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## How BSU STEM Faculty Can Learn from Identity-Based Programs to Help Minority Students Feel a Sense of Belonging

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## BACKGROUND

Boise State University (BSU) has many identity-based resources available for their minority students whenever needed. These resources range from safe spaces like the Student Diversity Center, and programs such as LSAMP. However, there is a blind spot in these resources for minority students at BSU. This study has revealed that although minority students have a sense of belonging in identity-based organizations, they do not feel the same towards the classroom environment or STEM faculty. It is crucial that BSU learns through these students' stories and identity-based programs. BSU faculty can help minority students feel a sense of belonging in classrooms and not just on campus.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

How can BSU STEM faculty implement successful components of identity-based programs into the classroom in order to help minority students feel a sense of belonging?

## METHODS

- I. Developed proposal for IRB approval
- II. Developed interview questions and protocol
- III. Participants were recruited through LSAMP's student population using criterion sampling
- IV. Conducted one-on-one interviews that were ranged from 30 to 60 minutes
- V. Interviews were analyzed collaboratively through empathy mapping

## THEMES

### Identity-based faculty stepping out of professional role and doing more

"My family was going through a lot of financial and health problems. I had some relatives die at the moment. The main coordinator [of CAMP\*], helped us through it quite a bit. She helped get my citizenship. So, I'm super thankful for that. So, what I'm saying is that she stepped out of her role of just a teacher." – Joaquín

#### Joaquín talking about BSU faculty:

"To them [identity-based faculty], it's not just a job. And a lot of times, I know they have a lot of stress on their back, and still step out of their way to help. I love that about the programs. I don't expect my structures professor to do that." – Joaquín

### Identity-based programs give a sense of belonging and family-like relationships

"We started meeting new people through OELA\*, I got to connect and to communicate about their culture, learn different things. They get to learn different things from me...I started building up confidence and joining all those [identity-based] organizations...I'm making a change somehow [by being a peer mentor]. I'm helping other students. I'm helping organizations, I'm helping other people that are Latin or Hispanic just move forward. I know there isn't a lot of us on campus, but hey, you can be someone." - Jimena

#### Jimena talking about BSU classroom environment:

"...I don't think other students feel comfortable talking to others that are not similar to their race or ethnicity [talking about being a peer mentor to incoming freshman]...'this is your advisor now; you should go talk to them' but it's more like we're on our own." – Jimena

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"The CAMP\* program, I feel welcome there...the LSAMP\* staff and office, I feel really welcome there...the Equity Center, I feel really welcome there too...honestly all the staff in CAMP feel like familia [family]...to, the communities that are important to me, are those that are marginalized, those that are minorities." – Juanito

#### Juanito talking about BSU classroom environment:

"I noticed one time in one of my classes that people try to avoid sitting next to me. People didn't sit next to me because I was the only person of color...sometimes there's only 4 or 5 people in the breakout room [Zoom class session]. I asked a question and I was completely ignored. I was the only student of color within that breakroom." – Juanito

#### DICTIONARY\*

CAMP – College Assistant Migrant Program  
OELA – Organización de Estudiantes Latino-Americanos  
LSAMP – Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation

#### REFERENCES

- [1] E. Knaphus-Soran, D. Hiramori, and E. Litzler, "Anti-racist institutional transformation matters: how can community cultural wealth and counterspace processes illuminate areas for change?," in American Society for Engineering Education Annual Conference and Exposition, Online, 2021.
- [2] T. L. Strayhorn, *College students' sense of belonging: A key to education success for all students*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2012.

## IMPLICATIONS

- Identity-based programs help BSU's minority students feel safe, comfortable, and have a sense of belonging [2]
- Minority students don't express the same feelings towards classroom environment and/or STEM faculty [2]
- Identity-based programs can create family-like relationships with minority students [1]
- BSU cannot rely on only identity-based programs to help their minority students feel like they belong on campus [1]

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Have BSU STEM faculty gain understanding of how differently minority students' experiences and feelings are towards classroom vs. identity-based programs
- BSU STEM faculty should learn from identity-based programs and implement successful components in the classroom
- BSU STEM faculty should create a safe space in the classroom that allows for students to comfortably talk and participate in discussion

