

## Assessment Model for Programmatic Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Initiatives

**Vianka Esteves Miranda\***


Doctor of Business Administration  
Northwestern State University of Louisiana  
College of Business and Technology  
114A Russell Hall  
Northwestern State University  
Email: [mirandav@nsula.edu](mailto:mirandav@nsula.edu)  
United States of America

**Elizabeth Abington Prejean**

Doctor of Business Administration  
Northwestern State University of Louisiana  
College of Business and Technology  
Northwestern State University  
Email: [prejeane@nsula.edu](mailto:prejeane@nsula.edu)  
United States of America

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### ABSTRACT

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*The study of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, (DEIB) processes is an ever-evolving phenomenon that will continue to influence and change the world. These processes are becoming increasingly prevalent and are present in business and educational environments driven by societal demands, environmental awareness, and funding requirements. The next generation of business leaders has serious concerns about the environment they will soon inherit. Each generation has events that define them (Civil Rights Movements, Watergate, the Recession, the Clinton Administration and Y2K, the Great Recession, Global Warming, and Climate Change). Today's students want to make a positive difference on Earth, unlike any generation in the past half-century. Furthermore, higher education faculty and administrators must meet the charge of effectively preparing post-secondary graduates to function in these initiatives.*

**KEYWORDS:** diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, program improvement, accreditation

### DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING

Educators continue to look for the almost flawless blending of knowledge and skills that could be transferable into the workforce. As such, college curricula should be progressive with the latest relevant DEIB information and practices (El-Amin, 2022; Howard, 2017; Hwang & Soe, 2010; Ilvonen, 2013; Wang & Wang, 2016). Researchers must weigh this against the practical and strategic need for institutions to adapt and innovate, fueled by the rapid pace at which DEIB initiatives evolve (Ilvonen, 2013; Wang & Wang, 2016). Research data shows that students tend to forget content covered during their first and second years and that there exists a significant decline in content retention from the time when instructors first present the material and when students attend the capstone course (El-Amin, 2022; Hardy et al., 2017). Based on this information, it is important to reinforce key concepts consistently throughout educational programs.

Higher education administrators are motivated to address this historical problem with a renewed vigor with emphasis in higher education, professional trainings, climate conservation efforts, and infrastructure projects to reinforce competency and awareness throughout the organization to

develop professional and scholarly environments, which promote the success of faculty, staff, and students (Miranda, Et. al., 2021) The five key areas for DEIB (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) initiative:

1. Leadership-aligned with the organizational strategic plan and consistently measure results
2. Datum-use both qualitative and quantitative to understand the environment
3. Infrastructure-set up a physical DEIB office and as diversity champions at every level of the organization
4. Strategy-start with the K-12 population as they are the incoming population of higher ed students; one example is to develop higher education camps for underrepresented populations.
5. Resources-adequate funding to implement and follow through on initiatives (Hari, 2001; Hitt, et al., 2010; Ross, 2021; Russell, 2020)

Educators are charged with the task of developing leadership education and monitoring existing educational administration roles to examine if the decision-making processes reflect the composition, cultural and initiatives of the

institutional community (Russell, 2020). Many existing firms have implemented organization wide DEIB strategy programs (Hitt, et al., 2010). One notable area is business ethics initiatives, which help to guide firms to develop a more robust DEIB corporate culture (Russell, 2020). Formal corporate ethics and compliance programs are key to improve organizational structures (Kolk, 2008). The use of well-developed organizational ethics programs are effective tools to develop a culture that embraces DEIB and foster the ability of organizations to maintain regulatory compliance with contributes to revenue stability and growth (Kolk, 2008; Miranda, et al., 2021). Hence, a thorough understanding of the impact of regulatory compliance is imperative as adherence contributes to a more robust bottom line through the elimination of costly penalties and lawsuits (El-Amin, 2022). On a micro-organizational level, effective ethics programs contribute to more fair, efficient, and accurate assessment practices for employee reviews, which reduce internal organizational ethical issues (Eason & Mazzei, 2019). Organizations must invest in training programs that promote compliance. (Eason & Mazzei, 2019; El-Amin, 2022).

Higher education administrators, as business leaders, have moved to address DEIB issues with a new awareness (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, 2022). An increasing number of administrators are faced with promoting education and training programs as well as learning environments that increase cultural awareness across the organization and foster scholarly and professional environments that effectively support the success of all faculty, staff, and students (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, 2022). Students must learn to excel in a diverse undergraduate setting which will prepare them to thrive in their postgraduate plans and foster the resiliency needed for success in a more inclusive workforce (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, 2022). To this end, universities must take the lead in teaching national and international students the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, 2022). Specific areas of concern in these efforts in Higher Education are:

- *“Recruitment and Retention: Universities must employ active and aggressive recruitment and retention of diverse faculty, staff, and student body.*
- *Research and Scholarship: Administration should build and enhance opportunities for research and scholarship in diverse fields.*

• *Strategic Partnerships: Build and support strategic partnerships that respect diversity, include diverse groups, and support advancing diversity and inclusion for all parties.*

• *Leadership Support and Development: Provide Top-down support for diversity & inclusion and create a pipeline of culturally competent academic leaders.”*

(Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, 2017; Redd, et al., 2020)

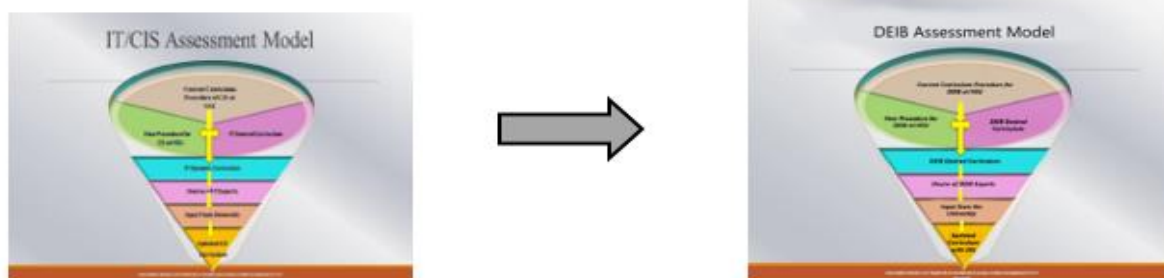
Experts recommend that institutions develop an independent DEIB strategic plan and avoid the incorporation of DEIB in the general organizational strategic plan (Maxell & Lanier, 2022; Miranda, et al., 2021; Redd, et al., 2020). Research shows that the most important characteristics of an effective DEIB strategic plan include the following:

1. Leadership-that can develop and implement the organizational strategy.
2. Strategy-which has a clearly defined purpose and initiatives.
3. Data-establish qualitative and quantitative data collection processes to increase an understanding of the organizational environment.
4. Infrastructure-most importantly, a physical office of DEIB
5. Resources-to include adequate funding to implement and follow through on initiatives. (Maxwell & Lanier, 2022)

## MODELS

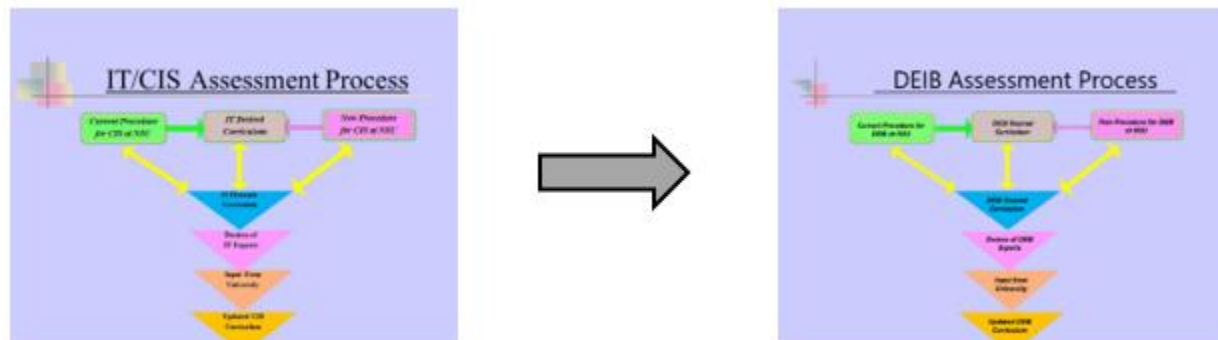
The programmatic assessment model for CIS/IT recommends that leaders blend current processes with new, progressive processes with the engagement of relative stakeholders, faculty, and administration. (Prejean, 2017). The authors purport that this model be revised for implementation of DEIB principles in higher education curricula. Figure 1 depicts the original CIS/IT Assessment Model and the revised model for DEIB. The authors assert that by utilizing the proposed model, appropriate recommendations to match the Undergraduate business program curriculum with the latest DEIB initiatives result. DEIB initiatives may be addressed correspondingly as depicted in the revised models in Figures 1 and 2 and as detailed in the revised DEIB Assessment Process steps.

**Figure 1. IT/CIS Assessment Model revised to the DEIB Assessment Model**



Below is a diagram showing the steps for the Assessment Process.

**Figure 2. IT/CIS Assessment Process revised to the DEIB Assessment Process**



## Steps of Proposed DEIB Assessment Process

1. Meetings with stakeholders (DEIB experts, advisory board members, faculty, staff, and students). Annual surveys of graduates and current students
2. Follow the current procedure and add personal interviews with selected graduates, and their supervisors working to keep up with the latest trends)
3. Combine Steps 1 and 2 to create desired DEIB initiatives
4. Dynamic DEIB Initiatives (Integration of the above steps and modification of dynamic curriculum)
5. Desires of Stakeholders: Continual dialogue with DEIB experts to improve the higher education curriculum.
6. Stakeholders Contributions: Input from students, faculty, and administration to update the curriculum
7. Updated Curriculum: The ultimate DEIB incorporated curriculum.

## PROPOSED USE OF THE MODEL

The authors propose the revised new model to understand the gaps in knowledge and skills of School of Business (SOB) graduates about DEIB processes and implications. The model proposes a straightforward way to monitor and track changes in any program through continuous review and implementation of identified gaps in knowledge and processes. Implementation of DEIB studies in all areas of education is essential. Future business leaders need to understand and model effective DEIB concepts to contribute to socio-economic initiatives to promote positive economic development successfully. The proposed DEIB model is an attempt by the authors to ensure that all College of Business classes include elements of DEIB to ensure that students have a higher degree of success as business and industry participants.

It is important to understand that the accreditation processes and standards be respected for any proposed model or processes employed by any accredited university (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, 2017; Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, 2019). Accreditation is a voluntary process that includes a thorough external review of the education institution's ability to provide the highest quality programs (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, 2017; Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, 2019). It is a comprehensive review of a school's

mission, faculty qualifications, and curricula, and includes mandatory self-evaluations, peer reviews, committee reviews, and the in-depth strategic plans (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, 2017; Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, 2019). The intent of the accreditation process is to ensure that learning material and tools are relevant to their field of study, and effectively prepares students to be relevant leaders after graduation (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, 2017; Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, 2019).

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is the regional body for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions in the southern states (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, 2019). The National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) is the federal agency governed by the United States Department of Education that controls access to federal funding, and regional accreditation is required for financial aid, as reported by SACSCOC (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, 2019). According to the SACSCOC, "Accreditation has almost become an unmandated requirement for higher education institutions in the United States, especially if the institutions desire access to various forms of Federal funding" (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, 2019).

Business accreditation in colleges is important in today's competitive job market for employability (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, 2017). The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International (AACSBi) is the world's largest business education network, founded in 1916 with more than "1,500 member organizations in ninety countries and more than 760 business schools accredited worldwide" (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, 2022). It requires an extensive qualification process for schools to participate and maintain their membership in AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, 2017). Less than 5% of business schools meet the criteria in the United States for this accreditation. (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, 2017). According to AACSB, DEIB is one of the five forces driving Business Education (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, 2022).





AACSB emphasizes that it is necessary to embed the principles of DEIB into the culture and planning of any school of business to ensure societal impact and organizational success (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, 2022).

## CONCLUSION

This research will add to the body of literature the importance of continuous assessment of programs in Schools of Businesses in an attempt to ensure that graduates are more effectively prepared to participate in today's workforce. This

research can assist scholars in other higher education business programs to ensure that DEIB topics are covered throughout the program so that students are prepared to enter the world of business. The recommendation is for all involved parties in schools of business to keep up with the advancement in this field. Using the proposed model and relevant process steps will ensure that diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging studies are in place to ensure that necessary changes are reviewed and implemented annually.

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