

# Leadership Excellence and Gender in Organizations

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## Leading change in higher education: Reflections on designing diversity and inclusion learning experiences

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Diversity and inclusion pose great challenges and opportunities for institutions of higher education today. Using a single-case study approach, we explicate the procedures, decision criteria, expertise, and commitments needed for the multi-year diversity certification (DC) endeavor at a public research-intensive university. DC design builds on research insights into the necessity for diversity and inclusion efforts and best practices to achieve more productive, inclusionary, and respectful cultures attuned to changing U.S. demographic trends and debates. DC also provides space for users' critical reflections about *how* they—in their capacities as faculty, staff, administrators, postdocs, and/or graduate teaching/research assistants—might engage more mindfully in everyday interactions with others who are different from them and *how* power, privilege, and exclusion might result despite best intentions. To achieve our aims, we use human-centered design to develop evidence-based yet scripted modules that personally connect to and provide applications for users. Guided by theories on tension and online instructional design, we explicate three main tensions underlie DC design processes: (a) tensions inherent to design processes of online learning experiences aimed at behavioral and institutional change, (b) tensions emerging from designing a learning experience for users with diverse needs, interests, and perspectives, (c) tensions in negotiating different expertise and levels of commitment during design. Theoretical and practical implications of educational design for diversity and inclusivity are presented.