

DiversityEdu Sparks “Intentional Conversation” About Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Cal Poly



INDUSTRY
Higher Education

REACH
21,000+ Students

ABOUT CAL POLY

Known for its emphasis on “learning by doing,” **California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly)** combines **technical and professional curricula with the arts and humanities to give students a wide breadth of hands-on experience**. Thanks to the university’s investment in robust diversity and inclusion initiatives, Cal Poly doubled the number of applications from students with marginalized identities between 2008 and 2018.

VISION AND CHALLENGE

When Jamie Patton joined Cal Poly in 2017 as the new assistant vice president for Student Affairs, Diversity and Inclusion, the campus climate was “chilly and hostile” when it came to issues of identity and marginalization. While students had access to “many of the traditional [diversity and inclusion] operations,” such as a multicultural center and a mandatory course, **Patton and his team recognized the need to foster an “intentional conversation about diversity, equity, and inclusion” on campus.**

With just shy of 22,000 students spread across a 9,000-acre campus, Patton knew the university needed to:

- **get everybody on the same page** when it came to diversity and inclusion;
- **reach a large number of students** in a short period of time; and
- find a diversity and inclusion framework that could become **the standard across the whole school.**

WHY DIVERSITYEDU?

- **Flexibility.** Cal Poly could customize the course to their students’ needs.
- **Expansive reach.** Patton’s team was able to engage students quickly at all levels of their education.



I can’t say enough about the work of the team. I appreciate the trust and the relationship that we had to build in a short amount of time.

Jamie Patton
Associate Vice President for Student Affairs,
Diversity and Inclusion



- **Setting a baseline of knowledge.** Patton’s hope was that DiversityEdu would help the university “begin the conversation about diversity and inclusion with new members of...[the] student body prior to their arrival in taking classes.”

IMPLEMENTING DIVERSITYEDU

In Patton’s opinion, “the launch went very smoothly,” thanks in part to DiversityEdu’s responsiveness and consistent communication between the two teams. The university was

- prepared to launch DiversityEdu;
- equipped to respond to course taker feedback during rollout; and
- able to make DiversityEdu part of the university’s Week of Welcome, or first-year orientation.

OUTCOMES OF DIVERSITYEDU

- **Access to the language and skills** to begin discussing topics that “aren’t talked about over kitchen tables, or in the curriculum in schools”
- **Consistent opportunities to learn** via the follow-on activities featured in the [DiversityEdu Facilitator’s Guides](#)
- **Deeper dives into conversations** between students and Patton and his team

NEXT STEPS

Thanks to the baseline of knowledge and skills introduced by DiversityEdu, the Cal Poly team is ready to reach new depths in student learning about growing inclusion. Next steps include:

- **more small-group discussions** about “oppression and the cycle of oppression—all those different concepts that are touched on throughout the 60-minute [DiversityEdu] module”;
- **extending the course** to resident advisors to deepen their connection to first-year students; and
- **continuing to work with DiversityEdu** to customize the course to Cal Poly’s evolving needs.

DiversityEdu is a woman-owned company with a team that is committed to building diversity competence and inclusive culture in corporate entities and educational institutions of all kinds and sizes.

For more information, demos, and partnership opportunities, please email Kate Chovanetz at kate@diversityedu.com.

