



INSIGHT

Lessons learned from our grantmaking programs

“Unknown” Students on College Campuses

An Exploratory Analysis

Daryl G. Smith, José Moreno, Alma R. Clayton-Pedersen,
Sharon Parker and Daniel Hiroyuki Teraguchi

*A research brief from The James Irvine Foundation
Campus Diversity Initiative Evaluation Project*



Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction: The Rise in “Unknown” Students on College Campuses	2
Methodology: Identifying the “Unknowns”	4
Findings: A Sizeable Portion of “Unknown” Students Are White	6
Implications: Accuracy Depends on the “Unknowns”	9
Recommendations: Improving Data Collection and Use	11
Conclusion	13
Bibliography	14
Appendix	15
Contributors	17

Cover photo by Jason Doiy

Executive Summary

In response to the increasing number of students who fall into the “race/ethnicity unknown” category of post-secondary demographic data, this exploratory study devised a method to ascertain the racial/ethnic backgrounds of these students by comparing existing enrollment data to a second, independent data set. The method was tested at three small private institutions in California. Our findings suggest that overall, a sizeable portion of students in the unknown category are white, in addition to multiracial students who may have selected white as one of their categories. These findings—while not necessarily generalizable—alert campus leaders of the need to attend to this growing segment of the student population and to how the United States is diversifying in more complex ways than ever before. The brief concludes with recommendations for future research and for both campus and federal data collection and use.

The Campus Diversity Initiative and CDI Evaluation Project

The James Irvine Foundation established the Campus Diversity Initiative (CDI), a \$29 million effort, to help twenty-eight independent colleges and universities in California strategically address issues of diversity on their campuses. The six-year initiative (2000–2005) supported a range of campus activities and institutional changes with the aim of increasing access and success of historically underrepresented students in higher education.

The CDI included a strong evaluation component to help each institution focus its projects and strategies and to identify and track larger institutional goals for change. A team of researchers from Claremont Graduate University (CGU) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) designed and led the CDI Evaluation Project to assist the CDI campuses in developing their own evaluation expertise and mechanisms. The evaluation project team worked with participating campuses to measure success, make mid-course corrections, and ultimately broaden and sustain diversity efforts beyond the scope and phase of the grant-funded projects.

Another purpose of the CDI Evaluation Project was to contribute new knowledge about effective diversity practices to the higher education field. Toward that end, the project is issuing three research briefs, of which this is the first, a monograph, a final report, and a resource kit. More information can be found at www.aacu.org/irvinediveval or www.irvine.org/publications/by_topic/education.shtml.

CDI Evaluation Project Team

Suzanne Benally, Campus Liaison	José Moreno, Senior Research Analyst
Susan E. Borrego, Campus Liaison	Sharon Parker, Co-principal Investigator
Jocelyn Chong, Research Associate	Daryl G. Smith, Co-principal Investigator
Alma R. Clayton-Pedersen, Co-principal Investigator	Daniel Hiroyuki Teraguchi, Research Associate
Mari Luna De La Rosa, Research Associate	Belinda Veal, Research Associate
Mildred García, Campus Liaison	
Jennie Spencer Green, Campus Liaison	

The three campuses highlighted in this brief were chosen for their comparability on several institutional characteristics, the presence of multiple sources of data, and their willingness to supply large amounts of data to the authors in a short period of time. We are grateful for their assistance. We also thank the CDI Evaluation Project Team, past and present, and Martha Campbell, Anne Stanton, and Jorge Ruiz-de-Velasco of The James Irvine Foundation for their contributions to this research brief. Finally, we thank Misha Charles and Melissa Blake for their administrative support of the project and especially Nancy O'Neill for her editing of the manuscript.

Introduction

THE RISE IN “UNKNOWN” STUDENTS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

Nationally, public scrutiny of the role of race and ethnicity in college admissions, legal challenges to affirmative action, and the introduction of policies such as California’s Proposition 209¹ have focused a great deal of attention on the racial/ethnic demographics of college and university student bodies. Within this context, one trend—considerable increases in the number of people falling into the “unknown” category² of college admissions and enrollment data—has remained largely unstudied.

Annually, all U.S. colleges and universities are required to report student enrollment data that is disaggregated by race/ethnicity to the Department of Education’s Integrated Post-secondary Education Data System, or IPEDS. IPEDS reporting forms list six standard racial/ethnic categories plus “race/ethnicity unknown.”³ Campuses submitting data to IPEDS typically place students in the unknown category when they do not fall neatly into one of the other categories. Such students may include those who, in their admissions applications, leave the race/ethnicity category blank, choose more than one racial/ethnic category, or choose “other.”

In recent years, IPEDS data have shown a dramatic increase in the percentage of individuals in the unknown category. Nationally, the figure has risen from 3.2% of students enrolled in 1991 to 5.9% of those enrolled in 2001—a nearly 100% increase.⁴ Despite this dramatic rise, to our knowledge there have been no empirical studies that have examined the racial/ethnic backgrounds of individuals who comprise this group. This prompted us to conduct this exploratory study, in which we sought to (a) develop a method for identifying the racial/ethnic backgrounds of students in an institution’s unknown category, and (b) test this method using enrollment data from three selective, comparably-sized, private liberal arts colleges in the Campus Diversity Initiative (CDI).

Nationally, the percentage of individuals in the unknown category has risen from 3.2% of students enrolled in 1991 to 5.9% of those enrolled in 2001—a nearly 100 percent increase.

¹ California’s Proposition 209 prohibits discrimination or preferential treatment by state and other public entities in public employment, public education, or public contracting on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin.

² There is no consistency across institutions as to who falls into the “unknown” category. It can serve as a catch-all category for those students who do not easily fall into traditional racial/ethnic categories, including students who leave demographic information blank, students who check multiple racial/ethnic categories, and students who check “other.” However, different campuses do different things with these students when collecting data. For example, one campus may place students who have selected multiple racial/ethnic categories into “unknown,” while another campus may place these students into the first discrete racial/ethnic category they designated. This points to the need for campus leaders to do further research into the demographic makeup of their institution’s unknown students and to make clear and public who is counted in this group.

³ Current IPEDS categories are nonresident alien; black, non-Hispanic; American Indian/Alaska Native; Asian/Pacific Islander; Hispanic; white, non-Hispanic; and race/ethnicity unknown. For more information, see nces.ed.gov/ipeds/web2000/WinterDataItems.asp. For a glossary of terms, see nces.ed.gov/ipeds/glossary/index.asp?charindex=R.

⁴ See Harvey and Anderson (2005). According to these authors, approximately 468,000 of the more than 14 million college students enrolled in 1991 fell into the IPEDS “unknown” category. In 2001, 938,000 of the nearly 16 million students enrolled were classified as unknown. On one campus included in our study, the percentage of students in the unknown category rose from 12% to 32% over a period of six years.

Identifying “unknown” students is an important part of efforts to

- ensure that campus leaders have accurate information about the demographics of their student populations;
- reduce the number of assumptions made about these students⁵;
- avoid skewing both internal and external data reports;
- monitor progress in increasing student compositional diversity and in ensuring the academic success of students from various racial/ethnic backgrounds;
- target mission, planning, curriculum and pedagogy, programs and services, hiring, and resource allocation toward all students’ high achievement.⁶

In the pages that follow, we introduce the data and methods used and summarize the findings from the three campuses. We then sketch out some of the implications of our findings and provide recommendations to both campuses and the federal government to better ensure accuracy in the gathering and reporting of racial/ethnic demographic data. This research brief reflects the goals of the Campus Diversity Initiative, which was designed to assist campuses as they worked to increase the access and success of low-income and underrepresented minority (URM) students in higher education.⁷

⁵ Accurate knowledge of campus demographics can also help leaders make sense of the broader campus racial climate. For more information on the campus racial climate, see Milem, Chang, and Antonio (2005).

⁶ For more on how to create educationally powerful learning environments, see AAC&J’s *Greater Expectations* report (2002).

⁷ For a longer description of the CDI project, see the box on page one or visit www.aacu.org/irvinediveval. In this paper, the term “underrepresented minority students” refers to African American/black, Latino(a)/Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native students. When we include other minority students in our discussion, we use the term “students of color.”

Methodology

IDENTIFYING THE “UNKNOWN”

In this study, we wanted to compare our first data source—student enrollment data for specific entering college cohorts—to an independent data source with a low instance of unknown classifications. As stated above, we enlisted the assistance of three California institutions, which we refer to as Campus A, B, and C. Each enrolls a first-year class of two hundred to four hundred students annually.

Data

Enrollment data are derived from information that colleges and universities routinely collect about their applicants as part of the admissions process, including racial/ethnic background. The application form for each of the three campuses allows prospective students to check all applicable categories of racial/ethnic identity. Upon the student’s acceptance and matriculation, the admissions data become enrollment data, and a permanent part of the campus student records system.

As noted earlier, there is no consistency across institutions in terms of how campuses handle data from students who leave the race/ethnicity category blank, who check “other,” or who check more than one racial/ethnic category. Campuses A, B, and C, for example, each handle data from these students differently. However, the enrollment data given to us for this study by all three institutions assigned each student to a discrete category.⁸

We used the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) first-year survey,⁹ which is administered by all three campuses, as our second data source.¹⁰ There are three reasons why CIRP data proved to be a good second source for this study. First, CIRP data generally involve a much smaller “unknown” category¹¹—in part, we believe, because the survey is administered to first-year students *soon after matriculation*.¹² Second, for each campus, we were able to examine cohorts with high CIRP completion rates, ranging from 82% to 97%.¹³ Third, the CIRP survey allows students to select multiple racial/ethnic categories to describe themselves, and the categories chosen by respondents *are not collapsed or otherwise changed when survey data are analyzed and reported back to campuses*.¹⁴

⁸ Thus, the enrollment data presented here represents 100% of each of the first-year cohorts we studied.

⁹ The CIRP survey is a national survey of entering first-year students conducted by researchers at the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles.

¹⁰ Ideally, we would have compared each student’s selection of racial/ethnic categories at the point of admissions/enrollment to her or his selection at a later point, but no data source existed that allowed for individual comparisons.

¹¹ For our purposes, the “other” category in the CIRP survey consisted of instances where students checked “other” and nothing else. “Unknown” represents those students who left the question blank. Thus readers will see “other” and “unknown” categories in the CIRP data columns within the tables listed in the appendix. The choices available to students on the CIRP survey are white/Caucasian, African American/black, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian American/Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Mexican American/Chicano, Puerto Rican, Other Latino, and Other. See www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/cirp_survey.html.

¹² It may be that students who perceive their race/ethnicity to be a “strike against them” in the admissions process are more likely to specify their racial/ethnic backgrounds once they have enrolled in college. This is an area in need of further research.

¹³ For Campus A, we examined the 2000 and 2001 cohorts; for Campus B, the 2002 cohort; and for Campus C, the 1998 and 2002 cohorts.

¹⁴ This can mean that the number of CIRP race/ethnicity responses is greater than the number of respondents. This was true for all campuses and for all years examined in this study.

Methods

For the enrollment data, we listed the number of students in each discrete racial/ethnic category and calculated percentages based on the total entering class. Then we did the same for the CIRP based on the total respondents. For Campus B, and for one entering class with Campus C, there were enough missing CIRP data to warrant some adjustment. Specifically, when CIRP responses were lower than enrollment numbers for particular populations of students, we added back the difference.

For example, as will be discussed below, Campus B had seven African American entering students according to enrollment data but only four respondents who checked “African American/black”¹⁵ on the CIRP. We presume that three African American students did not take the CIRP at all, because it is highly unlikely that these students, even if multiracial, would have abandoned the racial/ethnic identification they offered on their admissions applications. In such cases, we “added back” the students of color who, we believe, did not take the CIRP but would have minimally checked the racial/ethnic category they selected in their applications.¹⁶

There is no consistency across institutions in terms of how campuses handle data from students who leave the race/ethnicity category blank, who check “other,” or who check more than one racial/ethnic category.

¹⁵ We are following prevailing editorial guidelines in making “black” and “white” lower-case, even though we use these terms to refer to racial/ethnic categories.

¹⁶ This was to work with the best available data. Again, we recognize these students might have checked more than one racial/ethnic category had they taken the CIRP.

Findings

A SIZEABLE PORTION OF “UNKNOWN” STUDENTS ARE WHITE

Because complete CIRP data were not available and because we could not assign one-to-one correspondence between enrollment and CIRP data, we stress that this study is exploratory in nature, and we can only suggest findings that will need to be explored in greater depth by campuses themselves. Those wishing to review full data tables will find them in the appendix.

Campus A

Campus A entering cohorts in 2000 and 2001 included 32% and 22% unknown students, respectively (see table 1 in the appendix). In 2000, the entering cohort was 42% white, 12% Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI), 11% underrepresented minority (URM) students, 3% other, and 32% unknown, with a total class size of 218. Ninety-three percent (203) of the newly enrolled students filled out the CIRP. The CIRP demographic data point to this group being 70% white, 15% AAPI, 17% URM, 7% other, and 4% unknown. Consistent with some national research,¹⁷ students’ ability to select multiple racial/ethnic categories yielded increases in the percentage of African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, and AAPI students, along with white students. The 203 CIRP respondents chose 229 racial categories, indicating that *up to* twenty-six students (13%) in this group (if students chose only two categories) were multiracial.¹⁸

A comparison of the enrollment data to the CIRP data indicates an increase in the percentage of white students from 42% to as high as 70%. Even if all twenty-six students who potentially selected multiple racial/ethnic categories listed “white,” the percentage of white-only students would still increase to 57%,¹⁹ the most conservative estimate.

A similar pattern exists with the 2001 data, where a CIRP data comparison of unknown students indicates that the percentage of white-only students increases from 50% (enrollment) to anywhere from 60% to as high as 72%.

¹⁷ See, for example, Hirschman, Alba, and Farley (2000) and Xie and Goyette (1997).

¹⁸ With any discussion of CIRP multiple responses, we recognize that the number of multiracial students would be fewer if any portion of them chose three or more racial/ethnic categories.

¹⁹ We are mindful that the fifteen students who did not complete the CIRP also alter the ratio of students.

Campus B

The Campus B entering cohort in 2002 included 13% unknown students (see table 2 in the appendix). The cohort was 63% white, 14% AAPI, 9% URM, 2% other, and 13% unknown, with a total class size of 224. Eighty-five percent (190) of the newly enrolled students filled out the CIRP. The CIRP demographic data indicate this group to be 87% white, 11% AAPI, 8% URM, and 3% other. The 190 CIRP respondents chose 208 racial categories, indicating that up to eighteen students (9%) in this group (if students chose only two categories) were multiracial. The CIRP comparison indicates twenty-four additional responses for the white category. If we presume that the eighteen students were multiracial and that they selected white as part of their racial/ethnic identification, this would account for three-fourths of the white increase. Thus the number of students who move into the white-only category ranges from six (if there was complete overlap between white respondents and multiracial respondents) to twenty-four (if there was no overlap with multiracial respondents). This represents an increase from 63% (enrollment) to anywhere from 77% to as high as 87%.

Even with the high CIRP response rate, we were missing data on thirty-four enrolled students, making a clear comparison more difficult. There were three fewer African American, three fewer Latino(a), and ten fewer AAPI students in the CIRP count, and it is likely that these 16 students were among those who did not complete the CIRP. As noted above, we explored the impact of these students of color on our analyses by adjusting the CIRP profile. We added those sixteen students back into their respective categories, thereby adjusting the overall percentages of students (see the "CIRP-A '02" column in table 2). The adjusted profile becomes 80% white, 15% AAPI, 10% URM, and 3% other.

Notably, even though Campus B started with a smaller unknown category than Campus A, we find a comparable increase in the number of white-only students after analyzing this group.

Notably, even though Campus B started with a smaller unknown category than Campus A, we find a comparable increase in the number of white-only students after analyzing this group.

Campus C

The Campus C entering cohorts in 1998 and 2002 included 10% and 13% unknown students, respectively (see table 3 in the appendix). In 1998, the entering cohort was 53% white, 20% AAPI, 15% URM, 2% other, and 10% unknown, with a total class size of 397. Ninety-five percent (377) of the newly enrolled students filled out the CIRP. The CIRP data show this group to be 67% white, 22% AAPI, 18% URM, 6% other, and 1% unknown. The 377 CIRP respondents chose 431 racial categories, indicating that up to fifty-four students (14%) in this group (if students chose only two categories) were multiracial. The CIRP data for 1998 also show increases among Latino(a), American Indian, AAPI, “other,” and white students. While we do not know what percentage of students checking off multiple racial/ethnic categories included “white” in their selections, given the increases in the other categories, we presume there are still some students who moved from unknown into the white-only category.

In 2002, the entering cohort was 59% white, 11% AAPI, 14% URM, 3% other, and 13% unknown, with a total class size of 374 (see table 3). Eighty-two percent (307) of the students completed the CIRP. The CIRP data indicate this group to be 76% white, 11% AAPI, 14% URM, and 7% other. The 307 CIRP respondents chose 329 racial categories, indicating that up to 22 students (7%) in this group (if students chose only two categories) were multiracial. Because we were missing data on 67 students, we again adjusted our CIRP data to add in the 26 students of color who were likely part of the group of non-respondents (see table 4 in the appendix). With the data adjusted, the cohort becomes 70% white, 13% AAPI, 17% URM, and 7% other.

A comparison of the enrollment data to the CIRP data indicates that the percentage of white students could be increasing from 59% to as high as 70% to 76%. With sixty-seven students missing from the CIRP data, it is uncertain how many of them were white. And as with 1998, we do not know what percentage of students checking off multiple racial/ethnic categories in the CIRP included “white” in their selections. Still, it is reasonable to speculate that some students may have moved from “unknown” into the white-only category, to the point where further investigation is needed.

Implications

ACCURACY DEPENDS ON THE “UNKNOWN”

While there is variation among the three campuses in this study, overall, the results suggest that a sizeable portion of students in the unknown category are white, in addition to multiracial students who may have selected white as one of their categories. Campus A provides the most startling case, with the most conservative estimate indicating an almost 150% increase in the number of white-only students after the unknown category is analyzed.

Such findings have dramatic implications for higher education institutions. For example, a campus may have 50% students of color according to enrollment data but may have only 28% students of color according to high response rate CIRP data, where unknown students are identified and appropriately categorized. In such cases, a great deal of accuracy depends on who is in the unknown category.

Over the course of several decades of working with campuses to establish diversity initiatives, we have encountered many people who assume that most, if not all, students in the unknown category are multiracial. This study directly challenges that assumption and primes the field for further research in this area. As many campuses report progress toward compositional diversity by touting the presence of either underrepresented minority students or students of color generally, our findings suggest that the racial/ethnic composition of an institution can be distorted when there is a large unknown population. Even if a relatively small portion of this group is white, it will change the demographic diversity of a campus and have repercussions in terms of the handling of this category in data reporting.

Our findings suggest that the racial/ethnic composition of an institution can be distorted when there is a large unknown population.

Most colleges and universities collect data using a multiple race classification system (MRCS), similar to the system used by the federal government for the 2000 census.²⁰ Many of these institutions retain this more nuanced data in their records systems, but without a set of standards for handling and use, student demographic data can be shared with internal and external constituents in different ways and with different interpretations. For example, for some reporting purposes, a campus may omit unknown students entirely from the equation, reducing the overall student population size and effectively increasing the percentage of students of color on campus relative to the whole. In other instances, unknown students may first be presumed to be multiracial, and then be categorized as “students of color” in some reports. This is problematic first if there are unknown students who are white, and second if the campus lacks a clear, consistent, and public definition of “students of color.”²¹

This type of practice can negatively affect all levels of institutional functioning, from campus-wide strategic planning to individual programs and courses. One area of particular concern is the campus racial climate—for all students seeking to learn in a diverse community, and especially for underrepresented minority students. Indeed, in our work with the twenty-eight campuses involved in the CDI, we have heard numerous URM students describe the disorientation they experienced when they arrived on campus and discovered far fewer students of color—particularly sharing their own racial/ethnic background—than were indicated through admissions materials, campus tours, and minority student recruitment events. Many students recalled specific percentages of students of color being publicized during recruitment and said that their vision of a diverse campus was not realized. Some students acknowledged that they felt deceived by their institutions.²²

²⁰ Indeed, many colleges and universities have attempted to be more sensitive to students' multiracial identities by enabling applicants to select all applicable categories from as many as twelve different racial/ethnic classifications, as they can with the Common Application (www.commonapp.org). Yet these efforts are lost at the point of reporting to IPEDS. As we noted earlier, multiracial students are often lumped together with students who, for whatever reason, decline to state their racial/ethnic identity or select “other.”

²¹ Similarly, the term “black students” may be synonymous with African American students on some campuses, while other campuses may include students of African descent born outside of the United States. These are just a few examples of terms that can have different meanings for different groups and on different campuses.

²² We do not ascribe malice or intent to deceive to the campuses in the project; rather, we want to point out what we suspect is a common phenomenon across the country, and one that has not received adequate attention.

Recommendations

IMPROVING DATA COLLECTION AND USE

Institutional Level

Collect racial/ethnic demographic information post-enrollment to identify unknown students. It is possible that some increase in unknown students is due to an impression among white and AAPI students that their race/ethnicity would work against them in the admissions process. To capture a more accurate picture of their entering classes, campus leaders should also collect information on students’ race/ethnicity post-enrollment, when presumably students would not fear any repercussions for their self-identification.

Set campus-wide internal standards for using and reporting data. Campus “data leaders” should develop a set of standards for using and reporting student demographic data, particularly regarding the unknown category. Our study suggests that campuses cannot assume that all or even most students in the unknown category are multiracial, and so data users should be especially wary of automatically including these students as “students of color.” If it is not possible to disaggregate the unknown category by race/ethnicity at the point of data use, an individual should report what is known about these students and include a caveat about the potential for this category to skew an institution’s demographics—particularly if the number of unknown students is large.

Use consistent racial/ethnic categories across data sets. Internal data reports should involve a consistent set of racial/ethnic categories that are as detailed as possible. External surveys or data reports should be generated using the campus-established set of categories and, if necessary, generated a second time using the categories required by the external entity. This way, the detailed demographics will always accompany external reports in the campus files and be available internally any time the report is discussed.

Define all levels of racial/ethnic groupings. As noted earlier, campus leaders should (a) clearly and publicly define terms, such as “students of color,” that cluster individuals and groups into larger categories, and (b) work to ensure the terms are used consistently.

Provide details on the groups that constitute biracial and multiracial identities. Many campuses now enable students to select multiple categories of racial/ethnic identification when they apply for admission. Our study suggests that this group is critical to reporting an accurate student profile. Campus leaders should be able to ascertain the number of students who identify as biracial or multiracial and also be able to describe the variety of identities included in these categories.²³

To capture a more accurate picture of their entering classes, campus leaders should also collect information on students’ race/ethnicity post-enrollment, when presumably students would not fear any repercussions for their self-identification.

²³ Since the focus of many diversity efforts includes increasing access and success for underrepresented minority students, the demographic profile of multiracial students is especially necessary. In addition, without this information, programming efforts may ignore one or more of the communities with which students identify.

National Level

Implement a multiple race classification system (MRCS) for IPEDS. At the federal level, education policy leaders should amend IPEDS so that it uses an MRCS, as was done with the 2000 census. Requiring institutions to collapse groups of students into the “unknown” category results in less accurate information at the federal level. Perhaps more disconcerting, it reinforces this practice at the institutional level. As we hear an increasing call for institutional accountability for student learning outcomes, we should also demand to know precisely what groups of students are present in our learning environments. As stated earlier, this may be especially important for particular regions (e.g., the South), states (e.g., California), or institutions that have experienced protracted legal challenges around affirmative action, immigration, or other related issues.

Implement an MRCS for national reporting of educational outcomes at all levels. This will be the only way to determine with any accuracy who has access to the educational pipeline leading to graduate-level study and who is successful at points along the way.

Conclusion

Although our study is exploratory, data for those campuses with high CIRP response rates demonstrate that as the percentage of unknown classifications declines, the percentage of white classifications increases dramatically relative to the percentage of underrepresented minority student classifications. Furthermore, we found compelling evidence that these white classifications included both white-multiracial and white-only students. Our recommendations seek to eliminate our reliance on assumptions about unknown students and establish a way of collecting more accurate official enrollment data on all students. With this more accurate data, we will have not only a better sense of the true racial/ethnic composition of our colleges and universities, but also a better gauge of the access various students have to, and the success they have through, higher education.

It has become standard practice to acknowledge how the United States will diversify in the twenty-first century to a greater extent than ever before. With that, we must also now turn our attention to how the country is diversifying in more complex ways than ever before. We realize that enacting broad change—whether it is investing in new data systems, modifying existing systems, or refining the data that pass between units on campus—will be a complicated process for many institutions. But it is a process that campus leaders must plan for and carry out now, over the next five to ten years, and beyond. We hope that this brief will provide some impetus to undertake this very important effort.

As we hear an increasing call for institutional accountability for student learning outcomes, we should also demand to know precisely what groups of students are present in our learning environments.

Bibliography

Association of American Colleges and Universities. 2002. *Greater expectations: A new vision for learning as a nation goes to college*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Dahra, A., and K. Howard. 2001. Multiple race reporting. Paper presented at the Association of Institutional Research, Long Beach, CA, June 2–6, 2001.

Eschbach, K. 1993. Changes in Self-identification of American Indians and Alaska Natives. *Demography* 30: 635-52.

Harvey, W. B., and E. L. Anderson. 2005. *Minorities in higher education: Twenty-first annual status report, 2003–4*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

Hirschman, C., R. Alba, and R. Farley. 2000. The meaning and measurement of race in the U.S. census: Glimpses into the future. *Demography* 37 (3): 381-93.

Lieberson, S., and M. Waters. 1993. The ethnic responses of whites: What causes their instability, simplification, and inconsistency? *Social Forces* 72: 421-50.

Milem, J., M. Chang, and A. Antonio. 2005. *Making diversity work on campus: A research-based perspective*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities. www.aacu.org/inclusive_excellence/pdfs/Milem_Final.pdf.

Staff in Population Division and Decennial Statistical Studies Division. 1997. *Results of the 1996 race and ethnic targeted tests*. Population Division Working Paper No. 18. Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census. www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0018/twps0018.html.

Wendler, C., M. Feigenbaum, and M. Escandon. 2001, December. Defining group membership: The impact of multiple versus single ethnic/racial categories on testing practices. *College Board Research Notes, RN-13*. www.collegeboard.com/research/pdf/rn13_11425.pdf.

Xie, R., and K. Goyette. 1997. The racial identification of biracial children with one Asian parent: Evidence from the 1990 Census. *Social Forces* 76: 547-70.

Appendix²⁴

Table 1. Campus A:
Race/ethnicity via first-year enrollments and CIRP respondents, 2000 and 2001

	Enrollment '00 % (n)	CIRP '00 % [r] ²⁵	Enrollment '01 % (n)	CIRP '01 % [r]
African American/black	2% (4)	3% [6]	7% (15)	6% [13]
Latino(a)/Hispanic	8% (17)	11% [22]	10% (22)	12% [26]
American Indian	1% (1)	3% [6]	1% (3)	3% [7]
Asian American/Pacific Islander	12% (27)	15% [30]	9% (20)	13% [28]
White	42% (92)	70% [143]	50% (111)	72% [157]
Other	3% (7)	7% [14]	2% (4)	5% [11]
Unknown	32% (70)	4% [8]	22% (49)	1% [2]
Total n	100% (218)		100% (224)	
CIRP response rate [Total r]		93% [203]		97% [218]
Total CIRP responses ²⁶		229		244

Table 2. Campus B:
Race/ethnicity via first-year enrollments, CIRP and adjusted CIRP respondents, 2002

	Enrollment '02 % (n)	CIRP '02 % [r]	CIRP-A '02 % [r]
African American/black	3% (7)	2% [4]	3% [7]
Latino(a)/Hispanic	6% (13)	5% [10]	6% [13]
American Indian	0% (0)	1% [2]	1% [2]
Asian American/Pacific Islander	14% (31)	11% [21]	15% [31]
White	63% (141)	87% [165]	80% [165]
Other	2% (4)	3% [6]	3% [6]
Unknown	13% (29)	0% [0]	0% [0]
Total n	100% (225)		
CIRP response rate [Total r]		85% [190]	[206]
Total CIRP responses		208	

²⁴ All data used in the study were supplied by the three campuses. See note 11 for details about the CIRP “other” and “unknown” categories.

²⁵ [r] refers to the numbers of CIRP respondents choosing a particular category.

²⁶ We remind readers that the CIRP preserves multiple responses. In table 1, for example, 229 responses from 203 respondents indicate that up to 26 students selected multiple racial/ethnic categories.

Table 3. Campus C:
Race/ethnicity via first-year enrollments and CIRP respondents, 1998 and 2002

	Enrollment '98 % (n)	CIRP '98 % [r]	Enrollment '02 % (n)	CIRP '02 % [r]
African American/black	4% (17)	4% [15]	4% (17)	5% [14]
Latino(a)/Hispanic	10% (38)	11% [41]	9% (33)	7% [20]
American Indian	1% (3)	3% [12]	1% (2)	2% [7]
Asian American/Pacific Islander	20% (78)	22% [82]	11% (43)	11% [33]
White	53% (211)	67% [254]	59% (222)	76% [234]
Other	2% (9)	6% [23]	3% (9)	7% [21]
Unknown	10% (41)	1% [4]	13% (48)	0% [0]
Total n	100% (397)		100% (374)	
CIRP response rate [Total r]		95% [377]		82% [307]
Total CIRP responses		431		329

Table 4. Campus C:
Race/ethnicity via first-year enrollments, CIRP and adjusted CIRP respondents, 2002

	Enrollment '02 % (n)	CIRP '02 % [r]	CIRP-A '02 % [r]
African American/black	4% (17)	5% [14]	5% [17]
Latino(a)/Hispanic	9% (33)	7% [20]	10% [33]
American Indian	1% (2)	2% [7]	2% [7]
Asian American/Pacific Islander	11% (43)	11% [33]	13% [43]
White	59% (222)	76% [234]	70% [234]
Other	3% (9)	7% [21]	7% [21]
Unknown	13% (48)	0% [0]	0% [0]
Total n	100% (374)		
CIRP response rate [Total r]		82% [307]	[333]
Total CIRP responses		329	

Contributors

The **Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)** is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915, AAC&U now comprises more than 1,000 accredited public and private colleges and universities of every type and size. For more information about AAC&U, visit www.aacu.org.

Founded in 1925, **Claremont Graduate University (CGU)** is an independent institution, striking in its global linkages and partnerships, innovative in the ways it teaches, characterized by continuous reconfiguration, responsive in its research to social issues and needs, and sensitive to aesthetic and moral dimensions of professional life. CGU enrolls approximately 2,200 students in eight graduate schools of arts and humanities, behavioral and organizational sciences, educational studies, information science, management, mathematics, politics and economics, and religion. Among its nearly 18,000 alumni are 38 current or former college and university presidents, two members of Congress, and three MacArthur Fellows. CGU is a member of the Claremont Colleges consortium. For more information about CGU, visit www.cgu.edu.

INSIGHT “UNKNOWN” STUDENTS

THE JAMES IRVINE FOUNDATION

A PRIVATE, NONPROFIT GRANTMAKING FOUNDATION, WITH OFFICES IN SAN FRANCISCO AND LOS ANGELES. THE FOUNDATION WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1937 BY JAMES IRVINE, A NATIVE CALIFORNIAN WHO DEVOTED MOST OF HIS LIFE TO BUSINESS INTERESTS IN SAN FRANCISCO AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIS 110,000-ACRE RANCH IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, WHICH WAS AMONG THE LARGEST PRIVATELY OWNED LAND HOLDINGS IN THE STATE. WITH CURRENT ASSETS OF MORE THAN \$1.5 BILLION, THE FOUNDATION EXPECTS TO MAKE GRANTS OF \$61 MILLION IN 2005 FOR THE PEOPLE OF CALIFORNIA. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE JAMES IRVINE FOUNDATION, VISIT WWW.IRVINE.ORG.

ABOUT INSIGHT

INSIGHT IS A PERIODICAL PUBLICATION OF THE JAMES IRVINE FOUNDATION, DESIGNED TO PROVIDE NONPROFIT AND COMMUNITY LEADERS, GRANTMAKERS, POLICYMAKERS AND OTHER AUDIENCES WITH INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT WE ARE LEARNING FROM OUR GRANTMAKING PROGRAMS. INSIGHT AND ITS PARTNER PUBLICATION, INSIGHT BRIEF, ARE AVAILABLE FREE OF CHARGE FROM THE FOUNDATION'S WEBSITE, WWW.IRVINE.ORG.

© **THE JAMES IRVINE FOUNDATION 2005**. THIS EDITION OF INSIGHT MAY BE REPRINTED OR PHOTOCOPIED FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION, WITH ATTRIBUTION TO THE JAMES IRVINE FOUNDATION.

575 MARKET STREET
SUITE 3400
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105
415.777.2244

865 SOUTH FIGUEROA
SUITE 2308
LOS ANGELES, CA 90017
213.236.0552

WWW.IRVINE.ORG