

## **What is your level of intercultural competence?**

*Samantha Kennedy (FL), Diversity Committee Member*

I recently had the honor of becoming the chair of my extension district's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) committee. The committee was formed as part of a larger diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiative at the University of Florida, spearheaded by the Chief Diversity Officer, Antonio Farias.



Our committee has 11 members from across the 16 counties of Florida's panhandle. Each one of us is dedicated to improving the IDEA principles internally with our colleagues and externally with our clientele.

As a new committee, we looked for guidance about how to get started. Dr. John Diaz, Assistant Professor and IDEA liaison with UF/IFAS, suggested the committee members take the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI).

Designed to measure overall levels of intercultural competence, it shows a person's or group's progression along a continuum of cross-cultural competence and provides in-depth insights on how individuals and groups make sense of and respond to cultural differences.

Taking the IDI was an eye-opening experience. The assessment provided me with both my perceived orientation score and my developmental (or actual) orientation score. In what should probably be unsurprising results, my perceived orientation score was further along the continuum than my developmental orientation score. In other words, I thought I had more intercultural competency than I actually did. Fortunately, though, my developmental orientation score placed me at "Minimization," which means that while I have work to do to improve my intercultural competence, I already possess a good foundation upon which to build my knowledge and skills.

The IDEA committee members welcomed this opportunity to learn more about their levels of intercultural competence. As a group, we have already created a strategic plan to help us set goals and plan activities and other efforts to help ourselves, our colleagues, and our clientele continue to improve in this area and make Extension more diverse, equitable, and inclusive at all levels.