Evolve: Thriving Equitable Systems

March 2025

About Education Northwest

Education Northwest is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to helping all children and youth reach their full potential. We partner with public, private, and community-based organizations to address educational inequities and improve student success. While most of our work centers on the Pacific Northwest, our evaluations, technical assistance, and research studies have national impact and provide timely and actionable results.

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Executive summary

College Spark Washington and the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) are collaborating on the Evolve Initiative, which aims to advance systems-level change to support leaders of color in the state's community and technical colleges (CTCs). They have partnered with Education Northwest to conduct an evaluation for the initiative, with a particular focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) practices aimed at supporting and nurturing the well-being and career pathways of formal and informal leaders of color. The evaluation also examined systemic challenges, areas for growth, and recommendations for equity-focused changes that could engage and support leaders at multiple levels, positions, and institutions.

The evaluation team conducted 18 interviews, 10 focus groups, and a document review. We also collected survey data from 589 respondents: 173 identified themselves as a formal leader, 312 identified themselves as an informal leader, 32 said they did not support or oppose EDI in their current role, and 72 completed the demographic section only. We used content analysis to analyze interview, focus group, and open-ended survey data and descriptive statistics and regression analysis to analyze survey data.

Barriers to EDI system change efforts

The leaders who shared their knowledge and lived experience identified several barriers to implementing EDI efforts and dismantling racism in Washington's CTC system. These barriers included the unique contexts of the various community and technical colleges, as well as systemic barriers to recruiting and retaining leaders of color, who play a vital role in advancing EDI efforts. Evaluation findings indicated leaders of color do not have clear pathways to career advancement and face additional scrutiny, higher standards, and implicit bias in hiring and promotions. In addition to leadership pipeline issues, study participants identified several other barriers to EDI, including resource constraints, limited mentorship opportunities, additional emotional labor and work responsibilities placed on leaders of color, and resistance to change from faculty, staff, and community members. Many described EDI efforts as performative—one-time trainings, symbolic hires, and a lack of accountability or follow through—that were making little progress toward meaningful systemic change. In contrast, sustained EDI progress requires long-term commitment and structural changes to foster inclusive learning environments in which all students, faculty, and staff can thrive.

EDI plans and implementation

Of the 34 CTCs, 21 posted separate EDI strategic plans, 12 had embedded EDI goals within their broader strategic plans, and one CTC indicated their plan was in development. All CTCs expressed a commitment to supporting an EDI culture and climate, and most described having an equity team

that helped develop the EDI plan and the equity-related services they provide. While nearly all plans had general statements related to recruitment and retention, many did not explicitly prioritize or state goals to increase representation of leaders of color in their workforce. More than three-quarters of the CTCs shared statements on leadership development and the needs assessment data used to inform their EDI plan. Two-thirds included statements related to promotion or career advancement, but less than a quarter mentioned mentorship and leadership pipeline planning, and none addressed tenure processes that limit opportunities to hire leaders of color.

Based on Evolve Leadership Survey findings, most formal leaders felt confident that they had the knowledge and skills to lead EDI efforts. However, there were statistically significant differences, with leaders of color reporting more confidence in leading EDI initiatives, communicating a clear vision, and engaging the collective commitment of the CTC community. Leaders of color were also more likely to express confidence in their ability to elevate the voices of marginalized communities, uphold accountability, and implement effective EDI strategies. In contrast, they reported lower confidence than white leaders in their ability to center equity in departmental decisions.

Formal and informal leaders' views on implementation of EDI strategies

Across all EDI strategies, the percentage of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed that EDI strategies were in place was higher for formal leaders than for informal leaders. These strategies include transparent communication on EDI progress, accessible professional development opportunities, and revised hiring policies and practices that center EDI. A higher percentage of formal leaders than informal leaders agreed or strongly agreed that other EDI efforts were in place, including committees dedicated to EDI; regular events celebrating cultural diversity; and safe spaces for students, faculty, and staff from systemically marginalized communities can gather to find support. Survey findings indicate that there is room for growth. The percentages of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed that EDI strategies are in place ranged from 36 to 62 percent—informal leaders of color had the lowest percentages across all EDI strategies.

Working conditions, recognition, and support

The percentages of formal leaders who agreed or strongly agreed that conditions at their CTC supports EDI ranged from 56 to 64 percent. These indicators included a visible commitment to fostering growth for all leaders; advocacy for the success of students, faculty, and staff; and an environment in which students, faculty, and staff can promote EDI in meaningful ways. In contrast, a lower percentage of informal leaders agreed or strongly agreed with these statements, and further analysis found that these differences were primarily based on self-identified race or ethnicity. For example, 42 to 49 percent of informal leaders of color agreed with these statements about working conditions, compared to 52 to 61 percent of informal white leaders—the latter

percentages being closer to those of formal leaders. Informal leaders of color were also less likely than informal white leaders to feel comfortable sharing their ideas about EDI, less likely to feel respected and recognized for their work, and less likely to feel that they receive the resources and support they need to promote EDI in meaningful ways.

Career advancement, resources, and support

The percentages of formal leaders and informal leaders who agreed or strongly agreed that advancement opportunities to higher leadership positions are clearly outlined and transparent ranged from 13 to 25 percent. For formal leaders, the percentages of leaders who agreed that they have support to discuss EDI openly and can raise contrary opinions without fear of retaliation ranged from 39 to 51 percent for formal leaders and from 45 to 53 percent for informal leaders. The percentage of informal leaders who agreed or strongly agreed that they have access to EDI, antiracism, and leadership training; advancement opportunities; mentoring; and participation in strategic planning decisions was lower for leaders of color than for white leaders.

Considerations for planning next steps

The leaders who participated in the evaluation recommended several actions CTCs in Washington can take to shift EDI work from performative to substantive. These recommendations include hiring and supporting leaders of color to lead EDI work, supporting their efforts to make equity a shared responsibility, creating equitable leadership pipelines, encouraging collective accountability, and addressing the structural reforms necessary to address root causes of systemic inequities. The leaders also emphasized the importance of the SBCTC, Boards of Trustees, and external networks for providing the resources, guidance, and political will necessary to drive meaningful and lasting change across the CTC system.

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Foreword

In times of challenge, our commitment to equity must be unwavering. The work of advancing racial justice in the United States has never been linear—each generation has faced both progress and pushback. Today, we find ourselves in a moment of significant political headwinds. Recent executive orders, federal funding cuts, and policy shifts have introduced new stressors for those working to create a more just and inclusive society. While some of these challenges may ultimately be resolved in ways that protect Washington's equity efforts, the road ahead will require persistence, resilience, and a steadfast belief in the work we do.

At College Spark and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, we recognize that the pursuit of racial equity in the community and technical college system is not just about policy—it is about people. Leaders of color in our institutions play a critical role in shaping environments where students, faculty, staff, and administrators can bring their full, authentic selves to their work. We believe that when individuals are supported, valued, and uplifted, our entire system is strengthened.

History shows us that despite obstacles, progress endures. There have always been—and will always be—people dedicated to addressing the harm caused by racism and dismantling inequitable systems. We are honored to stand alongside those who came before us and those who will continue this work in the future. As we monitor and respond to shifting political landscapes, our fundamental commitment remains unchanged: to create a community college system where all students receive the support they need, and where a genuine sense of belonging and engagement is felt at every level.

The Evolve Initiative is one of the ways we are taking action to support leaders of color during this critical time. Through this initiative, we seek to foster a system that not only reflects our shared goals but actively works toward a more inclusive, equitable future. Despite the challenges, we remain committed to moving forward—together.

Dr. Warren Brown
CEO of College Spark Washington

Chris Bailey
Interim Executive Director for SBCTC

Chapter 1. Introduction

College Spark Washington and the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) are collaborating on the Evolve Initiative, which aims to advance systems-level change that will support leaders of color in the state's community and technical colleges (CTCs). They have partnered with Education Northwest to evaluate equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) practices aimed at supporting and nurturing the well-being and career pathways of informal and formal leaders of color. The evaluation team also examined challenges, areas for growth, and recommendations for equity-focused changes that could engage and support leaders at multiple levels, positions, and institutions.

Washington state context and legislation

In 2013 the Washington Student Achievement Council enacted a strategic action plan that would ensure 70 percent of the state's 25- to 44-year-old population achieved a postsecondary certificate or degree by 2023.[1] A critical strategy for increasing student completion rates is ensuring the CTC faculty and staff workforce reflects the diversity of enrolled students.[2] To date, the racial disparity in the proportion of CTC employees of color and the diversity of student enrollment has persisted across time (figure 1).

To address the need for increased racial diversity in CTC's administrators, faculty, and staff, Washington has enacted state laws to promote EDI and antiracist practices across the system. In 2021, the state legislature passed a law requiring all CTCs in the state to conduct climate assessments and campus listening and feedback sessions. The law also required CTCs to submit an EDI strategic plan the following year (RCW 26B.50.920). In the 2022–23 school year, the state legislature directed CTCs to provide all faculty and staff with EDI and antiracism professional development every two years. All new faculty and staff must complete the training upon hire, while all existing faculty and staff can participate in the professional development program as needed. The content of the professional development must focus on "eliminating structural racism against all races and promoting EDI while improving academic, social, and health and wellness outcomes for students from historically marginalized communities" (RCW 28B.10.145).

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[1] Washington Student Achievement Council. (2022). 2021 Strategic Action Plan. ED628851.pdf

[2] Cross, J. D., & Carman, C. A. (2021). The relationship between faculty diversity and student success in public community colleges. Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 46(12), 855–868. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2021.1910595

Figure 1. The racial diversity of community and technical college employees of color does not reflect the racial diversity of community and technical college student enrollment, 2015–16 through 2022–23
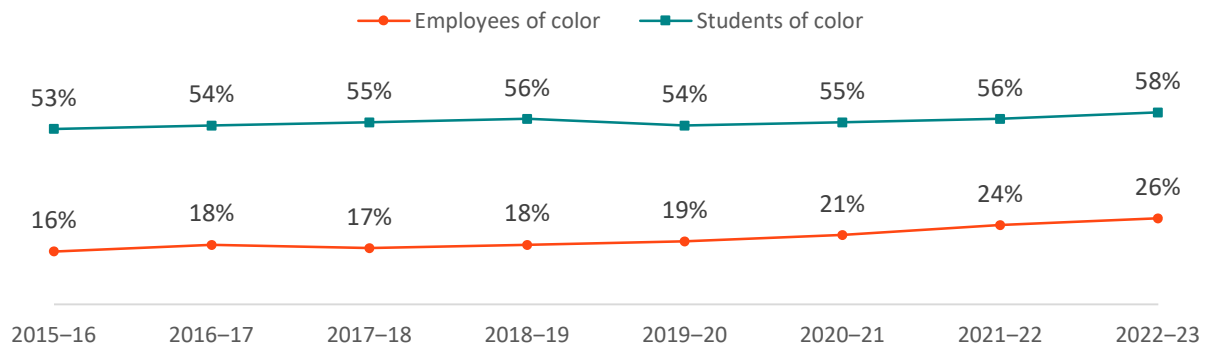
Note: From 2015–16 through 2022–23, total student enrollment ranged from 219,178 to 167,199 students and the total number of CTC employees ranged from 21,589 to 19,336.

Source: Authors' analysis of Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges data, 2015–16 through 2022–23.

Evaluation questions and methods

The goal of this evaluation is to provide an overview of the current experience of state leaders of color in Washington's CTC system at the administrator, faculty, and staff levels. We used a culturally responsive and equitable evaluation lens to customize our work to the specific needs and context of the Washington CTC system. This included collaborative planning to define desired evaluation outcomes, finalize evaluation questions, and create culturally relevant data collection measures. Our team maintained regular communication with College Spark Washington and the SBCTC design team, including a kick-off meeting, regular check-in meetings, and email communication as necessary. We also helped convene two meetings with the Evolve Initiative Advisory Committee, which includes 28 CTC leaders of color. The committee met in April 2024 to review and provide feedback on the evaluation design and again in February 2025 to discuss and help make meaning of the evaluation findings.

Evaluation questions

The four questions that guided this evaluation were developed in collaboration with College Spark Washington, the SBCTC design team, and the Evolve Initiative Advisory Committee.

1. What programs, resources, and support systems are available to help leaders of color at Washington community and technical colleges thrive in their careers and well-being?

2. What are the experiences of EDI leaders and other leaders of color at Washington community and technical colleges?

3. What recommendations do college administrators, faculty, and staff offer to improve the systemwide adoption, implementation, and expansion of EDI practices and policies?

4. What recommendations do college administrators, faculty, and staff offer to increase support for formal and informal leaders of color?

We used the following definitions of formal and informal leaders in this evaluation:

- **Formal leader** refers to a person who holds an official job title and/or has responsibilities and professional decision-making authority to enact or oversee EDI initiatives within their role. In addition to presidents and chancellors, this can include vice presidents, diversity officers, EDI committee leads/chairs, Title IX coordinators, directors, and deans.

- **Informal leader** refers to a person who advocates for and champions racial equity but may not have an official leadership title. Examples include someone who demonstrates a commitment to leading with racial equity in their work, self-identifies as an EDI leader, or whose guidance is sought by others due to their commitment, influence, lived experience, and/or EDI-related expertise.

Evaluation methods

The evaluation team used a mixed-methods design to describe the current EDI practices and experiences of CTC leaders of color. This section briefly describes the data collection and analysis procedures. A more complete description of the evaluation methods is provided in appendix A. Supplemental data tables are provided in appendix B, and interview and focus group protocols are provided in appendix C.

Data collection and analysis

Education Northwest collected interview, focus group, survey, and document review data to include the diverse perspectives of formal and informal leaders on current EDI practices.

Interviews and focus groups. Education Northwest developed a list of SBCTC design team members and formal and informal EDI leaders. SBCTC sent an email to potential participants that shared the purpose of the evaluation, introduced Education Northwest as the external evaluator, and explained that their decision to participate was voluntary and completely confidential. Our evaluation team conducted 18 interviews and 10 focus groups. A total of 41 formal and informal EDI leaders participated in the focus groups. These participants represented a wide variety of roles, including trustees, presidents, associate deans, faculty, student success advocates, and directors. Many participants were members of or affiliated with groups outside their institution such as the Diversity and Equity Officers Commission; the Faculty and Staff of Color Conference; Administrators of Color; the Northwest Regional Equity Conference; the Multicultural Student Services Directors' Council; and the Social Justice Leadership Institute. The participants came from diverse backgrounds and shared thoughtful and rich information about the support, opportunities, and

systemic challenges they had faced or continue to face in their leadership role. The sensitive nature of the information shared prompted evaluators to conduct individual interviews and small focus groups of two to three participants each. This provided participants with more privacy and a greater opportunity to share their experiences. We used a content analysis process to code and synthesize common themes, patterns, and trends and triangulation procedures to verify statements and compare the perspectives of different participants.

Evolve Leadership Survey. The survey included 25 Likert-scale questions for formal leaders and 23 Likert-scale questions for informal leaders. The respondents used a six-point Likert scale to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with 32 fixed-response items: 6 = strongly agree, 5 = agree, 4 = somewhat agree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree. The survey also included open-ended questions on the successes and challenges they had experienced as a leader and recommendations they had for improving EDI practices. This combination of quantitative and qualitative questions aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives on EDI in their professional environments.

Education Northwest collected survey data from October 24, 2024, to November 29, 2024. To maximize participation, the SBCTC design team and College Spark Washington sent email invitations to CTC presidents, chancellors, the Diversity and Equity Officers Commission, the Multicultural Student Services Directors Council, and a list of formal and informal leaders who were directly involved in their college's EDI work. Additionally, the SBCTC design team invited each community college to share the survey with their administrators, faculty, and staff. Chancellors and presidents also invited CTC administrators, faculty, and staff to complete the survey.

A total of 589 formal and informal EDI leaders responded to the survey: 485 completed the survey, 32 respondents said they neither support nor oppose EDI in their current role, and 72 completed the demographic section only. Of the 485, 173 identified themselves as a formal leader and 312 identified themselves as an informal leader. Fifty percent of formal leaders identified as a person of color and 42 percent of informal leaders identified as a person of color. The respondents' positions included presidents or chancellors, academic faculty, directors in administrative roles, student support services staff, and Title IX coordinators. The respondents included department chairs, EDI committee leads or members, leader of student or community-based organizations, and operations staff. We used Cronbach's alpha (α) to assess the internal consistency—one measure of the reliability of a set of survey items. The Cronbach's alpha values for each Evolve Leadership Survey scale ranged from strong reliability (0.80–0.89) to high reliability (0.90 or higher) for measuring the construct accurately.

The evaluation team used Stata software to analyze survey responses and descriptive statistics to calculate quantitative responses. We used content analysis and triangulation procedures to identify common themes and to compare the perspectives of survey respondents.

Document review. The evaluation team reviewed the EDI strategic plans and relevant documents that were publicly available on 34 CTC websites. Our review examined the presence or absence of the needs assessment and professional development information required by state legislation; whether the plan aligned with or was embedded in the college's strategic plan; and strategies for increasing recruitment, hiring; and advancement opportunities for leaders of color.

Limitations

White this study provides valuable insights into EDI strategies with the CTC system, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, participation in the evaluation was voluntary which may limit generalizability of the findings. Although efforts were made to include a diverse range of respondents, disparities in the representation of different leadership groups may have occurred. The qualitative data collected through interviews, focus groups, and open-ended survey responses provided valuable context; however, all data sources relied on self-reported information, which may not fully represent the perspectives of all CTC leaders. While this report underwent several reviews to minimize bias and ensure relevance to the CTC system, the interpretation of qualitative responses is inherently subjective, as themes were identified through evaluator analysis. Future research that assess changes over time, incorporates additional data collection methods, and expands the sample size could strengthen future analyses.

Organization of this report

The remainder of this report provides findings from the Evolve Leadership Survey, interviews, focus groups, and document review. Chapter 2 shares leaders' perspectives on barriers to equity-focused systems change. Chapter 3 shares findings on EDI strategic plan development and implementation successes. Chapter 4 describes how leaders experience the working conditions, recognition, and support they receive for their EDI work. Chapter 5 shares their perspectives on available resources and career advancement opportunities. Chapter 6 shares their views on progress toward EDI goals and considerations for planning next steps.

Within this evaluation report, we have chosen to use leaders of color and identity-first language (e.g., white leaders) to promote clarity and consistency when discussing racial and ethnic groups. While we acknowledge that individuals may have varying preferences for discussing identity-related information, our approach aims to maintain professionalism and help readers understand the information provided in this document. We remain committed to respecting each individual's self-identity and preferences and encourage open dialogue to address any concerns or requests for accommodation in future reports.

Chapter 2. Barriers to equity-focused systems change

This chapter outlines the Evolve Initiative's strategy for fostering equity-focused systems change and increasing support for leaders of color across Washington's 34 community and technical colleges. It also summarizes the conditions that promote and sustain changes in policies and practices in educational, health, and community-based organizations. Finally, it shares the barriers to systems change identified by participants in CTC focus groups, interviews, and surveys.

The Evolve Initiative's approach to systemic change

The Evolve Initiative seeks to bridge leadership development and institutional change by addressing three critical needs in the CTC system.[3]

- **Responsive leadership.** Ensuring responsiveness to the voices, realities, challenges, and needs of formal and informal leaders of color throughout the entire system.

- **Systemwide support.** Enabling systemwide support for leadership at multiple levels, positions, and individuals, fostering alignment in efforts to become antiracist leaders and institutions.

- **Equity-focused mission statements.** Providing support and accountability to translate equity-focused mission statements and EDI plans into actionable and measurable outcomes.

> *"We are looking to help create whole-college transformation by building capacity for equity-focused systems change in ways that improve relationships, interactions, practices, and policies that share the college culture and experience."*
>
> **—Warren Brown, chief executive officer of College Spark Washington**

Conditions that promote successful systems change

Systemic barriers that impede the use and sustainability of effective policies and practices are a universal concern for higher education institutions, government agencies, and community-based organizations. Conditions that promote successful implementation include ensuring the changes in policies and practices are a good fit with the college and CTC system, communicating that the change is a high priority for leadership, and engaging faculty and staff commitment to change

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[3] College Spark Washington. (2025). Evolve Initiative theory of change: Bridging leadership development and institutional change. Evolve Initiative - College Spark

practice. Sustaining policy and practice changes requires building organizational infrastructure that supports professional development and/or coaching, assigning clearly defined roles to sustain the practice change, and ensuring interested parties are informed about the progress and results of the changed practice.[4] Sustaining systemic changes requires alignment of the practice changes with policy, incentive or funding structures, hiring and retention practices, and accountability. Authentic systems change also requires shifting the conditions that maintain the ineffective practices and ensuring meaningful inclusion of leaders, faculty, staff, and students throughout the systems change process.[5]

Leaders play a critical role in establishing an organizational climate that supports and sustains effective implementation of new practices. Organizational change requires leaders who can set and communicate a clear vision to the faculty and staff. It also requires aligning or integrating the new policy and practice with existing priorities and coordinating work responsibilities to maximize effectiveness and efficiencies throughout the implementation process. However, defining and understanding the dynamic relationship between leadership and the effectiveness with which organizations achieve their desired goals is complex and multifaceted. It often involves selecting an approach that fits the CTC's context, removal of barriers that impede progress, and responding to the readiness level of faculty and staff to be fully responsible for incorporating the new practices into their work.

Barriers to establishing equity-focused systems that promote leaders of color, antiracism, and EDI policies and practices

Implementing EDI and antiracist practices in CTCs can be challenging due to the unique context of each institution, as well as institutional, cultural, and logistical barriers to systems change. The following paragraphs summarize challenges to integrating EDI and antiracist practices across Washington's CTC system, as identified by focus group, interview, and survey participants. In this chapter, we identify quotes from presidents or chancellors, while all other quotes are attributed to "EDI leader" rather than the specific title or position of the participant. The purpose of this decision is to protect the privacy of the participants and to promote clarity and consistency for the reader.

Local contexts and community values differ significantly across CTCs

The Washington CTC system serves communities that vary dramatically based on demographics, language diversity, socioeconomic factors, and student needs. For example, CTCs serving urban

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[4] Nishioka, V., & Pollack, I. (2020). Frameworks for effective organizational and leadership change: Readiness, implementation, and sustainability. Education Northwest.

[5] Kania, J., Kramer, M., & Senge, P. (2018). The water of systems change. https://www.ncfp.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/The-Water-of-Systems-Change-FSG-2018.pdf

communities often serve students from racially and ethnically diverse populations including first-generation, immigrant, and refugee students who would benefit from a diverse and multilingual workforce. CTCs in rural areas or in the eastern part of the state may have more conservative communities, where equity and anti-racism is not openly discussed or seen as a priority for change. Building a diverse workforce may be more difficult for these CTCs due to difficulties with faculty recruitment and retention.

> *"The 34 community and technical colleges are just very different places and so the attempts to make them do things in the same way are going to be very, very challenging because of the historical character and on-the-ground differences across these institutions. You're going to have different strategies to move the work forward, and they might need to be structured in different ways."*
>
> **—EDI leader**

Lack of a practical EDI framework and implementation strategy limits effective and meaningful systemic change

Leaders recognize the many challenges that implementing EDI across the CTC system presents, especially when it comes to adapting to local community needs. However, many expressed the need for an EDI framework or roadmap to guide planning, implementation strategies, and accountability. They believed an EDI framework would help integrate EDI into their college's overall strategic plan, increase consistency across the system, and strengthen collective commitment that promotes sustainability. Additionally, a shared framework could help leaders address the emotional burden of EDI work by fostering shared responsibility, clear strategies, and structured support such as sharing resources and lessons learned.

> *"It feels really important and successful some days. Other days it feels hard and like we're not doing enough. Some days, I feel like I don't know enough. There are a lot of feelings of inadequacy or feelings of being unsure of where to go next or what to do next."*
>
> **—EDI leader**

Institutional structures and conditions continue to perpetuate inequities and are resistant to change

Across all focus groups, interviews, and open-ended survey responses, leaders identified EDI as a moral responsibility and said closing equity gaps for students, faculty, and staff was a core mission of the CTC system. However, several leaders emphasized the enormous challenge of implementing and operationalizing equity given the deep-seated history and biases found in some CTC

communities. Two participants described the challenge of addressing long-standing institutional racism if the workforce is predominantly white and resistant to adapting to equity-based reforms.

"The system was designed for them [white people] and their culture and their cultural frameworks and their way of doing and being. Their experience is always centered. So, when you have a college that has 80 percent students of color, it requires shifting our practices to center the culture of the students we're serving. Because even though we're 80 percent students of color, our white students are completing at higher rates than our students of color."

—EDI leader

"I think a huge barrier is the history and biases and so forth in this state. As much as we're trying to be open—and I think many people have the best of intentions—I don't think everyone or every college has done that deep work to get through all the cultural barriers students of color face … and basically to try to dismantle them and be an antiracist institution … How do we change that entrenched way of thinking in some communities? Because, in some cases, the majority of the people who work at the institution have been in the community for generations."

—Formal leader

Performative implementation is a barrier to meaningful and lasting systems change

Leaders identified performative implementation as a barrier to meaningful and lasting EDI systems change. Performative EDI refers to symbolic actions that do not address root causes of inequity and often lack action plans and accountability processes. Examples of performative EDI could include conducting single-event trainings without providing additional support to implement the practices; placing individuals in EDI leadership roles who may not have the necessary knowledge, experience, or skills; failing to set measurable goals to track progress; or offering cultural events that feature diverse food, clothing, or decorations but do not directly address EDI efforts. Performative implementation also includes failure to provide meaningful support to leaders who are advancing EDI work. Participants identified two critical features of meaningful administrative support: trust in the EDI leaders' abilities and intentions about the work and a willingness to share decision-making power and actively support implementation of EDI strategies.

"Our college has a lot of performative antiracism efforts, with little to no actual resources put into that work at an institutional level. It is left to individual managers or department leaders to support professional development using their own departmental resources. What is needed is actual fiscal resources put toward supporting staff and faculty so they can take time outside of their daily tasks to engage in antiracism work."

—EDI leader

"Do you trust them (EDI leaders)? Do you trust what they're bringing? Do you trust their expertise? Do you trust the language they're using? Without trust it's not going to go anywhere. We have individuals who are just sitting there because some administrators don't actually want [EDI] to move, and so they become performative in how they're doing it. They become performative in the ways they advance it. They become performative in the things they do, and it devalues the person doing the work and devalues the impact it could have on students, staff, and faculty."

—EDI leader

Establishing an equity-focused CTC system requires mitigating the institutional biases that affect students, faculty, and staff. Participants noted the challenge of changing these long-standing structures and policies, as well as a general resistance to doing things differently.

"The challenge in these roles is to mitigate [institutional bias] and create opportunities for persons in historically and traditionally less-empowered groups. But those barriers are significant and deeply embedded, and they're not just systemic, they're cultural. Before students of color even get here, they've learned their so-called place in society, and a lot of them deal with internalized oppression. Then they come up against these [CTC} systems that have additional barriers for them."

—EDI leader

Building and retaining a racially diverse workforce will require implementing policy and practice reforms

Leaders identified inequities and inconsistencies in selection, hiring, and career advancement practices across the CTC system. Interview and focus group participants specifically identified current tenure and incentive systems that are barriers to EDI reforms. Several focus group participants shared examples that suggest racial bias was a factor in hiring and appointment decisions.

"I asked a person at one point in my career if I could be appointed to a role similar to the one that I'm now in. But I was told, 'Well, we're no longer doing appointments. You don't want individuals to think that we gave you anything, and we want you to compete for it so that they know you earned it.' However, my white colleagues could get appointments to different roles. It's not that they weren't doing appointments. They weren't doing appointments for me."

—EDI leader

Institutional leaders have strong emotions, different perspectives, and conflicting opinions on designing and implementing EDI and antiracist reforms

Implementing EDI efforts across the CTC system is complex due to the many institutional, societal, and structural challenges that affect students, faculty, and staff. For example, several leaders shared challenges related to coordinating the efforts of leaders of color and white leaders. Participants expressed concerns about white leaders who publicly support EDI initiatives but do little to challenge systemic issues. They also described how some white leaders and allies avoid difficult conversations about racism or center themselves in conversations rather than uplifting the voices of marginalized communities.

"White [leaders] often think they're super progressive and that they're the ones championing EDI work. But when it comes to the actual challenge of doing the work, they're the barrier. They're keeping us from moving forward and making changes on campus. That has been really disheartening to see, because I don't know if we're on the same page in terms of how we want to get this work done. And so that's been really frustrating."

—EDI leader

"I see a lot of white saviorism coming from faculty, as well as inappropriate use of their power and positionality. They're often not conscious of the harm they can do. And then I look at the faculty who are doing really outstanding work—I don't know that they're recognized, because they're doing it so quietly."

—EDI leader

Cultural differences and implicit bias from supervisors often result in conflict, wasted effort, and inefficiencies for informal leaders

The supervisory and power structures of many CTCs place staff members of color at a disadvantage for retention and advancement. Focus group participants shared examples of cultural misunderstandings, hostile supervisor-staff relationships, and overall work dissatisfaction that had led to wasted time, increased emotional burden, and work inefficiencies. Participants specifically mentioned implicit bias and cultural differences related to time, communication, and structuring work responsibilities.

> *"Higher education is one of the most bureaucratic and hierarchical settings you're going to find. And we know that, historically, the greatest diversity in higher education is among classified staff, not faculty, and certainly not tenured faculty ... And so, when [employees of color] talk about being at the mercy of a supervisor, well, that's more likely to be a classified staff member than a tenured faculty member who has the freedom to do whatever they want in their schedule, while a classified staff member is essentially chained to a desk. That's where our diversity is. That's where we need to be building community. And that's one of these hierarchical pieces that systemically protects and perpetuates the current power structure."*
>
> **—EDI leader**

Participants identified inconsistency—both within and across CTCs—in the policies and practices that impact who gets to engage in professional development community-building opportunities. These differences directly contribute to inequities and work dissatisfaction that could influence the retention of employees of color.

> *"I think one challenge is supervisors who don't really support the work. They don't allow staff members of color to participate in professional development or go to activities that promote community. I have an actual example where we were having the welcome back faculty and staff of color group reception, and an administrative assistant was told she couldn't go because she had to stay at her desk."*
>
> **—EDI leader**

Informal leaders, in particular, experience work-related stress related to their EDI work

Leaders of color at all levels experience bias, microaggressions, and macroaggression in their CTC work settings, but this is particularly acute for informal leaders who are responsible for supporting

students of color, supporting co-workers who are navigating bias incidents, or those who are the sole advocate for equity-focused changes at their institution. Several of these leaders mentioned the emotional burden of EDI work.

> *"Personal blowback, whisper and anonymous campaigns against DEI directors. Personal attacks on their character, integrity, and job performance … In the literature it's called 'know your place aggression.' [Persons of color] experience know your place aggression, meaning we're attacked at the same levels as we're praised. When white people, especially white men, are doing a good job they receive praise, not aggression."*
>
> **—EDI leader**

Another challenge identified by leaders of color are unwritten expectations and heavier workloads that go beyond their job descriptions. These inequities could be associated with tokenism and the expectations that they will be the spokesperson on EDI and antiracism efforts even if it is not part of their job description. Leaders of color identified the emotional labor of being the "go-to" person on equity issues and being expected to serve on EDI committees often without compensation.

> *"I think it's always been really heavy. I feel this sense of responsibility to the community to be involved. In the multiple leadership roles that I've held in my career, the responsibility gets heavier and heavier. And it's this unspoken labor that I think other people don't feel. The part that is not written in the job description is that I represent the people (of color) … They come to me a lot, and they don't go to my white counterparts. It is emotionally exhausting."*
>
> **—EDI leader**

While formal and informal leaders experience the increased emotional labor of implementing EDI practices, informal leaders in particular experience bias, microaggressions, and overt hostility that make their work emotionally and physically exhausting.

> *"When I'm in meetings with other decisionmakers, it can be very volatile and very passive-aggressive. These are often people who don't understand my world view or the life experiences that I bring and don't understand that I have responsibility to speak not only for our students of color but also our faculty and staff members of color … I feel like I have to put on armor every time I go to executive cabinet meetings. It's exhausting, and it takes a toll on my well-being, and I don't think that other people are experiencing that … It's like you're swimming upstream all the time."*
>
> **—EDI leader**

White leaders who completed the survey also expressed frustration related to lack of information about ways to contribute to EDI work and conversations. Some also described their difficulty in feeling heard and valued in EDI conversations.

"I think my college is already doing a lot of work in this area, which I greatly appreciate and commend. As a white, middle-manager at my institution, I am often not invited or encouraged to participate in more formal opportunities to advance EDI efforts, such as committees, task forces, strategic planning conversations, etc. To some degree, I understand that because people who share my identities are already well represented in those spaces. At the same time, it leads to a feeling of disengagement and being underutilized, since this is something I care about deeply and believe I have a lot to offer to."

—EDI leader

"It can be hard to speak up about racist or sexist activities happening to you when you are of the majority. It is a common opinion and occurrence that if you are of the majority—Caucasian, male, cis-gender, or no physical disability— foul language and degrading behavior are something you have to accept, because you are more privileged and therefore are not permitted to defend yourself or make complaints to HR or you will be deemed intolerant. The ability to uplift and help without the need to tear down other groups is something that is not well taught and translated across many higher education campuses. It creates a hostile and resentful environment for students, staff, and faculty."

—EDI leader

Summary

The leaders who shared their knowledge and lived experience identified institutional, cultural, and logistical barriers to establishing EDI systems in Washington's CTC system. These barriers include absence of a statewide EDI plan, staff and community resistance to change, lack of clear pathways to leadership and career advancement opportunities, promotion processes that disadvantage leaders of color, and the emotional and physical toll associated with EDI work. Many described EDI efforts as performative—one-time trainings, symbolic hires, and a lack of accountability or follow through—that were making little progress toward meaningful systemic changes that foster inclusive learning environments in which all students, faculty, and staff can thrive.

Chapter 3. EDI plans and implementation

This chapter shares the document review findings on the content of EDI plans related to increasing the racial diversity of faculty and staff at CTCs and providing career advancement opportunities for leaders of color. This is followed by findings from the Evolve Leadership Survey. Finally, we report leaders' recommendations on addressing areas of growth and advancing implementation of EDI across the CTC system.

Review of EDI strategic plans on inclusion of strategies to enhance advancement opportunities for leaders of color

All 34 CTCs have posted information about their EDI strategic plan on their website, and most have included campus climate survey findings as required by state law. Typically, strategic plans provide a long-term vision, goals, and direction and communicate the institution's high-level priorities and mission. Work plans outline how the institution will implement the strategic plan including actionable steps, timelines, responsible staff members, and measurable outcomes. While not required by state legislation, some CTCs did include a work plan or specific strategies for achieving their EDI goals.

Education Northwest conducted a content analysis of all EDI strategic plans and related documents to better understand how diversifying the CTC workforce and career advancement for leaders of color was reflected in these documents. Of the 34 CTCs, 21 posted separate EDI strategic plans on their websites, 12 embedded their EDI goals within the CTC's broader strategic plan, and one CTC indicated the plan was still in development. All CTC websites included statements about their commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusive culture and climate. The majority also described the equity team that helped develop the EDI plan and the equity-related services they provide. These services could include advising the executive cabinet on EDI issues, supporting students and staff members on EDI issues, providing or coordinating EDI and antiracist training, and responding to bias incidents or complaints.

All CTC strategic plans, whether presented as a standalone document or integrated into the college's overall plan, outlined long-term strategic directions that included EDI definitions and the professional development mandated by state law. As shown in figure 2, nearly all plans had a general statement related to recruitment and hiring, but few prioritized or mentioned hiring leaders of color. More than three-quarters of the CTCs had statements regarding leadership development and the needs assessment used to inform development of their EDI goals. Two-thirds of the plans referenced promotion or career advancement, but less than a quarter mentioned mentorship and leadership pipeline planning to establish or strengthen career pathways for leaders of color. None of the plans included goals related to addressing inequities in the promotion and tenure process that limit opportunities to hire or advance leaders of color.

Figure 2. Most equity, diversity, and inclusion plans referenced hiring and professional development strategic goals

Bar chart showing:
- Recruitment and hiring strategies: 97%
- Commitment to leadership diversity: 79%
- Leadership development and training: 79%
- Data-based decisions and accountability: 76%
- Equitable promotion, tenure, and career advancement: 65%
- Mentorship and sponsorship programs: 18%
- Leadership pipeline and succession planning: 18%
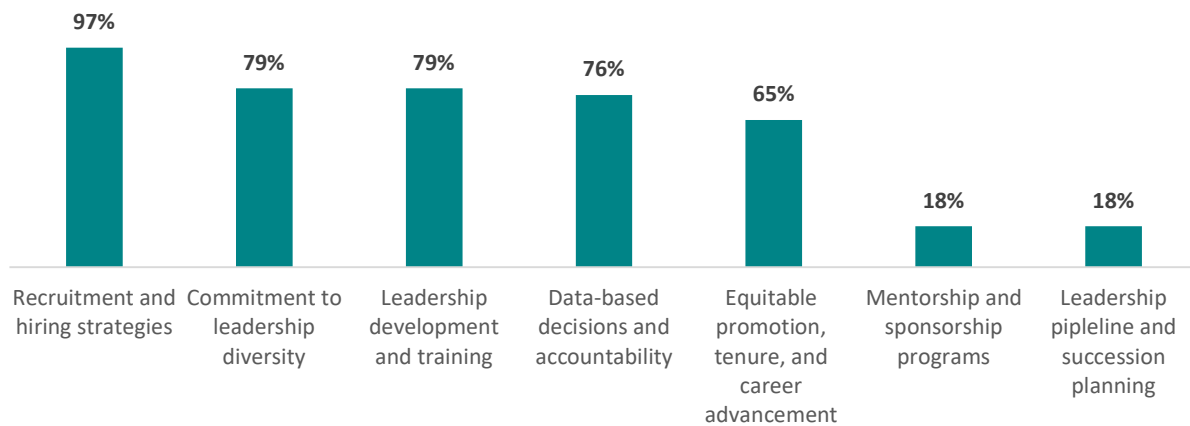
Note: Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) plans and related documents retrieved from 34 Washington community and technical colleges.

Source: Authors' analysis of community and technical college plans and equity documents, 2024.

Formal leaders' perceptions of their ability to lead EDI and antiracist efforts

This section reports the Evolve Leadership Survey findings, which explores how formal leaders view their ability to lead EDI efforts. To promote clarity and consistency for the reader, we use the terms "formal white leaders," "formal leaders of color," "informal leaders of color," and "informal white leaders" to describe the participants' self-defined leadership role and racial identity.

We conducted a regression analysis, which found a positive and significant relationship ($p \leq .05$) indicating leaders of color were more likely to agree or strongly agree that they could effectively lead EDI implementation strategies even after controlling for gender, level of education, and years of experience at the institution.

The percentage of formal leaders who said they could lead EDI efforts, communicate a clear vision, and engage the commitment of the CTC community was higher for leaders of color than for white leaders

Most formal leaders agreed or strongly agreed that they have the knowledge and skills to lead their college in creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment (figure 3). Most formal leaders also expressed confidence in their ability to articulate a clear EDI vision and goals and their ability to engage faculty, staff, and students in implementing EDI and antiracist practices. The percentages of formal leaders who agreed or strongly agreed that they could lead these EDI strategies was higher for leaders of color than white leaders, with agreement rates ranging from 71

to 78 percent for leaders of color and from 58 to 71 percent for white leaders. In contrast, a higher percentage of formal white leaders agreed or strongly agreed that they could center equity in departmental decision making, compared to formal leaders of color (82% and 75%, respectively).

Figure 3. A higher percentage of formal leaders of color were confident that they could lead, communicate, and engage the collective commitment to implement EDI, but a higher percentage of white leaders said they could center EDI in departmental decisions
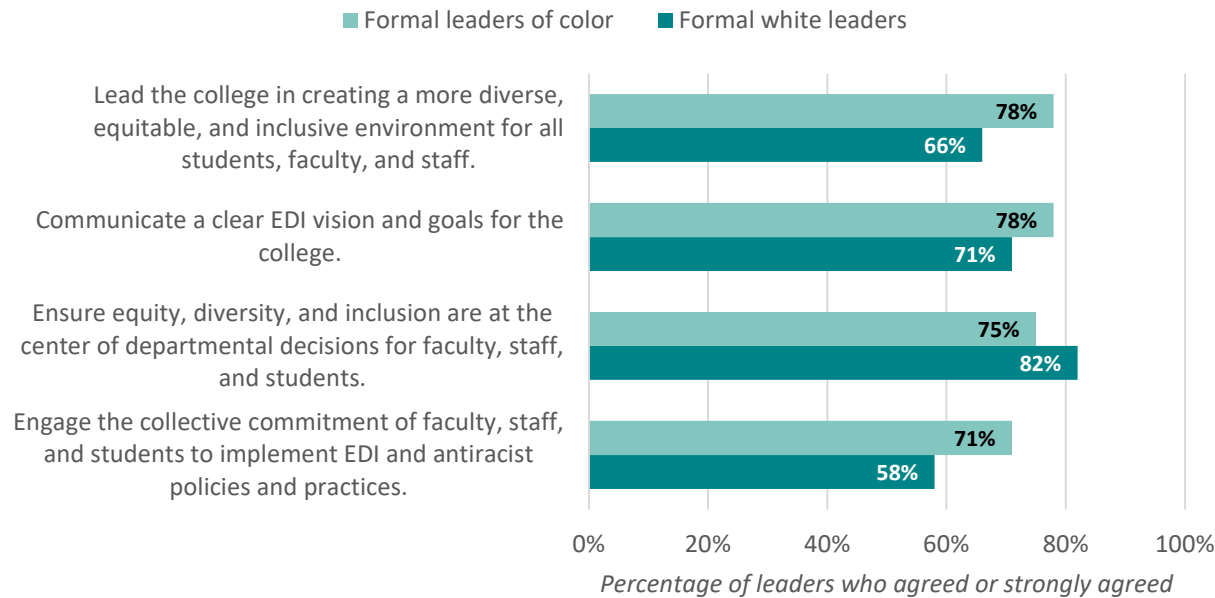
Note: The Evolve Leadership Survey used a six-point Likert scale. The response options were "somewhat disagree," "disagree," "strongly disagree," "somewhat agree," "agree," and "strongly agree." The number of item responses ranged from 64 to 65 for formal leaders of color and from 77 to 78 for formal white leaders. Detailed summaries of survey data are available in tables B1–B2.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

A higher percentage of formal leaders of color said they could elevate the voices of marginalized communities, uphold accountability, and implement effective EDI policies

As illustrated in figure 4, 95 percent of formal leaders of color and 94 percent of formal white leaders agreed or strongly agreed that they could lead by example. Additionally, 81 percent of formal leaders of color expressed confidence in their ability to establish an inclusive, antiracist culture that amplifies the voices of students, faculty, and staff from marginalized communities, while 85 percent believed they could hold themselves accountable for advancing and maintaining EDI efforts. Although a majority of formal white leaders also agreed or strongly agreed with their capacity to implement these EDI strategies, their percentages were lower at 60 percent and 80 percent, respectively. The lowest percentage of formal leaders of color (65%) and formal white

leaders (53%) agreed or strongly agreed that they could implement effective antiracist and EDI policies that will make a lasting impact on their campus community.

Figure 4. Both formal leaders of color and formal white leaders expressed confidence in their ability to lead by example, but a higher percentage of leaders of color said they could elevate the voices of marginalized communities, uphold accountability, and implement effective EDI policies

Note: The Evolve Leadership Survey used a six-point Likert scale. The response options were "somewhat disagree," "disagree," "strongly disagree," "somewhat agree," "agree," and "strongly agree." The number of item responses ranged from 64 to 65 for formal leaders of color and from 77 to 78 for formal white leaders. Detailed summaries of survey data are available in tables B1–B2.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Formal and informal leaders' views on implementation of EDI strategies

This section shares the Evolve Leadership Survey findings on how formal and informal leaders view the transparency of EDI plans; the college's advocacy for students, faculty, and staff from marginalized communities; and the extent to which leaders feel recognized and valued for their EDI work.

A higher percentage of formal leaders agreed that EDI communication, training, and hiring practices were in place, as compared to informal leaders

Among formal leaders, the percentage of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed that EDI practices were in place ranged from 48 to 59 percent for leaders of color and ranged from 45 to 62 percent for white leaders (figure 5). About half of the leaders of color and white leaders agreed or strongly agreed that their college maintained regular and clear communication about EDI and that faculty and staff had access to professional development on cultural competency, unconscious bias, and inclusive teaching practices. Regarding hiring policies and practices that center diversity and equity, 48 percent of leaders of color and 45 percent of white leaders indicated these were in place.

Informal leaders reported even lower agreement levels on the presence of EDI practices, and informal leaders of color had the lowest levels of agreement across leadership groups. The percentage of informal leaders of color who agreed or strongly agreed that EDI practices were in place ranged from 34 to 45 percent and the percentage of white informal leaders ranged from 42 to 58 percent. for white informal leaders.

Figure 5. A higher percentage of formal leaders than informal leaders agreed or strongly agreed that these EDI strategies were in place; the group with the lowest percentages was informal leaders of color
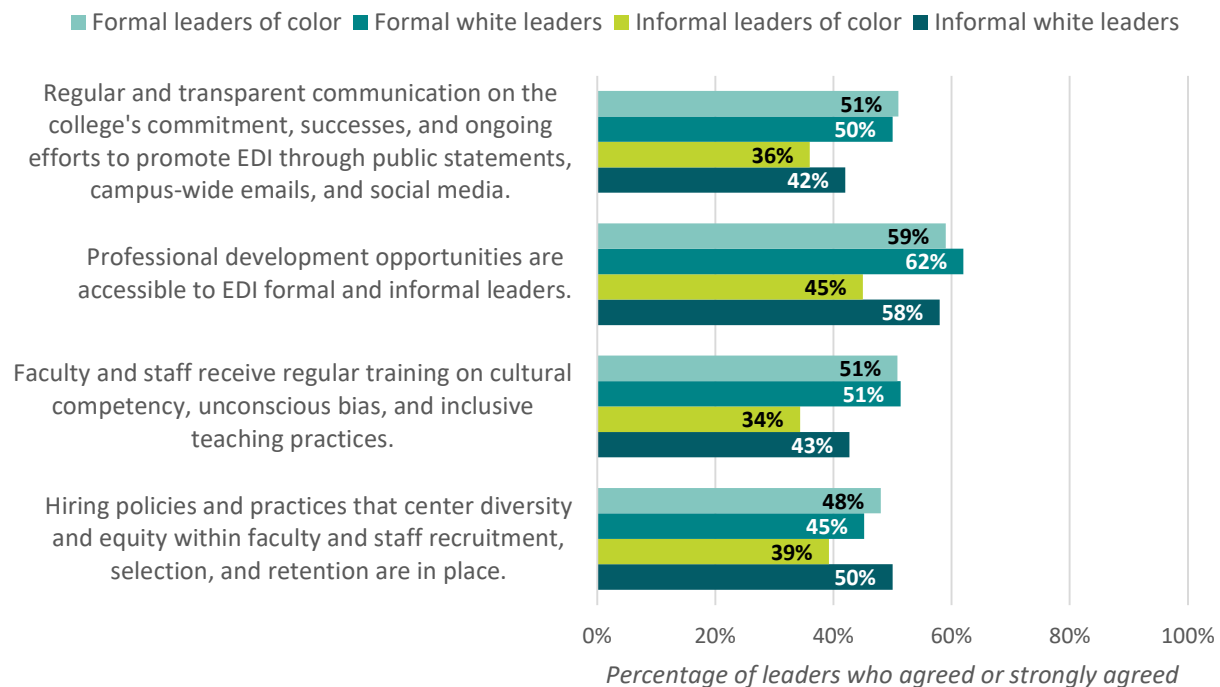
Note: The Evolve Leadership Survey used a six-point Likert scale. The response options were "somewhat disagree," "disagree," "strongly disagree," "somewhat agree," "agree," and "strongly agree." The number of item responses ranged from 58 to 59 for formal leaders of color, from 72 to 73 for formal white leaders, from 130 to 132 for informal leaders of color, and from 89 to 97 for informal white leaders. Detailed summaries of survey data are available in tables B3–B6.
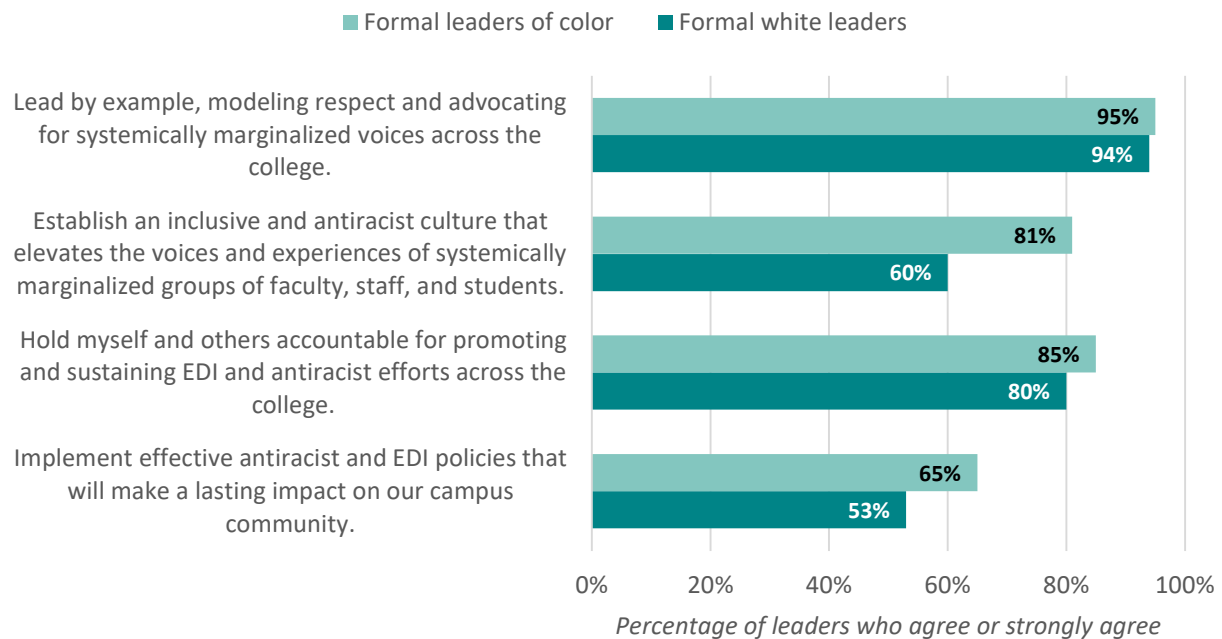
Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

A higher percentage of formal leaders than informal leaders agreed or strongly agreed that EDI strategies were in place. Specifically, between 40 to 68 percent of formal leaders said the CTC has committees dedicated to EDI; has safe places for faculty, staff, and students to find support; and conducts regular events that celebrate cultural diversity ranged from 40 to 68 percent (figure 6). In contrast, among informal leaders, agreement on the presence of these EDI strategies ranged from 29 to 56 percent. However, the percentages varied among leaders of color and white leaders. The percentage of leaders of color who agreed or strongly agreed that EDI committees and regular cultural events were in place was either lower or similar to that of white leaders. Notably, less than 50 percent of leaders reported the presence of designated safe spaces for systemically marginalized communities. Among formal leaders, a lower percentage of leaders of color reported the presence of safe places compared to white leaders, whereas among informal leaders, the percentage of leaders of color who reported the presence of safe places was higher than white leaders.

Figure 6. Higher percentages of formal leaders than informal leaders agreed or strongly agreed that EDI and antiracist practices were in place, but the percentages between leaders of color and white leaders varied
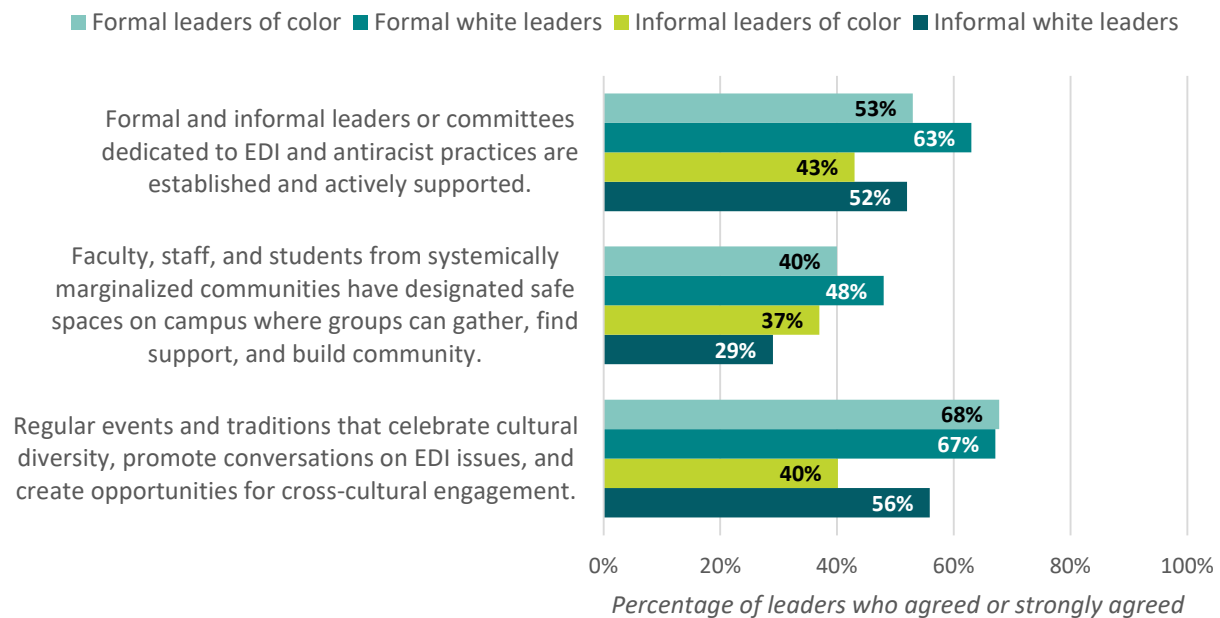
Percentage of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed

Note: The Evolve Leadership Survey used a six-point Likert scale. The response options were "somewhat disagree," "disagree," "strongly disagree," "somewhat agree," "agree," and "strongly agree." The number of item responses ranged from 58 to 59 for formal leaders of color, from 72 to 73 for formal white leaders, from 130 to 132 for informal leaders of color, and from 89 to 97 for informal white leaders. Detailed summaries of survey data are available in tables B3–B6.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Recommendations for integrating EDI and antiracist strategies across the CTC system

The leaders who participated in this evaluation had several recommendations for implementing EDI strategies that could build a more inclusive and antiracist culture on their campus and across the CTC system. In this section, we provide five of these recommendations, along with quotes that provide additional context.

To lead by example, formal and informal leaders need to do their own antiracist work

Formal and informal leaders understood the importance of continuing to examine their own biases and acknowledged the importance of continuous learning and creating space to have honest conversations about race, bias, and the cultural and historical contexts that influence their perspectives and decision making. Many white leaders who participated in the evaluation understood the importance of doing their own antiracist work and believed that being candid about their own learning was critical to leading EDI implementation.

> *"Within our college, it has to start with me … I have to be the one that is constantly talking about it, checking on it, making sure we're doing it, being open when others remind me that we may not be doing it … it's been a journey for me. I had to learn a lot. When I was first reading the book, 'White Fragility,' I was feeling exactly what she was talking about—getting very defensive. So, it took a lot of learning, and we did that at the cabinet level, to begin with … I still feel like a novice, and I don't know that I'll ever get to the point where I feel like I can confidently speak about these things in a way that I'm not going to offend someone."*

> **—Formal leader**

Some leaders believed that the willingness of presidents or chancellors to engage in their own work is not consistent across the CTC system.

> *"I think it starts with leaders who can do their own mirror work and show up authentically. Unless people are willing to take their own antiracist journey, then it doesn't matter … I just don't think people are ready to look within themselves and question how they're showing up, because some people are not willing to give up their privilege and their power."*

> **—Informal leader**

Communicate a clear vision of EDI and engage buy-in using messaging that considers the CTC's context and different viewpoints about equity

Communicating a clear vision for equity-focused systems and how CTCs could lead with racial equity is challenging and often wrought with cultural misunderstandings, resistance, and lack of knowledge about others' perspectives.

> *"I think within the faculty there might be issues related to buy-in … And maybe that's something the state can help with—countering the [anti-EDI] narrative and backlash. For example, what kind of data could [the state] provide to help start the conversation about why these efforts are needed? What kind of evidence could they provide about what works? And then how can we generate that buy-in from those places where we feel resistance?"*

> **—Informal leader**

Engage the collective commitment of faculty, staff, and students to implement EDI and antiracist policies and practices

Many leaders stressed the importance of including the perspectives of leaders, faculty, and staff of color in planning and implementing EDI policy changes, professional development, and culturally responsive curriculum and instruction. Leaders of color believe their lived experiences and deep knowledge about the challenges that students face within and outside the CTC system helps them understand the shifts that will have a meaningful impact on improving students' success. They also believed a shift toward equity-focused systems is necessary because of the growing diversity of their students.

> *"Most people of color come from collectivistic frameworks. And until we can embed collectivistic, cultural frameworks into how we do things so that more of our students can be successful and feel like they belong, then there's going to be a gap in our completion rates and our success rates … I don't want to get it confused. We are not saying, 'Don't serve them (white students),' but make space for others, too, right? Or have multiple ways of doing something so that everybody can benefit. And it's not just one group benefiting."*
>
> **—EDI leader**

Recognize the influence that different approaches to EDI implementation and systems change may have on engaging the collective commitment of faculty, staff, and students

Leaders identified the importance of formal and informal leaders working together to advance EDI. Several participants said disagreements about how to approach EDI implementation had led to disjointed and fragmented efforts. These disagreements exist not only between white leaders and leaders of color but also between leaders of color from different racial backgrounds.

> *"I think the biggest issue is the conflict over whether to take an advocate or purist approach. That's where I see people butt heads. There are those who feel we should go at this hardcore and call out racism whenever and wherever we see it. And then there are others who feel we need to bring people into the conversation slowly, if we ever want to have a chance of really getting them to engage in the work. I think that's what causes most of the tension.*
>
> **—Formal leader**

Provide professional learning opportunities and messaging that will focus staff on the reasons for implementing EDI systemic changes

Leaders emphasized the importance of engaging people in EDI efforts by meeting them "where they are" and providing clear messages on why EDI work is important. This may require adjusting the language, training, goals, curriculum, and practices being used. It also means explaining why EDI work is important and sharing examples of how it helps everyone in the CTC community.

> *"We hear things like, 'What does it have to do with teaching? My job is being a teacher. Why do I need to know about all that other stuff? It has nothing to do with math, nothing to do with science.' … The way I present it every year when we do our welcome is to talk about social determinants of health and talk about the humanity. We're talking right now about just connecting as people. And so, this absolutely belongs in the classroom. This absolutely belongs everywhere … how do we impact people's quality of life? That's what I present."*
>
> **—Informal leader**

Summary

Across all EDI strategies, the percentage of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed that EDI strategies were in place was higher for formal leaders than for informal leaders. These strategies include communicating about EDI progress, providing accessible professional development opportunities, and revising hiring policies and practices that center EDI. A higher percentage of formal leaders than informal leaders also agreed or strongly agreed that other EDI strategies were in place, such as committees dedicated to EDI; regular events celebrating cultural diversity; and safe spaces for students, faculty, and staff from systemically marginalized communities. However, survey findings indicate that there is room for growth. The percentages of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed that EDI strategies are in place ranged from 36 to 62 percent, and informal leaders of color had the lowest percentages across all EDI strategies.

Chapter 4. Working conditions, recognition, and support

This chapter shares formal and informal leaders' views on the use of strategies for increasing the racial diversity of the faculty and staff, providing access to EDI training and professional development, and communicating about the college's efforts to promote EDI. It also shares their perspectives on the college's efforts to support EDI work, celebrate and promote cultural diversity, and provide safe places for people of color to find support and build community.

Findings

Most formal and informal leaders feel the CTC system fosters growth for all leaders, advocates for marginalized communities, and promotes EDI in meaningful ways

For formal leaders, 64 percent of white leaders agreed or strongly agreed that their college is committed to fostering growth for all leaders and 61 percent believe their college advocates for the success of faculty, staff, and students from marginalized communities (figure 7). Although a majority of leaders of color also agreed or strongly agreed that these EDI strategies are in place, their percentages were lower at 55 percent and 59 percent, respectively. In contrast, the percentage of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed that their college fosters an environment for faculty, staff, students, and others to promote EDI in meaningful ways was higher for leaders of color (64%) than for white leaders (56%). Across all EDI implementation indicators, the percentages of informal leaders of color who agreed that these strategies are in place was lower than for informal white leaders. The percentages for informal leaders of color ranged from 42 to 49 percent and the percentages for informal white leaders ranged from 52 to 61 percent.

Figure 7. For both formal and informal leaders, lower percentages of leaders of color agreed or strongly agreed that their college is committed to fostering growth for all leaders and advocates for the success of faculty, staff, and students who come from systematically marginalized backgrounds

Legend: ■ Formal leaders of color ■ Formal white leaders ■ Informal leaders of color ■ Informal white leaders

The college is committed to fostering growth for all leaders, including leaders of color.
- 55%
- 64%
- 43%
- 52%

The college advocates for the success of faculty, staff, and students who come from systematically marginalized backgrounds.
- 59%
- 61%
- 42%
- 56%

The college fosters an environment for faculty, staff, students, and others to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in meaningful ways.
- 64%
- 56%
- 49%
- 61%

Percentage of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed

Note: The Evolve Leadership Survey used a six-point Likert scale. The response options were "somewhat disagree," "disagree," "strongly disagree," "somewhat agree," "agree," and "strongly agree." The number of item responses ranged from 60 to 61 for formal leaders of color, from 64 to 75 for formal white leaders, from 153 to 160 for informal leaders of color, and from 88 to 105 for informal white leaders. Detailed summaries of survey data are available in tables B7–B10.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Compared to their peers, formal leaders of color feel more confident that they are recognized for their EDI work and that their cultural identity and lived experience are valued

Formal leaders of color were much more confident than informal leaders of color about the EDI work at their institution and their role in that work (figure 8). For example, 64 percent of formal leaders of color agreed or strongly agreed that their work is recognized as an integral part of the college's plan, 54 percent believed their institution has a clear EDI plan and that progress is communicated regularly, and 57 percent felt that their cultural and life experiences were viewed as assets in that work. Lower percentages of formal white leaders agreed that these EDI strategies were in place, ranging from 37 to 47 percent, depending on the category.

Meanwhile, informal leaders of color showed even less confidence in these statements (35% and 41%, respectively). Informal white leaders, on the other hand, felt less confident that their cultural identity was viewed as an asset (40%).

Figure 8. Compared to other groups, formal leaders of color felt more confident that their institution has an EDI plan in place, communicates about the EDI plan, and views their cultural identity and life experience as assets in the work
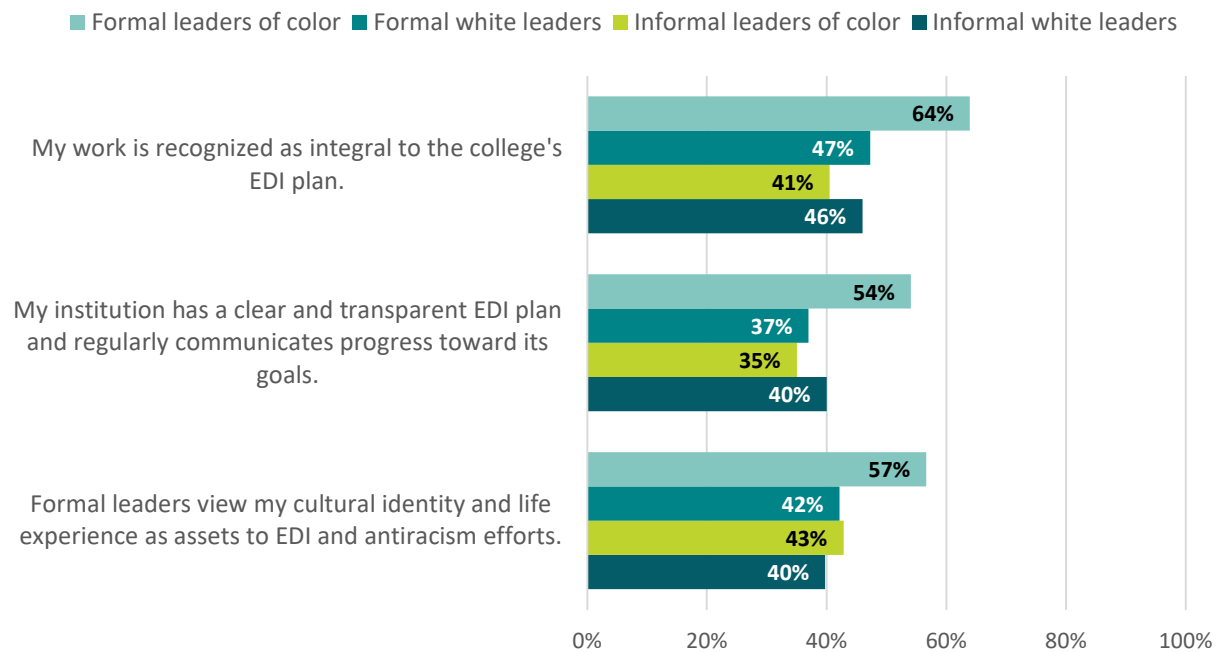
Note: The Evolve Leadership Survey used a six-point Likert scale. The response options were "somewhat disagree," "disagree," "strongly disagree," "somewhat agree," "agree," and "strongly agree." The number of item responses ranged from 60 to 61 for formal leaders of color, from 64 to 75 for formal white leaders, from 153 to 160 for informal leaders of color, and from 88 to 105 for informal white leaders. Detailed summaries of survey data are available in tables B7–B10.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Fewer informal leaders of color agree that they receive support and respect for their EDI work or are encouraged to promote antiracism at their institution

The percentage of informal leaders of color who agreed or strongly agreed that these supports are in place ranged from 38 to 51 percent, while the percentages for informal white leaders ranged from 47 to 63 percent.

Figure 9. A lower percentage of informal leaders of color agreed or strongly agreed that they can discuss, gain respect for, and receive encouragement for their antiracism and EDI efforts
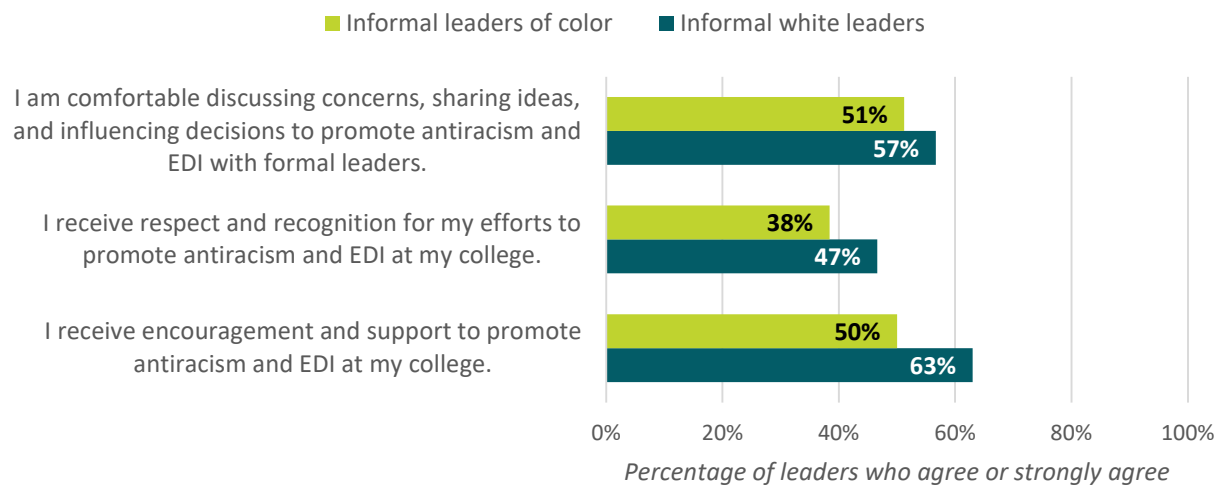
Note: The Evolve Leadership Survey used a six-point Likert scale. The response options were "somewhat disagree," "disagree," "strongly disagree," "somewhat agree," "agree," and "strongly agree." The number of item responses ranged from 112 to 122 for informal leaders of color and from 84 to 91 for informal white leaders. Detailed summaries of survey data are available in tables B13–B14.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Approximately two-thirds of informal leaders, regardless of race/ethnicity, do not feel confident that they can voice contrary opinions without fear of negative consequences or retaliation

While most informal leaders feel they have the resources they need to engage in EDI and antiracism work, a large majority do not feel confident that they have the channels of support to do so or that they can voice their opinions about how to engage in the work without fear of negative consequences (figure 10). These percentages were remarkably similar for informal leaders of color and informal white leaders.

Figure 10. About half of the informal leaders of color and white leaders agreed or strongly agreed that they have access to resources and channels of support, and about a third agreed or strongly agreed that they can voice contrary opinions without the fear of retaliation

Legend: ■ Informal leaders of color   ■ Informal white leaders

I have channels of support that allow me to engage in open and honest conversations about race and other systemic inequities.
- Informal leaders of color: 40%
- Informal white leaders: 44%

I can voice my contrary opinions without the fear of negative consequences or retaliation from my peers.
- Informal leaders of color: 34%
- Informal white leaders: 33%

I am provided with resources to engage in EDI and antiracism work, such as participation in committees, task forces, and student or faculty…
- Informal leaders of color: 50%
- Informal white leaders: 53%

Percentage of leaders who agree or strongly agree

Note: The Evolve Leadership Survey used a six-point Likert scale. The response options were "somewhat disagree," "disagree," "strongly disagree," "somewhat agree," "agree," and "strongly agree." The number of item responses ranged from 112 to 122 for informal leaders of color and ranged from 84 to 91 for informal white leaders. Detailed summaries of survey data are available in tables B13–B14.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Recommendations for integrating EDI and antiracist strategies across the CTC system

Recognize and leverage the knowledge and expertise of leaders of color to revise EDI policies and procedures on instruction, career advancement, human resources, and other operating procedures

Shifting CTC procedures and practices to create a more inclusive and equity-focused learning environment requires the inclusion of leaders of color who have backgrounds and lived experiences that are similar to those of the students, faculty, and staff.

"People are developing something to help us do the work, but we (informal leaders of color) are not included. Let us be part of that, so that we can help direct it. The reason it is currently so vague is that they didn't actually have the necessary context. If they had asked us, we would have said, 'This is actually what needs to be in there.' We can help define some of those parameters about professional learning opportunities, how we should use funding for this, or how it should be allocated—any of those things. We have ideas. We have the necessary experience to make it more relevant for continuous work and progress."

—Informal leader

Leverage the important contributions that formal and informal leaders of color can bring to this work

The goal of embedding EDI into instruction and student support services is to increase enrollment and completion rates for the growing number of students from diverse racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. To accomplish this goal, CTCs must leverage the expertise and leadership of administrators, faculty, and staff members of color to strengthen or build culturally relevant, student-centered practices.

"I think about the importance of hope and faith in the work that we have. I think every institution I've ever worked at has called itself student-centered, and all of my colleagues think of themselves as student-centered. But I think in our work, student-centered is a little bit different, because we have a different kind of connection that comes from working directly with students who are inspired by our own hope and faith that things can get better. I know that in my time I've seen progress on these issues and that has been very important in centering my own hope and faith."

—Informal leader

"And those students, I know are looking at us as the examples of not only what is possible, but as trailblazers, holding the lamp for them so that they can make it through these challenges. It was a huge realization to me that nobody is teaching students about navigating racism in the workplace. They have to go to a professional association to even engage in that discussion, because it's not part of the curriculum. But it's a very important part of what they're going to experience in the professional setting. And so it's important for us to be there for them, to continue going back to them and centering them. I think we do that in a necessarily different way than our white colleagues."

—informal leader

Respect and support leaders of color by establishing realistic expectations and channels of resources and support

Create the conditions for leaders of color to have a community that supports their EDI and antiracist work.

"I think it's important that we reach a critical mass. Most of us who do this kind of work have experienced this in our career—being the only one in a room. And when you're the only one in a room, you're very conspicuous if you stand up and speak out. It is a matter of personal risk whether or not you say these things. However, if it moves from being one in a room of 10 to being one of three or four in a room of 10, it makes a huge difference as to whether or not those people feel safe sharing their real experiences and their real perspectives.

—Formal leader

Leaders of color are often expected to be the spokesperson for an entire community of color. This expectation places an unfair burden on them.

"We have to empower BIPOC leaders on campus and give them an opportunity to thrive in their leadership role while also ensuring that they're not [asked to be] the voice of all people of color on our campus. That's not their job. And historically, on our campus, that used to be a thing: 'Here, you're the one African American person on the President's Cabinet. You're responsible for telling everyone about our EDI efforts.' We've really tried to rectify that situation and make the [EDI] work the responsibility of all leaders."

—Formal leader

> *"Women of color in formal leadership roles experience the outsized expectation that they must accomplish more than their white predecessors or counterparts, and if they do not do enough, fast enough, or 'correctly' enough, they are at risk of being thrown from the 'glass cliff.'"*
>
> **—Formal leader**

Focus on improving supervisors' capacity to provide culturally responsive and supportive management skills, especially with informal leaders

Several focus group participants described their gratitude for supervisors who valued their knowledge, expertise, and life experience. They noted that their supervisors often reach out to them for help with increasing their own learning; checking their biases; and incorporating input on EDI strategies, planning, and communication. The participants mentioned the positive impact this has on their work satisfaction, sense of well-being, and career advancement opportunities.

> *"My current supervisor definitely supports me. They value how long I've been at the institution—my institutional knowledge and my experience. And they give me a lot of autonomy. Just knowing that I can do my work and have the freedom to try new things. Sometimes those ideas work, sometimes they don't, but having that grace to try new things is big for me."*
>
> **—Informal leader**

Provide informal leaders with more recognition for their EDI efforts

Informal leaders of color often serve multiple roles that add to their already heavy workload. Often, they are not compensated for this work and it is not recognized by formal leaders or their colleagues. Within their institution, leaders of color often work to advance EDI by serving on committees or as a department chair, mentor, or advocate. Many leaders of color are also members of or are affiliated with groups outside their institution such as the Diversity and Equity Officers Commission; the Faculty and Staff of Color Conference; Administrators of Color; the Northwest Regional Equity Conference; the Multicultural Student Services Directors' Council; and the Social Justice Leadership Institute.

"I just did a feedback session with faculty, and one of the main things they said was that they didn't feel they were being recognized and appreciated for the things they were doing. So, that's huge. If we had ways to recognize them that could lead to promotion, I think that would be something real. Not just 'Hey, thanks,' but an actual financial reward of some kind, because they're doing a lot."

—Informal leader

Summary

The majority of formal leaders agreed or strongly agreed that their institution is committed to fostering growth for all leaders; advocates for the success of faculty, staff, and students; and fosters an environment for leaders at all levels to promote EDI in meaningful ways. The percentages of formal leaders ranged from 56 to 64 percent across these indicators of EDI implementation. In contrast, the percentages for informal leaders were lower, ranging from 42 to 49 percent for informal leaders of color and from 52 to 61 percent for informal white leaders. Regression analysis found statistically significant differences among informal leaders based on their self-identified race or ethnicity. Informal leaders of color are less likely than informal white leaders to feel comfortable when sharing ideas about EDI. They are less also likely to feel respected, gain recognition, and receive resources or support for their EDI work.

Chapter 5. Career advancement, resources, and support

This chapter shares formal and informal leaders' views on the career advancement opportunities in general and the channels of support they receive in relation to their EDI work. It also shares their suggestions for increasing recruitment, selection, and retention of EDI leaders, especially with an emphasis on leaders of color.

Leaders' perspectives on the advancement opportunities, resources, and channels of support

Formal leaders of color felt more confident than formal white leaders that they have channels of support that allow them to engage in open and honest communications and that they can voice their contrary decisions about EDI without fear of retaliation (figure 11). However, survey findings indicate room for growth as the percentages of leaders of color were 43 and 51 percent and the percentage for white leaders was 39 percent for both items. In addition, less than a third of the formal leaders of color agreed or strongly agreed that they had the resources to do EDI work (27%) and that they had access to career advancement opportunities (13%). For these indicators, the percentages of leaders of color was lower than the percentages of white leaders.

Figure 11. The percentage of formal leaders of color who agreed or strongly agreed was higher than white leaders on having channels of support and sharing their contrary opinions with retaliation, and lower for accessing advancement opportunities

Legend: Formal leaders of color ■ Formal white leaders

I have channels of support that allow me to engage in open and honest conversations about race and other systemic inequities.
- Formal leaders of color: 51%
- Formal white leaders: 39%

I can voice my contrary opinions without the fear of negative consequences or retaliation from my peers or supervisors.
- Formal leaders of color: 43%
- Formal white leaders: 39%

I have the resources to engage in equity work, which includes time for conversation and reflection about inequalities and tools to advance the institution's mission.
- Formal leaders of color: 27%
- Formal white leaders: 34%

The advancement opportunities to higher leadership positions are clearly outlined and transparent within my college.
- Formal leaders of color: 13%
- Formal white leaders: 25%

Percentage of leaders who agree or strongly agree

Note: The Evolve Leadership Survey used a six-point Likert scale. The response options were "somewhat disagree," "disagree," "strongly disagree," "somewhat agree," "agree," and "strongly agree." The number of item responses ranged from 46 to 52 for formal leaders of color and from 57 to 65 for formal white leaders. Detailed summaries of survey data are available in tables B13–B12.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Meanwhile, the percentages of informal leaders who agreed or strongly agreed that they had access to EDI, antiracism, and leadership resources to enhance their skills, mentoring opportunities, to participate in strategic planning or policy decisions was lower for leaders of color than white leaders (figure 12). The percentages of informal leaders who agreed or strongly agreed that these opportunities were available to them ranged from 19 to 42 percent for informal leaders of color and from 20 to 53 percent for informal white leaders. The lowest percentage of informal leaders agreed or strongly agreed that advancement opportunities to higher leadership positions are clearly outlined and transparent (19% for informal leaders of color and 20% for informal white leaders).

Figure 12. The percentage of informal leaders who agreed or strongly agreed that they have access to advancement opportunities, mentoring, and participating in strategic planning decisions was lower for leaders of color than white leaders
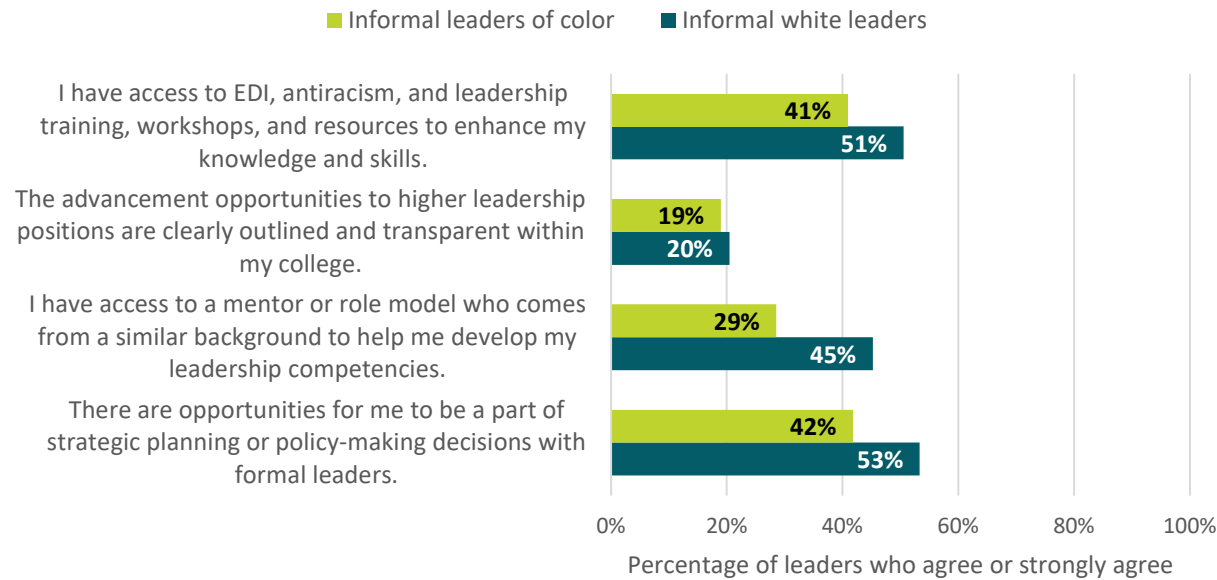
Note: The Evolve Leadership Survey used a six-point Likert scale. The response options were "somewhat disagree," "disagree," "strongly disagree," "somewhat agree," "agree," and "strongly agree." The number of informal leader item responses ranged from 121 to 122 for informal leaders of color and from 84 to 91 for informal white leaders. Detailed summaries of survey data are available in tables B13–B14.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Recommendations for integrating EDI and antiracist strategies to establish career advancement opportunities and support systems to recruit, select, and retain leaders of color

Engage the Boards of Trustees' leadership and support

The Board of Trustees has a critical role in guiding the strategic direction and implementation of each CTC. The members bring a wealth of knowledge, connections, and experience across multiple careers and disciplines. Engaging the Boards of Trustees to advance EDI work in meaningful ways could provide support to formal leaders as they build strategic plans and navigate the adaptive nature of EDI work.

"Strategically, are we looking at who our programs serve, who enters our college, who actually graduates from our college? Are we looking at support services that some of our students need that other students might not need? Are we looking at mentoring programs? Are we looking at what happens after they leave our campuses? From a strategic standpoint, we as trustees can look at the big picture and provide that guidance and insight on where we want our college to go and thereby impact [EDI]."

—Board of Trustees member

Provide opportunities for leaders of color to build relationships and community within their college, across the state, and nationally

Most focus group participants mentioned the importance of providing opportunities to share experiences, build community, and strengthen relationships with other formal and informal leaders of color. Leaders said building external networks and relationships outside of their institution was important to their growth as leaders. External networking outside the state helped leaders learn about different perspectives and strategies from EDI leaders who may work in states that are similar to Washington as well as states that are more advanced in their EDI work. Joining external networking and learning communities within Washington was viewed as a significant support, in part because of the low numbers of faculty and staff members of color within their institution.

They identified the Diversity and Equity Officers Commission (DEOC), Multicultural Student Services Directors Council, and Association of College Trustees of Color as important sources of support, community, and learning. The participants also said the annual conferences such as the Faculty and Staff of Color Conference; Administrators of Color; the Northwest Regional Equity Conference; the Higher Education Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Collaborative; and the other events also helped them build relationships, make connections, and renew their energy for EDI work.

"Oh, definitely connecting with the other diversity officers in the state is invaluable … it was very important, meeting those [DEOC members], and then also just getting a lay of the land as far as the differences between Seattle and that side of the state and recognizing where those differences are. Also, learning a little bit about allocations and budgets and how people are using their money. It helps because we don't have a pre-written plan for every college that says, 'This is the way this role is supposed to be.'"

—Formal leader

"Through the DEOC we have been very intentional about foregrounding the community itself. We really try to be more organic in how we approach this and emphasize building our relationships with each other so we have that community."

—Informal leader

Many formal and informal leaders spoke to the challenge of recruiting, hiring, and retaining EDI leaders with the knowledge, skills, and lived experience required to do EDI work. Many colleges have engaged in nationwide recruitment efforts due to the limited number of candidates in their district and across Washington state. While these efforts have been successful for many CTCs, others in more conservative communities have experienced viable candidates declining positions due to bias in the local community. The need to create a pipeline of EDI leaders has prompted administrators to consider "grow your own" as a potential strategy.

"That's what keeps me coming back every single day—the knowledge that we're trying to create spaces where students can feel like they belong and are part of the community and can believe that the college really wants them to succeed. And we're trying to build a coalition of leaders that have that skillset and share that commitment. And part of that is creating a community that they can fall back on and just be themselves and realize they don't have to get everything right, every time. There needs to be some grace. They shouldn't have to fear that they're going to lose their job if they make a mistake."

—Informal leader

Examine promotion and tenure systems to mitigate practices that disadvantage leaders of color and EDI implementation

Focus group participants identified current tenure systems as a barrier to creating opportunities to hire leaders, faculty, and staff members of color. Some leaders said the tenure system limited the number of position openings to the small number of retirees each year. However, several leaders stated revising tenure systems to include accountability for implementing EDI strategies was a viable solution. In addition to tenure systems leaders suggested examining other incentive structures.

"I think it's really important for us to critically examine our incentive structures. One of the things that has been uniform across my experience in higher education is that we decry the silos in higher education. But the reason everything is siloed is because the incentive structures are siloed … If we can incentivize things differently, such as incentivizing community involvement, spending time with individuals who are different than you and learning about them, then we'll get different results."

—Informal leader

Review promotion, appointment, tenure, and incentive structures to identify and rectify inequitable policies and procedures

Recruitment and selection processes may be influenced by implicit bias and differences in access to advancement opportunities. For example, leaders of color and other systematically marginalized groups may face additional scrutiny or higher standards in hiring and promotion processes such as being expected to apply for positions while others may receive appointments to similar roles. Recruitment and hiring often favor existing networks and working relationships, limiting access for candidates or employees who are underrepresented or lack connection to these groups. Failure to address implicit bias in evaluations, tenure, and promotion procedures could perpetuate practices that undermine EDI progress.

"We need more transparency around promotions. Right now, some people get appointed and others have to apply. And if you look at the data, across different colleges, you're going to see those patterns."

—Informal leader

"I don't think the tenure system itself is a barrier. I think the barrier is how we evaluate faculty once they get tenure. And I'm making that distinction because I think any faculty member can earn tenure, but once a faculty member does get tenure, we don't evaluate them in the same way. And there may need to be an evaluation system that includes [EDI]."

—Formal leader

Increase the opportunities for leaders to participate in policy or practice planning decisions

Many formal and informal leaders said positioning EDI leaders of color in roles that would allow them to influence policy and practice decisions was a core strategy in their EDI implementation

plan. Leaders said the inclusion of leaders of color in conversations about policy and expanding their representation in director, vice president, and other leadership roles could deepen implementation of EDI policies and practices.

> *"There is a pretty high level of diversity on the executive team … and there is a lot of attention being paid to increasing diversity at the director and assistant director levels. I believe there is a genuine desire to expand that pool of candidates, but we're not there yet."*
>
> **—Formal leader**

Informal leaders said it was essential to provide EDI training to supervisors who are new to their jobs

Focus group participants pointed to a lack of training for supervisors, which they viewed as pervasive across the CTC system. Recommended topics for such training included culturally responsive employee management practices and how to have difficult conversations.

> *"We often promote people to supervisory positions because they've done such a great job in their previous position, but then we don't provide them with any training. They don't know how to supervise. They don't know how to manage. So, we're beginning to design training programs for supervisors. And I think if we did something like that at the state level it would be really helpful."*
>
> **—Formal leader**

Increase access to mentoring focused on career advancement, especially for informal leaders of color

Leaders of color identified mentoring as essential to their advancement to leadership positions in the CTC system and other positions during their career trajectory. The characteristics of mentors who were the most helpful were individuals who saw them as a "whole" person and committed the time to build a relationship with them. Mentors bring deep knowledge and experience as a leader, offer guidance on navigating institutional and interpersonal challenges, and engage in solution-focused problem-solving. Mentors also facilitate networking and connections to leaders in the field and introduce their mentees to professional organizations and influential leaders that can help promote their career advancement and leadership development. Here is how one leader described mentoring:

"The great thing about having mentors of color is that they see me as a holistic human being, not just a professional. Just this week I was talking to two mentors of color who gave me specific suggestions about what I should do next. I really appreciate that. And they mentioned mistakes they had made—some of which were not entirely within their control—and I get to learn and benefit from that experience. I think those opportunities are really critical."

—Formal leader

Summary

The percentages of formal and informal leaders who agreed or strongly agreed that advancement opportunities to higher leadership positions are clearly outlined and transparent ranged from 13 to 25 percent. For formal leaders, the percentages of leaders who agreed that they have support to discuss EDI openly and can raise contrary opinions without fear of retaliation ranged from 39 to 51 percent for formal leaders and from 45 to 53 percent for informal leaders. The percentage of informal leaders who agreed or strongly agreed that they have access to EDI, antiracism, and leadership training, advancement opportunities, mentoring, and participating in strategic planning decisions was lower for leaders of color than for white leaders. These findings suggest a clear need for more transparent and consistent career advancement opportunities and increased access to training and mentorship, particularly for leaders of color.

Chapter 6. Considerations for next steps

EDI implementation will require a shift in culture and mindsets, as well as intentional efforts to dismantle longstanding institutional policies and practices that perpetuate inequities across the CTC system. It will also require a long-term strategy that includes clear goals, professional development, and accountability. The survey findings indicate formal leaders of color have more confidence in their ability to lead these EDI strategies than white formal leaders. The focus group findings also highlight the advantages that lived experience has for applying the vision, communication, and practices required for EDI implementation and sustainability. The remainder of this chapter summarizes the successes and considerations for implementing EDI that formal and informal leaders shared during interviews, focus groups, and open-ended survey responses.

Successes or EDI progress

The formal and informal leaders identified several successes that they have experienced as leaders of EDI efforts. These include the implementation of professional development and the collection of needs assessments, as mandated by Washington legislation. They also described equity-focused changes in strategic planning, policies, leadership structures, and practices. For example, many leaders shared successes related to integration and alignment of EDI strategies with the college's broader strategic plan. Leaders also provided examples of resources that helped implement these strategies, such as increasing funding to hire qualified persons of color to lead EDI efforts, enlisting experts to support training and policy revisions, and providing supports to retain leaders of color. Some leaders noted "measurable" progress such as increasing the percentage of employees of color in their department or increasing Hispanic student enrollment rates.

The EDI leaders shared successes on institutional changes such as integrating EDI in their outreach, selection, and retention practices; changing leadership structures to include EDI leaders in planning and decision making; and allocating resources to advance EDI training, events, and activities. Many described ways that they adapted the content and delivery of EDI training, advocacy, and guidance to the local needs of their CTC.

For example, a few leaders said focusing messaging on improving student outcomes and the importance of promoting civility across their campus was helpful. Some leaders stressed the value of approaching EDI as "heart and head work" and said using training that fosters empathy and relationship-building helped increase engagement and buy-in for those efforts. They also emphasized the need to establish norms for difficult conversations, such as developing active listening skills, acknowledging diverse experiences, and embracing discomfort as part of shifting to an EDI culture. Across all leadership levels, reflecting on personal bias and engaging multiple perspectives were seen as essential to building collective support and sustaining momentum for EDI with their institutions.

Considerations for next steps

1. Provide a statewide framework to guide EDI implementation and a process for sharing tools, lessons learned, and strategies across the CTCs. Many participants wanted more clarity about how to "lead with equity," including a shared vocabulary, strategies, and resources. The participants said the framework should foster consistency across the EDI system and should allow for adaptation to local needs, strengthen accountability and progress measurement, support well-being practices, and define clear pathways and advancement opportunities for leaders of color.

2. Clearly describe the SBCTC role and establish processes to facilitate shared learning and resource exchange among CTCs, such as:

   a. Building an EDI framework to guide planning, implementation, and continuous improvement.

   b. Providing data on key performance indicators to track progress toward desired EDI short- and long-term goals.

   c. Sharing key messaging for various CTC and community audiences.

   d. Supporting the development of—or adaptations to—professional development and course curriculum that promote best practices in culturally responsive instruction.

   e. Revising policies and procedures on recruitment, selection, onboarding, tenure, and career advancement.

   f. Developing statewide networks that support leaders of color and white leaders separately as well as a collective group committed to EDI. There is a clear need to develop professional learning communities for faculty members in smaller CTCs or for those in departments that do not have colleagues in similar EDI leadership roles.

3. Continue to support state and local networks for leaders in order to share information, promote professional learning, and build relationships with others who are engaged in EDI work. In particular, participants mentioned the Diversity and Equity Officers Commission, Multicultural Student Services Directors Council, the Association of Community College Trustees—Trustees of Color, and the Washington Association of Community and Technical Colleges as critical networks to continue EDI systems change efforts.

4. Share talking points to communicate the vision and goals of EDI-focused state legislation and the argument for making EDI a priority across the CTC system. Talking points should be directed at different audiences and community contexts.

5. Provide access to more types of training and offer suggestions on how to provide ongoing, job-embedded professional learning that will foster leadership development and meaningful change. Share ideas for engaging faculty, staff, and administrators who have different opinions on the usefulness, value, and intention of EDI efforts.

6. Assess and address the career advancement and well-being needs of EDI leaders within the CTC, with particular attention to the needs of informal leaders of color.

7. Consider providing training for departmental supervisors on culturally responsive and supportive communication and management skills that will promote well-being and a sense of belonging for employees.

8. Increase opportunities for formal and informal EDI leaders to engage in mentoring relationships that will create learning opportunities, networking, and advice on navigating leadership and career advancement opportunities within the CTC system.

9. Encourage and develop systems that will support recognition of EDI efforts and promote shared learning and resources across the CTC system.

10. Recognize the many individuals and communities that have been systematically marginalized and the influence that intersectionality has on the experiences of individuals and communities.

Appendix A. Evaluation questions and methods

Education Northwest used a developmental evaluation approach to learn about current equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) efforts focused on increasing the racial diversity of formal and informal leaders across the community and technical college (CTC) system. Four questions guided this evaluation:

1. What programs, resources, and support systems are available to help leaders of color at Washington community and technical colleges thrive in their careers and well-being?

2. What are the experiences of EDI leaders and other leaders of color at Washington community and technical colleges?

3. What recommendations do college administrators, faculty, and staff offer to improve the systemwide adoption, implementation, and expansion of EDI practices and policies?

4. What recommendations do college administrators, faculty, and staff offer to increase support for formal and informal leaders of color?

Methods

We used a culturally responsive and equitable evaluation lens to customize our work to the specific needs and context of the Washington CTC system. Our team maintained regular and transparent communication with College Spark and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) design team including a kick-off meeting, regular check-in meetings, and email communication. The principles that guided our evaluation included collaborative planning to define desired evaluation outcomes, culturally relevant data collection measures, and equity-focused data analysis procedures.

Data collection and analysis

The evaluation team collected interview, focus group, and survey data from SBCTC and CTC administrators, faculty, staff, community-based organizations, and students to better understand participants' lived experiences and college's current EDI practices. Evaluators used relevant literature to create interview and focus group protocols, the Evolve Leadership Survey, and the rubric used to review college EDI plans. The design team reviewed the interview, focus group, and survey drafts, and their input was incorporated into the final versions of these measures.

Interview and focus groups

Education Northwest developed a list of SBCTC design team members, presidents, chancellors, vice presidents, diversity officers, EDI committee leads/chairs, Title IX coordinators, directors, deans, and faculty who were formal or informal EDI leaders. SBCTC sent an email to potential participants that shared the purpose of the evaluation, introduced Education Northwest as the external evaluator, and explained that the decision to participate was voluntary and completely confidential. Our evaluation team conducted 18 interviews and 10 focus groups. A total of 41 leaders participated in focus groups, representing diverse EDI-related roles, CTC positions, and lived experiences.

- The participants included some white leaders, but the majority of participants were leaders of color who identified as American Indian, Asian, Black, white, and multiracial.

- Collectively, the participants held a variety of positions at multiple levels including presidents, chancellors, vice presidents, deans, trustees, EDI coordinators, faculty, and directors.

- The participants represented many roles within their institutions including deans, provosts, vice presidents, department chairs, Title IX coordinators, EDI committee leads/chairs, EDI coordinators, student advisors/counselors, directors in administrative roles, and faculty or other academic positions.

- Some participants were members of the Diversity and Equity Officers Commission, Multicultural Student Services Directors Council, and Trustees of Color.

- Some participants were affiliated with or had experience with community-based partners including the Social Justice Leadership Institute, Faculty and Staff of Color Conference, Administrators of Color, the Northwest Regional Equity Conference, and the Multicultural Student Services Directors' Council.

The participants shared thoughtful and rich information about the support, opportunities, and systemic challenges they have faced or continue to face in their leadership role. The sensitive nature of the information prompted evaluators to conduct individual interviews or small focus groups with two or three participants, which provided participants with more privacy and a greater opportunity to share their experiences.

Analysis. All sessions were recorded and then transcribed into written notes. To protect the participants' privacy, the recordings and transcripts were stored on a secure server that could only be accessed by members of the evaluation team. Our team used content analysis to code and synthesize common themes, patterns, and trends. We used data triangulation to verify statements and identify areas of agreement and disagreement among the interview, focus group, document review, and survey data.

Evolve Leadership Survey

The evaluation team conducted a survey of formal and informal EDI leaders across the Washington CTC system. The survey gathered demographic and background characteristics of participants and explored four key areas of formal and informal leadership (table A1).

Survey administration. We conducted the Evolve Leadership Survey between October 24, 2024, and November 29, 2024, using Alchemer, an online survey tool. To maximize response rates, the SBCTC design team and College Spark Washington sent up to four email invitations, depending on the potential source, to all CTC presidents and chancellors, a purposeful sample of 406 formal and informal leaders who participated in EDI efforts, the Diversity and Equity Officers Commission, and the Multicultural Student Services Directors Council. Additionally, the SBCTC design team invited each community college to share the survey with their administrators, faculty, and staff.

Participation in the survey was voluntary, and all participants were required to provide informed consent before proceeding with the survey. This ensured that participants were fully aware of the survey's purpose, their rights, and how their responses would be used. Confidentiality was a key consideration in the survey design. Participants were informed that their responses would be kept anonymous and that no personally identifiable information would be collected. To protect participants' privacy, identifying information such as names or contact details was not included in the survey responses. Data was stored securely in a password-protected database, accessible only to the Education Northwest evaluation team. The final dataset was anonymized for analysis, ensuring that no individual participants could be identified.

The survey included 25 Likert-scale questions for formal leaders and 23 Likert-scale questions for informal leaders. The respondents used a six-point Likert scale to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with 32 fixed-response items: 6 = strongly agree, 5 = agree, 4 = somewhat agree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree. The survey also included open-ended questions on the successes and challenges they had experienced as a leader and recommendations they had for improving EDI practices. This combination of quantitative and qualitative questions aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives on EDI in their professional environments.

Table A1. Evolve Leadership Survey scale constructs for formal and informal leaders

Survey scale	Constructs	Formal leaders	Informal leaders
Demographic and background characteristics	• Position, role/work responsibilities, years at the institution, and education level • Race and gender	X	X
Formal leader capacity, available support, and access to advancement resources	• Ability to implement and lead antiracist and EDI efforts • Communicate, lead by example, and accountability • Transparent advancement opportunities • Resources and channels of support • Voice opinions without fear of retaliation	X	
Informal leader support and access to advancement resources	• Ability to implement and lead antiracist and EDI efforts • Communicate, lead by example, and accountability • Transparent advancement opportunities • Resources and channels of support • Voice opinions without fear of retaliation		X
College support for faculty, staff, students, and others	• Ability to implement and lead antiracist and EDI efforts • Communicate, lead by example, and accountability • Transparent advancement opportunities • Resources and channels of support • Voice opinions without fear of retaliation	X	X
EDI strategies and implementation	• Ability to implement and lead antiracist and EDI efforts • Communicate, lead by example, and accountability • Transparent advancement opportunities • Resources and channels of support • Voice opinions without fear of retaliation	X	X

Source: Authors' analysis of 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey questions.

Survey respondents. A total of 589 formal and informal leaders responded to the survey: 485 completed the survey, 32 respondents said they neither support or oppose EDI in their current role, and 72 completed the demographic section only. Of the 485, 173 identified themselves as a formal leader and 312 identified themselves as an informal leader. The percentage of formal leaders who identified as a person of color was 50 percent and the percentage of informal leaders who identified as a person of color was 42 percent. The evaluation team used Stata software to analyze survey responses and used descriptive statistics to calculate quantitative responses. We used content analysis and triangulation procedures to identify common themes and to compare the perspectives of survey respondents.

Analysis. We primarily used descriptive analysis methods to analyze the survey data, such as frequency distributions, means, and percentages. The analysis provided an overview of the

distribution of responses and trends in leadership knowledge, strategies, and perceptions of EDI within CTCs. We used Cronbach's alpha (α) to assess the internal consistency—one measure of the reliability of a set of survey items. Internal consistency helps us understand how well a group of items within a scale measures the same underlying construct or concept. The Cronbach's alpha values for each Evolve Leadership Survey scale ranged from strong reliability (0.80–0.89) to high reliability (0.90 or higher) for measuring the construct accurately.

Table A2. The internal consistency coefficients ranged from strong to high reliability among the Evolve Leadership Survey scales

Survey item	Number of items	Cronbach's α
Formal leader capacity, available support, and access to advancement resources	8	0.90
Formal leader respect for opinions and access to antiracist resources	4	0.82
Informal leadership development, support, and available advancement resources	7	0.89
Informal leadership respect for opinions and access to antiracist resources	3	0.81
College's values of equity and commitment to EDI	6	0.90
Strategies for Implementing equity, diversity, and inclusion	7	0.90

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Document review

The evaluation team reviewed the EDI strategic plans and relevant documents that were publicly available on 34 CTC websites. Our review examined the presence or absence of the needs assessment and professional development information required by state legislation; whether the plan aligned with or was embedded in the college's strategic plan; and strategies for increasing recruitment, hiring, and advancement opportunities for leaders of color.

Appendix B. Supplemental data tables

Table B1. Centering diversity, equity, and inclusion in leadership—formal leaders of color

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following, "I am very confident in my knowledge and ability to …"	Percent of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed	Percent of leaders by level of agreement					
		Strongly agreed	Agreed	Somewhat agreed	Somewhat disagreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
Implement effective antiracist and EDI policies that will make a lasting impact on our campus community.	64.6%	24.6%	40.0%	27.7%	‡	‡	‡
Lead the college in creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment for all students, faculty, and staff.	78.1%	31.3%	46.9%	17.2%	‡	‡	‡
Communicate a clear EDI vision and goals for the college.	78.5%	30.8%	47.7%	‡	‡	‡	‡
Lead by example, model respect, and advocate for systemically marginalized voices across the college.	95.3%	59.4%	35.9%	‡	‡	‡	‡
Engage the collective commitment of faculty, staff, and students to implement EDI and antiracist policies and practices.	70.8%	38.5%	32.3%	24.6%	‡	‡	‡
Establish an inclusive and antiracist culture that elevates the voices and experiences of systemically marginalized groups of faculty, staff, and students.	81.3%	29.7%	51.6%	15.6%	‡	‡	‡
Hold myself and others accountable for promoting and sustaining EDI and antiracist efforts across the college.	84.6%	40.0%	44.6%	‡	‡	‡	‡
Ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion are at the center of departmental decisions for faculty, staff, and students.	75.4%	26.2%	49.2%	18.5%	‡	‡	‡

‡ Data suppressed due to less than 10 responses in the cell.

Note: Number of formal leaders ranged from 64 to 65.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Table B2. Centering diversity, equity, and inclusion in leadership—formal white leaders

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following, "I am very confident in my knowledge and ability to …"	Percent of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed	Percent of leaders by level of agreement					
		Strongly agreed	Agreed	Somewhat agreed	Somewhat disagreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
Implement effective antiracist and EDI policies that will make a lasting impact on our campus community.	52.6%	‡	‡	35.9%	‡	‡	‡
Lead the college in creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment for all students, faculty, and staff.	66.2%	19.5%	46.8%	23.4%	‡	‡	‡
Communicate a clear EDI vision and goals for the college.	70.5%	24.4%	46.2%	19.2%	‡	‡	‡
Lead by example, model respect, and advocate for systemically marginalized voices across the college.	93.6%	44.9%	48.7%	‡	‡	‡	‡
Engage the collective commitment of faculty, staff, and students to implement EDI and antiracist policies and practices.	58.4%	18.2%	40.3%	29.9%	‡	‡	‡
Establish an inclusive and antiracist culture that elevates the voices and experiences of systemically marginalized groups of faculty, staff, and students.	59.7%	15.6%	44.2%	32.5%	‡	‡	‡
Hold myself and others accountable for promoting and sustaining EDI and antiracist efforts across the college.	79.5%	34.6%	44.9%	16.7%	‡	‡	‡
Ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion are at the center of departmental decisions for faculty, staff, and students.	82.1%	28.2%	53.8%	12.8%	‡	‡	‡

‡ Data suppressed due to less than 10 responses in the cell and if one cell had less than 10 responses when calculating the percentage of leaders who agreed to strongly agreed. .

Note: Number of formal leaders ranged from 77 to 78.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Table B3. Strategies for implementing equity, diversity, and inclusion—formal leaders of color

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements	Percent of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed	Percent of leaders by level of agreement					
		Strongly agreed	Agreed	Somewhat agreed	Somewhat disagreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
Hiring policies and practices that center diversity and equity within faculty and staff recruitment, selection, and retention are in place.	47.5%	8.5%	39.0%	28.8%	16.9%	‡	‡
Faculty and staff receive regular training on cultural competency, unconscious bias, and inclusive teaching practices.	50.8%	10.2%	40.7%	27.1%	‡	‡	‡
Faculty, staff, and students from systemically marginalized groups have designated safe spaces on campus where groups can gather, find support, and build community.	39.7%	17.2%	22.4%	31.0%	17.2%	‡	‡
Regular events and traditions that celebrate cultural diversity, promote conversations on EDI issues, and create opportunities for cross-cultural engagement.	67.8%	22.0%	45.8%	25.4%	‡	‡	‡
Formal and informal leaders or committees dedicated to EDI and antiracist practices are established and actively supported.	52.5%	11.9%	40.7%	35.6%	‡	‡	‡
Access and professional development opportunities are available to EDI formal and informal leaders.	59.3%	13.6%	45.8%	23.7%	‡	‡	‡
Regular and transparent communication on the college's commitment, successes, and ongoing efforts to promote EDI through public statements, campus-wide emails, and social media.	50.8%	13.6%	37.3%	33.9%	‡	‡	‡

‡ Data suppressed due to less than 10 responses in the cell and if one cell had less than 10 responses when calculating the percentage of leaders who agreed to strongly agreed.

Note: Number of formal leaders ranged from 58 to 59.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Table B4. Strategies for implementing equity, diversity, and inclusion—formal white leaders

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements	Percent of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed	Percent of leaders by level of agreement					
		Strongly agreed	Agreed	Somewhat agreed	Somewhat disagreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
Hiring policies and practices that center diversity and equity within faculty and staff recruitment, selection, and retention are in place.	45.2%	‡	‡	34.2%	‡	‡	‡
Faculty and staff receive regular training on cultural competency, unconscious bias, and inclusive teaching practices.	51.4%	15.3%	36.1%	25.0%	‡	‡	‡
Faculty, staff, and students from systemically marginalized groups have designated safe spaces on campus where groups can gather, find support, and build community.	47.9%	13.7%	34.2%	27.4%	‡	‡	‡
Regular events and traditions that celebrate cultural diversity, promote conversations on EDI issues, and create opportunities for cross-cultural engagement.	67.1%	28.8%	38.4%	24.7%	‡	‡	‡
Formal and informal leaders or committees dedicated to EDI and antiracist practices are established and actively supported.	62.5%	26.4%	36.1%	29.2%	‡	‡	‡
Access and professional development opportunities are available to EDI formal and informal leaders.	61.6%	24.7%	37.0%	26.0%	‡	‡	‡
Regular and transparent communication on the college's commitment, successes, and ongoing efforts to promote EDI through public statements, campus-wide emails, and social media.	50.0%	20.8%	29.2%	31.9%	‡	‡	‡

‡ Data suppressed due to less than 10 responses in the cell.

Note: Number of formal leaders ranged from 72 to 73.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Table B5. Strategies for implementing equity, diversity, and inclusion—informal leaders of color

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements	Percent of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed	Percent of leaders by level of agreement					
		Strongly agreed	Agreed	Somewhat agreed	Somewhat disagreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
Hiring policies and practices that center diversity and equity within faculty and staff recruitment, selection, and retention are in place.	39.2%	13.8%	25.4%	28.5%	14.6%	≥5.0%	≥5.0%
Faculty and staff receive regular training on cultural competency, unconscious bias, and inclusive teaching practices.	34.4%	13.0%	21.4%	30.5%	17.6%	≥5.0%	≥5.0%
Faculty, staff, and students from systemically marginalized groups have designated safe spaces on campus where groups can gather, find support, and build community.	37.1%	11.4%	25.8%	33.3%	11.4%	7.6%	7.6%
Regular events and traditions that celebrate cultural diversity, promote conversations on EDI issues, and create opportunities for cross-cultural engagement.	40.2%	16.7%	23.5%	38.6%	13.6%	‡	‡
Formal and informal leaders or committees dedicated to EDI and antiracist practices are established and actively supported.	42.7%	14.5%	28.2%	31.3%	10.7%	≥5.0%	≥5.0%
Access and professional development opportunities are available to EDI formal and informal leaders.	45.0%	16.0%	29.0%	33.6%	9.9%	≥5.0%	≤5.0%
Regular and transparent communication on the college's commitment, successes, and ongoing efforts to promote EDI through public statements, campus-wide emails, and social media.	36.4%	13.6%	22.7%	31.1%	16.7%	≥5.0%	≤5.0%

‡ Data suppressed due to less than 10 responses in the cell.

Note: Number of formal leaders ranged from 130 to 132.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Table B6. Strategies for implementing equity, diversity, and inclusion—white informal leaders

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements	Percent of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed	Percent of leaders by level of agreement					
		Strongly agreed	Agreed	Somewhat agreed	Somewhat disagreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
Hiring policies and practices that center diversity and equity within faculty and staff recruitment, selection, and retention are in place.	49.5%	16.1%	33.3%	30.1%	‡	‡	‡
Faculty and staff receive regular training on cultural competency, unconscious bias, and inclusive teaching practices.	42.7%	13.5%	29.2%	22.9%	18.8%	≤12.0%	≤12.0%
Faculty, staff, and students from systemically marginalized groups have designated safe spaces on campus where groups can gather, find support, and build community.	29.2%	11.2%	18.0%	33.7%	23.6%	‡	‡
Regular events and traditions that celebrate cultural diversity, promote conversations on EDI issues, and create opportunities for cross-cultural engagement.	55.9%	16.1%	39.8%	23.7%	10.8%	‡	‡
Formal and informal leaders or committees dedicated to EDI and antiracist practices are established and actively supported.	51.5%	18.6%	33.0%	26.8%	13.4%	‡	‡
Access and professional development opportunities are available to EDI formal and informal leaders.	58.3%	19.8%	38.5%	24.0%	10.4%	‡	‡
Regular and transparent communication on the college's commitment, successes, and ongoing efforts to promote EDI through public statements, campus-wide emails, and social media.	41.7%	16.7%	25.0%	30.2%	10.4%	≤12.0%	≤12.0%

‡ Data suppressed due to less than 10 responses in the cell.

Note: Number of formal leaders ranged from 89 to 97.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Table B7. Understanding the college's values of equity—formal leaders of color

Please indicate the extent to which you agree that the following is fully in place on your campus	Percent of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed	Percent of leaders by level of agreement					
		Strongly agreed	Agreed	Somewhat agreed	Somewhat disagreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
The college fosters an environment for faculty, staff, students, and others to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in meaningful ways.	63.9%	23.0%	41.0%	19.7%	‡	‡	‡
The college advocates for the success of faculty, staff, and students who come from systematically marginalized backgrounds.	59.0%	19.7%	39.3%	27.9%	‡	‡	‡
The college is committed to fostering growth for all leaders, including leaders of color.	55.0%	‡	‡	21.7%	‡	‡	‡
Formal leaders view my cultural identity and life experience as assets to EDI and antiracism efforts.	56.7%	18.3%	38.3%	23.3%	‡	‡	‡
My institution has a clear and transparent EDI plan and regularly communicates progress toward its goals.	54.1%	‡	‡	27.9%	‡	‡	‡
My work is recognized as integral to the college's EDI plan.	63.9%	31.1%	32.8%	32.8%	‡	‡	‡

‡ Data suppressed due to less than 10 responses in the cell and if one cell had less than 10 responses when calculating the percentage of leaders who agreed to strongly agreed.

Note: Number of formal leaders ranged from 60 to 61.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Table B8. Understanding the college's values of equity—formal white leaders

Please indicate the extent to which you agree that the following is fully in place on your campus	Percent of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed	Percent of leaders by level of agreement					
		Strongly agreed	Agreed	Somewhat agreed	Somewhat disagreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
The college fosters an environment for faculty, staff, students, and others to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in meaningful ways.	56.0%	18.7%	37.3%	30.7%	‡	‡	‡
The college advocates for the success of faculty, staff, and students who come from systematically marginalized backgrounds.	60.8%	21.6%	39.2%	29.7%	‡	‡	‡
The college is committed to fostering growth for all leaders, including leaders of color.	64.4%	23.3%	41.1%	20.5%	‡	‡	‡
Formal leaders view my cultural identity and life experience as assets to EDI and antiracism efforts.	42.2%	‡	‡	28.1%	‡	‡	‡
My institution has a clear and transparent EDI plan and regularly communicates progress toward its goals.	36.5%	17.6%	18.9%	37.8%	‡	‡	‡
My work is recognized as integral to the college's EDI plan.	47.3%	21.6%	25.7%	33.8%	‡	‡	‡

‡ Data suppressed due to less than 10 responses in the cell and if one cell had less than 10 responses when calculating the percentage of leaders who agreed to strongly agreed.

Note: Number of formal leaders ranged from 64 to 75.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Table B9. Understanding the college's values of equity—informal leaders of color

Please indicate the extent to which you agree that the following is fully in place on your campus	Percent of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed	Percent of leaders by level of agreement					
		Strongly agreed	Agreed	Somewhat agreed	Somewhat disagreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
The college fosters an environment for faculty, staff, students, and others to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in meaningful ways.	48.8%	20.0%	28.7%	31.9%	8.7%	≤10.0%	≤10.0%
The college advocates for the success of faculty, staff, and students who come from systematically marginalized backgrounds.	41.5%	16.4%	25.2%	34.6%	10.1%	≥10.0%	≤10.0%
The college is committed to fostering growth for all leaders, including leaders of color.	43.1%	13.7%	29.4%	24.8%	18.3%	≥10.0%	≤10.0%
Formal leaders view my cultural identity and life experience as assets to EDI and antiracism efforts.	42.9%	22.7%	20.1%	29.9%	16.2%	‡	‡
My institution has a clear and transparent EDI plan and regularly communicates progress toward its goals.	35.0%	13.4%	21.7%	33.8%	15.3%	≥10.0%	≤10.0%
My work is recognized as integral to the college's EDI plan.	40.5%	12.4%	28.1%	28.8%	11.8%	≥10.0%	≤10.0%

‡ Data suppressed due to less than 10 responses in the cell.

Note: Number of formal leaders ranged from 153 to 160.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Table B10. Understanding the college's values of equity—white informal leaders

Please indicate the extent to which you agree that the following is fully in place on your campus	Percent of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed	Percent of leaders by level of agreement					
		Strongly agreed	Agreed	Somewhat agreed	Somewhat disagreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
The college fosters an environment for faculty, staff, students, and others to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in meaningful ways.	61.0%	21.9%	39.0%	26.7%	‡	‡	‡
The college advocates for the success of faculty, staff, and students who come from systematically marginalized backgrounds.	55.8%	18.3%	37.5%	28.8%	10.6%	‡	‡
The college is committed to fostering growth for all leaders, including leaders of color.	51.9%	14.4%	37.5%	26.9%	9.6%	‡	‡
Formal leaders view my cultural identity and life experience as assets to EDI and antiracism efforts.	39.8%	11.4%	28.4%	35.2%	12.5%	‡	‡
My institution has a clear and transparent EDI plan and regularly communicates progress toward its goals.	40.0%	14.3%	25.7%	28.6%	12.4%	≤10.0%	≤10.0%
My work is recognized as integral to the college's EDI plan.	45.5%	12.1%	33.3%	33.3%	10.1%	‡	‡

‡ Data suppressed due to less than 10 responses in the cell.

Note: Number of formal leaders ranged from 88 to 105.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Table B11. Formal leader support and resources—formal leaders of color

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements	Percent of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed	Percent of leaders by level of agreement					
		Strongly agreed	Agreed	Somewhat agreed	Somewhat disagreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
The advancement opportunities to higher leadership positions are clearly outlined and transparent within my college.	13.5%	‡	‡	34.6%	21.2%	19.2%	‡
I have the resources to engage in equity work, which includes time for conversation and reflection about inequalities and tools to advance the institution's mission.	26.5%	‡	‡	42.9%	‡	‡	‡
I can voice my contrary opinions without the fear of negative consequences or retaliation from my peers or supervisors.	43.5%	‡	‡	21.7%	‡	‡	‡
I have channels of support that allow me to engage in open and honest conversations about race and other systemic inequities.	51.1%	‡	‡	38.3%	‡	‡	‡

‡ Data suppressed due to less than 10 responses in the cell and if one cell had less than 10 responses when calculating the percentage of leaders who agreed to strongly agreed.

Note: Number of formal leaders ranged from 46 to 52.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Table B12. Formal leader support and resources—formal white leaders

Please indicate the extent that you agree with the following statements	Percent of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed	Percent of leaders by level of agreement					
		Strongly agreed	Agreed	Somewhat agreed	Somewhat disagreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
The advancement opportunities to higher leadership positions are clearly outlined and transparent within my college.	24.6%	‡	‡	24.6%	23.1%	‡	15.4%
I have the resources to engage in equity work, which includes time for conversation and reflection about inequalities and tools to advance the institution's mission.	33.9%	‡	‡	25.4%	18.6%	‡	‡
I can voice my contrary opinions without the fear of negative consequences or retaliation from my peers or supervisors.	38.6%	‡	‡	24.6%	19.3%	‡	‡
I have channels of support that allow me to engage in open and honest conversations about race and other systemic inequities.	38.6%	‡	‡	38.6%	15.8%	‡	‡

‡ Data suppressed due to less than 10 responses in the cell and if one cell had less than 10 responses when calculating the percentage of leaders who agreed to strongly agreed.

Note: Number of formal leaders ranged from 57 to 65.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Table B13. Informal leadership development, support, and resources—informal leaders of color

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements	Percent of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed	Percent of leaders by level of agreement					
		Strongly agreed	Agreed	Somewhat agreed	Somewhat disagreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
I receive encouragement and support to promote antiracism and EDI at my college.	50.0%	23.7%	26.3%	26.3%	15.3%	‡	‡
I receive respect and recognition for my efforts to promote antiracism and EDI at my college.	38.4%	17.9%	20.5%	26.8%	20.5%	‡	‡
I am comfortable discussing concerns, sharing ideas, and influencing decisions to promote antiracism and EDI with formal leaders.	51.2%	25.6%	25.6%	20.7%	10.7%	≤10.0%	≤10.0%
There are opportunities for me to be a part of strategic planning or policy-making decisions with formal leaders.	41.8%	18.9%	23.0%	19.7%	17.2%	‡	‡
I have access to a mentor or role model who comes from a similar background to help me develop my leadership competencies.	28.6%	10.1%	18.5%	17.6%	11.8%	21.8%	20.2%
The advancement opportunities to higher leadership positions are clearly outlined and transparent within my college.	19.0%	≤10.0%	≤10.0%	18.1%	22.4%	19.0%	21.6%
I have access to EDI, antiracism, and leadership training, workshops, and resources to enhance my knowledge and skills.	40.8%	18.3%	22.5%	35.0%	12.5%	≤10.0%	≤10.0%
I am provided with resources to engage in EDI and antiracism work, such as participation in committees, task forces, and student or faculty organizations.	50.4%	14.0%	36.4%	24.0%	14.9%	‡	‡
I can voice my contrary opinions without the fear of negative consequences or retaliation from my peers.	33.9%	15.7%	18.2%	23.1%	18.2%	14.0%	10.7%

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements	Percent of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed	Percent of leaders by level of agreement					
		Strongly agreed	Agreed	Somewhat agreed	Somewhat disagreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
I have channels of support that allow me to engage in open and honest conversations about race and other systemic inequities.	40.5%	19.0%	21.5%	28.1%	10.7%	≤15.0%	≤15.0%

‡ Data suppressed due to less than 10 responses in the cell and if one cell had less than 10 responses when calculating the percentage of leaders who agreed to strongly agreed.

Note: Number of formal leaders ranged from 112 to 122.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Table B14. Informal leadership development, support, and resources—white leaders of color

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements	Percent of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed	Percent of leaders by level of agreement					
		Strongly agreed	Agreed	Somewhat agreed	Somewhat disagreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
I receive encouragement and support to promote antiracism and EDI at my college.	62.2%	24.4%	37.8%	25.6%	‡	‡	‡
I receive respect and recognition for my efforts to promote antiracism and EDI at my college.	46.6%	13.6%	33.0%	27.3%	18.2%	‡	‡
I am comfortable discussing concerns, sharing ideas, and influencing decisions to promote antiracism and EDI with formal leaders.	56.7%	21.1%	35.6%	24.4%	‡	‡	‡
There are opportunities for me to be a part of strategic planning or policy-making decisions with formal leaders.	53.3%	23.3%	30.0%	17.8%	12.2%	‡	‡
I have access to a mentor or role model who comes from a similar background to help me develop my leadership competencies.	45.2%	15.5%	29.8%	14.3%	15.5%	≤15.0%	≤15.0%
The advancement opportunities to higher leadership positions are clearly outlined and transparent within my college.	20.5%	8.0%	12.5%	14.8%	23.9%	23.9%	17.0%
I have access to EDI, antiracism, and leadership training, workshops, and resources to enhance my knowledge and skills.	50.5%	17.6%	33.0%	24.2%	15.4%	‡	‡
I am provided with resources to engage in EDI and antiracism work, such as participation in committees, task forces, and student or faculty organizations.	53.3%	17.8%	35.6%	26.7%	11.1%	‡	‡
I can voice my contrary opinions without the fear of negative consequences or retaliation from my peers.	33.0%	11.4%	21.6%	27.3%	20.5%	≤15.0%	≤15.0%

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements	Percent of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed	Percent of leaders by level of agreement					
		Strongly agreed	Agreed	Somewhat agreed	Somewhat disagreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
I have channels of support that allow me to engage in open and honest conversations about race and other systemic inequities.	43.8%	11.2%	32.6%	27.0%	16.9%	‡	‡

‡ Data suppressed due to less than 10 responses in the cell.

Note: Number of formal leaders ranged from 84 to 91.

Source: Authors' analysis of the 2024 Evolve Leadership Survey.

Appendix C. CTC formal and informal leader focus group/interview protocols

Logistics and informed consent

Hello, thank you for being here with us today. My name is [name], and I am from Education Northwest, an organization that does research and evaluation to advance equity in education. The State Board of Community and Technical Colleges and College Spark Washington has asked us to collect information on how leaders across Washington's CTC system view the "State of BIPOC Leadership." The information you share will inform planning and implementation of the Evolve Initiative that aims to strengthen equity-focused systems that support leaders of color.

We asked you to participate in this focus group/interview because of your leadership role in Washington's CTC system. The focus group/interview will take about an hour. We are here to have a conversation about your experiences as a leader; how you view the strengths and challenges of CTC's equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts; and recommendations you have for improving these efforts.

Your participation is completely voluntary, but we hope that you choose to participate because your insights are valuable to strengthening the Evolve Initiative. You can choose not to participate, decline to answer any questions, or stop at any time without any consequences. We do not expect there to be any risks to you for participating in the focus group/interview. Your participation will not affect your position at your institution. While we ask all participants to respect each other's privacy by not sharing what is discussed outside of this conversation we cannot guarantee that everyone will do so. Your perspective will help SBCTC strengthen equity-focused systems to be more supportive of you advancing equity at your institutions and across the system.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you can contact Vicki.Nishioka@ednw.org or at [phone number].

By participating in this focus group/interview you are indicating that you agree to participate in the focus group/interview. Can we get a thumbs up as a recognition to participate?

- (If no) – allow participant(s) to leave the Zoom call and thank them for their time.

We will be recording today's session to ensure that we capture all the details of the discussion. You can request us to pause the recording at any time. At your request, we can also redact any information you share after the focus group/interview. The recording may be sent to a third party for transcription. All recordings and transcripts will be kept secure, will only be accessible to the

EDNW team, and will be destroyed after the report is complete. Your name or any identifying information will not be included in any reports without your consent.

Do you agree to the recording of this focus group/interview?

- (If no) – allow for participant(s) to leave and exit and Zoom call and thank them for their time.

Formal leaders

Background information

1. Let's begin with introductions. Would it be possible for everyone to say their name and role and how long they have been at their institution?

Interviewer begins recording.

2. How would you describe your role and its connection to the larger EDI landscape at your college?

Experiences of formal leaders

Next, we want to hear about your experience as a formal leader and how to promote EDI work at your college. Before we begin, we want to offer some foundational definitions of how we will use these terms throughout our conversation:

Facilitator shares definitions with the group

Formal Leaders: Individuals who hold official job titles and/or have responsibilities and professional decision-making authority to enact or oversee EDI initiatives within their roles. Examples include presidents and chancellors, vice presidents, diversity officers, EDI committee leads/chairs, Title IX coordinators, directors, and deans.

Informal Leaders: Individuals at all levels, who advocate and champion racial equity who may not have an official leadership title but hold a commitment to leading with racial equity in their work, and are self-identified as EDI leaders who are sought for answers and guidance due to their commitment, influence, lived experience, and/or expertise.

1. What does it look, sound, and feel like to be a CTC formal leader of color?
   a. What strategies, supports, or opportunities have improved conditions for CTC leaders of color on your campus? Across the Washington CTC system? (ask for examples)
   b. What are systemic challenges or barriers to equity, diversity, or inclusion of CTC leaders of color on your campus? Across the Washington CTC system? (ask for examples)

  c. Do any of these supports or challenges influence your likelihood of continuing your EDI efforts? Does it influence your likelihood of staying at your institution?

2. Would you say people from all backgrounds and identities have equitable opportunities to advocate for and lead with equity on your college campus? Across the Washington CTC system? (ask for examples)

  a. If not, which groups have opportunities to lead EDI work at your college? Which groups do not have equitable opportunities to lead EDI work?

  b. From your perspective, does everyone have equitable opportunities to advance their careers at your college? If not, who has equitable career advancement opportunities? Who are overlooked for career advancement?

3. What recommendations do you have for nurturing equity-focused systems change to create environments where formal leaders are supported and thriving?

  a. What recommendations do you have to improve equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) for formal leaders of color on your campus?

  b. What recommendations do you have for improving EDI across the CTC system?

4. What does it look, sound, and feel like to be an informal leader who advocates for improving equity on your college campus? Who are the informal leaders that promote EDI on your college campus? (get names and examples)

  a. What strategies or opportunities support informal leaders who advocate for EDI on your college campus?

  b. What are the systemic challenges or barriers that undermine the effectiveness of informal leaders?

5. What recommendations do you have for improving the effectiveness of informal EDI leaders?

Is there anything else you would like to share with us that we haven't discussed already? Thank you for answering our questions today.

Informal leaders

Background information

1. Let's begin with introductions. Would it be possible for everyone to say their name and role and how long they have been at their institution?

Interviewer begins recording.

2. How are you connected to advancing EDI at your college?

Experiences of informal leaders

Next, we want to hear about your experience as an informal leader who promotes EDI work at your college. Before we begin, we want to offer some foundational definitions of how we will use these terms throughout our conversation:

Facilitator shares definitions with the group

Formal Leaders: Individuals who hold official job titles and/or have responsibilities and professional decision-making authority to enact or oversee EDI initiatives within their roles. Examples include presidents and chancellors, vice presidents, diversity officers, EDI committee leads/chairs, Title IX coordinators, directors, and deans.

Informal Leaders: Individuals at all levels, who advocate and champion racial equity who may not have an official leadership title but hold a commitment to leading with racial equity in their work, and are self-identified as EDI leaders who are sought for answers and guidance due to their commitment, influence, lived experience, and/or expertise.

3. What does it look, sound, and feel like to be an informal leader who advocates for improving equity on your college campus?

   a. What strategies, supports, or opportunities have improved conditions for CTC informal leaders on your campus? Across the Washington CTC system? (ask for examples)

   b. What are systemic challenges or barriers to equity, diversity, or inclusion of CTC informal leaders on your campus? Across the Washington CTC system? (ask for examples)

   c. Do any of these supports or challenges influence your likelihood of continuing your EDI efforts? Does it influence your likelihood of staying at your institution?

4. Would you say people from all backgrounds and identities have equitable opportunities to advocate for and lead with equity on your college campus? Across the Washington CTC system? (ask for examples)

   a. If not, which groups have opportunities to lead EDI work at your college? Which groups do not have equitable opportunities to lead EDI work?

   b. From your perspective, does everyone have equitable opportunities to advance their careers at your college? If not, who has equitable career advancement opportunities? Who are overlooked for career advancement?

5. What recommendations do you have for nurturing equity-focused systems change to create environments where informal leaders are supported and thriving?

   a. What recommendations do you have to improve equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) for informal leaders on your campus? For informal leaders of color specifically?

     b. What recommendations do you have for improving EDI across the CTC system?

6. What role have formal leaders played in promoting EDI strategies at your college? From your perspective, what does it look, sound, and feel like to be a CTC formal leader?

     a. What strategies or opportunities support informal leaders who advocate for EDI on your college campus?

     b. What are the systemic challenges or barriers that undermine the effectiveness of formal leaders?

7. What recommendations do you have for improving the effectiveness of formal EDI leaders?

Is there anything else you would like to share with us that we haven't discussed already? Thank you for answering our questions today.