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## **Assessing Undergraduate Kinesiology Students Perspectives on the Effectiveness of DEI Initiatives: Implications for Career Readiness and Program Development**

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**CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, ST. PAUL**

**ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA**

**DEPARTMENT OF KINESIOLOGY AND HEALTH SCIENCES**

**Assessing Undergraduate Kinesiology Students Perspectives on the Effectiveness of  
DEI Initiatives: Implications for Career Readiness and Program Development**

**A DISSERTATION PROJECT**

**SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY**

**in partial fulfillment of the requirements**

**for the degree of**

**Doctorate (EdD) in Kinesiology**

**by**

**Wakpor Rengel**

**St. Paul, Minnesota**

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### **Abstract**

This dissertation evaluates the effectiveness of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives within undergraduate Kinesiology programs and their impact on students' career readiness. The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from student surveys with qualitative open-ended probes to explore perceptions and attitudes towards DEI initiatives.

Findings reveal that while students recognize the importance of DEI in educational settings, there is a discrepancy between the perceived implementation of these initiatives and their effectiveness in preparing students for diverse workplaces. The research highlights the need for more integrated and practical DEI strategies in Kinesiology curricula to enhance student preparedness for the increasingly diverse health sector. The study contributes to the understanding of how DEI initiatives are perceived in academic settings and suggests pathways for curriculum development to better align educational outcomes with the demands of a diverse professional landscape.

**Keywords:** *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Kinesiology, Career Readiness, Curriculum Development, Higher Education*

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Background Information**

The terms diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are becoming more infused into mission statements and the way organizations practice. In higher education specifically, DEI is said to be vitally important for the future (AKA, 2021). While diversity can be categorized into different types, it simply means difference. Equity refers to providing individuals the same access to opportunities, while also recognizing that not everyone is given the same starting point (Tan, 2019). Lastly, Inclusion aims to give everyone a seat at the table, including but not limited to leadership positions and the process of decision making (Tan, 2019).

The field of Kinesiology studies the science of human movement and improving health and wellness. Within the field students can be funneled into a variety of health career paths that require interaction with many diverse individuals. Brooks et al. (2013) states that a critical component that diversity brings to kinesiology programs is the preparation of future professionals to enter the field. Culp (2016) stresses the integration of service action into pedagogy that moves students from beyond the walls of classrooms to becoming active participants of society.

Despite many efforts and marginal improvements in health outcomes over the years, health disparities are a prevailing issue that continues to affect minorities disproportionately compared to majority counterparts. Recent census indicates that there will be a drastic shift in population demographics. As a result, it is estimated that by 2044 minorities will make up the majority of the U.S population (Brooks et al., 2013). With the current inequities that already exist, and the job market in health professions continuing to expand, it is essential that the field

of kinesiology not only places special attention on implementing DEI, but also conducting in depth student evaluations

on education and how it translates to practicing in the workplace among diverse populations.

### **Gaps in Research and Scholarship**

When analyzing the body of work pertaining to DEI and Kinesiology, minimal literature is available within this space and is often anecdotal in nature. Additionally, existing research tends to focus primarily on diversity while ignoring equity and inclusion. Traditionally, Kinesiology is a science-based field that concentrates on developing student's general knowledge and skills. With that being the center of attention, it comes as no surprise that DEI work is not a core component of Kinesiology curriculums. However, integration of DEI is said to provide a better understanding of how professionals can perform in culturally diverse settings (Feitosa et al., 2022). This further illuminates the need for additional work in this area.

Another dilemma in scholarship is the lack of diversity in participants. Particularly in Russell et al. (2019) work surveying administrator's, almost all participants were white males who shared similar viewpoints on some topics. For example, over half of the participants were either neutral or agreed that too much focus on DEI has lowered the quality of students admitted into Kinesiology programs, and in some instances causes problems in the classroom (Russell et al., 2019). A more in depth analysis of this study is presented in the literature review.

Current DEI strategies in higher education focus extensively on faculty recruitment, retention, experiential learning, and developing meaningful partnerships with other institutions, organizations, and communities. Recruitment specifically focuses on increasing the matriculation of students of color into undergraduate and graduate programs, in addition to hiring more faculty of color. Both groups continue to be severely underrepresented in Kinesiology-based allied

health programs. One issue with recruitment is the socialization of people of color. Scholars assert that African Americans in higher education operate in educational climates where cultural dissonance heightens (Burden, 2005). Consequently, this creates feelings of isolation, power imbalances, and is a threat to retaining faculty of color (Burden, 2005). The use of experiential learning is on the rise in many kinesiology departments and asserted by scholars to be a high impact tool in education (de Groot et al., 2015; Morrissey et al., 2017). While the many benefits are broadly described, there is a lack of qualitative data on student perceptions of experiential learning programs. According to de Groot et al. (2015) student evaluation is necessary to provide direction of ongoing development of these types of courses.

The development of partnerships can also serve as a form of recruitment and aims to improve organizational diversity while improving the student learning experience. Barriers to implementing and sustaining strong partnerships include funding, time commitment, and lack of dedicated individuals. While all of the previous strategies mentioned are excellent approaches, there is limited information available on the effectiveness and perceived benefit from the student's point of view. There needs to be critical evaluation on how these strategies translate to student learning and career preparation through a DEI lens.

### **Problem Statement (Research Question)**

The primary aim of this study is to assess student's beliefs and feelings in regard to the effectiveness of DEI initiatives promoted through Kinesiology programs and how that prepares them for a successful career. Generally speaking, programs vary in requirements and how they're evaluated. Furthermore, the criteria of cultivating awareness and developing skills to thrive in a multicultural setting is not a standard benchmark of achieving a Kinesiology degree. However, Bixon and Law (as cited by Hurtado, 2003) state that employers have stressed the value of



attaining skills such as openness to new ideas, empathy, and the ability to work with others as very desirable traits in the workforce due to the changing population demographics. Providing regular evaluation on this will benefit students in terms of future preparation and help Kinesiology programs to identify areas where they fall short.

## **Hypothesis**

H<sub>0</sub>: There will be no relationship between DEI and increasing student's capacity to work with and understand diverse individuals.

H<sub>1</sub>: The responses of the student diversity survey will indicate either decreased or increased knowledge of diversity, equity, and inclusion within Kinesiology programs.

H<sub>2</sub>: There will be a relationship between the presence of DEI in an educational curriculum and student's overall feelings of workforce preparedness in diverse spaces.

H<sub>3</sub>: Students will rate an increased sense of awareness on health disparities, racial understanding, and greater feelings of self-efficacy due to various DEI initiatives.

## **Definitions**

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined to provide more clarity on the topic.

*Diversity*: Differences - The practice or quality of including people from different backgrounds (Tan, 2019).

*Equity*: The quality of providing equal access to opportunities (Tan, 2019).

*Graduate*- Studies beyond the first or bachelor's degree (Merriam-Webster, n.d).

*Health disparities*: Differences and/or gaps in the quality of health and healthcare across racial, ethnic, and socio-economic groups (Riley, 2012).

*Inclusion*: The action or state of being included within a group or structure (Tan, 2019).

*Kinesiology*: The scientific study of human body movement (American Kinesiology Association, 2021).

*Undergraduate*: A student at a college or university who has not received a first and especially a bachelor's degree (Merriam-Webster, n.d).

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

One assumption of this study is the survey administered will be both reliable and a valid measure in being able to assess student perspective. The usage of diversity scales and open ended questions is often used to further probe individual's attitudes and beliefs relating to DEI. Another assumption is the survey will accurately be able to assess how much of DEI is learned from the classroom environment versus personal experience. Student's come from many walks of life, which means that they carry a plethora of different experiences. Moreover, there are programs that currently offer a variety of elective DEI classes that may have had a positive impact on student's beliefs and feelings of career preparedness prior to completing this survey.

One limitation is getting enough respondents for data to be meaningful. As previously mentioned, kinesiology is a large, growing major filled with thousands of students. Surveys can often be hard in producing a lot of responses without incentives. Qualitative student evaluation surveys have traditionally produced small sample sizes (de Groot et al., 2015). Furthermore, another limitation is getting student perspectives from only one state. Minnesota is considered a progressive state and that may affect existing initiatives, curriculum, and training that is accessible to students. More research will be needed to get a well-rounded view of how student's feel across the country.

Lastly, a delimitation of this study is the potential influence of the department's chair/program leader's attitudes towards DEI to affect encouragement of student participation.

Russell et al. (2019) surveyed academic administrator's beliefs and found that many individuals believe DEI has no place in education, and having cultural conversations brings more tension to classrooms than good. Cover letters introducing the goal of the survey will be sent to Kinesiology departments across the state of Minnesota along with the survey. Administrators that may view DEI as unimportant may be less likely to disseminate the survey to students, which ultimately can also affect response rate.

### **Significance of Study**

There are approximately 900 Kinesiology programs across the U.S., with a 445% increase seen in degrees awarded from 2002-2003 to 2016-2017 (Nuzzo, 2020). This growth has positioned Kinesiology as one of the fastest growing majors across the country. Given the growth rate of kinesiology degrees, the expansion of health jobs, and the growing concerns of alleviating health disparities, it is of high importance to assess learning and workforce preparedness. As the needs in healthcare and population demographics are continuing to become more diverse, it is paramount for education to reflect these changes. Higher education should continue to evaluate current strategies and best practices for DEI. Based on the responses, gaps and areas of improvement in cultural competency will be identified. Kinesiology departments can actively use these results to determine any changes needed in course curriculum.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

DEI is an area of interest to kinesiology in ensuring that future professionals “recognize the shared fabric of science and inquiry” (Gregory-Bass et al., 2013, p.1). In addition, implementation of DEI is integral to institutions ability to achieve their academic missions, while improving excellence, and serving all constituents (Gregory-Bass et al., 2013). As the population demographics continue to change, it is of high importance growing allied-health fields like kinesiology to continually evaluate best practices that will not only provide equal opportunities for all individuals but guarantee educational preparedness in caring for the most vulnerable, marginalized, underserved patients.

The aim of this review is to gain a better understanding of how DEI is incorporated in kinesiology by asking the following questions: What strategies or policies have been identified as successful ways to promote DEI? Do faculty/administrative beliefs affect successful application of DEI in educational curriculum? Does the field of kinesiology evaluate both student and faculty perspective on their commitment to DEI? How does DEI prepare students for future work? The search protocol included any peer reviewed literature published in the last 20 years that included key words or phrases such as, diversity, equity, inclusion, kinesiology, student preparedness, DEI curriculum in kinesiology, strategies, DEI beliefs, and career readiness.

### **History of DEI**

Although DEI is rapidly expanding due to societal events such as the 2020 pandemic and civil unrest, the origins of DEI date as far back into the 1960's in response to the Civil Rights movement (Diversity Officer Magazine, n.d). African Americans experienced great amounts of

tension and discrimination as they were integrating into a non-segregated world (Diversity Officer Magazine, n.d). The development of affirmative action and employment laws were steps taken to address this issue. With each new decade, DEI efforts have continued and evolved. For example, in the 1980's diversity education was introduced to raise awareness to individual differences and equal rights (Diversity Officer Magazine, n.d). Presently both diversity education and diversity training are utilized by employers, and higher education to increase knowledge and change the attitudes of employers expanding beyond the issue of race. In addition to societal pressures, the expected paradigm shifts of population demographics increasing within people of color has been a catalyst of increasing DEI work.

In Kinesiology today there has been a gradual uptick in publications pertaining to DEI since the early 2000's. Programs are now holding space for DEI, and it has become a pillar component of how groups practice. The American Kinesiology Association (AKA) now recognizes DEI as crucial and offers best practices, leadership, resources, and information on faculty recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups (AKA, 2021a). The AKA has also created the Inclusive Excellence Award which selects, and awards institutions based on their promotion, sustainment, and understanding of DEI through teaching, research, service, or other initiatives (AKA, 2021b).

### **Partnerships and Strategies to Enhance Diversity**

Having a blueprint to follow is an effective tool for not only academic institutions, but any organization or entity who is committed to increasing and sustaining DEI efforts. The easy part is taking an interest, while the difficulty is actually starting and identifying strategies that will have promising end results. Keith and Russell (2013) highlight two models of best practices with proven success for implementing institutional and organizational diversity that kinesiology

programs can adopt. Institutional diversity focuses on creating equal opportunity to individuals from different backgrounds in attaining leadership positions. While organizational diversity has greater emphasis on the environment and creating a positive space where stereotypes can be respectfully deconstructed (Keith et al., 2013). Both types of diversity are necessary, but implementation requires a collective effort from students, staff, and faculty.

Indiana University- Purdue University, Indianapolis (IUPUI) has shown strength in developing diversity initiatives, which has increased activity engagement in students and faculty as it relates to “cultural diversity, health disparities/and or health equity” (Keith et al., 2013, p.2). These initiatives have led to students reporting feelings of increased preparedness surrounding working with the general population as they matriculate into the workforce (Keith et al., 2013). Key components that have led IUPUI to become a model of best practice are the development of curriculum, and coursework specific to enhancing diversity, building community partnerships and instrumentation of service learning for students.

The kinesiology department at IUPUI has collaborated with the Physical Education and Tourism Management department to create international experiences through service learning that exposes students to diverse learning and thinking. Another example of an intentional partnership is the establishment of a community-based exercise program for inner city residents. Through this partnership, students are able to provide health/fitness assessments, personal training and exercise leadership to individuals that normally wouldn't be able to afford it. Students not only can receive academic credit, but it provides them the opportunity to work with a wide range of diversity spanning from age, race, health status, and physical capability (Keith et al., 2013). As a result, residents also benefit from improved health and fitness.

IUPUI offers a great urban, Midwest perspective. The second model of best practice is through Auburn University. This model focuses on utilizing partnerships between Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) to foster networking and create opportunities for students. Auburn developed the Preparing Future Scholars Program (PFSP) to create better relationships between kinesiology departments and similar programs at HBCU. The PFSP is guided by eight principles to further increase diversification in the student body. This program has created a pipeline to successfully recruit undergraduate students of color into Auburn's graduate programs. DiGiacinto (2014) states that building these types of relationships can help shape the climate of diversity and there is much that can be learned from HBCU. In contrast to Predominantly White Institutions (PWI), HBCU often admits students who have lower test scores, and grade point averages (GPAs), compared to PWI who focus more on higher test scores and Grade Point Average (GPA). A strength of HBCUs is their ability in taking students as they are and tapping into higher potential. This may require more time and resources, but the end result produces individuals with a stronger sense of identity, culture, positive socialization, and higher capabilities of performing academically.

### ***Experiential Learning***

The rise of experiential learning is increasing in many kinesiology programs (de Groot et al., 2015). The term experiential learning is defined by the intersection of real-life experiences and education. The main focus is to gain knowledge and understanding outside of the traditional classroom experiences. Service learning is a form of experiential learning that provides students a practical approach to gain skills in a professional setting, while also serving their communities. Although the importance of service learning has been recognized, limited studies have evaluated the effectiveness of these courses from a student perspective. de Groot et al. (2015) is the first

study to evaluate the experiences and perceived benefits of a required service learning in Kinesiology students. As previously, the aforementioned IUPUI is identified as a model institution for their work in developing intentional curriculum to enhance diversity. Specifically, the Physically Active Residential Communities and Schools (PARCS) is a program created to address community-based exercise needs, while also increasing student's skills in health and wellness in a real-world setting (de Groot et al., 2015).

In their current work, de Groot et al. (2015) recruited Kinesiology students who had completed the PARCS program. A total of 10 students participated in this study and were compensated \$20 for their time. Students were divided into male and female focus groups that lasted 60 minutes. Focus groups utilized semi-constructed interviews. A combination of recorded audio and a research assistant were used to transcribe responses. Data was qualitatively assessed through a thematic approach. Codes were assigned to emerging themes for each focus group. Reliability was further assessed by comparing intercoder themes for each interview.

Nine themes emerged from the data. These themes included personal and professional experience, decision to participate, location decision, self-efficacy, perceptions of participants, social interaction, personal and program communication, facility outcomes, and program outcomes. Overall, students indicated high levels of satisfaction and that PARCS has much value in exposing them to different socio-economic, racial diversities, in addition to gaining necessary skills needed for professional work that cannot be achieved with classroom work alone. The results of this study have led to further changes in IUPUI curricula to address areas where students feel more preparation would be beneficial. In addition, it supports the positive reflections made by students in exit interviews highlighted by Keith and Russell (2013). de Groot et al. (2015) discusses the major limitation of a small sample size, however previous qualitative



studies on service learning have used 15 or less participants, which is consistent with the current study.

Morrissey et al. (2017) shares three institutions that are grounded in experiential learning that other institutions can learn from. California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB) has a serving learning institute that offers opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to be engaged in promoting social justice. The larger mission of CSUMB is to serve diverse populations in surrounding areas. All students are required to take two service-learning courses, with one being specific to their major. Kinesiology students focus specifically on gaining a deeper understanding of social justice while also completing 30 hours or more of community service (Morrissey et al., 2017). The kinesiology department has formed partnerships with 15-20 other wellness organizations who share similar objectives of providing students with meaningful opportunities to grow as community members. The goal of community service is to build “skills and attitudes necessary to work and serve effectively in a diverse society to create more just and equitable workplaces, communities, and social institutions” (Morrissey et al., 2017. p. 3).

In addition to service learning, students are required to complete internships. CSUMB has developed a strong program in which students can choose from a list of established sites, rather than going out and looking for their own organizations. Faculty have taken on a greater role in being more involved with this process in terms of reviewing applications, making sure students complete all requirements, and coordinating with sites to place students in organizations. These partnerships are said to be mutually beneficial for students and organization, but much work goes into maintaining these relationships (Morrissey et al., 2017).

The second example is shown through Grand Valley State University (GVSU). GVSU is a large institution that includes many students from underserved populations. In attempts to

address this, GVSU advocates for implementation of high impact programs. The Department of Movement Science works in conjunction with the National Hockey League (NHL) and has formed a partnership that gives exercise science students the opportunity to engage in service learning. During the NHL season, exercise students come out to a testing facility to conduct physical fitness assessments on athletes. The success of this program has led to more utilization of students to perform these assessments during training camps. It is reported that the strength and conditioning coach also inquires from faculty and students to determine appropriate tests, which speaks to established rapport (Morrissey et al., 2017).

The last example is Marshall University and delivered through the Professional Master of Science in Athletic Training program (PMSATP). Based on the qualifications/skills and requirements needed for board certifications, PMSATP has developed a service point required for graduation. The main goals of the service and engagement are to foster academic learning, application of the real world, personal development, improve communication, and greater involvement in community (Morrissey et al., 2017). Service-learning activities include giving presentations, conducting testing, organizing, and volunteering for events, and attending conferences (Morrissey et al., 2017). These activities provide experiences needed to achieve the previously highlighted goals of service learning. One important consideration is the PMSATP hopes to add an evaluation piece to determine student satisfaction and engagement.

### **Beliefs Surrounding DEI in Kinesiology**

Russell et al. (2019) state that strong leadership is important in promoting both faculty and student diversity in higher education. Furthermore, examining administrators' beliefs can paint a clearer picture on how diversity is either shaped or hindered in kinesiology departments (Russell et al., 2019). In addition, inquiring about strategic goals can provide more information

on what steps academic unit leaders such as chairs, directors, and heads are taking to advance student diversification in their programs and departments. Sixty-eight individuals were identified and recruited from the American Kinesiology Association (AKA). The AKA promotes and enhances kinesiology by advocating on national and international levels, while also providing resources, materials, and various opportunities for university administrators (AKA, 2021a). In total, 43 participants were men while 25 were women. Each participant completed an online survey called the Kinesiology Administrator Diversity Survey (KADS). This survey was derived from the Faculty Diversity Survey and modified to better represent kinesiology-based leadership.

The KADS contained 58 items including 42 Likert/semantic-differential questions that were assessed on a 5-point scale, with 1 being strongly disagree to 5 being strongly agree. These items asked faculty to rate their level of agreement to statements such as “Change pedagogy to encourage more discussion and interaction among students of different racial/ethnic backgrounds.” The survey contained 13 demographic questions that asked faculty to provide information on their institutions' Carnegie classification, ethnic/racial group, age, gender, education and academic rank. Lastly, the three open-ended questions like “Over the years, the presence of racially/ethnically diverse students in your kinesiology program or department has been a factor in prompting your faculty to \_\_\_\_.” (Russell et al., 2019).

Responses were analyzed using descriptive and thematic content analysis. When looking at the ethnic/racial makeup of faculty, approximately 70.6% of respondents reported that their institutions had between “0 and 5 tenure track faculty of color within their Kinesiology Program Departments (KPDs)” (Russell et al., 2019, p. 8). In general, just under half of the administrators reported that their programs had at least 10 faculty tenured positions. When looking at student

make up, administrators reported having anywhere between 0 and 1000 undergraduate students, and 0 to 300 graduate students. In terms of race and ethnicity, Russell et al. (2019) reported that 42.6% of administrators had between 0 and 5 students of color in their KPDs (Russell et al., 2019). Similarly, 51.5% of graduate programs also reported having between 0 and 5 students of color.

Overall, there was a strong agreement between administrators (85.3%) that they are committed to creating and maintaining a diverse environment (Russell et al., 2019). However, when exploring diverse programs offered in kinesiology, more than half of the respondents did not agree that there had been any courses devoted to racial/ethnic issues. Likewise, 55.9% stated that there hadn't been any adjustments made by faculty to the syllabi or readings to reflect racial/ethnic issues. Faculty was also asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement "Change pedagogy to encourage more discussion and interaction among students of different racial/ethnic backgrounds." While 79.4% of participants believed they encouraged dialogue and discussion among students in the classroom, over half of the participants also believed that engaging in classroom interaction between students from different racial/ ethnic backgrounds just creates more tension and disturbances in the classroom (Russell et al., 2019).

Although these sentiments speak to the complexity of a diverse cohort, it fails to recognize that diversification produces creativity in working groups and reduces group think (Hurtado, 2003). Exposure to diverse environments allows students to develop social and cognitive skills needed to problem solve and handle conflicts that may affect different populations. Furthermore, encouraging interactions and dialogue in the classroom will better prepare students for future encounters in the workplace and engaging in a diverse society (Hurtado, 2003). Results from the thematic analysis found themes such as advocacy, motives,

and actions. Diversity was identified but rarely defined (Russell et al., 2019). Administrators also highlighted history, status, and overall outlook as they discussed issues their departments faced.

Russell et al. (2019) concludes by stressing that progression cannot be made without accountability and advocacy. To further address DEI and social justice in kinesiology, administrators must be diligent and engage in more proactive efforts. A significant limitation of this study was the homogeneity of participants, as 92.6% of participants were white and predominantly male. Of only four identified as administrators of color, and none were black or Hispanic individuals. On one hand this gives perspective on the lack of administrator leadership from these groups; but for the purpose of this study, it limits the viewpoints to only white beliefs. One future recommendation would be to expand the participant criteria to more than just AKA members.

According to Russell et al. (2019), administrators are more likely to act upon the beliefs they hold. Similarly, understanding student perspectives on barriers can give insight into their experiences, and exacerbate factors that prevent diversity from growing in kinesiology. Although the addition of health allied occupations to kinesiology has increased work opportunities, there continues to be a struggle to enroll and train minority students (Barfield et al., 2012). Barfield et al. (2012) investigated the differences between African American and Caucasian students regarding enrollment influences and what they believed to be roadblocks in the field of kinesiology.

Six hundred and one participants were recruited, with two hundred and twenty two further analyzed who self-reported enrollment in kinesiology-based programs (Barfield et al., 2012). These programs included athletic training, exercise science, physical therapy assistant, pre-physical therapy, and pre-occupational therapy programs (Barfield et al., 2012). The

researchers utilized two scales to evaluate racial differences and barriers affecting enrollment. These scales were The Scale for Allied Health Enrollment Decision (SAHED) and the Scale for Allied Health Enrollment Barrier (SAHEB). Levene's test was used to test homogeneity between both groups. Multivariate ANOVA (MANOVA) was used to compare group differences. The main findings reported a clear distinction between African American and Caucasian students in perception. More specifically, when looking at enrollment influences, African American students saw personal influence, career opportunity and physical self-efficacy as more important to their enrollment decision compared to Caucasian students (Barfield et al., 2012). Social influence, experiential opportunity, academic preparation, and physical self-efficacy were highlighted as barriers that African American students perceived greater when compared to Caucasian students (Barfield et al., 2012).

While a strength of this study was providing evidence of racial differences among students surrounding enrollment influences and barriers, some limitations were present. Barfield et al. (2012) explain that future studies should incorporate culture and how it may affect student groups instead of explicitly race. Additionally, including perspective from K-12 students is important for “understanding multiple levels of the student matriculation process” (Barfield et al., 2012, p.6). These findings offer direction for recruitment marketing strategies for minority students and highlight focus areas for kinesiology students. Closing the gap in the underrepresentation of minority students in health allied professions can address the disparity in the lack of diversity among health professionals.

Generally speaking, compared to their majority white counterparts, there is a lack of people of color (POC) in both student body and faculty positions in higher education when looking at the field of kinesiology. More specifically there is a big disparity in being able to

recruit and retain African American and Hispanic individuals to full time faculty positions in higher education (Hodge & Corbett, 2013; Russell et al., 2013). Hodge and Corbett (2013) states that both groups account for 30% of the minority population, but only make up about 10% of full-time faculty at leading doctoral granting institutions. Respectively 5.4% for black and 3.6% for Hispanic (Ryu, 2010; Snyder & Dillow, 2012).

While some advancements have been made over the years in recruiting more African American and Hispanic educators (13.4% to 17.1%), statistics show that they're filling more adjunct, part time positions at community colleges HBCU rather than PWI historically black universities, rather than predominantly white institutions with full time tenured positions (Hodge & Corbett, 2013). A staggering 76.8% of faculty of white faculty highlights the underrepresentation of African American and Hispanic faculty. Scholars have engaged in some discussion and further broken-down potential issues that may play a role in the inability to sufficiently recruit and retain African American and Hispanic individuals. This includes socialization experiences, racism, and pipeline dilemmas.

Continuing to examine various beliefs held between students and faculty can provide focus points to ameliorate issues observed both in kinesiology and higher education. From the beginning, racism has been a deep-rooted problem that has forced students and faculty to feel isolated. These experiences add to increasing numbers of retention and are further displayed by underrepresentation of faculty/students of color at all levels at PWI. Burden (2005) asserts that if change is to occur, there must be more work done on learning about African American experiences in educational environments.

Burden (2005) conducted a study on nine tenured African American faculty across various institutions in PWI. Using a snowball approach, research sought out one individual

through directories that listed predominantly faculty of color. As a result, the first participant also recommended faculty of color who they believed would be interested. Researchers took these prospective candidates and contacted them for participation. Interviews consisted of semi-structured, open ended questions based on the principles of critical race theory (CRT). Five interviews were completed via phone, while the other four were in person. In total these interviews lasted an average of 45-60 minutes. Data was analyzed through voice listening. Interviews were then transcribed in codes to further assess themes. The final results generated four major themes including: 1) resources, opportunities, and power structures, 2) programmatic neglects and faculty mentoring needs, 3) social isolation, disengagement, and intellectual inferiority issues, and 4) double standards, marginalization, and scholarship biases.

Participants felt that despite the available resources at their institutions, white colleagues at PWI's often held power which greatly affected career advancement and many aspects of decision making (Burden, 2005). In terms of programmatic neglect, participants believed that interest and effort in hiring faculty of color was not of major concern and only given weight during times of auditing (Burden, 2005). In addition to the neglect in recruitment, there was an overwhelming feeling of resistance from white colleagues in diversifying curricula in kinesiology. Consequently, this notion instills the beliefs of wanting to keep things Eurocentric. The third theme revealed that African American faculty often felt isolated, which evoked feelings of being second class and not part of the larger collaboration. One participant described this feeling as a "chilly climate." Most notably participants expressed being perceived as less capable and competent, contributing to having to always prove their worth. This idea is perpetuated by the belief that African Americans are hired to meet quotas rather than for their qualifications. Finally, the last theme highlighted concerns surrounding research biases, and the



difficulties of black scholars to publish work that doesn't align with traditional paradigms (Burden, 2005). In closing, PWI needs to evaluate how institutional discrimination is hindering faculty of color from progressing and maintaining a negative environment. There is continual need for increased diversity initiatives, and critical attention needed to address the concerns of faculty of color.

### **Career Readiness**

Career readiness is defined as the foundation in which individuals “demonstrate core competencies that broadly prepare the college educated for success in the workplace and lifelong career management” (NACE, n.d, para.1). The eight core competencies of career readiness include career and self-development, communication, critical thinking, equity and inclusion, leadership, professionalism, teamwork, and technology. The equity and inclusion domain focuses on not only demonstrating awareness, but increasing “attitudes, knowledge, and skills to engage with people from different local and global cultures” (NACE, n.d, para. 5). This core competency is especially critical for kinesiology students entering health professions which seek to provide quality patient care. While technical skills are needed for career readiness, Lewis et al. (2022) state that early exposure to principles of Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) prior to career entrance is advantageous in adequately training professionals to practice respectfully and effectively in diverse spaces among different fields.

### ***Training and education of career readiness in Kinesiology***

There are four major learning dimensions that are used to assess student learning which include: 1.) workplace readiness and general education skills 2.) content knowledge/discipline 3.) soft skills 4.) student engagement. Workplace readiness and general educational skills refer to a basic set of skills needed that can propel students to be successful in a professional setting or

higher levels of academia (Zhu, 2007). Content knowledge can vary based on a specific profession. For example, individuals must have a certain level of competence to achieve certain certifications or an advanced degree. Soft skills are also known as noncognitive skills and are necessary for individuals to be able to work on a team, problem solve, and “communicate with a diverse set of colleagues and clients” (Zhu, 2007, p. 6). Lastly, student engagement focuses on active participation in the learning process. Historically kinesiology has focused heavily on bolstering students’ general knowledge and skills, with little to no attention placed on the development of soft skills. According to Zhu (2007) the value and importance of soft skills did not start being assessed until the early 2000’s. While it is a general assumption that once a student receives a degree they have acquired enough competence, knowledge, and skills for a job, it is not always the case. The U.S Department of Labor (2006) reports that employers consistently note that new graduate hires are not prepared to work and lack critical thinking and problem skills required for today’s workspaces.

Kinesiology is a unique field of study in the sense that it has a multidisciplinary nature. Meaning that there are many subdisciplines that require their own niche of skills. However, each discipline must provide an optimal learning environment in which students are able to build the capacity to treat and work equitably with diverse patients and populations. Student learning at the degree level is focused on course work completion, total credits needed, grade point average (GPA), internship, thesis/dissertation. To address the anticipated demographic shift in society and the need for improved patient care, educational preparation must evolve to include cultural proficiencies relating to DEI to further prepare graduates in addition to conducting student evaluation (Lewis et al., 2022).

## **Conclusion**

Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) has deep roots in society but is just beginning to scratch the surface in the field of Kinesiology. There are various ways to advance DEI as shown by partnerships, and experiential learning. One dilemma that exists is the difference in perspective on the importance of DEI. Russell et al. (2019) showcases how various beliefs can affect implementation while Barfield et al. (2012) focuses on how these beliefs influence student matriculation. Furthermore, Burden (2005) offers a closer depiction of the workplace climate, and how failure to incorporate DEI actively, and strategically can leave faculty of color feeling isolated. Another area of concern is limited research on the success of DEI initiatives, and how it aids students in career preparation. While a few best practices have been identified and have shown positive experiences for students, there is a lack of literature specifically on student evaluation (de groot et al., 2015; Keith et al., 2013 & Morrissey et al., 2017). This insight can offer direction for course development, and offerings centered around DEI, with the goal of enhancing preparation for students to work in diverse spaces.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This study is a follow up to the work by Russell et al. (2019) that utilizes a qualitative online survey approach. Russell et al. (2019) found five key points when surveying administrators: 1) the demographics of student and faculty makeup is predominantly white, 2) administrators generally agreed that faculty had not developed any courses or offerings that address diversity and equity, 3) implementation of initiatives surrounding diversity and inclusion varied among administrators, 4) faculty did not believe that professional trainings and development were provided in addition to curriculum and syllabi adjustments to support diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), and 5) most administrators saw themselves as advocates for DEI, while some believed it was not their responsibility. The purpose of this current study was to evaluate undergraduate Kinesiology student's feelings and beliefs on career readiness to work with diverse populations prior to entering the field of Kinesiology, based on the education and resources their respective institutions provide surrounding DEI.

### **Participants**

Purposive sampling was used to recruit 30 participants identified as Kinesiology majors or in other health disciplines that fall under the broad Kinesiology discipline. Examples of other health disciplines include, but are not limited to, exercise science, exercise physiology, sport science, and health and physical education. According to the National Academy of Kinesiology (NAK) the discipline of Kinesiology contains many specialized areas of study pertaining to movement and physical activity; therefore, the inclusion of other health disciplines was appropriate for this study (NAK, 2022). Participants who were at least sophomore status or

higher in education were sought. Freshman students were excluded due to the likelihood of not having enough major courses to appropriately speak to career readiness.

A google search was conducted to identify all division I, II, III schools in the state of Minnesota (MN). Based on this initial search a total of 30 schools were compiled. Another google search was performed to evaluate every single school's website to examine their academic majors and to determine if a Kinesiology or closely related health discipline major existed. Schools that fit the aforementioned criteria were recorded on a spreadsheet for the researcher to move forward with in contacting. This resulted in a final selection list of 22 institutions. Next, another google search was completed on all the schools websites specifically looking for department chair heads, deans, or any faculty emails available. There were five cases where emails were not available but phone numbers were. These numbers were also recorded on the spreadsheet as contact information. A cover letter with more specific detail on the intent of the study and a link to the KSD survey with electronic informed consent was sent to 55 emails. In response to this email, Kinesiology instructors stated they would pass it on to their students or would forward it to the department chair/head. The project was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

## **Instruments**

The Kinesiology Student Diversity Survey (KSD) is a modified instrument adapted from both the Faculty Diversity Survey (Davis et al., 2006) and the Kinesiology Administrator Survey (KADS) used in Russell et al. 's (2019) work on academic administrator's beliefs about diversity. The newly modified instrument was tailored to reflect more on the student experience and to probe specific questions on career readiness as it relates to DEI exposure in a kinesiology curriculum (see Appendix C). The KSD contains a series of demographic questions, Likert type

items, and open-ended probes. Similar to the KADS survey, the Likert questions focus on commitment and beliefs about diversity and the diverse courses/experiences/development offered in kinesiology. Open-ended probes were geared toward advocacy, knowledge development, and workforce readiness. For example, one question asked students how well do you think the kinesiology department has enhanced your knowledge surrounding health disparities in minority populations?

### **Instruments**

The KSD Kinesiology Student Diversity survey (KSD) is a modified instrument of both the Faculty Diversity survey (Davis et al., 2006) and the Kinesiology Administrator Survey (KADS) used in Russell et al. (2019) work on academic administrator's beliefs about diversity. The newly modified instrument was tailored to reflect more on the student experience and to probe specific questions on career readiness as it relates to DEI exposure in a kinesiology curriculum. The KSD contains seven demographic questions, 10 Likert type items, and six open-ended probes. Similar to the KADS survey, the Likert questions focus on commitment and beliefs about diversity, diverse courses/experiences/development offered in kinesiology. The open-ended probes are geared toward advocacy, knowledge development, and career readiness. For example, one question asks students how well do you think the kinesiology department has enhanced your knowledge surrounding health disparities in minority populations? The full survey can be found in Appendix C.

### **Procedures**

Data collection took place in the fall semester of 2023. Administrators forwarded the survey to students and were encouraged to have students complete them in two weeks. After two weeks, a follow up reminder was sent out to administrators again. Data collection ended eight

weeks from the time the initial emails and cover letters were sent out. A total of 32 students completed the KSD survey. All data was exported from google surveys and entered into a password protected excel spreadsheet that would later be utilized for data analysis.

### **Design & Data Analysis**

All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS. The demographic data and Likert items were analyzed using descriptive statistics to provide a numerical summary of participant characteristics. Measures of variability and central tendency were used to count, identify percentages, and how often responses occurred. The qualitative data of the KSD survey was assessed using thematic analysis to interpret the results. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as a step-by-step process in which data is analyzed, coded, and patterns are recognized to create meaning. The transcripts were reviewed to identify significant statements and similar concepts, which were further grouped into themes. Data was organized using QDA Miner to highlight common points of agreements and differences between students. This type of analysis offers the ability to both organize and interpret qualitative data in a detailed manner. Similar to Russell et al. (2019) this approach of coding data, and identifying themes was used to provide more insight on the open-ended probes concerning student's opinions, feelings, and experiences.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained from Concordia University St. Paul. All participants were provided an informed consent form prior to completion of the survey in which all procedures, risks, and benefits associated with participation in this study were identified. All participants were also made aware that should they choose to withdraw from the study at any time, there would be no consequences associated. Informed consent and the survey

can be found in Appendix B. To ensure data protection, only confirmed participants were provided the link to the survey. The KSD survey did not ask for any sensitive information, such as date of birth (DOB) or health status. Further privacy concerns such as identity were addressed by assigning pseudonyms to each participant. For example, using “Respondent 1” to present data rather than the participant’s name. Additionally, results of the online survey were secured in a password protected computer and were only accessible by the primary research investigator.

### **Conclusion**

The following chapter will provide detailed results found during the data analysis process. A combination of tables, figures, and themes that emerged from the quantitative and qualitative data will be used to provide a clear depiction of student feedback.



## **Chapter 4: Results**

### **Descriptive Results**

This study assessed the perspectives of undergraduate Kinesiology students from four different institutions across Minnesota. A total of 22 participants ( $N = 22$ ) were included, with ages ranging from 18 to 54 years. The mean age of participants was 25.3 years, with a standard deviation of 8.2 years. Participants comprised 53.1% females ( $n = 12$ ) and 46.9% males ( $n = 10$ ). In terms of ethnicity, the sample was predominantly White/Caucasian (62.4%,  $n = 14$ ), followed by Black/African American (12.5%,  $n = 3$ ), and other minorities including Mixed (6.3%,  $n = 2$ ), Native American (3.1%,  $n = 1$ ), and Pacific Islander (3.1%,  $n = 1$ ). Socioeconomically, the majority of students identified as coming from a middle-class background (65.5%,  $n = 15$ ). The academic distribution included sophomores (31.3%,  $n = 7$ ), juniors (34.4%,  $n = 8$ ), and seniors (34.3%,  $n = 8$ ). Majors were primarily in Exercise Science (28.1%,  $n = 6$ ) and Kinesiology (31.3%,  $n = 7$ ), with others enrolled in related health disciplines. Please see table one in the appendix for a detailed overview.

### **Commitments and Beliefs about Diversity**

Students were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement to the statement “The kinesiology department is committed to creating and maintaining a diverse, equitable, inclusive environment”. The results in table two show that many students (72.7%,  $n=16$ ) rated a positive perception of their department's commitment to diversity. Students were then asked to rate if their kinesiology department has “addressed issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.” While almost half of students (47.2%,  $n=8$ ) agreed or strongly agreed that their kinesiology program has addressed issues of DEI, a substantial proportion (52.4%,  $n=11$ ) neither agree nor disagree as highlighted in table three. Furthermore, students were asked to rate their level of

agreement or disagreement with the statement “My university's kinesiology curricula adequately prepare students to work with diverse populations.” Table four indicates that most students 72.7%, n=16 agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that their university’s curricula adequately prepare them to work with diverse populations. Lastly, students were asked to rate the level of extent that DEI should be integrated into Kinesiology education. Data from table five display a strong majority of (68.2%, n=15) believe that DEI should be integrated into their education to a great or very great extent.

### **Diverse Courses, experiences, and development offered in Kinesiology**

The students were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement “Your kinesiology department offers courses that address racial/ethnic issues members in the community may face.” In table five, a similar percentage of students disagreed (27.3%, n=6) with the statement as those who agreed or strongly agreed (22.7%, n=5) with the statement. Students were then asked to respond to the following statement “Faculty are open to incorporating more racial/ethnic readings into the syllabus.” Over half (59.1%, n=13) of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed in table six with the statement indicating that faculty are generally willing to integrate diverse perspectives into academic content.

Focusing further on the role of faculty, students were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement “The faculty encourages discussion and interaction among students of different racial/ethnic backgrounds.” Regarding faculty encouragement, (68.2%, n=15) of students in table seven agreed or strongly agreed that faculty are fostering an inclusive environment where discussion and interaction among students from diverse backgrounds take place. Finally, students were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement on the statement “Do you think engaging in interactions with other students from

different racial/ethnic backgrounds can lead to increased tensions and challenges in the classroom.” An equal proportion of students (27%, n=5, n=6) disagreed and agreed with the statement highlighting that there can be challenges associated with such interactions as shown in table eight..

## **Thematic Results**

The thematic content analysis revealed six major themes based on student responses to the six open-ended probes. These major themes were 1) advocacy within the kinesiology department, 2) understanding health disparities among students, 3) exposure to practical experience in racial/ethnic diversity, 4) factors influencing interactions with minority individuals, 5) Student Confidence in Engaging with Diverse Backgrounds, and 6) Preferred Resources for Enhancing Skills and Knowledge in Diversity. See figures one through six for more detailed results.

### ***Advocacy Within The Kinesiology Department***

This theme was led by the question “In what way(s) has your kinesiology department demonstrated themselves as an advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion?” Over half of the students (62.1%) indicated that their kinesiology department displays advocacy through fostering an inclusive environment, coursework, faculty demographic makeup, and discussions.

Specifically, students stated:

- There is no evidence of prejudice or bias to any group or individual. (Respondent #2)
- I know there has never been a time where I noticed they were not advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion. (Respondent #17)
- They are very big on having group discussions that can really help diversity grow. (Respondent #19)

- The kinesiology department I think does a good job at having students learn about the course materials at hand no matter what racial background you may have. They expect everyone to speak up equally and participate in class. (Respondent #21)

While a strong majority stated that faculty showed support for DEI, students felt that there is more the department could be doing (17.2%). For example, respondent three said the following

“I have seen diverse students on discussion boards, but not diverse professors or readings”.

Respondent 10 also said “My institution offers a course that focuses specifically on DEI in the biology department, however there is no required course for Exercise Science Majors. To a degree it is discussed within our classes but not greatly discussed. Could do more. Although advocacy is present, some students felt it does not directly stem from the kinesiology department (6.9%). Respondent # 24 stated “Students are from all over the country. Likewise respondent #22 also stated “I think having people with different backgrounds in class is what challenges the department to open up to other backgrounds, however, I don’t believe the KHS department is doing that on its own”. In contrast, 13.8% of students believe that the kinesiology department does not demonstrate advocacy. For example, Respondent # 12 stated “There is not much I have observed for them to advocate for DEI in the Exercise Science Department, however, I do not think there has been much opportunity for them to do such a thing”. Likewise Respondent #23 stated “None that I can see”.

### ***Understanding Health Disparities Among Students***

This theme highlights students' beliefs regarding the kinesiology department's role in enhancing their knowledge pertaining to health disparities in minority populations. Roughly one third of students (36.4%) indicated that the department has enhanced their knowledge of health disparities. The other two thirds of students responded that the department has either not

improved their knowledge of health disparities in minority populations (22.7%), the opportunity to discuss health disparities has not been given (18.2 %), more discussion is needed (13.6%), and that disparities are discussed in general but not specific to minority populations (4.5%). A small percentage (4.5%) of students indicated they were unsure. Students who stated that the department has not enhanced their knowledge of health disparities in minority populations or felt the department should be doing more expressed the following in these statements:

- Not a lot. I wish they talked about it more because they don't talk about disparities between different populations. (Respondent #13)
- I don't think they have talked/taught much about these disparities in my courses or they have been vaguely mentioned. (Respondent #1)
- Because they don't have a specific class to this, I cannot say that they have enhanced my knowledge surrounding health disparities in minority populations. (Respondent #2)

### ***Exposure to Practical Experience in Racial/Ethnic Diversity***

Students were asked to report on practical experiences they have had pertaining to working with racial/ethnic diversity. A strong majority (68.4%) answered yes to gaining practical experiences from their kinesiology department. These experiences included internships, clinical hours, and racially/ethnic diverse classrooms that allowed group work and discussions with individuals from different backgrounds. Conversely, 26.3% of students stated they have not had any opportunities to gain practical experience. A small portion of 5.3% reported that opportunities may exist to gain practical experiences, but they have not had them.

### ***Factors Influencing Interactions with Minority Individuals***

Students were asked to “share what factors have had a greater influence on your increased interactions with minority individuals: your personal life experiences or education?” Over half of the students (60.7%) stated that personal life has been the most impactful in cultivating these interactions. Respondent #12 stated “I have learned a lot about myself and personal biases which I did not even know I had until I explored myself better” and “I think that the cure for fear is familiarity when it comes to learning about new cultures”. A quarter of students (25%) attributed the development of interactions with minority individuals to jobs clubs, jobs and involvement in sports. Respondent #29 stated “Coaching youth track has definitely influenced how I interact with many people, it opened up more knowledge for myself and others when I have to work with young athletes and their parents”. Respondent #28 stated “I think growing up playing a variety of sports has helped a lot” and “Being exposed to different races as a child and learning to work with other players on the field played a large impact on where my stance is today”. Education was rated the lowest with 14.3% stating that it was the most impactful factor in creating exposure to having interactions with minority individuals.

### ***Student Confidence in Engaging with Diverse Backgrounds***

This section focuses on self-efficacy and asks students to rate their level of confidence in effectively communicating and engaging with individuals from diverse backgrounds in a kinesiology setting on a scale from 0-100 with 1 signifying extremely low confidence and 100 signifying extremely high confidence. Based on this distinction, students who rated their confidence levels close to 50 (plus or minus 10) were identified as having a moderate level of confidence. Seventy- seven point eight percent of students rated themselves as having a high level of confidence when it comes to their communication and engagement. Factors influencing

this rating include the geographic location in which respondents grew up that allowed them to have exposure in communicating with minority groups, along with personal experiences.

Respondent #1 stated “I would say 90 because I come from an inner city school where I’ve had the opportunity to interact with diverse populations. That is why it’s so easy for me to feel comfortable in a situation where others may feel unsure about. I’m not 100 because I don’t have different language backgrounds and obviously I don’t know everything about cultural problems”.

Respondent #4 rated themselves 85 and stated, “I have full confidence in communicating with others from diverse backgrounds”. A combined 22.2% (11.1% respectively for each) rated themselves as either having a moderate or low level of confidence. Respondents who gave themselves a moderate rating of confidence felt somewhat confident in their ability but recognized there were areas where they could improve. For example, respondent #20 said “I think I can make conversation and get that connection, but sometimes I need to gain enough courage”. Respondents with lower ratings felt they had not had enough experiences with individuals from different cultures which led to a lower rating of confidence levels. Respondent #18 said “I feel like I don’t know enough about populations that have rules regarding dress and who can be touched by men and stuff like that”.

### ***Preferred Resources for Enhancing Skills and Knowledge in Diversity***

This theme focuses on areas that students indicated would be valuable as an additional resource/support in development of skills and knowledge relating to working with diverse populations. Students listed topics such as having more clinical opportunities, classroom discussions, campus events, course content, DEI specific programs, and focusing on developing communication skills and values, that may enhance their preparation in future work in the field of kinesiology. This theme showcases that students have ideas and meaningful feedback when it

comes to ways in which their educational experiences can be enhanced. Kinesiology departments should integrate student feedback as they seek to further implement DEI into their curriculums.

## **Conclusion**

The survey questions were intended to further explore student's beliefs and feelings in regard to the effectiveness of DEI initiatives promoted through Kinesiology programs and how that prepares them for the workforce. Specifically, students were asked to report on their knowledge of DEI, their current education, awareness of health disparities, racial understanding, and feelings of efficacy regarding workforce preparedness in minority populations. Chapter 5 will provide a discussion and interpretation of the results, while also offering practical applications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.



## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

The study's results, as detailed in Chapter 4, provide insightful perspectives on how students in Kinesiology departments across Minnesota perceive diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives within their educational programs. Partnerships, recruitment of diverse faculty members and student body, beliefs surrounding diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), and training and education all affect students' preparation in developing culturally relevant skills to best work in a diverse patient population. The current study sought to gain more insight on the effectiveness and perceived benefits of those approaches from the undergraduate student perspective. This chapter discusses these findings in the context of their broader implications for Kinesiology education, student preparedness for the workforce, and DEI strategies in higher education.

### **Student Demographics and Diversity Perception**

The majority's positive perception of their departments' commitment to diversity is promising, yet the data suggests room for improvement in enhancing the inclusivity of educational environments. The demographics reveal a significant representation of students from the 18-25 age group and a balanced gender ratio. However, more than half of the students surveyed were white (62.4%), and the lower representation of students of color underscores a need for greater inclusivity in attracting diverse student populations. This finding is consistent with previous studies examining students and faculty of color in kinesiology (Barfield et al., 2012; Russell et al., 2019; Ryu, 2010). While three of the four institutions were geographically located in an urban area, the lack of diversification of both faculty and students of color emphasizes room for improvement in recruitment. Next, students were asked various items relating to their kinesiology's department commitment and beliefs about diversity, and any

diverse courses or experiences offered. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of students had a positive perception of the kinesiology department's commitment to creating and maintaining a diverse, equitable, environment. Having the support of administrators is critical in continuing DEI efforts, which is recognized by student responses and creates a sense of encouragement in classrooms. Similar to Russell et al. (2019), 85% of administrators saw themselves as advocates for diversity and equity which is highlighted by their support of hiring minority individuals, having a more progressive mindset, and advocating for individuals with disabilities.

### **Perceptions of DEI Advocacy in Kinesiology Departments**

The results suggest that students generally see faculty as advocates, however, their support seems to lie predominantly on inclusion. Students had positive things to say about how faculty treat individuals with respect, and each person is always included in class discussions or invitations to events outside of class. However, there was minimal feedback on how diversity and equity are supported. When diversity was mentioned, it was simply a product of having students in class who come from different backgrounds, and not necessarily the content or curriculum faculty are providing. In fact, when asked about diverse courses offered and faculty willingness to incorporate more racial/ethnic readings into the syllabi, a majority of students disagreed that either of those strategies are implemented. This finding is not completely surprising because previous research has shown that when administrators are asked the same questions, they also do not believe that their faculty make syllabi adjustments or offer courses that address issues of DEI (Russell et al., 2019).

### **Knowledge of Health Disparities**

A significant portion of students reported that the kinesiology department has not enhanced their knowledge of health disparities. Furthermore, students indicated that they would

like more discussion on the topic, and that they are not given the opportunity to discuss these topics. These results display one way diversity is neglected and can be problematic as students transition into the workforce. Lewis et al. (2022) stated that delaying DEI education can put students at a disadvantage in developing foundational skills in cultural competency and learning about structural inequities that may better prepare them to contribute to their communities.

### **Evaluation of Practical Opportunities**

The results highlight the importance of practical experiences in enhancing students' understanding of working with diverse populations. This finding suggests that integrating more experiential learning opportunities, such as internships and community engagements that expose students to diverse settings, could be beneficial, which emphasizes the value students place on including DEI within their educational experiences. While a substantial number of students acknowledge their departments' efforts in advocating for DEI, there remains a split opinion on the extent to which courses address racial and ethnic issues. This indicates a need for curriculum development that more explicitly includes diverse perspectives and topics relevant to minority communities. Internships were reported as an opportunity that has helped students gain experiences with diverse clientele, and athletic teams. This result supports the impact of experiential learning. de Groot et al. (2015) describes experiential learning as gained knowledge and understanding that takes place beyond the traditional classroom. Students who have participated in this type of learning have reported higher levels of satisfaction, attainment of professional skills, exposure to different types of diversity in a real world setting (de Groot et al., 2015). While this result is encouraging and promising, 26.3% of students reported that they have not had any opportunities to gain any practical experiences. Another 5.3% of students reported that opportunities may exist, but they have not had them quite yet. Seniors who have not had

these opportunities will have to rely on gaining culturally necessary skills on the job to best meet the needs of their career in an inclusive, equitable manner.

### **Perceived Influences on Direct Involvement with Minorities**

Of the five categories mentioned, students rated education the lowest (14.3%) and the least influential factor. More than half of the students reported that their personal life experiences have been the most significant source in increasing interactions with minority individuals. Tajfel and Turner (as cited by Abacioglu et al., 2023) assert that from a very young age, children become familiar with group patterns and categorize themselves into groups based on distinctions. These behaviors and attitudes can shape how individuals view certain groups (Abacioglu et al., 2023). Therefore, certain prejudices and biases can develop which manifest during interactions with people. It is no surprise that personal life was rated as the most influential because of the deep values and culture in which each unique individual is raised. However, education is a powerful tool that can be formative in applying multi-cultural practices and creating a learning environment where all students can be engaged (Abacioglu et al., 2023). The faculty's role in promoting inclusive environments and encouraging discussion among diverse student groups is critical. The survey results show that a majority of students feel supported in this regard is a positive outcome, demonstrating the faculty's active role in fostering a DEI-friendly learning atmosphere. Educators should create a culture that supports students from all backgrounds through providing inclusive curriculum, content, and sharing enthusiasm for DEI.

### **Self-Assessment on Engagement and Communication with Minorities**

An overwhelming number of students (77.8%) reported a high level of confidence in effectively communicating and engaging with individuals from diverse backgrounds in a kinesiology setting. The high confidence levels reported by students in their ability to

communicate and engage with diverse populations in professional settings are encouraging. This positive rating was supported by factors such as growing up in diverse neighborhoods and communities, attending inner city schools with individuals from many backgrounds, possessing skills to communicate, having awareness of the basic needs of others, and the importance of adaptation and learning from everyone. These students demonstrate the advantage of early exposure to diversity as shown by their high ratings of self-efficacy. In contrast, students who gave themselves a medium or low rating of confidence detailed that they had not had enough exposure with other populations to have insight on cultural norms, or simply needed more courage to engage with minority populations. This self-assessment, however, also indicates a need for ongoing support and resources to further enhance these skills. The students who rated having a higher level of confidence had the advantage of the geographic locations in which they grew up in. Individuals who grow up in more homogenous areas, or smaller towns were less likely to have those same experiences. Children are at the mercy of where their parents choose to live, which also affects the schools in which they are enrolled. Socioeconomic status can also greatly influence those decisions (Lockwood et al., 2018). Thus, the need for kinesiology education to be utilized in a manner that can offer exposure and foster dialogue among students to make meaningful connections is paramount.

### **Student Suggestions for Improvement**

The results suggest that students want more opportunities to learn in clinical, diverse settings. Students have ideas and meaningful feedback when it comes to ways in which their educational experiences can be enhanced. Kinesiology departments should integrate student feedback as they seek to further implement DEI into their curriculums. There is a general belief that having these opportunities would offer more perspective on diversity because of the ability

to learn from the communities they are immersed in, while simultaneously providing help to the people who need it the most. Student's desire to have more classes, coursework, and programs devoted to DEI; there was an emphasis on the need to "specifically talk about it" in classroom discussions. Furthermore, students want more exposure, and engagement events, where they can develop communication skills with new people and gain more information.

Additionally, students also want respectful environments, where they do not have to be fearful. One respondent stated that it can often be intimidating to engage with individuals from different backgrounds due to fear of "screwing things up". Students' suggestions for additional resources and support to develop skills in working with diverse populations highlight a gap in current educational offerings. Incorporating student feedback into program development could lead to more robust and inclusive Kinesiology programs. Clearly, students have high expectations and want their education to live up to that. Kinesiology faculty should be open to student feedback and should not be afraid of adjusting so that all students can experience equal opportunity and belonging.

### **Practical Applications**

The findings of the current study underscore the necessity of integrating DEI into Kinesiology education comprehensively. These findings suggest that while there is an institutional effort towards promoting DEI, the execution may benefit from a more holistic and integrated approach. To address the divide in student perceptions, KSD departments might consider not only focusing on curriculum content, but also include creating opportunities for practical experiences and personal growth in diverse settings. Establishing partnerships with diverse communities and organizations for internships can provide students with the exposure and practical experience needed to work effectively in diverse settings. Implementing targeted

training for faculty to effectively facilitate discussions on sensitive DEI topics is necessary for continued faculty development. Training and workshops incorporating DEI in teaching methods and curriculum design can help bridge the gap between students expectations and current offerings. Kinesiology departments should consider curriculum revision by developing a more inclusive curriculum that not only incorporates diverse readings but also includes courses specifically addressing racial/ethnic issues and their implications in kinesiology and sports. Additionally, there needs to be enhanced transparency around DEI efforts, by creating forums for students to provide feedback on DEI initiatives and curriculum content, along with conducting regular assessments of student experiences and satisfaction regarding DEI in the curriculum.

By doing so, Kinesiology departments can better prepare students for the increasingly diverse and inclusive workforce they will enter. Kinesiology departments must examine their intentions versus following through with actionable programmatic needs. The current study showed that while most students have a positive view of faculty's support for DEI, it is predominantly displayed through the general feelings of being welcomed. Treating each student with fairness and respect is a basic expectation of how any working professional should operate. However, showing support for DEI should not stop there and should be followed up with pragmatic activities such as being aware of classroom demography and providing readings and engaging in discussion that reflects the direct needs of the classroom. In situations where classrooms lack a diverse student body, faculty should still employ the same strategies to display their advocacy for the broader communities. Inability to make these changes will perhaps further lead to unwelcoming classroom environments and deepen the notion that both students and faculty believe that engaging in discussion with individuals from different backgrounds leads to elevated tensions.

Kinesiology departments should create requirements for students to take a cultural competency course, participate in service learning, or establish a running list of internships that are strategically placed in diverse communities. Student's stated that they want these opportunities but are often unaware of them existing. As a countermeasure, faculty can play a more proactive role in cultivating these experiences. Although the field of Kinesiology has traditionally focused on more biological sciences and attaining general skills and knowledge, it is time to start embedding DEI principles into how the Kinesiology discipline approaches education. Failure to do so will continue to perpetuate disparity among minority populations and lead to more unprepared professionals.

### **Contribution to Knowledge and Profession**

The results of this study are helpful as kinesiology departments continue to assess the importance of DEI and look to gain more feedback on how they can practically integrate these concepts. The mixed responses highlight the complexity of integrating DEI into higher education, particularly within the KSD. While students recognize faculty efforts and express a desire for inclusive education, there remains a clear need for more direct and effective DEI strategies in curriculum development and program implementation. The commitment to creating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment must be matched with action that resonates with the student body to foster a truly inclusive academic culture. While DEI is not a new concept it is an under researched area in the field of Kinesiology. To date, there have been limited qualitative studies that examine student feedback specifically on this topic (de Groot et al., 2015; Keith & Russell, 2013). Furthermore, it is beneficial for faculty, students, and the broader community to directly hear about student perceptions of how successful, or unsuccessful, the DEI initiatives are delivered at the respective institutions'. As faculty make changes, it potentially enhances the



educational experience for students, and as students encounter meaningful education, they are more equipped to serve their communities, thus creating a pipeline for change.

### **Action Plan**

It is the intention of the primary investigator to share the general findings of this study with each kinesiology department head/dean of the four institutions of undergraduate students who participated in this study. Additionally, each institution will be presented with specific results that capture student responses from their individual kinesiology department. As outlined in Chapter 3, participant identities will not be disclosed in this evaluation. The goal of this plan is to provide kinesiology department programs with summative feedback on how students view their education and learning based on a DEI framework. Furthermore, this feedback will highlight program areas of strength, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement.

It is planned to provide this institutional feedback during the summer semester of 2024. During the academic year, summer semesters tend to have lower enrollment, and faculty often utilize this time to develop and prepare for future courses. This timeline will give a period of time for faculty to review these results and further evaluate their programs. While each KPD department is not required to make any changes, they are strongly encouraged to consider the results of the KSD survey as they look to make any curriculum changes to further enhance the student experience.

### **Limitations**

While there are strengths to the feedback from the KSD survey, this study is subject to several limitations. First, the students who participated in this study came from one state, with institutions that were located predominantly in urban areas. Furthermore, these institutions were

considered relatively small, having a student enrollment of 3100-6700. As such, these results cannot be generalized across all KPD departments and must be interpreted with caution.

Second, the demographic data revealed that nearly two-thirds (62.4%) of student respondents were white. This homogeneity in participants is consistent with previous literature (Burden, 2005) and can affect the general beliefs from a cultural aspect. A more diverse pool of participants is needed to provide a more comprehensive view of the student perspective. Third, the data analysis exposed a methodological flaw in the KSD, which resulted in omitting one of the questions. Students were asked to rank five components based on their level of importance for Kinesiology professionals to consider (1= most important and 5= least important). These components included cultural competency and awareness, inclusive program design and adaptation, language and communication skills, knowledge of health disparities and social determinants of health, and building trust and rapport with diverse individuals. In closer examination of this question, the researcher found that although the instructions asked students to rank each item based on a scale of 1-5, the ranking items were categorized by strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. The lack of clarity caused some students to rank some components the same, instead of ranking each item once. This inconsistency led to too many assumptions the researcher had to make and was impossible to objectively analyze; thus, leading to the decision to omit the data from further analysis.

Separately, one of the open ended questions could have also been revised for further clarity. Question 4 asked students to “share what factors have had a greater influence on your increased interactions with minority individuals: your personal life experiences or education?” Although this question gives free range to share different factors, it also may have steered students in the direction of having to choose between personal life experiences and education.

Nonetheless, it still provided insightful feedback on the impact personal life or education can have on these interactions.

Finally, the targeted population of this study were undergraduate Kinesiology or associating majors students who were sophomores, juniors, and seniors. In the initial cover letter sent out to department heads, deans, and instructors, this inclusion criteria were not specified. Because of this lack of clarification, the KSD survey went out to all undergraduate and graduate students who fit the major criteria. A total of 32 responses were received, but only 22 could be included based on this parameter. Omission of these responses decreased the desired sample size of 30 and led to a loss in qualitative feedback.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Based on the limitations of this study, future research can focus on conducting research in KPD departments at larger institutions that are geographically located in both urban and rural areas. There is no information available on if geographic location affects implementation of DEI or future preparation of students to work in diverse populations. These areas would offer a broader view of how KPD departments in the United States compare. While the main goal of this study was to elicit student feedback prior to entering the workforce, it would be beneficial to also study graduate students who have already had work experiences. Graduated and gainfully employed students may have additional insight on skills required to successfully work with diverse populations and might be better able to speak to the transition from student to working professional. Utilizing professional websites like LinkedIn and social media outlets can aid in recruiting graduate students.

A more targeted approach is needed to recruit students of color to participate in these types of studies. Underrepresentation of people of color (POC) is a consistent theme across DEI

literature (Barfield et al, 2012; Russell et al., 2019). To support the recruitment of people of color, future researchers may consider using the snowball approach to leverage personal connection. Burden (2005) describes this approach as allowing participants to invite and recommend other individuals who would be interested prospects for a study. If future improvements are to be made, then all shared experiences must be represented. Lastly, future researchers should include multiple coders to further establish trustworthiness. In the current study, only the primary investigator coded and interpreted all data, which may affect the dependability of the results. Including multiple coders can help determine reliability and consistency of qualitative data.

## **Conclusion**

While it is beneficial to recruit and train professionals who mirror the racial and ethnic identities of the patients they serve, it is also paramount to cultivate professionals who are culturally competent, possess soft skills, and are aware of the immediate needs of the communities they serve. As with all industries, the field of Kinesiology must evolve as population demographics continue to shift. Educational programs in kinesiology-based disciplines cannot do everything through a traditional approach that strictly focuses on biological sciences. Kinesiology departments must be willing to change by being open to embedding DEI into pedagogy. The present study sought to further evaluate undergraduate students' beliefs on their education and how it translates to practice. A salient theme revealed was that students are very aware of DEI and want more from faculty in terms of providing a diverse, inclusive curriculum and opportunities to further develop core skills. Kinesiology departments have made positive steps in displaying their advocacy for DEI, but there is still much work to be done in becoming a more active participant in society.

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## Tables

**Table 1.**

*Demographic Data of Participants*

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<b>Group</b>	<b>Factor</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>18-25</b>	<b>46.8</b>	<b>15</b>
	<b>25-34</b>	<b>31.1</b>	<b>10</b>
	<b>35-44</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>45-54</b>	<b>15.6</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>Undisclosed</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>53.1</b>	<b>17</b>
	<b>Male</b>	<b>46.9</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>White/Caucasian</b>	<b>62.4</b>	<b>22</b>
	<b>Black/AA</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>Mixed</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>Native American</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Pacific/Islander</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Undisclosed</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>2</b>

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<b>Socioeconomic</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>15.6</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Middle</b>	<b>65.5</b>	<b>21</b>
	<b>Low</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>Undisclosed</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Suburban</b>	<b>21.9</b>	<b>19</b>
	<b>Urban</b>	<b>62.5</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>Rural</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>Undisclosed</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Religious Affiliation</b>	<b>Agnostic</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Atheist</b>	<b>21.9</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>Christian</b>	<b>56.2</b>	<b>18</b>
	<b>Undisclosed</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Disability Status</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>9</b>
	<b>No</b>	<b>81.5</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Institution</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>B</b>	<b>87.5</b>	<b>28</b>
	<b>C</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>D</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1</b>

<b>Major</b>	<b>Exercise Phys.</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Kinesiology EDD</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Education</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>English</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Exercise Science</b>	<b>28.1</b>	<b>9</b>
	<b>Kinesiology</b>	<b>31.3</b>	<b>11</b>
	<b>MS AT</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>MS Ex Sci</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Phys. Education</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Sport Psychology</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Sports Manag</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Freshman</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>Sophomore</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Junior</b>	<b>31.3</b>	<b>9</b>
	<b>Senior</b>	<b>34.4</b>	<b>12</b>
	<b>Graduate</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>Doctorate</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>6</b>

Legend: AA = African American, MS AT = Master's in Athletic training, MS EX = Master's of Exercise Science

**Table 2.***Item Question 1*

The Kinesiology department is committed to maintaining a diverse, equitable, inclusive environment

Scale	Frequency	Percent
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4.5%</b>
<b>Neither Agree or</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>22.7%</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>40.9%</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>40.9%</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>31.8%</b>

**Mean Score = 4.0**

Note. A mean score of greater than three represents a positive attitude. A mean score of three represents a neutral attitude. A mean score of less than three represents a negative attitude.

**Table 3.***Likert Item Question 2*

Do you think your Kinesiology department has addressed issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion?

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>14.3%</b>
<b>Neither Agree or</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>38.1%</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>33.3%</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>14.3%</b>

**Mean Score = 3.3**

Note. A mean score of greater than three represents a positive attitude. A mean score of three represents a neutral attitude. A mean score of less than three represents a negative attitude.

**Table 4.***Likert Item Question 3*

My universities current Kinesiology curriculum adequately prepare students to work with diverse populations

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>13.6%</b>
<b>Neither Agree or</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>13.6%</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>63.9%</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9.1%</b>

**Mean Score = 3.7**

Note. A mean score of greater than three represents a positive attitude. A mean score of three represents a neutral attitude. A mean score of less than three represents a negative attitude.

**Table 5.***Likert Item Question 4*

To what extent do you believe DEI should be integrated into Kinesiology education?

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Small extent</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4.5%</b>
<b>Moderate extent</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>27.3%</b>
<b>Great extent</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>27.3%</b>
<b>Very great extent</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>40.9%</b>

**Mean Score = 3.0**

Note. A mean score of greater than three represents a positive attitude. A mean score of three represents a neutral attitude. A mean score of less than three represents a negative attitude.

**Table 6.***Likert Item Question 5*

The Kinesiology department offers courses that address racial/ethnic issues members in the community may face

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>27.3%</b>
<b>Neither Agree or</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>50.0%</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>13.6%</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9.1%</b>

**Mean Score = 3.0**

Note. A mean score of greater than three represents a positive attitude. A mean score of three represents a neutral attitude. A mean score of less than three represents a negative attitude.



**Table 7.***Likert Item Question 6*

Faculty are open to incorporating more racial/ethnic readings into the syllabus

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>13.6%</b>
<b>Neither Agree or</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>27.3.%</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>50.0%</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9.1%</b>

**Mean Score = 3.5**

Note. A mean score of greater than three represents a positive attitude. A mean score of three represents a neutral attitude. A mean score of less than three represents a negative attitude.

**Table 8.***Likert Item Question 7*

The faculty encourages discussion and interaction among students of different racial/ethnic backgrounds

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9.1%</b>
<b>Neither Agree or</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>22.7%</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>27.3%</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>40.9%</b>

**Mean Score = 4.0**

Note. A mean score of greater than three represents a positive attitude. A mean score of three represents a neutral attitude. A mean score of less than three represents a negative attitude.

**Table 9.***Likert Item Question 8*

Do you think engaging in interactions with other students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds can lead to increased tensions and challenges in the classroom?

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>27.3%</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>22.7%</b>
<b>Neither Agree or Disagree</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>22.7%</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>27.3%</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>

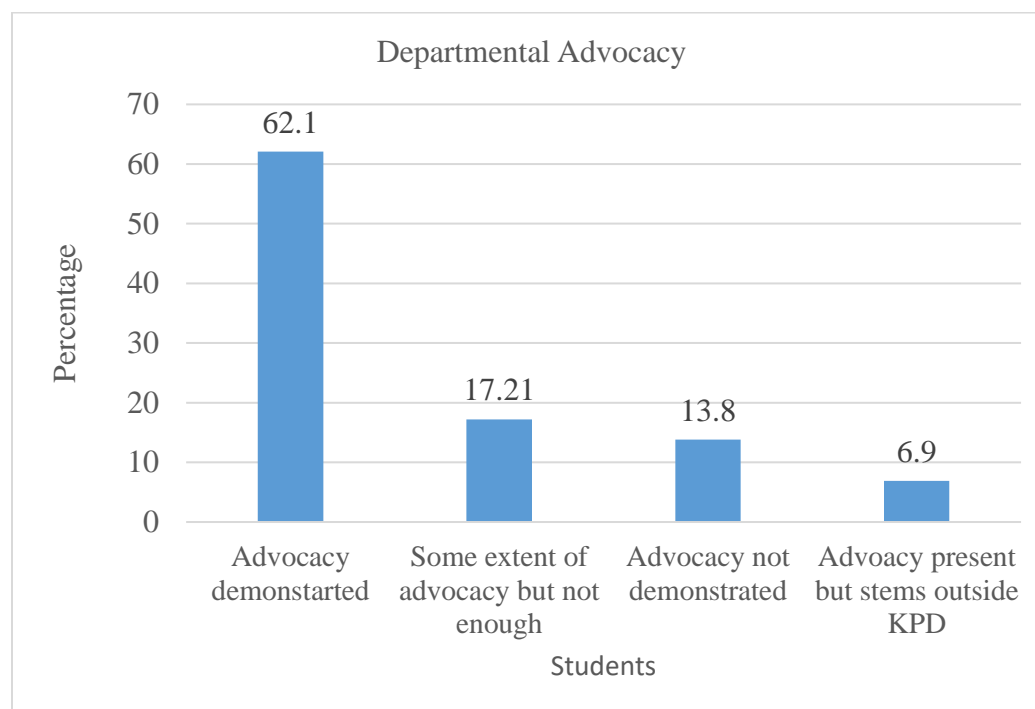
**Mean Score = 2.5**

Note. A mean score of greater than three represents a positive attitude. A mean score of three represents a neutral attitude. A mean score of less than three represents a negative attitude.

## Figures

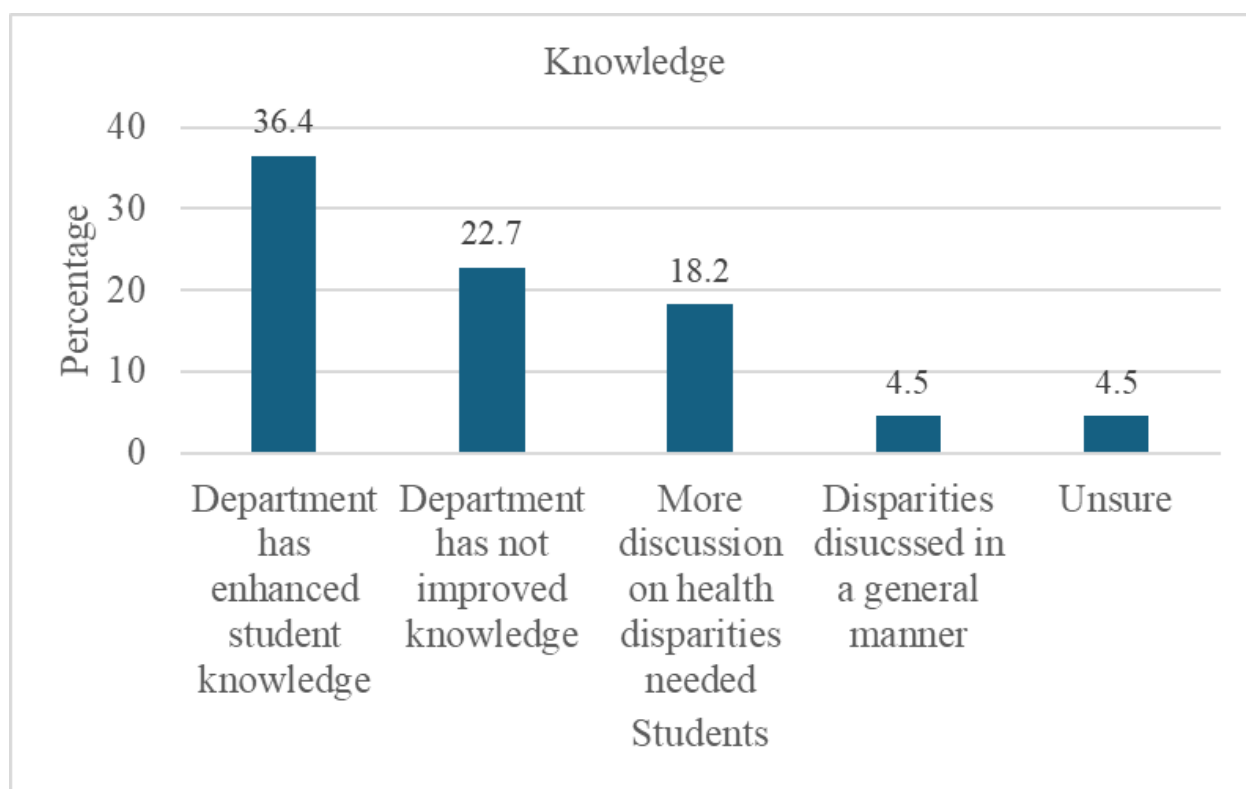
**Figure 1.**

*Advocacy Within The Kinesiology Department*



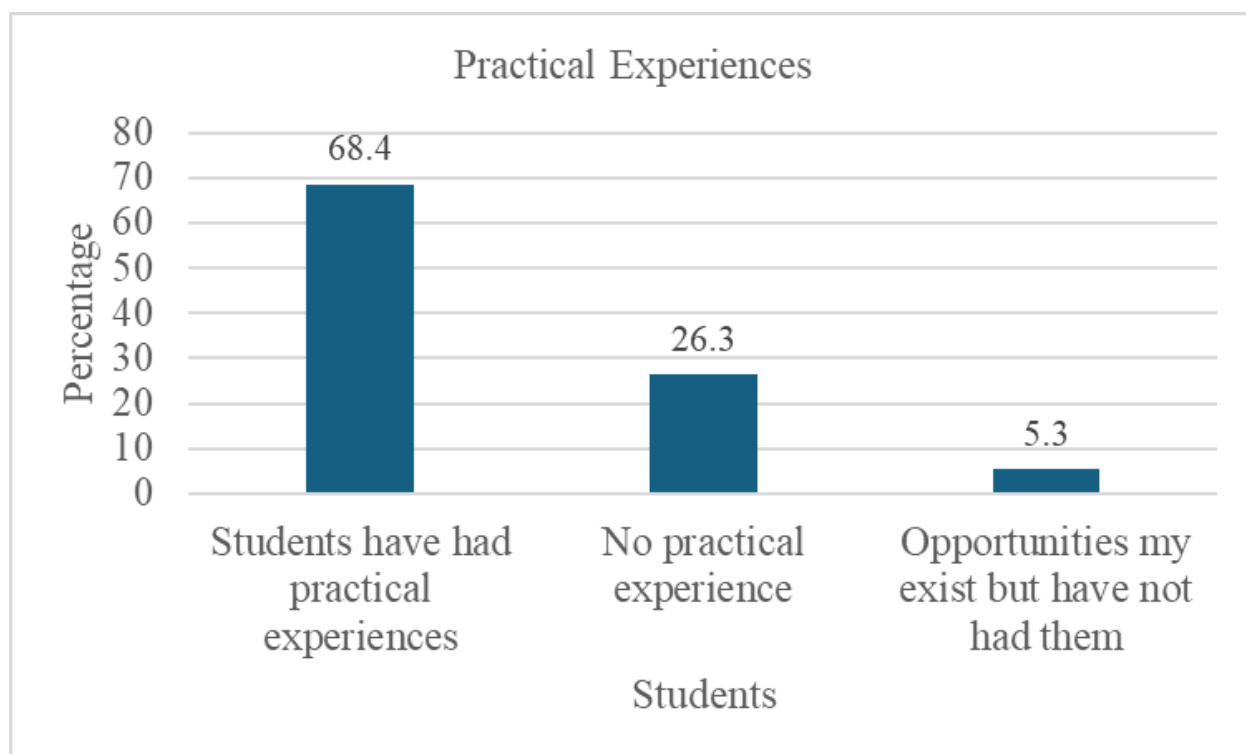
**Figure 2**

*Understanding Health Disparities Among Students*



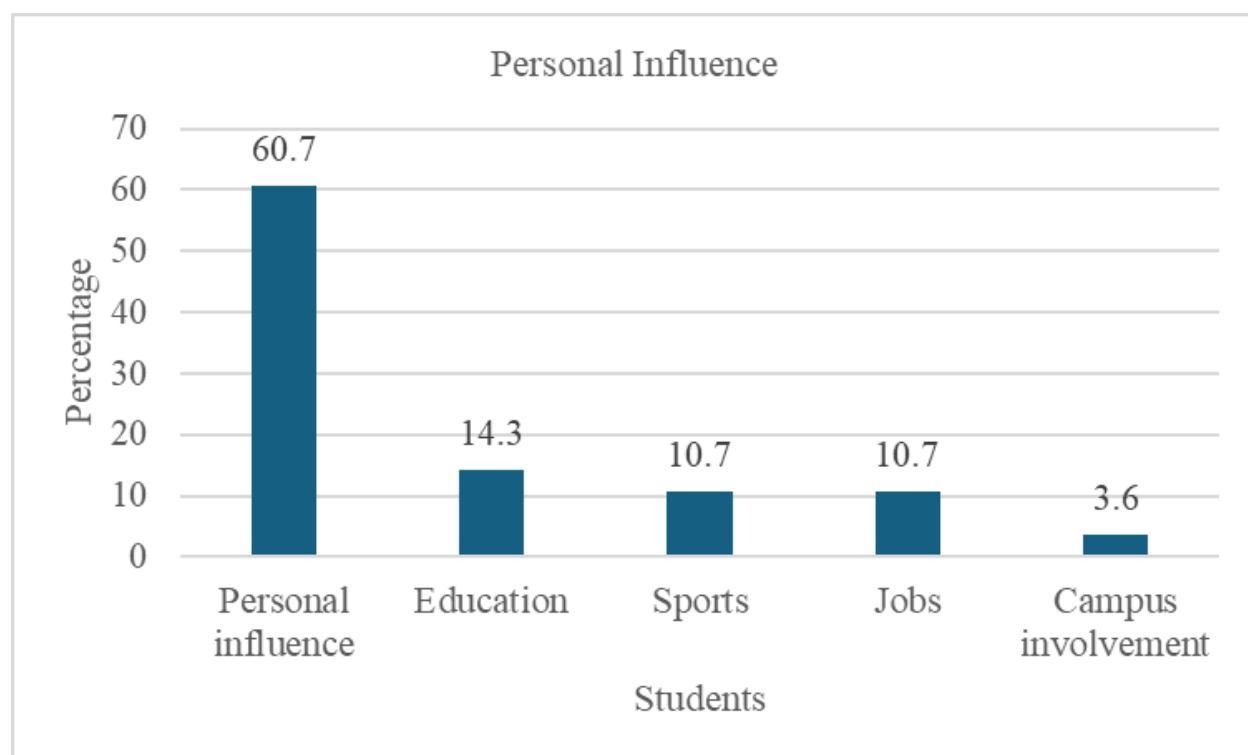
**Figure 3**

*Exposure to Practical Experience in Racial/Ethnic Diversity*



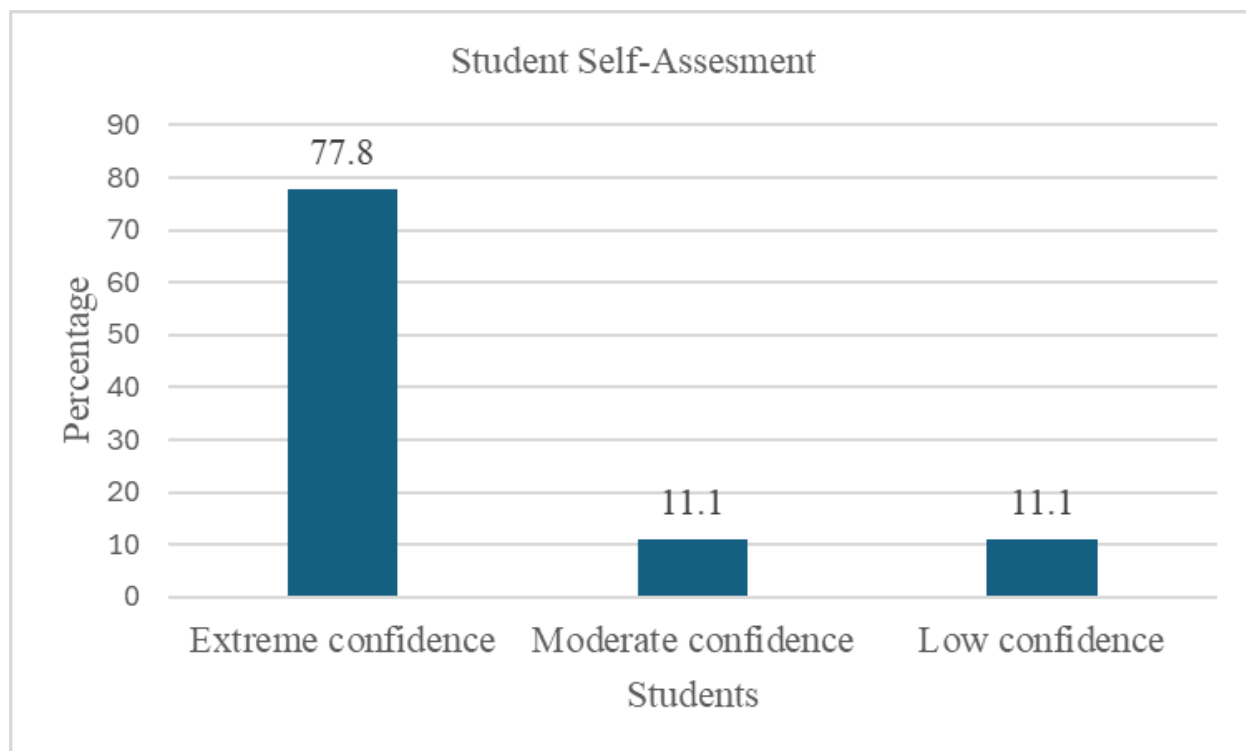
**Figure 4**

*Factors Influencing Interactions with Minority Individuals*



**Figure 5.**

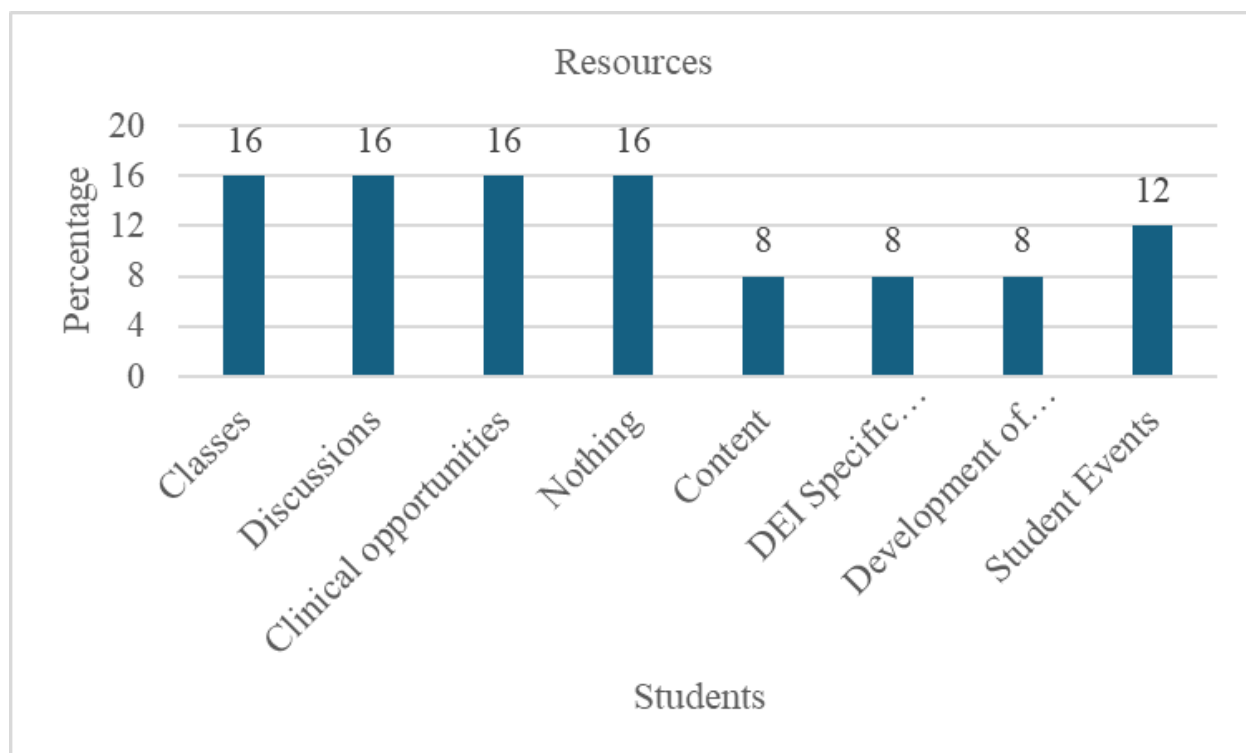
*Student Confidence in Engaging with Diverse Backgrounds*





**Figure 6**

*Preferred Resources for Enhancing Skills and Knowledge in Diversity*



## **Appendix**

Appendix A: Cover letter

Appendix B: KSD Survey

## Appendix A

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Wakpor Rengel, and I am a doctoral student at Concordia University St. Paul. I am currently conducting a research study on undergraduate students who are Kinesiology or Exercise Science majors, aiming to explore their beliefs on career readiness in working with diverse populations based on the implementation of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) principles.

I am reaching out to you as a department head, chair, or faculty member because of your crucial role in the academic community. Your support in forwarding and encouraging students to participate in this study would be greatly appreciated.

To participate in the study, students can access the survey by clicking the following link: [Insert Survey Link Here]. The survey will only take approximately [estimated time] to complete, and all responses will remain confidential. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time without consequences.

Thank you for considering supporting this research endeavor. Your collaboration will significantly contribute to the advancement of knowledge and understanding in the field of Kinesiology or Exercise Science. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at [rengel@csp.edu](mailto:rengel@csp.edu).

Thank you for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

## **Appendix B**

There are no anticipated risks associated with completing the online KSD questionnaire. You may skip any questions that you do not wish to answer or that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Participant identities will not be disclosed. All individuals and their institutions will be assigned pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

There are no direct benefits to completing this survey. However, the feedback provided will be advantageous to the larger Kinesiology community as they look to make improvements in education, advance DEI initiatives and ultimately better prepare students to work in a culturally diverse workforce to deliver more effective, empathetic patient care.

By clicking on the link below and completing the survey you are acknowledging you have read the above statement and are providing consent.

### **KSD Survey**

Demographic questions:

1. Name
2. Age
3. Ethnicity
4. Gender
5. Institution
6. Major
7. Academic Year

### **Likert Questions:**

*Please rate the following items on your level of agreement with 1 meaning= strongly disagree to 5 meaning= strongly agree.*

1. Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree

Commitment and beliefs about diversity

- The kinesiology department is committed to creating and maintaining a diverse, equitable, inclusive environment.
- How well do you think your kinesiology program has addressed issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion?
- Do you believe it's valuable to integrate DEI training into education?
- To what extent do you believe that DEI should be integrated into kinesiology education and training? Please rank the following:

(1) Not at all (2) To a small extent (3) To a moderate extent (4) To a great extent (5) To a very great extent

- Do you believe that the current kinesiology curriculum adequately prepares students to work with diverse populations?
- In your opinion, which of the following aspects are most important for kinesiology professionals to consider when working with diverse populations?

Please rank the following from 1 (most important) to 5 (least important):

- Cultural competency and awareness
- Inclusive program design and adaptation
- Language and communication skills
- Knowledge of health disparities and social determinants of health
- Building trust and rapport with diverse individuals

#### **Diverse Courses/experiences/development/ offered in kinesiology program**

- The kinesiology department offers courses that address racial/ethnic issues members in the community may face.

- Faculty is open to adjusting the syllabus and curriculum to reflect more racial/ethnic readings?
- The faculty encourages discussion and interaction among students of different racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- Engaging in interactions with other students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds creates tensions and arguments in the classroom.

### **Open ended probes**

*This section requires more than one word answers and is intended to elicit feedback on personal experiences and/or education as it relates to career readiness. Please provide a written response for each question. Lists, bullet points, sentences or paragraphs can all be utilized to answer the open ended probes.*

1. Do you perceive the kinesiology department as an advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion?
2. How well do you think the kinesiology department has enhanced your knowledge surrounding health disparities in minority populations?
3. Have you had opportunities within your kinesiology program to gain practical experience working with diverse populations?
4. What has been a greater influence in expanding interactions with minority individuals? Your personal life experiences, or education? Why?
5. On a scale of 1 to 100, where 1 signifies extremely low confidence and 100 signifies extremely high confidence, please rate your level of confidence in effectively communicating and engaging with individuals from diverse backgrounds in a kinesiology setting. Additionally, provide a brief explanation for your rating. How confident do you

feel in your ability to effectively communicate and engage with individuals from diverse backgrounds in a kinesiology setting?

6. What additional resources or support do you think would be valuable for kinesiology students in developing skills and knowledge related to working with diverse populations?