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# Fostering Campus Diversity and Advancing the Internationalization of Education on College and University Campuses

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**Fostering Campus Diversity and Advancing the Internationalization of  
Education on College and University Campuses**

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**Abstract**

This paper discusses the challenges that institutions of higher education face in educating and preparing students to work and live in an increasingly diverse global population. This concept-oriented discussion does not intend to provide detailed theoretical or experimental development and analysis. Instead, this paper presents an innovative paradigm that attempts to embrace many nuances associated with the terms diversity and globalization in the literature. The paper posits the internationalization of education as a strategy that can help universities demonstrate their commitment to educating students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Other strategies include targeted recruiting of highly competent international faculty and students, and focusing on the language skills that international faculty and students bring to U.S. campuses. The paper concludes that institutions of higher education must revise their mission to accommodate new operational methods that will enable students to be effective global citizens.

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**Introduction**

The United States is increasingly pluralistic in terms of ethnicity, gender, and class, as well as in the many ways people express their faith, love, behavior and creed. Minority populations, such as Hispanics and Asians, are growing at rates that will readily eclipse the country's white populations in the next 40 years (World Population Review, 2015; Cohn, 2014; Colby & Ortman, 2015). Meanwhile, the advance of multinational corporations is shifting the distribution of labor and bringing diverse populations into greater contact. Thus, there is a mounting pressure, sometimes felt more than uttered,

for people to develop the competencies needed to operate effectively as global citizens. In turn, the public has increasingly demanded that higher education provide these competencies to diverse populations. Thus, the more than 3,000 institutions comprising American higher learning are looking to redefine their mission statements to effectively illuminate how diversity is a strength and a compelling reality of the higher education landscape (Clark, Fasching-Varner & Brimhall-Vargas, 2012; Gasman, Abiola, & Travers, 2015; Thompson, 2012; Rothman, Kelly-Woessner, & Woessner, 2011).

However, diversity is not always a clearly understood term, despite how often it appears in contemporary discourse. Thompson and Cuseo (2015) indicate that the “word diversity derives from the Latin root *diversus*, meaning various. Thus, human diversity refers to the variety of differences that exist among people who comprise humanity—the human species” (p. 1). Likewise, Adams, M. & Zúñig, X. (2016) claim that diversity entails the inclusion and emphasizes the social, cultural, and other differences and commonalities among social identity groups based on the “ethnic, racial, religious, gender, class, or other ‘social categories’ generally recognized within the U.S.” (p. 96). In broad terms, diversity encompasses groups distinguished by race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental ability, age, and national origin (Adams & Zúñiga, 2016; Green & Watkins, 1998). It is, in short, a term that recognizes similarities and values differences in perspective.

The opportunity and challenge that diversity represents for higher education can be illustrated in the major population trends occurring worldwide. First, the number of children is declining; in fact, by 2050, there will be twice as many older people than children (Holodwy, 2016). This means that there is an acceleration of aging adults in emerging economies, who will need to be trained or retrained in order to advance in the labor market. Colleges and universities, obviously, serve as an important avenue for acquiring new expertise.

The second major trend is the rapid growth of working-age populations in certain geographic areas more than others. According to Holodwy (2016), the percentage of China's and India's population over age 65 may not be as large as that of various European countries or Japan. This trend has an obvious impact on post-

secondary education, which can provide the formal educational training and resources required by these new populations. However, such diversity requires that colleges and universities retool their programs and services to accommodate this emerging population, both physically on their campuses and virtually through the Internet.

Beyond these international trends, the United States is facing its own internal demographic shifts that cannot be overlooked. As reported by Colby and Ortman (2015), according to the latest U.S. Census Bureau's projections, by 2044, ethnic minority groups will constitute the majority of the U.S. population: Hispanics will grow from 49.7 million to 83 million; Asians will grow from 14.4 million to 34.4 million; the Black population will grow from 39.9 million to 56.9 million; and the non-Hispanic, White population will increase by only one percent, from 200.9 million to 203.3 million. Data from the Pew Research Center (2014) corroborates these estimates: By 2060, the United States will be 48 percent White, down from 85 percent a century earlier.

For colleges and universities, which have, historically, primarily serviced White populations, these trends signal a need for important policy and attitude changes. The predominately White, middle-class thinking that permeates most educational institutions must be reevaluated in terms of how conducive it is to the success of diverse groups. To this end, the present paper offers a new paradigm framework that addresses how diversity can be approached, achieved, and maintained in higher education.

### **Agreeing on a Common Definition of Diversity**

There is a good deal of misconception among individuals about the definition of diversity on college and university campuses,

especially in the United States. Some individuals think that this concept only applies to social and political issues pertaining to Black and White relations or religious differences. On the extreme end of this opinion, there are individuals who think that diversity is a political correctness plot by left-wing academicians to force affirmative action practices on society in order to bestow entitlements on disadvantaged populations (Daniels, 1991 & Sargent, 2015). This mindset tends to express itself in criticisms of campus diversity programs claiming that diversity is a way of forcing campuses to recruit unqualified ethnic minority students, increase multicultural courses, and prevent certain types of speech. However, diversity is an inclusive concept by its very nature. At the broadest level, the term calls for the affirmation of myriad people and ideas—which gives rise to the related term, cultural competence.

Fortunately, several scholars have worked to imbue the idea of diversity with greater depth and specificity. Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995), for instance, introduced an interpretive and process-based approach to understanding diversity, defining the term as one that has different meanings according to its context and usage. They explain: “An anthropological approach to diversity would provide a comparative view of human groups within the context of all human groups. A political approach would analyze issues of power and class [...] diversity conveys a need to respect similarities and differences among human beings and to go beyond “sensitivity” to active and effective responsiveness” (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995, p. 8).

Another similar meaning stems from Thompson (2000), which appeared in the University of Massachusetts’ Minority Services and Program Handbook. This description sees diversity as a buzzword that is interchangeable with the word

multicultural, defined as the acceptance of diverse racial, cultural, economic and social groups. In full, Thompson (2000) advocates that diversity is a perspective, one that recognizes, respects, appreciates and celebrates human differences and builds an environment of inclusion, participation, contribution, affirmation and interaction.

More theoretically, Gurin, Dey, Gurin, and Hurtado (2003) describe diversity on campuses in three dimensions: Structural, Informal, and Classroom: “Structural diversity is the numerical representation of diverse groups on campus. Informal interactional diversity is the actual experience students have with diverse peers in the campus environment. Classroom diversity is exposure to knowledge about race and ethnicity in formal classrooms” (p. 23). More recent scholars, such as Ely and Roberts (2008) and Ramarajan and Thomas (2012), define diversity as “a characteristic of a group (of two or more people) that refers to demographic differences among group members in race, ethnicity, gender, social class, religion, nationality, sexual identity, or other dimensions of social identity that are marked by a history of intergroup prejudice, stigma, discrimination, or oppression” (p. 553).

These are, of course, only a handful of the definitions in play with regard to diversity. However, the meanings that endure depend as much, or more, on the rhetorical intent behind them as their technical accuracy. Some negative reactions toward diversity, as alluded to earlier, arise from fear and stereotyping. Stereotyping is an emotionally charged exaggeration of reality that allows people to use mental shortcuts in their understanding of individuals and groups. Oftentimes, the reliance on stereotypes stems from individuals’ discomfort with navigating environments composed of culturally

different people. Without a clear definition of diversity, some individuals may turn to inaccurate stereotypes to drive their perceptions of diversity efforts and reactions to diverse populations. This influence has a monumental impact on the ways individuals think and the choices they make.

In order to spread a clear understanding of diversity and properly operationalize its characteristics, it is paramount that scholars define diversity in a positive and consistent manner. Doing so would illuminate the positive nature of diversity and help promote intergroup equality and positive intergroup relations. It is important for people to express themselves in ways that attempt to minimize feelings of alienation and isolation among and between individuals, particularly for those who find themselves in the minority population. There is, in fact, an urgent need to eradicate some of the assumptions and stereotypes about cultural groups, especially those involving people of color and members of groups who have been historically oppressed or discriminated against in our society and on our campuses.

Just as higher education has been historically tasked with introducing workable practices into the wider society, the public now looks to them to be a model for diversity and cultural competence. Undoubtedly, it is a mammoth task to educate students, faculty and staff, as well as broader society about the value of individual differences. Nonetheless, informing individuals about the richness of human diversity broadens their perceptions and outfits them with a clearer lens through which they can better understand multiple human cultures. To this end, campuses should agree on an operational definition of the word diversity that will lead to positive group outcomes. Promoting awareness, education and training can also serve this goal. Ultimately, individuals from different

groups need close proximity with one another to tangibly change social connections. Additionally, there must be a primary charge to learn more about the complex world we live in and its interconnections, so that students can act intelligently as world citizens. To this end, institutions of higher learning must adopt different mission statements that support the notion of global citizenship.

### **Finding a Common Definition of Global Citizenship**

Global citizens are sometimes called globetrotters, world travelers and world citizens. Global citizens view themselves as individuals who are acquainted with international affairs and geographic locations around the world. They present themselves as people familiar with diversity, multiculturalism and social justice issues.

However, becoming a global citizen requires more than an occasional trip to another country. Caruana (2014) claims that, contrary to the broad idea of living and acquiring experience in some faraway land, global citizenship can be acquired simply by reflecting inwardly on one's place in the world. Similarly, Hunter (2006) defines global competence as "having an open mind while actively seeking to understand cultural norms and expectations of others, leveraging this gained knowledge to interact, communicate and work effectively outside one's environment" (pp. 130-131). On this basis, Manzke (2015) formulated the following definition: "global citizens are created through the acquisition of multicultural knowledge and the ability to utilize that knowledge effectively to engage with different cultures around the world" (p. 15). Despite these propositions, Caruana (2014) maintains that global citizenship is a term that is "abstract and ill-defined" (p. 88).

Nonetheless, Israel (2012) believes that “the forces of global engagement are helping some people identify as global citizens who have a sense of belonging to a world community. This growing global identity in large part is made possible by the forces of modern information, communications and transportation technologies” (p. 1). With these newfound opportunities at hand, Braskamp (2008) suggests that global citizenship on a college campuses is a must. He contends that students need to become “useful neighbors to everyone including those in their own community” (p. 3) by embracing global citizenship as an identity and responsibility.

As is apparent, global citizenship is a moving target. Educators around the world continue to investigate the traits common to global citizens in order to delineate a consistent and broadly applicable meaning.

### **Creating a Culturally Competent Learning Community**

Colleges and universities need to create a culturally competent learning community, built on the ideals of diversity and global citizenship, in order to prepare students to navigate multicultural environments. To do so, it is necessary for campus administrators to assess the tangible and non-tangible practices and rituals going on in their schools. These practices derive from sports, academics, and numerous other sources, but all act as social influences that determine the campus identity. This identity informs people’s perceptions of and relation to the larger campus community.

As Peck (1998) argues in his book, *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace*, a community is where individuals not only make and transform meaning, but also work together for the common good. Peck (1998) goes so far as to claim that “in

and through community lies the salvation of the world,” but also believes that “most of us have never had an experience of true community” (p. 17). This seems to be the case on many U.S. campuses, as evidenced by the growing number of campus protests centered on issues of racial bias and inequalities Spinelle, (2015). These events have led students and faculty of all cultural backgrounds to ask the same questions: “How can we make our campus a safe place for all people?” “What does it take to create a campus community that truly celebrates and not just tolerates cultural differences?” And, “how do campuses enlarge the participation of all their members so that the genuinely brilliant potential of every person can be harnessed?”

In his remarks before the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, Dr. Ernest L. Boyer (1990) outlined the increasing decline of community on college and university campuses. His speech emphasized, among other important factors, how important it is for college and university presidents to reflect on the meaning of campus community and consider what personality they want their campuses to have. Boyer took both diversity and global awareness into account in his definition of community. He also maintained that a campus needs to adhere to six key standards in order to establish a rich campus learning community where all members are valued:

**Be a purposeful community:** A purposeful community is one in which students and faculty share learning goals. Likewise, the classroom is seen as a place where community begins and where “great teachers not only transmit information but also create the common ground of intellectual commitment.”

**Be an open community:** A place where freedom of expression is

uncompromisingly protected and where civility is powerfully affirmed.

**Be a just community:** A place where the sacredness of each person is honored and where diversity is aggressively pursued.

**Be a disciplined community:** A place where individuals accept their obligations to the group and where well-defined governance procedures guide behavior for the common good.

**Be a caring community:** A place where the well-being of each member is sensitively supported and where service to others is encouraged.

**Be a celebrative community:** A place in which the heritage of the institution is remembered and where rituals affirming both tradition and change are widely shared (Boyer, 1990).

The major challenge in achieving Boyer's principles is overcoming narrow individual viewpoints. To this end, the campus needs to balance majority and minority views, recognizing that all members have a role to play in constructing the campus personality. The University of Texas at Austin (2016), developed a Strategic Plan to address campus community engagement (2016). Outlined in their plan were seven goals for fostering community engagement and representational diversity:

**Diversity:** Demonstrating respect for all individuals and valuing each perspective and experience.

**Community engagement:** Learning and working collaboratively with community members and organizations to achieve positive change.

**Inclusion:** Breaking down barriers to meaningful participation and fostering a

sense of belonging.

**Integrity:** Setting high standards of professional ethics and being consistent in principles, expectations, and actions.

**Leadership:** Guiding and inspiring people and organizations toward excellence.

**Partnerships:** Cultivating mutually beneficial internal and external relationships built upon trust, cooperation, and shared responsibility.

**Social Justice:** Challenging injustice and working toward an equitable society in which all enjoy rights and opportunities.

Embracing these six key standards and seven goals would be the first step in achieving a harmonious existence between and among diverse cultures, both domestic and international. This ideology of community-building provides the basic building blocks for a cultural competence intelligence. With such intelligence, individuals can move beyond simply tolerating the cultural differences of "others" and instead participate in a positive and democratic campus community.

## **The Internationalization of Higher Education**

Higher education is poised for a paradigm shift where students and faculty can transmit and receive knowledge beyond conventional or local boundaries. As campuses are increasingly pushed toward internationalization, there is a rising need for a global perspective on education that can help individuals adapt to cultural differences.

International education draws upon the strengths of many nations and people, and it helps to communicate a sense of global personhood (Global Citizenship Alliance 2015). For this reason, leading universities



around the world are developing international relations through educational programs and exchange opportunities (Marginson, 2000). Business schools have been frontrunners in encouraging the internationalization of higher education. Joint ventures, exchange programs, international symposiums and travel excursions are just a few examples of the activities that business schools are currently engaged in. Meanwhile, campuses in the United Kingdom have had to incorporate new systems to address teaching, learning and assessment, so that their students are prepared to “live and work within a global, cultural context” (Stevenson, 2014, p. 47).

Obviously, universities have long been invested in recruiting international students as a means of generating additional revenues. However, this is quickly becoming a mandatory investment: As Haigh (2014) argues, for “many universities, recruiting international students is a matter of survival” (p. 3). Recruiting international students and faculty “is a part of the process that secures a university’s reputation by demonstrating its world-class character” (Haigh, 2014, p. 5). At the same time, this process has the secondary impact of facilitating cultural exchange and intercultural relationship-building, both on campuses and within the broader community.

Language training plays a major role in the internationalization of higher education. The United States lags behind in this regard partly because language training is not a major priority for its students. However, many international students and faculty come to United States universities with multiple language proficiencies, including English. Some international universities, such as the University of Basque Country in northeast Spain, are officially bilingual, allowing students to study their major concentrations in either language (in

this case, Spanish and Basque). The United States is home to a few practically bilingual universities, particularly in areas with considerable Hispanic populations, but fewer have taken on any official designation. Thus, in the wake of demographic shifts and international orientation, there is a rising call for greater language proficiency among American students.

Of course, as Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra (2013) maintain, English is still “the tertiary education language par excellence, and plays a key role as a commodity of globalization” (p. 1407). However, bilingualism, particularly in English, gives international students and faculty a clear advantage in the global marketplace. On a more humanistic level, though, a pivotal question remains unanswered: Namely, does language usage stimulate increased global practices, or is it just a tool to enhance communication among international populations? Research needs to uncover the degree to which bilingualism helps universities internationalize their campuses.

## **Conclusion**

With increasingly multicultural populations at their doorsteps and an urgent need to accommodate international students and faculty, IHEs are faced with the daunting task of retrofitting their academic programs to address the world’s mounting diversity. So galvanized, they are seeking answers to complex questions about how we can live together, communicate amongst each other, and define ourselves on this planet. Finding those answers will require the entire campus community, from student affairs to faculty, to significantly alter how they do business.

The 2009 World Conference on Higher Education challenged universities to enact new operational methods that would address the pressing issues of global societies

and promote better international understanding (UNESCO, 2009). The Salzburg Global Seminar (2015) clearly reminds educators that globalization poses new educational challenges that universities must address in their classrooms. At the same time, students themselves can play a large role in reforming universities and assisting them with embracing diversity and internationalism. By requesting specialized study programs and international field practices, for example, students can direct universities' attention toward new academic programs. In this way, it may be possible to move universities beyond simply re-enacting the status quo and build academic programs that address the demands of a diverse, global society.

In order to achieve a progressive learning environment for students and educators, educational leaders—alongside state and federal governing bodies, and world policymakers—need to first settle on a consistent definition of diversity and global citizenship. This is only the first step, however, in advancing education reform. Colleges and universities need to engage individuals in collaborative initiatives (e.g., activities, events, and immersion programs) that advance diversity and global citizenship, thereby increasing the potential for social change. Furthermore, IHEs should promote a scholarship of engagement that embraces diversity and global citizenship. Marullo and Edwards (2000) maintain that, for institutions to move towards a scholarship of engagement, the scholar must play the role of “organizer among their university colleagues so that networks of interested faculty, administrators, and staff can collaborate with enduring community-based constituencies and develop innovative ‘win-win’ projects for all parties” (p. 896). Collaborative engagement can serve as the vehicle for reshaping the college and university landscape around the ideals of diversity.

Of course, such actions should not be undertaken purely for the sake of reform, or to improve universities' financial positions, but rather to fulfil the basic concept of education—namely, the teaching of important life principles and critical thinking skills. In the words of landmark educator Arthur W. Foshay (1991), “The one continuing purpose of education, since ancient times, has been to bring people to as full a realization as possible of what it is to be a human being...”(p. 278). If Foshay is right, then diversity and global education have a paramount role to play in the education of our students. Diversity is a learning experience whose transcendent value cannot be ignored.

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