

# DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING: A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY'S INQUIRY AND ACTION\*

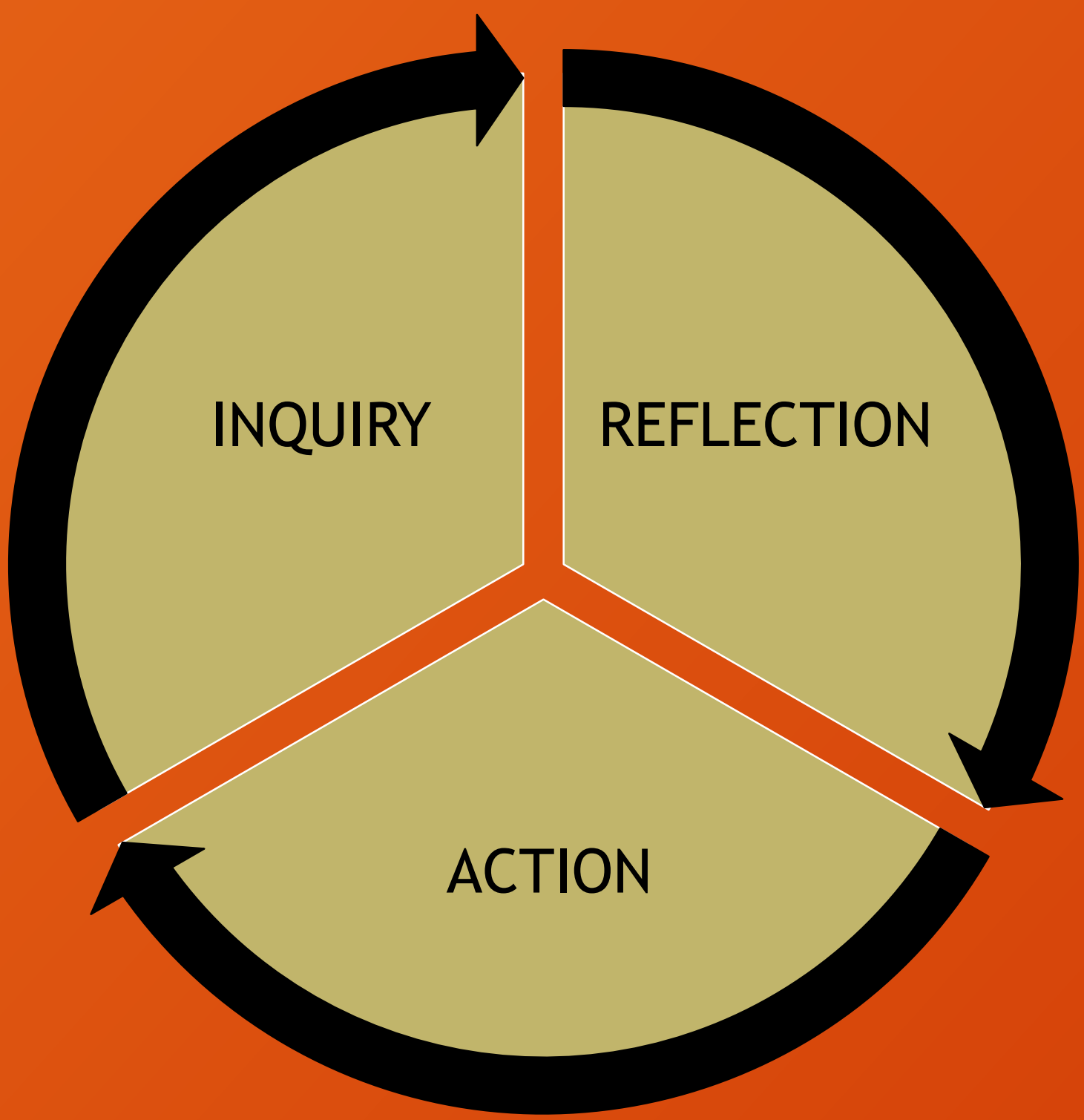
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## BACKGROUND

Covid-19 and social justice movements of the last three years created monumental changes in education. These changes provided opportunities for exploration and innovation in the new Duke occupational therapy doctorate program. Duke OTD established a professional learning community (PLC) to engage in inquiry, reflection and action toward fostering classrooms and program systems characterized by equity, inclusion, and belonging.



## OBJECTIVES

- 1) Engage in professional development on creating inclusive, anti-racist classrooms and program culture;
- 2) Integrate best practices determined through professional development activities;
- 3) Determine a measurement plan and collect evidence related to PLC goals.

## METHODS & PARTICIPANTS

Engagement in a professional learning community (PLC) is an inquiry method, like participatory action research. Members create and address questions through recurring phases of inquiry, reflection, and action. Inquiry in this PLC involved readings, facilitated dialogue, and workshops. Fifteen faculty and staff participated in the PLC and met regularly to determine goals and processes, create shared definitions, and solidify as a community through working with an external facilitator.



## RESULTS

Key outcomes of the project involved implementing the following education and infrastructure actions to facilitate progress in becoming an inclusive, anti-racist community:

## PROGRAM-LEVEL ACTIONS:

- Infused EDI activities into faculty annual evaluation reports.
- Instituted a Commitment Pledge for instructors.
- Established Student Affairs and EDI committees.
- Sought guidance on inclusive policy development.
- Established a student professionalism committee
- Established a position to support recruitment and retention of underrepresented students in occupational therapy.
- Increased diversity of faculty through part-time instructors from diverse backgrounds.
- Instituted adverse reporting processes.
- Conduct listening sessions with students each semester.

## STUDENT ACTIONS:

- Two workshops with the Office of Institutional Equity
- Two workshops through Multi-cultural Affairs

## FACULTY AND STAFF ACTIONS:

- A four-session workshop that concluded with a restorative circle.
- Explore further use of the restorative circle process for conflict transformation.
- A workshop DEI Foundations with the Office for Institutional Equity.
- A workshop on Trauma-Informed Education
- Three faculty have completed the Teaching for Equity Fellowship.
- Two completed Teach for Equity Now
- Engagement in course review to broaden diverse representation of cases and texts.
- One faculty joined Cohort 2 of Racial Equity Learning Arc

## ONGOING CONSIDERATIONS

OTD students still report episodes where the classroom climate and program practices are racist and not trauma informed. Three areas of need were identified:

- Timely, closed-loop communication on student-raised issues is critical.
- EDI facilitators and consultants are in too short supply for timely resolution of issues.
- Education in inclusive teaching must include all GTAs, guest lecturers, and part-time instructors.

## CONCLUSIONS

This inquiry identified challenges of implementing and sustaining efforts to generate a truly inclusive learning community. It is our hope that continuous review and development will keep us moving toward a program where all members belong and flourish.

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