

# SUMMER LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

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2023-24  
KEY TAKEAWAYS



Office for Institutional  
Diversity and Inclusion  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

# Leading in Difficult Times: Sustaining Hope Through Stacking Crises

**FACILITATORS:** Jade Richards and Patti Stewart

**IN TODAY'S EVER-CHANGING LANDSCAPE,** leaders face an array of crises, requiring them to navigate unprecedented scenarios with resilience and determination. From the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic to the tragic reality of mass shootings, higher education leaders find themselves operating within a new normal characterized by constant adversity. The points below address key points in navigating stacking crises, while sustaining hope and advancing a culture of inclusivity.

## KEY POINTS

- Exhibit calmness with clear communication and commitment to the cause and empathy.
- Being deliberate and calm in communication can backfire if it does not match the feelings of those most impacted, leading to feelings of disconnection.
- Appropriate transparency and the ability to communicate, being honest and respecting boundaries.
- Adaptability to have different conversations and be able to pivot. Leading from the front, leaders are also leading by example.
- Being vulnerable, communicating that being affected can happen to anyone.
- Leaders can experience trauma too, being mindful that we can also be impacted.
- Need to listen to others, how can we be collective and make decisions together, hearing from a range of perspectives.
- Empathy – being empathetic when listening.
- Authenticity – recognizing in a moment of crisis we may not have all the facts, have the humility and ability to know what we don't know.
- Remaining curious and allowing for humility and compassion.
- We spend time reacting, instead of thoughtfully being proactive.
  - How do we take action?
  - Consider different perspectives around us; take it into account.
  - Practice it, have a crisis team, bring them into conversation using active listening.
- People process differently, in their own timelines.
- People may live with compounding experiences.
  - More than one experience of crisis (extended).
  - Changing perspective as a leader.

## HOW WE MOVE FORWARD

- Modeling behavior, setting tone and using your influence.
- Owning mistakes.

- Creating safe spaces for conversations.
- We may have unintended consequences.
- We may need to change directions.
- As a leader show what you don't know.
- Public can be more receptive.
- See people as human, leaders and employees.
- Working toward information to be shared.

## SHARING WHERE WE MAY BE IN THE PROCESS

- Opportunities to connect, collaborate, take learning and bring them back.
- Self-care (flight example, put on your safety mask first before helping others).
- Know your resources.

## SOLUTION AND STRATEGY-FOCUSED QUESTIONS

1. How do we lead with kindness and civility during difficult times?
2. How can we use a broader perspective when considering action in times of crisis? How can we take into account the broad range of identities our community has?
3. What strategies are helpful when prioritizing care and addressing harm?
4. How do we identify gaps at an interpersonal level?
5. How do we identify gaps at an institutional level?
6. How do we identify gaps at a structural level?
7. What trauma informed practices do you find most helpful as a leader and as a community member?
8. Which circumstances can we control, which can we not control? What is our responsibility given this?
9. What strategies have been helpful for you?
10. What resources can we lean on as leaders and community members?

## RESOURCES

- AAUW Getting Started with Difficult Conversations: <https://www.aauw.org/resources/member/governance-tools/dei-toolkit/difficult-conversations/>
- KornFerry Institute Guide: [https://www.kornferry.com/content/dam/kornferry/docs/pdfs/KFI\\_Leading%20in%20a%20Crisis.May14.pdf](https://www.kornferry.com/content/dam/kornferry/docs/pdfs/KFI_Leading%20in%20a%20Crisis.May14.pdf)
- Leading In Times Of Crisis (Article highlighting important characteristics): <https://www.forbes.com/sites/joyceearussell/2020/07/26/leading-in-times-of-crisis/?sh=463f33e96ed2>
- Standards of Professional Practice from NADOHE: [https://nadohe.memberclicks.net/assets/2020SPPI/\\_NADOHE%20SPP2.0\\_200131\\_FinalFormatted.pdf](https://nadohe.memberclicks.net/assets/2020SPPI/_NADOHE%20SPP2.0_200131_FinalFormatted.pdf)
- Berkely Public Health Leadership Toolkit: <https://publichealth.berkeley.edu/student-life/career-and-leadership-development/toolkit/>
- SAMHSAToolkit: <https://www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/press-announcements/202012080500>

# Advancing DEI in a Politically Charged Landscape

**FACILITATORS:** Lynn Lammers and Matt Olovson

**A**DVANCING DEI IN A POLITICALLY CHARGED Landscape: DEI administrators in higher education face an uncertain political landscape in the upcoming election cycle, including supreme court rulings, censorship and direct targeting of DEI programs. How can MSU leaders coalesce around DEI to resist moving backwards? The key points below summarize identified strategies to navigate a hostile political environment and identify risk mitigation strategies.

## KEY POINTS

- In electing and appointing leaders, an Ubuntu philosophy should be an essential qualification. Where leaders recognize the dignity and worth of others, interconnected with their own, political polarization would dissipate and political actions would likely be more aligned with DEI values.
- Fear, isolation and disempowerment are the desired outcomes of political attacks on DEI. In response, we must work in solidarity and leverage the collective voice/power in continuing to do this critically important work.
- Though legislative and judicial actions can alter the path, our work persists because we recognize, as the research has always done, that diversity is critically important to the mission of higher education, that equitable and inclusive communities attract, retain and sustain critical masses of diversity, and that we must act with the fierce urgency of now to demonstrate that MSU is steadfast in its commitments and values.

## SOLUTION AND STRATEGY-FOCUSED QUESTIONS

- What external pushback do MSU leaders face in advancing DEI?
- What internal pushback do MSU leaders face in advancing DEI?
- How do we build solidarity among MSU leaders in advancing DEI?
- What kinds of personal and professional development are necessary to ground MSU leaders as they face pushback?
- What are the knowledge gaps leaders have regarding the current political landscape? What do MSU leaders need to better understand in order to give a full-throated defense of DEI values and programming?
- What are some risk mitigation strategies MSU leaders can employ to navigate the upcoming election cycle?

- How can MSU leaders build capacity for emotional resilience, psychological flexibility, and empathy? What mental health support is available to MSU leaders?

## BROAD CONSIDERATIONS

- With regard to political spectrum polarization, what social, communal, historic, and/or psychological factors contribute to political identity-based decision making and/or positioning?
- In a democratic republic, should elected and/or appointed officials represent the majority interests and if not, what responsibilities do these public servants have toward educating themselves and others about their efforts to serve the whole?
- How can MSU work to reduce political polarization and divisiveness, such that governmental leaders are held accountable to serving the public interest rather than party positions?

## IMPLICATIONS OF CURRENT JUDICIAL AND LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

- Following its determination that diversity in higher education is no longer a compelling educational interest justifying race-conscious practices, how should institutions of higher education proceed to cultivate and maintain the diversity demonstrated in the literature to provide significant educational value and critical institutional importance?
- With state legislators and other elective officials around the country creating prohibitions against diversity, equity, and inclusion work at colleges, universities, and other public entities, how has the national political landscape affected the MSU community and what, if anything, should MSU be doing to support our community and acknowledge the impacts that disinvestment in this work is likely to incur in our society?
- Following the U.S. Supreme Court's determination that a web designer may refuse services to members of the LGBTQIA+ community based upon the designers First Amendment right to free expression, how do you anticipate that the court's opinion that "the opportunity to think for ourselves and to express those thoughts freely is among our most cherished liberties and part of what keeps our Republic strong" may be used to justify divisiveness, hateful conduct, and/or exclusionary behaviors and how should efforts to promote inclusion, acknowledge individual freedoms in consideration for community wellbeing?

## RESOURCES

- <https://www.princeton.edu/news/2021/12/09/political-polarization-and-its-echo-chambers-surprising-new-cross-disciplinary>
- <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>

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## RESOURCES – continued

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- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7201237/>
- <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41317418>
- <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/01/18/what-happens-when-democracies-become-ferociously-polarized-pub-86190>
- <https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/slipopinion/22>
- What Counts as Discrimination on a College Campus?: <https://www.chronicle.com/article/a-crusade-to-end-reverse-discrimination>
- The Supreme Court’s Segregationists: <https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-supreme-courts-segregationists>
- Republican State Officials Threaten Legal Action Over Company Diversity Policies: <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/republican-state-officials-threaten-legal-action-over-company-diversity-policies-2023-07-13/>
- In Statehouses, Tenure was Bruised, but DEI was Walloped: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/faculty-issues/diversity-equity/2023/07/21/statehouses-tenure-was-bruised-dei-walloped>
- A Framework for Advancing Anti-Racism Strategy on Campus: <https://nadohe.memberclicks.net/assets/2023/NADOHE%20Anti-Racism%20Framework%20-%20Accessible.pdf>

## Navigating Bullying/ Toxic Work Environments

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**FACILITATORS:** Mina Shin and Vanessa Holmes

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### **WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF TOXIC** work cultures? How can leaders

proactively detect, address and prevent harm to the organizations by taking early actions? In this session, symptoms of toxic work culture were identified along with strategies, practices and solutions that support more inclusive work environments.

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### **SOLUTION AND STRATEGY-FOCUSED QUESTIONS AND KEY POINTS**

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#### **Q1: How would you define a toxic workplace in your own words?**

- A place where individuals cannot bring their full selves.
- A non-safe and threatening place.
- A place where people don’t have opportunities to be heard.
- Policies, processes that stifle individuals.
- Deconstruct what is considered norm, professionalism, related policies (could originate from white supremacy).

#### **Q2: What are the symptoms of toxic work cultures/environments? What are the specific cases you have experienced in your position?**

- Demoralization, lack of trust, gaslighting and abuse of power.
- People are forced to go through socialization and normalize it, even if that’s toxic.
- The culture is steeped with unwritten rules that people are expected to follow to achieve success.
- Feeling insecure and lacking competency.

#### **Q3: If you have experienced toxic work cultures before what could have been done differently or better?**

- Not being fearful of speaking truth.
- Demonstrating respect and holding others accountable.
- Working together to seek solutions.
- Set expectations, require people to take ownership and accountability.
- Not tolerating bullying, expecting people to take accountability for their words and actions.
- Holding the supervisor accountable for following up on toxic and bullying actions of employees.

#### **Q4: You recognize symptoms of toxic work cultures/environments in your unit. What specific proactive strategies and practices would you implement?**

- Leadership development.
- Being proactive – trust building before problem occurs.
- Providing mental health/stress reduction opportunities.
- Life-work balance: training and resources.
- Supervisors provide honest, productive reviews and individual development plans.
- Employees actively participate in evaluation and development processes.

#### **Q5: What are the resources you know of on campus that prevent toxic work cultures/environments? What resources are lacking? What do we need?**

##### **• RESOURCES AVAILABLE**

- o Misconduct hotline <https://misconduct.msu.edu/>
- o The Office for Civil Rights and Title IX Education and Compliance (OCR)
- o Office of Institutional Equity (OIE)
  - The Office for Civil Rights and Title IX Education and Compliance (OCR) <https://civilrights.msu.edu/>
  - <https://civilrights.msu.edu/response-and-investigations/index.html>
  - POE (Prevention, Outreach, and Education Department) <https://poe.msu.edu/>
- o WorkLife Office <https://worklife.msu.edu/>

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**Q5: CAMPUS RESOURCES - CONTINUED**

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**• RESOURCES LACKING**

- o We don't see supervisors and their staff attending the same events, so they miss out the opportunity to build strong rapport or align thinking on expectations.
- o Survey is another mechanism to identify needs and develop resources.

**• WHAT WE NEED**

- o Resources to build more awareness around the community.
- o More preventive measures before negative action occurs.
- o Informal resolution can be used to address some cases.

**Q6: What solutions to workplace bullying/ toxic work environments can you provide as a leader?**

- Create a culture that allows open and honest communications.
- Adopt team approach, not hierarchical.
- If some changes cannot be adopted explain why.

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**RESOURCES**

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- <https://workplace.msu.edu/>
- <https://workplace.msu.edu/workplace-bullying/>
- <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/navigating-toxic-work-environment-jada-reed/>

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