



*Vision · Opportunity · Inclusion
Collaboration · Equity · Social Justice*

A Learning Community of Diverse Leaders
South Seattle Community College

A brief history of the VOICES initiative...

VOICES I

In July 2010, the AANAPISI (Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution) grant funded its first off-campus professional development Summer Train-the-Trainer Institute at Ocean Shores. The two-and-a-half day Institute was designed to help participants deepen their knowledge of diversity fundamentals needed to help others within South's learning community grow their understanding of equity and inclusion principles. This Institute was called a "Train-the-Trainer Institute" with the idea that this group would become campus diversity/equity leaders, increase their multicultural competency, and expand South's diversity, inclusion and equity capacities. Twenty-nine faculty, classified and exempt staff, and administrators participated. The result was the development of a strong learning community of diversity leaders naming themselves V.O.I.C.E.S. (for Vision, Opportunity, Inclusion, Collaboration, Equity, and Social Justice).

The participants identified five major focus areas/initiatives for integration into South's culture in support of diversity and social justice: 1) Use of the **Where I Am From** poem to build a better understanding of who we; 2) providing **VOICES Learning Community** support to reinforce the work and "community" of the VOICES group; 3) develop a **System** to survey South's infrastructure to identify gaps in our ability to address student/staff needs in terms of cultural or other sensitive issues; 4) develop strategies to build **Community, Allies, Mentorship** to engage faculty and staff across campus; and 5) **Sustaining the Work** by incorporating the work of the VOICES learning community into the core themes and to continue to lead an action plan to address the gaps.

Mission Statement

VOICES is a collaborative community furthering South Seattle Community College's commitment to providing lifelong learning opportunities with respect to ensuring inclusion, equity and social justice. VOICES promotes a vision of cultural sensitivity, fostering a climate of awareness of and appreciation for diversity.

To complete their commitment, VOICES participants met quarterly in their subgroups to develop an action plan - and timeline to share their knowledge and skills with colleagues with the larger group during the Fall and Spring Institute. Those ideas were carried into VOICES III.

VOICES II

To respond to the demand developed out of the success of the VOICES Summer Institute in 2010, a second cohort was created in July 2011 at a three-day, Summer Institute on South's Georgetown campus. Twenty people participated. This session built upon the learning community created by the first VOICES Summer Institute and brought in new participants to work with the alumni and build a larger community – growing the VOICES membership to 35

members. Building upon the work of VOICES I, the workgroups developed action plans toward institutionalizing four initiatives: 1) **Allies for New Hires** to build community and provide mentorship for new hires; 2) **Diversity Framework** to develop a system to build campus multicultural competency. The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) is being utilized across campus as an assessment tool to strengthen intercultural competence; 3) **Lunch and Learns** are continuing to engage the campus community in diversity issues; and 4) **Where I'm From (WIF)** is utilized in and out of the classroom to allow individuals to share their experiences. These activities have become a part of South's culture.

Lunch and Learn

To better prepare the participants for the first Summer Institute, pre-readings were assigned and lunch time discussions were facilitated by the Director of the Office of Diversity and Retention. The Lunch and Learn series were open to the entire campus. The readings and discussions were selected to engage the campus community and promote understanding and support for campus diversity issues. An average of 20 participants attended each session, half of whom were South employees but not Summer Institute participants! The Lunch and Learn series has been continued in support of the VOICES mission to provide lifelong learning opportunities that promote and embrace multiculturalism, equity and social justice for the campus community.

What participants say about the VOICES and Lunch & Learn initiatives:

- *"I learned so much at the summer institute; it was transformative."*
- *"Fantastic- so much new information that I can take back to the college/to my job."*
- *"I did enlighten my understanding of equity & social justice and diversity."*
- *"I've already applied it to my life and work."*
- *"Really want to use these allies to solve problems in learning for students"*
- *"Absolutely fantastic...learned a lot."*
- *"A great start to a new beginning as a new community. We are born!!"*
- *"Power of shared understanding"*
- *In 17 years here at South, I have never seen a conversation, so deep, so fast than the conversations around diversity that have come about because of the Summer Institute.*
(by a South colleague who didn't attend the Institute)

VOICES III

The positive feedback regarding the learned strategies, practices and confidence in addressing educational outcomes by attendees of VOICES I and VOICES II led to the joint funding support of PEER (Partners in Equity in Education through Research) and South's second AANAPISI grant for VOICES III. The 2013 VOICES III is three-and-a-half day Summer Institute being held at Islandwood.