COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

Womxn of Color Affinity Group, CSU Extension
FAQs*

What is an affinity group? Affinity groups center employee voices and needs by creating and sustaining virtual channels to build community, share information and resources, and employ effective means for supporting one another.

The CSUE Womxn of Color Affinity Group (WoCag) is an informal affinity group and community-centered space developed organically to respond to employee needs. Recognizing the importance of such efforts and the value they provide for our employees' well-being and success, WoCag is intended to offer additional institutional support, collaboration, and longevity for existing and new employee-based efforts that promote an inclusive and equitable culture at CSUE and reflect our Principles of Community.

What is WoCag's purpose? Different communities will have different needs and priorities, so there is flexibility around how community members utilize group channels to create unique affinity spaces.

We encourage using Microsoft Teams to support community building and informal interactions among members in ways that best address community interests and needs. Files can also be used to collect, store, and share information about pertinent university policies and/or resources in the surrounding community. Other possibilities include organizing to advocate for policy change, fostering collaborations, and supporting each other personally and professionally, etc., all of which can be done collectively.

Who can join? Any CSUE employee can request to join; every member must agree to our Terms of Use and Community Guidelines before being added.

The naming of affinity spaces is an inherently imperfect practice, and as such, differences within affinity groups are to be acknowledged and affirmed. WoCag was established with intersectionality in mind; this includes recognizing that our different identities situate us differently within multiple systems of privilege and disadvantage. The most effective way to create inclusive culture change is by prioritizing the needs of those who are marginalized within numerous systems.

Solidarity, support, and allyship are demonstrated by honoring designated spaces for people to connect in community and showing up for others when and how they ask of us.

This group is for employees and not intended for undergraduate or graduate students. Student seeking additional resources and support, contact Student Diversity Programs and Services, Student Leadership, Involvement, and Community Engagement, or contact your advisor. Those with post-doctoral appointments are encouraged to reach out to the Graduate School for information on available resources.

Why join? WoCag is a resource for employees who have ever thought, "There have to be more people like me at CSUE, but I don't know who they are, how to reach out, or where to find them." WoCag creates increased means for communication when new issues or ideas arise, both within the affinity space and across group interests and identities. Having WoCag centrally listed and maintained makes it easy to find and join.

How do I join? To join WoCag, please fill out this interest form. Upon agreeing to the Terms of Use and Community Guidelines, you will be added to the group channel.

How do you stay connected? WoCag uses Microsoft Teams to minimize the need for additional listservs. To stay up-to-date, we encourage you to download the Microsoft Teams app to your desktop and other devices. Notifications and involvement depend entirely on your preferences; keep all notifications turned off and only check-in when you want. It's up to you!

Microsoft Teams helps facilitate communication and interactions among CSUE employees, but it is not the only way to connect. Members are encouraged to gather, convene, and communicate offline when needed.

Channel leads and members set the tone for how they prefer to utilize Microsoft Teams and/or other group channels, including how and when WoCag interacts, both virtually and in person.

I don't have access to a computer, email, or Microsoft Teams. How can I stay connected? There are access challenges when primarily using digital channels for communication. This is no exception. However, members can identify alternative ways to connect with others in their community who do not have digital access and coordinate methods amongst themselves. For example, a simple call-buddy system could be an option. Files can be created within group channels to organize rosters and processes for contacting those who would benefit from more intentional outreach. A small group of members could volunteer to create a call/text tree to share updates, information, and check-ins with those who don't have access to Microsoft Teams.

What's the expected time commitment? As little or as much as you want! Participation is completely voluntary. Members are encouraged to engage in whatever degree feels appropriate for them and do so because they want to, not because they feel pressured.

Those who are particularly enthusiastic about engaging with others in an affinity space are encouraged to plan, organize, and host opportunities—virtual or otherwise assuming social distancing precautions are observed—or contact Sonjia Cervantes to initiate other modes of engaging with others.

WoCag is not a committee, though they could develop or leverage their own internal structures to meet community needs (if appropriate). They could also potentially partner as an informative resource for other university committees or units working on related issues.

What if someone causes harm or disrupts the affinity space? Channel leads and all members are expected to hold themselves and others accountable to the agreed-upon WoCag Terms of Use and Community Guidelines, as well as CSU's Principles of Community. When necessary, Wes Alford will be consulted to mediate any pending issues. Any employee and/or their activity that is disruptive to WoCag will be subject to removal.

Are there other affinity groups on campus I can join? As the CSUE WoCag group develops helpful and inclusive strategies for leveraging their group channel, VPD may serve as a resource to connect university-wide. Email Cori Wong to learn more.

In cases where it is important or necessary to create larger affinity spaces, such as listening sessions or programming across affinity groups, please don't hesitate to reach out to VPD staff. We will do our best to offer any available support, whether directly from our office or by coordinating collaborations among affinity groups and appropriate campus entities that may support related programming.

What about privacy within the affinity space? WoCag's Microsoft Teams channel is not public; only CSUE employees who join by agreeing to the Terms of Use and Community Guidelines have access to Team and other group channels. Members within a channel are visible to each other. CSUE staff serve as group channel owners. Chats and communication are subject to the same privacy regulations as university email.