

# Spokane Community College

## Faculty, Staff, and Student DEI Listening and Feedback Sessions

**Qualitative Research Study Results Report  
Study Fielding May 2024**



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# Project Summary

In May 2024, teams at Spokane Community College (SCC) and those involved in the SCC DEGA (Diversity, Equity, and Global Awareness) Committee partnered with Strategic Research Associates to conduct a qualitative listening and feedback collection project to evaluate current lived experiences among faculty, staff, and students about racism, diversity, ethnicity, and equity topics experienced through their engagement with the college.

This work, while driven by SCC's internal goals and desires, also contributes to the college's responsibility to conduct this research to meet the requirements of RCW 28B.10.147 (formally known as Washington Senate Bill (SB) 5227), which requires annual listening and feedback sessions on DEI to be conducted at institutions of higher education (IHE).

Our key focus of these listening sessions was to create a safe space to collect and learn from the lived experiences of faculty, staff, and students and their interactions with SCC, exploring the following themes among the separate segments.

- SCC's Commitment to DEI
  - Does SCC have a strong commitment to DEI?
  - Does SCC put too much emphasis on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion?
  - Should improving diversity and inclusion be a priority for SCC?
  - Is the use of diversity and inclusion targets at SCC supported?
- Hiring and retention of a diverse faculty and staff
  - How important is it for you to learn from faculty from diverse ethnicities/a similar ethnicity to your own?
  - How important is it to have an advisor of the same ethnicity as yours?
  - People of all ages, cultural backgrounds, genders, races, religions, etc. have an equitable chance of getting hired at SCC?
  - Does SCC provide sufficient programs and resources to foster the success of a diverse faculty?
- Experience of discrimination based on race
  - Have you experienced racism at the college?
  - Have you witnessed discriminatory events at SCC because of someone else's racial or ethnic identity?
  - Have you ever seen an SCC instructor or staff member push back on racist acts or speech?

- Have you experienced discriminatory events at SCC because of your racial or ethnic identity?
- Have you witnessed discriminatory events at SCC because of someone else's racial or ethnic identity?
- Culture of belonging
  - Can you be yourself on campus or at work? (code-switching)
  - Have you ever considered leaving SCC or switching jobs because you feel unwelcomed (based on race)?
  - Have you found a community at SCC where you feel you belong?
  - Do you think the culture of SCC is biased based on race?
  - Do you think the culture of SCC is racist?

Our qualitative research study methodology for this project involved inviting individuals from randomized lists of targets provided by the college. These individuals were selected randomly to ensure no bias was included in the invitation process.

A total of 342 "White" faculty and staff, 86 "BIPOC" faculty and staff, 699 "White" students, and 604 "BIPOC" students were provided to the Strategic Research team by SCC's Institutional Research Office through random selection for invitation purposes to the listening sessions. All of these individuals were invited to participate in the sessions via email, leveraging Calendly for self-selection and affirmation of attendance. All groups, due to low registration rates, were also called by Strategic Research staff to encourage them to join the sessions.

Session participants were provided with meals as a thank you for sharing, and students, in addition to meals, were provided a \$25 gift card to offset their time and travel investment. Sessions for faculty and staff were held on campus, in a campus meeting room, and student sessions were held both on-campus and online via Zoom. Due to low participation among BIPOC faculty for the originally scheduled listening session, an additional session was held for this segment via Zoom.

Joanne Vega, MBA of Strategic Research Associates, and Karen Cash, MBA of Aspire - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Consulting Services, moderated the sessions. Sessions were recorded for report development purposes only, and these recordings, in addition to notes taken by the moderators, were used to develop this summary report.

Total participation can be summarized as follows: 18 faculty and staff (an increase of 9 from 2023) and 11 students (while a lower total participation rate from 2023 from 17 participants, our sessions included better attendance from scheduling than before, resulting in no need for rescheduled sessions), broken down as follows:

- A total of 14 individuals identified as “White” faculty and staff accepted the invitation to participate; 11 attended and participated in the sessions held on campus on Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup>, and Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup>.
- A total of 11 individuals identified as “BIPOC” faculty and staff accepted the invitation to participate; 7 attended and participated in the sessions held on campus on Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, and online via Zoom on Friday, May 17<sup>th</sup>.
- A total of 19 individuals identified as “BIPOC” students accepted the invitation to participate; seven attended and participated in one of the listening sessions held either on campus or online via Zoom on Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup>.
- A total of 30 individuals identified as “White” students accepted the invitation to participate; six attended and participated in one of the listening sessions held either on campus on Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup> or online via Zoom on Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup>.

Qualitative analysis, by nature, is designed to gain deep insights from a small group of people, unlike quantitative research (surveys), which often collect feedback from larger groups of people.

The findings in this report represent the feelings of those who participated in the listening sessions. In some cases, individuals can use these activities to grandstand and share a specific item they wish to advance. While the teams do their best to report on themes, specific quotes may reflect these special interests brought to the sessions by individuals.

While these opinions can be applied to many, given the total sample size, they must also be used carefully.

# Executive Summary

Our research included feedback from current SCC students (online, on-campus, and rural campus students), SCC-employed staff, and SCC-employed faculty.

We saw improvements in our registration rates for these listening sessions from our 2023 efforts, which we attribute to including a larger pool of randomly selected invitees and moving the sessions to be on campus. Registrations and interest in our listening sessions during this iteration were double those we saw in 2024.

Our registration-to-attendance ratio was the lowest among the student populations. However, our on-campus sessions did retain a higher attendance rate than online sessions (38% of registrants for in-person sessions ultimately attended, while 11% of registrants attended the online session.) Attendance rates among faculty and staff sessions were 74% of those who registered.

Initial registration and attendance rates are a challenge with this work. They can indicate either a lack of cultural support for DEI discussions or a lack of engagement in DEI topics among these groups, among other reasons (this list is not exhaustive as to reasons why people would not be engaged). We found an interest in re-enrolling among those who participated in our 2023 sessions from both BIPOC and White segments, especially among staff and faculty (students we did not see any repeat participants), indicating the perceived value participants gained from engaging in the process and continuing this work in their roles on and around campus.

The discussions that ensued were precious to all who joined. Participants were open and engaged, sharing deeply personal stories with the group moderators and reflecting on their lived experiences at SCC.

For privacy reasons, we will not share the details of these stories in this report, but the themes they contain are highlighted in the following segment narratives.

## Students

**Students shared very little knowledge of SCC's DEI programs compared to faculty and staff session participants.** When discussing how they may feel while on campus or in the classroom, many shared experiences where they felt out of place when starting courses and during orientation. However, those feelings quickly faded once they became comfortable as students.

To students, **a diverse, inclusive atmosphere is one that includes a "myriad of different peoples"**; these people can come from different races, countries, genders, socio-economic backgrounds, and more.

A unique element of inclusivity among SCC's population is its high population of refugee students and ESL students, in addition to specific racial and ethnic populations.

These students shared stories of **specific challenges navigating the enrollment process, and access to needed materials to ensure their success as students.** Materials like computers, computer programs, and books, finding money for required support items, and correctly understanding what was needed were specific challenges.

**BIPOC students suggested that while it may be “nice” to have staff, faculty, or counselors who are like them, they do not expect it, nor are they seeking it out.** As long as they have not experienced a situation where they felt out of place, they did not see this need to be addressed as an active issue. If English was not a student’s first language, the students appreciated and craved talking to faculty and staff who spoke their primary language (i.e., Spanish, French, Slavic languages, etc.).

Students who chose to be more involved in programs and community groups at SCC shared heightened experiences with inclusivity and belonging after finding their community groups on campus. **Those who have participated in programs at the Center for Inclusivity and Diversity (CID), either as visitors or as people who contributed to the programs through their club involvement, had brighter stories to tell about feeling part of the college than others.**

As our previous results show, **access to counselors is a specific pain point for students.** While many suggested that they may not see a need for counselors on their educational journey, when we asked them to think about situations where they may want to share or report a DEI-related issue, they also suggested that they would bring these issues to a counselor-type individual.

**Online students were noticeably more disconnected from programs, counselors, and issues than those who participated in on-campus courses.** They shared more stories about struggling with finding what “to do or not to do” as a student navigating the educational system and knew less about what resources may be available to them if they had challenges.

**The inclusivity issues that surfaced during our discussion went beyond racial inclusivity and more towards socioeconomic inclusivity. Many expressed concerns about struggling to reach their educational goals while still balancing work and family.** They felt like they lacked support from SCC to help them achieve these goals.

Specifically, equity concerns arose about access to books, required course resources, cell phones for QR code access and two-step verification, library access due to limited hours and resources, and computers with the appropriate speed, power, and programs. These were all specific challenges to those with economic insecurities.

Given the population SCC serves, **it also has many students who do not have access to traditional financial aid and need assistance outside of the federal financial aid programs.** International students and refugee students feel a burden to self-support their education, often driven by cultural experiences that make success as a student difficult for them.

## Faculty and Staff

Faculty and staff listening session participants share that **SCC has taken steps toward its commitment and position on DEI**. They have witnessed changes through increased discussions on EDI and DEI topics, training on diversity and inclusion, and processes being put in place that foster equitable hiring practices.

While many shared that there is significant emphasis on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion at SCC. They add that **they have frustration with the process and its implementation**, as they hear of the programs and things being done, but many of these practices **feel like “checkboxes” to them** or land on deaf ears. Both staff and faculty participants also mentioned that there is very little or no top-level leadership presence publicly supporting DEI efforts or events. They suggest that they would love to see more opportunities in and around the campus community to **connect more and create community**, in a sense, break the communication barriers that individuals may be putting in place.

They suggest that while “their parents had to fight for space at the table,” **the issue they see today at SCC is more about ensuring a chair is available for them that will support them and that they are welcomed at the table**.

Participants also share **frustration with executive leadership, citing a high rate of interims in positions of authority who do little to advance the campus climate**. Often, they share that when they raise ideas, concerns, or opportunities to those in interim roles, the responsibility of these tasks falls to others, or they see no action being taken.

Staff and faculty both share opinions that they would like to **see more diversity within the leadership pool**, people of diverse backgrounds, and fewer cis-White male decision-makers.

**One specific call to action that staff and faculty raised is that more steps could be taken to break up the monoculture within leadership**. They share frustrations with the search processes and feel that while the processes are in place to support equitable hiring (policies, search advocates, etc.), the actions taken by leadership and the hiring teams either ignore the recommendations of these policies or go against them altogether. A cited example is someone being added to a hiring pool that was not among those chosen by the search committee, and this person was not added due to an equity evaluation failure.

**BIPOC session participants shared explicit concerns about current educational materials being surfaced on topics of anti-racism and color-blindness that they feel are being poorly executed and communicated through inappropriate channels**. They suggest that such training should come from a place of experience with the understanding that groups can be negatively impacted or retraumatized by the topics being discussed, as historical discussions about past societal oppressions can be triggering to many.

Like previous findings, **staff and faculty felt the online DEI training and badges were ineffective and empty rhetoric**. Many saw the LinkedIn training as ineffective for a few key reasons. First, the training modules could be played, and credit for “watching” the video was given, even if the person did not completely watch the video. Second, it felt like the videos

were a “check the box” fulfillment because there were no knowledge tests to ensure the content was consumed. Finally, they share that some trainings lack valuable content or are dated and irrelevant to today’s needs.

Some, more often those in underrepresented groups, felt that **not everyone has an equitable chance of getting hired at SCC**. They feel steps are being taken that can positively impact these decisions, but **the programs in place lack the fortitude to have made any impact to date**.

The **search advocate program receives mixed reviews** among listening session participants. Some gave the program glowing reviews and felt that the work was valuable and that their involvement helped them contribute to the diversity and outcomes of hiring decisions. Others were more critical and felt that the role is too subjective to be effective and that not all search advocates are as effective at identifying or acting on the observed bias.

**Many BIPOC faculty and staff have experienced discriminatory events at SCC due to their race or ethnic identity**. Additionally, those who are not of an underrepresented group have either witnessed or experienced similar events on campus or through their employment. Inclusivity issues are not relegated to those who are underrepresented but are often experienced by all. Many have felt not included due to their socio-economic backgrounds, their lived experiences, their personal household makeups (i.e., single women with children cite being denied opportunities due to work-life balance concerns), and other non-visual disadvantages many may suffer from.

**Code-switching continues to be common** among staff and faculty session participants. Many feel they have to act or be a certain way to be successful in the workplace and have a deep-seated fear of retribution. **They feel like they cannot bring concerns to their supervisors, regardless of their racial or ethnic background**. Participants directly cite instances where they choose to be careful whom they speak to about issues that may arise.

The **informal reporting process exacerbates this fear of retribution, and participants share their discomfort with feeling they must advocate for themselves when they feel oppressed**. When asked where they would go for support, many suggest co-workers like themselves, which puts others at risk and puts an undue burden on them to be counseling support.

Staff and faculty **participants raise concerns that any visibility, say by standing up for others or themselves, can be seen as a threat and can negatively impact the success of their career at SCC**. Faculty express specific concerns about losing tenure-track opportunities due to their involvement in programs or expressing opinions that may be pushing DEI topics forward. The culture within some programs and departments at SCC is described as “secretive and manipulative.”

**Under the guise of professionalism, those of diverse backgrounds and experiences share stories at SCC of being bullied or told to behave a certain way to ensure that they do not have opportunities taken away from them by leadership**.

**A lack of counselor availability for staff and faculty surfaced as a new issue, where they suggested that they would like to see counselors like them that they can relate to, so they**

**do not need to burden their co-workers when issues arise.** Additionally, they expressed concerns about the limits currently in place for counseling sessions (10 versus unlimited for students) when staff and faculty can often carry burdens that others have endured due to their ability to be the “like me” representative for certain subgroups.

SCC staff and **participants shared a desire to amplify their impact and ways to get more involved in discussions about diversity, equity, and inclusion** than just those who may be part of these populations. While they didn’t have specific suggestions on how best to instill this supportive culture, the desire to see this implemented greatly indicates the level of support these initiatives can have if executed sensibly.

# Findings and Recommendations

The focus group research reinforced assumptions and underlined opportunities for improvement on DEI topics within SCC moving forward. Please note that the themes below are based exclusively on the comments and feedback collected during the listening sessions.

## **The work on DEI and changing the campus climate and culture is still in its infancy at SCC.**

Many expressed personal and direct experiences with DEI concepts at SCC where they may cite seeing or feeling less than or not included. Many fear that discussing or acting in ways that impact the White-dominant culture at SCC will negatively impact future career opportunities they may have within the system.

Several participants experience frustration and subtle acts of exclusion (microaggressions) when requesting and ultimately not receiving individual accommodations for their diverse needs (e.g., neurodivergences, physical ability, physical size, etc.).

They suggest that this can be impacted through more diverse hiring decisions in executive leadership and by including more voices from outside the dominant communities on campus, in the workforce, and in educational materials.

Current culture dictates that while policies may exist to guide equitable and unbiased decisions, not all policies are enforced rigorously, or they become non-committal lip service by those involved.

## **Fear became a critical talking point in employee segments.**

Discussions of fear throughout the entire institutional system were especially prevalent among the staff and faculty segments, regardless of racial or ethnic background.

Participants expressed specific fears of

- Retribution
- Change
- Extra work

- Feeling uncomfortable
- Of others with positions of power
- Of losing their job or their job's safety
- Political change and outcomes
- Worldwide economic pressures

Faculty and staff report feeling unsafe sharing issues with co-workers and superiors due to a fear of retribution. However, they would welcome a way to have these conversations in a safe environment.

**Creating a formal reporting process is one opportunity to remove this fear of retribution** for some. You could also consider creating Talking Circles or establishing Employee Resource Groups/Affinity Groups for employees to share and commune.

**Not everyone has an opportunity to succeed at SCC, and many of these barriers are due to a lack of diversity. Students experience far fewer instances of feeling out of place than staff and faculty.**

Staff and faculty shared stories of feeling out of place and, most importantly, passed over for advancement opportunities due to their lived experiences, backgrounds, presentation, and "who they are," which is observed as being tied to an unwritten definition of professionalism that imbues itself into the decision-making processes of the institution. Many cite fears and instances of being asked or instructed to "act professional" or to "act a certain way (as professionals)," or they may be denied opportunities. Students had fewer experiences of feeling out of place by this professionalism measurement but expressed difficulties in accessing educational materials, specifically the technology they need to succeed. They also share that one of their main pain points is learning how to be a student (i.e. the "hidden curriculum"); they often stumble and learn through experiences how to succeed as a student at SCC.

"Getting lost in the educational process" can be an issue specific to students who may have experienced problems testing successfully or having time to complete homework assignments while still balancing life. The knowledge of and acceptance of the student body as a working-studying population is essential when considering acceptance and inclusivity among this group.

Faculty and staff suffer from a greater class system that is engrained into the culture of the organization and will continue to be challenging to influence as those with power will be reluctant to let it go.

Consider the following actions to help address DEI concerns:

- Executive leadership to physically attend and regularly communicate support of DEI programs and events.
- Provide the opportunity for DEGA members to review and provide feedback on proposed DEI-related training and presentations.
- Establish a formal diversity accommodations request process.
- Conduct a tenure analysis - percentage of diverse candidates in total pool, percentage of diverse candidates receiving tenure, demographics of tenured faculty, etc.
- Reassess procedures, cultural practices, and workplace systems with a DEI lens (i.e., supplier diversity, sourcing talent, onboarding, performance reviews, promotions, feedback loops, training, etc.).
- Provide relevant and SCC-specific DEI training with competency expectations and impact metrics.
- Provide awareness, education, and counseling to address racial battle fatigue, also known as racial trauma.
- Invest in the “invisible forces” such as employee engagement, cognitive diversity, and psychological safety.
- Analyze exit interview feedback for ways to mitigate burnout and turnover.

### **How can there be issues if there is nowhere to go and no one to report it to?**

Students did not share any knowledge about how to report equity or inclusivity issues they may experience to anyone at SCC. They have ideas and suggest they go to a counselor, faculty member, or someone they view in leadership if they have an issue, but they are unaware of how to share any of their experiences with SCC.

Faculty and staff acknowledge that the reporting process is informal, and the individual with the concern is burdened with addressing their concerns directly with

individuals they may have an issue with. This puts them in a position of fear of retribution and the outcomes.

Students still struggle with the process. Consider providing Onboarding sessions with students throughout the year to learn about the CID, on-campus offerings (i.e., bakery, food pantry, greenhouse, automotive, etc.), and learn processes and procedures (i.e., how to meet a counselor, file a complaint, etc.). The GUID 102 course is helpful, but many do not enroll in it at the onset of their journey and do not know of the value of the course.

*We have included additional analysis and comments by market segment through the narrative on the following pages.*

# Segment Summaries, Notes, and Themes

## STUDENTS

To SCC students, higher education means an opportunity – an opportunity for a future, a career, and to make themselves proud. It also represents a step towards adulthood for many and, for some, a step out of a bad situation or previous choices they may regret. Working on their undergraduate degree is a significant opportunity to move forward in their lives.

Some share stories of their journey as students who struggle through the learning process as they find hidden rules and pitfalls in navigating registration, funding, and even coursework. Those who have completed or are enrolled in the “Guide 102 Course” shared that this course was explicitly helpful for them as they learned what it meant to be a student at SCC and how to leverage their educational opportunities within the system best.

*“There's a level of fear coming into a Community College about it, entry-level college, especially walking into the CID building that I walk into every day with not only the diverse group but the age gap in most of my classmates. And so, yeah, there's a level of anxiety every day I come. But just getting over that and coming was part of the growth [as a student]. But I'm here to get determined to learn.” SCC Student Participant*

Students who primarily attend online courses and have less connection with the campus resources share more stories than others about understanding what resources are available to them and how to proceed through their education.

*“All I saw was go to college, build your life better, get a better degree or whatever. But I never saw, hey, we can help you with this. This can be helped if you have problem, if you have problems with planning. We have resources. We have, you know? OK, 'cause some people are embarrassed. I mean, I felt embarrassed. I'm sitting there going, I'm the type of person that doesn't ask for help.*

*Yeah. But yeah, there's totally some people out there that are just too embarrassed to be like, hey, like, I just like, I want to change my life. I need some help figuring this out. You say you can help me change my life. How are you helping me changing my life?” SCC Student Participant*

Many share that the struggles they observe or feel among students, whether it be acceptance by their gender, identity, race, age, or socio-economic background, are rooted in that individual's outlook and general society pressures. They feel that they can be themselves on campus, and in the classroom with little fear of retribution or feeling out of place. They acknowledge that code-switching happens, but it is a response to general social pressures more so than a response to pressures they feel as a student made upon them by the college.

*"I feel like I'm always used to code switching, but it's not anything that the campus has done to me. I feel like it's always like I have to judge the situation before I mention certain things about myself. But I don't think it's a certain scenario that the campus has set up. I think it's just basic society that set up individuals themselves. Yeah, like, like, like I said, I can't hide. I have to be myself." SCC Student Participant*

To students, they reiterate that a community that feels inclusive, and belonging includes a myriad of different people with different experiences, stories, and backgrounds.

*"Yeah, the instructors really, people have a lot of heart towards students, just giving them the resources to succeed, giving them plans, being really patient, especially with everybody's basic schedules. Because like it's a very different setting from other universities where it's just a majority of just like young students. But in a Community College, there's like a myriad of different diversities. There's people coming back and they're juggling jobs, juggling families. So it's a different demographic of students and then every instructor kind of gets it over to your school and they're just really patient with each student." SCC Student Participant*

Being new to school, and the education process is a common frustration for students, and many shared frustrations and challenges with the first steps of the process as they tried to fit in and feel accepted in the system. Some share a fear of asking for help due to fears of being misunderstood, or treated differently for asking.

*"But kind of, you know, when your language, not your first language in the can [be intimidating], it's kind of you feel very intimidated or somehow that, yeah, afraid to ask the question that's been my experience." SCC Student Participant*

One individual in our BIPOC student sessions had excellent experiences with the Administration Office staff and team, and shared glowing stories about their experiences with this office during their onboarding and orientation. Others in the session nodded along, indicating similar experiences with either this office, or pockets of individuals throughout the SCC system.

*"And but if we're just speaking on staff, yes, the staffing, it's great that administration office, that administration office is just those people out there are helpful and they all help each other. Like they piggyback off each other.*

*They it's, I don't know, it's the aura in that office. And when you walk in and it's because if you'd be intimidating, you know, your first time coming to school, like everything's new. Yeah, everybody's looking at you.*

*Yeah, you might think everybody's looking at you a certain type of way, but and it just be insecurities, you know, personal things within and all that being the things that it's almost like your mind playing tricks on you type of deal, you know. And for me it wasn't uncomfortable at all. You know, you might see people might give you a certain spirit like what is he doing here? But it doesn't mean that it's like come here, like why are you just do you need the help come in. And they are, they are so adamant on who will be the help that you need given the answers." SCC Student Participant*

Socio-economic and technological knowledge surfaced among students as a concern with acceptance and their ability to succeed as students. They shared stories of barriers with technology as they were completing their coursework (for instance, one class requiring an assignment to be completed on Office 2014 versus a current version they are using or the online version they have access to).

Students also shared stories, almost uniformly, about the realization that they “needed a new computer” after starting their coursework. Very few, after registration, shared that the technology they thought they would be able to use was sufficient to complete the work they were assigned.

*“So yeah, that's definitely a frustration with the yeah just the mixed match technology the outdated parts of it is frustrating. And I know it's a Community College and not a university but the over 5 different side resources you have to download and use Icon Academy for math and this for you know there are certain programs you also have to download onto the computer. So it's not just my updatable computer. It's just my computer able to withhold everything that you need to download and function in somewhat of a fast capacity spot because I tried to do just the cheap one. The check box in the first week of school was just the 1st 20 minutes of my computer loading. So we had to get the better one.*

*But that was \$900 that we'll pull out of somewhere. I don't know 'cause we don't get financial aid yet and so I'll have to wait to get financial aid. And then if there's a possibility of Chromebook from school but and I know it's not necessarily it should be it should be something that if not the school funding or the government funding you can check out laptops.*

*You can check out laptops whatever. It's only Chromebook. And so which is why the issue with the Microsoft with stuff because Chromebook doesn't really establish it. So and I had to do the online version and I was like and it's hard to like to go into work and school and putting kids on my end, you know. And so it's hard to time manage and fit everything in as well.” SCC Student Participant*

While most did not have examples of opportunities of inclusiveness that they have been involved in, those who did share stories of their inclusion in clubs and groups on campus shared that those experiences were formative and valuable to them. Being part of an affinity group, for those that did share, has been additive to their experiences at SCC.

*“Like I guess this quarter I've been more active in like joining clubs recently, planning events, especially for this quarter, the association with Latin American students, LASO here at the school and who helped the vet for like just like a music night. And I helped sort of plan out because, you know, I was part of the band that played.*

*So I was on sort of network that and it felt like better to be actively a part of another like association with new schools. So I feel that's been really helpful for me, just applying myself, being more outgoing, engaging more with opportunities that, you know, other people might need help with.” SCC Student Participant*

Students feel accepted and supported by their faculty and instructors, many shared stories and experiences where they felt their instructors were going out of their way to help them succeed in their studies. They share that they feel seen and accepted by their instructors.

*"Yeah, you, you have to love it because she wants to see, see to where you want to go. You know, if you can't get it, come back. At least she will help. There's different methods to the madness, you know, and she's he's actually going to give you an answer. I mean, I think you can act more of a person, you know? I've seen that, that the teachers, the instructors, they want to see you succeed. I really like that." SCC Student Participant*

When asked if they were aware of what to do if they have a complaint about an issue, whether it be with a student, staff, or faculty member, many students shared that they did not know where to go. Some explained that the thought gave them fear, as they felt many others had more power than them within the system, and if they had an issue, they would want to speak to a third party and not directly accuse or confront their oppressor.

*"I think if something were to happen that would really affect me, if somebody were to say something to me, if it was somebody who is above me, like uses their power against me, I would try to find another resource that I could who could talk to that individual like. And I feel like there's quite a lot here like when I counselor like you haven't even talked about this professor to anybody.*

*Like if a professor was being like just straight up, not good, like really discriminatory towards a certain student and it's like failing them on certain things. I haven't experienced that. But if that were to be something that happened, I feel like I wouldn't confront the professor. I would go to somebody else." SCC Student Participant*

## **FACULTY AND STAFF**

When discussing with faculty and staff participants what a diverse work environment feels like, they describe it as a place that can reach all students with what it offers through topics, meeting their educational needs, etc.

It employs a wide variety of people of different ages and backgrounds. A workplace that features people of various nationalities, gender identities, races, and socioeconomic statuses. Participants suggest that SCC is working towards setting a culture that supports this initiative and is on a path forward.

*"Like there's yeah, there's just a path for you that's available. Like there's an open door in whatever path forward you wish to choose. I think it's about recognizing that different people may need different types of things to be successful in the people come from different places and the same tools may not work forever. Yeah, I think we're embracing that. We're definitely learning a lot, embracing it a lot in the education sphere, certainly just learning how to work with younger adults. They they're more forward with their needs, let's say, and asking for these equity, let's see that a lot.*

*See that a lot with the student groups. When we see these, they're much, much better at articulating, I think, than asking for those types of services." SCC Staff Participant*

Staff participants also added that a diverse work environment goes beyond definitions and exemplifies the outcomes. It creates a space where individuals can feel comfortable sharing their experiences and being themselves without fear of being left out or feeling less than others.

*"I would say that to me, like we have the definitions right, right here. But to me, DEI is about the outcomes, right? Because yes, in a diverse workspace, you can have a diverse workspace, but do you feel safe, right? Do you feel as though you truly belong? Like do you have people on campus that you can trust, and can you show up as your authentic self? Those are like what we should see in any space and especially and you know, while like reaching for these, right, like this is our goal." SCC Staff Participant*

Participants shared that they felt accepted to be themselves among their peers and those they immediately work with if they focus on performing their work and staying on task.

*"Like it was kind of like within a new job where you're still sort of uncertain about certain like work dynamics and social interaction type stuff. I kind of just go about like new situations like a new job and I'm in now I'm a little bit more reserved. So I'm kind of just more focused on like learning what I'm doing here and how I'm going to be doing that and how I can best do that and kind of shy away, not shy away.*

*But like I don't really put a whole lot of business on like the personal side and bringing that to work just because I want to focus on like what I'm doing here. But I certainly think that SCC is an inclusive workplace, you know and that's just for me personally like it takes me a long time to kind of feel comfortable with change and newness.*

*And so I, I guess I'll just say, OK, an inclusive side or inclusive workplace definitely looks like a place where there's really good balance of being able to share what you're going through and stuff that's outside of work, but at the same time balancing that with like, you know, just getting work done and stuff like that. So yeah, you can't, you can't all be playing around activities, right. We still have a job to do." SCC Staff Participant*

Participants support the inclusion of more diversity in hiring pools and among hires. However, they admit that they still do not see much racial or ethnic diversity in their staff and faculty populations now.

*"I just want to say that my wish is one day when we're talking about diversity, not to see and to forget that someone was of a different origin and remember him as a full colleague and have one person be themselves and not representative of their group and just be." SCC Faculty Participant*

Box-checking came up in multiple groups as a current practice at SCC that they felt was not achieving its goals of creating diversity and equity. Many suggest that it is due to not all boxes being equally represented and that some "boxes" people may have in their history are not part of those being currently measured for outcomes.

*"So that's something that to add to that, I also was thinking that when I think about diversity, I'm really thinking about variability and variability not just in terms of races, but yeah, I am white, but I am different as well. And it becomes thankfully obvious. But then I check box white Caucasian. And this box checking is what really, really I would like not in the first word, right and to go towards some sort of a balance between equality and variability.*

*And just to add to this frustration with hiring, just as you and I, I can name very few yet we have a very large population of Russian, Ukrainian, Eastern European minorities here in Spokane that I have yet to see it reflected in our spot, maybe just at the lowest levels." SCC Faculty Participant*

Additional thoughts on DEI and EDI messaging being felt as "check boxes" versus cultural shifts and change.

*"And I feel like on campus something that not again, like not like a struggle, but something that like just kind of stands out to me, I guess is that every DEI message feels like a list that we're just checking off. So if it's like, like, oh, Juneteenth is coming up like oh, let's just do a brief like message, boom, that's it. I think there was like an event a few days ago, like the Asian and Pacific Islander, like appreciation, like week or month. And then I literally never saw anything about it except for like the like on Monday there was like a message that was sent out and I was like, oh, OK, well, I didn't, I didn't know." SCC Faculty Participant*

*"So as it relates to upper level leadership, I think that surface level, yes, they say we EDI, this is what we care about. But when it comes to solving problems, real life problems that happen for not just our students, for our employees as well, crickets, crickets." SCC Staff Participant*

Many support the idea of how hiring, training, and onboarding can help positively influence the diversity of staff and faculty at SCC. Some had very positive experiences being involved with and trained in the search advocate program and feel that the program is a good step forward in ensuring that diversity is embodied in hiring actions. Recent hires cited the program and thought it had a positively influenced their ability to land a role at SCC.

*"And currently, I'm not exactly sure how this role functions, but for my interview, there were three people there that were there to determine whether it was fit for the job. And then one person who was there to watch the interview and make sure that it is equitable. So, three people are making decisions about do we hire this person or not. One person's there to like to oversee that these three people making decisions that are like, doing it right, or are they just hiring, you know, whites cis-straight males or are they like, like, so somebody's there watching." SCC Staff Participant*

Some had more critical opinions of the effectiveness of the search advocate program.

*"I will say that there is a strategic, there is a CCS strategic project on both increasing employee diversity. And there's a strategic project on evaluating the effectiveness of the search Advocate program. Now, I believe that the reason why it's a strategic project*

*is because it's not effective. Because if it was, we wouldn't be the only ones in here. You wouldn't have to send out the survey to all the BIPOC employees because there's only 20, right?*

*So I do not think that the search advocate, I think that the search advocate program process or whatever has great intentions and it is proven to work elsewhere, hence why we took it from OSU. And I think SFCC, they have better outcomes than we do here at SCC. But ultimately things are not like procedural enough because it's like, OK, as a search advocate, my dedication to my role that's subjective." SCC Staff Participant*

They also mention that while the search advocates are present at interviews, they are unsure how many of them, if many of them are voicing concerns when they arise, or if they have been advocating appropriately.

*"If the search seems if the committee seems to be making choices that are not equitable, seems to be like fully powered by bias, then the search advocate can talk to the chair of the committee and say "hey I'm seeing quite a bit of bias. I'm not sure if you guys are really looking at all the candidates and being there with the qualifications." I believe that there is potential for the search advocate to declare a failed search because it was being so unfair. I don't know of that happening very often, but that is something that the search advocate can do, and they can even bring up that issue to someone higher." SCC Staff Participant*

Speaking more to the pockets of diversity and inclusivity, the Center for Inclusivity and Diversity (CID) was mentioned often as a place for the community to experience diverse people on campus and in the SCC community. They suggest spreading this experience throughout the campus to remove these pockets of acceptance and broaden acceptance throughout the campus community.

*"And we're doing these readings and like, because I told SCC, like, you can't have a campus of diversity unless you have it visible and there's not enough art. Art changes people and it's healing. And you know, another thing is CID is beautiful. But that should not be our highest highlight. That should be the whole campus." SCC Faculty Participant*

Creating cultural acceptance and staving microaggressions within the community are rising topics among staff and faculty. Many mention that while there are many "good people" in the community, there are also pockets of people who exhibit non-inclusive behavior or are micro-aggressors. They share a difficulty in addressing these in situ and find that the current process of asking the victim to stand for themselves is out of place.

*"So, what I hear, yeah, is the microaggressions, and that was on a list of mine. Like how do we sort of address those in a moment without again, without having to be the, you know, it's these conversations often come through when asking the victim to stand up and fight their aggressors, right? Because that's what a lot of that's what a lot of some people ask, ask among any type of a systemically non dominant person, right? You know, it's apparently their responsibility to stand up for themselves but there's not an*

*acceptance of that. It is stifled, you're scared. And I'm not speaking for me, I see this with others." SCC Faculty Participant*

*"I understand that broad strokes are easier to embrace, you know, broad strokes in celebrating pride communities or broad strokes in celebrating immigrant and refugee communities. But in the micro is where it gets difficult when an individual is asking for accommodation or consideration or whatever. It's in the micro where I see the stops coming or the push back, the subtle micro aggressions too." SCC Faculty Participant*

Current activities within the community are shared by many to have mixed outcomes on success in elevating the conversation about inclusion throughout the population and educating others to be more inclusive in their actions. Specific concerns were raised by both BIPOC Staff and Faculty about the way these programs are presented and the content contained within them.

*"So the EDI-AR training, equity, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism, that responsibility is housed with HR. We just went through reorg and now we have a new Department of Culture and Talent development that is revamping how EDI-AR training should look because we know the LinkedIn learnings are terrible and effective and just a check, check box, check, check, right." SCC Staff Participant*

A recent training brought up by a BIPOC participant spoke to how the training, when done by people who may not represent the population being discussed or without proper context, can be misleading and make those whom they are speaking about feel out of place.

*"So then I went to this other training in the afternoon because I was like, OK, I'll try to plug into some of these training. And there was this training called it's called Color Blind or Anti-Racist Color Blindness and Building the Coalition. And I was like, hmm, that should be interesting ... But it went really not a good way, and it was really terrible, like and hostile, I think, for BIPOC people, and I don't think that they really thought about it, and they tried to like to balance it with like critical race theory. But then, first, it was four White males that give this anti-race and color blindness and coalition building and then like because they're not in the BIPOC community. ... It's kind of like a religion, you know, it's just a space for them to like to feel victims, and you know, they talked about Black people versus like non-Black people like taking the oppressor and the oppressed dynamics." SCC Faculty Participant*

Understanding the intent of an individual's behavior is a topic that many suggest could receive more focus and training among staff and faculty. They suggest that if individuals listened and approached situations with an open mind, they could act more in alignment with the culture SCC is striving to move towards. They point out that while the intent is in place for diversity in programs, they are not seeing this in action in hiring and that all senior leadership continues to be White male dominant and not representative or diverse.

*"I'm obviously, but just having interacted with lots of different people in campus, it's just, you know, it's curious 'cause it's, you know, for me personally, I'm open to some of those conversations depending on who it is and what the, what the motive is or the intention. There's no one in the room in those positions at mid-level or higher power*

*that identify with any of the issues that are being talked. I mean, I don't want to say nobody because now I feel like I'm gonna I'm missing like the one person. But there's only just a one, right? Yeah, but there's there's not enough to where I mean, there's no one speaking except the people experiencing it, which are mid-level and lower, not mid-level and higher.*

*And I have a feeling of that the intent matters, the culture is really what matters rather than the words where I have had a very unpleasant personal experience as I would try to put out and it was disability related. I do feel that there are topics that we are all are screaming about.*

*So everybody's aware that there's EDI component, you know, which is why I kind of, I tried to stay away from the typical DI language of victim oppressor because it is a continuum and nobody wants to be an oppressor and nobody wants to intentionally be bad. So I have had people were like, well, tell me what are the right words to say?*

*And I'm I am panic because there are no right words to say. It is not the words, is the intent. And I am a person just like any other human being on the planet who has been involved for millions of years to look not just for the language but for the authenticity. And I can tell it." SCC Faculty Participant*

Access to counseling services was suggested as a benefit that could provide additional benefits to all involved, in addition to training. Still, participants are frustrated with the limited number of allotted counseling sessions.

*"And I remember when I was taking sessions, for example, from counseling services and it's like you have 10 sessions, students have unlimited, you have 10 sessions. It's like I'm not here because we need help. We are dealing with legitimate tragedies on multiple fronts. And you're counting sessions because I'm taking away from students." SCC Faculty Participant*

Additionally, systemically non-dominant staff and faculty point out that counseling is not diverse, and does not offer individuals like them to speak with. They point out that this is important to both employees, and students.

*"You know, with counselors, I think that, yeah, there should be more members of different backgrounds because, as you said, when students are looking to the faculty and staff, you want to look for someone or something that you can relate to. And it's hard to find and it's a deterrent. That's why students at SCC, at least that's why students I see, don't seek out mental health counseling, even though that is an amazing free resource to them.*

*Students have said that they're not going back because of that lack of relatability. And just it's like, I'm sharing my problems with you, and you're telling me to drink water. Like, like, that's literally what's happened." SCC Staff Participant*

Systemically non-dominant staff and faculty also readily acknowledge the lack of those like them in their peer groups, and around campus among the employee groups which may be

different from the other cultures they may have experienced in their past that were more diverse.

*"And then coming here, it was a little bit of culture shock, kind of like what they alluded to, where the first thing I noticed in our department was like everyone's white. And not only that, like leadership, everyone. OK, Everyone's white. OK Oh, over there, everyone's white. And I, I don't know what the percentage is, but it does feel like everywhere that I go in terms of like a meeting, I'm like, I'm the only one that's a little bit different. And it's kind of feeds in mentally." SCC Faculty Participant*

The informal reporting process came up in all groups as either a process that participants were unaware of (they suggested they did not know of what reporting process was in place) or participants would share stories of how the informal reporting process creates a culture of non-reporting, and pushing issues under the rug.

Many suggest that they fear bringing issues to the surface for fear of retribution. There is also a general feeling and culture of "all staff and non-tenured faculty are disposable," which complicates the informal reporting process and creates more reasons for people not to report issues when they occur.

*"And I think that lots of times, you know, you're relying on your job for your own, you know, financial stability and taking care of your families. And so you're just weighing, do I risk losing my job because I'm now going against somebody who has more power than they do in order to do what you would be considered right?"*

*And then but you're weighing, you know, it's one person's word against another person's word and you don't have the power and you're disposable essentially as an active person. Then you just don't say anything." SCC Faculty Participant*

*"The thing is, I mean, like, you know, we have to be careful because the leadership's still very white and very strongly relationship connected but secretive and not transparent and manipulative, right?" SCC Faculty Participant*

Staff also raise comments about the cultural dichotomy between faculty and staff, and how they feel faculty treat them as less than, and as those who are disposable or replaceable within the system.

*"I'm like, I just don't do well with blatant disrespect, but faculty can sometimes try to make you feel like I'm faculty and I'm the boss and the leader, but, you know, you don't report to faculty. No, no, but they use their privilege. I've been told and heard many times of faculty and not faculty that that that statement 10 years faculty are untouchable. They can do whatever they want. Oh, God, I've heard that. Yeah, I've been here just two months and I've heard it probably a lot of times. And it's like it's that culture that we have like that power and privilege. So I can do whatever I want. I can say whatever I want and say untouchable." SCC Staff Participant*

From a faculty perspective, this implied classism can also have negative impacts on their experiences with SCC.

*"But that was the first experience talking with other departments, talking about me being a faculty. They would say subtle comments. And then I didn't understand what they were talking about. And I'd be like, oh, OK, yeah, I am. I am faculty. Yeah. But it's like, it feels so like classist and, like, weird and like, it's just, yeah, it's just a kind of a strange environment.*

*And I still hear it from time to time. Like, oh, there are certain people that have like different hours. And it's like I feel bad saying like, yeah, we do have different hours, but that that's just like our roles are just different, you know."* SCC Faculty Participant

Participants, both staff and faculty, point to the examples set by the C-suite in how SCC employees should be acting, treating others, and taking action. Many cite that there has been little action and a lack of accountability from many who are currently in interim roles. They suggest that the work in EDI that is being asked about and focused on in these cultural evaluations needs to be reflected in leadership actions and that they would like to see that to help the effort make a true impact.

*"It's just hard because again, we're not the decision makers, It's the people that are gatekeeping at the top. And it's like they don't even realize that they're perpetuating the culture that they're trying to dismantle. Like, but they're not really like cognitive dissonance, right? Cognitive dissonance. That's what's going on at the top, 'cause they have to do and tell themselves what they need to do and tell themselves to make themselves feel better while also saying one thing like another thing to keep their job maybe to so that they continue to have buy in from, you know, at large. But again, they're not people who are interacting with our students every day."* SCC Staff Participant

# Appendix I

## Supporting Documentation, Moderators Guides, Participant Lists, Transcripts, Archival Videos, etc.

### Qualitative Research Study Results Report Study Fielding May 2024

*Please note that any transcriptions are raw, have not been reviewed for proper terminology, and will contain errors due to naturally occurring errors with the AI in our transcription tools.*

*View/Download Files Using the Following Links*

#### **Moderators Guide - Faculty and Staff -**

<https://strategicresearchassociates.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/EWLSUMRJudGII6BC7VwCUABWeckOyVErvSXY-hmaQRi8A?e=mZmQoV>

#### **Moderators Guide - Students -**

<https://strategicresearchassociates.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/EdNFobDilUVKnnzDmJqOcGIB4vzgsiLlgJTCaKolxihyig?e=CT52xK>