Office of Cultural Fluency, Equity, and Inclusion: Vision and Mission

VISION
To create a harmonious, inclusive, and equitable learning environment that celebrates diversity, nurtures a sense of belonging, and fosters mutual understanding.

MISSION
The Office of Cultural Fluency, Equity, and Inclusion (OCFEI) is dedicated to promoting cultural fluency, equity, and inclusion through consultation, policy development, training, and advocacy. We work collaboratively to eliminate disparities, challenge discrimination, and champion equitable outcomes. Our commitment to anti-racist and antidiscrimination ethos drives our efforts in advancing social justice and quality for all.

CORE VALUES

Equity and Justice
We believe that every individual deserves equal access to educational opportunities and resources. We work to eliminate disparities based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic location.

Inclusion and Belonging
We provide an environment where every student and employee feels valued, respected, and a sense of belonging. We celebrate diverse identities and experiences as essential elements of our shared community.

Cultural Fluency
We recognize the importance of understanding and appreciating diverse cultures and perspectives. By developing cultural fluency, we aim to bridge gaps and build connections across differences.

Debra Leigh
Vice President
Cultural Fluency, Equity and Inclusion

I am delighted to serve as the inaugural Vice President for Cultural Fluency, Equity, and Inclusion at St. Cloud Technical and Community College (SCTCC). The Office is a testament to the visionary leadership of President Lori Kloos, who has dedicated herself to the growth and support of our Office, aligning with its core principles. I also acknowledge all the students, faculty, and staff who have paved the way for this office to exist and the diversity initiatives that started long before I arrived. All have played a key role in positioning the college today.

As I contemplate the achievements since the establishment of the Office of Cultural Fluency, Equity, and Inclusion at SCTCC in 2020, I am profoundly inspired. Our institution remains steadfast in its mission to provide education, training, and support that facilitates equitable participation in our society, economy, and democracy. We have reimagined our strategic plan, embracing shared beliefs, a student experience statement, and measurable strategies that resonate with the objectives of the Minnesota State College's and University's Equity 2030 initiatives. The introduction of an Antiracist Equity Framework and an Equity Audit underscores our commitment to inclusivity and diversity on our campus.

A pivotal milestone was the establishment of the Multicultural Center—a vibrant hub that fosters diversity across race, class, gender, and more. This center stands as a symbol of unity, attracting diverse stakeholders, businesses, service organizations, families, students, and global recognition.

Looking ahead, my vision is to further diversify our workforce and empower underrepresented student populations in vocational fields. Our endeavor is to nurture skilled leaders, particularly women, across our ten sectors, fostering an environment where every student and employee can bring their unique perspectives and contributions to SCTCC. We are dedicated to providing equitable support to help each individual realize their personal and professional potential.
American Indian Acknowledgement

SCTCC acknowledges that we occupy the ancestral land of the Ojibwe, Dakota, Sioux, and Chippewa tribes. This recognition is an essential first step in honoring the history and heritage of indigenous peoples. The college is committed to dismantling colonial practices and traditional structures. This is crucial for creating a more inclusive and respectful environment that recognizes and rectifies the impact of colonialism on indigenous communities.

The faculty is actively working to build a more diverse and inclusive curriculum. This commitment to diversity ensures that students have the opportunity to learn about different perspectives, cultures, and histories, including Native American perspectives.

SCTCC is raising awareness about the use of negative imagery, mascots, and language that refer to Native Americans. By doing so, the college is taking steps to eliminate stereotypes and promote respectful language and imagery.

The Multicultural Center provides a dedicated space for Native American students to gather, learn more about their identities, and share their culture. Such spaces are essential for fostering a sense of belonging and community.

SCTCC is actively involved in the community as a co-sponsoring the annual community Pow Wow and through the close relationships with the Native American community in Minnesota.

SCTCC has commissioned a Native American painting by artist Brian Dow which is currently on display in the Multicultural Center. These initiatives and more contribute to creating a more welcoming and inclusive educational environment for all students.

Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire
---------W.B.Yeats
The Equity by Design Teaching Academy (EBDTA) at SCTCC is dedicated to fostering an academic culture rooted in equity, inclusivity, and social justice. With a primary focus on addressing outcome gaps and historical inequities, the EBDTA empowers educators and creates transformative learning environments where students can thrive, regardless of their backgrounds.

The EBDTA equips faculty with the tools and strategies to create up-to-date culturally responsive curricula, assessments, and teaching methods. The research model provides historical context, is data-driven, and is faculty-led. Faculty have opportunities for ongoing professional development enhancing cultural competence in a supportive community where educators share insights and collaborate.

The EBDTA fellows have provided feedback that led to changes in policies, engaged in dialogue with decision-makers to ensure that equity considerations are embedded in institutional practices, and served as a conduit between faculty and administration to communicate and address equity-related concerns.

**EBDTA Fellows**

Adam Smeija  
Katie Smeija  
Lunde Althaus  
Jim Anderson  
Andrew Cone  
Mark Gucinski  
Ali Alsaffar  
Jennifer Evens  
Scott Ridlon  
Kevin LaNave  
Kelly Crue  
Kelly Halverson  
Katie LeVerson  
Diane Ehr  
Beth Flick  
Kathleen Robinson  
Michele Timp Pilon  
Nancy Wallin  
Anthony Alfaro  
Steve Gilmore  
Matthew Diedrick  
Ingrid Smiles  
Heidi Smith  
Khaldoun Ahmed  
Faith Ericson  
Pam McBroom  
Dawn Straley  
Chris Chamberlain  
Melissanne Frank  
Megan Magwire-Rogholt  
Caitlin Hickcox  
Ann Tuoy-Giel  
Connie Logeman  
Luke Green  
Susan Engle

**Facilitators**

H. Ray Keith  
James Gray

**Equity by Design Teaching Academy**

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Cultural Fluency, Equity, & Inclusion Updates

The Office of Cultural Fluency, Equity, & Inclusion (OCFE&I) has engaged in a number of activities to demonstrate our strong dedication to fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment at SCTCC.

The establishment of the Cultural Fluency Leadership Council (CFLC), comprised of faculty, staff, students, administrators, and community leaders committed to social justice, ensures Equity-minded perspectives are integrated into Policy reviews and decision-making processes at various levels in the college. A small group from the council traveled with President Kloos to the University of Minnesota in Duluth to learn more about how their Multicultural Center operates and the commitments and progress they have made to dismantle systemic racism on their campus. Learning from other institutions, such as the University of Duluth, demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement and adopting best practices in dismantling systemic racism.

The creation of the Bias Response Team is a valuable resource for addressing and supporting individuals who have experienced bias incidents on campus, promoting a safe and inclusive community. The Bias Response Team responds to reports of bias incidents on the campus and serves as a resource for members of the campus that have experienced a bias incident? We are committed to providing support and educational opportunities and awareness, so everyone knows how to recognize and respond appropriately when incidents occur.

The OCFEI pays particular attention to the national trends in diversity, equity, and inclusion. Participation in national conferences and organizations like NADOHE and NCORE reflects our commitment to staying informed about national trends and contributing to the broader conversation on diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education. I served on the national planning team for the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE) and attended the national conference.

Four Edquity by Design Teaching Academy Fellows attended the National Conference on Race & Ethnicity in Higher Education (NCORE). NCORE is a significant forum for discussions and critical dialogue about race, ethnicity, and its intersections in higher education.

The OCFEI COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS supports the Juguard Leadership Program and NEXT MLK, HAPPINESS PROGRAM WITH RSVP, POW WOW, JUGUAAD, AFRICAN WOMEN’S ALLIANCE, BLACK YOUTH NETWORK, ANNA MARIE’S ALLIANCE, PRIDE, JUNETEENTH, HISPANIC HERITAGE CULTURAL EVENT, MAC Marker Space. Minority, and women owned partnerships.
SCTCC had the privilege of hosting Dr. Sister Chrispina Lekule, an inspiring figure who has made remarkable contributions to education and empowerment, particularly in Tanzania.

Dr. Lekule's journey is a testament to the transformative power of education. Born and raised in the Kilimanjaro Region of Tanzania, a country where many children still lack access to education, she overcame significant challenges to pursue her own education. Her father's determination to provide education for his children, despite his own illiteracy, played a pivotal role in shaping her path.

Before embarking on her remarkable academic journey, Dr. Lekule worked as a secondary school teacher and served as the headmistress of a resident school in Zanzibar, Tanzania. Her commitment to education led her to pursue higher education, culminating in graduate degrees from St. Cloud State University and a Ph.D. in Educational Policy from the University of Windsor in Ontario, Canada.

Dr. Lekule’s academic achievements continued to flourish as she became a professor in the faculty of Education and assumed the role of Director of Postgraduate studies, Research, and Consultancy at St. Augustine University of Tanzania. Her recent appointment as Provost at Aruaha Catholic University marks a historic moment as she becomes her country's first female Provost.

Beyond her administrative roles, Dr. Lekule is a prolific writer, focusing on topics such as education as a means of liberation, the plight of vulnerable children, the intersection of technology and education, women's empowerment, in education, and the transformative potential of international education.

As a leader in women's education in Tanzania, she has tirelessly advocated for girls' education, encouraging them to pursue their studies and empowering them to become global citizens, local leaders, and inspiring role models.

During her sabbatical visit, Dr. Lekule conducted focus groups and interviews with SCTCC students to learn more about their experiences as students, served on the Black Women Lead International Conference planning committee, and taught a class in the Ph.D. program at St. Cloud State University.

We are honored to have Dr. Sister Chrispina Lekule share her remarkable journey and insights with our campus community.
If you thought that school only imparts knowledge, think again.

School holds a very special place in our memory. The droning lectures, the fun in the cloakroom, mischief and pranks, and the companionship of friends. These memories make school a very special place.