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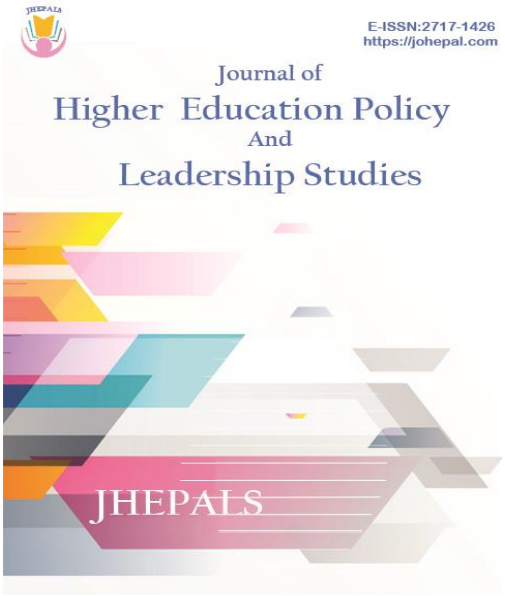
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Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging in Higher Education: The Case of Indiana University

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the theme of the Indiana University Office of the Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion's (OVPDEI) Annual Reports (2021-2022, 2022-2023). This research employs a qualitative research methodology with thematic and social network analysis as its methodological frameworks. The 2021-2022 OVPDEI Annual Report identified four main themes—Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB)—encompassing 16 sub-themes. The 2022-2023 OVPDEI Annual Report retained the same four primary themes —encompassing 16 sub-themes. However, it evolved its approach, reflecting a shift toward systemic and data-driven strategies. Both reports share recurring themes such as community engagement, cultural competency, and support mechanisms, which remain critical to fostering inclusion and belonging. However, the 2022-2023 report introduced unique elements such as policy development, feedback, and adaptation. The evolution from broad foundational efforts in 2021-2022 to actionable, systemic strategies in 2022-2023 mirrors best practices in higher education that prioritize representation and structural change. This study highlights Indiana University's progression in addressing DEIB through increasingly targeted and systemic initiatives. The shift from foundational approaches in 2021-2022 to more robust, data-driven strategies in 2022-2023 demonstrates the institution's responsiveness to evolving challenges and priorities.

Keywords: Diversity; Equity; Inclusion; Belonging; U.S. Higher Education; Indiana University

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Introduction

Academic institutions place significant importance on autonomy and expertise in their decision-making processes. Academic leaders must cultivate collaborative partnerships with various stakeholders to ensure that institutional activities align with a shared vision rooted in the organization's mission and values (Hendrickson, et al., 2013). Mission statements serve as a guiding force, providing inspiration, a sense of direction, and a reflection of the institution's character, ultimately shaping its actions and initiatives (Wilson, et al., 2012). Mission-driven educational institutions focus on advancing projects and programs that align with their foundational values and goals.

The demographic landscape in the United States is evolving rapidly, with projections indicating that one in five Americans will be an immigrant by 2050, and white individuals will comprise only 46% of the population (Passel&Cohn, 2008). This increasing racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity is mirrored in higher education, particularly among graduate students (Chao, et al., 2022). As the diversity of student populations grows, addressing cultural differences and implementing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) practices becomes paramount in educational settings. Researchers emphasize that many students may not have engaged with DEIB concepts or social justice topics in academic settings. These students often lack empathy for differing perspectives and may feel defensive when engaging in such discussions (Saucier et al., 2023). To address this, scholars recommend integrating classroom conversations about DEIB into course designs, enabling students to understand social dynamics better, recognize inequalities, and decide whether to contribute to solutions or perpetuate problems.

However, significant gaps still need to be in integrating DEIB principles into institutional policies. For example, Noone and Murray found that 34% of higher education institutions still need to include diversity as a criterion in hiring and placement processes (Noone & Murray, 2024). Similarly, Tiede (2022) reported that while DEI criteria were applied by 29.2% at the doctoral level, this figure increased to 45.6% at the higher education level.

Managing commitments to equality, diversity, and inclusion presents complex challenges for higher education institutions. While formal equality is enshrined in legal frameworks designed to prevent discrimination against protected groups, achieving equity requires a systemic evaluation of structural barriers and proactive measures to overcome them (Barnard & Hepple, 2000).

Diversity in higher education is commonly understood as representing individuals from various protected groups. Over time, institutions have transitioned from addressing diversity solely through equality and multiculturalism to embedding it as a central value (Ahmed, 2007). However, diversity alone does not guarantee inclusion. True inclusivity requires recognizing and valuing differences, addressing privileges, and dismantling systemic inequities (Claeys-Kulik et al., 2019). As an analogy, diversity can be likened to being invited to a party, while inclusion is being asked to dance. Critics, such as Juday (2017), argue that this perspective oversimplifies the issue, emphasizing that true inclusion requires empowering individuals to participate actively and contribute to decision-making processes rather than being passively included. This evolving understanding highlights the need for higher education institutions to move beyond representation and legal compliance toward

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fostering environments where equity and inclusion are deeply embedded in their practices and culture.

Creating inclusive environments remains a significant challenge for institutions that unconsciously adopt norms favoring majority groups. For instance, women, though not a numerical minority, often encounter difficulties in male-dominated organizational cultures where male-centric values shape governance and decision-making. These challenges are amplified for individuals with intersectional identities, as overlapping categories such as race, gender, and class intensify inequalities (Crenshaw, 1989). The research underscores the need for institutions to address these intersectional inequities through policies that enhance awareness and drive systemic change at both national and institutional levels (Nichols & Stahl, 2019). To foster meaningful diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), universities must go beyond legal compliance and surface-level representation, embedding systemic change into their structures and culture to create authentically inclusive environments (Scott, 2020).

In the United States, many higher education institutions, particularly historically white institutions (HWIs) or predominantly white institutions (PWIs), have recognized the importance of DEI within their mission frameworks (Barnett, 2020). These institutions often establish dedicated programs and departments to foster diversity and promote inclusion. Indiana University exemplifies this approach by integrating DEI principles into its strategic goals and institutional culture, demonstrating its commitment to creating a welcoming and supportive environment for all students and staff.

Indiana University (IU) strives to cultivate an inclusive campus climate that ensures equal access, participation, representation, and community. Through the efforts of the Office of the Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Multicultural Affairs (OVPDEI), the university supports numerous initiatives and programs aligned with these goals. These efforts are deeply rooted in IU's mission to foster a welcoming and inclusive environment for every student. IU has made notable progress in enhancing diversity within its student population, with underrepresented students comprising 30.6% of its degree-seeking enrollment—surpassing Indiana's state average of 26.6% for underrepresented populations. This progress, highlighted by a 4% increase in minority representation above the state average as of 2021 (OVPDEI, 2023), underscores the university's strategic focus and intentional efforts toward advancing diversity and inclusion.

Indiana University (IU) has successfully supported underrepresented students, evidenced by its retention rates and targeted initiatives. In 2021, the retention rate for full-time, first-year students from underrepresented backgrounds reached 80.7%, an improvement from 76.9% in 2020. Additionally, the dropout rate for minority students declined by approximately three percentage points, highlighting the effectiveness of IU's support systems. IU's commitment to diversity is further reflected in its detailed tracking of minority enrollment data, particularly for Latino students. The university's emphasis on Spanish-language communications and initiatives tailored to engage the Latino community showcase its efforts to address the unique needs of this demographic. Through these measurable outcomes, Indiana University underscores its dedication to fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive academic environment for all students (OVPDEI, 2023).

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Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging: Indiana University

This study aims to analyze the theme of the Indiana University Office of the Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion's (OVPDEI) Annual Reports (2021-2022, 2022-2023). Specifically, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the main themes and sub-themes in the OVPDEI Annual Reports for 2021-2022?
2. What are the sample activities associated with the sub-themes in the OVPDEI Annual Reports for 2021-2022?
3. What are the main themes and sub-themes in the OVPDEI Annual Reports for 2022-2023?
4. What are the sample activities associated with the sub-themes in the OVPDEI Annual Reports for 2022-2023?
5. What are the similarities and differences between the OVPDEI Annual Reports for 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 regarding sub-themes?

Through this analysis, the study seeks to provide deeper insights into how IU's OVPDEI initiatives align with its broader goals of fostering diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging across the institution.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This research employs a qualitative research methodology. The qualitative phase of the study involves a case study approach. According to Yin (2014), a case study examines a real-life situation in its natural context, especially when the boundaries between the context and the phenomenon are unclear. This method is particularly useful for addressing research questions such as "how," "why," and "what," enabling an in-depth exploration of a situation or phenomenon (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Furthermore, a case study provides a foundation for understanding and predicting unclear relationships between phenomena and supports the emergence of theoretical insights (Yin, 2014). As Merriam (2013) suggests, a case study is precious for investigating complex issues requiring a holistic and detailed analysis. For this research, qualitative data will be collected through document analysis.

Study Group

The study group comprises the Annual Reports (2021-2022, 2022-2023) of the Indiana University Office of the Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (OVPDEI). During the data collection process, the OVPDEI office was contacted via e-mail in October 2024 to obtain the reports. Additionally, the office's website was reviewed to collect further relevant documents and information.

Data Analysis

Document analysis, a qualitative research method, was employed to systematically and meticulously analyze the content of written documents (Tinto, 1993). According to Altheide (1996), document analysis involves steps such as setting criteria for document inclusion, collecting documents and data, identifying critical areas of analysis, coding the documents, verifying findings, and conducting analysis. Objectivity and reliability are crucial principles

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guiding this process. An analysis is considered reliable when other researchers analyzing documents under similar conditions arrive at similar conclusions (Altheide, 1996; Kıral, 2020).

The study utilized applied thematic analysis (ATA) and social network analysis as its methodological frameworks. Themes were derived based on research questions and a review of related literature, while sub-themes were identified through thematic and social network analyses. ATA is a versatile methodology that incorporates multiple epistemological, methodological, and theoretical approaches, and it is particularly effective for analyzing textual data from sources like interviews, focus groups, and existing documents (Guest et al., 2012; Mackieson et al., 2019).

For this study, the OVPDEI reports from 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 were analyzed independently to identify distinct themes and sub-themes. Subsequently, a comparative analysis of the findings was conducted within thematic and social network analyses to draw meaningful insights and connections.

Results

The findings of the research are presented below, organized according to the research questions.

The Main Themes, Sub-Themes, and Sample Activities in the OVPDEI Annual Reports 2021-2022

The main themes, sub-themes, and corresponding sample activities identified in the OVPDEI Annual Reports for 2021-2022 are illustrated in Figure 1. This diagram represents the interconnectedness of the themes and highlights critical areas of focus within the report.

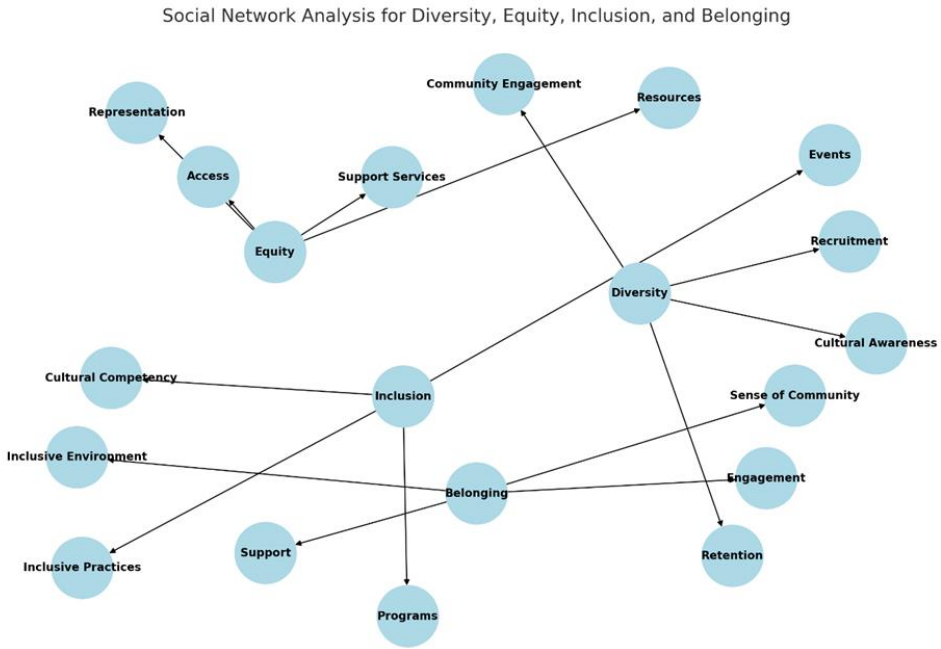


Figure 1. Social Network Analysis the OVPDEI Annual Reports 2021-2022

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Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging: Indiana University

According to Figure 1, it is observed that the report is categorized into four main themes: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, with a total of 16 sub-themes. Each central theme is associated with specific sub-themes, and the sample activities for these sub-themes, as highlighted in the OVPDEI Annual Reports 2021-2022, are provided in the attached documentation. The numbers next to each sub-theme represent the frequency of their occurrence within the text, reflecting the emphasis on each topic in the report.

Theme One: Diversity

The Diversity theme emphasizes representation across demographics and initiatives to enhance student body and faculty diversity. It is categorized into five sub-themes: Community Engagement, Recruitment, Cultural Awareness, Retention, and Events. These sub-themes and their corresponding sample activities are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.
Sub-Themes of Diversity

Sub-Theme	Frequency	Sample Activity
Community Engagement	3	Community partnerships, including collaborations with the Indiana Black Expo Education Conference, Indiana Latino Institute (ILI), and the Bowen Family Foundation.
Recruitment	3	Initiatives like the Herbert Presidential Scholars Program and partnerships with minority-serving institutions to attract diverse scholars.
Cultural Awareness	3	The Diversity Education and Cross-Cultural Engagement (DECCE) leads educational sessions and cross-cultural leadership programs.
Retention	4	Mentoring Services and Leadership Development programs providing academic, social, and health support.
Events	3	The Social Justice Conference on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, featuring keynote addresses and the Building Bridges Award.

The Diversity theme emphasizes representation across demographics and includes initiatives to enhance student body and faculty diversity. It is structured around five sub-themes: Community Engagement, Recruitment, Cultural Awareness, Retention, and Events. Community Engagement involves partnerships with organizations such as the Indiana Black Expo Education Conference, the Indiana Latino Institute (ILI), and the Bowen Family Foundation, focusing on recruitment, retention, education access, and college readiness for underrepresented communities. Recruitment efforts aim to diversify the student and faculty body through initiatives like the Herbert Presidential Scholars Program and partnerships with minority-serving institutions. Rashad Nelms, as Executive-in-Residence, played a significant role in diversifying faculty and leadership positions. IU's Diversity Education and Cross-Cultural Engagement (DECCE) promotes cultural awareness through educational sessions and cross-cultural leadership programs, fostering awareness and discussions on equity, diversity, and social justice. Retention initiatives include Mentoring Services and Leadership Development programs that connect students with mentors, offering academic, social, and health support. Events like the Social Justice Conference on Martin Luther King Jr. Day feature keynote addresses and the Building Bridges Award, which honors individuals embodying Dr. King's vision. These interconnected efforts collectively advance diversity and inclusivity at Indiana University.

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Theme Two: Equity

The Equity theme focuses on fair practices and policies that ensure equal opportunities for all, particularly for underrepresented groups. This theme is categorized into four sub-themes: Access, Support Services, Representation, and Resources, as outlined in Table 2.

Table 2
Sub-Themes of Equity

Sub-Theme	Frequency	Sample Activity
Access	2	Programs like the 21st Century Scholars Program provide access to higher education for low-income students.
Support Services	3	The Academic Support Center (ASC) offers tutoring, workshops, and academic advising to assist students.
Representation	3	Faculty diversification initiatives, including partnerships with minority-serving institutions, are prioritized.
Resources	3	The Indiana University Social Justice Conference addresses critical diversity, equity, and inclusion issues through keynote speakers and workshops.

The Equity theme in the report highlights four key sub-themes: Access, Support Services, Representation, and Resources, each reflecting Indiana University's commitment to fostering fairness and opportunity. Access is emphasized through programs like the 21st Century Scholars Program, which aims to eliminate financial barriers and provide higher education opportunities for low-income students. Support Services are exemplified by the Academic Support Center (ASC), which offers tutoring, workshops, and academic advising to help students overcome the challenges of college-level coursework and stay on track for graduation. Representation is prioritized through initiatives focused on diversifying the faculty, including recruitment efforts and partnerships with minority-serving institutions, as well as fostering community connections for minority faculty members. Lastly, Resources are enhanced by programs such as the Black Philanthropy Circle and Queer Philanthropy Circle, which provide significant funding for equity-focused projects and student initiatives across IU campuses. Collectively, these sub-themes underscore IU's dedication to creating an equitable and supportive academic environment.

Theme Three: Inclusion

The Inclusion theme emphasizes fostering a welcoming environment where all individuals feel valued and included. It is achieved through various programs and initiatives that promote awareness and education. The sub-themes and corresponding sample activities related to the Inclusion theme are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Sub-Themes of Inclusion

Sub-Theme	Frequency	Sample Activity
Programs	3	Indiana University hosted the Diversity Career and Internship Fair.
Inclusive Practices	3	The Training Outreach Program (TOP) by the LGBTQ+ Culture Center supports inclusivity initiatives.
Cultural Competency	3	The First Nations Educational & Cultural Center enhances recognition and support for Native American communities.

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Events	3	Indiana University Social Justice Conference bring together community members to discuss critical issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, with keynote speakers and workshops

The Equity theme in the report is centered on four key sub-themes: Access, Support Services, Representation, and Resources, each illustrating Indiana University's dedication to fostering fairness and opportunity. Access is highlighted through initiatives like the 21st Century Scholars Program, which seeks to remove financial barriers and expand higher education opportunities for low-income students. Support Services are exemplified by the Academic Support Center (ASC), which provides tutoring, workshops, and academic advice to help students navigate the challenges of college-level coursework and maintain progress toward graduation. Representation is a priority, with efforts to diversify faculty through targeted recruitment and partnerships with minority-serving institutions while fostering community connections for minority faculty members. Lastly, Resources are bolstered by initiatives such as the Black Philanthropy Circle and Queer Philanthropy Circle, which offer substantial funding to support equity-focused projects and student programs across IU campuses. These sub-themes reflect IU's commitment to building an equitable and inclusive academic environment.

Theme Four: Belonging

The theme of belonging emphasizes fostering community among students and faculty, developing support networks, and recognizing individual and collective achievements to enhance the overall campus experience. The sub-themes of belonging and their associated frequencies and sample activities are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Sub-Themes of Belonging

Sub-Theme	Frequency	Sample Activity
Engagement	3	Engagement activities such as the Diversity Career and Internship Fair.
Support	4	Mentoring Services and Leadership Development providing personal encouragement, career advice, and academic support to students.
Sense of Community	3	The La Casa Latino Cultural Center and the LGBTQ+ Culture Center created spaces for community building.
Inclusive Environment	4	Diversity Education and Cross-Cultural Engagement initiatives promoted an inclusive and respectful environment fostering dialogue about equity and social justice.

The Inclusion theme in the report is structured around four sub-themes: Engagement, Support, Sense of Community, and Inclusive Environment. Under the Engagement sub-theme, the report highlights activities such as the Diversity Career and Internship Fair, which provided students with opportunities to connect with potential employers and explore internships and full-time positions. The Support sub-theme emphasizes initiatives like Mentoring Services and Leadership Development, which offer personal guidance, career advice, and academic assistance, particularly for students from underserved backgrounds. The Sense of Community sub-theme focused on fostering connections and belonging through cultural centers such as La Casa Latino Cultural Center and the LGBTQ+ Culture

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Center, creating spaces for students to build relationships and strengthen their identity. Finally, the Inclusive Environment sub-theme featured initiatives like Diversity Education and Cross-Cultural Engagement, which aimed to promote an inclusive and respectful atmosphere that encourages open equity and social justice dialogue. These sub-themes collectively reflect the university's commitment to fostering inclusion across its community.

The Main Themes, Sub-Themes, and Sample Activities in the OVPDEI Annual Reports 2022-2023

The main themes, sub-themes, and corresponding sample activities identified in the OVPDEI Annual Reports for 2022-2023 are illustrated in Figure 2. This diagram highlights the interconnectedness of themes, showcasing how Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging have been operationalized through various initiatives and program.

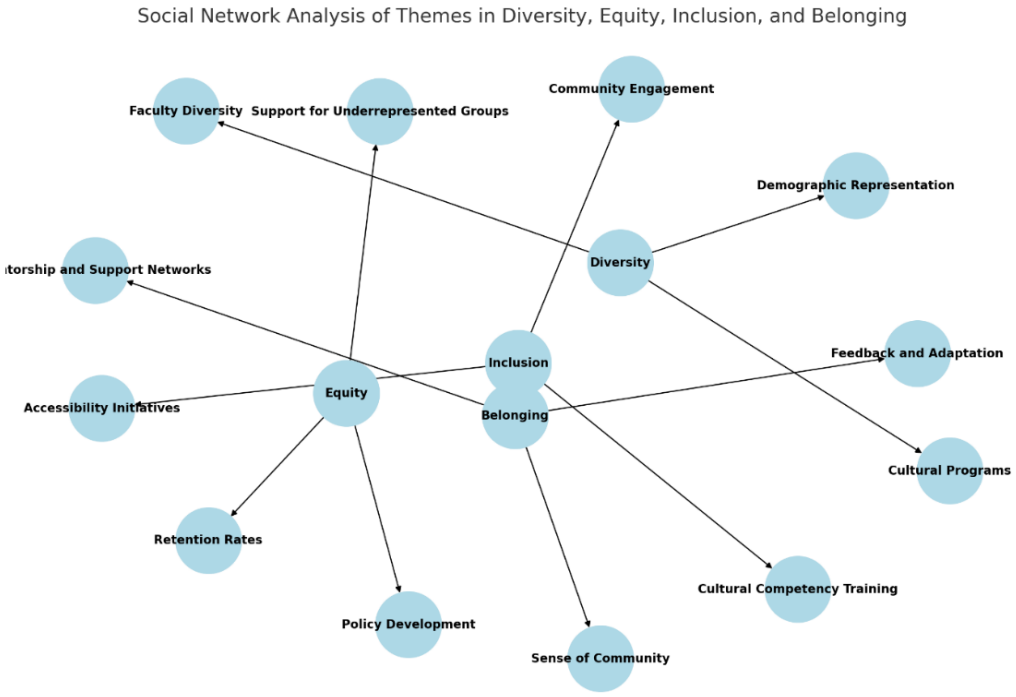


Figure 2. Social Network Analysis the OVPDEI Annual Reports 2021-2022

According to Figure 2, it is observed that the report is organized into four main themes: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, comprising 12 sub-themes. The main themes, sub-themes, and associated sample activities from the OVPDEI Annual Reports 2022-2023 are provided in the attached documentation. The numbers next to each sub-theme represent the frequency of their occurrence in the text, reflecting the emphasis placed on each sub-theme in the report.

Theme One: Diversity

The theme of diversity highlights efforts to enhance representation across various demographics and initiatives to improve diversity within the student body and faculty. The

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sub-themes of diversity, along with their frequencies and associated sample activities, are presented in Table 5.

Table 5.
Sub-Themes of Diversity

Sub-Theme	Frequency	Sample Activity
Demographic Representation	5	Significant growth in the number of Latino and Hispanic students.
Faculty Diversity	4	IU Presidential Diversity Hiring Initiative, resulting in the hiring of 97 individuals from traditionally underrepresented groups over two years.
Cultural Programs	3	Hosting cultural events such as the Social Justice Conference to celebrate diversity.

The report organizes the Diversity theme into three sub-themes: Demographic Representation, Faculty Diversity, and Cultural Programs. In Demographic Representation, the report highlights an increase in underrepresented student enrollment, constituting 30.6% of the degree-seeking population. It includes a notable rise in Latino and Hispanic student numbers, reflecting efforts to enhance diversity in the student body. For Faculty Diversity, the university has made significant strides in hiring diverse faculty members through initiatives like the IU Presidential Diversity Hiring Initiative. This program has recruited 97 individuals from traditionally underrepresented groups over two years, showcasing a strong commitment to equity in academic staffing. Under Cultural Programs, Indiana University celebrates diversity through various cultural events like the Social Justice Conference. These events unite students and faculty to engage in meaningful discussions about social issues, fostering a deeper understanding of diversity and inclusion.

Theme Two: Equity

The Equity theme emphasizes the importance of fair practices and policies that ensure equal opportunities for all, particularly underrepresented groups. Table 6 outlines the sub-themes, their frequency in the OVPDEI Annual Reports 2021-2022, and examples of related activities.

Table 6.
Sub-Themes of Diversity Equity

Sub-Theme	Frequency	Sample Activity
Retention Rates	5	Focus on improving retention rates for underrepresented students, achieving an increase to 80.7% for full-time beginners.
Support for Underrepresented Groups	5	Programs like the 21st Century Scholars Program and DEAP provide equitable access to education for marginalized students.
Policy Development	3	Annual climate surveys inform policies by identifying challenges faced by diverse student groups, enabling targeted interventions.
Accessibililiy Initiatives	4	Tools like *Anthology Ally* aim to ensure accessible learning experiences for all students.

The Equity theme is organized into four sub-themes: Retention Rates, Support for Underrepresented Groups, Policy Development, and Accessibility Initiatives. Retention Rates focuses on improving the retention of underrepresented students, which has reached

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80.7% for full-time beginners. Targeted programs for these groups have significantly contributed to this achievement. Support for Underrepresented Groups includes initiatives like the 21st Century Scholars Program and DEAP, which offer academic support, mentoring, and financial assistance to ensure equitable access to education for marginalized students. Under Policy Development, the annual climate survey is crucial in shaping equity-focused policies. It identifies diverse student groups and informs tailored interventions to address those challenges effectively. Accessibility Initiatives emphasize making learning accessible for all students, particularly those with disabilities. Programs like Anthology Ally implement Universal Design for Learning principles, ensuring inclusivity in educational environments. These sub-themes collectively reflect efforts to promote equity across Indiana University's initiatives.

Theme Three: Inclusion

The Inclusion theme highlights efforts to create a welcoming environment where all individuals feel valued and included through programs and initiatives that promote awareness and education. The sub-themes and sample activities associated with this theme are presented in Table 7.

Table 7.
Sub-Themes of Inclusion Theme

Sub-Theme	Frequency	Sample Activity
Cultural Competency Training	5	The university offers training programs, such as the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Leadership Certification.
Accessibility Initiatives	4	Programs like Anthology Ally are implemented to ensure learning is accessible for all students.
Community Engagement	4	Indiana University promotes community involvement through various outreach initiatives.

The report's Inclusion theme is organized into three sub-themes: Cultural Competency Training, Accessibility Initiatives, and Community Engagement. Under Cultural Competency Training, the university offers programs like the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Leadership Certification, designed to equip faculty and staff with the necessary skills to create and maintain inclusive environments.

The Accessibility Initiatives focus on ensuring learning opportunities for all students, particularly those with disabilities. Programs like Anthology Ally integrate Universal Design for Learning principles to enhance accessibility and support diverse learning needs. In the Community Engagement sub-theme, Indiana University prioritizes outreach initiatives that connect with underrepresented populations, fostering a sense of belonging and promoting inclusive participation in the broader community.

Theme Four: Belonging

The Belonging theme centers on fostering community among students and faculty, creating support networks and recognizing individual and collective achievements to enhance the overall campus experience. The sub-themes of belonging and their corresponding sample activities are presented in Table 8.

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Table 8.
Sub-Themes of Belonging Theme

Sub-Theme	Frequency	Sample Activity
Mentorship and Support Networks	7	Faculty-to-Faculty Network Mentoring Program and DEAP, aimed at supporting diverse students and faculty.
Sense of Community	4	Events and programs that connect students from various backgrounds, cultivating a strong sense of belonging.
Feedback and Adaptation	3	Regular climate surveys that help the university adapt its strategies to ensure an inclusive and supportive environment.

The report organizes the Belonging theme into three sub-themes: Mentorship and Support Networks, Sense of Community, and Feedback and Adaptation. In Mentorship and Support Networks, the report highlights the implementation of initiatives such as the Faculty-to-Faculty Network Mentoring Program and DEAP. These programs are designed to build robust support systems for students and faculty from diverse backgrounds, fostering personal and professional development through inclusive connections. Various events and programs that facilitate interactions among students from diverse backgrounds emphasize a sense of community. These initiatives play a crucial role in fostering a sense of belonging, enabling students to feel connected and supported, promoting their engagement and success on campus. Through Feedback and Adaptation, the university conducts regular climate surveys to gather input from the community. This ongoing feedback allows the institution to refine its strategies and ensure all members feel respected, valued, and included within the campus environment.

Similarities and Differences Between OVPDEI Annual Reports 2021-2022 and 2022-2023

Table 9 highlights the similarities and differences between the OVPDEI Annual Reports from 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, focusing on how the sub-themes evolved over the two periods.

Table 9.
Similarities and Differences Between OVPDEI Annual Reports 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 in Terms of Sub-Themes

Theme	2021-2022 OVPDEI Annual Report	2022-2023 OVPDEI Annual Report
Diversity	Centers around Diversity as a major hub with connections to sub-themes like Community Engagement, Cultural Awareness, Events, and Sense of Community.	Inclusion and Equity serve as central connectors with Diversity and Belonging closely tied.
Equity	Connected to broad sub-themes like Representation, Access, and Support Services, emphasizing fairness and access.	Focused on specific mechanisms such as Support for Underrepresented Groups, Retention Rates, and Accessibility Initiatives.
Inclusion	Linked to Inclusive Practices and Cultural Competency, emphasizing the creation of welcoming environments.	Linked to Inclusive Practices and Cultural Competency, emphasizing the creation of welcoming environments.
Belonging	Tied to Support Programs and Retention, emphasizing sustained participation.	Focused on Sense of Community and Cultural Programs, highlighting the importance of community connections and cultural activities.

The OVPDEI annual reports from 2021-2022 to 2022-2023 demonstrate a progression from foundational strategies to more integrated and actionable approaches in addressing

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Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB). In 2021-2022, diversity was central, connected to themes like community engagement and cultural awareness, while equity focused on broad concepts such as representation and access. Inclusion emphasized fostering welcoming environments through cultural competency and belonging, highlighting support programs and retention efforts. By 2022-2023, diversity became more intertwined with Inclusion and Equity, with a heightened focus on Belonging. Equity shifted to targeted initiatives for underrepresented groups and accessibility. Inclusion expanded to include feedback mechanisms and cultural competency training, fostering adaptability, while belonging evolved to emphasize community connections and cultural activities, reflecting a deeper integration of themes.

Both reports share themes such as Community Engagement, Cultural Competency, and Support Mechanisms. Community Engagement is recognized as a critical driver for fostering inclusion and belonging, Cultural competence is highlighted as crucial for creating inclusive environments, and Support Mechanisms are emphasized in both reports, with the 2022-2023 report detailing specific programs and networks. However, each report also has unique elements. The 2021-2022 report emphasizes Events and Cultural Awareness, focusing on visible activities promoting diversity and Inclusive Practices, which reflect a broader operational focus on day-to-day inclusivity. In contrast, the 2022-2023 report highlights Policy Development, Feedback, and Adaptation, reflecting continuous improvement, formal DEIB structures, and Support for Underrepresented Groups and Accessibility Initiatives, showcasing targeted equity strategies. This evolution reflects a shift from general frameworks to actionable and measurable strategies, strengthening the institution's commitment to DEIB.

Conclusion, Discussion, and Suggestions

The 2021-2022 OVPDEI Annual Report identified four main themes—Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging—encompassing 16 sub-themes. Diversity was the focal point, connecting to sub-themes such as Community Engagement, Cultural Awareness, Recruitment, and Retention. These align with Harper and Hurtado's (2007) findings, highlighting the importance of fostering engagement and cultural understanding to improve inclusivity. Equity emphasizes Representation, Access, and Support Services, supporting Ahmed and Swan's (2006) notion that fair representation underpins institutional equity. Inclusion focused on Cultural Competency and Inclusive Practices, echoing Freeman et al.'s (2007) argument that fostering welcoming environments is critical for creating inclusive institutions. Belonging prioritized Support Programs and Retention, underscoring the institution's commitment to sustaining long-term engagement among diverse groups (Strayhorn, 2012).

The 2021-2022 report featured activities such as the Social Justice Conference, partnerships with the Indiana Latino Institute, and mentoring initiatives targeting underrepresented students. Programs like the Herbert Presidential Scholars Program emphasized recruitment, while the Academic Support Center offered Support Services. These activities align with Mitchell et al. (2012), who argue that such targeted programs improve representation and engagement. Furthermore, cultural events and cross-cultural leadership workshops addressed Cultural Awareness and Inclusive Practices, reflecting the

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findings of Tinto (1993), who emphasized the role of cultural integration in fostering student success.

The 2022-2023 OVPDEI Annual Report retained the same four primary themes but evolved its approach, reflecting a shift toward systemic and data-driven strategies. Diversity became closely linked to Inclusion and Equity, while Faculty Diversity and Cultural Programs emerged as significant sub-themes. Equity expanded to include Retention Rates, Accessibility Initiatives, and Policy Development, demonstrating a commitment to structural change (Claeys-Kulik & Jørgensen, 2018). Inclusion-integrated Feedback Mechanisms and Cultural Competency Training align with Scott (2020), who emphasizes the importance of adaptive, responsive strategies for fostering inclusion. Belonging focused on Sense of Community and Mentorship Networks, emphasizing connections and support systems (Patton et al., 2007).

Sample activities in the 2022-2023 report included the IU Presidential Diversity Hiring Initiative, which successfully hired 97 underrepresented faculty members, reflecting a focus on Faculty Diversity. Accessibility Initiatives such as Anthology Ally enhanced equitable learning experiences, while mentorship programs like DEAP supported Retention Rates and fostered Belonging. Regular climate surveys enabled Feedback Mechanisms that informed policy adjustments, reflecting Claeys-Kulik and Jørgensen's (2018) call for evidence-based inclusivity strategies. These targeted activities align with Harper's (2012) findings, emphasizing measurable outcomes and institutional accountability in advancing DEIB goals.

Both reports share recurring themes such as Community Engagement, Cultural Competency, and Support Mechanisms, which remain critical to fostering inclusion and belonging. However, the 2022-2023 report introduced unique elements such as Policy Development and Feedback and Adaptation, reflecting a shift toward continuous improvement and formal accountability (Scott, 2020). Additionally, targeted initiatives like Support for Underrepresented Groups and Accessibility highlighted more explicit equity measures, addressing critiques of superficial diversity efforts (Ahmed, 2007). The evolution from broad foundational efforts in 2021-2022 to actionable, systemic strategies in 2022-2023 mirrors best practices in higher education that prioritize both representation and structural change (Crenshaw, 1989; Harper & Hurtado, 2007).

This study highlights Indiana University's progression in addressing DEIB through increasingly targeted and systemic initiatives. The shift from foundational approaches in 2021-2022 to more robust, data-driven strategies in 2022-2023 demonstrates the institution's responsiveness to evolving challenges and priorities. This evolution aligns with Tinto's (1993) assertion that institutions must integrate cultural and structural strategies to foster inclusivity. By implementing targeted programs, feedback mechanisms, and accessibility initiatives, Indiana University is a model for fostering a diverse and inclusive academic environment that prioritizes representation and systemic equity. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance DEIB strategies in higher education:

- Institutionalize Regular Feedback Mechanisms: Develop comprehensive feedback systems, such as climate surveys, to identify ongoing challenges and adapt strategies to meet the evolving needs of diverse student populations.

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- Expand Targeted Support Programs: Build on successful initiatives, such as the 21st Century Scholars Program, by expanding support for underrepresented groups, including mentorship networks and financial aid programs tailored to specific demographics.
- Strengthen Accessibility Efforts: Implement tools and practices grounded in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to ensure that all students, particularly those with disabilities, have equitable learning opportunities.
- Enhance Cultural Competency Training: Introduce mandatory cultural competency workshops for faculty, staff, and students to foster a deeper understanding of diversity and encourage inclusive practices across all institution levels.
- Promote Intersectional Research and Policies: Encourage research that addresses intersectional challenges within DEIB efforts and uses findings to inform institutional policies that account for overlapping identity factors.
- Foster Long-Term Community Partnerships: Strengthen collaborations with external organizations to create pipelines for underrepresented students and provide broader opportunities for engagement and learning.
- Develop Clear Metrics for Success: Establish specific, measurable outcomes for DEIB initiatives to assess progress and hold the institution accountable for achieving its goals.

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Human Participants

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Originality Note

The author confirms that this manuscript is original, has not been published previously, and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere, in whole or in part.

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The author confirms that AI-assisted technologies (e.g., Grammarly) were used solely for the purpose of improving the grammar and language of the manuscript. No AI tool was used to generate content or interpret research findings. Additionally, the manuscript was reviewed and proofread by a native speaker of English prior to submission.

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