Oral Defense Announcement
University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Education with an emphasis in Educational Practice

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In-Groups, Out-Groups and the Challenge of Increasing Diversity through Intentional Inclusion and Equity Practices: Exploring the Roles of Urban Land Managers, Affinity Groups and Alaska Residents

Date: June 3, 2019
Time: 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Place: TLC-CR1

Abstract
Public lands belong to all of us. Yet, data indicate that some Americans are participating more than others in the decision-making processes that guide use, access, and availability of our public lands and resources. Three researchers investigated specific intersections of participation along the public decision-making process, with a focus on illuminating barriers to full public participation as well as potential bridges to increasing equitable inclusion. Researchers interviewed urban land managers and affinity group leaders, surveyed a sample of residents in Alaska, and examined public testimony from a city council discussion about an inclusion resolution in Homer, Alaska. Qualitative and quantitative analyses across these studies revealed that barriers prohibiting full participation can be grouped as either intra-barriers, which are seen within individuals, groups, or organizations, or as inter-barriers, which are seen between groups across society. Intra-barriers include difficulties such as lack of trust, deficient group representation, low familiarity with public lands, and shortage of resources. Inter-barriers involve lack of understanding of other cultures, groups, and agencies, and inconsistent priorities, policies, and mandates that drive efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in public lands and access to decision making. Bridges, or solutions, to these barriers can be grouped into five major categories: building and maintaining strong partnerships, increasing participant representation, strengthening ally capabilities, improving staff representation and cultural competency, and improving engagement strategies. The researchers conclude that the most direct path to increasing access to public decision making is to increase equity and inclusion in tandem. Increasing both the intentionality of inclusion and the practices of equity ultimately lead to measurably higher rates of actively diverse participants.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
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