

The logo for the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) is displayed in a large, stylized, white serif font on a black background. The letters are bold and slightly shadowed, giving it a three-dimensional appearance. The background of the entire page is a collage of various educational terms and CSUN-related text in different fonts and sizes, creating a textured, word-art effect.

# ON THE CUTTING EDGE

## Diversity & Equity Innovation Grants in the MDECOE

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April 2023

In January of 2023, faculty members of the Michael D. Eisner College of Education were awarded Diversity & Equity Innovation Grants. The Diversity & Equity Innovation Grant was established to support educational projects, scholarly research, creative activities and other programmatic initiatives that promote diversity, equity, inclusion, access, anti-racism and social justice for the benefit of the CSUN community.

### **From Surviving to Thriving: A Support Group for Counseling and MFT Graduate Students**

Drs. Dana Stone, Shyrea Minton, and Deborah Buttitta are professors in the Department of Educational Psychology & Counseling (EPC). Their DEI grant is titled: “From Surviving to Thriving: A Support Group for Counseling and MFT Graduate Students.” Specifically, this project speaks to the DEIG objective to create programs that support students of diverse populations in academic disciplines in which they are traditionally underrepresented. The goal of this project is to create intentional and supportive group spaces for counseling and MFT graduate students to build cultural community wealth and make social connections with one another, which is a form of mental health support needed to eliminate barriers to success. These groups help to promote personalized student success with identity-based support groups.

EPC graduate students in the Counseling and MFT programs are a unique subset of the CSUN student population. As graduate students in their programs, while completing coursework, they also participate in fieldwork in which they directly serve the larger community’s mental health needs through the provision of counseling and clinical services. During the last three years, the mental health services provided by these students have been unprecedented in terms of the complexities of a simultaneous shared experience of witnessing and living through persistent and multiple crises and recent attacks (e.g., racial injustice, immigration disparities, LGBTQIA+ and gender inequities, and anti-Black and anti-Asian racism) with their clients. A concerning factor related to their ongoing engagement during the tumultuous sociopolitical climate and pandemic is compassion fatigue, which is the secondary stress reaction of helping others through experiences of stress and trauma (APA, 2020). Now more than ever, it is of utmost importance that graduate counselors and therapists in training do their own introspective work to acknowledge personal experiences related to the aforementioned topics, to confront their unconscious bias, and to counter compassion fatigue. Having their own community and mental health support will foster continued engagement as students and practitioners, as they navigate the impact of the multiple crises personally, academically, and professionally.

Affinity groups of up to 10 participants will meet weekly for 10 weeks. Group speakers competent in topic areas such as BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ support, racial trauma, grief and loss, and compassion fatigue will present at those weekly meetings. Pre- and post-surveys will help evaluate participant experiences and potential gains. Guest speakers will also complete reflections.

It has become evident that BIPOC and other individuals who hold marginalized identities need safe spaces to process racial harm (Blackwell, 2018) and other harm associated with their identities. This project will deliver increased support for BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ in the counseling and MFT programs and the field at large. It will also increase capacity of those counselors and clinicians to serve clients of color and engage in anti-racist and affirming therapeutic practices with all clients and specifically BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ clients with racial (Williams et al., 2018) and cultural trauma more effectively.

# Diversity & Equity Innovation Grants in the MDECOE

## Simulation for Inclusive Multicultural Preparation and Cultural Transformation [SIMPACT]: Using avatars to increase social justice awareness and skills with CSUN faculty and students

Dr. Wendy Murawski, Executive Director of the CTL and Director of SIMPACT Immersive Learning, received a DEIG grant for: “Simulation for Inclusive Multicultural Preparation and Cultural Transformation [SIMPACT]: Using avatars to increase social justice awareness and skills with CSUN faculty and students.” This project presents SIMPACT, CSUN’s award-winning, highly realistic, avatar-based, mixed-reality simulation system to interact with CSUN participants around courageous conversations. Using a dual-pronged approach, SIMPACT simulation scenarios are being created that (a) work with CSUN faculty to present them with strategies for including DEI discussions in their undergraduate and graduate courses, and (b) embed simulation into CSUN coursework across the university so that CSUN students themselves can be presented with DEI-related situations. Once scenarios are developed and faculty have become aware of its availability and application, the sustainability of the project and its broad institutional impact are assured. This project directly addresses the CSUN goal of “Disrupt Systemic Inequities” in our Roadmap to the Future.

The unique aspect of this project is the creation of scenarios specifically designed around topics related to diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice open to all CSUN faculty to learn how to talk about difficult and sensitive topics so they can facilitate critical conversations with their undergraduate and graduate students. In addition, CSUN students in fields beyond the College of Education will have the opportunity to learn ways to share feelings of inequity, discuss micro-aggressions, debate disagreements over privilege in a respectful manner, and work collaboratively and communicate openly about sensitive topics around social justice issues in a safe space; SIMPACT is that space.

Faculty training is being offered on how to become a SIMPACT facilitator. Scenarios are being crafted by subject matter experts and include a wide variety of topics relevant to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Survey data will help ascertain the perceived impact on participant opinions and skills as they relate to the various topics identified. The use of SIMPACT will enable a large number of CSUN faculty and students to engage in difficult conversations in a safe and supported environment. The outcomes are hard to quantify, but an improved and more equitable campus culture is priceless.

## UPCOMING CTL CONFERENCE



**WHAT REALLY WORKS  
IN EDUCATION  
CONFERENCE 2023**  
THEME: HIGH-LEVERAGE PRACTICES AND COLLABORATION

**SAVE THE DATE**

West Coast Sept. 29 <sup>th</sup> & 30 <sup>th</sup>	East Coast Oct. 10 <sup>th</sup> & 11 <sup>th</sup>
<b>CSUN</b> CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY NORTHridge	<b>WILLIAM &amp; MARY</b>
 Join us in person for a new kind of education conference and leave with a bag of tools for any educational setting. <b>Day 1:</b> Co-Teaching 101 Workshop <b>Day 2:</b> Conference sessions on inclusion, dealing with challenging behaviors, co-planning co-assessing and more!	 <b>FOR MORE INFORMATION</b> <a href="http://www.csun.edu/ctl">www.csun.edu/ctl</a> @CTLatCSUN  Scan Me

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