![Office of Diversity & Inclusion - University of Nebraska-Lincoln]

UNL presents A CEO Action Event: Fostering Belonging

On April 28ᵗʰ, 2022, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion participated in the CEO Action Day of Understanding by hosting Chancellor Ronnie Green, Dr. Michael Slepian (Columbia University), and Dr. Sarah Singletary Walker (Creighton University) for a conversation about fostering belonging. This conversation was followed by a discussion with Vice Chancellor Marco Barker wherein participants aimed to answer two questions: *how do you see inclusion and belonging connected?* and *how do you foster greater inclusion and belonging?*

How do you see Inclusion + belonging connected?

Participants identified several connections between inclusion and belonging which reflect key differences between the concepts. Although we may make efforts to include diverse identities in our workspaces, those individuals may not feel a sense of belonging. Some participant responses include:

- *Inclusion as the action then belonging as the outcome feeling.*

- *Lots of different kinds of diversity that we need to be sure to acknowledge*

- *Both inclusion and belonging are extremely important.*

- *We cannot have belonging without inclusion but how you get there is different for everyone.*

- *Inviting people to the table versus including them from their own perspective.*

- *We can make efforts to include others, but their belonging comes from their own perspective.*

- *Inclusion is what we do from our perspective to make people feel a sense of belonging. Belonging is how those inclusive practices feed their soul and their sense of homeplace.*

- *Inclusion is the idea and belonging is the action of having the opportunity to participate in sharing your voice.*

- *Inclusion can be promoted in a strategic plan and the opportunity for belonging can still be denied.*

- *Inclusion means that what a person feels is important to them, that is important to me.*

- *People do not leave because they are not included, they leave because they do not feel like they belong.*
- *We need to create an environment where belonging is possible, and inclusion is a piece of that.*
- *Being invited is different from having your ideas taken seriously, your expertise taken seriously, your experience taken seriously.*
- *What if we welcome people, but we do not know the next steps?*
- *Article shared, [Language of Appeasement by Dafina-Lazarus Stewart](#)// March 30, 2017*
- *Examples of the being "included' only as representative are our current processes for search committees and the burden placed on the interpretation of needing minority representation. There is a feeling of being a token versus truly belonging and having agency.*
- *How do we create a culture that is inclusive while also bringing belonging to address this?*
- *To take on the work*
- *For those that are able to change policy, address this within the system to create change.*
- *We spoke about the use of cultural/racial group identity recognition weeks/months and how though it may foster recognition of underrepresented groups in the workplace, it may also further create a silo effect and tokensim without actually creating inclusion.*

How do you foster greater Inclusion and belonging?

Participants offered a number of strategies to promote inclusion and belonging that implicate the personal, interpersonal, group, and policy, and ideological levels of our institutions. What is clear is that participants highlight that fostering inclusion and belonging takes intentional work. Some participant responses include:

− *Crucial conversation training.*

− *Addressing/call out 'bad' behavior, but respectfully.*

− *Working on getting past silos, mistrust, get more communication and understanding.*

− *Need communication and transparency.*

− *Sometimes hard to call out the insidious behavior, very subtle.*

− *Matter of Intent- language, body language.*

− *We change our systemic processes to not single individuals out, which often leads marginalized or historically underrepresented individuals feeling fatigued.*

− *We should think about what language we use to request historically underrepresented persons to serve on committees. Are we using language that tokenizes their participation? Or are we using language that truly values their perspective*

− *Mentoring junior faculty, graduate students, and new team members on how to say no, how to protect their time, and offer them spaces where they feel safe to talk.*

− *Using language that signals that this is "our" responsibility, not "their" responsibility.*

− *Inclusion and belonging are up to all of us, including those from dominant groups.*

− *Asking those from dominant identity groups to serve on DEI committees.*

− *Every interaction matters.*

− *Do not make individualistic assumptions.*

− *Do not base policies on only your personal past experiences.*

− *Modeling vulnerability, curiosity, self-reflection, and consideration of ways to improve inclusion and belonging.*

− *Relationships matter. Need to know colleagues better.*