

# The Pedagogical Imperative of Changing the Culture of Teaching

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***Abstract:** The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted higher education and the professoriate in unprecedented ways, heightening collective awareness of the systemic inequities and vulnerabilities of higher education. In response to these challenges, this article shows how one university redesigned its culture of teaching to center inclusive pedagogies through targeted faculty and graduate student development as well as structural shifts in teaching and learning infrastructure using cultural historical activity theory (CHAT). This paper articulates the need to re-humanize teaching and learning through inclusive pedagogies.*

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*inclusive pedagogy, an imperative to help faculty solve crises in real-time and sustain our educational promise if higher education wishes to survive in the 21st century.*

**Keywords:** inclusive pedagogies, faculty & graduate student development

## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic, racial reckonings, political upheaval, and the impact of climate change demand higher education institutions interrogate structures, practices, and ideologies that fail to respond to the systemic inequities magnified by these compounding crises. This paper analyzes novel initiatives that have enabled University of Denver (DU) to reimagine structures, practices, and ideologies for ongoing cultural transformation during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. Explored through the lens of postsecondary education scholarship and learning sciences, we center our analysis on one research question: How did the culture of teaching at University of Denver (DU) shift as a result of the challenges brought forth by the pandemic in 2020? We use cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) to operationalize and identify elements of an institutional culture that transformed through and beyond March 2020, a significant milestone when DU transitioned from pre-COVID-19 face to face (F2F) classrooms to post-and-ongoing COVID-19 through virtual teaching and learning. Given that our findings are still unfolding and transpiring *in situ*, we characterize our paper as an emerging idea. Our study borrows from the framework of social design experiments (Gutiérrez & Vossoughi, 2010) to capture moment-to-moment and iterative decisions that help researchers design towards equity (Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016).

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, institutions globally have experienced financial and human loss while revealing ingenious risk-taking at an unprecedented rate (Blumenstyk, 2020). From admission requirements to instructional modalities, institutional survival instincts continue to drive the collective dismantling of practices deemed obsolete in today's context. However, a longstanding culture of academic cynicism toward inclusive pedagogy and professional development in graduate preparation, faculty socialization, and faculty development remain subjacent to the current state of affairs. Furthermore, the

structural inequities highlighted by the fluidity and uncertainty of the current context challenge academia's normative conceptualization of the classroom as a culturally neutral intellectual space (Ambrose et al., 2010). Perhaps now more than ever, the professoriate's very relevance and survival hinge on how well it espouses pedagogical competencies that meet the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical demands inherent to teaching and learning. This shift will require ~~the~~ faculty members to recognize dynamic aspects of organizational culture that are shaped by individuals' interactions with the historical and symbolic aspects of their organizations. Because institutional culture is shaped as people understand and adopt the shared assumptions of other members of the community (Tierney, 1988), new attitudes toward graduate student preparation and faculty socialization will need to develop if higher education institutions choose to apply lessons learned from COVID-19 and better prepare for future operational tectonic shifts. The pandemic revealed how traditional values for research and the production of new knowledge need to be reimagined in new cultural practices. As such, a new imperative to re-center the worth of humanizing approaches to professional development and pedagogy remains a necessary condition to meet challenging crises in real-time while maintaining the educational promise of higher education.

As institutions justify their educational value in the face of a rapidly changing landscape, so too must they account for normative graduate student preparation and academic training, faculty socialization, and faculty development practices that do not meet the challenges brought forth by the COVID-19 pandemic and compounding crises. The success of many institutions hinges on how well-prepared institutional cultures are to embody inclusion and meet higher education's public purposes. In a time that requires extensive interdisciplinary collaboration, we aim to support institutions struggling to navigate these uncertain times by providing an inside view of DU's approach to these three areas.

## **Literature Review**

Higher education, as a field, has typically prioritized empirical research and knowledge production over other forms of scholarship, and this emphasis is exhibited in graduate preparation, faculty socialization, and faculty development. In this literature review, we will explore how

normative graduate student preparation and academic training, faculty socialization, and faculty development create an institutional culture that is not always grounded in inclusivity or aimed at higher education's public purposes. Exploding faculty workload during the pandemic suggest that normative institutional cultures inadequately prepare faculty to address large-scale crises, and many institutions are grappling with ways to support faculty about documenting that change (i.e., Misra, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic and compounding crises reveal fissures in academia's anchoring to today's most pressing issues. Moreover, although inequities and racial trauma have always existed, online transitions revealed and exacerbated oppression in a way many faculty had not previously experienced (see Fain, 2020; Mickey et al., 2020; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2020).

### **Graduate Training**

Traditionally, doctoral education has emphasized research in support of higher education's mission to discover and produce new knowledge (Austin & McDaniels, 2006). Scholars have raised questions about the adequacy and appropriateness of graduate program preparation for the professoriate, as the doctoral experience is the first stage of the academic career. As Austin (2002) notes, doctoral education is the first step in the "socialization for the professoriate" (p.95). She further states:

Three perspectives on graduate school as a socialization process are important: (a) the way the socialization process occurs in graduate school; (b) the conceptions that graduate students develop about the academic career and faculty role; and (c) the students' responses to and suggestions concerning graduate education as a socialization process. (p. 97)

Institutions of higher education rarely offer systematic professional development opportunities in teaching as well as information and guidance about other faculty responsibilities outside of research. Graduate student conceptions of doctoral education highlight mixed messaging about research and teaching priorities for faculty (Austin, 2002). Research productivity is perceived as more important than teaching in graduate study (Austin & McDaniels, 2006) despite the fact that only about 4% of U.S. colleges and universities are designated "R1" (Ross Manzo & Mitchell, 2018). This emphasis on research as separate

from teaching influences how graduate students view the professoriate. Worse yet, it fails to prepare future faculty members so they can meet the pedagogical demands of a prolonged crisis such as COVID-19, where rapid shifts in teaching modality, student support, and community building prove challenging for most institutions.

Many students are interested in academic careers in order to make a difference in their communities. Yet, there are many barriers to community engagement inherent to higher education norms that prioritize research over all other institutional goals (O'Meara & Jaeger, 2019). With a smaller availability of funding and prestige with community work, students are less likely to pursue the scholarship of engagement (O'Meara & Jaeger, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted funding streams and community engagement opportunities, revealing the need to re-think institutional practices in these areas.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the need for future faculty to be prepared for work and responsibilities beyond research. Lucas et al. (2019) identified success factors for teaching professional development opportunities for graduate students, citing the need to prepare future faculty for modern roles and responsibilities of the professoriate. In the study, the researchers examined eight institutions that are members of the Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning (CIRTL) to investigate what institutions must consider to develop and sustain a teaching professional development program for graduate students. Factors found to enhance graduate student development in teaching include (a) campus culture around teaching and learning, (b) placement of the program within the organization, (c) program leadership, (d) program logistics, and (e) knowledge and resource benefits of membership in a network like CIRTL (Lucas et al., 2019).

Despite efforts to broaden graduate training, doctoral education has largely remained focused on preparing future researchers. Efforts to broaden the aims of graduate education remain mostly at the margins. Moreover, once these students join the academy as faculty, socialization experiences may vary widely and prove more challenging for some in comparison to others.

## Faculty Socialization

New faculty are not typically welcomed, prepared, and socialized to enter the professoriate and academic cultures, leading to other faculty challenges in the future (Scott et al., 2016; Tierney, 1997). This is particularly the case when it comes to faculty of color (Delgado-Romero et al., 2007). Faculty “socialization is of fundamental importance with regard to many of the most pressing issues that confront academic administrators and faculty” (Tierney, 1997, p. 1). While written over twenty years ago, this sentiment still rings true. One critique of faculty hiring is that top-ranked programs hire their own students or from other top-ranked programs, thus reifying certain academic cultures (Fabianic, 2011; Freeman & Diramio, 2016). When the academic culture focuses solely on the contributions of research and focuses on top-tier institutions, many other aspects of culture are not cultivated.

Because of the emphasis on graduate school research, faculty often have unrealistic expectations and are unprepared for their faculty roles (Murray, 2008). New faculty report frustration with increased teaching loads – not necessarily because they resent teaching or are not committed to teaching. Rather, the transition to an increased teaching load puts a strain on their time for other activities, requires course design and teaching skills they were not as adept in nor had developmental support for, and new faculty feel pressured to prioritize research because that is how they will eventually get tenure (Murray, 2008). An average of 10% of doctoral graduates find positions at a research university, which means the other 90% of faculty's socialization to community colleges, regional comprehensive institutions, or private universities is important to consider for the profession (Murray, 2008). As COVID-19 continues, so does the strain on faculty members juggling administrative, teaching, and caretaking/parenting roles that compound in the face of individual and community trauma. The normative academic emphasis on research has omitted critical professional development in the professoriate's whole-self and wellbeing.

Research examining factors that promote success of early career faculty reflect the notion that there is continued mixed messaging about the relative weight of teaching and research. Stupnisky, Weaver-Hightower, and Kartoshkina (2015) used a mixed methods approach to understanding factors that promote early career success. The themes that

emerged included expectations, collegiality, balance, and location. They noted unclear expectations were a frequently mentioned problem with one respondent identifying a mismatch between the stated expectations of the role and reality of evaluation pressures: “‘60% is supposed to be teaching... it doesn’t help [in evaluations], but it can hurt. And so 30% is supposed to be research ... yet that is all they seem to care about’” (Stupinsky et al., 2015, p. 375). The unfolding COVID-19 pandemic challenges this notion through the experiences of faculty members who have recognized they were ill-equipped to transition to an online setting and thus began to worry about student evaluations in courses where student engagement and communication proved inadequate.

Additionally, very little focus has been placed on the unique experiences of faculty of color navigating entrance into the academy. For faculty of color, balancing competing obligations of research, teaching, and service can be even more challenging due to the imbalance in service demands (see Domingo et al., 2020) combined with marginalization of scholarly contributions (Cole et al., 2017). One common tool for faculty socialization is the existence of faculty mentoring programs (Zellers et al., 2008). In a systematic literature review of faculty mentoring, Houston (2019) found that mentoring takes many forms (i.e., formal, informal, ad-hoc, and online mentoring) and is critical to the career development and retention of new faculty members. There are many positives associated with mentoring including the correlation between the mentoring relationship and job satisfaction, wherein the higher the rated quality of the relationship, the greater job satisfaction reported (Lunsford et al., 2018). Indeed, mentoring is a critical component for supporting the experiences of faculty of color entering the academy. This is especially true at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) (Diggs et al., 2009) and may contribute to increased retention (Singh & Stoloff, 2003). Yet the research on mentoring for faculty remains “relatively shallow” (Zellers et al., 2008, p. 582). While mentoring is a prolific practice in higher education, more robust exploration is needed to understand faculty mentoring programs and the socialization of new faculty (Zellers et al., 2008) to academic cultures and the work of the faculty. Furthermore, research into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on minoritized faculty members is paramount to reveal the short and long-term implications of exacerbated racial battle fatigue, individual and community trauma, and racial taxation during the unfolding crisis.

## Faculty Development and Inclusive Pedagogy

Academic culture places more priority on research as exhibited by artifacts like promotion and tenure standards, resources for research support, and faculty work norms. However, institutions can support and enhance teaching through faculty development. In fact, faculty development has been referred to as a “fourth leg” that can add stability to the “three-legged stool” of academia (i.e., teaching, research, service; Altany, 2012). Though teaching is a critical component of the faculty role, it is often only after faculty have been hired and welcomed to campus that teaching becomes a priority and faculty are provided with additional training and support. This faculty development most likely occurs through a Center or Office for Teaching and Learning (CTL). These centers, while valuable, are not always enough to create a culture that supports teaching. Not to mention that while continuing education is required in many professional arenas (e.g., law, medicine, counseling, and K-12 education), ongoing professional development in teaching practice is not required in higher education and is often not part of the reward structure. Mitten & Ross (2018) identified three areas of challenges to sustain a commitment to teaching at a research institution. The challenges include university structures (faculty evaluations, availability of resources, e.g., teaching assistants); university values (how the institution recognizes teaching); and student factors (generational differences in technology and student interest in the material) (Mitten & Ross, 2018).

Meanwhile, the national racial reckoning experienced throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and demographic shifts in higher education have made diversity and cultural-competency agendas a priority in institutions and for professional development. Yet, faculty are not broadly socialized nor supported to address these issues in their teaching practices (Quaye et al., 2007). Institutions must develop procedures to implement and sustain a plan towards inclusive pedagogy that should permeate every aspect of curriculum and course design, classroom management, and assessment of teaching and learning (Iturbe-LaGrave, 2020). Inclusive pedagogy is critical to meeting growing demands for dismantling gross inequities within and beyond higher education. At its core, “[inclusive] pedagogy requires that educators embrace their students as whole human beings consisting of mind, body, and soul and create interactive and

dynamic classroom environments that inspire deep and meaningful transformational learning" (Tuitt et al., 2016, p. 218).

While not new, this humanizing pedagogy is more relevant than ever as the current context requires that

[...] faculty reimagine their teaching and dismantle oppressive practices that have hindered the academic success of historically underrepresented students in American Higher Education. It is an approach to teaching that requires us to recognize, assess, and respond to microaggressions; to co-construct knowledge, community agreements, and curricula through which every student's experiences in the world are validated and seen. (Iturbe-LaGrave, 2020 para. 2)

Because inclusive pedagogy is often politicized and misunderstood as "teaching about diversity, equity, and inclusion," the main challenge to embracing this humanizing pedagogy remains structural. For example, is inclusive pedagogy a central component of institutional strategic planning? Does it permeate faculty onboarding initiatives and departmental expectations? Is it an anchoring principle in graduate and professional student professional development? Last but not least is a recognition that this humanizing pedagogy depends on faculty members' intersecting social identities, positionalities, and personal preferences around curricular design, classroom management, and assessment. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to inclusive pedagogy, rendering the role of teaching and learning centers critical in its adoption and sustainability on campus.

Kruse et al. (2018) highlight the characteristics necessary for implementing and sustaining a culture that supports inclusive pedagogy and supporting diverse students. The characteristics needed for this work are attention to shared knowledge, professional learning at all levels of the organization, inclusive instructional methods, integration with other campus initiatives, and inclusivity of diversity foci (Kruse et al., 2018). Some of the necessary conditions to support the development of these characteristics are time, communication, a climate of trust and openness to improvement and learning, supportive leadership, and access to

expertise designed to support individual and organizational learning (Kruse et al., 2018).

In summary, higher education and academia have prized research over the other institutional missions of teaching, learning, and community engagement. As a result, graduate student training, faculty socialization, and mentoring and development are mostly geared toward research. Faculty are not systematically trained in ways to support students, create community, or respond to crises, which can leave faculty unprepared to deal with today's realities of the twin pandemics of racial injustice and COVID-19. Institutions must prioritize professional development around inequities in proctoring technologies; revised university grading options; support for faculty members under duress; support for faculty members teaching contentious and/or controversial topics; and learning communities for minoritized faculty experiencing racial battle fatigue, racial taxation, and microaggressions in online environments.

### **Organizational and Academic Culture**

Many scholars have discussed, emphasized, and examined organizational culture for colleges and universities and how culture affects policies, programs, and the operations of an institution (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Hartley, 2002; Kezar & Maxey, 2016; Schein, 1992). Organizational culture can be defined in many ways. Schein (1992) defines culture as a way to make meaning for people within an organization and explains that culture is:

a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems (p. 12).

Culture shapes the way individuals understand the organization, including imparting its shared understandings, values, and beliefs (Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Schein, 2004). While artifacts and espoused beliefs (e.g., the mission statement) are important for understanding an organization, it is also important to explore an institution's "basic underlying assumptions," which are held at a deep and often unconscious level by members of a group (Schein, 2004). Thus, organizational culture is not

fixed – it is dynamic and shaped by individuals’ interactions with the historical and symbolic aspects of an organization. Institutional culture is also shaped as people understand and adopt the shared assumptions of other members of the community (Tierney, 1988), which relates to both graduate student preparation and faculty socialization. When viewing the professoriate's culture, it is clear that the espoused values and artifacts for faculty center on research and the production of new knowledge while relegating pedagogy and inclusion as add-ons not often recognized or rewarded in tenure and promotion protocols.

### **Theoretical Framework**

To navigate the national landscape of teaching and learning during the convergence of multiple pandemics—COVID-19 and racial reckonings—we argue that a critical analysis of institutional culture is necessary. From the fields of learning sciences and organizational psychology, we leverage cultural historical activity theory (Cole, 1998; Gildersleeve, 2010) to examine how the DU re-organized its infrastructure and policies to improve teaching and learning within the context of these pandemics. More specifically, we explore how DU’s culture created entry points for faculty to gain exposure to and confidence in their ability to enact inclusive teaching practices.

Cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) operationalizes culture through a suite of six multi-voiced, multi-dimensional, and overlapping elements (Cole, 1998; Gildersleeve, 2010). First, we position faculty as the subject, or the main population of interest, in our study. Second, we frame the object as the goal, which is for faculty to grow in their identities as teacher-scholars and their fluency of inclusive teaching practices so that our students continue to engage in robust learning. Third, the subject and the object build relationships through artifacts, which are programs and initiatives that support graduate student training, faculty socialization, and faculty development, so the institution can move toward our mission of strengthening their equity-minded pedagogies. Fourth, we are mindful of rules, explicit policies, and implicit norms through which institutions operate. Fifth, the division of labor reveals who carries out what responsibilities and the rationale for such. CHAT is a praxis-oriented framework that defines and analyzes culture through concrete aspects of institutional infrastructure.

At the same time we analyze institutional culture as the basis for our paper, we want to acknowledge the broader national and political milieu through which our university specifically and higher education institutions generally function. The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed and shaped higher education including funding, the role of the professoriate, enrollment, alumni donations, and federal and state policy, thus creating an instability not experienced before by the sector. The wavelength of fear is ubiquitous, ranging from fear of losing money to fear of losing students, losing jobs, and losing face. We argue that naming context is an important tool to help researchers and scholars understand the interactions between overlapping contexts which shape how we teach, learn, and grow. As institutions of higher education confront this reality, a focus on inclusive pedagogy should remain a discrete characteristic of how teaching and learning are conducted in a way that recognizes the wealth of diversity inherent to an educational experience that advances democracy, centers the greater good, and allows students to demonstrate civil and collegial discourse across difference of thought and opinion.

In summary, this literature review draws on the valence of postsecondary education scholarship to describe how graduate training, faculty socialization, faculty development, and inclusive pedagogy co-construct academic culture. The following section describes how we use CHAT as a platform to project and understand the culture of teaching, which has necessarily evolved in response to dynamic local and national contexts.

## Methods

The following research question guides our paper: How did the culture of teaching at DU's shift in 2020? We use CHAT to show how DU's institutional culture transformed from in-person to virtual teaching and learning within the context of COVID-19. Given that DU, like many institutions across the country, is still educating in the time of COVID-19, we categorize our paper as an emerging idea. We look to the framework of social design experiments (Gutiérrez & Vossoughi, 2010) to honor the fluid and perpetually shifting disposition and journey of designing towards equity (Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016).

We draw on the concept of design narratives (Hoadley, 2002) to articulate how the university "systematically adapted our designs during

a period of social upheaval and political change” (Jurow & Freeman, 2020, p. 6). Our design narrative uses a three-layered approach from conjecture mapping (Sandoval, 2014, as cited in Jurow & Freeman, 2020) to address these important plot points. First, we discuss theories which inform how the institution believes cultural change will happen. Second, we describe how our aspirations will look once the cultural changes occur. Third, we evaluate the degree to which we are making progress toward our aspirations and identify what, if any, ongoing cultural shifts we need to consider now and for the future.

### **Data for the Design Narrative**

Our design narrative is composed from the following documents: job descriptions, program descriptions, email messages, announcements from DU leadership (i.e., Chancellor, Provost, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs), websites, and Learning Management System (LMS) data.

### **Positionality**

We played multiple and overlapping roles. Dr. Iturbe-LaGrave, a multilingual Latina administrator, is the director of inclusive teaching practices who leads initiatives to infuse inclusive teaching practices in all aspects of the university. Dr. Sponsler, a White, female American clinical assistant professor in the College of Education, also serves as a faculty fellow within the teaching and learning center and is charged with supporting faculty in teaching and professional roles. Dr. Paguyo, an Asian American female administrator, is the director of academic assessment who oversees assessment and accreditation efforts for over 120 undergraduate and graduate programs. Dr. Alvarez, a White, female American, is the director of the center for teaching and learning who leads the center’s team (directors, faculty developers, and instructional designers) and navigates the political topography to advocate for excellence in teaching. In her previous role as a tenured professor, she brings familiarity to the faculty life cycle and a commitment to robust teaching. Our work directly relates to faculty development and socialization and the adoption of inclusive teaching practices at both the institutional and classroom levels as a faculty member.

## Description of Study Site

DU is a research-institution located in the Mountain West with over 12,000 students (approximately 6,000 undergraduate students) and about 1,200 full-time faculty. Faculty include both tenured and tenure-track faculty and full-time non-tenure-track faculty called teaching and professional faculty (TPF). TPF make up about one quarter of full-time faculty, and their responsibilities center mainly on teaching and service, with limited emphasis on research. There are ten different colleges within the institution, and offerings range from the liberal arts and sciences to engineering, business, and international studies, as well as graduate and professional schools like education, law, and social work. The institutional mission is to be a “great private institution dedicated to the public good” and espouses a “teacher-scholar” model for faculty work.

## Findings

This section is divided by two distinct points in time of higher education during 2020: teaching culture before the COVID-19 era and teaching culture during the COVID-19 era. This distinction helps articulate what cultural shifts have since occurred and continue to unfold at DU even at the time of writing this manuscript. Within each timeframe—before COVID-19 and during COVID-19—we describe the teaching culture in terms of division of labor, artifacts, and rules as described in our use of CHAT.

### Academic Culture and Norms Pre-Covid-19 (Before March 2020)

**Division of Labor.** From the CHAT model, division of labor highlights what roles or responsibilities individuals take on within a cultural context. In the years before the pandemic, there was support for teaching and learning that was optional and partial rather than required, systematic, and pervasive. One way to understand institutionalization (Hartley et al., 2005) is to examine the structural supports for one’s mission and may include resources, personnel, and strategic planning. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the DU center for teaching and learning boasted a comprehensive suite of inclusive teaching practices programming. Stemming from a strategic commitment to Inclusive Excellence across all institutional learning environments, the CTL’s

approach is rooted in an understanding that inclusive teaching practices require educators to engage the wealth of intersecting social identities and positionalities that faculty and students bring to the classroom. University of Denver was well-positioned to catalyze the compounding crises of 2020 as it had increased structural supports for teaching and learning through the creation of three new pre-pandemic positions: the vice provost for faculty affairs (VPFA) who reports to the provost of the institution; one faculty fellow who facilitates learning communities; and the director of inclusive teaching practices who reports to the director of the office of teaching and learning. It is believed that the director of inclusive teaching practices is the first of its kind in the nation. The director of inclusive teaching practices provides proactive and responsive leadership, direction, and programming that advances DU's commitment to inclusive excellence and inclusive pedagogy. Furthermore, the director of inclusive teaching practices is charged with creating, implementing, and assessing strategic faculty development opportunities, online resources, and consultations for faculty members, academic administrators, academic departments, and allied offices (i.e., the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; the Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX; the Interdisciplinary Research Institute for the Study of (In)Equality; and the Faculty Senate). Additionally, the Faculty Senate has occasionally collaborated with the CTL through ad-hoc projects. These partnerships have been contingent upon whether the Faculty Senate president and the Academic Planning Committee lead want to address teaching as part of their governmental responsibilities.

**Artifacts of Ideology.** Artifacts are tools, programs, or initiatives that move organizations toward a goal. In this example, ideology is an artifact: If an institution's ideology values spirituality, for example, then the institution will likely refer to spirituality in artifacts that reflect their mission. University of Denver has an ideological commitment to inclusive excellence and teaching as exhibited by the "teacher-scholar" model which centers both teaching and research as the core components of faculty work. Historically, the scholar component of that mission has more often been recognized. For example, in 2019, there was the first Teaching Excellence Recognition dinner to recognize the top 8% of faculty for their teaching based on student evaluations. On the other hand, there has been a well-established Excellence in Research

dinner which honors the top researchers identified through grants and numbers of publications for many years.

However, in the past five years, there have been three ideological commitments to more robust and inclusive teaching practices. In 2015, the CTL hosted a faculty learning community that asked the deceptively simple question, “What kind of teaching do we aspire to at DU?” Four broad areas emerged to describe the type of teaching that faculty members aspire to enact: significant and impactful; learning-centered and active; inclusive and empathetic; and reflective and evidence-based (Arend & Pitts, 2016).

Also in 2015, the Faculty Senate at University of Denver developed and approved new Policies and Procedures Related to Faculty Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure which included the establishment of a Teaching and Professional Professorial Series. Faculty members under this newly established professorial series devote between 60% and 100% of their responsibilities to teaching and service, and between 0% and 20% to scholarship and creative activity. Faculty members receive renewable multi-year appointments and promotions under ranks of assistant, associate, and full professor. This process has required units to create guidelines and procedures related to promotion and specifically, how to emphasize teaching.

Finally, at the broadest institutional level, the university engaged in a collaborative effort to build a new strategic plan, DU IMPACT 2025. Among the strategic initiatives and objectives identified during this process were those related to faculty excellence, creating a culture of measurement and accountability, expanding professional development opportunities, and assessment for continual improvement. The strategic imperatives also highlighted inclusive teaching and the desire to cultivate an “exceptionally diverse, inclusive, equitable, and welcoming community” (University of Denver, n.d.).

Due to these unique circumstances at University of Denver—the attempt to create agreed-upon criteria for teaching, the establishment of new faculty lines focused primarily on teaching, and a strategic plan that recognizes the importance of our teaching mission as grounded in inclusivity—our institution is uniquely positioned to provide insights,

examples, and lessons learned regarding the development of a culture that supports more inclusive teaching practices.

**Artifacts of Faculty Development.** To support faculty in their professional development efforts, the CTL offered a suite of artifacts to interested faculty including faculty learning communities, opportunities for publishing through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), workshops, consultations, annual conferences about teaching and learning, teaching grants, a weeklong course design institute, and a two-year grant for DU to become a member of the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (NCFDD). Aside from the temporary NCFDD membership, there was no formal university-wide mentoring program although a few exist at the college level. New faculty could participate in a “Teaching at DU” self-paced course through the LMS. When the director of inclusive teaching practices first joined DU in 2016, she created a portfolio of inclusive teaching programs that was expanded and developed into several online, asynchronous, and open-access platforms in response to the COVID-19 modality challenges.

**Artifacts of Graduate Student Professional Development.** Graduate students received mentoring, support, and socialization mainly through their departments, colleges, and rarely at the institutional level. In other words, there was no centralized orientation, training, or targeted graduate student programming through the CTL. Center staff were available for workshops upon request.

**Rules.** It is important to note that artifacts related to faculty development and graduate student professional development were never required. The opportunities were optional and open to all faculty and adjunct faculty. Occasionally, department chairs and associate deans would recommend individual professors to engage with the CTL for remedial purposes, but these instances were never considered compulsory.

### **Academic Culture and Norms During Covid-19 (After March 2020)**

**Division of Labor.** The need to teach across modalities led to the creation of new roles embedded within the CTL and various academic departments to build capacity and ensure strategic alignment:

six instructional designers with one specifically dedicated to inclusive teaching practices; a new inclusive teaching practices postdoctoral research fellow to expand the bandwidth of the director of inclusive teaching practices; five new faculty fellows; and ten partners in pedagogy graduate student assistants.

**Artifact of Ideology.** The pandemic and national racial reckoning significantly shifted the ideological commitment of the institution to focus on inclusive teaching practices and professional development. Examples include the provost's and vice provost for faculty affairs' announcement of "\$2.2 million to support faculty teaching" (personal communication, August 11, 2020), and the historic announcement of the Faculty Institute for Inclusive Teaching (FIIT) requirement released by the University Chancellor:

The rollout of the Institute, created by [DU's] own experts ... will begin on Aug 18. FIIT consists of eight brief content modules, all of which are mandatory for all faculty to establish a baseline and build a shared language [...] FIIT marks an important moment of shared governance, inclusive approaches to curricula, and inclusive spaces for learning. Initiated jointly by the chancellor, provost, and Faculty Senate, FIIT will include tailored, [DU]-specific course material followed by optional follow-up opportunities for in-person engagement later in the year. (personal communication, August 5, 2020)

Further ideological commitment is evidenced through mandatory online trainings for faculty and staff including the EverFi modules "Preventing Harassment & Discrimination" and "Managing Bias", and a "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion" module designed for students.

**Artifacts of Faculty Development.** The CTL saw exponential growth in faculty development programming to meet the real-time pedagogical demands posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, racial reckonings, and political upheaval.

**Faculty Institute for Inclusive Teaching (FIIT).** Designed by the director of inclusive teaching practices in collaboration with a postdoctoral research fellow and the director of academic assessment, FIIT is an asynchronous, interactive, self-paced, online program on

inclusive teaching. This signature, comprehensive, online program was created in-house and received significant financial support from the university chancellor; the vice provost for faculty affairs (VPFA); and the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI). The institute consists of eight content modules. Each module explores a specific topic and provides a definition, content to advance understanding, pedagogical tools, and a critical self-reflection prompt. Modules include 1) “What is Inclusive Teaching?”; 2) “Creating an Inclusive Curriculum”; 3) “Identifying Inclusive Learning Outcomes”, 4) “Designing Inclusive Assessment and Evaluation”, 5) “Facilitating Inclusive Discussion and Group Processes, 6) “Responding to Bias and Microaggression”, 7) “Understanding Power, Privilege, and Oppression”; and 8) “Taking Care of Self and Community.” FIIT boasts an 89% completion rate, with 1,251 total enrolled learners as of October 2020 (University of Denver, 2020b).

**Inclusive Teaching Practices Website.** Stemming from an internal LMS course titled “Inclusive Teaching Practices Portal” which had a total of 370 participating faculty, the institution committed significant support to expand this resource into an open-access website (University of Denver, 2020b). Designed by the director of inclusive teaching practices in collaboration with campus partners, this website aims to support educators in creating dynamic courses, removing barriers to learning, and dismantling oppressive practices by implementing inclusive pedagogies. Here, educators can explore critical diversity considerations that shape higher education in real-time, read academic articles, visit suggested websites, and watch recommended TED talks and videos. Website analytics show a cumulative 5,824 unique visitors and 7,172 pageviews since launching on June 1, 2020; a significant increase from when the content was internally managed in the institutional LMS (University of Denver, 2020b).

**Faculty Fellows.** The center for teaching and learning sought faculty partners to help advance inclusive pedagogy, scholarship of teaching and learning, and mentoring work. Applications were solicited for five positions: faculty fellow of partners in pedagogy program (P3), faculty fellow of equitable professorial experiences, faculty fellow of scholarship of teaching and learning, faculty fellow for teaching and

professional faculty, and peer teaching mentor leader. Each position includes an honorarium and some also include a course buy-out.

**Teaching Excellence Task Force.** The pandemic created a fertile ground for the proposal to Faculty Senate and subsequent approval to form the Teaching Excellence Task Force. This committee is charged with examining models of quantifying and demonstrating teaching excellence beyond student evaluations of teaching (SETs) which notoriously have a differential negative impact on women and faculty of color (Misra et al., 2021).

### **Artifacts of Graduate Student Development**

**Partners in Pedagogy Program (P3) for Graduate Teaching Assistants.** Designed by the director of inclusive teaching practices, the former director of the scholarship of teaching and learning, and the director of the office of teaching and learning, this program prepares and supports ten graduate students in instructional support roles in various academic departments while also advancing their professional identity, academic management, and academic leadership skills. These graduate teaching assistants are charged with providing faculty support, providing technical support, and implementing fundamental tenets of inclusive pedagogy. They are paired with faculty based on three criteria: (a) faculty teaching contentious and controversial topics, (b) faculty teaching large courses, and (c) faculty under duress. Graduate students in this program meet the faculty's need for real-time pedagogical support during COVID-19. Graduate teaching assistants must complete the "Foundations in Teaching and Learning" Canvas course and the Faculty Institute for Inclusive Teaching (FIIT) to develop a robust foundation in best practices in teaching, learning, and inclusive praxis. They are overseen and mentored by one faculty fellow.

**Foundations of Teaching and Learning Online Course for Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs).** Designed by the director of inclusive teaching and former director of the scholarship of teaching and learning, this is an asynchronous, self-paced, online course. The course introduces GTAs to resources and provides an overview of the latest best practices in higher education pedagogy and educational technology. GTAs have access to self-paced materials through the university's LMS. The course is divided into eight content modules: 1) "Developing Your

Professional Identity”, 2) “Being Tech Ready”, 3) “Being an Inclusive Educator”, 4) “Understanding Assessment and Evaluation”, 5) “Interacting With Students”, 6) “Balancing School and Teaching Support”, 7) “Foundations of Evaluation”, and 8) “DU Policies”. To date, the completion rate is at 95% among the 113 GTAs enrolled in the course.

**Rules.** In August 2020, the chancellor made a historic announcement formally requiring all faculty to complete the DU Faculty Institute for Inclusive Teaching (FIIT) by the first day of the academic quarter. While continuing to offer its pre-COVID-19 suite of available programs, the Faculty Institute for Inclusive Teaching (FIIT) became the first formally required CTL course in DU’s history. The institutional leadership at DU made difficult decisions relating to budget and finance for the academic year 2020-2021 including layoffs and cuts across the institution. At the same time, DU committed \$2.2 million dollars to support expert teaching in a complex time, further bolstering its commitment to inclusive pedagogies.

## Discussion

In our findings, we used CHAT to operationalize changes in the culture of teaching at DU when comparing the pre-COVID-19 era to the current chapter of education during COVID-19. To conceptualize these changes, we turn our attention back to three landmarks in design narrative: theory of change, aspirations, and critical reflections (Jurow & Freeman, 2020).

First, our theory of change is rooted in the notion that cultural transformations occur when there are shifts in one or more elements of CHAT; specifically, in our paper, we see cultural changes within division of labor, artifacts, and rules. Division of labor changed when DU hired seven new OTL employees and created five new faculty fellow positions to amplify the mission of teaching. Artifacts changed when the ideology of DU grew in its explicit commitment to inclusion and the development of new professional development initiatives for faculty and graduate students. Rules changed when institutional leadership dedicated millions of dollars to teaching initiatives and mandated faculty participation in FIIT.

Figure 1

*Culture of Teaching Pre-COVID-19*

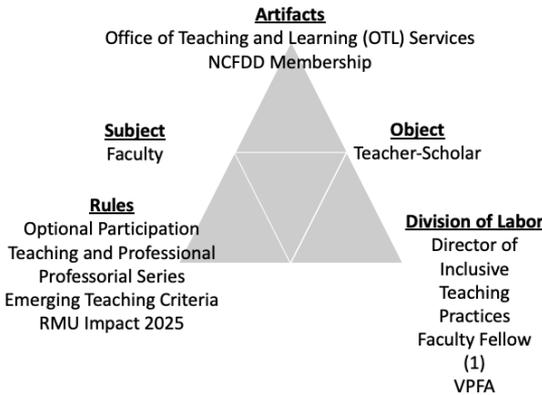
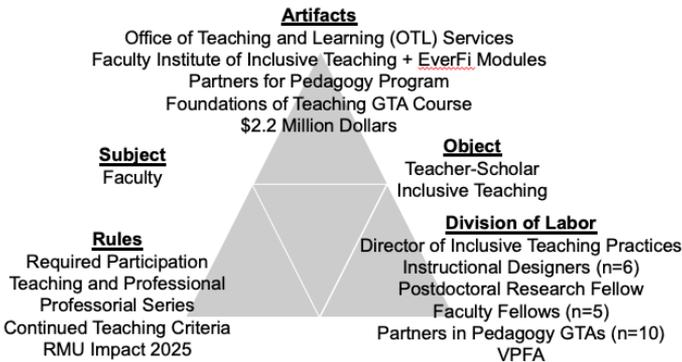


Figure 2

*Culture of Teaching During COVID-19*



Second, our post-pandemic aspirations grow from our theory of change. Once each element of culture develops from possibility to reality, the teacher-scholar model and equity-minded practices will be fully realized in action. We re-imagine the university culture as one where all faculty, regardless of academic background, will embrace inclusive teaching as a moral imperative for the profession; where appointment, tenure, and promotion guidelines will reward teaching efforts as much as discipline-specific journal impact factors; and where ample support will continue to exist for faculty to engage in reflective teaching practices. In this expansive vision of what could be, we see teaching excellence and inclusion as central to the very fabric of DU.

Third, our critical self-reflections allow us to scaffold the gap between our aspirations and our current location within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic's far-reaching impact. Arguably, DU can continue moving the needle toward equity if institutional leadership engages in ongoing investments and intentional designs to bolster the culture of teaching. In this model, the onus of responsibility falls on administrative leadership to prioritize faculty development; cultivate and earn trust of the university community through clear and transparent communications; and demonstrate its commitment to a strong teaching culture through ongoing support of teaching and learning expertise to be shared for faculty learning and organizational learning (Kruse et al., 2018).

Based upon these emergent findings, we share three recommendations for consideration in the praxis of teaching and learning in the post-pandemic academy. First, if postsecondary education institutions value teaching as a profession, then the value for teaching must be reflected in policy and infrastructural shifts. This transpired at University of Denver when all faculty were required to participate in the Faculty Institute for Inclusive Training (change in rules) and when the university offered a suite of new interventions to support faculty and build community (change in artifacts and division of labor). Second, if higher education values inclusion in principle and in practice, then inclusion must be enacted as a moral imperative throughout all dimensions of an institution, from the macro-level across an entire university to the micro-level throughout a classroom. Third, administrators and educators must understand the conditions under which DEI initiatives can flourish. Copying DEI initiatives from DU and pasting into a different

institutional context, for example, is not the same as copying and pasting text from a Word document to an Excel spreadsheet. The ability for DEI initiatives to flourish will depend upon the willingness of institutions to engage in learning at multiple scales—micro, meso, and macro—in relation to specific CHAT elements of an institutional context, how these variables interact with one another, and how to design environments where everybody can learn from and with each other, regardless of their roles and positionalities.

## Conclusion

In moving forward toward an uncertain future marked by the multiple pandemics of 2020-21, higher education institutions must restructure and scale-up graduate training, faculty socialization, and faculty development that is anchored in inclusive and humanizing pedagogies. The impact exposed by the current crises has revealed higher education's systemic weaknesses in ways we can no longer afford to ignore: neoliberalism; tuition-dependent revenue streams; and the lack of pedagogical, instructional design, and technological training for faculty. Critical to institutional survival is the need to provide future faculty with the pedagogical tools necessary for inclusive, engaging, and relevant multimodal teaching responsive to today's environment and diverse student needs. Institutions must actively address their faculty's proficiencies in curricular and course design, classroom management across modalities, formative and summative assessment, and educational technology. The toll of these structural, practical, and ideological gaps surrounding faculty development will continue to rise as faculty experience increased stress, taxation, and fatigue in inequitable ways, and students forego enrollment altogether after unjustifiably costly and inadequate learning experiences. The collective grievances experienced during the rush to get spring 2020 courses online will be replayed through sustained struggles with online classroom management, student engagement, toxic online discussions and chats, privacy concerns, and reactive policies and codes of conduct that attempt, but fail, to sustainably address the needs of an ill-equipped and exhausted professoriate that was socialized to focus on scholarship and not supported in developing the skill-sets required for 21st-century teaching.

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