



Tara Cooper

Equity Consultancy

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Over her 22 years of experience addressing issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion, Tara Cooper has worked collaboratively with organizations to build skills, strategies and capacity to advance and sustain equity and inclusion at every level of the organization. Ms. Cooper has coached executives and staff in K-12, higher education, and non-profit organizations to help them advance their goals in equity and inclusion internally, and in the community. Through equity audits, executive level coaching, professional development, and strategic planning, Ms. Cooper creates opportunities for sustainable change that lead to a more inclusive organizational culture—demonstrated in policy and practice, equitable hiring and retention strategies, and diverse community and stakeholder engagement.

During her career working in higher education, Ms. Cooper served in private, public and vocational institutions, gaining broad yet deep understanding of the challenges that come along with equitably serving a diverse range of students and community stakeholders. Over those years she provided leadership and innovative strategies and approaches to overcome institutional challenges and barriers, both internal and external. Most notably, during her time in the Portland State University College of Education, she created a program for future teachers of color. Through community coalition-building and individualized advising and mentoring, she devised strategies for connecting with diverse families and students and built trusting relationships in order to learn more about the assets and needs of the students and communities. The resulting combination of culturally specific knowledge and her experience building authentic relationships across cultural backgrounds lend to Ms. Cooper's unique ability to: 1) "meet people where they are at;" 2) facilitate learning about different worldviews and lived experiences; and 3) simultaneously connect the client's personal learning to their professional practice.

In addition to her time in higher education, Ms. Cooper's work in the K-12 and non-profit sectors provided her with in-depth experience auditing and assessing organizational strengths and gaps and implementing processes for working collaboratively on continuous improvement plans. In addition to coaching to planning, she brings experience in implementing equitable hiring policies and procedures designed to decrease bias and inconsistent hiring practices, along with initiatives designed to support and retain a diverse workforce.

Ms. Cooper currently serves as a Post-Secondary Pathways Director overseeing career and college pathways work for 20 school districts. She also runs her own consultancy, focused on equity development for K-12, higher education, non-profit and public agencies. In addition to her professional experience in advancing equity, she also holds a master's degree in intercultural communications and is currently completing her doctorate in adult learning and leadership. With a passion for people, equity, and social justice, Ms. Cooper's grounded and knowledgeable presence helps her clients to chart a path to integrate equity and inclusion principles and practices into all aspects of their culture and work.