

# Rise, Teach, Learn - Season 3 Episode 7

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## The READI Hub

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We acknowledge and are mindful that CSU Chico stands on lands that were originally occupied by the first people of this area, the Mechoopda, and we recognize their distinctive spiritual relationship with this land and the waters that run through campus. We are humbled that our campus resides upon sacred lands that once sustained the Mechoopda people for centuries.

00:28

Welcome to the Rise, Teach, Learn Podcast. I am Dr. Chiara Ferrari, Director of Faculty Development at Chico State, and we are happy to make this resource available to our campus community and beyond. The podcast is hosted by Dr. Jamie Linn Gunderson and she will engage in timely conversations with faculty, staff, and students and give you a taste of the Chico experience. Subscribe to our podcast and explore the many resources available on our website. Thank you for listening.

00:59

Hello, and welcome to Rise Teach Learn. I am your host Jamie Gunderson. In this episode, we will explore plans for creating a hub for research in equity, antiracism, diversity and inclusion or READI at Chico State. And I'd like to welcome this episode's guest Dr. Chiara Ferrari, the Director of the Office of Faculty Development, and Dr. Rachel Teasdale, Professor in Earth and Environmental Sciences Department and the recently appointed READI Coordinator. Chiara, Rachel, thank you so much for being here today. Chiara, I'd like to start with you. Can you tell us more about what READI is and how that work came to be?

01:37

Thank you, Jamie. I am very excited to be here to share some news about READI in this podcast. And we already released a Zine where we had already shared some information. So if you want to pair the two resources, you can get some updates about this exciting news. So, as you mentioned, Jamie, READI will be a hub for research in equity, antiracism, diversity and inclusion. And the way it came about was really at the end of last year, so sometime in spring 2021, where faculty development could finally breathe for a moment. And so we had spent a whole year trying to support faculty being online, everyone was teaching remotely. And there was, it was very hard for faculty development to be proactive to think of a vision and a plan that could have some sort of long-term goals, because again, we had to be very reactive to the pandemic. And so as soon as we could stop for a moment and think about what, what do we want to do and what do we want faculty to be in the future, a natural kind of response was to expand upon faculty development's focus on equity, diversity, inclusion, and antiracism, because I think that there's a great place for faculty development to contribute to this conversation.

03:15

Now, the first thing I want to say is that we don't really see the READI Hub as duplicating efforts, we hope, we do not want to duplicate efforts. We know that there's a lot of initiatives on campus about EDI, and antiracist work. But we do want to focus in READI on what faculty development can do best, which is really support Research and Instruction. Now, in terms of funding, I know that everyone has this question, so let's get it out of the way. So how is READI being funded? Well, interestingly, there was this great opportunity from the chancellor's office. In August of 2021, we received a memo where specific funding was allocated for faculty professional development opportunities. So, I kind of want to read what the memo says because it clarifies what this money should be used for. The Budget Act of 2021 includes \$10 million of one-time funding to support equal opportunities, practices and provide culturally competent professional development for faculty, including leveraging 21st century technology to improve learning outcomes.

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Now, of course, \$10 million is across the CSU, Chico State specifically received \$400,000 that were distributed between faculty development primarily and the technology and learning program. So this is funding that was really allocated for professional development for faculty. And my hope was that instead of creating programs that would respond to an immediate need, was to think a little bit more in terms of long-term goals and establish something that could have a longer duration. Now, great news, we did receive some funding, and we can set up READI, which is set to launch in fall 2022. The bad news is that this is one-time funding. So it doesn't help a lot with sustainability of the hub. But this is why we are looking for external funding. And we have already applied to some funding to ensure that READI can be sustainable on the long term.

05:47

I'd like to bring Rachel into the conversation, Rachel, you're going to be serving as the READI Coordinator and I am super excited to work alongside you as a READI equity fellow, can you tell us more about others involved in this work?

06:01

Sure. Yeah, I'm really excited to work in this effort as well. All of us at Chico State have student learning as our highest priority. And the practices and, and initiatives involved with equity, diversity, inclusion, and antiracism will really help improve student learning and the student experience. And so, I think we all value this at a certain level. And so, when you ask who's going to be involved, my hope is that everybody sees themselves as involved. We know that the equity fellows are going to be sort of centralized people who will be a resource for other faculty, and our equity fellows are coming from different parts of campus in terms of disciplines. So different colleges have equity fellows. And so, we really have a nice array of folks who can help faculty find resources, learn resources, embed resources into their courses, and also help them think about assessing or evaluating: are these new practices or are these things that we're trying in our classes actually working to support student learning? So on the one hand, we have a lot of programs that have been very successful, and we'll be able to continue offering those, maybe they'll have a little bit more focus on equity, diversity, inclusion and antiracism. But we also have some new ideas. And one of those is to work with departments or programs or disciplinary groups of disciplinary experts who want to work together to learn about or start using some

initiatives that embrace ideas of equity, diversity, inclusion, and antiracism. And so, our equity fellows will be able to work in similar disciplinary themes with folks who are interested in doing those kinds of things.

08:13

We also know that assessment and evaluation is an important part of all of our programs, but also all of our courses. We all want to know if what we're doing is effective. And so the READI hub will be able to help folks who are looking for resources, not only for learning about and embedding new practices in their classes, but also learning about how to assess whether or not that's effective. So really, there's opportunities for just about anybody who wants to get involved.

08:47

So Chiara, what all will the ready work entail? Can you give us an overview of the goals, mission and vision?

08:52

Sure, I'm happy to actually. Let me start with the vision. READI will be a hub for the study of equity, diversity and inclusion, and antiracist practices from the perspective of faculty instruction and research as I mentioned before. READI will engage in the production of new and innovative scholarship on EDI and will also serve as the hub for pairing faculty needs with existing resources. So again, we do not want to reinvent the wheel. We do not want to duplicate efforts, but we want to make sure that faculty know where the resources are, whether they're in faculty development or elsewhere, like the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, or in Student Affairs or in Undergraduate Education wherever those efforts on campus are. Now to me the unique role of READI will be to provide faculty support and mentorship in relation to research and scholarship that focuses on equity, diversity and inclusion and scholarship that can result in increased student success and well-being and we will talk a little bit later about these connection which is not always easy to assess.

10:02

We're also currently working on a strategic plan with the equity fellows. We've been all contributing to this document. And I've been working this semester with Samara Anarbaeva in Journalism and Public Relations, Lesa Johnson in Sociology, and Paul Bailey in Mathematics and Statistics, but also in the School of Education, and of course, Rachel, to really create a solid strategic vision for the hub that includes objectives that we can measure. So are we meeting our goals or, or are we not? And so hopefully, thanks to the strategic plan, both the vision and the purpose of READI can expand. Now, in terms of the mission, we also have some clear objectives in mind or areas that we want to cover. So let me, let me touch on, on some of them.

10:57

First of all, as I mentioned before, we would like to provide equity mentorship in relation to EDI and antiracist work. And I think we also need to re-envision what faculty mentorship means. How do we avoid turning mentorship into assimilation? I think this is a very serious question that faculty development needs to explore. And we need to move away from mentorship programs that perhaps employ more of a dominant approach where the new faculty learns from the senior faculty, and instead

embrace a partnership where there's learning happening on both sides. So one key element will be faculty mentorship, but we also want to create a forum for research on equity, antiracism, diversity and inclusion. We want to offer resources to produce Scholarship of Teaching and Learning around EDI work. Now, of course, because we are a teaching institution and faculty development is incredibly committed to inclusive pedagogy, we do want to promote resources that hopefully will result in more inclusive pedagogy. We want to expand on our resources about curriculum design, and especially curriculum that it centers EDI. This is then our one core one that Rachel, Rachel and I are trying to address and it's improved access to EDI data and assessment practices. This is something that I have to confess in faculty development we haven't been doing very systematically. And so I do want to improve our assessment practices. We want to support grant writing that relates particularly to EDI practices. And we also want to help implement equity work in the RTP in the retention tenure and promotion process. And overall, we really want to foster campus collaboration across EDI and antiracist work. So, an ambitious purpose and mission, but I am confident that, that the whole READI team can tackle these goals.

13:07

So in preparation for this podcast Chiara, you mentioned that you did a lot of work studying other universities with similar initiatives, can you give us a little insight into what you found in your research?

13:19

Absolutely. So, you know, establishing a center, or a hub or an institute, whatever you want to call it, that relates faculty development practices with EDI and antiracist work is, is fairly new. There are some models, but there are not a lot of models, and there's not a lot of literature. So we have been looking at some model. One is at Arcadia University, the CASAA center, there is an institute called JEDI PIE at San Francisco State University. There is a hub for equity and innovation in higher education at Georgetown. So we've been looking at these models, and I actually scheduled a meeting with two faculty members at Arcadia university that are in charge of their center to get their input about how did they come about, Do they have a strategic plan? How did they establish their goals? And probably the most important element that I came out of from that meeting was the idea that the goals of any centers that focuses on equity, diversity and inclusion and antiracism needs to be flexible, to adapt its purpose and its goals, to the changing nature of racism and oppression.

14:39

This is something that really, really made me pause because the way oppression and systemic racism operate, especially in institutions of higher education is oftentimes very nuanced. So we need to be able to determine what those nuances are and how systemic racism operates within higher education, to be able to address it, to be able to respond to it. And therefore, the only way to do it is to be able to adapt our goals based on those, on those changes. So my conversation with them made me also realize that we are somehow exploring uncharted territory. There, there are some centers but not as many and so we really want to learn from each other, we really want to learn from others. And hopefully, if we develop best practices, being able to share them with others. So we are exploring this work, we are looking at other models, and we would like to bring together faculty that are leading these EDI initiatives, EDI centers. And so to be able to compile a list of best practices, strategies, and resources for those who want to create similar centers in their institution. So ideally, we will be able to

create our own conference that focuses on the creation of EDI centers within faculty development offices.

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How do you foresee the READI work being applied on campus? And what do you project the impact will be on faculty teaching and student learning.

16:21

So as we mentioned before, with the mission and some of the goals of READI, we really want to learn more about how our initiatives we're already using, how those are working. And we want to continue that effort with our new initiatives. So as Chiara was talking about, there's not a huge literature base to know if, you know, one intervention, or one, one teaching practice or another is better than others. And we certainly don't know that necessarily for Chico State courses, faculty and students. And so one of the big goals is to be more systematic and more careful about learning, about what we're learning about. So we're, we're going to try and, and use more sort of self-evaluation and feedback. So that when people are trying great things in their classes, we can share those, and we have evidence that things are working. I think that's also, that's really important for my class and for sharing with other people's classes and vice versa. And I think that we'll also make it more demonstrable, that Chico State really does value diversity, equity, inclusion and antiracism. It's really a thing here. And the more we talk about it, the more we share about what we've tried in our courses and programs and advising at all levels, the more we share about that, then the more front and center it becomes and I think there can be a shift in the culture at Chico State that's, that's more well known. And I think that will also help not just the way faculty teach and the way students learn. But I think it will also help faculty who are on campus who feel maybe that diversity isn't as front and center as it should be. And I think that by changing the culture, or shifting the culture, I should say, I think that will go a long way to support each other. I know that's a, that's a big goal. But we're going to work towards that.

18:46

And if I can relate what Rachel just said to my previous point about we need to make this work sustainable, we need to make this work long term. I think that if we systematically employ assessment, if we systematically embed data in what we do, and we can demonstrate that what we do works, I do believe that we will become more competitive for external funding. So, speaking of external funding, we have applied for some funding that are made available by the Chancellor's Office. These are called CREATE awards and CREATE stands for creating responsive equitable active teaching and engagement. And we have come up with four research questions that we plan to explore basically, in everything that we will do next year. So, the four questions - and they really relate to how do we assess whether or not faculty development programs have an impact on student success - So these questions are, do faculty learn as intended in the EDI professional development workshops? The second question is: Do faculty translate their learning into using inclusive pedagogy and more equitable teaching practices? This is the part about faculty learning. Now how do we connect it to student success and student learning? Do EDI programs result in improved equity in student learning? And do EDI programs lead to a learning environment that promotes students' sense of belonging and self-efficacy. So our work next year will be driven by these four key research questions. Now, in addition, in terms of application, that was your question, Jamie, what, what is the application and how can faculty directly

benefit from what we are doing ready, we are definitely going to offer professional development opportunities that center EDI and antiracist work. We will make some funding available for curriculum design for scholarship of teaching and learning. But also I would like personally to start exploring this concept of activism as scholarship. So, thinking of alternative methods, non-traditional methods of scholarship. And I would say that really our ultimate goal, so what is the ultimate application that we can find? What is the ultimate benefit that we can find in the work that we're doing? Well, ideally, we will be able to attract and support BIPOC faculty and staff and increase their retention at Chico State, which really remains a predominantly white institution, at least in terms of faculty and staff.

21:42

This really sounds like exciting work. And I know a lot of our faculty and staff are super passionate about making Chico State a super accessible and inclusive space. So can you tell me Chiara and Rachel, how can faculty and staff start getting involved in this work?

21:59

Sure. So it right now, it's still in the designing phase, but we have a busy summer of planning and designing. The first thing, of course, is that we will have a website, a website for READI in the fall. And so I would say that, that is probably the best, the best channel to explore as a first introduction to READI, I do not have a website right now. But we can link it later on in this episode resources as soon as I have a URL for the website. So you can just go in one place and find all the information. The other is that I realize that this is a lot of new information. This is a lot of resources. This is a lot of new stuff that we're putting out. And just exploring the website might not give you an exact understanding of everything that is available. So in the Fall faculty development, will organize a READI Fair, where faculty can come and talk to me talk to Rachel the READI Coordinator or talk to the equity fellows to really explore firsthand what the resources are. So stay tuned for these resources, because it will become clear to you but also to us all the things that we can offer.

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Yeah, and I would like to add that, you know, we are getting a lot of these resources put together and the website developed. But I'm ready to get started now. And if you are too, I would just invite you to contact me and send me your ideas, send me your questions. I'd love to hear from you. If you're thinking that you've already done some course redesign or activity design, and you want to learn about how it's working in your course, contact me now or over the summer, and we can put something together so that you can start studying that and collecting data to really learn how is it working? Is it, is it working? How could it work better? Let me know. And I'm happy to work with you over the summer to, to jump, jump right in at the beginning of fall. So get involved. And we just love to hear from you.

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And likewise, if you have resources to share, if you have done things that work. If you have ideas for guest speakers, please share the resources you have. Again, this is not meant to be anything new. It's meant to share resources that probably we already have on campus and we might just not know about it.

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And there you have it, folks. Today we explored the READI hub at Chico State and I'd like to thank our guests, doctors Chiara Ferrari and Rachel Teasdale for their contributions to this episode, I encourage you to share any resources you have on READI initiatives or anything that's working in your own teaching practice with our READI team. Don't forget that you can access previous episodes of Rise Teach, Learn, as well as all of the resources associated with this episode through our FDEV podcast web page. A big thank you to you for listening and until next time, we got this Wildcats!