

# **Expanding Potential 2015-6 Seed Project Awardee Final Report: CU-Prime Diversity Workshops**

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March 15, 2016

**The purpose of this final report is for readers to understand the motivations, processes, and outcomes for the seed project awardee's programming in order to sustain and scale these efforts.**

## **DESCRIPTION OF CU-PRIME**

We have developed four workshops focused on equity in STEM for graduate student leaders of CU-Prime at the University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder). Founded and run by physics graduate student volunteers, the CU-Prime mission is to improve inclusion of undergraduate students from underrepresented groups in the CU-Boulder Physics Department through mentorship and community-building. Presently, CU-Prime offers three major services for undergraduate students: (1) a biweekly seminar series where graduate students from diverse backgrounds present their life-paths and research projects to a largely undergraduate audience; (2) a semester-long course in which first- and second-year undergraduate students from diverse backgrounds develop and carry out their own research project; and, (3) a mentorship program that pairs graduate student mentors with undergraduate student mentees.

## **PROJECT OUTLINE**

Our project has two major components: (1) design and implement four quarterly Diversity Workshops, and (2) document, evaluate, and disseminate our designs. Here we provide outlines for each of these two components.

### **Workshop design and implementation**

Over the last year, we have designed and implemented three two-hour workshops. The fourth and final Synberc-funded workshop is scheduled for Saturday, March 19, 2016. It will span five hours. The dates and titles of these workshops are listed below:

06/22/2015:	Achievement Gaps & Deficit Models
09/12/2015:	Models of Allyship & Roles of Social Change
12/02/2015:	Deconstructing "Diversity"
03/19/2015:	Summative Workshop: What We've Learned So Far (upcoming)

Prior to receiving funding from Synberc, we designed and implemented two additional workshops: one focused on gender in physics (12/08/2014) and the other on the experiences of first-generation college

students (03/20/2015). In total, 22 unique participants have attended one or more of these six workshops, with an average of 12 participants per workshop.

### **Workshop documentation and evaluation**

For each workshop, we have kept detailed records of the assigned pre-readings and the workshop agenda. In addition, we have taken extensive notes during the implementation of the workshops. Finally, after each workshop, we have solicited anonymous feedback from participants via online surveys. These materials have been compiled into individual summaries that are shared with, and stored by, CU-Prime.

We consider the sequence of workshops *as a whole* as comprising a single “intervention.” To evaluate the impacts of the intervention, we plan to conduct interviews with 10 participants in April 2016, after the implementation of the Summative Workshop. To encourage candid interview responses, an external person will conduct the interviews. Our interview questions have been designed to probe three aspects of the intervention:

1. participants’ perceptions of the workshops’ purpose and alignment with the CU-Prime mission;
2. their perceptions of the workshops’ impact, both on themselves and on CU-Prime; and,
3. their experiences during the workshops (e.g., opportunities to listen and be heard).

## **PROJECT GOALS**

### **Initial goals**

Each workshop was strategically designed to achieve the following four goals:

1. blend scholarly work with the lived experiences of students from marginalized groups;
2. focus on intersectional privilege and multiple marginalities; and,
3. tailor discussions and resources to the needs and goals of the group; all in service of empowering student leaders of CU-Prime as agents of change within the Physics Department.

To achieve these goals, each workshop incorporates the following activities:

- pre-workshop homework that includes reading scholarly articles written by researchers, reading blog posts written by students, and watching videos created by students;
- discussions that unpack the complexity of groups like “women” or “first-generation college students,” which themselves contain a broad range of diversity;
- post-workshop feedback that asks participants to identify areas of interest and need in order to inform future workshop topics; and,
- dedicated time during workshops for participants to discuss (a) their role in the organization and (b) the organization’s role in the department.

### **Changes in goals**

Our initial goals have not changed. However, our approach to our goals *has* changed. Three major changes are listed below.

- **Introduction of empathy activities.** To help participants understand the lived experiences of students from marginalized groups, we watched videos where such a student would describe their experiences. Then, through individual writing exercises and whole-group discussions, we would answer three questions: (1) where is the student coming from, (2) how do I think they're feeling, and (3) how does that make me feel?
- **Introduction of theme-specific activities.** Whereas early workshops focused primarily on discussing homework, later workshops introduced theme-specific activities. For example, in the "Allyship & Social Change" workshop, we employed the "Tornado Warning" activity, developed by TrainingForChange.org. In the "Deconstructing Diversity" workshop, we analyzed the language used, and meaning behind, a campus-wide email in response to black student protests.
- **Shifted focus of conversations about the role of the organization.** Our first two workshops (not funded by Synberc) engaged participants in conversations about how we could improve the implementation of CU-Prime's seminar series, mentorship program, and first-year course. The next two workshops focused on talking about our collective vision for CU-Prime as an organization working towards social change. And our most recent workshop created space for participants to critique our organization's use of the word "diversity."

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ISSUES

CU-Prime is especially interested in serving white women and men and women of color because these groups are especially underrepresented in the CU-Boulder Physics Department: for example, in Fall 2014, out of 492 declared Physics or Engineering Physics majors, only 12% were women and 8% were from underrepresented racial or ethnic groups. We look to support CU-Prime in their diversity and inclusion efforts to ensure that their work is done with integrity.

The Diversity Workshops create a space for CU-Prime leaders to engage in collective and continued self-education about the experiences of the students we aim to serve. Courses in Women & Gender Studies, Ethnic Studies, etc., are not typically part of the educational experiences of physics graduate students—including the leaders of CU-Prime—resulting in a need for additional education in the realm of equity in STEM. The Diversity Workshops address this critical need by providing opportunities for CU-Prime leadership to (a) learn about the challenges and successes of students from underrepresented groups in STEM, and to (b) apply this learning to the continued growth of their services.

## ENACTING CHANGE

Through these workshops, we have served 22 unique graduate and undergraduate student leaders of CU-Prime. Indirectly, we have served over 100 undergraduate students who participated in the CU-Prime seminars, course, and/or mentorship program.

Conversations about the workshops have begun to permeate multiple aspects of CU-Prime. For example, at a recent organizational meeting, several new leaders expressed interest in participating as co-designers and co-facilitators of the workshops. Other students offered to find new sources of

financial support for the workshops. In addition, based on a recommendation from Synberc, participation in Diversity Workshops has been proposed as an expectation (but not a requirement) for the teachers of the CU-Prime course.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

Locally, we have solicited and incorporated input from faculty in the CU-Boulder Ethnic Studies Department as well as other on-campus diversity experts.

## **SCALING TO OTHER INSTITUTIONS**

Our workshop materials will be made available online, and can be used to help run workshops of this kind in any setting where a group of individuals want to learn more about the experiences of students from diverse backgrounds.

In particular, our dissemination plan will leverage our synergistic relationship with the Access Network, a network of six programs similar to CU-Prime. In addition to CU-Boulder, Access sites include: Arizona State University, Chicago State University, Rochester Institute of Technology, University of Maryland, and UC Berkeley—home of the award-winning Berkeley Compass Project which served as the inspiration for all other Access programs, including CU-Prime. The similar organizational structure and programmatic values (e.g., student leadership) of Access programs makes this network an exciting space to explore implementation of these workshops at one or more institutions other than CU-Boulder. To this end, we will encourage our colleagues in programs like the Berkeley Compass Project to implement these workshops within their local leadership structures.

## **IMPACT OF SEED PROJECT FUNDING**

Funding from the Synberc Expanding Potential Seed Project impacted our project in two ways. First, our status as an externally funded effort has elevated the prestige of these workshops in the eyes of CU-Prime and the Physics Department. Along the lines of prestige, the Seed Project provided funding for food and supplies, which helped us create a professional environment for our workshop participants.

Second, the Seed Project provided funds for evaluation of the workshops (to be completed in April 2016), which will be crucial for assessing, improving, and disseminating the workshops.

## **IMPACT OF EXPANDING POTENTIAL WORKSHOP**

The Expanding Potential Workshop connected us with other awardees, and we were able to get different perspectives on how diversity-driven programs are structured. We collected some ideas for the organization we work with around recruitment and mentoring, as well as learned about new resources to use in future workshops.

## **TIPS FOR INITIATING WORKSHOPS AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS**

In running these workshops, we have found it crucial to position ourselves not as experts, but as co-learners. In this way, it is possible for graduate student (or other) leaders in any organization to feel less

pressure to know everything, but being open to continual learning. This is especially key because of the sensitive nature of the topics we discuss in the workshop.

In each workshop we built in time to review and talk about the previous workshops. Speaking with leaders in our local organization, we found that many of them felt as though they had missed out on previous information, or that they weren't "ready" for the later workshops. We think it is crucial to make sure that everyone feels welcome, and also to help them get extra information so that they don't feel like they have missed out.

Inter-group conversations about marginalization and oppression can be uncomfortable for members of dominant groups, but they are fundamentally unsafe for members of marginalized groups. Managing these dynamics is tricky. We incorporated empathy activities as one way to get people thinking and talking about how they feel about these issues, and why. We avoided having a workshop explicitly about race and racism because none of us felt comfortable facilitating this conversation in a space where the vast majority of participants were white people. Instead, issues of race and racism were interwoven into other discussions (e.g., about gender or first-generation college student status). This is an area for growth for our facilitation team.

## **ADDITIONAL RESULTS**

We will be holding one last workshop this month, and will have an external evaluator interview workshop attendees by the end of the semester. To date we do not yet have any preliminary results outside of the feedback forms, where all 100% respondents express interest to attend more workshops, and 3 respondents express interest in co-facilitating future workshops.

## **QUOTE/TESTIMONIAL**

"Synberc's support was instrumental in legitimizing this project. With the funding, we were able to get materials that made these workshops more professional, as well as pay for an external evaluator to assess our efforts. Attending the workshop was an amazing experience that opened my eyes to the many different efforts happening across the country that align with our values. The connections that I made there, with Shaila and her team, as well as other attendees, will not only help finish out this project, but will help me with my own personal research efforts and goals! It's awesome that Synberc committed so much time and resources to starting these conversations about inclusion and equity— Thanks for making this push!"

-Simone Hyater-Adams

After each workshop, we surveyed participants. Below are excerpts of favorable responses:

- "I thought the whole thing was thought provoking and interesting. The questions forced me to think about issues and my own responses in new ways."  
(Allyship & Social Change Workshop)
- "I found it very helpful that we had clear workshop objectives (a big picture), and also that we shared each participant's goals for the workshop (or the retreat) in the beginning of the workshop."  
(Allyship & Social Change Workshop)

- “Discussions about vision & goals for CU-Prime in light of the workshops and things we have learned so far. It was really important because not everyone agreed about what CU-Prime should do or what part we can play.”  
(Achievement Gap & Deficit Models Workshop)
- “It was helpful to read and talk about a specific intervention that proved helpful for first-generation college students. That kind of panel focused on differences is something CU-Prime might be able to do (and probably would be beneficial for all students, not just first-gen).”  
(Workshop on First-Generation College Students)
- “I liked the exposure to the readings as a foundation for the discussion, and our work more broadly. Talking about it is much more helpful than just reading it, and let's face it, I wouldn't have read it anyway if not for the workshop!”  
(Workshop on Gender in Physics)