

Dr. Amer Ahmed
Vice Provost for Inclusive Excellence
University of Vermont
Feb. 5, 2025

5:00 PM – Dr. Pam Luster (@DrPamLuster)

Welcome to #EquityChat! This evening, we're delighted to host @dramerfahmed, the Vice Provost for Inclusive Excellence @uvmvermont. Dr. Ahmed's work in advancing inclusive excellence across higher education has been transformative. Let's learn from his vast experiences and insights. @DrTammeil @Iamkeithcurry

5:06 PM – Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson (@DrTammeil)

Q1 @dramerfahmed, tell us: what's your walk-up song or anthem that embodies your drive for advancing inclusive excellence? #EquityChat @DrPamLuster @Iamkeithcurry

[Amer F. Ahmed, Ed.D. @dramerfahmed · 12m](#)

I thought long and hard about this. I think I have to go with "Keep Ya Head Up" by Tupac Shakur: https://youtu.be/oKKoy2F9F54?si=e_K3tdDms_rrBJEy... I think it just captures the essence of what moves and motivates me to do the work.

[Equity Avengers @equityavengers · 9m](#)

This one is a classic! @Iamkeithcurry used this one as inspiration for an [#unapologeticleadershipthought](#) <https://iamkeithcurry.org/2024/08/unapologetic-leadership-thought-keep-ya-head-up/>

5:14 PM – Dr. Keith Curry (@Iamkeithcurry)

Q2 @dramerfahmed, throughout your diverse career in inclusive excellence, was there a defining moment or key experience that catalyzed your commitment to engaging in this vital work? How has that influenced your approach at UVM? #EquityChat @DrTammeil @DrPamLuster

[Amer F. Ahmed, Ed.D. @dramerfahmed · 3m](#)

(1/1)I studied abroad in Durban, South Africa during the Truth and Reconciliation Process when Mandela was President. The experience of being in a country only 4 years after Apartheid ended and in classes with people who grew up in racial segregation changed me.

[Equity Avengers @equityavengers · 53s](#)

Only four years! Trauma like that lives on for generations.... how raw and intense everything must still have been when you were there.

[Amer F. Ahmed, Ed.D. @dramerfahmed · 2m](#)

(2/2) I believed there was a conversation happening on race and racism that wasn't occurring in the U.S. I also saw a willingness to engage in dialogue, healing, forgiveness with accountability, and much more that I simply was not seeing in the U.S. at the time.

[Amer F. Ahmed, Ed.D. @dramerfahmed](#)

(3/3) It inspired me to dedicate my life towards creating deeper understanding and justice for all. Lastly, 9/11 fundamentally altered the experience of myself and my community in the U.S. I've known that I have a responsibility to educate others about our community.

5:21 PM – Dr. Pam Luster (@DrPamLuster)

Q3 [@dramerfahmed](#), in your role, collaboration is key. To do this work, we must continue learning and partnering with others. How do you educate yourself and who is informing your practice? #EquityChat [@DrTammeil](#) [@lamkeithcurry](#)

[Amer F. Ahmed, Ed.D. @dramerfahmed · 6m](#)

(1/2) I'm a collaborator by nature that gift strengthens my ability to be effective. I recognize the gifts and ability of others and am adaptive in partnering with others. I've also been mentored well by leaders in my field. Most importantly, by Dr. Damon A. Williams [@DAWPHD](#)

[Amer F. Ahmed, Ed.D. @dramerfahmed · 4m](#)

(2/2) He has poured into me tremendous knowledge, wisdom, and expertise. We are both from Springfield, Ohio and are alums of Miami Univ (OH), and advanced DEI work at Univ. of Michigan. So our ties and connections go beyond the work. I'm thankful for all he's invested into me.

[Equity Avengers @equityavengers · 3s](#)

These kinds of mentors are so essential in higher ed -- I feel like so many of us involved in this work have these kinds of stories. This is how the work becomes personal!

5:28 PM – Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson (@DrTammeil)

Q4 [@dramerfahmed](#), overseeing [@uvmvermont](#) identity centers & leading University Inclusive Excellence Council involves complex, university-wide work. What strategies are most effective

in building capacity & advancing inclusive excellence? [#EquityChat](#) [@DrPamLuster](#)
[@lamkeithcurry](#)

[Amer F. Ahmed, Ed.D. @dramerfahmed · 3m](#)

(1/3) My first two years, we taught all colleges and administrative units in a decentralized institution to develop Inclusive Excellence Action Plans. It was the first data-driven IE strategy in the history of UVM:

<https://uvm.edu/ie/comprehensive-inclusive-excellence-action-plan>

[Amer F. Ahmed, Ed.D. @dramerfahmed · 2m](#)

(2/3) We had to teach many to shift from the performative to action-based and strategy (not just tactics). The tactics need to support the strategy and need to connect to broader institutional goals, priorities, values, and strategies.

[Equity Avengers @equityavengers · 1s](#)

This right here! Not *performative* but ACTION-based and strategic! This is how to make this kind of work truly impactful. [#EquityChat](#)

[Amer F. Ahmed, Ed.D. @dramerfahmed · 38s](#)

(3/3) Engaging senior leaders (w/ expectations from the President and Provost) were key in connecting IE Action Plans to unit Strategic Plans as well as the Provost's Academic Success Goals (<https://uvm.edu/provost/academic-success-goals...>) and the President's Strategic Vision: <https://uvm.edu/president/amplifying-our-impact>

[Amer F. Ahmed, Ed.D. @dramerfahmed · 3m](#)

Our institutional values were key guides as well:

<https://uvm.edu/president/our-common-ground>

5:35 PM – Dr. Keith Curry ([@lamkeithcurry](#))

Q5 [@dramerfahmed](#), the journey towards racial equity is long and feels especially arduous now. How are you sustaining yourself & what practices would you recommend to other [#EquityAvengers](#) for maintaining their well-being? [#EquityChat](#) [@DrTammeil](#) [@DrPamLuster](#)

[Amer F. Ahmed, Ed.D. @dramerfahmed](#)

(1/2) I have developed a deep commitment to self-care. For example, over this past winter break I focused on family and took a true break from work. This was key in being able to show up fully invested and focused for the current moment we're collectively navigating.

[Equity Avengers @equityavengers · 36s](#)

Self care is essential in this work. Too often everything feels so urgent, so immediate and we wonder why burnout is as pervasive as it is in higher ed, especially among equity practitioners. We are so glad you were able to take the time you needed for you and your loved ones.

[Amer F. Ahmed, Ed.D. @dramerfahmed](#)

(2/2) My past self would have felt guilty and/or selfish for truly investing and taking that time for myself. I no longer feel that way and fully recognize that if I don't, I will burn out if I don't. I am invested in a lifetime commitment to advancing this work.

5:41 PM – Dr. Pam Luster (@DrPamLuster)

Q6 @dramerfahmed, as someone who has consulted widely across North America, what are some of the common challenges institutions face in approaching equity work, and how do you recommend they address these challenges? #EquityChat @DrTammeil @lamkeithcurry

[Amer F. Ahmed, Ed.D. @dramerfahmed · 2m](#)

(1/2) Walking the walk rather than simply talking the talk. I think in higher ed, the cultivation of the ego is pervasive in the culture. Often what people think and say is more valued than what is embodied and enacted. Humility is a practice that needs to be better cultivated.

[Amer F. Ahmed, Ed.D. @dramerfahmed · 1m](#)

(2/2) With that, a commitment to engage in difficult dialogue across difference. A willingness to have hard conversations about challenging topics without dehumanizing others. This became difficult in hundreds of institutions and colleagues who I engaged post-10/7 in particular.

5:47 PM – Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson (@DrTammeil)

Q7 @dramerfahmed, what gives you hope for the future of inclusive excellence in higher education? What vision do you hold that keeps you motivated and energized in your work? #EquityChat @DrTammeil @DrPamLuster

[Amer F. Ahmed, Ed.D. @dramerfahmed · 4m](#)

(1/2) As Dr. King said, "The arc of the moral universe is long but bends towards justice." Although, we've seen the pendulum swing wildly in recent years, this is only a season. A painful one, but I do not believe the current moment will persist or sustain itself.

[Amer F. Ahmed, Ed.D. @dramerfahmed · 3m](#)

(2/2) Our ancestors endured greater challenges (with no viable path to change in their lifetime). Our task is to take care of each other and ourselves to co-create the path to new possibilities. We must reach out and bring along people that might not already agree with us.

5:53 PM – Dr. Keith Curry (@lamkeithcurry)

Q8 @dramerfahmed, what's your freedom dream for the future of higher education? How do you envision achieving a truly inclusive and equitable academic environment? #EquityChat @DrTammeil @DrPamLuster

[Amer F. Ahmed, Ed.D. @dramerfahmed · 1m](#)

(1/1) To indigenize rather than decolonize. Decolonizing is an understandable response to centuries of epistemological supremacy. However, it is just that, a response (or reaction) to a dominant order rather than operating from a fundamentally alternative conceptual foundation.

[Amer F. Ahmed, Ed.D. @dramerfahmed · 2m](#)

(2/2) Indigenizing is a call to our collective ancestral knowledge and truth that we all are capable of drawing from to shape and reshape knowledge and the world we collectively live in. This creates space for wisdom and spirit and other ways of knowing beyond just intellectual.

[Equity Avengers @equityavengers](#)

This is beautiful. Thank you for sharing this with us and our [#EquityChat](#) network.

[Dr Pamela Luster #EquityAvengers #RealCollegePrez @DrPamLuster](#)

TY [@dramerfahmed](#) for joining us and for your commitment to this work! Join us next week as we welcome [@_bjsnowden @calstate](#) Ctr for Black Student Success! These are hard days friends, stay in community, lift each other up! [@lamkeithcurry @DrTammeil @equityavengers](#) OUT!