

ASEE CDEI 2019-2020 Performance Report

Commission Name: Commission on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Commission Chair: Susan Walden

Commission Members: Rebecca Bates, Elizabeth Litzler, Alice Squires, Emily Allen, Raquel Tamez, Trina Fletcher, Daryl Chubin, Tasha Zephirin, Rochelle Williams, Meagan Pollock, Rachelle Reisberg, and ex-officio members Rocio Chavela, P.K. Imbrie, Gary Steffen, Malinda Zarske, and Ray Phillips

Commission Objectives:

In April 2020, CDEI became the Commission on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. While its objectives remained the same—1. increase visibility and discussion of DEI issues; 2. develop guidance to foster inclusive environments in which all engineers thrive; 3. facilitate and encourage adaptation of strategies to promote the empowerment of all—the context for execution changed drastically, yet in ways that have not been fully realized.

As impacts of COVID-19 rolled across the U.S., the work of CDEI's seven committees (heretofore subcommittees) was slowed considerably as chairs and members scrambled to balance new roles and requirements of their jobs, families, and self-care with the pursuit of voluntary committee activities. The uncertainty continues, and CDEI, like other parts of ASEE, is exploring ways of fulfilling the promises in its mission and objectives.

Specific new objectives for the 2019-20 year articulated during our Annual Committee Meeting in Tampa, June 2019, included (with responsible /sub/committee(s)):

- 1) complete the ASEE & SEFI Joint Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Statement (joint statement task force);
- 2) continue to develop content for our new DEI Committee/Commission website (communications and professional development);
- 3) develop and receive approval for a new Strategic Framework that could have a longer life-cycle than previous three-year plans (strategic planning & assessment and chairs);
- 4) launch a blog for periodic posts about CDEI's and community members' work (communications);
- 5) launch a virtual workshop series to provide community education outside of the Annual Conference engagement (professional development);
- 6) secure approval for the ASEE Constituent Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Award and make the inaugural award in 2020 to celebrate five years since the Year of Action on Diversity (awards); and,

- 7) identify and engage key partnerships with other equity-serving organizations to amplify efforts and accelerate change (partnerships).

The on-going objectives included:

- 1) plan for the 2020 Annual Conference pavilion (conference planning);
- 2) plan for special session programming in the 2020 Annual Conference (chairs and professional development);
- 3) award the Best DEI Paper award for 2020 conferences (awards);
- 4) prepare and distribute the CDEI newsletter at least semi-annually (communications and executive);
- 5) provide position statements on DEI issues to the ASEE Board, as they arise in the community or at the request of the Board (policy & letters and chairs);
- 6) recognize DEI work within the community via Champions Letters (policy & letters and executive)

Accomplishments (2019-2020)

In spite of the challenges presented by upheaval in members' lives by the demands of coronavirus response, CDEI can point to many accomplishments during the past year! The ASEE CDEI / SEFI writing task forces completed their draft and secured approval from the organizations' Boards for the new *Joint Statement on Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion: A Call and Pledge to Action*. Partnering with several stakeholder organizations, many members and several subcommittees of CDEI promoted and engaged in #EngineersShowUp, a week of focused action to "Change Cultures of Oppression in Engineering" in February. In March, facing COVID-19 uncertainties, the CDEI chairs submitted a letter to the ASEE Board and HQ detailing several equity and inclusivity reasons that a decision for a virtual or postponed Annual Conference needed to be hastened. Many ASEE members counted among Members, Delegates, and Friends of CDEI are supporting the founding of a new Constituent Committee on Equity, Culture, & Social Justice in Education (ECSE). CDEI is actively promoting engagement in the provisional division through our communications channels.

By subcommittee other specific accomplishments are:

Awards

The winner of the ASEE Best Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Paper in 2019 was **WIP: Aligning What We Want with What We Seek: Increasing Comprehensive Review in the Graduate Admissions Process** by **Dr. La'Tonia Stiner-Jones and Dr. Wolfgang Windl** from the Graduate Studies Division. In 2019, there were submissions from 16 divisions and 1 section, along with two papers that were nominated after reviewing was complete. Papers were submitted from PIC 1 (2), PIC II (4), PIC III (3), PIC IV (7), and the Pacific Southwest Section. In 2020, there were 16 papers submitted from the following PICs: PIC 1 (3), PIC II (2), PIC III (1), and PIC IV (10). Of these papers, four have been selected as finalists and three noted as honorable mentions. The finalists will present their papers during a special session at the Annual Conference and the winner will be selected based on both the paper and the presentation.

After the 2019 conference, the Committee proposed a new annual award called the ASEE Constituent Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Award to celebrate the work of ASEE constituents to increase diversity, equity, inclusion, and access within engineering and engineering education. This award recognizes the actions of an ASEE constituent group who can show measurable accomplishments in 1) making the Society more inclusive of members from historically marginalized groups and/or 2) addressing issues of diversity, equity, & inclusion within their constituency and/or the broader engineering education community. The award was approved in April 2020 so announcements will be made at this year's conference for nominations to be submitted during the 2020-21 award nomination cycle. The first award will be decided and announced at the end of the 2021 Annual Conference with the award to be conferred during the 2022 Annual Conference.

Communications

The primary work of the committee was the creation of the bi-annual newsletters and a new blog. In addition, the committee, in conjunction with the chairs team, made updates to the website based on a prioritized list. These modalities are meant to increase awareness and engagement in CDEI efforts across ASEE and the engineering education community.

The Communications committee put out two newsletters this year (Fall 2019 and Spring 2020) with updated formatting. Each newsletter went out to about 270+ members, delegates, and friends, as well as to PIC chairs to forward to division list-serves.

The new CDEI blog was launched on February 22, 2020 and has 7 posts so far. Submission solicitation from our stakeholders was curtailed during COVID re-organization. We posted about the work of the Commission as well as amplifying the work of other groups, such as #EngineersShowUp. We hope that the blog provides another way for interested stakeholders to learn about and from the work of CDEI and plan to have regular updates.

CDEI Communications and Professional Development committees, along with the chairs team, continue to make revisions to the website, although without a dedicated website administrator, some changes have happened more slowly than desired.

Conference Planning

For the 2019 ASEE conference, this subcommittee led programming for CDEI via the Footsteps, Division Mixer, and the Diversity Pavilion. Starting with the CDEI table at the Division Mixer, information such as handouts on best practices, resources, and CDEI's programs were shared with conference attendees. Partnering with P-12 in the adjoining spaces, the Diversity Pavilion served as a focal point for information and awareness on DEI issues as well as a space for conversation on DEI issues. To increase Pavilion traffic and visibility, a book raffle and artwork (banners, posters) were used. The Pavilion theme was "Inclusive spaces, Inclusive environments". Questions to provoke discussion and reflection included: "How do we create inclusive spaces and environments?" The Pavilion artwork was refreshed and included new posters created by the committee with assistance from ASEE art department. The Footsteps project saw new messages created to bring awareness to current issues. Pronoun stickers for badges were made available at the Pavilion, Division Mixer table and ASEE registration area.

We are proud to report that 438 people stopped by the 2019 Diversity Pavilion, and 117 new affiliates signed our sign-up sheet expressing interest in CDEI. The Division mixer increased our visibility as well, with 106 people stopping by our table there. Finally, our CDEI members and friends also provided strong support for our work at the annual conference, with 24 folks covering shifts at the Diversity Pavilion.

CDEI also co-sponsored the inaugural LGBTQ reception at the 2019 Annual Conference, in conjunction with NOGLSTP and ASEE Headquarters and several university supporters. A reception was planned for the 2020 Conference, and CDEI executive committee secured external sponsorships for the event. With the move to a Virtual Conference, the event will be held separately.

Plans were underway for the 2020 ASEE conference to create a more interactive pavilion space by adding and reconfiguring the furniture between CDEI and P-12. New questions and conversation prompts were going to focus on a conference interdivisional thread: "How can we prepare the next generation of engineers—the Engineers of the 2030s?" and "How can we assure that the Engineers of the 2030s are inclusive and welcoming to others?" Plans for the Division Mixer and the Pavilion had to be curtailed to fit into the new virtual conference format. The committee hopes that some of the interactions & dialogue can occur in the new virtual format and is preparing to staff these new virtual events.

Professional Development

In 2019, without the ability to host paper sessions, CDEI leaned heavily on the new Professional Development subcommittee to plan PD offerings for the 2019 annual conference and beyond. CDEI sponsored: six SafeZone Ally training sessions, including one with the Student Division; two in-committee developed PD sessions addressing individual- and organizational-level DEI actions; our annual RoundTable conversation and Best Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Paper finalists sessions; and, community-submitted sessions on a variety of topics including a kick-off PD session on ways to address "Race & Privilege in the Classroom." Over 400 attendees indicated interest in these sessions with official recorded attendance over 250. Formal evaluation of the PD sessions showed a strong positive response.

To promote access to education on DEI topics, the PD committee planned a series of Virtual Workshops. Two were hosted during the #EngineersShowUp Week of Action. A special series, the CDEI Professional Development Summer Workshop Series is underway. All events are weekly on Wednesdays until August 12, for one hour starting at 1 PM Eastern (excluding June 24 during the Virtual ASEE Annual Conference), open to everyone, and complimentary. Registration is via Google calendar.

Session topics span the DEI landscape affecting faculty and students alike. Titles include: Leveraging the ASEE & SEFI Joint Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: A Call and Pledge for Action, Promoting Student Wellness in the Online Classroom (A Discussion), Culturally Responsive Teaching in Times of COVID-19, and Diversity Papers: Tips and Guidelines for Authors and Evaluators. Team facilitation is typical, with 20 different facilitators

participating in the Summer Workshop Series. The first three sessions have had an average attendance of 30 people. A recording of each session is posted on the CDEI website for those who cannot attend in real time.

It is a testament to the tech savviness of the PD committee chair, PD members, and CDEI that this series could be organized and advertised swiftly and effectively. It serves as a model for those transitioning to a greater online presence.

In addition to the Virtual Workshops, the PD committee has led development of a robust CDEI programming schedule for the 2020 Annual Conference, in partnership with the chair team. Six of fifteen community submissions for sessions were accepted, with one being submitted as a 2020 Distinguished Lecturer. Some other sessions were deemed more appropriate for a divisional technical session and were forwarded to those. Other submissions were invited for the Virtual Workshop series. Although a couple of our invited workshops cancelled due to the change to a Virtual Conference, we are excited to host a story-telling experience of #EngineeringWhileBlack; a conversation about DEI and ethics resources under new ABET guidelines; a workshop about inclusive, collaborative learning in large classes; three PD committee-developed workshops; three Safe Zone Ally trainings; and, our usual roundtable conversation and Best DEI Paper sessions.

Finally, illustrating the critical role that the PD committee provides in CDEI, members of the committee have partnered with Communications for updating the Resources page on the CDEI website & the launch of our CDEI blog.

Policy & Letters

Priorities for the year were established in June 2019. They included: Confederate monuments on campuses; trans student support; impacts of affirmative action decisions by the Supreme Court; DREAMers; should composition of panels (e.g., “manels”) be addressed in a policy proposal to ASEE; and paths to professional engineering licensure for 4-year engineering technology (ET) graduates. (Paths to licensure for ET degree holders is important to diversity because of the higher proportions of underrepresented students with ET degrees.)

Notable activities (and in some cases, outcomes) were as follows:

1. Unfortunately the NCEES vote to extend licensure to ET graduates narrowly failed, but this advocacy will continue.
2. The subcommittee was tasked with working with First Nations communities in the Montreal area to create an appropriate land acknowledgment at the ASEE Annual Conference, along with other activities that might entail a deeper commitment to decolonizing principles and action. When the conference was moved online, these plans were put on hold, to be taken up for the next in-person conference working with local Native communities there.
3. A proposal to record/caption all Distinguished Lectures in addition to plenaries was taken forward by CDEI chair.
4. A tracking system for Champion of Diversity and other letters was completed, and the process for producing letters was streamlined using templates and empowering the CDEI chair to approve and deliver.

5. A webinar—Being a Vocal Majority, a version of ally/bystander training to help people make noise in support of targeted researchers—was offered in February 2020 as part of the #EngineersShowUp Week of Action.

Partnerships

The year began with uncertainty regarding the latitude that a Board Committee would have with launching external partnerships. We settled on a focus of internal partnerships and opening conversations with mutual conference attendance with key organizations such as NSBE, SHPE, and SWE. Members of CDEI scheduled presentations for the NSBE Dean’s round table and SWE convention, but these events have been postponed due to COVID-19. The Partnerships committee plans to start working with organizations that already have a DEI focus and connect with leaders of those organizations.

Contributing to robust partnerships with internal and external constituencies cannot be the sole responsibility of a single subcommittee. Evidence of the whole-of-CDEI ongoing efforts in these efforts are the accomplishments of the task force working with SEFI on the ASEE-SEFI joint statement, participation of many CDEI affiliates in the #EngineersShowUp movement (including with inaugural offerings of the CDEI blog and Virtual Workshop series), and the vision and organization of the Constituent DEI award.

Strategic Planning & Assessment

The primary focus was the development of a strategic framework to serve as the foundation for guiding CDEI moving forward. Having a more open framework of overarching goals seemed more time efficient than a set of three-year objectives; especially considering that measuring impact and change across ASEE is beyond the scope of the committee's reach. We were also hopeful that a DEI Framework would be used to guide the next ASEE Strategic Plan. CDEI set out to embrace a direction that respects intersectional identities and the need for systemic disruption, along with acknowledging the reluctance of some ASEE members to see equity as an issue. To find a direction that abolishes systemic oppression and moves the organization beyond economic justifications for diversity to include definitions of engineers as moral actors and citizens whose professional conduct should yield positive social benefits (e.g. justice, opportunity, learning). All of these goals must be considered within the limited capacity of an organization of volunteers engaged in these toll-taking activities in their daily work. The committee identified five primary components through which to focus efforts: 1. Opportunities presented by the annual conference; 2. Communications; 3. Partnerships with related organizations; 4. Awards that reinforce DEI goals; and 5. Influencing policy changes.

The resultant strategic framework was approved by the Board at the same meeting that they bestowed a Commission designation. This new designation brings a requirement for a specific Strategic Plan. Thus, for 2020-21, a new strategic plan will be confirmed by the CDEI executive team and the committee will work to identify quantitative and qualitative assessments to measure progress at the CDEI level as well as identify ways in which ASEE members can “live the plan” daily.

Commission To-Do List (2020-2021):

1. Prepare for the ASEE Annual Conference in 2021 with specific attention to the Division Mixer and the Diversity Pavilion, including the tracking of visits to each.
2. Expand partnerships by distributing exhibit hall passes at the 2021 Annual Conference to other organizations and securing their collaboration by scheduling them into “staffing” time slots at the pavilion.
3. Solicit ideas and suggestions for other DEI-minded professional development training sessions and series.
4. From last year’s To-do List (effectively precluded by the pandemic), boost the presence (initially but not exclusively through CDEI) at ASEE regional conferences and those of partner organizations (e.g., NSBE, SHPE).
5. Review the new CDEI Strategic Plan to determine priorities among the nine objectives and develop action plans that include identifying and dismantling policies and practices that perpetuate systemic inequities faced in ASEE and the organizational cultures in which our engineering education stakeholders work.
6. Adapt to the new designation of Commission and continue on-going activities and initiatives in support of our mission
7. Supplementing significant work on the website from the past year, the change from a committee to a commission will require larger overhaul in 2020-2021.