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## A Cross-Disciplinary Examination of Institutional Diversity: How University Programs Advance a Diverse Workforce

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# NAMMS

NORTH AMERICAN MANAGEMENT SOCIETY

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## **A Cross-Disciplinary Examination of Institutional Diversity: How University Programs Advance a Diverse Workforce**

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**Abstract:** *Diversity in higher education is encouraged and celebrated throughout many predominant universities across the United States. Institutions of higher learning benefit from diversity in all aspects of campus life; from classes, organizations, or extracurricular activities. Institutional theory is applied to this study to examine how diversity programs are implemented in various university types (national research, private, and state) as well as different settings (educational opportunities, leadership, and accessibility) to develop a qualified and diverse workforce. To achieve this objective, we suggest universities implement a multifaceted approach focusing on initiatives at the university, faculty, and student level.*

**Key words:** *Diversity, Inclusion, Higher-Education, Educational Opportunities, Leadership*

### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the numerous benefits to working in higher education is the access to diverse perspectives. Diversity may include differences in race, gender, ethnicity, or anything else (Dess & Parker, 1999). Each member of the campus community collectively benefits when the level of interaction among diverse groups increases. Diversity, itself, has been viewed from various perspectives and frameworks. In general, scholars tend to examine how organizations manage workforce diversity through the discrimination and fairness paradigm, the access and legitimacy paradigm, or the learning and effectiveness paradigm (Dass & Parker, 1999). Since educational and civic importance of informal interaction among diverse groups is vital during the college years (Gurin, et. al, 2002), university administrators are conscious of diversity and inclusion to meet societal expectations. Diversity is embraced in higher education, regardless of institutional classification; including national research universities, state funded public universities, and small private universities. It will ensure a higher proportion of diverse individuals that are motivated and capable of succeeding in an environment of rigorous academic inquiry.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to investigate campus wide diversity programs at each university type to highlight initiatives that are implemented at the collegiate level. To ensure the entirety of the above-mentioned educational spectrum is sampled, the following institution programs are examined: Biological Sciences at the University of Chicago (Chicago, IL; national research), College of Business at Valparaiso University (Valparaiso, IN; private), Health and Human Performance at the University of North Carolina Pembroke (Pembroke, NC; state).

## UNIVERSITIES AS MIMETIC ORGANIZATIONS

Institutional rules function as rationalized myths that organizations incorporate to gain legitimacy, maintain stability, acquire resources, and enhance their survival prospects (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Institutional theory suggests that changes in features of the formal structure of organization (institutions of higher education) reflect the effects of the social environment on organization (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Institutionalization is the process by which actions are repeated and given a similar meaning by individuals and by others (Scott, 1995). The schools we examine are a few of many institutions providing opportunities for diverse students. The institutionalization component suggests that similar institutions will follow suit as it has become the norm. Organizational changes (Scott, 1995) are introduced to align with social rules, expectations, norms, and values. In many cases, these institutions were on the forefront of these changes, and fortunately, others have continued that tradition.

Diverse student populations provide a larger population of prospective students. As these individuals progress through their degree program and graduate, it simultaneously develops a larger alumni network of successful graduates. Having a prodigious base of prospective students and alumni certainly helps mitigate potential financial issues during an economic downturn or periods of uncertainty. Diversity promotes social well-being, talent maximization, and legitimacy among its peers. These institutional forces (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) have a propensity to make institutions more analogous over time. Mimetic isomorphism exists because organizations model themselves after others they perceive to be more legitimate, especially in times of uncertainty.

Influential institutions gain power as they form the ability to define the rationalized and social myths of their industry. With this power, less established institutions follow their lead of diversity and inclusion. Over time, diversity and inclusion has become the industry standard. Though each institution will have its own diversity programs, institutionalization will likely create similarities between them (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). This will often provide economic benefits through social process that will benefit the institutions both directly and indirectly (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Therefore, the trend setters have made it a focal point to increase diversity and inclusion, which is having a positive influence on higher education.

## RESEARCH UNIVERSITY - UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

In the hierarchy of academic institutions, the elite research-oriented universities are looked to as the trend setters. Conforming to institutionalized rules (Staw & Epstein, 2000) can improve legitimacy for the organization and its leadership. Since its inception in 1890, the University of Chicago has been at the forefront of promoting diversity in academia. Unique to many institutions of its day, the university was open to all, regardless of gender, race, or religious background. Its founders recognized the importance of different perspectives when engaging in rigorous academic inquiry. This legacy of diversity and inclusion has been epitomized by the countless breakthroughs that the University of Chicago has made in promoting the scholarship of historically underrepresented groups. From awarding the first Ph.D. to an African American woman in 1921 to inaugurating the first Jewish president of a major American

university in 1968, and then the first female president of a major private American university in 1978, the University of Chicago has led social change in academia. The University of Chicago was also the first major non-historically black institution to have an African American hold a full faculty position (W. Allison Davis in 1942) and refused to set quotas that restricted the number of Jewish students matriculating in a given year, which was common among other elite institutions in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Sokoloff, 1992; Steinberg, 1971). In addition to the promotion of gender, race, and religious diversification in higher education, the university has continually provided a voice to the LGBTQ community, founding one of Chicago's first gay liberation organizations in 1969, and being among the first universities in the United States to offer domestic partnership benefits to same-sex couples in 1992. Due to its continual efforts to improve the lives of its LGBTQ students, the University was the first institution in Chicago to receive a perfect 5 Star rating from the LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index.

The tradition of diversity promotion at the University of Chicago is reflected by the many programs and initiatives specifically designed to engender an atmosphere of inclusion and academic equality among its students and faculty at the institutional level. A prominent example is the International House, which was founded in 1932 to promote cross-cultural appreciation and understanding. Since then, the residence hall has housed over 40,000 students from nearly every country, and dually serves as a cultural center for diversity programs at the University of Chicago, as well as the general public. The University also has several organizations and governing bodies focused on promoting diversity, including the Center for Identity + Inclusion, the Diversity Leadership Council, and the University Diversity Advisory Council. These programs are designed to ensure the personal, academic, and professional growth and success of students and members of the university community from all backgrounds. At the graduate level, GRAD Development & Diversity leads efforts within UChicagoGRAD (an organization that provides graduate students and postdocs training to complement their academic pursuits). Their mission is to create, sustain, and coordinate practices that support the career development of graduate students and postdocs from historically underrepresented and marginalized groups, as well as to incorporate diversity in the scholarly lives of all members of the graduate community.

Although similar initiatives can be found at other elite institutions, the university continues to demonstrate its spirit as a pioneer and leader of educational diversity by also focusing on prospective college students. One of the barriers preventing historically underrepresented groups from attaining widespread academic success is the poor quality of education provided by urban school systems throughout the country. Therefore, the University of Chicago has been committed to improving the education of future college students by focusing on primary and secondary schools in urban settings. Through its Urban Education Institute (UEI), the University not only operates a PreK-12 public school for Chicago residents, but also conducts rigorous applied research, trains teachers and school leaders, and provides research-based tools that can be utilized by other urban schools throughout the United States. The University of Chicago has provided a model for how higher education can engage in the systemic improvement of PreK-12th grade schooling. This initiative will likely become increasingly popular in the upcoming years to close the gaps between education research, and practice in a way that improves the quality of schools and student outcomes nationwide.

Despite the progress the University of Chicago has made in promoting diversity at all levels of higher education, the institution has acknowledged previous shortcoming raised by the Climate Survey administered in 2016, which was designed to gauge the experiences of students and faculty on a broad range of issues related to diversity and inclusion. Although the results were mostly encouraging, the survey indicated that many members of the campus community did not feel included or valued ("Spring 2016 Campus Climate Survey", 2016). In response, the University devised the Diversity and Inclusion Initiative which will work in collaboration with previously established campus entities to further improve campus diversity. According to the plan, the Office of the Provost and the University will make a financial commitment to increasing the diversity and excellence of faculty, with a particular emphasis on

women and those from historically underrepresented groups in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields (Ward, 2017).

Improving diversity in STEM fields is particularly important because their overall contribution to the United States workforce continues to increase. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor, the estimated national size of the STEM workforce will grow to 8,650,000 by 2018. STEM employment is expected to increase by 8.9% between 2014 and 2017, far outpacing the 6.4% expected increase for non-STEM employment (Noonan, 2017). Nevertheless, 88% of working professionals in science and engineering jobs in the U.S were White or Asian as of 2015 (only 25% were White or Asian Women; “Women, Minorities, and Persons, 2017), a statistic that disconcertingly mirrors the distribution of the STEM workforce 30 years ago. This statistic is not due to a shortage of available students, as more women than men are currently enrolled in all U.S. undergraduate programs, and college enrollment among minority groups has generally increased (Digest of Education Statistics”, 2018).

Considering the recent statistics on the disproportional distribution of STEM jobs among women and minorities, as well as the results from the 2016 Climate Survey, the University of Chicago has put a considerable emphasis on promoting diversity and inclusion in STEM fields. This initiative is exemplified by the Biological Sciences Division (BSD), which has multiple programs and events to improve diversity in science. In an effort to find and retain promising graduate school applicants from historically underrepresented groups, the Graduate Recruitment Initiative Team (GRIT), a BSD-specific student-led organization supported by administrators and faculty, attempts to improve and sustain diversity for incoming graduate student classes. Essentially, GRIT is involved in several aspects of the admissions proceedings (pre-admissions, invitation decisions, and interview weekends) to improve admission outcomes for historically underrepresented students. Such activities include traveling to conferences that focus on underrepresented minority scientists to recruit new students, working with faculty to correct implicit bias, hosting pre-interview video chats with prospective minority students, and even having an advisory role in selecting candidates for interviews.

Once graduate students from historically underrepresented groups are accepted and matriculate at the University of Chicago, these individuals can join the Initiative for Maximizing Student Development (IMSD). IMSD supports research training, mentoring and educational activities of new graduate students, with a particular emphasis on enhancing the diversity of the biomedical, behavioral and clinical research workforce. Specifically, the program pairs students with faculty mentors who help guide their research projects and scientific development. In addition, the program provides professional development in essential scientific skills, leadership, and professional networking, as well as advice on potential career options after graduation.

The BSD also promotes several sustained efforts to foster the development of the next generation of biomedical scientists. One of its flagship diversity programs is the Post-Baccalaureate Research Education Program (PREP). The program is designed to provide mentoring, research skills, coursework, and a stimulating learning environment to recent post-baccalaureate students who intend to pursue a Ph.D. in the biomedical sciences. It offers a unique opportunity for historically underrepresented students to strengthen their graduate school applications, by conducting research as laboratory technicians for one year at the University of Chicago. By incorporating diverse academic activities that will prepare students for the rigors of graduate level scholarship, PREP has been a particularly effective program, with 100% student placement in graduate school. Consequently, the PREP R25 grant was renewed in January 2018 for the next 5 years and will continue to serve as a reliable pipeline for historically underrepresented students to attain their goal of becoming distinguished biomedical scientists.

Finally, in accord with its pioneering spirit toward academic diversity, the BSD recently decided to no longer require applicants to submit GRE scores as part of the graduate school application process. The

decision was largely influenced by a growing literature on the lack of predictive value of the GREs (Hall et al., 2017; Moneta-Koehler et al., 2017; Pacheco et al., 2015), as well as concerns that the standardized test disadvantages historically underrepresented groups (Croizet and Dutrévis, 2004; Sachs, 1997). Importantly, the University has also exempted undergraduate applicants from submitting SAT or ACT scores in lieu of allowing prospective students to send transcripts on their own and submit video introductions, as well as other nontraditional materials to supplement their applications (Rhodes, 2018). With these changes, the University of Chicago has become one of the first elite research institutions to drop the requirement for standardized test scores at both undergraduate and graduate levels, which will further help to promote the diversification of its student body and graduates entering the workforce. The University of Chicago is a leader in successful graduates in the workforce, and thus other institutions are likely to imitate their behavior (Havemen, 1993). Large organizations, particularly successful ones, serve as role models for other organizations (Havemen, 1993).

## PRIVATE UNIVERSITY – VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY

Valparaiso University is a private liberal arts university in Valparaiso, Indiana (within 50 miles of Chicago, Illinois). Over the years, the university has made a conscious effort to increase the level of diversity through recruitment, programs offered, and student activities. Like University of Chicago, Valparaiso University benefits from having a diverse population of students in the classroom. One noticeable difference between the two institutions is the size of the student body. While University of Chicago, as a national research institution enrolls a large population of students from around the globe, small private universities often enroll students from the surrounding area. However, being so close to a major metropolitan area provides access to education for a diverse population, while also providing leadership opportunities in a more intimate setting. At the university level, Valparaiso University has developed The Office of Multicultural Programs (OMP) to provide inclusive leadership opportunities for the entire student body. OMP invites students:

“to join and participate in diverse extracurricular, co-curricular, and curricular programs that offer leadership opportunities, identity exploration, and development; promote multicultural education; enhance student retention; and provide venues for social action, service, and collaborative endeavors. In the process, you will meet caring and dedicated faculty and staff and develop special friendships with other students — “friends that will last a lifetime!” So come and be involved! OMP is the place to be!”

In the spirit of diversity and inclusion, the university offers several inclusive student organizations in several specific areas of diversity (See table 1 for details).

The focus on institutional diversity at Valparaiso University extends beyond the office of multi-cultural programs. Within the College of Business for example, there exists three separate diverse and inclusive professional student organizations. Currently, Valparaiso University’s College of Business has a chapter of Delta Sigma Pi (business), Epsilon Nu Tau (entrepreneurship), and Financial Management Association (finance). Additionally, the college is in the midst of pursuing a chapter of National Association of Black Accountants (accounting) to extend additional opportunities to students. Each of these professional organizations are a chapter of a national association. Though each is bound by the bylaws of the national organization, the chapters possess the ability to self-govern.

Like the OMP organizations, the college of businesses student organization leadership includes a diverse representation of the student body. For example, three of the past four chapter presidents of Delta Sigma Pi were female. The presidential representation in those four years also included diversity in sexual orientation and race. It is evident that the chapter has successfully promoted the top candidate to president regardless of race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. Although the presidents are only one member in

a chapter of fifty, the ability to be inclusive is viewable across campus. The leadership team comprises members who identify with each of the four university diversity organizations. Each semester, the chapter holds recruiting events where a majority of chapter members are available to meet prospective candidates. Comprised of a large, diverse population of members and leaders, future participants may feel more comfortable about acceptance within the group.

**TABLE 1: VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY DIVERSITY ORGANIZATIONS**

Organization	Purpose
AAPIC- Asian American Pacific Islander Coalition	The mission of the Asian American Pacific Islander Coalition is to create a welcoming environment for students of Asian or Pacific Islander heritage. We also work to educate camps about the different aspects of Asian and Pacific Islander culture and issues, advocate for our members, as well as create and nurture student leaders within the API community on campus
Alliance	Alliance supports, educates and advocates for the LGBTQ+ community. Alliance creates a safe space for students to explore identity and celebrate LGBTQ+ culture.
BSO- Black Student Organization	The Black Student Organization promotes pride and cultural awareness of the African American culture through various programs and activities. BSO also provides avenues for networking and socializing.
LIVE- Latinx In Valparaiso Excellence	LatinX In Valparaiso for Excellence is a diverse organization that strives to engage members with the campus community, as well as the broader LatinX community, by celebrating cultural awareness and creating an inclusive space on campus. We support students in academic excellence and personal development

[Valpo.edu/multicultural](http://Valpo.edu/multicultural)

Since its inception in January 2018, the Epsilon Nu Tau chapter has promoted inclusion as one of its key ideals. The members vary in gender, nationality, race, religion, and even field of study as the organization is open to all majors. Leadership positions consisted of students from Arts & Sciences and Engineering in addition to the College of Business. ENT provides an outlet for creative thinking beyond the classroom, thus stimulating a diverse population. In February 2018, ENT helped coordinate an entrepreneurship competition, Valpo Innovates, open to all university students regardless of major. Students had 48 hours to develop a business plan pitch for a solution to a pollution problem in Northwest Indiana. The university invited business leaders and faculty to engage the students throughout the process and provide feedback. The winning team contained students from Arts & Sciences, Engineering, and Business; creating a truly multidisciplinary approach. Overall, the participants came from all four colleges within the university and collectively came up with excellent solutions; as judged by faculty and business professionals. Subsequently, Valpo Innovates 2.0 is scheduled to be held on campus in the spring of 2019. The event was so successful in bringing together strong minds from across campus, that it received recognition by the university and a grant for expansion. Like the University of Chicago, Valparaiso University is committed to providing opportunities to a diverse student body.

The benefits of these leadership positions are a secondary way that a student may differentiate him or herself. Whether it be professional speaking engagements, organizing an event, or networking with other professionals, institutions can enhance the college experience outside as well as inside the classroom. Though the terminal degree will often get the employee the job, the interpersonal skills acquired within an organization setting may be the differentiator towards upward mobility within an organization. Institutional Theory (Haunschild & Miner, 1997) suggests imitation is more common under conditions of uncertainty. When university outcomes are positive, peers will be more likely to imitate (Scott, 1995).



## STATE UNIVERSITY - UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PEMBROKE

The University of North Carolina Pembroke (UNCP) is one of 17 institutions that make up the University of North Carolina System. Located in rural, southeastern North Carolina, it was founded as an institution to train American Indian public-school teachers in 1887 (Quick Facts, 2019). Today, 61% of UNCP's student population comes from historically underrepresented groups (primarily African American and American Indian/Alaskan native) and offers 41 bachelor's degrees and 17 master's degrees (Quick Facts, 2019).

Historically, access to affordable college was a barrier to a college education (US News Ranks, 2017). However, UNCP has attempted to alter this paradigm, as the cost of attendance per semester is now \$500 (UNCP, 2018). By marketing affordable college towards a diverse population, the representation of a wide variety of culture and backgrounds has also grown.

Originally designated a Tribal College and University (TCU), the university promotes Native American Scholarships to bolster the population and affirm its roots. UNCP informs American Indian students who are applying of several statewide scholarships. The university's website directs students to the North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs which helps students attain several special grants prior to entry. Although this source of outside funds is not affiliated with the university, it is augmented with a specific link for Native American graduate student scholarships within the university and a 10-page document for undergraduate scholarship opportunities. UNCP also writes grants for students with Native American descent. This year, a 1.1 million dollar grant over a five-year time period was procured by UNCP to support the Educational Leadership Program. This will provide twenty tuition free scholarships for students, many of which are dedicated for Native Americans and other diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, once in school, scholarships exclusively for Native American students can be attained. The Center for Student Success sends out emails to potential students with qualifying GPAs for specific majors and scholarships. For example, of the 25 scholarships in the School of Education, seven are exclusively offered to Native Americans. An email to a qualifying student would state the availability of such scholarships if prior qualifications were met. Example scholarships can be seen below (Table 2). In addition to Native American scholarships, UNCP offers several scholarships to students who are residents of the county in which UNCP is located. Because the county is very diverse, these scholarships often go to other historically underrepresented students.

Besides state and college wide scholarships to support Native Americans and other diverse population of students, UNCP has existing programs to promote the culture of indigenous people. These activities are for the entire student body and can promote cultural competency. First, an American Indian Studies program exists which students examine issues of sovereignty, nation building, colonization, social justice, and the historical roots of American Indian lives as they are lived today. Regardless of major, students have the opportunity to enroll in these classes as electives.

Furthermore, a Native American student organization assists with creating activities and events surrounding the culture. The purpose, according to the school website, is to "promote pride in our Native American Heritage, explore economic, political and educational opportunities of Native Americans and to promote the unification of Native students on our campus" (UNCP, 2018). With this purpose in mind, the organization has many discussions and events with leaders around North Carolina. All students are welcome to this organization and several introductory secessions are offered throughout the year. Students in some of the American Indian studies classes are required to attend at least one meeting. Lastly, UNCP Chancellor Dr. Robin Gary Cummings, who is Lumbee Indian, also created the Native American Speaker series. This is a series of presentations with prominent people such as artists, chefs, and scholars within the American Indian community. Chef Sean Sherman conducted a food demonstration honoring native food ways. In other words, it was an opportunity for the collective student

body to understand and sample foods that are indigenous to Native Americans. This allows all students in the cafeteria to experience the Native American culture.

**TABLE 2: UNCP DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION NATIVE AMERICAN SCHOLARSHIPS**

Scholarship	Requirements
Anderson N. Locklear Endowed Memorial	Member of a state or Federally recognized tribe. Awarded by the Education Department to a major in Teacher Education. Can be renewed as long as student is in good standing.
Louise Bell Locklear Memorial Scholarship	Second semester Sophomore, Junior, or Senior majoring in education with a 2.5 GPA and a resident of North Carolina. Scholarship renewable as long as recipient is in good standing with university and criteria is met. First preference given to a member of a State or Federally recognized tribe.
Mary Elizabeth Jones Brayboy Scholarship	Member of a State or Federally recognized tribe. Awarded by the Education Department to an Education Major with a 3.0 GPA.
Pearlie Locklear Scholarship	Member of a State or Federally recognized tribe. Renewable as long as student is in good standing. Major in Early Childhood Education.
Sheltering Home Circle	Studying to become an elementary classroom teacher in grades K-6. The recipient shall be selected in accordance with the following criteria: Has completed two years of study in the School of Education, has maintained at least a 2.5 GPA, is a resident of North Carolina, exhibits financial need, and exhibits integrity, moral standards and service through the community and campus involvement. Recipient shall be an enrolled member of a State or Federally recognized Indian Tribe, with a preference to a member of the Lumbee Tribe. Funds from the scholarship will be used for tuition, fees, and books. Scholarship may be renewed for 2 <sup>nd</sup> year as need exists and academics continue to meet criteria.

[Uncp.edu/admissions](http://Uncp.edu/admissions)

Symbols of the original roots still exist and are ubiquitous across campus. Newly enrolled students are required to take a freshman seminar class in which they are required to visit the Museum of the Southeast American Indian located on campus. This is an exhibit of culture for the Native Americans in the region. Furthermore, the entire university staff is given a one-hour lecture every year about the history of the University and the significance of the Native Americans to the college. The dedication of tradition extends to various statues, names of buildings, and even the school mascot which is a red-tailed hawk (important to the people in the region). The logo of the sports teams features this hawk with a Native American head in front. The university embraces its original Lumbee Native American roots and is not seen as mistreatment of a heritage. Potentially, that may be why the red-tailed hawk mascot is embraced and not seen as exploitation by the general population associated with the university. Finally, multiple traditions of the indigenous people of the region are displayed at graduation and commencement. These include dress, songs, and musical instruments of the native people during the precession.

In addition to native people, UNCP is home to other diverse populations. They engender an environment where students feel accepted regardless of background. If the feeling of inclusion is not genuine, feelings of isolation may persist and hence, may switch universities (McClain & Perry, 2017). The Office of

Diversity and Inclusion's mission is to "strive to develop or co-create programs and services where each student can be engaged in an inclusive, respected, and diverse environment." Some ways of inclusion can be as simple as having food nights from different cultures such as "Chinese Tea Party" or as extensive as a leadership summit which consisted of several student organizations and faculty having a conversation about diversity. They strive to have constant contact and offer activities throughout each semester. This type of thoughtful behavior ensures that students have a voice in the university and feel welcomed regardless of age, gender, race, religion, or sexual orientation. The extent of inclusion goes beyond tangible forms and has grown to social media; a Facebook page set up by the office of diversity where people can share events or thoughts that they are having is open to students. UNCP is committed to the students having a diverse experience. As the vision statement states "Diversity and Inclusion fosters the development of a robust university experience that best prepares students for success in an increasingly diverse and multicultural society." The tenants of the office include:

- **Unity** – Celebrating our similarities and differences, as we strive to prepare students to be inclusive and diverse thinking leaders and representatives of UNC Pembroke
- **Nourishment** – Feed our minds with new ideas and perspectives
- **Community** – Build a diverse and united communities of interests
- **Pride** – Create communities that celebrate, embrace, and affirm its diversity

The Department of Kinesiology implements the campus wide diversity and inclusion initiative in a multitude of ways. First, many of the students attend the events that the university sponsors. Second, the Teacher Education Council (TEC) has a specific task force to recruit a diverse student population. TEC has taken the initiative to visit rural schools and distribute pamphlets about UNCP and its programs. Lastly, diversity is a focal point in many of the classes offered. For example, Health and Physical Education students spend a unit learning about games and activities outside of the United States. This will give students a more diverse pedagogical toolbox and facilitate their own novel ideas about sport. Therefore, not only is diversity a conscious conversation at the macro level, but also thoughtfully implemented in the micro/ departmental level.

## **CONCLUSION**

Regardless of institution type, higher education is focused on adding a component of diversity in all aspects of campus life. We consistently found similar programs and perspectives across our sample that lead to higher education opportunities for historically unrepresented groups. As such, we find the trend is moving in the right direction. However, there is still plenty of work to be done. In some cases, not all students are aware of all the opportunities that exist on campus. Lack of awareness and potentially lack of understanding may inhibit some students from truly being involved.

Therefore, we introduce several proposals with cross-disciplinary benefits for diversity and inclusion.

## **INSTITUTION LEVEL**

### **Proposal 1: Accommodate a Diverse Population of Students**

In the spirit of diversity and inclusion, outreach and recruiting should be welcoming. For many students, their first interaction with a potential school will be with university administration. If institutions fail to connect with students early on, it will prevent a relationship from developing between the faculty and student body. In many cases, initial interest in a school will encourage students to meet with faculty in

their area of interest or plan an overnight stay on campus with a current student. If the student is met with perceived barriers, the second and third opportunities to enact in deeper engagement with other campus advocates may be missed. It is a tremendous opportunity for universities to build a relationship in order to develop a strong pipeline of future scholars into the workforce. Fortunately, all three institutions have specific methods for attracting diverse populations. Though each institution has its own unique programs, mimetic isomorphism has indirectly made the focal point of the efforts very similar. It takes more than generic dialogue to reach some students. Programs to promote STEM jobs among women and minorities is an important step to bridge the opportunity gap. In our study, University of Chicago was not alone in their efforts to attract diverse populations. Like STEM fields at University of Chicago, Valparaiso University is making a conscious effort to attract more women and minorities into their MBA program. When discussing the opportunity to increase applicants from that area, the director specifically mentioned the importance of building a relationship. She, herself a Valparaiso MBA graduate, has seen the program grow in size and diversity over the past decade and a half. Applications, acceptances, and enrollment from underrepresented groups is steadily increasing over time. University of North Carolina Pembroke's approach to diversity is also showing promise. First, their education department works with underprivileged school districts as part of their curriculum. For some students in these classes, it may be their first exposure to higher education. This fosters relationship between the prospective students and current students enrolled in UNCP. As this relationship builds, high school students gain access to information about the institution and scholarship opportunities to make college attainable. Finally, by lowering their tuition to \$500 per semester, the access to education has dramatically increased to students from a disadvantaged background.

## **Proposal 2: Connect with Urban Secondary Schools**

Efforts are being made at the secondary education level to provide collegiate opportunities for historically underrepresented groups. There is an inherent need to improve the quality of education received in urban public-school systems, so that a higher proportion of historically underrepresented groups will have both the motivation and academic aptitude to succeed in an environment of higher learning. In an effort to address this limitation in the U.S. school system, urban public high schools have begun partnering with local institutions of higher education to provide students with a curriculum more conducive with college preparation, as well as develop programs that facilitate the ability of underserved minorities to successfully apply to their desired colleges. Such examples can be found at Victory Early College High School (Houston, TX) and Wicomico High School (Salisbury, MD).

Victory Early College High School is a relatively small high school in the Aldine Independent School District of Houston, TX (total enrollment is 449 for grades 9-12) but is consistently regarded as one of the best high schools in the United States, being ranked 272nd nationally, and 50th in Texas (Aldine, 2017). The high school touts itself as a college preparatory institution that collaborates with Lone Star Community College providing an atmosphere that blends high school and college into coherent educational programs. Importantly, Victory Early College High School serves a community that is extraordinarily diverse (total minority enrollment = 98%) and is a poignant example of how high schools can coordinate with local institutions of higher education to prepare students from historically underrepresented groups for the rigors of coursework at the collegiate level. Victory provides students with the opportunity to pursue a high school diploma and an Associate's of Arts Degree or two years of college credit toward a baccalaureate degree.

Wicomico High School (Salisbury, MD), implemented a program called GEAR UP (GEAR UP, 2018). **G**aining **E**arly **A**wareness and **R**eadiness for **U**ndergraduate **P**rograms is made possible through a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education. This program is designed to prepare students and families academically, financially and inspirationally to enroll and succeed in post-secondary (college or technical school) education. A unique aspect of this program is that it targets the students in middle school and will

continue to assist students throughout their secondary education. GEAR UP is a program that will assist students through summer enrichment programs and scholarships. Other programs offered included campus tours, tutoring in English or math, speeches by selected guests, Career Day, and field trips.

## **STUDENT LEVEL**

### **Proposal 3: Promote Student Advocacy**

When trying to promote diversity on campus, student buy-in is essential. Student peers will often have more direct influence on students being involved compared to faculty or administration. In our collective experience, student recruitment is essential to foster diversity in academic programs, professional organizations, clubs, and events. The composition of participants can be a door or a barrier to gaining diversity opportunities. Comparatively, it is more difficult to truly merge into a group that lacks a common identity. Since diversity is multi-faceted, any positive association with other members may lead to connectivity. Student interaction is essential to feeling welcomed on campus. Prospective students may meet with current students, get campus tours, and even spend a night on campus. Others, though, may take their first steps on campus at the start of their freshman year. In either case, college presents a new challenge and opportunity for all students. The universities we studied all have significant resources allocated to foster an environment of inclusion. In all cases, the universities offered diverse clubs and organizations through a specific office dedicated to diversity and inclusion. Yet, it is equally important to have the students be as welcoming as the rest of campus. It may be tempting for campus organizations to recruit from the same pool of students as it has worked in the past. However, over time, this inhibits diversity and the opportunity for growth. For anyone who works with student organizations, it is advised to make it a focal point with leadership. In our experiences, the student organizations that we work with have a strong diversity component, which deserves recognition for the respective student bodies. It shows that the students are implementing the values of the university at the student level.

## **FACULTY LEVEL**

### **Proposal 4: Encourage Faculty Interaction**

Compared to institutions and students, faculty have the greatest ability to make an impact in the professional lives of students. Once a student arrives on campus, the collective faculty are entrusted with disseminating knowledge in the field, both theoretical and practical. Though students will talk to administrators and other students about general perceptions of the professional environment, these discussions often engage faculty members. As faculty, we have all gone through some sort of exploration process to end up where we are. In fact, something unique to our field led each author to take that exploration in a particular direction. It provides faculty scholars to mentor and outline the process of finding that area of excitement. Additionally, the longer a faculty member is engaged, the more anecdotal stories of success can be shared. When discussing underrepresented groups in higher education, each field of our study had a specific program to reach out and connect with diverse groups. This study examined institutional diversity and its implementation in a specific field. As such, each institution has significantly more programs that provide opportunities for different areas of diversity in various other fields of study. The strategic importance of the faculty member is that he or she will be more aware of key opportunities and be able to instruct the student population accordingly. It is common for any student organization to have a faculty advisor. Therefore, that individual can collaborate with student leadership to provide greater accessibility to a large segment of campus.

In conclusion, all universities are as unique as the individuals who attend them. Each member of the campus community brings something unique and valuable to the organization. Fortunately, these schools we studied have all made it a point to emphasize diversity across campus. Initially, this means that

diversity programs were at the administration level. Over time, faculty and students took on a more specific role to embrace inclusion in their various fields of study. The leading institutions are often at the forefront of social change, as industries often look at the key players before deciding what to do next. Regardless of the institution's position in the market, diversity and inclusion benefits the past, present, and future students of that college or university.

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