

Rise, Teach, Learn - Season 5 Episode 3

READI Retrospective

00:03

Hello, and welcome to Rise, Teach, Learn. I'm your host Jamie Gunderson. In this episode we explore READI, its resources, its journey and its impact at Chico State. To help me tell this story, I am joined by fellow wildcat, Dr. ALesa Wade, who is an equity fellow in the Office of Faculty Development. And I'd like to extend a very special welcome to former Wildcat and the brains behind READI, Dr. Chiara Ferrari. I really can't imagine no better person than Chiara to tell us about READI is and how it came to be. So Chiara, I'm just gonna pitch it right to you. Are you ready to talk about READI?

00:39

I'm always ready to talk about READI. It's, it's a little bit emotional to, to come back and reflect on on ready. READI was definitely a, like a passion project that that I had for faculty development, I would say that it moved from being a passion project to actually a commitment. And that switch definitely happened in probably the, the early months or the month where we were planning and envisioning READI. And, and the fact that this idea turned from passion to commitment, I really have to give a lot of credit to the faculty that work with me, to the faculty that really pushed well, you were one of them, Jamie. But Lesa Johnson, Paul Bailey, Samara Anarbaeva, that was kind of the first round of equity fellows that really challenged me into expanding the work from equity, diversity, and inclusion, to fully embrace an anti racist framework and again, an anti racist commitment to the work that we were doing in faculty development. And to me, that was, that was something that I needed to go through personally, it was a journey that I needed to complete. And I needed to understand what it means to be doing EDI and anti racist work in academia, honestly, but also in a way that allows, in this case, faculty development, to hold itself accountable for the results, for the practices for the kind of programs that we offer them. And so READI was not born in a day. And the first part that was needed for me is for me to fully commit and understand that real EDI antiracist work is a commitment, a commitment that is intellectual commitment that is in practice, and frankly, a commitment that is financial.

03:18

When we were logging on today to record this episode, ALesa and I were talking about how we've never really had an opportunity to stop and reflect on all the work that has gone into READI. READI actually started in 2020. So when we talk about what we have now, which is a sustainable hub for practices, resources, and research related to equity, diversity, and inclusion and anti racism practices, you're talking about like three years of continuous work involving a lot of people - can you kind of walk us through like that journey, like how we got from 2020, to where we are today with this, this hub of resources for faculty?

04:04

I would say that the first impetus was in 2020, of course, we were in the midst of the pandemic, we were all remote and I became director of faculty development in July 2020. And the immediate need

was to be reactive to the pandemic and to make sure that faculty could receive the appropriate support for moving instruction online, and being able to address the student needs in this environment. That was not only the remote environment, but it was also an environment where there was a lot of uncertainty, and we needed to rely on technology a lot more than we had done in the past. We had to be a lot more creative in terms of pedagogy, because all of us had to be online. Of course, some disciplines lend themselves for online education a lot more than, than others. And so the reason why I'm starting back, it's because I believe that the pandemic really clarified the need of approaching teaching and learning from a different perspective, through different tools, and with a lot more attention to equity, diversity and inclusion. So at some point, we needed to respond to that need. And again, the first year was complicated because we barely had time to eat and sleep. And so thinking of something new, something that needed a lot of time to envision, and to put into practice was a bit too much to chew at the time. But it was always a need that was in the back of my mind. And so I started to discuss some ideas about creating some sort of center, or, or some sort of hub or whatever we want to call it at the time, we weren't that clear. But I started discussing some ideas with the former Vice Provost, Daniel Grassian, and about how faculty development could really become a hub for EDI work.

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And so I spent maybe six months or so envisioning some ideas, I started working with equity fellows, you were one of them, Jamie and Paul Bailey. And at some point, we brought on board, Lesa Johnson and Samara Anarbaeva. And slightly later on, Rachel Teasdale. But that semester, and I believe it was the spring of 2022. Yes, that was the spring of 2022. I would say that that's truly the time, when READI became a lot more real in everybody's mind. It became more real, because I found faculty buy in, I found that faculty were interested and needed this kind of work. And it became more real, because I made a commitment, official commitment to Chico State and to faculty development and to the faculty to really provide these kinds of resources and learning from the pandemic, moving forward towards a much more intentional effort towards equity, diversity, and inclusion. So that semester, when I mentioned working with you, and Paul and Lesa and Samara and Rachel was instrumental, because that's where the framework of anti racism was established. And you know, what, what I'm grateful for is that I work with faculty that are activist, they're not just, they're not just experts in ethnic studies, they're not just invested in this work. They're actual activists. And they challenged me, they challenged me to do this kind of work in an honest way. And there were there was no other way to do this work. Either we were going to do it honestly, either. We were going to do it in a way that tried to get to the core of systemic racism, which is part of academia including Chico State, or we were not going to be successful in creating something that could truly help faculty address equity, diversity and anti racism in their classes. So to me, I really want to take a moment to thank Lesa and Paul and Jamie and Samara and Rachel to force me to do this, this work seriously. And to truly embrace anti racism in our practices, okay, it's very long. So I'm going to stop.

09:26

No, I have to say I resonate hard with that because I was just like, in this moment, reflecting as you're talking and I'm like thinking about myself and how much I've grown as an educator like since that time, you know, I remember like in the first initial stages of READI like you and I were geeking out over like, coming up with an outline for the teaching guides that followed Universal Design for Learning. And then from there it snowballed into like what do we have like over 40 teaching guides now on our website that span five different focuses and one inclusive of you know equity, diversity, and inclusion. And so that,

you know, that was like, we started really, really small. And we have created something that's like, you know, it's a hub, there are resources available to faculty of a variety of types, there's podcasts, there's the teaching guides, there's workshops, things that they can quickly, you know, at their fingertips, choose what, however, they want to approach bettering their practice. And so I just think that you made that super accessible, and you did it in very, like creative ways. So just a big kudos to you. And also a thank you for like allowing me to have that growth because you're right, like we had to be authentic in our own teaching and our own practice to do this type of work to to create these resources.

10:46

What I didn't mention before, and I think that what you just said is a good segue, this is a way READI is sustainable. The creation of resources available has made it sustainable, not only the creation of resources, but the fact that these resources are not created in a vacuum that we create teaching guides, we record podcasts that then are used in workshops and series. Part of what and again, this was a lesson that I learned from the pandemic is that we needed to make resources available asynchronously, we needed to create a repository of resources that faculty could access at any time. So why not making those resources sustainable? Why not creating teaching guides, then, of course, they can be updated, but they can be used whenever they're needed. Teaching guides that can be embedded into workshops that we offer, I think that the the clear one that comes to mind is the EDIT series, the EDI Teaching series, which was basically built literally around resources on EDI and antiracist practices already living within faculty development and READI. And so it was also a fairly, I want to say efficient way not to have to sort of reinvent the wheel all the time, but to make better uses of the resources that we had to create a series like EDIT, which Alisa is leading, and therefore she should probably talk about it more than I do.

12:45

Yeah, I mean, Chiara, you're absolutely right that like the the design system for EDIT emerged as a result of this reality that we have so many amazing resources that you all had built for READI, already. And so it was important for us to find ways to embed those in our programming in multiple facets so that people encounter them in different ways. So with EDIT, what we did is we pulled a different teaching guide for each workshop and then constructed an interactive workshop session. And this was Chiara and I and Allison McConnell that initially sat down to build these out where the focus of each workshop then also creates opportunities for faculty to model the the types of equitable pedagogy and student-centered teaching within the antiracist approaches to teaching that they could model those things in the workshop and then take those same tools with them into the classroom. And so we are able to not only put together these handouts that connect back to READI resources, but then to also guide them toward ways that they can apply those resources in their own teaching, and build out deliverables that, that use the resources in order to guide them to how they might apply those things in their classes. So you know, they're constructing a statement for their syllabus that talks about their positionality they're putting together or thinking about backward design and how can they create learning outcomes that students can understand and they can intentionally shape their courses in a way that allows them to build on that and to structure a space of community in their classroom that's accessible for students from a wide variety of diverse backgrounds and experiences and, and kind of reach all of these different students in meaningful and important ways.

14:43

Alisa, remind me is this EDIT's second or third year?

14:47

This is EDIT's second year now. So the third iteration of the program, we ran it the first time in spring of 2023, and then did fall and now this current session Um, with the added benefit, actually the last version that we ran in fall 2023. We actually also connected it into the critical success course program on campus. And so folks who are in a critical success course, which these are like high, these are courses that tend to have high DFW rates on campus and touch a large number of our students. And so as folks go through that program and those classes, then they were also taking the EDIT workshop series as a part of that process. And so that actually increased the number of people that we had taking EDIT.

15:38

And I also understand that there is a maybe push or an idea to support new faculty with enrolling in EDIT. Can you speak a little bit about that?

15:51

Yeah, so the other thing that our Interim Provost thought was really important was anyone, any department that was running a hire needed to also ensure that the folks sitting on that hiring committee understood sort of the structural dynamics around equitable pedagogy and work in the classroom. And, and so those search committees then also took EDIT that same semester, with the goal of then sort of facilitating a larger conversation throughout the search, to really emphasize the importance of that in the classroom, and to ensure that we also are embracing new faculty who come from diverse backgrounds. And not only that, but we're also supporting those faculty in their teaching. And so one of the things that we're continuing to do is to pitch EDIT workshops as a way for newly hired faculty to also build out that community, and to get access to those tools and resources that maybe they didn't have a lot of experience working with in graduate programs. But now they need in the classroom.

16:54

I do want to build on what Alisa was saying about EDIT, because we are not talking anymore about one faculty learning community that 15-20 faculty take. And there's no other impact outside of those 15 to 20 faculty. But it's actually helping, recruiting and retaining hopefully faculty of color. In the Hispanic Serving Institution Professional Development Initiative, which I sort of lead with Teresita Curiel, the director of LatinX, Equity and Success, I feel that it's part of the same effort to expand what we do, in faculty development and in READI to serve a much broader area of campus. In this case, the sessions were primarily attended by staff. And so I feel that what used to be an in that case, we really look at what it means to be an Hispanic Serving Institution. How can we assess our practices? What kind of tools we can offer, what kind of professional development we can develop, specifically, at Hispanic Serving Institutions. What kind of practices we can change to actually say that, you know, it's it, what does it mean to serve Hispanic students and staff and faculty. And so I feel that what started as something that was fairly limited to faculty and faculty development and teaching and learning, has now expanded beyond faculty development beyond only impacting faculty. And it's, it's a place on campus that if supported, can have a huge impact, including, for example, in hiring and retaining faculty, including in helping with retaining students that are struggling in, for example, first year courses. So, you know, for me, sustainability can only be secured with commitment and investment. I think that one

of the argument that needs to be made, again, is that this is not an investment exclusively, in faculty development. This is an investment that has a much broader impact and it already has had a much broader impact.

19:40

Now, you have been very modest Jamie, but another program that has come out of READI has been the Universal Design for Learning, faculty learning community, and I personally attended it and so that was very interesting for me too, to sit as one of the participants and kind of sit in a different role than the lead and the organizer, I often define the UDL faculty learning community as an FLC on steroids. Because there were so many activities, there was so much interactivity. And I particularly appreciated the final sort of showcase, which really, again, was open to the entire campus to see. But the reason why that model was specifically essential for READI is that it is the model that has been funded by the National Science Foundation for the next two or three years. And talking about impact. The STEM UDL FLC now has members from Butte College as well. So not only READI has impacted Chico State, but now we're also going outside of Chico State and impacting our sister institution in in Chico and Butte County. I do have to clarify the role that Rachel Teasdale had, Rachel was fundamental in in getting the grant and ensuring funding for for that. So what I haven't yet mentioned is all the work that sort of happened behind behind the scenes behind the curtain to actually make READI available, running efficient. And that I I have to say, I know that I have but I want to thank the FDEV office staff, Rebecca Nelson, absolutely. She's been an invaluable, incredible asset for faculty development and for READI in helping visualizing the website, making it happen, doing research into what kind of function of the website, we could, we could use search function, design, icons, and then Thilini Rathnayake, one of our student assistant to actually make it happen. She designed most of the of the ready website. And so I want to make sure that we don't forget everyone, including Nick Ramos and Camryn Hamilton, two other student assistants, which also ties into the kind of support that this office and this work needs to be able to be fully efficient. But the faculty development office staff and student assistants have been instrumental to make sure that me and the faculty including all the various equity fellows that we've had throughout the years, and especially last year, to make sure that we could be ready to function. And so an incredible shout out and incredible gratitude to the office of faculty development staff.

23:04

Here here, Chiara, I hope you're so proud of all the great work that you've done in leading us

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I'm very proud of faculty development. I am proud to have worked with such an amazing group of faculty and staff and students and administrators that have shaped you know the way I have approached faculty development the way I try to include those values in everything we do, in faculty development and in READI and I know that I've, I've left it in, in wonderful hands, both Zach's hands and, and Jamie and Alisa and everyone that is that is involved in faculty development. I think that I think that we're doing great work at Chico State, and this work should be supported.

24:00

And there you have it, folks, today we explored the impact and sustainability of READI. I'd like to thank our guests for their contributions to this episode and most importantly, their contributions to this great work on campus. Please don't forget to you can access previous episodes of Rise, Teach, Learn, as well

as all of the resources associated with this and other episodes through our FDEV podcast web page. A big thank you to you for listening and until next time, we got this Wildcats!

24:28

We would like to thank the Mechoopda on whose traditional lands this recording is taking place without their support and continued positive presence in our community we would be unable to for the cultural and educational work that is at the heart of this recording.