

## 60-Second SoTL

### Episode 4 – Institutional Diversity Messaging in Higher Education

(Piano Music)

00:03

#### **Jessie L. Moore:**

What messages about diversity, equity, and inclusion are higher education institutions sending through their public websites, and how are those messages interpreted by faculty and students? That's the focus of this week's **60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning**. I'm Jessie Moore.

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In "Delving into Institutional Diversity Messaging: A Cross-Institutional Analysis of Student and Faculty Interpretations of Undergraduate Experiences of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in University Websites," published in *Teaching and Learning Inquiry*, a team of faculty and students investigated the messages university websites convey about inclusion.

The team included Joanna Rankin, Andrew Pearl, Trina Jorre de St. Jorre, Moriah McSharry McGrath, Sarah Dyer, Samiah Sheriff, Roberta Armitage, Kerstin Ruediger, Anoushka Jere, Saania Zafar, Shalaine Sedres, and Daania Chaudhary. They represented five large, public research universities in Australia, Canada, the U.S., and the U.K., and they employed a students-as-partners approach, with student co-researchers working in partnership with the team's academic staff or faculty, throughout the research process.

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Their multi-site case study analyzed 20 public website pages from each of the authors' institutions, with a focus on pages like institutional home pages, mission statements, and diversity office pages. The authors provide a comprehensive list of the types of pages they analyzed and include 12 questions they used to guide their analysis, making it possible for readers to replicate this analysis with other institutions' public websites.

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The student co-researchers identified 32 themes to code their interpretations of the websites, with eight themes occurring most frequently: Diversity, student experience, strategy, support services, belonging, connecting and socializing, teaching excellence, and learning environment. Several website examples demonstrated a sense of belonging and inclusion, but the authors caution that including these illustrations on websites without following up with institutional practices could further exclude students even as the institutions project inclusivity.

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The scholars note that students-as-partners approaches offer “a step toward critically examining not only what messages are being sent to students about equity, diversity, and inclusion, but [also] how those messages are being received.” As a result, this open-access article offers a rich model of partnering with students to better understand how students’ lived experiences align with or vary from institutional messaging.

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To learn more, follow the link in our show notes to read the article.

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(Piano Music)

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Join us next week for another snapshot of recent scholarship of teaching and learning on **60-second SoTL from Elon University’s Center for Engaged Learning**. Learn more about the Center at [www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org](http://www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org).

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(Piano Music)