

Text Summary

A Business Case For Diversity: A Basis for Higher Education A Presentation for the Board of Trustees Sub-committee on Diversity

I. Introduction:

The presentation is intended to address two key concepts: (1) A Business Case for Diversity and (2) how that business case relates to higher education.

The presentation was suggested by Sharon Ting who thought could be helpful in establishing a foundation as diversity is reflected in and affected by work in higher education, and strategic planning.

II. Establishing a Framework for the Business case

The work wheel lists the many factors of diversity that exist in the work place, when we talk about diversity in general. The Center Circle depicts what we refer to as the various visible and most common aspects of diversity: (race, gender, age, physical abilities, sexual orientation, and ethnicity). The last two circles depict what we refer to as the invisible diversity factors, and usually are thought of as contributing primarily diversity of thought.

When you look at these factors, the average person will see populations; for today's presentation, I ask that you look at them as perspectives that are present in the workforce.

We need to apply them to a phrase by (Smith 2009): "Optimized behavior of a diverse work force (with diverse perspectives) creates a significant operational advantage", meaning that many of the hypothetical factors listed on the wheel can help to address the various success factors or challenges in the work world of the average university.

- Factors that can help lead to optimal success or potential work force issues for faculty and staff (feeling respected and connected in their departments, seeking assistance with the research requirements, seeking a mentor that can be trusted, negotiating a pathway for Career Advancement, identifying faculty/staff of one's race or gender and adjusting to the city culture).

Or students (adaptation, culture shock, persistence from one semester to the next, persistence to graduation, academic difficulty, seeking assistance in understanding administrative systems, Making students feel at home (adaptation), facilitating disabilities, homesickness, identifying faculty/staff of one's race or gender; identifying students of one's race or gender).

III. Diversity as a driver of Innovation

A variety of diverse perspective as seen on the work wheel can help to address these issues.

Each perspective represents a different voice(s) when engaged in problem solving.

In his book, *The Difference*, Scott Page, discusses how groups think and specifically how diversity of perspectives impact group decisions. His research shows that the greater the diversity, the greater the potential for innovation. Page proposes 3 tenants regarding innovation: (1) Diversity includes not only traditional factors, but people's distinct cognitive tools and abilities. (2) Increased diversity helps organizations to think differently and innovate in groups. (2) Teams of people from diverse backgrounds find better solutions than brilliant individuals with enormous IQ's working alone. In essence, these factors lead to (1) Increased Creativity, (2) Enhanced Critical Thinking, and (3) Development of Inventive Products.

More importantly, Scott and others have found it is not just about the numbers. Effective facilitation and placement of diverse people in organizations is critical. To maximize innovation and optimize organizational performance, businesses must: (1) Pursue presence of a critical mass of diverse people, (2) Promote interaction of everyone involved and (3) Promote effective placement of people in the organization.

IV. **Diversity/Innovation based Research regarding Higher Education**

How does this apply to Higher Education?

We can best look at a variety of research studies that demonstrate how these practices were able to produce effective or improved performance in higher education. Below are a series of diversity studies that reflect innovative practices that address higher educational issues. (Headlines only)

1. **Student participation in faculty mentoring programs improved self-efficacy.** This was true to an even greater degree, for those students with same-ethnic mentors. (Santos & Reigadas, 2002).
2. **Recruitment and retention for students of color improved when pursuing a number of structured contacts through faculty of color mentorship, including:** making personal contacts, teaching a diversity course and conducting diversity research. This was true however, only when having reached a critical mass of faculty of color, and students of color (Rogers and Molina, 2006).
3. **Recruitment and retention for students of color improved in mentorship programs.** This was true when rated by faculty familiarity, including same-race affiliation as a variable. (Schwitzer, Griffin, Ancis and Thomas, 2011).
4. **On the teaching side,** (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado & Gurin, 2002) have postulated that interaction with a diverse student body contributes to the learning outcomes of students in the classroom.

5. A study by Antonio, Chang, Hakuta, et al. (N.D) found that the presence of a Black collaborator in a group of White participants (students) **generally led to greater perceived “novelty” (generation of novel ideas). It also led to a greater level of integrative complexity among White students.** Additionally, in those situations where students reported engagement in cross-racial (African American to White) relations, an increase in integrative complexity occurred.
6. A study by Harper and Hurtado (2007) **re-enforced the notion that institutions can affect the transition of racial minorities negatively**, if the climate reflects a sense of privilege for majority (Caucasian) students.
7. Sidanius (2008) was able to determine that living with "outgroup roommates" from different races demonstrated statistically significant gains in comfort levels with people of different groups, including:
 - having circles of friends beyond one's own group, and a variety of other measures of tolerance toward.
8. **Companies with:**
 - a. a higher percentage of women in top leadership positions performed better financially than their competitors (Catalyst, 2004);
 - b. with higher representation of different racial minorities in significant (non-token) positions (Herring 2006) increases production when compared to competitors different groups.

V. **Summary/ Synthesis**

We can see on the left hand side –where I had previously listed diverse populations and perspective ----, - that there is now a menu of research diversity findings.

This includes diversity perspectives and menus that can affect at least the challenges of students, faculty, and staff in Higher Education. These then constitute a new perspective on the business case for diversity in higher education.

Diversity-Based & Innovative Strategies

- Critical mass of diverse populations
- Diversity-based rooming assignments
- Campus climate of equity
- Critical mass of historically underrepresented populations
- Intentionally structured diverse work teams
- Mentoring programs.
- Effective diversity education programs , curriculum & training

Hypothetical Higher Education Challenges

- **Students**
- Making students feel at home (adaptation)
- Dealing with Culture Shock when meeting someone different
- Helping students persist from one semester to the next
- Having difficulty performing in the classroom
- Helping students figure out “the system”
- Facilitating an accommodation for a disability
- Being homesick
- Finding students or your race or gender that you can talk to
- Finding faculty/staff or your race or gender that you can talk to, who ‘get it’
- Feeling that the campus is welcoming
- **Faculty/Staff**
- Feeling respected and connected in your department
- Seeking assistance with the research requirements
- Seeking a mentor you can trust
- Negotiating a pathway for Career Advancement
- Finding faculty/staff or your race or gender that you can talk to
- Adjusting to the city culture