



10-14-2021

## My First 90 Days at Pacific

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### Recommended Citation

Lomax-Ghirarduzzi, Mary J., "My First 90 Days at Pacific" (2021). *Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Articles and Writings*. 4.

<https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/dei-articles/4>

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# My First 90 Days at Pacific

OCT 14, 2021



Dear Pacific Community,

On July 1, I returned to the community that reared me. I love Pacific and call Stockton, Sacramento and San Francisco home. Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is about understanding the beauty, resilience and unique contribution of each person and group and using that knowledge to uplift us all for the common good. DEI work at Pacific is narrative-rich, identity-affirmed and justice-focused; just like the tradition of the three cities I call home which comprise California's oldest and first institution of higher learning.

## **Where we are...**

In my first 90 days, I held a series of listening and visioning discussions with university stakeholders; over 60 separate meetings. I also received emails and had impromptu conversations providing me

with feedback from 300-plus Pacificans from all three campuses. The stakeholders represented every part of the university community including cabinet members, academic deans, faculty governance leaders, staff leaders, student leaders, alumni, community leaders and regents who each provided perspectives on diversity, equity and inclusion at Pacific.

Utilizing a SCOT (strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats) analysis and a qualitative method with a DEI-focused lens, I received 26 written responses on DEI work currently being done at the university. The remaining responses were captured through careful note taking and transcription. The following primary themes emerged:

*Strengths*

People with a deep commitment

Effective legacy programs (e.g., CIP)

*Challenges*

Perceived lack of resources/funding

Perceived lack of education and training

*Opportunities*

Deep integration of DEI universitywide

DEI education for employees

*Threats*

Competing priorities/fatigue

Lack of DEI understanding/engagement

**Perhaps the most important finding in my equity audit was this: that every Pacifican wants to feel seen, be heard, and know that they matter.**

### **Where we come from...**

To ground our work, it's important to understand the origin of diversity, equity and inclusion at Pacific. Responding to demands of African American, Latinx and Asian American students concerned about the lack of access, Pacific answered the call for diversity, equity and inclusion before our peer institutions. Our narrative for educational equity is cemented in the establishment of the Community Involvement Program (CIP) in 1969.

For more than 50 years, CIP, a need-based scholarship and retention program for first generation college students who graduated from a Stockton high school or attended and transferred from San Joaquin Delta Community College, has served the educational needs of low-income students by providing financial access to Pacific along with a wide range of support.

Today, I know that CIP is a national model for educational equity and academic excellence. Throughout my career, I have helped universities learn what educational equity means in the context of institutions being inclusive and becoming anti-racist:

- We center the voices and needs of first-generation and other historically marginalized students, staff and faculty first in our institutional reform and social justice efforts, and
- We integrate an equity-minded approach in our recruitment, retention, curriculum, assessment and community-engaged activities to achieve academic excellence and student success.

As the proud beneficiary of what happens when student activism intersects with equity-minded leadership, Pacific's DEI strength rests on our story of institutional change for access and inclusion.

### **Where we are going...**

As a completion of the [Pacific Action Plan for DEI](#) initiated in 2020 by President Christopher Callahan, my office will announce DEI education and development available for employees. This is a work in progress and the collaboration of many areas including Human

Resources, Academic Affairs, Student Life, Enrollment Management, Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity and the Office of Ombudsperson to name a few.

In his Fall 2021 State of the University address, President Callahan boldly shared our 10-year goal, “Pacific will become the best small, student-centric, comprehensive university in the U.S.”

Based upon my findings with stakeholders, and to realize the president’s visionary charge, I have drafted an original framework for diversity, equity and inclusion at Pacific grounded in the promise of educational equity.

At the October 2021 meeting of the Board of Regents, my plenary talk is on “The Role of DEI in Governance.” I will introduce the Regents to **Pacific’s DEI Framework for Excellence**, an essential methodology and transformative practice in governance activities designed to integrate and guide DEI into the life and activities of the university. My hope is to concretize and think about DEI across all aspects of the university. Ultimately, we want everyone to discover how DEI fits into their day-to-day duties starting with the regents.

I am grateful to the Council of Deans (COD), Staff Advisory Council (SAC), Academic Council (AC), University Council on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (UCDEI) and ASuop who have helped me better understand Pacific’s people, processes and capacities for DEI.

My story is forever linked with Pacific. I am overjoyed to serve as your inaugural Vice President for DEI and honored to return to the College of Pacific as Professor of Communication. I will continue what I began on arrival: **to meet you, to listen, and serve.**

Important closing note: October is Filipinx American month and Stockton is home to one of the most influential and robust Filipinx American communities in the nation (I know this firsthand because I grew up living, learning, and playing side-by-side with children and families from this rich community). To learn more about the history and contributions of the Filipinx American community, go to [Little](#)

Manila Rising in Stockton. Also, check out the San Francisco Public Library where I serve as Commissioner.

Keep the faith,

Mary

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Originally published at <https://www.pacific.edu/pacific-newsroom/my-first-90-days-pacific>