

Article

From Theory to Practice: Evaluating the WHOLE Experience Framework for Faculty and Staff Development at a Hispanic Serving Institution

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Abstract

This study examines how faculty and staff experienced the WHOLE Experience Framework (WEF) and its perceived effectiveness in facilitating Belonging, Access, and Inclusive Excellence (BAIE) professional development workshops at a Hispanic Serving Institution. Grounded in andragogical theory and Universal Design for Learning, the WEF comprises five core components: Welcoming, Holistic, Open, Liberating, and Empowering. Using the workshop research methodology, this study engaged 164 faculty and staff across five workshops, assessing participants' experiences with the framework and their confidence in applying BAIE principles in their professional practice. The survey results ($n = 51$) revealed high levels of participant satisfaction and reported increases in BAIE knowledge and confidence. Facilitators modeled active learning strategies to implement WEF components. The findings suggest that participants experienced the WEF as an effective framework for facilitating meaningful professional development experiences that prepare participants to integrate culturally responsive and access-centered practices into their work environments.

Keywords: andragogy; professional development; adult learners; belonging; access; inclusive excellence

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1. Introduction

Professional development in higher education has garnered considerable attention as institutions strive to create more responsive and culturally affirming learning environments (Solomon et al., 2023). The number of students from varied backgrounds and cultures has increased significantly on college campuses, with the United States experiencing substantial upward growth in historically underrepresented populations across most states (Johnson, 2019). Most notable is the growing number of adult learners in higher education who bring unique needs, aspirations, and varying learning requirements (Johnson, 2019).

When contrasting these population trends with the demographic makeup of faculty, there is clear evidence that attention to professional development is necessary to ensure successful connections between learners and institutional staff, ultimately creating effective learning environments that produce positive outcomes (Booker & Campbell-Whatley, 2018). Many institutions have recognized that successful student outcomes benefit from culturally sensitive faculty and staff who can connect with learners socially, emotionally, and intellectually (White-Lewis et al., 2022). Faculty who create responsive learning environments understand the importance of culturally affirming approaches that honor students' varied backgrounds and experiences (Tuitt et al., 2023). The Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) on which this study focuses exemplifies this population shift. Its students are 56% Hispanic and 33% Black. The faculty demographics are approximately 70% White, 20% Hispanic, 5% Black, and 5% other. The institution reports that cultural awareness, humility, and sensitivity are key principles for facilitating its mission of social justice, and it has prioritized professional development activities addressing these issues for all faculty and staff.

The landscape of professional development focused on cultural responsiveness in higher education has shifted considerably in recent years, as evolving policy environments and public discourse have reshaped how institutions frame and deliver such programming. These shifts underscore the need for frameworks grounded in established learning theory rather than politically contingent terminology, positioning the WHOLE Experience Framework (WEF) as a particularly timely contribution to this space.

To meet the professional development needs of faculty and staff working with varied adult learners, the principles of andragogy present a theoretical framework best suited for effectively facilitating meaningful learning experiences (Gay, 2024). Adult learners bring unique cultural backgrounds, lived experiences, and worldviews to professional development settings, requiring approaches that honor their expertise while promoting growth in culturally responsive practices (Booker & Campbell-Whatley, 2018). The aim of our study is to determine the effectiveness of the WEF theory in facilitating meaningful learning experiences for adult learners. The question that guided our inquiry "Is the WEF theory an effective framework to provide meaningful experiences that prepare participants to integrate culturally responsive and access-centered practice into their work environment?"

1.1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of our study was to address an organizational need for an inclusive educational environment at this HSI that seeks to include all student populations regardless of their background (i.e., race, gender, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, or religion). This HSI has seen an increase in the demographic shift in its student population; however, there has been limited shift in its faculty and staff, facilitating an imbalance in the interactions between faculty, staff, and students. This paper describes the implementation and evaluation of the WHOLE Experience Framework (WEF) as a facilitation approach for Belonging, Access, and Inclusive Excellence (BAIE) professional development workshops at this HSI. By examining the framework's application across five workshops for faculty and staff, we analyzed how WEF principles created meaningful learning experiences that supported participants' development of BAIE knowledge, skills, and confidence while aligning with our institution's demographic profile and social justice mission. Throughout this paper, we use the phrase "from theory to practice" to denote the deliberate translation of a conceptual framework, in this case the WEF, into observable facilitation behaviors, learning activities, and participant facing strategies. Theory describes what an inclusive learning environment ought to look like; practice consists of the concrete moves facilitators make, in real time, to produce that environment. The workshops studied here are the connective tissue between the two.

The problem the WEF is designed to address can be stated plainly. When a student body shifts demographically faster than the faculty and staff who teach and support it, the result is a chronic asymmetry in how welcome, recognized, and capable students feel within the institution. Existing professional development models tend to treat this asymmetry as a content gap, a matter of teaching faculty more about culture, identity, or bias, rather than as a facilitation gap. The WEF treats it as the latter: the issue is not only what faculty and staff know, but how learning environments are structured, opened, and shared with the people in them. Naming the problem in this manner matters because it changes what counts as evidence of success. Knowledge gains alone are insufficient; the framework asks whether participants leave with the disposition and the skill to construct environments in which all learners can do their best work.

The WEF draws from established andragogical principles. In 1970, Malcolm Knowles introduced the term “andragogy,” defining it as principles focused on the unique characteristics of adult learners, emphasizing that the learning process in adults differs from that of children (Loeng, 2018). Andragogy encompasses both science and the art of helping adults learn, with the creation of an environment conducive to learning as the primary goal of all educators (Hampton-Garland & Thomas, 2020; Singha et al., 2024). Adult learners are particularly motivated by their sense of knowledge or skills learned and their practical applications (Singha et al., 2024).

In addition to andragogy, the components of the WEF operationalize Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. The UDL has three foundational principles: (a) multiple means of representation, (b) multiple means of expression, and (c) multiple means of engagement (Rose et al., 2006; Zhang et al., 2024). At its core, the UDL focuses on proactively designing learning experiences and environments that address the varied needs of all learners. The WEF aligns with the UDL in that its components promote creating professional development experiences that are flexible and adaptable, which adult learners report needing to successfully achieve their learning goals (Thomas & Thomas, 2023).

Recent advancements in adult learning theory have emphasized the importance of cultural responsiveness and belonging in professional development contexts (Knowles et al., 2020). Representation encompasses real or perceived differences involving identity-based characteristics, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other demographic characteristics (Knowles et al., 2020). The National Association of Colleges and Employers has noted that language and facilitation approaches can either support or impede efforts to foster belonging and access (Thomas & Thomas, 2023).

The BAIE workshops implemented at our institution aimed to evaluate the use of the WEF to determine whether participants experienced the intended outcomes: feeling welcomed, engaged holistically, operating in an open environment, experiencing liberating educational approaches, and feeling empowered through the professional development process. Ultimately, this study sought to understand how effective the WEF was as a facilitation framework for preparing faculty and staff to apply BAIE principles in their professional contexts.

1.2. Background and Context

The co-investigators created BAIE workshops, translated theoretical knowledge into classroom practice and provided faculty with strategies to implement culturally responsive pedagogical approaches that responded to the college’s unique demographics. By allowing participants to experience the WEF principles as both learners and potential facilitators, the BAIE workshops aimed to equip faculty with actionable techniques and philosophical frameworks to enhance student engagement and success.

The Conceptual Model of the BAIE Workshops: The WHOLE Experience Framework

The WEF was previously tested in a four-session professional workshop series designed to foster culturally responsive teaching practices (Thomas & Thomas, 2023). Student feedback about the workshop series, collected via a six-question evaluation survey, indicated that the WEF increased feelings of belonging, motivation, and engagement among participants from varied backgrounds. WHOLE is an acronym for the five components of the WEF: Welcoming, Holistic, Open, Liberating, and Empowering. These components work together synergistically to engage students and teach concepts of belonging, access, and inclusive excellence through both instructional design and content delivery.

Welcoming. This component activates adult learners' readiness to engage by creating psychological safety from the outset and maintaining it throughout the educational experience (Li et al., 2020). It establishes a foundation of trust where learners feel valued, recognized, and inspired to contribute. For faculty serving varied populations, the welcoming component requires cultural humility, necessitating different approaches for different cultural groups to foster an environment where all students feel genuinely welcomed (Tuitt et al., 2023). The welcoming dimension operates across three critical interfaces: learner-to-instructor interactions that validate student presence, learner-to-content connections that make material accessible and relevant, and learner-to-learner relationships that foster community and collaborative knowledge construction. Research suggests that when students experience this multidimensional welcome, their cognitive engagement increases alongside their emotional connection to the learning process, resulting in deeper information processing and retention (Harrison & Thomas, 2019; Ritonga et al., 2025).

Holistic. This component recognizes and engages the complete identity of each learner within the educational context, going beyond acknowledging students' academic personas to embrace their lived experiences, cultural backgrounds, personal values, and professional aspirations. Facilitators employing the holistic approach design interactive learning opportunities that intentionally draw upon learners' prior knowledge, multiple perspectives, and real-world challenges. This approach respects adult learners' accumulated wisdom by building bridges between existing knowledge frameworks and new concepts, thereby enhancing their understanding and knowledge. Research indicates that holistic learning environments yield higher levels of student investment because they validate learners' full humanity rather than treating them as passive recipients of information (Li et al., 2020; Thomas & Thomas, 2023). By incorporating authentic elements of learners' lives into the educational experience, facilitators create meaningful connections that enhance knowledge transfer and application across contexts. Faculty implementing holistic approaches might incorporate culturally relevant case studies, invite personal narratives that connect to course content, or design assessments that allow students to apply learning to their specific community contexts.

Open. This component establishes a foundation for authentic dialog and shared authority within the learning space. Openness manifests as a willingness to distribute power dynamically between facilitators and participants, creating opportunities for collaborative meaning-making. In practice, openness requires facilitators to incorporate structured pauses for reflection, actively solicit multiple viewpoints, and demonstrate vulnerability by acknowledging the limits of their perspectives. This component demands emotional intelligence when navigating challenging discussions about belonging and inclusive excellence, as facilitators must model comfort with discomfort and demonstrate receptivity to constructive feedback. Research suggests that learning environments characterized by openness generate higher levels of student psychological safety, which correlates with increased risk-taking in sharing innovative ideas and exploring complex concepts (Ritonga et al., 2025; Thomas & Thomas, 2023). An open learning environment promotes intellectual humility alongside rigorous inquiry, creating conditions where transformation be-

comes possible for all participants. Faculty practicing openness might incorporate regular feedback mechanisms, create democratic classroom norms collaboratively with students, and explicitly acknowledge when course content reflects dominant perspectives while inviting critical analysis.

Liberating. This component transforms traditional educational frameworks by embracing flexibility, adaptability, and learner agency. Liberating recognizes that standardized approaches often privilege dominant cultural perspectives while marginalizing others. Liberation in learning requires facilitators to offer multiple pathways for engagement, comprehension, and demonstration of mastery, moving beyond one-size-fits-all pedagogies. By implementing a variety of instructional modalities (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, technological), facilitators accommodate varied learning preferences and abilities while challenging students to develop versatility in their learning strategies. The liberating dimension acknowledges the many structural constraints that nontraditional students navigate, including work responsibilities, caregiving duties, and systemic barriers. Consequently, liberating educational practices might include flexible deadlines, multiple assessment options, and content delivery methods that accommodate various life circumstances (Gay, 2024).

Empowering. This component activates learners' sense of agency and efficacy throughout the educational experience by making direct connections between learning activities and students' personal, professional, or community goals. This dimension requires facilitators to create opportunities for authentic choice, self-directed exploration, and meaningful application of knowledge to real-world challenges. Empowering education deliberately cultivates students' metacognitive awareness, helping them recognize and leverage their growing capabilities. When learners experience empowerment, they exhibit greater persistence in the face of obstacles, increased willingness to tackle complex problems, and stronger identification with their fields of study (Li et al., 2020; Thomas & Thomas, 2023). Facilitators promote empowerment by gradually transferring responsibility to learners, celebrating incremental progress, providing actionable feedback, and creating visible pathways that connect current learning to future aspirations. This approach not only enhances learning outcomes but also contributes to students' development as change agents and leaders.

1.3. Review of Literature

The WEF serves as a framework for engaging participants in professional development content delivery. There are numerous ways to discuss learning experiences and environments. However, this literature review focuses on andragogy, reflecting the study's population: adult learners. The targeted methodologies that align with the principles of andragogy include collaborative learning, case studies, problem-based learning, concept mapping, and reflective writing (Livingston & Cummings-Clay, 2023). Although some examples are specific to highly specialized areas, such as healthcare, each methodology has applications across an array of disciplines and professional development contexts (Carpenter-Aeby & Aeby, 2013; Lewis & Bryan, 2021; Monts, 2000). Thomas and Thomas (2023) used the WEF in their work entitled "Leveraging the WHOLE Experience Framework to Elevate Inclusive Learning", using a case study methodology to discuss and refine DEI practices in two psychology courses at a community college. The WEF was used as a framework to improve student engagement.

Gichane et al. (2025) conducted a scoping review of the literature to determine what research exists that targeted programs that focus on the characteristics and outcome of diversity, equity, and inclusion. They found 62 programs that focus on this area of research and of those, the majority centered on faculty/investigators. While Gichane et al. aimed at identifying, characterizing, and evaluating DEI approaches to increase hiring,

promotion, and retention of underrepresented employee groups, our current research focused on faculty, staff, and student interactions and establishing a learning environment that provided a sense of belonging. Lastly, Wang et al. (2024) provided another example of a systematic review of diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism training studies. This research conducted a systematic review of studies that focused on DEI and anti-racism training and concluded that DEI training should focus less on individuals and more on supporting behavioral and organizational changes. Our research focused similarly on organizational changes. Taken together, these studies indicate that empirical research specifically using the WEF remains limited. To date, Thomas and Thomas (2023) is the only published study to apply it in a learning environment, and that work focused on undergraduate students rather than on professional development for faculty and staff. The present study is therefore the first empirical examination of the WEF in a faculty and staff professional development context at an HSI, and it situates the framework within the broader literature on organizationally focused inclusive practice (Gichane et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2024).

1.3.1. Collaborative Learning and Case Studies: Interconnected Approaches

Collaborative learning and case studies represent complementary andragogical approaches that work synergistically in professional development settings. Both methodologies honor adult learners' prior experiences while creating opportunities for shared knowledge construction (Booker & Campbell-Whatley, 2018).

Collaborative Learning utilizes information and communication technologies to offer learners opportunities for interaction and communication (Carrio-Pastor & Skorczynska, 2015; Egizii, 2015). In healthcare education, collaborative clinical reasoning involves two or more providers developing diagnoses and treatment plans, with research showing that a lack of collaboration can result in inadequate patient care (Hublin et al., 2023). This approach falls under interprofessional education, suggesting that students benefit from learning with professionals from other disciplines, thereby gaining exposure to varied roles in delivering person-centered care (Lancaster et al., 2024; Saint-Louis et al., 2024). These collaborations enhance communication and ultimately improve outcomes. Yang et al. (2023) demonstrated the effectiveness of collaborative learning with medical students serving as teachers in a near-peer model. Stanley and Zhang's (2019) research highlights andragogy practice in business education by having students create and narrate solutions to multiple-choice problems, simulating real-life organizational collaboration experiences.

Case Studies provide learners with real-world situations they may encounter in their professional practice. Educators design case studies to promote critical reasoning and independent thinking skills in safe environments. Traditional case studies often limit students to lower domains of Bloom's taxonomy (remembering, understanding, applying); however, reverse case studies allow participants to engage in higher-level thinking (analyzing, evaluating, creating) by participating in case development (Smallheer, 2016). This approach enhances learners' ability to analyze and evaluate material while developing necessary case details.

The intersection of collaborative learning and case studies becomes particularly powerful in professional development contexts. When participants work together to analyze cases or develop scenarios, they combine their varied professional experiences while building collective understanding. Case study analysis promotes critical thinking skills, with research showing that 82% of preceptors use this strategy to promote critical thinking in nursing students (Hamarash et al., 2023). This collaborative case-based approach enables participants to analyze complex scenarios, interpret data, make professional judgments, and develop appropriate interventions while learning from colleagues' perspectives. For example, collaborative learning and case study were used in workshop 1 to

highlight the content on cultural humility vs. cultural competence. This allowed participants from various backgrounds to work as a team symbolizing the aspect of professional work environment that participants experience daily.

1.3.2. Problem-Based Learning

Problem-based learning provides participants with realistic, complex scenarios that require active use of critical thinking and sound reasoning to identify and address underlying issues. This active learning strategy facilitates exploration of real-world problems, requiring participants to engage in action–reflection–action processes to construct knowledge and evaluate alternative solutions (Ghezzi et al., 2021). In professional development contexts, problem-based learning centers participant experiences and promotes collaborative problem-solving. Moreover, as the teams were formed in Workshop 1, each team was presented with a problem that the team had to resolve without the use over verbal communication, role playing, and under timed pressure to develop the solution.

1.3.3. Concept Mapping and Reflective Writing

Concept mapping, introduced by Novak and colleagues in 1992, serves as a powerful tool for promoting critical thinking skills among adult learners. This metacognitive tool effectively promotes deep learning and has been successfully used across disciplines to help participants learn by fostering meaningful connections between related concepts and providing visual representations of subjects under review (All & Havens, 1997).

Reflective writing encourages participants to self-reflect on their experiences, analyze their actions, and make connections between theory and practice (Hamarash et al., 2023). Guided reflective writing enhances learning and promotes professional judgment skills (Smith, 2021). In professional development settings, reflective writing enables facilitators to assess participants' thought processes and development while encouraging the evaluation of concepts and the development of better communication skills. Artioli et al. (2021) suggested that reflective writing lies at the heart of professionalism across fields, as transforming thoughts into words creates new ideas, deepening learning experiences and enhancing personal and professional development. Reflective writing was evidenced in workshops 3 and 4 and created meaningful engagement among participants when the team was required to huddle to create new ideas. At the end of each workshop the facilitators carefully observed how each component of the WEF was implemented across the various workshops and the feedback received from participants appeared to validate the researchers' intent for the framework as a vehicle for inclusive professional development.

2. Materials and Methods

This study used the workshop research methodology, which Trettin et al. (2025) described as a self-standing research method with a structured setting of “creative group reflections, idea generation, and problem-solving” (p. 2). This methodology included both quantitative and qualitative measures to provide a holistic view of the outcomes of these workshops. To capture quantitative data post workshop, a 12-question Likert scale survey was used. To capture the qualitative component of the workshop, one question was open-ended, asking participants to provide their reflections on the workshop. This research methodology differed slightly from the traditional mixed-methods design in that the workshops themselves were the focus of the research. The workshop research methodology has gained increased use in various fields, including business and health sciences, in ways that mirror the use of focus groups (Ahmed & Asraf, 2018; Storvang et al., 2024). Ørngreen and Levinsen (2017) described three perspectives on workshop research:

“(1) Workshops as a means are authentic activities aimed at domain-specific issues to achieve a goal; (2) workshops as a practice investigate the relationship between the workshop and outcome; and (3) workshops as research methodology focus on the study of domain-related cases using the work format as a research methodology. (p. 72).”

Workshop research methodology has been used successfully in several studies focused in the following areas Ørngreen and Levinsen (2017), (e-learning); O’Cathain (2025) (health research); and Hu (2024), (educational context). The workshop methodology guided our transformative philosophical framework. Recognizing that knowledge is not neutral and reflects power relationships within society, the purpose of knowledge construction is to help people create more fair and responsive educational environments (Mertens, 2017). Within this transformative framework, we acknowledged multiple realities shaped by social, political, and cultural values, with particular attention to the experiences of historically marginalized populations served by our institution. We used the workshop methodology to diagnose, plan, facilitate, and analyze a series of five workshops (Storvang et al., 2024) entitled “Amplifying Access and Cultivating Belonging: BAIE Training Workshops,” which operationalized BAIE concepts using the WEF.

The workshop methodology creates a welcoming learning environment guided by a facilitator, focused on a specific topic. We selected this methodology because it allowed for an in-depth examination of a bounded system (the workshop series) within its real-world context (Creswell, 2018), enabling us to investigate how the WEF functioned as both an instructional framework and an evaluative tool for BAIE training. The workshop format is structurally aligned with the WEF: it is a bounded, facilitated environment in which welcoming behaviors, holistic engagement of participant identity, open dialog, liberating instructional flexibility, and empowering application activities can be enacted and observed within a single session. This structural alignment is what permits the workshop to function simultaneously as the intervention being studied and as the research methodology through which that intervention is examined.

Because qualitative work of this kind is sometimes critiqued for limited generalizability, we follow Yin’s (2009) position that the appropriate standard for evaluating such studies is analytic generalization, the extent to which findings can be related back to a theoretical framework, rather than statistical generalization to a population. Merriam (1995) similarly argued that qualitative researchers are not seeking to establish laws; rather, they seek to understand the world from the perspectives of the participants in it (p. 56). Our study is positioned within that tradition: the WEF is the theoretical reference point, and the findings are presented as evidence about how that framework functions in one HSI context, not as claims about all HSIs or all professional development programs.

During the diagnostic phase of the BAIE Workshop series, we aimed to illustrate how the workshop research methodology could be employed as an educational approach to operationalize the WEF. Our first step in conducting the workshop was a meeting with members of the president’s office to confirm that we would lead the development of BAIE workshops for the college community on a series of topics, including cultural humility and anti-racism. Addressing these topics was important, as the college was mandated to offer more sensitivity training on these issues. The workshops were voluntary and open to all members of the college community. The workshops needed to be engaging; they could not be lecture-based.

Our second step was planning the logistics, including workshop locations, dates, and times, as well as identifying facilitators. Within the first 3 weeks of planning, we developed the topics, secured the venue, and established the dates for all the workshops. The workshops were held over 3 months providing longitudinal exposure to the framework

concepts. This timeline facilitated deep engagement with the framework and provided participants with opportunities to reflect on their experiences across multiple sessions.

Our third step was marketing the series of workshops, which the president's office promoted through the president's college listserv to increase interest and convey the importance of these workshops to the college community.

Our fourth step was to identify the lead experts who would facilitate the workshops. The facilitators were as follows: (a) Workshop 1, two PhD-prepared nurses with expertise in HIV patients whose work reflects cultural competency, humility, and sensitivity; (b) Workshop 2, panel of experts, one PhD nurse moderator, two PhD nurses with expertise in sickle cell disease (SCD), and one PhD in social epidemiology; (c) Workshop 3, one EdD nurse educator with expertise in the social determinants of health; (d) Workshop 4, two master's-prepared experts in artificial intelligence in online instructions; and (e) Workshop 5, two Doctor of Social Work (DSW) experts in anti-racism and decolonizing the curriculum. Each facilitator was oriented on the use of WEF and instructed on how to incorporate it into their presentations, with an explicit requirement for active audience participation. These facilitators were selected based on their area of expertise, the recommendation of colleagues, their publication record, or their website presence on the topic.

Our fifth step involved drafting the email message that the president's office would review for distribution to the college community. Two weeks before each workshop, the president's office sent an email blast with a registration link to the entire college community, including faculty as well as full-time and part-time staff. Pre-registration ensured an accurate number of participants, providing facilitators with insight into the audience and enabling them to plan activities accordingly.

Our sixth step occurred after each event; facilitators asked participants to scan the QR code to take a brief survey on their experiences with the workshop. The QR code and a survey link were also sent from the president's listserv, encouraging all participants to complete the survey as soon as possible. The data were instrumental in determining the outcome of each workshop.

2.1. Sample and Setting

Participants included a broad cross-section of faculty, staff, administrators, and healthcare practitioners representing multiple disciplines and professional contexts. This study employed a combination of purposive and convenience sampling to recruit participants, with purposive sampling used to deliberately target HSI faculty and staff who could provide meaningful insights about BAIE professional development experiences, while convenience sampling was utilized by making workshops available to all faculty and staff who were readily accessible through the president's listserv and could attend the scheduled sessions. Thus, the researchers did not have a pre-determined sample size. Our IRB-approved protocol, which required participant anonymity, did not permit the collection of demographic data from the workshop samples. However, we collected the facilitators' demographic data, which were highly representative of workshop participants. Four of the five workshops were held on campus, with one conducted at a local medical center, extending the framework's application beyond the traditional academic setting.

2.2. Workshop Content and Structure

Each workshop addressed distinct aspects of BAIE principles while consistently employing the WEF as the instructional approach:

Workshop 1: Cultural Humility vs. Cultural Competence explored the integration of cultural humility into classroom instruction. This workshop attracted participants from varied academic departments, including English, Mathematics, Library Sciences, College

Administration, and Public Health. The workshop explored the distinctions between cultural humility and cultural competence, examining how cultural humility promotes welcoming workplaces and its impact on team productivity and unity. Collaborative learning, case study, and problem-based learning employed the WEF instructional approach.

Workshop 2: The Art of Listening to Our Communities coincided with National Sickle Cell Month, focusing on sickle cell anemia (SCA). This workshop featured a panel presentation and dialog between community stakeholders, nursing staff, and faculty. The panel comprised a person with SCA, two nurse researchers, two nurse practitioners specializing in SCA care, three nursing educators, and a public health expert, modeling the representation of multiple perspectives. Reflective writing showed the WEF instructional approach.

Workshop 3: The Legacy of Racial Inequalities and Its Impact on Health Inequities focused on developing skills to address bias, discrimination, and barriers to professional growth. Participants examined the historical context of healthcare practices regarding race, their contribution to anti-Black racism and inequities, and implications for patients and healthcare providers. Collaborative learning, case study, and problem-based learning employed the WEF instructional approach.

Workshop 4: Deconstructing Racism in Our Curriculum explored curriculum development at the intersection of race and other social categories. Facilitators shared their experiences decolonizing the curriculum in the college's Social Work Department, grounding their approach in critical race theory and anti-racist pedagogy. Collaborative learning, case study, and problem-based learning employed the WEF instructional approach.

Workshop 5: Artificial Intelligence and BAIE: Why It MATTERS examined biases in data, algorithms, and decision-making processes. This workshop examined the current state of BAIE in higher education and the opportunities and challenges posed by AI-powered technologies in teaching and learning contexts. Reflective writing showed the WEF instructional approach. We mapped these workshops into the instructional methods and primary WEF component illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Mapping of Workshop Topics, Instructional Methods, and Primary WEF Components.

WS	Topic	Primary Instructional Method(s)	Primary WEF Components
W1	Cultural Humility vs. Cultural Competence	Collaborative learning; case study	Welcoming; Holistic
W2	The Art of Listening to Our Communities	Panel discussion; reflective writing	Welcoming; Open
W3	Legacy of Racial Inequalities and Health Inequities	Collaborative learning; problem-based learning	Holistic; Liberating
W4	Deconstructing Racism in Our Curriculum	Case study; problem-based learning; pair and share	Liberating; Empowering
W5	Artificial Intelligence and BAIE	Reflective writing; concept mapping	Open; Empowering

Note: WEF components are listed by primary emphasis; in practice, all five components were operationalized to some degree in every workshop. The mappings reflect the components most actively foregrounded by the facilitators' chosen instructional methods.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Consistent with transformative research approaches, we developed a data collection instrument that aligned both the components of the WEF and the transformative goal of advancing educational access and belonging. The survey was created using Survey-Monkey, and the QR code transmitted the data to an Excel spreadsheet, making the survey results available to the organizers of the workshop series while ensuring participant anonymity. The BAIE Workshop survey was based on the WEF components. This anonymous 13-question survey consisted of 12 Likert-scale questions (ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree") that assessed participants' experiences with each component of

the WEF. For example, to evaluate the Welcoming component, the survey asked participants to respond to the statement “I felt welcomed, comfortable, and confident in the workshop.” The survey had multiple indicators for each WEF component (see survey in Appendix A). To establish instrument credibility, the survey items were mapped directly to the five WEF components, ensuring content alignment between the framework’s theoretical constructs and the measured outcomes. The final question was an open-ended, free-text response that asked participants to describe their plans for integrating BAIE principles into their teaching. Beyond construct mapping, the survey items were adapted from a prior instrument used in a 2022 WEF workshop series at the same HSI and were pilot tested with a small group of participants from that earlier series to assess clarity, response burden, and alignment between item wording and each WEF component. Items that produced ambiguous responses in the pilot were revised before deployment in the present study. We acknowledge that this procedure establishes content validity rather than the broader psychometric validity that would require larger samples; the limitation of formal psychometric testing is taken up in Section 4.1.

Our data analysis approach aligned with the transformative philosophical framework by centering participant voices and experiences. Quantitative data from Likert-scale questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions and measures of central tendency, to identify patterns in participants’ experiences with each WEF component. Given the ordinal nature of Likert-scale data and the sample size ($n = 51$), we calculated agreement percentages by collapsing “strongly agree” and “agree” responses to report aggregate endorsement rates for each survey item. Open-ended responses were analyzed using conventional qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) following an inductive coding process: responses were first read in their entirety, then coded for recurring concepts, and finally organized into key themes reflecting participants’ reflections on applying BAIE principles in their work contexts. Conventional content analysis was selected because it is appropriate when the research aim is to describe a phenomenon for which existing theory or research literature is limited, allowing categories to flow from the data rather than being imposed a priori (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Two members of the research team independently reviewed the qualitative data to enhance interpretive consistency.

Following the transformative approach, we interpreted the findings with attention to power dynamics in educational settings and the potential for creating more responsive and fair learning environments. Two members of the research team also served as facilitators for two of the five workshops, creating a dual role that we acknowledge as a potential source of interpretive bias. To mitigate this, we took three steps. First, the two researcher facilitators did not independently code data from workshops they had facilitated; coding for those sessions was led by the team member who had not been present. Second, we maintained analytic memos throughout the analysis process to document interpretive decisions and surface assumptions. Third, the team engaged in regular peer debriefing sessions in which emerging themes were challenged and revised collaboratively. This reflexivity is central to the transformative philosophical framework, which recognizes that researchers are not neutral observers but rather active participants in the construction of knowledge.

For the purposes of this study, we define effectiveness as participants’ self-reported experience of the WEF and their perceived capacity to apply BAIE principles within their professional practice, rather than as a measured change in behavior, instructional performance, or student outcomes. This definition follows from the workshop research methodology, in which the unit of analysis is the participants’ experience of the workshop itself (Ørngreen and Levinsen (2017); Trettin et al., 2025), and from Yin’s (2009) position that such studies are evaluated by analytic generalization to a theoretical framework rather

than statistical generalization to a population. Throughout this paper, references to the framework's effectiveness should be read in this bounded, perception-based sense.

3. Results

A total of 164 participants attended the five workshops, and 51 responded to the survey. Participants found the workshops welcoming (91%) and agreed that they provided opportunities for networking with others (90%). Ninety-two percent of participants reported an increase in knowledge and understanding of belonging, access, and inclusive excellence, and 80% agreed that the workshops were designed to support the learning and application of these concepts in work, practice, teaching, and curriculum development. Almost all participants (86%) indicated that the workshops provided an opportunity for them to reflect on their current values and practices, and 77% felt comfortable sharing their self-reflections.

Most participants agreed that the facilitators created a safe environment (78%) and employed multiple strategies to engage participants (72%). Most participants (83%) felt that they were treated respectfully by the facilitators, and 87% reported that the facilitators made them feel comfortable contributing to the dialog. Participants agreed that while guiding the discussions, the facilitators allowed conversations to evolve based on topics important to the participants (83%) and that multiple perspectives and opinions were valued (84%).

3.1. Sample Demographics

The participants in the on-campus workshops represented faculty and staff from across the campus of this HSI, with a mixture of full-time faculty (40%), full-time staff (50%), and others (10%) attending. On the other hand, at the off-campus workshop, the participants were all clinical practitioners who worked at the large local medical center, of whom 80% were registered nurses and 20% represented other disciplines. The demographics of our 10 facilitators included two Hispanic females, one non-Hispanic White female, one non-Hispanic White male, and six non-Hispanic Black females.

3.2. Qualitative Findings from the Open-Ended Response

Fifty-one participants completed the free response item asking how they planned to implement BAIE principles in their work using the WEF. Inductive coding of these responses produced four recurring themes that ran across all five workshops.

Self-reflection as a precursor to practice change. The most frequently coded theme was the use of structured self-reflection as the first concrete action participants intended to take. Respondents named reflection on their own bias, assumptions, and prior interactions with students and colleagues as the move that had to precede any pedagogical or curricular change. One participant wrote that the workshop "provided pause to how one thinks about the work environment as a learning environment," and several described intentions to schedule periodic reflection alongside instructional planning.

Listening as an enacted skill. Participants repeatedly described listening not as a passive habit but as a deliberate practice they intended to model. Responses framed listening as an action to be performed visibly, with the explicit purpose of ensuring that students and colleagues "feel seen and heard." This theme cut across the clinical and academic participants, suggesting that the workshop framing transferred across professional contexts.

Curricular and instructional intent. A third theme captured concrete intentions to alter course materials, syllabi, and assignment design. Responses referenced auditing curricula for biased language, redesigning case studies to reflect varied patient and student

populations and adopting flexible deadline policies. This theme aligned most directly with the Liberating and Empowering components of the WEF.

Belonging as the integrating outcome. Across the four workshops on cultural humility, community listening, racial inequities, and curriculum decolonization, participants returned to the language of belonging, for themselves, their colleagues, and their students, as the outcome they were working toward. This theme appeared even in responses that did not use the word “belonging” directly, but described feeling welcomed, valued, or respected as the condition they wanted to create for others.

Representative reflections illustrating each theme appear in Table 2, where they are juxtaposed with the corresponding WEF component definitions.

Table 2. Participants’ Reflections on the WHOLE Experience Framework.

Component	Definition	Participants’ Reflections
Welcoming	Participants’ engagement with a learning environment throughout the duration.	It was important for me to hear that ... people of color might never feel truly safe even if “we” think that we have created a safe environment. I liked some of the best practices, like “call in, don’t call out.”
Holistic	The “whole” person is engaged in learning.	“Continue to be humble” “Listen more carefully and respectfully. Acknowledge and elevate opinions-perspectives different from my own. Enjoy learning from colleagues with diverse viewpoints and experiences.” “I will try to model open and safe conversations.”
Open	Feedback and self-reflection are leveraged throughout the learning experience.	“Understanding my own bias and feelings and reflecting on them to be able to avoid certain situations and issues that relate to racial disparities and inequality.” “What I took of most value is the fact that self-reflection is important.”
Liberating	There are opportunities for flexibility and adaptability.	“Do a second deep dive into the curriculum in our department enlisting all stakeholders in the process.”
Empowering	There is choice in learning modalities that reflect participants’ desired outcomes.	It will allow me to communicate better with my coworkers and to learn about their background so that we will be able to handle projects and deadlines quicker.” “It will help me be a better leader.”

4. Discussion

Facilitators modeled active learning techniques, including collaborative learning, reflective writing, case studies, and concept mapping, which aligned with adult learning principles and supported transformative education. Activities such as reverse case studies, decolonizing curricula, and exploring AI bias equipped educators with tangible tools to foster responsive learning environments for historically marginalized student populations. A racially varied group of facilitators added credibility, relatability, and authenticity to the workshops, enhancing trust and engagement among attendees, particularly within this HSI.

Participants experienced the WEF as an effective framework for facilitating BAIE professional development workshops. Participants’ self-reported responses indicate that the WEF helped them translate BAIE concepts into intended changes in their academic practice. Participants reported that the WEF translates BAIE’s concepts into tangible academic practices. The faculty development literature indicates that educators often endorse principles of inclusion but lack strategies to operationalize them in teaching and learning environments (O’Leary et al., 2020). The WEF closes this gap by providing a structured

framework that links theory with specific facilitation strategies. In addition to reporting increased knowledge, participants described their intentions to alter communication practices, curriculum design, leadership behaviors, and interactions with colleagues. These reported intentions suggest that the WEF facilitates practical application of theory, an important finding in professional development research.

The findings reinforce central assumptions of andragogical theory. As described by Knowles et al. (2020) and other researchers, adult learners are most engaged when instructional experiences acknowledge their prior knowledge, invite active participation, and demonstrate immediate relevance to professional practice (Knapke et al., 2024; Lewis & Bryan, 2021). Collaborative learning exercises align with andragogical principles. The BAIE workshops used collaborative learning exercises such as sharing reflective writing, problem-based learning, and case-based discussions to engage participants. As active contributors to knowledge rather than inactive receivers of information, participants experience BAIE through the learning process itself. This finding is noteworthy because adult learners often evaluate education experiences not just on what they learn, but on how they experience the learning environment (Boeren et al., 2012). As a result, participants experienced high levels of participation and satisfaction.

This study indicates that institutions creating professional development programs can use BAIE as a pedagogical process rather than knowledge transmission delivered solely by content experts. Much of the literature on diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism training has focused on knowledge acquisition and attitude change (Carter et al., 2020). However, organizational change is more pervasive when interventions are hierarchical and contextual, addressing individual behaviors, social interactions, and organizational culture (Corbo et al., 2016). The WEF addresses organizational change by using the learning environment itself as an intervention. In the workshops, welcoming interactions, opportunities for reflection, dialog, learner choice, and shared authority were not ancillary features; they constituted how learning occurred.

The findings are especially relevant for HSI and other institutions experiencing increasingly multicultural student populations. Demographic shifts in the student population of higher education institutions have occurred more rapidly than changes in faculty composition, resulting in gaps between student experiences and institutional practices (Pham & Tsai, 2024). Professional development models that intentionally support cultural responsiveness, belonging, and learner engagement may help close these gaps. Although the current study was conducted within a single HSI, the WEF's underlying principles may be relevant in institutions where faculty and staff seek practical approaches to creating engagement in multicultural learning environments. The framework's versatility and adaptability may be especially valuable, as it allows facilitators to customize its implementation to institutional culture and student demographics rather than relying on a prescriptive model.

Interestingly, the results suggest that participants experienced belonging as both an outcome and a process. Participants frequently referenced listening, self-reflection, respect for differing perspectives, and opportunities for dialog in their responses. These themes suggest that institutions promote belonging not only through policies but also through repeated interpersonal experiences that communicate value, recognition, and respect (Vaccaro & Newman, 2016). The WEF is a pedagogy that supports creating these experiences intentionally within professional development settings.

In each workshop, facilitators used learning strategies that reflected a component of the WEF:

Welcoming. In Workshop 2, the song "Lovely Day" by Bill Withers greeted participants. The facilitators started to dance and invited the participants to join in. The music

and dancing continued until all the participants arrived; the activity stimulated camaraderie and relaxation, preparing participants to learn, connect, and engage.

Holistic. In Workshop 3, participants and the facilitator engaged in an interactive discussion about finding ways to overcome the negative racial bias in a commonly used medical device that prevented the upscaling of care to a higher level for Black patients during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this problem-based learning exercise, the facilitator summarized the evidence and posed a question related to the content, pausing to enable participants to think critically about their experiences and process their emotions about the issue before sharing their thoughts. The discussion incorporated their experiences as learners, humans experiencing traumatic events, and healthcare providers, allowing for a whole-person response. One of the key design elements of andragogy is active participation, which is divided into two constructs: the learning environment and instructional strategies (Carpenter-Aeby & Aeby, 2013). Establishing a learning environment that is both emotionally and physically safe enables adult learners to set aside outside worries and bring their whole selves to the learning process.

Liberating. For the liberating component, facilitators found ways to involve participants in learning activities using different formats. In Workshop 2, word clouds were used to explore the concepts of cultural humility and cultural competence, engaging participants digitally. The word clouds functioned as “group participation concept maps,” enabling participants to consider the relationships between different elements of cultural humility and cultural competence within each concept and among them.

Empowering. In Workshop 4, facilitators used reflective writing to create an opportunity for flexibility and adaptability. They asked participants to write about one opportunity or challenge related to belonging, access, inclusive excellence, and AI. One facilitator collected and collated the notes to create a template for the group discussion. The reflective writing empowered participants to articulate their learning objectives and allowed the facilitators to address them effectively.

The Anti-Racist Curriculum Workshop prompted participants to explore actionable steps for fostering fairness within their respective curricula. Participants formed pairs and identified words that reflected bias or discrimination in their curricula, replacing them with words that promoted belonging and access. This pair-and-share activity helped participants understand how they could use their power to change teaching and learning.

Participants reflected on their workshop experiences. Table 2 illustrates the framework’s components, providing definitions and authentic participant reflections that highlight the real-world application and impact of each concept. These insights reveal how learners internalize and respond to inclusive educational practices, emphasizing the framework’s relevance and effectiveness. Table 2 is presented here rather than in the Section 3 because it serves an interpretive function: it juxtaposes each WEF component’s formal definition with representative participant reflections, allowing the reader to evaluate the framework’s resonance with lived participant experience. The verbatim reflections themselves are qualitative evidence (developed in Section 3.2), but their pairing with the conceptual definitions is an analytic act and therefore belongs to the discussion. Some of the responses to the open-ended question were quite revealing in those participants reported that the self-reflection activity was powerful and provided pause to how one thinks about the work environment as a learning environment. Other participants indicated that listening is an action and one that will be modeled to ensure others feel seen and heard. We heard many similar responses from participants throughout the five workshops, and regardless of the subject, the feeling of belonging was an abiding theme.

These findings extend and refine prior work on the WEF and on inclusive professional development more broadly. Thomas and Thomas (2023) used the WEF in two psychology courses at a community college and reported improved student engagement; the

present study contributes new evidence that the same five components, Welcoming, Holistic, Open, Liberating, and Empowering, function effectively when the audience is faculty and staff rather than students, suggesting that the framework's reach is not confined to traditional classroom contexts. Our results also align with the conclusion drawn by Wang et al. (2024) in their systematic review of DEI and antiracism training: that the most promising programs are those that target behavioral and organizational change rather than individual attitudes alone. Participants in this study consistently described intended changes to curriculum, instruction, and policy practice rather than purely personal stances, which is consistent with that recommendation. Finally, where Gichane et al. (2025) found that the majority of DEI workforce studies focused narrowly on faculty and investigators, the present study broadens the lens to include staff, administrators, and clinical practitioners working alongside faculty, a population that has been underrepresented in the empirical literature and that, at HSIs in particular, plays a central role in shaping students' sense of belonging.

4.1. Limitations

The content presented in this series was appropriate for a minority-serving institution in a low-income urban environment. Facilitators who led these BAIE workshops were, in some cases, demographically aligned with participants. Their influence on engagement levels and outcomes may not be replicable with different facilitators or contexts. Suburban or rural colleges and universities that serve predominantly higher-income or mainly White students should consider incorporating BAIE topics and content relevant to their audience.

Additionally, we make no claims that these findings are generalizable beyond this HSI. We argue based on Merriam (1995) seminal work, that the reader will determine the use and application of these research findings. Further, this research employed four strategies that strengthen external validity: (a) a detailed description of the workshops, inclusive topics highlighting BAIE, (b) multi-site design (five workshops in this series), (c) thematic presentations of the participants comments, and (d) detailed description of the logistics in which these workshops were implemented. We acknowledge that the WEF has had limited evidence in the professional development literature; however, understanding the perspective of the participants that attended these workshops has provided more evidence of the valuation of these workshops and the impact the workshops had in guiding future educational practices.

1. Data collection occurred immediately following the workshops, capturing only short-term perceptions. There was no longitudinal follow-up to determine whether knowledge gains were sustained in behavioral or instructional changes. The generalizability of the findings to a broader population may be limited, as participation in the workshops was voluntary and primarily attracted individuals inclined toward culturally responsive professional work. This self-selection bias means that participants may have been more receptive to BAIE concepts than the general faculty and staff population, potentially inflating positive outcomes. Additionally, the survey response rate of 31% (51 out of 164 workshop participants) raises questions about whether non-respondents may have had different experiences or perspectives. The in-room administration of the survey via QR code immediately following each workshop may have introduced additional response bias: participants who remained in the room and chose to complete the survey on the spot may have been more positively disposed toward the experience, and the proximity of the facilitators at the time of administration may have created mild social desirability pressure. Future studies should include a follow-up survey administered after a time delay and through a channel independent of the facilitators.

2. Due to IRB requirements for participant anonymity, the lack of demographic data prevents analysis of how racial, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds may have influenced workshop experiences or outcomes. The small number of survey responses may not fully represent the experiences of all participants. Although agreement patterns were consistent across all five workshop sessions, results are reported in aggregate, and future studies with larger samples may benefit from comparative analysis across individual workshops. Additionally, the survey instrument was not subjected to formal psychometric testing such as Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency among the Likert-scale items. Future iterations of this research should include psychometric validation of the instrument to strengthen claims about the reliability of the WEF-aligned survey measures.
3. Because our IRB-approved protocol precluded the collection of participant demographic data, we make no claims about differential experiences or outcomes across racial, ethnic, disciplinary, or role-based groups. All findings reported here describe the aggregated self-reported experience of the 51 respondents within a single HSI and are not intended to generalize beyond that context.

4.2. Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the insights gained through the implementation of workshops using the WEF aim to sustain and expand its impact across varied educational contexts. Educators can use these recommendations to guide their application of BAIE principles in learning environments.

1. Adopt the WEF for professional development initiatives and integrate it into faculty onboarding, curriculum design processes, and evaluation frameworks.
2. Tailor future BAIE workshops for varied institutional types by adjusting activities and facilitator demographics to ensure cultural and contextual relevance.
3. Implement ongoing evaluations to identify and measure long-term changes in classroom practices and student outcomes linked to faculty exposure and adoption of the WEF.
4. Create faculty learning communities to share and reflect on challenges and successes in applying BAIE principles and the swWEF in the classroom.
5. Incentivize workshop participation through recognition, stipends, or professional development credits to increase reach and fairness in access to training.

4.3. Recommendations for Future Research

Several recommendations emerge from this study for future research, including the following:

Longitudinal studies should follow participants after the workshop to assess sustained behavior change and determine whether initial knowledge gains translate into lasting changes in professional practice. Such studies would provide valuable insight into the framework's long-term effectiveness and identify factors that support or hinder sustained implementation of BAIE principles.

Demographic analysis represents another important area for future investigation. If institutional review boards permit, collecting optional demographic data would enable researchers to understand the differential impacts of the WEF across various participant characteristics. This analysis could reveal whether certain groups respond more favorably to specific components of the framework and inform targeted professional development approaches.

Comparison studies comparing WEF workshops to traditional professional development training methods would strengthen the evidence base for this approach. Such studies could employ randomized controlled designs to isolate the effects of the WEF ver-

sus other professional development approaches, providing clearer evidence of its relative effectiveness.

Finally, **multi-institutional studies** testing the framework across different institutional types (community colleges, research universities, liberal arts colleges) and demographic contexts would enhance the understanding of the framework's generalizability and adaptability. These studies could examine how institutional culture, student demographics, and regional contexts influence the framework's effectiveness and identify necessary adaptations for different settings.

5. Conclusions

These conclusions reflect participants' self-reported experiences and intentions rather than observed changes in practice or measured student outcomes, and they are bound to the single HSI context in which the workshops occurred. Participants reported that the WEF-guided workshops facilitated psychological safety, encouraged open dialog, and validated their lived experiences, all of which align with the andragogical principles on which the framework is grounded. Participants expressed intentions to apply BAIE principles in curriculum development, instructional practices, and institutional policymaking, indicating a successful transfer of learning from theory to application. Participants from varied departments attended, showing the broad applicability of the WEF and BAIE principles. This study reported participants' perception of the WEF as a pedagogical model for embedding BAIE principles into faculty and staff development at an HSI. The WEF may provide a foundation for reimagining classroom practices that center varied learner experiences. By integrating adult learning theory, the WEF empowered faculty and staff to critically engage with structural barriers and adapt instructional design for greater access and belonging. The workshops' positive reception indicates that the WEF has the potential to be a scalable and adaptable framework that can meet the needs of increasingly varied student populations.

This study contributes to the literature on inclusive professional development in three specific ways. First, it provides the first empirical examination of the WEF in a faculty and staff professional development context, extending prior work (Thomas & Thomas, 2023) that tested the framework only in undergraduate classrooms. Second, it demonstrates that an explicitly theory-grounded framework can sustain professional development on belonging, access, and inclusive excellence even in a policy environment where the terminology of such work is increasingly contested, a finding of practical importance for institutional leaders navigating that environment. Third, by surfacing four recurring themes from participant reflections (self-reflection as a precursor to practice change, listening as an enacted skill, curricular and instructional intent, and belonging as an integrating outcome), this study offers a structured set of intermediate outcomes that future studies and other institutions can use to design and evaluate similar programs.

Moreover, it adds to the professional development literature by demonstrating that BAIE can be operationalized through the intentional design of learning experiences. Rather than viewing BAIE solely as an institutional vision, the WEF frames BAIE as a set of pedagogical processes embedded within the learning environment. The WEF is a practical model for translating adult learning theory into faculty and staff development activities that support engagement, reflection, and career development. As institutions of higher education adapt to evolving student demographics and increasingly complex educational contexts, the WEF offers a valuable framework for aligning professional development practices with institutional commitments to BAIE.

Despite positive feedback from survey respondents who described the value of the WEF, the 69% non-response rate warrants consideration, as it may indicate participant caution or psychological safety concerns regarding formal evaluation of culturally respon-

sive professional development initiatives. Recent policy changes targeting terminology and programming related to belonging and access in higher education may contribute to increased reluctance among faculty and staff to engage openly with related research, even when they value the professional development content. For instance, participants mentioned concerns about providing feedback due to the presence of administrators such as deans in attendance, while others expressed a fear of sharing their perspectives due to concerns about being perceived negatively. This climate of uncertainty may significantly impact both participation in and evaluation of culturally responsive professional development initiatives. Given these challenges, institutional leaders must create explicitly protected spaces for such professional development and clearly communicate institutional commitment to supporting faculty and staff engagement with BAIE principles, regardless of external political pressures.

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Informed Consent Statement: This study was exempt with limited review and did not require informed consent. These workshops were part of an educational process which did not require informed consent. Attendance at the workshops was voluntary.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

WEF	Whole Experience Framework
BAIE	Belonging, Access, and Inclusive Excellence
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
SCD	Sickle Cell Disease
DSW	Doctor of Social Work
HSI	Hispanic Serving Institute

Appendix A. WHOLE Experience Framework Survey

WHOLE Experience Framework Survey

Welcoming

To what extent do you agree with this statement?

“I felt welcomed, comfortable, and confident in the workshops.”

Did you feel invited to contribute to the conversation?

Holistic

Did the workshop activities provide an opportunity to network with other participants?

To what extent do you agree with this statement?

"I felt recognized and respected as a whole human being during the workshops."

Open

Did the workshops provide an opportunity for self-reflection?

Did the workshops provide an opportunity to share your self-reflection?

To what extent do you agree with this statement?

"The facilitators made an effort to check in with participants to ensure we felt safe expressing our opinions and thoughts."

Liberating

Were the workshop facilitators flexible in accepting diverse opinions and perspectives during the conversations?

Did the facilitators provide multiple ways for participants to engage in the conversation?

To what extent do you agree with this statement?

"The facilitators guided the conversation but allowed it to flow to related topics of concern to the participants."

Empowering

Did the conversations expand your understanding or knowledge about the topic?

To what extent do you agree with this statement?

"The workshop was designed to support learning and applying diversity, equity, and inclusion principles in work, practice, teaching, and curriculum development."

Application (free-response question)

Please tell us how you plan to implement Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in your work using the WEF

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