January 8, 2018

Dear Colleagues:

Although this letter comes to you with short notice, we are asking you to consider inviting your students in your spring classes to participate in an important project toward Inclusive Excellence through mentored dialogue and projects. This spring semester (2018), the President’s Council in Diversity & Inclusiveness will be sponsoring a student critical dialogue program entitled “Talking Change, Making Change. This program is the second generation of the “Voice of Discovery” we have experienced success with over the past semester. The key difference in the Talking Change, Making Change program is the introduction of a critical action component. Talking Change, Making Change will focus on smaller groups of 5-10 students and is designed to build understanding and action plans for the themes covered each semester. Each group will meet for two hours per week for six weeks and is facilitated by two graduate students trained to lead our undergraduates through the critical dialogue and action planning steps of the program.

As you know, student participation in this program depends heavily on the support of USD faculty. Thus, I am writing to invite you and your students to participate in this important initiative. Faculty members who elect to support the program have previously provided students with course points for participating in the six-week program. Student participation works best if they are given points (rather than extra credit), although we defer this option to the respective faculty member. An important factor to keep in mind is the program’s need for student engagement once students have come forward to participate. We are looking for a genuine commitment from students to work through the dialogue on themes and action plans. As such we are hoping you will communicate this need – rather than a more narrow interest in course points – to your students.

The program schedule is as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Group Meetings</th>
<th>February 5 – March 2 (education &amp; dialogue)</th>
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<td>March 12 – March 23 (action/deliverable development)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culminating Dinner &amp; Presentations</td>
<td>March 28; 5:30 – 7:00 pm</td>
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Students are required to attend all six sessions of the group to which they have been assigned. Attendance is taken at all meetings and reported to respective faculty members so that they can assign appropriate points for each participating student.
In addition, some faculty members have requested that students write an essay, undertake a class presentation regarding their experience in the program, or undertake an action research project to demonstrate the knowledge and experienced gained through their participation in the program.

Faculty and student participation in the Talking Change, Making Change program is organized through our website, www.usd.edu/voices. The website is the hub of information for all participants -- faculty, students, and facilitators. Students will apply to participate in the program through the voices website and faculty will be able to express interest in having class(es) participate in the program. It is important that faculty complete the faculty interest form so we can be sure to properly administer/share attendance and completion records for your students. The website will also be used share essential updates and program information throughout the program, and a summary of deliverables produced each semester.

The application for student participation is found at: https://www.psychdata.com/s.asp?SID=180444

The faculty interest form is found at: https://www.psychdata.com/s.asp?SID=180442

If you have questions regarding the program or participation, please contact Rich Braunstein at voices@usd.edu or call/text him at 605.670.0117. Rich is coordinating the group facilitations and he will be at the ready to answer your questions and provide support throughout the program.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lamont A. Sellers
Associate Vice President for Diversity