

Case Study for AGEP Evaluators' Capacity Building Conference

Culturally Responsive and Social Justice Evaluations:

Hypothetical Case Study: The Eastern-AGEP Alliance

Institutional Background and Project Context

The Eastern-AGEP Alliance was formed in 2017 bringing together four universities in the eastern part of the country across two neighboring states. The goal of Eastern-AGEP is to develop and implement a model for creating institutional and department-level changes that facilitate the movement of URM STEM doctoral candidates into faculty positions, postdoctoral positions, positions at federally funded national laboratories, and positions at scientific think tanks. The fields of particular focus in this Alliance are computer science, chemistry, engineering, and mathematics (CEEM). A listing and brief description of the Eastern-AGEP participating institutions are provided in Table 1.

The University of Zia is the lead institution of the Alliance. However, each Alliance member is expected to play a substantial role in the development and implementation of Eastern-AGEP. The alliance partners were selected based on a history of collaborations (e.g., faculty exchange, pipeline programs) in STEM research and education. However, the relationship has periodically been characterized by conflict and animosity among the historically Black University (HBU) administrators/faculty over programmatic issues. Each participating institution has a team of staff, not necessarily of equal size, working to coordinate and implement Eastern-AGEP programs. Over the past three years of the Alliance, the institutional contribution from Nesreen University, the historically Black University (HBU), has been less than the contributions from the three PWIs (Predominately White Institutions). As a result, Nesreen Alliance staff feel that members from the PWIs do not value their input and oftentimes marginalized them in decision making. The most recent example was when Zan University was selected as the host for the annual Eastern-AGEP conference, although Nesreen University volunteered to host the meeting this year, as they also did the year before but was not selected.

University of Zia, the Alliance lead institution, has been embroiled in controversy during much of the fall semester. The University's student newspaper reported at least 10 hate crimes or Anti-Semitic and bias-related incidents on or near campus, including racist graffiti against Black and Hispanic students and a noose made out of toilet paper hung on the dormitory room doors of Black students. These incidences have been particularly disturbing for faculty/staff at Nesreen University. The University of Zia's President announced that steps would be undertaken to improve the campus climate for African American and other students from underrepresented groups. Also, university officials announced new initiatives aimed at increasing the racial and ethnic diversity of its faculty.

Alliance Goals, Objectives, and Activities

Eastern-AGEP utilizes institutional change strategies designed to positively impact URM graduate students and faculty in STEM. In particular, the Alliance engages university provosts and deans, selected department heads, directors of graduate studies, and faculty to lead the transformation in computer science, chemistry, engineering, and mathematics departments (CCEM). The Eastern-AGEP seeks to: (a) develop and/or strengthen coordination of URM recruitment in the target departments, (b) improve climate, practices, and policies that will increase URM CCEM doctoral students’ entry, retention, and completion of doctoral education, and (c) improve faculty and institutional supports (e.g., policies, climate, mentoring and other practices) affecting URM students’ preparedness for entry into the professoriate and into CCEM research fields in government and private sectors.

Major activities of the Eastern-AGEP include: (a) recruitment, (b) advising, including facilitating the transition of URM graduate students through the pipeline to opportunities that will enhance their research skills and participation in CCEM academic communities, (c) implementing initiatives to promote buy-in, build cross-cultural faculty academic coaching and mentoring skills, and creating pathways for success for URM CCEM Ph.D. completion, (d) assessing students’ perceptions of programmatic and institutional climate, and (e) testing initiatives related to building an inclusive community.

Evaluation Context

The evaluation was commissioned by the lead institution, the University of Zia. Without input from Alliance partners, the PI, a tenure White male professor at the University of Zia, hired an experienced evaluator, Katherine (a White woman and principal owner of Evaluation Consultants, Inc.). She had worked with the PI on several previous grants. However, Katherine left the Eastern-AGEP at the end of the first year of the grant.

Table 1: Description of Eastern-AGEP Institutions

AGEP Partners	Selected Demographics and Institutional Data
University of Zia <i>(very high research activity, large size private institution; urban campus)</i>	Student Pop.: 50,434 (54% female) Ethnic Diversity of Students: 73% White; 7% Hispanic; 5% Black or African American; 3% Asian; 1% American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders; 3% Ethnicity unknown; 8% Non-resident visitor Faculty Pop. : 5,750 Ethnic Diversity of Faculty: 66% White; 3% Black; 4% Hispanic; 27% Other Tuition: \$55,530 (plus fees, room, board) Acceptance Rate: 47%
Zan University <i>(very high research activity, large urban campus)</i>	Student Pop.: 23,950 (50% female) Ethnic Diversity of Students: 55% White; 10% Hispanic; 5% Black or African American; 15% Asian; 1% American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders; 3% Ethnicity unknown; 12 Non-resident visitor Faculty Pop. : 1,650 Ethnic Diversity of Faculty: 80% White; 3% Black; 4% Hispanic; 6% Asian; 7% Other Tuition: \$55,530 (plus fees, room, board) Acceptance Rate: 13%
Zia State University	Student Pop.: 22, 850 (52% female)

<p><i>(very high research activity, large size private university; geographically isolated)</i></p>	<p>Ethnic Diversity of Students: 70% White; 7% Hispanic; 4% Black or African American; 5% Asian; 1% American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders; 3% Ethnicity unknown; 10% Non-resident visitor Faculty Pop. : 1,750 Ethnic Diversity of Faculty 78% White; 6% Black; 4% Hispanic; 12% Other Tuition: In state \$14,540; Out-of-state \$39,725 (plus fees, room, board) Acceptance Rate: 78%</p>
<p>Nesreen University <i>(high research activity, medium size private historically Black institution)</i></p>	<p>Student Pop.: 9,850 (65% female) Ethnic Diversity of Students: 83% Black or African American; 3% White; 7% Hispanic; 5% Asian; 1% American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders; 1% Non-resident visitor Faculty Pop. : 1,190 Ethnic Diversity of Faculty 67% Black; 8% White; 2% Hispanic; 4% Asian; 19% Other Tuition: \$27,850 (plus fees, room, board) Acceptance Rate: 41%</p>

Small Group Activity Instructions

Small Group Activity I: Applying CRE/SJP in the Eastern AGEP Evaluation

Directions: You have been organized into small groups. Using the case study as an example, discuss what might be some cultural, racialized, and social justice issues that you/your team should pay attention to during evaluation planning and implementation and how you would address these issues.

Debrief: Each small group share two main points from issues discussed.

Small Group Activity II: Applying a Strengths-based Perspective to the Eastern AGEP Evaluation

Directions: In the same small groups, using the case study as an example, discuss what a strengths-based (as opposed to deficit based) perspective would be that focuses on uncovering assets and strengths of participants, the Alliance and its partners.

Debrief: For each group, please provide one or two major points about what it means to use a strengths-based perspective with:

- participants
- Alliance partners
- the Alliance as a whole.