, retention, promotion, and establishing and maintaining equitable support structures.

## Examples of Common Barriers, Challenges and Resistance Within Higher Education

- Lack of direction and ownership with DEIB initiatives
- Need for buy-in from community members
- Lack of partnership and nuanced approach to DEIB
- Lack of funding or budget allocation
- Limited resources and staffing support
- Marginalized students, staff and faculty bringing concerns about DEIB and then, in turn, being asked to lead the DEIB efforts
- Appointing a DEIB officer who has a marginalized identity but does not have the expertise to lead DEIB initiatives
- Asking marginalized staff and faculty to take on the emotional labor of shifting a culture without recognition and support
- DEIB work fatigue because of an unbalanced distribution of workload
- Assuming all marginalized people have the same experiences or lived experience to offer perspective on
- Sharing messages that are not authentic, driven by data or reflective of previous commitment
- Focusing solely on metrics instead of qualitative information
- Neglecting to put action behind written policies
- Denial that experiences of bias exist within the environment
- Negating data or focusing narrowly on specific data points
- Negating experiences that were not trends in the data set
- Prioritizing other initiatives that do not center on DEIB
- Threat to the individual identities of individuals with power
- White supremacy culture
- Temporary allyship
- Lack of accountability or shifting the responsibility to others
- Scapegoating, gaslighting and whitewashing narratives or experiences
- Assuming the environment will be different with a new cohort of students or administrators
- Fear of taking a “political” stance or participating in “culture wars”
- Associating DEIB with a liberal approach or challenge to conservatism within dentistry
- Unaware of implicit biases, assumptions and stereotypes
- Unaware of privilege and marginalized group dynamics
- Educational elitism
- Dualistic patterns of behavior; moving from either/or to both/and thinking
- Not integrating DEIB into continuous training, curriculum, professional development and career advancement
- Disconnect between theory and practice
- Inequitable promotion practices
- Salary inequities
- Maintaining and sustaining power structures that limit access for others/groups
- Lack of reporting structures for biased and discriminatory behaviors and practices
- Being labeled a racist, sexist, etc.
- Afraid of making mistakes, offending others or creating potential conflict
- Unaware of identity-based terminology
- Distrust between leadership and campus groups, social identity groups and roles
- Representation within marginalized identity groups among students, faculty, staff, administration and dental education
- Intergenerational challenges and ways of being, thinking or doing
- Mental health needs and resources
- Fear of retribution or retaliation
- Fear of litigation or decreased morale
- Relying on one-way communication and a lack of feedback loops
- Cynicism that the environment won’t change
- Distrust because of previous inactions or missteps
- Social determinants of health
- Check-the-box approach

## Operational Challenges and Navigating Resistance

After the climate study findings have been distributed, implementation challenges may occur.

Some stakeholders may express a lack of confidence, competing priorities may arise, and misalignment with proposed actions could occur. Others may express resistance to losing something of value, including their choice to participate in future decision-making. While operational challenges are common, moving towards sustaining DEIB change takes action, persistence, patience and time. It is important to provide space to listen to concerns and validate the points of view of students, staff and faculty while continuing to move forward with initiatives. Communicating that these feedback opportunities are integral to the process, as well as information about feedback channels and how to use them, will help streamline that process.

Overall, pushback can lead to less opportunities to utilize data for change and fewer opportunities for inclusion. When we do not actively address pushback, we jeopardize advancing DEI, which can lead to issues of retention, engagement and belonging. Resistance causes delay and inaction, and can stem from a variety of root causes. Blind, political and ideological are three common forms of resistance you may encounter. You may find that some are simply intolerant to change—any change—which is how blind resistance can manifest. Others may express or appear to be mourning over the loss of something, such as opportunities for full self-expression or the way things used to be. Responding with what's being gained long term versus lost short term can counter this type of resistance. Finally, others may express that the plan for change is incorrect or doomed to fail as a result of their deeply held values. Countering with heartfelt messaging that centers empathy can help.

Understanding the basis of resistance can inform your messaging campaign throughout the implementation process. Keep in mind that you will likely need to communicate the same points many times and having a variety of messages to choose from based on the type of resistance can minimize redundancy.

## Tips to Respond and Move Past Resistance to Continue DEIB Momentum

- **Alignment with allied program and school values:** Creating and distributing a written impact or DEIB statement can show a commitment to DEIB that is backed by action. “By attaching diversity efforts to institutional plans and agendas, or changing mission statements to include diversity efforts to institutional plans and agendas or changing mission statements to include diversity as a goal, leaders have the ability to publicly share their values and intentions.” (Kezar, et. al, 2008)
- **Focus on data storytelling:** For many schools and programs, the ADEA Climate Study is the first opportunity to receive insightful data reflective of the experiences at their dental school or allied dental education program. This data can be used to tell a story that highlights growth opportunities and environmental and systematic patterns that can be addressed. Schools and programs can use the data to tell the story they are trying to convey and provide an overview of interventions.
- **Foster empathy:** Much of the data that was reported in the findings focuses on belonging, engagement, and internal and external factors that contribute to your environment. At the core of DEIB work is people and their ability to thrive, show up authentically in the spaces they share, and be recognized and celebrated for their contributions. Stakeholders want to know that they are seen, valued, heard, included, appreciated and respected.
- **Collaborative dialogue:** Gather key stakeholders to have an open dialogue to discuss the root causes of resistance and develop intentional strategies.
- **Intentional communication:** Identify and communicate how DEIB efforts benefit all stakeholder groups, revisit and align to values, and share vision and rationale for a strategic approach.

This 2022 report will serve as a benchmark and be a crucial tool in creating an environment of belonging. When navigating pushback or resistance, it is important to remember that the goal is for all voices in academic dentistry to be heard and valued.

## CREATING BUY-IN

Creating buy-in with colleagues and leadership is important for moving strategic DEIB initiatives forward. While challenges and barriers exist, supporting DEIB initiatives can result in cultivating a more engaging environment, capturing valuable data, fostering innovation in learning and ultimately supporting more psychologically safe and fulfilling experiences for students, faculty and staff.

The data gathered from the climate study will be used to develop targeted, strategic initiatives at the ADEA association and campus levels to foster a more inclusive, safe, organizational values-led, welcoming and humanistic environment for every person. The goal is to create critical DEIB programs.

### Investment in DEIB

Not all organizational leaders fully understand the impact of advancing DEIB on the student, faculty and staff experience. In some instances, creating a business case for DEIB is needed.

Some stakeholders will be motivated by a moral and ethical set of values that ensure members of their community are treated fairly, have access to resources to help them succeed based on their individual needs, experience a sense of belonging and see themselves as contributors. This approach tends to center on equity.

Other stakeholders will have a different vantage point and be driven by business results and return on investments in this work. These stakeholders will be interested in data that showcase how investing in the time, talent and resources will produce better outcomes or performance indicators. Many studies showcase a strong return on investment through employee engagement and higher performing teams, increased productivity, financial success and opportunities, cost reductions and savings, and people retention. For example, an employee with a higher sense of belonging positively correlates with higher levels of engagement, potentially leading to higher productivity, innovation, collaboration and organizational commitment. Ultimately, one of the main goals of dental education is to invest in the future of the dental profession through its people. Being in a people-centric profession allows people to remain at the core of the experience. Investment in DEIB will achieve tremendous success within academic dentistry and result in a more holistic, patient-centered approach to

care. Similar research exists that showcases the impact DEIB initiatives can have on the student learning environment, skill development, connection to their field of study, and levels of engagement, belonging and inclusion.

### Outcomes of an Investment in DEIB

- **Demonstrated relevancy:** Appeal to the expectations of emerging generational cohorts and in general, shifting expectations of stakeholders who expect schools to center their lived experiences.
- **An uptick in innovation:** Different perspectives from varying backgrounds can lead to more ideas, expanded creativity and engagement.
- **More data for analysis and benchmarking:** Understanding DEIB patterns and trends can help inform business decisions and ultimately lead to more opportunities to measure success.
- **Greater financial returns:** Higher revenues are often positively correlated with companies with diverse leadership and staff. Teams with greater measures across the varied dimensions of diversity can contribute to more significant outcomes.
- **Optimal organizational and team performance:** Teams can solve more complex challenges and operate with higher productivity rates.

**DEI work is not only a commitment but a journey, and the best step in the journey is the first step. From there, you have to be willing to continue to walk the path, and be open to what will be shared with you as well, as once people know that this is the journey that you are on, you will have committed people in-house that will be willing to do some of the work for you and with you."**

– Bryan Jackson, *Aligning Your Organization's DEI Strategy & Priorities with Your Executive and Professional Searches*



**“DEI work begins by stepping back and looking at your organization’s strategy and priorities and understanding how a DEI initiative or effort can not only enhance your workforce, but help drive for greater impact for the communities you serve. Real, lasting impact can come when DEI is viewed through that lens, as it becomes part of your business strategy, operational strategy and programmatic strategy.”**

– Lisa Brown Alexander, REALITIES: Race and Diversity Practice in Nonprofits Webinar, 2020.

- **Student and staff retention:** Diverse organizations that have higher levels of retention avoid the financial and institutional knowledge cost of employee turnover.

### **Actions Toward Creating Buy-In for Leadership and Staff**

When looking to engage support for DEIB efforts, using the PATH Model (Partner with people, Ask questions, Trust lived experiences, Hold leadership accountable) developed by Dr. Rachael Forester can assist in starting conversations about meaningful actions.

1. **Partner with people:** Before starting any DEIB initiatives, it is important to identify the key stakeholders and those with decision-making power. As a leader, partnering up with the most passionate DEIB champions is important. “Communication experts on campus are essential partners in developing and consistently disseminating the DEI value proposition and addressing questions about why work on DEI is a focus of activity. Confirm the structure of your campus communications staff members and work with those in leadership roles to develop your plans” (University of Minnesota).
2. **Ask questions:** For each program, start asking, “Who is not in the room when important decisions are being made?” Also, consider asking questions to determine

the gaps in DEIB knowledge and consider that various leaders may be at different “readiness” stages.

3. **Trust lived experiences:** Which lived experiences are centered as “normal” of the “in-group” and which experiences are part of the “out-group”? Conducting initial focus groups can help prioritize DEIB initiatives. Examining qualitative data from the climate study and providing space to discuss solutions is a powerful, actionable way to gain buy-in from leadership.
4. **Hold leadership accountable:** One of the most critical aspects of an engaged DEIB journey is accountability. DEIB should not be a topic that is only discussed for 10 minutes in a quarterly check-in. Instead, DEIB initiatives should be woven into every program, and it is the leadership’s responsibility to keep this at the forefront of organizational objectives. One way to ensure that leadership stays accountable is to have each faculty or staff member own and report on parts of the strategic DEIB plan. This helps leadership take ownership of each part of the plan and ensures that the whole plan does not fall solely on the efforts of a DEIB committee or one singular leader. Power sharing and collective ownership are essential to make DEIB efforts sustainable.

## INTERPRETING & MAKING MEANING OF RESULTS

Overarching considerations to be mindful of when reviewing your campus-level data set:

- All sections of the campus-level report will start with key findings that present some analysis of your data, followed by item-level data to support the findings. Key findings are highlighted in Chapter 2 and all subsequent chapters will provide more detailed information and findings.
- We highly recommended that you review each data point and analyze your data set. Use this report to determine your own findings and develop strategic and measurable outcomes to advance DEIB at your campus.
- Utilize the tips and discussion questions within the report as a guide for making meaning of and analyzing the data.
- The results within this report should be used:
  - to identify current strengths and opportunities for growth in your school/program climate,
  - to inform next steps in pursuing growth and
  - to inform future survey efforts.
- The results within this report should NOT be used:
  - to compare programs or schools against one another,
  - for retaliation against participants reporting negative experiences or
  - to target groups and/or participants in any way based on their response rate or responses.
- For some campuses, several social identity groups were suppressed for each school and program due to small group size ( $n < 10$ ).
- At some campuses, a substantial portion of participants in many of the schools and programs chose not to specify one or more of their social identities (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability status).
- Two widespread issues that emerged across participating dental schools and allied dental education programs were an underrepresentation of social identity groups and a disproportionately large group of participants who did not identify one or more social identities, possibly out of fear of compromised confidentiality and consequent retaliation.
- Given the substantially large Did not Identify groups in the data for many schools and programs, these groups may primarily include participants from marginalized, underrepresented and underserved social identities that are otherwise suppressed in this report. Results from the Did not Identify groups are particularly important. If results for these groups are more negative than for the overall sample, results will support the hypothesis that participants are afraid of retaliation for reporting negative experiences.
- Some of the data shared in the report may require an additional inquiry to better understand the finding. Dental education leadership should be mindful to avoid inquiry that leads to historically marginalized community members needing to solve for or fix the environment. This is an unfair approach that often occurs within an organizational setting. An additional inquiry may be necessary but, in many instances, reviewing well-established resources that center DEIB is an option with similar outcomes.
- Recognize that your campus is not alone. While some findings may be less than ideal, there is an opportunity to create substantial positive change and growth that will have a lasting impact on your current and future community members. Network with your peers and seek advice from campuses that may be further along in their DEIB journey.
- Peer groupings were developed to provide additional context for how dental schools and allied dental education programs similar to yours responded to the data point. Recognize that each school and program are unique and may operate similarly but exists within different environments with different identities and personalities present.
- As you prepare to develop a process and platform to share your campus-level results with key stakeholders, utilize this toolkit as a guide.

## Understanding Your Campus Climate

Start by reviewing who participated in the study at your campus.

- Did most of our students, faculty and staff participate in the climate study survey?
  - If yes, does the sample size accurately reflect your community?
  - If no, what are some of the barriers that prohibited participation?
    - What caused some roles or social identity groups to participate and others not?
      - Is there a fear of retaliation or was the survey not executed in a way that would encourage and bolster participation?
    - Does this sample size reflect our campus community?
    - Without making assumptions, what roles or social identity groups had lower participation at my campus and does the data provide an understanding of why?
- Are there any roles and/or social identities you wish were better represented?
- How can you increase access to the survey in future years?
- What resources exist on your campus that could help provide more information about the experiences of individuals from roles and social identities underrepresented in your report?

Each result or finding in this report is a summary of individual experiences of your dental school or allied dental education program climate. As a leader within dental education reviewing the findings presented in this report, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is this result what I want for my school or program? Is this how I want my dental school or allied dental education program climate to be experienced?
2. Would I want my dental school or allied dental education program to be known for this result?
3. Would I want potential students, faculty, staff and administrators to hear this result from a current dental school or allied dental education program community member?
4. If the answers to 1, 2 or 3 are “yes,” what infrastructure, resources, people, values and practices/procedures in my dental school or allied dental education program may contribute to this aspect of our climate? If I’m not sure, how could I find out?
5. If the answers to 1, 2 or 3 are “no,” what infrastructure, resources, people, values and practices/procedures in my school/program are missing, are susceptible to bias or are supportive of bias? If I’m not sure, how could I find out?
6. If the answers to 1, 2 or 3 are “no,” are there any social identities present in this data that need better representation in decision-making processes and/or stakeholder groups in your dental school or allied dental education program?
7. Do I need more information about resources, practices, values and lived experiences in my school or program? How do I collect this information without targeting or burdening school/program members with specific social identities?

### *General Questions:*

- What is the ideal response you hoped to see from survey participants?
- What is the lowest acceptable response you hoped to see?
- What is the most common response members actually gave? How does this compare to the ideal vs. acceptable responses you thought of?
- Which roles and social identities have the largest percentage selected strongly disagree, disagree and neither agree nor disagree?
- Where do I want my dental school or allied dental education program to fall relative to our peers in dental education?
- What groups are experiencing your environment differently?
- What kind of action plan could you create based on these findings?

### **Develop a Dashboard or Summary of Findings:**

After reviewing the data set, determine which key findings are most important for your stakeholders to access, understand, validate and use to collectively create meaningful change at your campus. Utilize the key findings section and your own data analysis to develop a sharable document if you choose not to share the campus-level report in its entirety. We recommend sharing high-level findings across all areas assessed in the report (Overall Satisfaction, Well Being, Sense of Belonging, Welcomeness, Bias and Discrimination, etc.).

Once you have developed your tailored recommendations, developed goals and set your strategy, use the data as a benchmarking tool to monitor your progress.

### **Communicating Challenging or Negative Findings**

For many campuses, there will be a need to share areas where your campus is underperforming or has opportunities for growth and transformative change. Do not be afraid of your results! Appreciate both the positive and negative results for what they are – a reflection of experiences, not people.

1. Thank your survey participants (stakeholders) for participating in the survey and providing their honest feedback on their experience. Feedback and results should never be used to threaten or make participants feel poorly about an outcome.
2. Focus on the data findings, not people. Seek to understand.
3. As discussed throughout this toolkit, transparency is key. Being transparent around challenging results can reaffirm your commitment to change, validate and recognize the experiences of campus members, acknowledge growth opportunities and potential, and at times, course correct inconsistent behaviors that are not aligning with organizational values and mission.
4. Provide space for stakeholders to process the information shared and an opportunity to share their reactions. Initiate a dialogue by asking open-ended questions. Remain objective throughout the dialogue. Do not debate who is right and who is wrong; all experiences are valid as members of your community.
5. Share next steps. Invite stakeholders to be part of a collaborative process to shift your culture by co-creating and implementing strategies and goals.
6. Revisit progress and follow up on unresolved issues presented.
7. Thank your stakeholders for being an active part of creating a more inclusive, diverse, equitable and humanistic environment within dental education.

# OPPORTUNITIES TO UTILIZE DATA FINDINGS

## How to Strategically Engage in DEIB Initiatives

- Attract, equip and graduate diverse pools of students
- Further advance academic dentistry
- Develop strategic and measurable goals
- Embed DEIB into programs, curriculum, services and environment
- Build upon current DEIB initiatives
- Gain CODA accreditation
- Enhance patient care
- Recruit, promote and retain staff and faculty
- Understand identity-based trends within dental education
- Become leaders within the medical DEIB space
- Attract more people into dentistry professions
- Implement pathway programs
- Invest in a people-centered approach to development
- Institutionalize DEIB competencies
- Provide training and professional development
- Cultivate intentional partnerships with other agencies and community organizations
- Enforce DEIB best practices in clinical care

## Further Exploration of Findings

The ADEA Climate Study findings are a great tool to use for benchmarking performance and experiences within dental education. The campus-level reports were designed to provide in-depth information while maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. The report may have left you with additional questions that will require further exploration that you will be equipped and empowered to initiate. Use the report findings to host additional focus groups or listening tours to learn more about the experiences within your academic and professional environment. In some instances, conduct further quantitative inquiry to gain new insights. The additional inquiry should not be a way to identify responses from ADEA Climate Survey participants. Note, where sample sizes were too small to report findings, it is recommended that the dental education-wide report is reviewed for trend data that may align with your school or program.

## ADEA Resources

ADEA has committed to helping dental schools and allied dental education programs advance DEIB at the campus-level and within dental education. Additional resources can be accessed at [adea.org](http://adea.org) and will be announced in fall of 2022.

## SAMPLE COMMUNICATION PLAN AND MESSAGING

The findings of the ADEA Climate Study can be communicated through email, internal messaging systems and social media. It will be helpful to understand, discuss and agree on a plan to share campus-level findings before sharing out any action plans or roadmaps, it can be helpful to share your campus-level findings. Transparency around DEIB data is key, and sharing the findings of the climate study will help further establish trust.

Once the appropriate stakeholders have decided upon the DEIB roadmap or action plan, it is important to keep the most marginalized individuals in mind before sharing action steps. Framework for advancing equity in medicine + science: "It is imperative to approach DEI action plans by first considering the numerous ways in which people can be marginalized, the unique barriers confronting different groups, and how the intersection of identities can put some communities or individuals at greater disadvantage." (Spencer, 2021)

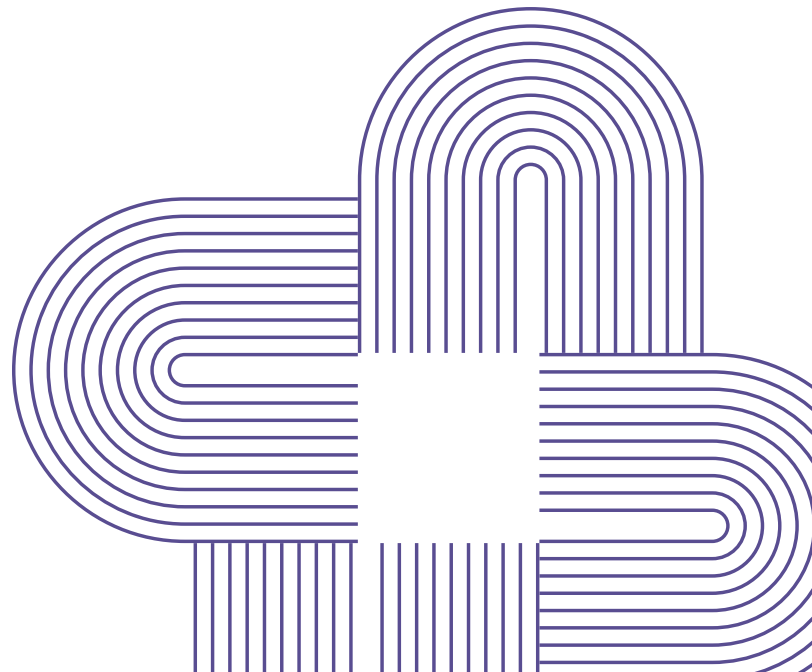
Developing an internal and external communication plan is a solid investment and can ensure your campus remains actively committed to advancing DEIB. Some of the largest organizations have created dashboards and online landing websites dedicated to conveying DEIB data points and internal and external action points for moving forward.

When sharing statements or information with key stakeholders, be mindful of the story your campus is wanting to share, who the message is coming from and what identity groups are being impacted. It is at times helpful to provide historical narratives and facts that led to this moment, a reflection on the current environment, what is being planned, how it will be achieved and the projected timeline. This is also a time to highlight the work that is being done and elevate the voices of students, faculty and staff who are leading the efforts. It is also advised that all messaging being shared is edited for accuracy, clarification and sensitivity.

One way to ensure momentum on implementation continues is planning and providing frequent updates to key stakeholders about the progress being made. Include in your updates any challenges that have been uncovered throughout the process. Provide additional programming opportunities to advance DEIB related skills, knowledge and awareness for students, faculty and staff. During these sessions, dedicate a portion to providing progress updates. Another opportunity is to host a panel discussion of findings, utilizing a town hall approach to engage participants.

### Reflection Questions Before Sending Out Campaign Communication

1. Who are the key stakeholders or audience?
2. What are the goals of the communication?
3. What actions do we hope our audience will take?
4. How can we customize communication to ensure the needs of different social identity groups are included?
5. How can we engage staff, students and faculty to be excited about being part of the process?
6. What type of commitment do we need from participants?
7. What type of visual presentations and collateral need to be developed?
8. What is the review and editing process for the communication distributed?



Below are customizable templates that can be used to aid in your communication efforts.

## **PRESENTATION OF ADEA CLIMATE STUDY CAMPUS-LEVEL FINDINGS**

**Subject line:** 2022 DEIB ADEA Climate Study Findings at [program/school name]

Greetings \_\_\_\_\_,

We would like to invite you to a presentation of findings on [date] from [time] at [location].

You are receiving this invitation because in early 2022, our [dental school or allied dental education program] participated in the inaugural American Dental Education Association (ADEA) 2022 Climate Study.

ADEA commissioned a dental education-wide climate assessment survey to collect baseline data on diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) at U.S. and Canadian dental schools and allied dental education programs. This inaugural climate assessment was a crucial step in assisting academic dentistry in fostering a more humanistic environment and in measuring the perceptions of students, faculty, staff and administrators regarding DEIB.

You may recall participating in the survey or focus groups last spring. For those of you who were present to participate, thank you. Your participation is appreciated and part of this climate study within U.S. and Canadian dental schools and allied dental education programs and our campus-level report findings. Each participating dental school and allied dental education program that had 10 or more participants received a report with localized findings. Participants were anonymously surveyed about belonging, discrimination, inclusion and equity within dental education. Students, faculty, staff and administrators also provided insights on their experiences.

### **About the Presentation**

During this presentation, we will highlight the findings reflective of our [program/school] and invite you to share your reflections and reactions to the results. We will also discuss next steps for how we will advance DEIB within our dental educational programs and services. We encourage the next steps of our strategic planning and execution of deliverables to be collaborative, so we hope you will provide feedback and actively participate.

Thank you for being a valued member of this community and for your past and ongoing commitment to DEIB efforts at [program/school name]. We look forward to advancing our future DEIB initiatives, together.

Sincerely,

[name]

*Additional Inquiry*

Subject line: Advancing DEIB at [program/school name]

Dear Students, Faculty and Staff,

As a follow up to our presentation of the 2022 ADEA Climate Study findings at [program/school name], we invite you to join our leadership team for a [roundtable discussion/focus group/listening session] to further explore [insert topic]. We will use this session to gather additional information needed to define our next steps and DEIB strategic planning process. Your participation and feedback will help shape the future of our academic dentistry programs and services.

Please join us on [date] from [time] at [location].

The benchmark data we received from the climate study provided a starting point and understanding of our environment. Next, we will use the data, coupled with your feedback and active participation, to shape future steps to create a more humanistic environment.

Regards,

[name]

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*DEIB Committee*

Subject Line: Join our DEIB Committee

Dear Students, Faculty and Staff,

Thank you to all who participated in our [roundtable discussion/focus group/listening session] on [date]. Some of the highlights shared from this gathering include:

- [highlight]
- [highlight]
- [highlight]

As we begin the strategy development phase of our commitment to advancing DEIB, I invite you to join our DEIB Committee. This committee will serve as a workgroup that will help develop, advance and execute our DEIB-related goals. This group will ensure we maintain steady progress and serve as an accountability partner to our [program/school] and leadership.

To join this committee, [insert instructions/selection process, etc.]. Committee member duties will include [list duties and time commitment]. Our goal is to have a group that is reflective of the social identities and roles that represent our [program/school] and ensure all voices are reflective in the next phase of our work.

Any questions can be directed to: [insert contact details]

Thank you,

[name]



## ADEA RESOURCES

[ADEA Checklist to Promote Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#)

[ADEA Faculty Diversity Toolkit](#)

[ADEA Report - Slow to Change: HURE Groups in Dental Education](#)

## CITATIONS & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

14 Tips For Implementing DEI Initiatives That Actually Succeed.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2021/09/08/14-tips-for-implementing-dei-initiatives-that-actually-succeed/?sh=1b917c024088>

DEI Efforts: How to Deal With Pushback and Obstacles. Gartner Inc.

<https://www.gartner.com/en/articles/how-to-navigate-pushback-to-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-efforts>

DEI Pitfalls: <https://www.diverseeducation.com/opinion/article/15109470/common-dei-pitfalls>

Kezar, Adrianna; Eckel, Peter; Contreras-McGavin, Melissa; Quaye, Stephen John. *Higher Education: The International Journal of Higher Education and Educational Planning*, 55(1) 69-65. Jan 2008

McKinsey – Diversity Wins Report: <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/featured%20insights/diversity%20and%20inclusion/diversity%20wins%20how%20inclusion%20matters/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters-vf.pdf>

Spencer, S., Burrows, C., Lacher, S. E., Macheledt, K. C., Berge, J. M., & Ghebre, R. G. (2021). Framework for advancing equity in academic medicine and science: Perspectives from early career female faculty during the covid-19 pandemic. *Preventive Medicine Reports*, 24, 101576. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2021.101576>

Tools for Communicating About Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

<https://university-relations.umn.edu/resources/tools-communicating-about-diversity-equity-and-inclusion>

