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ASSESSING THE LEVEL OF CURRICULUM AND SCHOLARSHIP DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

In January of 2007, Kennesaw State University (KSU), a comprehensive state university in the southeastern United States, embarked on the trail to garner an understanding of the extent to which diversity is embedded in the curriculum, scholarship, and creative activities of the campus. This project, the KSU Diversity and Equity Assessment Initiative, consisted of four separate work teams, and each team was charged with assessing the state of diversity in a specific area of the institution. Each work team was comprised of both faculty and staff representatives from all seven colleges on the KSU campus. For the purpose of this project, diversity focused on age, ability/exceptionality, ethnicity, family structure/gender, geographic region/language, religion, sexual orientation/identity, and socioeconomic status. The focus of this paper is to report the processes utilized to assess the level of diversity in the Coles College of Business curriculum and faculty scholarship.

The Education and Scholarship Diversity research team analyzed diversity in the curricular offerings of Kennesaw State University and the coverage of diversity topics in the scholarship (including research and creative activities) of KSU faculty members.

While a previous diversity group had prepared a preliminary course title analysis, the team decided that a list of course titles that suggest diversity topic coverage was limiting for several reasons. The team decided to solicit information directly from faculty members regarding course coverage and research activities that address diversity topics. Direct data collection allowed for analysis of both completed works and works in development. Additionally, the team interviewed business school leadership in order to solicit information and the perspectives of the dean regarding curriculum and scholarship efforts addressing diversity. Other activities included collecting information from peer and aspirant institutions and contributing questions to campus focus groups regarding curriculum and scholarship diversity.

The "Diversity Inventory" became the primary focus of the team's work during Spring 2007. The inventory combined information directly reported by the faculty on diversity in the curriculum and in research and creative activity. The overall response rate was an impressive 45.7% of all Coles College of Business faculty.

INTRODUCTION

The notion of assessing the depth of curricular diversity is a persistent challenge for institutions of higher education that have an interest in ensuring that their students receive a multifaceted educational experience (Vaughn 2007). Research demonstrates the profound need to ensure an effective evaluation process when or if an institution of higher education embarks on upon assessment of diversity in the curriculum or research activities (Williams 2007). Smith (1999) discusses the importance of diversity in the educational and scholarly roles of institutions of higher learning, and she stresses the importance of assessing the adequacy of an institutions current curriculum and scholarship in educating all students for a pluralistic society and diverse work force.

The purpose of the KSU Diversity Inventory is to collect and analyze data regarding the current state of diversity in course offerings and in faculty research and scholarship. In addition to providing valuable benchmark information regarding the courses and scholarship in the college of business that engage with issues of diversity, the inventory also tests a new framework for universities to assess the state of diversity in the two unique, and arguably most valuable, services provided to the community by academic institutions—those of curriculum offerings and scholarship. This paper reports on both the process and the initial assessment results of an assessment initiative that examines curricular and scholarly efforts to address diversity in the Coles College of Business at KSU.

The importance and difficulty of assessing and revising curricular efforts related to diversity have been the focus of recent research efforts. Kezar and Eckel (2005) note that the most successful campus diversity efforts have included campus leadership support, faculty involvement, and multidisciplinary efforts. The authors also note the importance of supporting individual faculty as well as campus-wide efforts that have the potential to shape the curriculum either directly or indirectly.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: the next section reviews the literature related to curriculum and scholarship diversity and discusses the research question. The following section describes the methodology utilized to assess curriculum and scholarship diversity efforts. This is followed by a section that describes the results of the assessment initiative. The final section of the paper discusses the implications and limitations of the research.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The literature regarding curriculum and scholarship diversity in higher education has primarily focused on the importance of diversity topic coverage in the curriculum and the establishment of curriculum diversity requirements (Kezar and Eckel 2005, Smith and Schonfeld 2000, Williams 2007). Jones (2005) stresses the necessity of restructuring the college

curriculum to educate all students for a pluralistic society. While referencing Smith's (1999) model of college and university diversity efforts, Jones continues by stating that existing efforts to improve campus climate, access and success, and intergroup relations at the university level are unlikely to be successful without efforts to include diversity in the curriculum.

Epps (2008) notes that business schools often fail to include thorough coverage of diversity issues in the required curriculum. The author also notes the importance of diversity in corporations, and states that common problems that arise in corporations include failure to address diversity issues or problems that arise, failure to devote significant resources to diversity, and failure to establish an appropriate stance towards diversity from top management. As the workplace environment becomes more diverse, the skill set of managers must often broaden to include establishing professional relationships with employees and customers from differing backgrounds. This skill set is not often included in the standard business curriculum, and many managers tend to ignore problems when they arise.

While the educational benefits of including diversity topic coverage in the curriculum have been summarized by researchers (Smith and Schonfeld 2000), little research has been devoted to the appropriate methods to assess the existing levels and quality of curriculum diversity efforts. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis methods are necessary in the assessment of curriculum and scholarship diversity, and the efforts that are made to document the status of curriculum and scholarship diversity are critical to later assessment efforts.

The efforts at Kennesaw State University to assess the levels of curriculum and scholarship diversity in its College of Business provide important information regarding how institutions of higher learning might examine the extent to which students are being prepared to contribute to global and diverse enterprises. Additionally, the establishment of benchmark levels of diversity curricular coverage and diversity in scholarship efforts will allow the university to later examine the impact of implemented programs and efforts to encourage curriculum and scholarship diversity. Finally, the inclusion of both qualitative and quantitative efforts in the assessment of curriculum and scholarship diversity at this institution provides a needed framework to examine diversity at the college and university level. The research question for this study is as follows:

How should business schools assess the level and details of diversity topic coverage in their curriculum offerings and research activities?

METHODOLOGY

The research team designed the Diversity Inventory based on research. One of the members drafted questions for the diversity inventory, and the team revised the questions during team meetings. The inventory includes a cover letter email received from the dean of the faculty member's college and questions regarding diversity coverage in the course offerings and

scholarship of the faculty member. The web-based curriculum component was preloaded with all business courses and course numbers.

The draft inventory was pilot tested with faculty members from multiple departments. Pilot testing resulted in minor wording changes to the draft cover letter email and the inclusion of additional categories of scholarship categories and stages of completion. Pilot test participants also indicated that they would be more likely to complete the inventory if it was distributed via email, endorsed by their dean, and easy to complete. Based on team discussion and pilot testing feedback, the inventory asks for information regarding significant course coverage of diversity topics. For the purposes of the inventory, significant course coverage is defined as greater than or equal to 25% of the total course coverage. Institutional Review Board approval was sought and obtained for the Diversity Inventory.

In order to encourage participation and receive information back in an easily manipulative format, the inventory was developed for distribution utilizing web-based survey software. One inventory was developed for each academic department. The inventory for each department has all courses taught by the college loaded into drop down lists for selection by the responding faculty member.

The Dean received information regarding the diversity inventory and a request to distribute the cover letter email and inventory to all faculty members in their respective departments. The inventory was distributed to all faculty members on April 27, 2007. Faculty members were requested to complete the inventory no later than May 14, 2007. A reminder email message was sent to faculty members on May 10, 2007.

RESULTS

Table 1 summarizes the overall response rate for the Diversity Inventory and the characteristics of respondents. Forty-eight of the College of Business' (COB) faculty members completed the inventory, which represents approximately 45.7% of the teaching faculty. Panels B – D of the table includes the demographic characteristics of the 48 inventory respondents who answered demographic questions in terms of faculty rank, tenure status, and time at KSU. Panel B describes the faculty rank of respondents. The modal rank of respondents was Full Professor (33.3%), with similar percentages of Assistant Professor (29.2%)and Associate Professor (22.9%) respondents. As detailed in Panel C, the majority of respondents (85.4%) are either tenured or on tenure track. Panel D describes the length of KSU employment of the respondents. The majority of respondents have taught at KSU for ten years or less, and 37.5% of respondents have been employed at KSU for more than ten years. Based on the demographic data, inventory respondents represent a broad cross-section of the College of Business faculty in terms of faculty rank, tenure status, and length of employment at KSU.

Table 1. Overall Response Rate and Respondent Demographics		
Panel A. Number of Respondents		
Approx. Number of Faculty	Number of Responses	Percentage of Faculty Responding
105	48	45.7%
Panel B. Faculty Rank		
Instructor/Lecturer		4
Assistant Professor		14
Associate Professor		11
Full Professor		16
Other (please specify)		0
(skipped this question)		3
Total Respondents		48
Panel C. Faculty Tenure Status		
Not on Tenure Track		4
Untenured but on Tenure Track		16
Tenured		25
(skipped this question)		3
Total Respondents		48
Panel D. Faculty Years of Experience at KSU		
0 - 1 year		3
2 - 3 years		10
4 - 5 years		9
6 - 10 years		5
More than 10 years		18
(skipped this question)		3
Total Respondents		48

Faculty were asked to consider the courses that they taught from Summer 2006 through Spring 2007. As noted in Chart 1, only 25% of the respondents have taught at least one course with significant coverage of diversity topics.

Chart 2 summarizes the overall courses with diversity coverage by diversity topic. As noted in Chart 2, sexual orientation had the least number of responses with 2 courses with significant coverage while all of the other diversity topics were relatively close to each other in the number of course ranging from 7 to 12.

As indicated in Chart 3, in the area of diversity coverage in faculty scholarship, only 9 of the 48 respondents indicated that they participated in scholarship and/or creative activities, which focused on one or more diversity topics.

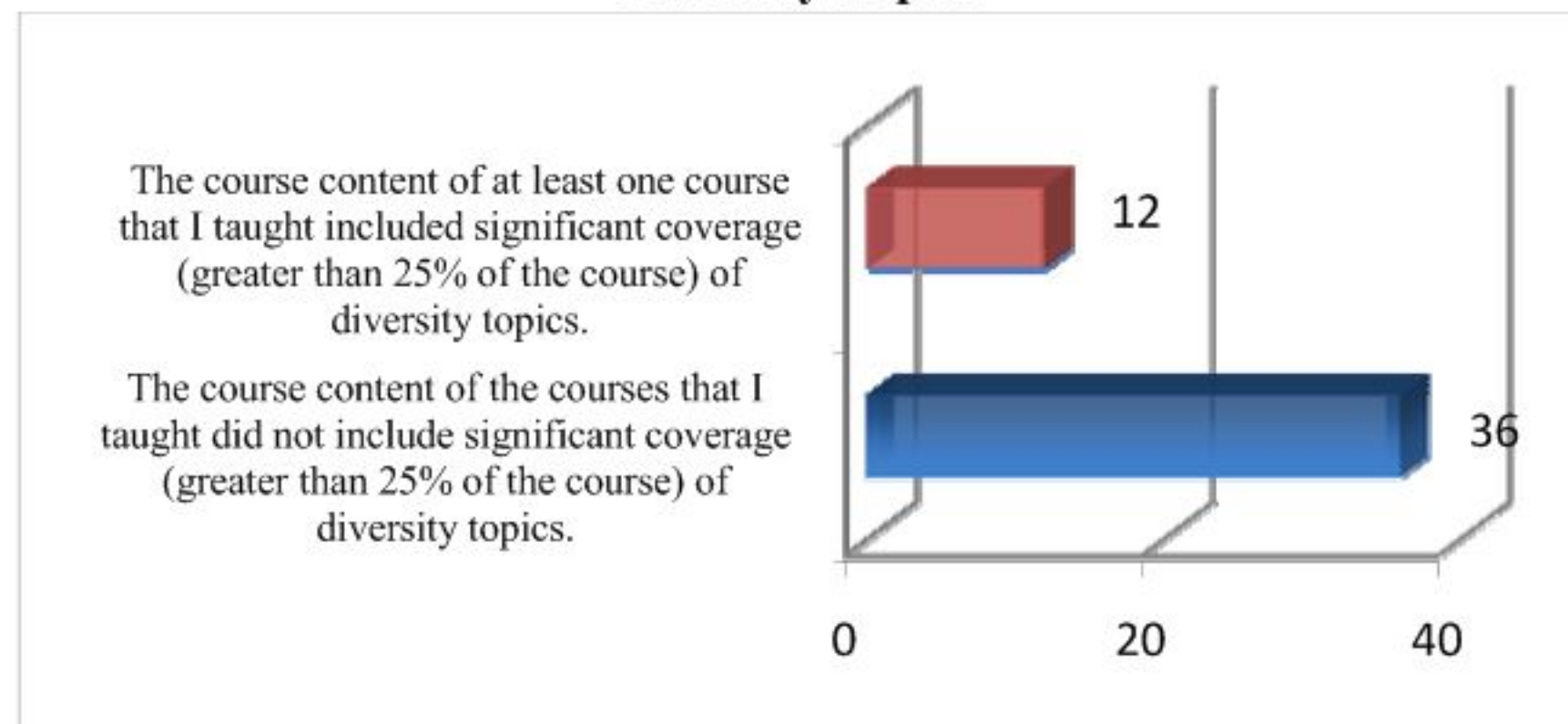**Chart 1: Number of Faculty Who Taught Courses that Included Diversity Topics**

The course content of at least one course that I taught included significant coverage (greater than 25% of the course) of diversity topics. — 12

The course content of the courses that I taught did not include significant coverage (greater than 25% of the course) of diversity topics. — 36

Chart 2: Number of Courses with Significant Diversity Coverage

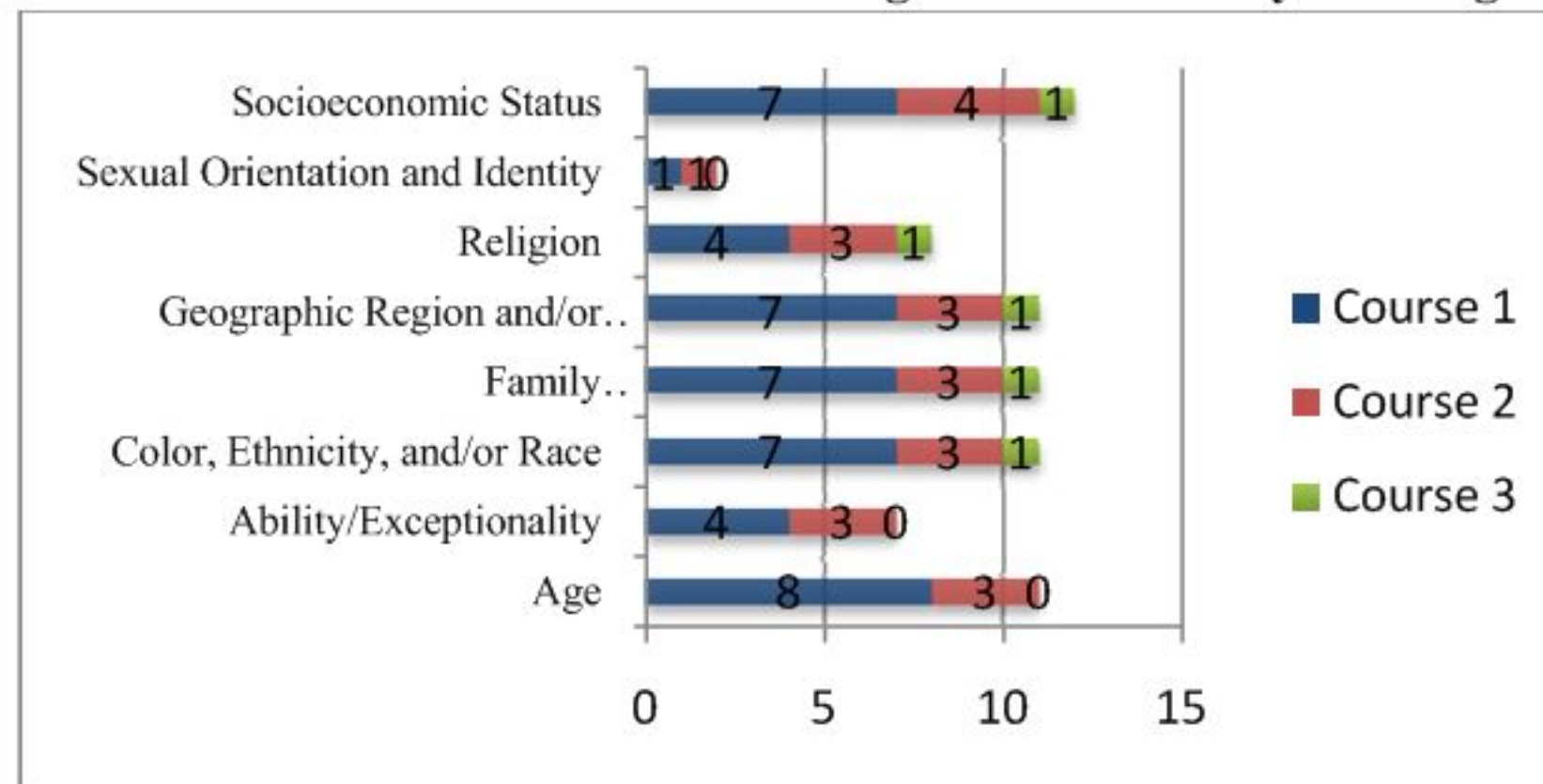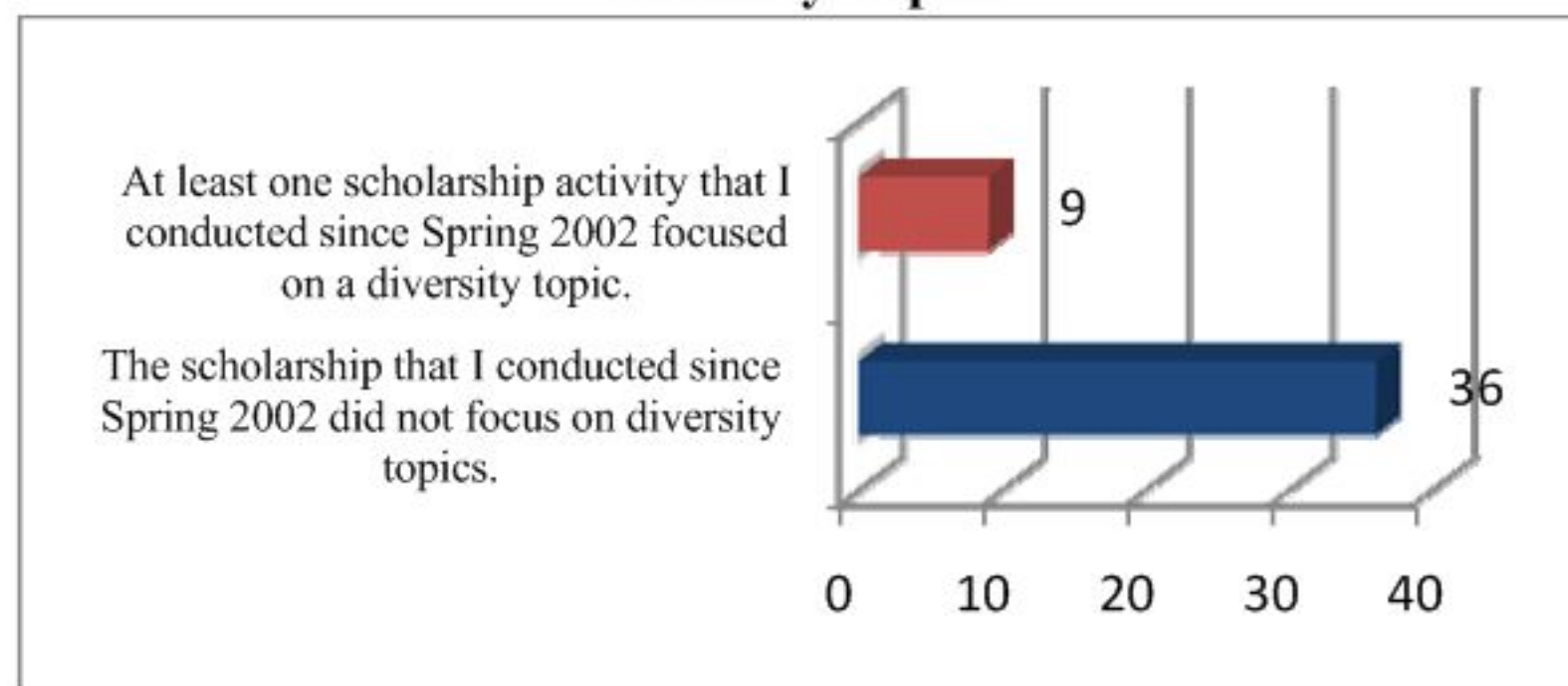|	Course 1	Course 2	Course 3
Socioeconomic Status	7	4	1
Sexual Orientation and Identity	1	1	0
Religion	4	3	1
Geographic Region and/or..	7	3	1
Family..	7	3	1
Color, Ethnicity, and/or Race	7	3	1
Ability/Exceptionality	4	3	0
Age	8	3	0

Chart 3: Number of Faculty Who Participated in Scholarship and/or Creative Activity that Included Diversity Topics

At least one scholarship activity that I conducted since Spring 2002 focused on a diversity topic. — 9

The scholarship that I conducted since Spring 2002 did not focus on diversity topics. — 36

Faculty respondents indicated that they are engaged in 148 projects, covering all six research/creative activity categories. In direct parallel to the diversity coverage in the curriculum,

the three most active diversity categories for research and creative activity are "Family Structure/Responsibility or Gender" (42 responses, 28.4%), "Age" (41 responses, 27.7%), and "Geographic Region and/or Language" (23 responses, 15.5%), and. The least frequently appearing categories also closely match diversity in the curriculum: "Socioeconomic Status" (3 responses, 2.03%) and "Sexual Orientation and Identity" (2 responses, 1.35%). Table 2 summarizes the research activities that focused on one or more diversity topics.

Table 2: Number of Scholarship Activities that Focused on Diversity

AREAS OF SCHOLARSHIPS	Published Books	Published Articles	Presented Creative Activity	Conference Presentation or Workshop	Completed but Unpublished Research	Research/Creative Activity in Development	TOTAL
DIVERSITY CATEGORIES							
Age	3	9	10	17	2	0	41
Ability/Exceptionality	1	2	0	3	2	0	8
Color Ethnicity and/or Race	1	2	0	7	1	5	16
Family Structure/Responsibility or Gender	4	10	10	15	2	1	42
Geographic Region and/or Language	1	3	7	7	3	2	23
Religion	1	9	0	3	0	0	13
Sexual Orientation and Identity	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
Socioeconomic Status	1	0	0	1	0	1	3
SUBTOTALS	13	35	27	54	10	9	148

The diversity assessment team also conducted a detailed interview with the leadership of the business school. Below is the result of the interview with the Dean of the Business School:

How adequate is the current curriculum and scholarship for educating all students for a pluralistic society and world in terms of availability (of courses and activities), experience (students' course-taking patterns), and learning (impact on the individual student)?

The Coles College is doing a fair job in terms of curriculum and scholarship diversity. The college has not yet done a strategic assessment of inclusiveness or diversity.

It may be a good idea for the university as a whole to first look at curriculum diversity by analyzing the general education courses that must be taken by all students. In the Coles College, perhaps we should first look at the business core curriculum both on the undergraduate and graduate levels.

What teaching and learning strategies serve this purpose?

In business, we would like to see more strategic inclusion of cases and vignettes analyzing topics related to diversity. Applied examples of issues related to diversity are the best way to incorporate diversity into the business curriculum, both on the undergraduate and graduate levels.

In the Coles College, we might also analyze how we populate the speaker series of invited executives. Including representatives from more representative groups might be beneficial.

How diverse is the faculty, and what difference does this make within departments and the classroom?

Table 3 includes a numerical analysis of faculty diversity within the Coles College. The dean believes that the faculty should reflect both the community in which we live and the business community at large. Consequently, the college should aggressively pursue inclusive recruiting strategies by department.

The dean believes that the only way to be effective in increasing faculty diversity is to have a separate university pool of funds for recruiting minority faculty. These funds should be available to all colleges on a first-come, first-served basis. The funds should not affect the regular recruiting efforts of the departments and colleges. This would be a resource investment that adds value to the university.

How effective are efforts to deepen faculty engagement with new scholarship related to diversity within and among the disciplines?

Although there are no current efforts in the Coles College to encourage scholarship related to diversity, such research is valuable. The dean believes that financial or other incentives should be used to modify behavior of faculty in terms of chosen research topics. Competitive grants or targeted research underwriting might be effective.

What initiatives has your college taken in supporting multicultural curriculum efforts?

The Coles College has not yet taken a strategic looks at our efforts in this area. The dean supports looking at the core courses in an initial assessment.

Table 3. Coles College Faculty Composition—Gender and Race						
	Black	Asian	Hispanic	White	Total	%
Accounting Dept- Females	1	2		9	12	41%
Accounting Dept - Males	1	1		15	17	59%
					29	
Management - Females	1			8	9	36%
Management – Males	1	2		13	16	64%
					25	
Leadership - Females	1			4	5	50%
Leadership – Males				5	5	50%
					10	
Economics - Females		1		7	8	30%
Economics - Males	1	8	1	9	19	70%
					27	
Marketing- Females				5	5	31%
Marketing - Males	1			10	11	69%
					16	
Coles - Females	3	3	0	33	39	36%
Coles - Males	4	11	1	52	68	64%
	7	14	1	85	107	
	7%	13%	1%	79%		

What research and teaching in your college has advanced the University's diversity agenda?

At this time, the college has not analyzed the diversity scholarship that is being conducted.

How is diversity integrated into the curriculum of your college?

The Coles College has not yet taken a strategic looks at our efforts in this area. An important driver to integrating diversity topics into the curriculum would be the regional and professional accrediting bodies. For example, if SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) and/or AACSB-International (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business)

were to include curriculum diversity as a focus, then business schools would be more likely to integrate diversity into the curriculum.

Which strategies for developing a curriculum that fosters intercultural and international competencies have been most successful? Which have been least successful? Which could be termed "best practices"? (Best Practices are processes, programs, and procedures that most successfully lead to the unit's ability to reach the University's diversity goals and can be validated through measurable outcomes.)

Although the Coles College does not presently have a separate diversity committee, the dean believes that this should be considered as we transition to shared governance. He believes that the committee should perhaps include both faculty and staff.

What measures of success have you identified to gauge your progress in this area? Include data demonstrating outcomes.

The dean would like to see some type of monitoring of minority student and faculty recruiting. Currently, the Assistant Directory of Graduate Programs in the Coles College is working with the National Society of Hispanic MBAs, and we recently received recognition from this group. We also have a relationship with the National Black MBA Association. In these efforts, faculty leadership is key. The dean would support the establishment of a student chapter of the National Association of Black Accountants.

DISCUSSION

In an evaluation of the dimensions of college and university diversity provided by Smith (1999), it is evident that the one dimension that is unique to institutions of higher learning is the dimension of curriculum and scholarship diversity. Institutions of higher learning teach courses and conduct faculty scholarship; therefore, it is appropriate and necessary to assess diversity in these two areas when these institutions attempt to assess campus-wide diversity. Business schools, in particular, produce graduates who often enter multinational and diverse corporations, and these graduates should be prepared to communicate with and appreciate diverse groups of peers, customers, suppliers, and potential business partners.

This study has reported the efforts of one state comprehensive university to assess the level and quality of diversity in its business school curriculum and faculty scholarship. Using a combination of peer and aspirant benchmarking, qualitative interviews, and a unique online assessment tool, Kennesaw State University established a baseline of data with which it can compare future data in order to analyze the results of programs were implemented after the initial assessment.

While the Diversity Assessment Initiative collected data from a significant percentage of business school faculty, the business school response rate was one of the lowest response rates

among campus-wide faculty. This may require follow-up efforts to determine if non-respondents have more data to add to the inventory or whether their work is, by nature, not involved in diversity issues. It is also important to note that some individual research projects may have been counted more than once for different diversity topic categories. Therefore, the total numbers that resulted from the scholarship assessment may not be an accurate total of all diversity research activity within the business school. It does, however, give a sense of the diversity areas that are being addressed in the university's research activities. A final limitation of the study is that it only includes assessment activity at one institution of higher learning. However, the assessment tools utilized at this institution can be modified for the specific circumstances of colleges and universities of differing size, assessment capabilities, and institutional missions.

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