



**Diversity, Equity, and
Inclusion Audit
2023-2024**

raiseRED Dance Marathon

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RaiseRED is an integral part of our campus that unites University of Louisville students of all backgrounds to improve the community.

Preface

As we enter into our 11th year, we understand that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) needs to be at the forefront of our decision making for all things. This DEI audit is intended to hold ourselves accountable throughout the year leading up to the dance marathon, as we recognize that, in the past this has not always been the case. For multiple years, raiseRED's leadership and participants in the marathon, also called dancers, have been composed of people who are involved in the Interfraternity and Panhellenic Council. In turn, we have had a lack of diversity in the makeup of our organization, with little to no participation from the multicultural groups on campus. Over the years, these organizations have not felt welcomed to join raiseRED because it is presented that it is only for Greek students. RaiseRED has been seen as an exclusive club, and we understand that we need to make the necessary steps to not have that persona anymore. Additionally, there have been barriers we have unintentionally set in place prohibiting people from coming to our dance marathon. We want to change that outlook and create an environment where all students are, and feel, welcomed and accepted. This audit describes changes we are actively making in diversity, equity, and inclusion, and is a living document as we never want to be stagnant in our initiatives. Pediatric cancer and blood disorders do not discriminate, so neither do we.

Diversity

To put it simply, we have not been a diverse dance marathon in the past, or one that represents the makeup of University of Louisville. While we understand we attend a predominately white institution, as of the fall of 2022, 31.3% of students are people of color. That is about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the population, yet that does not correlate to the makeup of our marathon. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, the majority of the people in raiseRED are in the Interfraternity and Panhellenic Councils, respectively. In the 2019-2020 year, about 88% of our dancers were in Greek life, not including the Black sorority and fraternities. That represented around 800 students at our marathon out of the 907 students registered. With this limited group of dancers, we are excluding a large majority of the school's population and funds they might potentially raise from their networks. Having certain people appear as the main audience at our marathon makes other Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) not feel welcomed in our organization which is something we are trying to change.

RaiseRED is taking steps to increase diversity in our staff and dancer population. First, we are making sure our sole focus is not on getting members from Interfraternity and Panhellenic Council to attend our marathon. We are relying on our existing relationship with these populations to encourage registration, and will be focusing our awareness efforts on the smaller, multicultural organizations that we have not had relationships with in the past. Attending their meetings and/or events, meeting with their executive board, and interacting with them before the marathon is something that we are implementing to build a connection with them. As a result, the hope is that they will want to attend our events and sign up for the marathon. This is also the case when recruiting people for raiseRED staff. Over the years we have been able to have a more diverse staff, and that has reflected in the demographic of our dancers. In the past marathon, there were around 79% of our dancers that were involved in Greek life versus the 88% in 2020. While the change is minimal, we note that it is still progress, and we hope that this year and the years to follow, these numbers become more representative of our campus population.

Equity

Equity means there is fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for everyone, regardless of one's identity. This is something we have not been considering as much as we should be in the past. Our dance marathon is 18 hours, which is a long amount of time to have an event in general, but we historically made it a requirement to stand the whole time. While the reasoning behind this was for the kids at the hospital who are dealing with treatment and fighting cancer and blood disorders, it is demanding to stand for 18 hours if someone is able-bodied. If someone had a disability affecting them physically, it would be very strenuous, most likely impossible, to attend our marathon. This does not give them a fair opportunity and essentially excludes them from attending our signature event. Additionally, there is a \$200 fundraising minimum, which is required to attend our marathon. Depending on whenever someone registers for the marathon determines how long they have to raise that amount of money. Depending on the student, it could either be very easy or very difficult to raise this amount. For some, based on their circumstances, they simply might not have the resources to be able to raise the money, prohibiting them from being able to come to the marathon. We recognize instances like these, with no accommodations, are not being equitable to our student body, so we have been, and are, working to change that.

We understand asking someone to stand for 18 hours is a lot, and because of that, we decided to change our pledge to stand to a pledge to stay two years ago. Instead of asking someone to stand for 18 hours, we are just asking them to stay at the marathon, making the marathon more accessible. As an organization, we still recognize that staying is a big ask, so while we would like everyone to be at the marathon the whole time, we do allow people to check out if needed. On the same note of making our marathon more accessible, we have added an accommodation room. This is a quiet space for students who might be overstimulated in the main room where we are having activities, need a moment to relax, or even take a short nap. Our marathon is very content heavy, so adding this room in has been a benefit for people who need it, and it deters them from leaving the marathon completely. Regarding our fundraising minimum, we are aware that it can be a bit daunting asking someone to raise \$200. However, we are a

fundraising organization, and these minimums are set in place for our efforts to raise as much money as we can for our cause. Due to the fact that this minimum may be unattainable for some students to reach on their own, we have implemented some ways to offset that amount. Recently, we have added some ways to offset that fundraising amount for dancers and our staff members. RaiseRED has been fortunate enough to partner with UofL Athletics, specifically the volleyball team, for paid volunteer opportunities. Throughout the fall, dancers and staff members of raiseRED can work to set up the volleyball court before practice and games, and get money towards their fundraising goal. Additionally for staff, one can be on the Service Staff to complete various service projects throughout the year, and the amount they have to fundraise is lessened. We also have our alumni donate throughout the year for people who are working to hit their minimum, as well as times where we will match dancers to get them to their goal.

We have done some other things to make sure that we are being as accommodating as possible, like adding captions in our social media videos and at the marathon. There have also been opportunities created for students to get connected with raiseRED outside of directly attending the marathon. We have a program, Cardinal Crew, where students are paired up with a child from the hospital and they do fun activities together throughout the year. This allows for students to get connected to our cause before the marathon. Likewise, pre-events are something we have through the school year, and these are events on a smaller scale that is open to all students to get them exposed to our dance marathon before it actually happens. All of these opportunities allow the student body to get plugged in with our beneficiaries without requiring them to attend the marathon. So far, the feedback from these changes have been positive, and we will continue to add more modifications to the organization to make it more equitable for all!

Inclusion

As an organization, we want every person who comes to a tabling event, a pre-event, and the marathon to feel welcomed. Whether they are a first time dancer, or someone on the executive board who has done raiseRED all four years of college, we

want everyone to feel welcomed and accepted. Unfortunately, we have not always upheld those practices. We group our dancers up by organizations, and most of the time, the RSOs with the largest number of people are the Interfraternity and Panhellenic Council. It can be very intimidating going to an event with around 500-600 students who are for the most part, all a part of the same organization. If we are not making an active effort to not only welcome but champion these smaller clubs and individuals who are joining raiseRED, they are not going to feel included and will not want to be involved in the years to come.

In order to make everyone who we encounter feel welcomed, we are first working on shifting away from the strong emphasis on having to register with a group. There are a large number of students who are not involved in an RSO, or they're involved in so many they did not want to register with just one. Either way, we have seen an increase in our individual dancers over the years, so we have adjusted accordingly and have added Student Involvement Staff members for these individual dancers. The essence of a Student Involvement Staff member is to be a liaison between raiseRED and their organization. We understand it puts individual dancers at the short end of the stick if there is no one directly they can reach out to for questions, so we added that position to combat that issue. This was touched on in the Diversity section of this audit, but along the lines of not wanting an individual dancer to feel left out, we do not want organizations with a smaller number of students to feel like they are less important. We want as many RSOs as possible to feel welcomed, and with that, we want them to feel included in raiseRED too. This year, we anticipate getting participation from new students in RSOs or as an individual dancer. To make them feel appreciated, we plan to start highlighting RSOs and dancers on our social media who have not participated in raiseRED before! We do not take people registering for this 18 hour dance marathon lightly, so we want to take the time and effort to thank these organizations and students for registering. Additionally, we still want to recognize clubs who have always had some sort of involvement in raiseRED over the years, because that is something to celebrate as well. All in all, raiseRED is taking steps to do a better job at cultivating an inclusive space for any individual who interacts with us, and we are excited to see all the progress we can make in this realm.

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, this is a living and breathing document, as DEI is not something that is a “one and done” change. We plan to use this document throughout the year to hold ourselves accountable, note our shortcomings and successes, and most of all determine how we can improve over the next school year. There will always be something raiseRED can work on in the realm of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and this audit is a space to recognize that. As an organization, we not only want people to say raiseRED has been triumphant in raising funds for pediatric cancer and blood disorders, but also triumphant in creating a welcoming space for students no matter their identities or backgrounds. We are proud of the changes we have made so far and are looking forward to the changes yet to come.



Contact Info

Aysha Puzhakarailath

Executive Director

Email : executive.raised@gmail.com

Allison Kinnard

External Director

Email: external.raised@gmail.com

Last Modified:

