

A Case for Administrators of Color: Insights and Policy Implications for Higher Education's Predominantly White Institutions

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Fall 2013

The underrepresentation of administrators of color in higher education is one of the most important ethical dilemmas facing colleges and universities today. Arguably, in no place is this more evident than at historically white colleges and universities (majority institutions). Prior to the 1960s, the lack of administrators of color in higher education's Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) was viewed as common place and a cultural normative due to the existence of segregation and widespread racism during that era. It was not until the American Civil Rights Movement that higher education was forced to expand, at which point, state and federal civil rights mandates--prompted by social justice concerns--began to challenge institutions that excluded minorities (Chang, 2005). Many of these mandates became known as affirmative action policies. Mostly race-sensitive in nature, these affirmative action policies aimed to increase access and opportunities for promotions, salary increases, and career advancement for minority employees.

However, not all PWIs immediately welcomed the demand for a culturally diverse leadership upon their campuses (Arthur & Shapiro, 1995; Kawewe, 1997; Payne, 2004; Perna, Gerald, Baum, & Milem, 2007; Wilson, 1995). Studies on university hiring practices revealed that in many instances, once a minority hiring goal was met, departments stopped seeking minority applicants. In some cases, institutions took direct and intentional action to cease the recruitment of minorities (e.g., by pulling their ads from minority publications) regardless of the number of vacancies that occurred from then on (Wilson, 1995). Meanwhile, over time, legal disputes to affirmative action programs began to expose flaws amidst the policy's good intentions.

Over 40 years after the American Civil Rights Movement, many of today's college and university policy makers have shown a willingness to embrace racial diversity. However, efforts to do so have proven that positioning a diverse administrative leadership to reflect the values, issues, and concerns on campus is a multidimensional and complex task (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Holmes, Ebbers, Robinson, & Mugenda, 2000; Jackson, 2004; Jackson & Rosas, 1999; Watson, Terrell, Wright, Bonner, Cuyjet, Gold, Rudy, & Person, 2002). The purpose of this article is to summarize scholarship on the challenges of increasing administrative representation for people of color in higher education and to address implications for policy and practice.

Scholarly Findings on Diversity and Leadership Intersections

When considering the reality of many institutions, as they become increasingly diverse, every decision on strategic planning will not be reflective of all constituents (Winston, 2001). And, while that may be the case, we find it essential that all parties should be represented. Often, the method of increasing representation for administrators of color has been relegated to placing

affirmative action representatives on hiring committees and diversifying the hiring committee. While these actions are essential to increasing representation, these single-focused linear measures are not adequate alone when addressing the socially entrenched and complex power negotiations of institutional racism, institutional culture, and socialization. Upon examining scholarship on combating the lack of racial minorities holding administrator positions, several key themes remain constant: (1) the value of diversity is convoluted due to limited and mixed empirical findings; (2) there is not a one-size-fits-all solution; (3) a holistic and integrated approach is needed; (4) conceptualizing diversity leadership through group dynamics is increasingly complex due to multiple intersections between people and organizations; and (5) diversity is a litmus test to organizational adaptability.

Mixed and Limited Empirical Findings on Valuing Diversity

In the context of the workplace, valuing diversity means (1) creating a workspace that respects and includes differences; (2) recognizing the unique contributions that those individuals can make, and (3) creating a work environment that maximizes the potential of all employees (Keough & Tobin, 2001; Astin & Astin, 2000; Clark, 2000). From the higher education perspective, diversity is theoretically supposed to strengthen institutions and increases their likelihood of continued success due to its reliance on associations between groups. However, studies on instituting diversity research in the workspace have produced polarized results from being beneficial to being counterproductive due to increased conflicts among groups (Herring, 2009).

A One Size Fits All Approach to Diversity Leadership Does Not Exist

In short, due to various intersecting variables, diversity leadership work cannot be managed because all minorities do not have the same needs. Therefore, the approaches to address the needs of each minority group must be customized. There are several reasons to support this notion. First, human behavior cannot be predicted due to individual internalization and context variations. Second, culture is a socially and contextually fluid construct that shifts as situations change. As suggested by critical race theory, one's minority status not only shapes them as individuals, but it is also part of the larger social structure in which leadership emerges. In particular, culture is continuously reconstructed and negotiated due to varying places, contexts, and internalized meanings as influenced by environmental social structure (Alfred, 2000; Yon, 2000; Ospina & Foldy, 2009). Lastly, although higher education institutions may appear the same, the organizational culture and socialization practices differ. Therefore, like people we must be careful not to caricature or stereotype all similar institutions into the same cultural category. By doing so, we run the risk of producing only cosmetic or superficial changes to colleges and universities.

The Need for a More Integrated and Holistic Approach

In the past, many collegiate institutions have attempted to use quick cosmetic fixes to cure the leadership disparity between administrators of color and their white counterparts, but most have made little to no progress in making diversity a reality (Jackson, 2001). Other colleges and universities have taken a more structured organizational approach, but it has proven to be just as ineffective. For example, the use of a color blind strategy supports the logic that if we do not

notice race, then we cannot act in a racist manner. However, empirical studies suggest that those who actively avoid the subject of race are actually perceived as the most racist. Additional research has also shown that colorblindness weakens inclusion efforts because it emphasizes individualism, assimilation, and the ignoring of cultural group identities (Cox, 1993; Foldy, Rivard, & Buckley, 2009).

Another popular tactic is the multicultural approach to diversity. The emphasis is placed on diversity work force and leveraging the strength of differences; however, that often undermines the unity and perceived exclusion of non-minority groups. An example would be the inclusion of diversity months to celebrate people of color without giving the same attention to the cultural differences among Whites (i.e. Irish, Germanic, or Italian heritage); which may cause resentment. Further, under the multicultural approach, policies such as affirmative action is reconfigured and renegotiated to expand the concept of diversity towards a more international appeal. On the surface level, this shift only serves to strengthen institutions. However, critics have noted that the new prominence on international diversity tends to obscure its application on the domestic problems that first gave rise to affirmative action; which was to correct inequities caused by past vestiges of white privilege against domestic minorities (Graham, 2002; Page, 2004; Johnson 2005; Rimer & Arenson, 2004).

Facilitative Diversity Leadership Through Group Dynamics is Increasingly Complex

Like leadership in other societal spheres, diversity leadership in higher education is multifarious due to relationships formed between group dynamics, cultural competence, and the context of structured inequalities (i.e. history of white privilege). Research on diversity groups yield mixed findings such as: (1) perceived backlash from dominant groups towards diversity initiatives; (2) leaders of color not being viewed as legitimate; (3) feelings of having to fight tokenism and stereotypical labels; (4) facing power inequities when compared to their white counterparts; and (5) minority leaders using their racial identity as a multicultural ability to lead across differences (Kanter, 1993; Ospina & Foldy, 2009; Holladay, Knight, Paige, & Quiñones, , 2003; Kidder, Lankau, Chrobot-Mason, Mollica, & Friedman, 2004; McKay, Avery, Tonidandel, Morris, Hernandez, & Hebl, 2007). Other studies have surmised that cultural competence is needed to navigate through such institutional transitions. In addition, individuals need to have a certain level of cultural metacognition –a process where one is able to use what he/she knows, and their general problem solving and adaptive skills to function within a foreign culture. However, the challenge of this work is garnered by the inconclusiveness because cultural competence discourse is still being defined (Earley & Peterson, 2004).

Lastly, structured inequalities are often contextualized by the nation and institution's history whereas the racial and ethnic minority leaders have had to play by the rules of competition established by the dominant status group -White males. Moreover, although the concept of diversity leadership in higher education is inclusive, marginalized groups are pushed to compete with one another while the dominant group does not due to their already inherent status and privilege (Chizhick & Chizhick, 2002; Haley & Sidanius, 2005). The result is a constant, though not always overt, struggle over organizational change between racial and ethnic minorities on the one hand and the sustainment of status and privilege of the dominant group members on the other. We view this as further problematic because colleges and universities reflect the culture

and values of the dominant group; in this case, the emphasis placed on diversity is managed in their favor which further sustains white privilege (Aguirre & Martinez, 2003).

Diversity Leadership is a Testament to Higher Education's Organizational Adaptability

Research has shown that despite their leadership acumen, many racial and ethnic minorities will encounter ceilings if the institution does not create an environment that welcomes their contributions. Konrad (2003) argues that this phenomenon is due to an outdated "trait model of diversity" where stereotyping, prejudice, institutional and interpersonal discrimination goes ignored because these issues –if highlighted- are threatening to the dominant group. In higher education, the challenge of having a more inclusive and diverse leadership begins with stressing transformation by adopting the values of cultural pluralism and multiculturalism. Further, researchers argue that institutions must shift beyond the traditional organizational and managerial view on diversity which places emphasis on competition, size, hierarchy, specialization, and environmental processes of natural selection because it continues to promote the sustainment of white self interests (Birnbaum, 1983; Winston, 2001). Theoretically, these contrasting views signify a need for institutions to re-examine the culture in which their traditions and leadership have been structured in an attempt to make the campus more inclusive for the already present and growing multicultural population. Also, as Battin (1997) argues, strengthening diversity and inclusion efforts in the leadership rankings is not only demographically smart, but morally right.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Beyond institutional efforts, federal and state policymakers, higher education associations, foundations, and others have several ways to respond to the lack of diversity leadership across colleges and universities. This is not to suggest that these efforts should replace the initiatives currently offered on college and university campuses. However, what we are saying is that both institutional and policy responses are necessary to improve the recruitment, retention, and persistence rate of administrators of color. Drawing from existing research and promising practices from institutional initiatives, the following recommendations are examples of ways to complement institutional efforts with new policies, practices, and resources.

Increase Funding for an Intentional Administrator Pipeline

In this era of fiscal constraints, new funding may not always be available. Nonetheless, it is important to focus new and existing funding on measures and programs targeting ways to increase the administrator of color pipeline. A minority pipeline program can be addressed in two ways: (1) by developing a specialized curriculum as early as the undergraduate level to prepare students for a career in higher education administration; and (2) facilitating a career mentor program that grooms junior and senior management employees for higher level positions by offering training, a peer-to-peer mentoring network, and opportunities to gain additional professional certifications. Another funding opportunity would be to find means to promote wage equity between minority administrators and their White male or female peers through departmental and institutional comparisons. Through these efforts, institutions can greatly improve their role in growing a qualified applicant pool of future administrators, and ensure that

compensation packages match the responsibilities given--which can hopefully improve administrator retention rates.

In addition, providing funding opportunities to attend leadership development programs outside an administrator's institution may be useful. This approach may be especially valuable for institutions that may not have developed formal leadership development programs for their minority administrators. There are a diverse array of higher education leadership development programs and institutes in which an institution can sponsor their administrators to participate. One of the most well known of these opportunities is the American Council of Education's Fellows Program (ACE, 2013). This program enables higher education leaders to serve at another institution working with the president. There are also programs that are specifically geared to prepare minority and women leaders. Other availabilities include:

1. The American Association of State Colleges and Universities' Millennium Leaders Institute (AASCU, 2013) enables leaders serving at public institutions to engage in both theoretical learning as well as practical, hands-on training through media interviews, visits with representatives on Capitol Hill and close interactions with presidents and chancellors.
2. The Executive Leadership Summit is a yearly program offered by Hampton University (2013).
3. The Center for Studies in Higher Education at the University of California, Berkeley's Executive Leadership Academy (ELA, 2013) is open to all individuals who are interested in preparing themselves for appointments to executive positions such as vice presidents, provosts, presidents, and chancellors.
4. The Leadership and Mentoring Institute (LMI) is provided by the American Association of Blacks in Higher Education (AABHE, 2013), and their purpose is to support African-Americans who seek to acquire information and skills to prepare them for senior administrative ranks.
5. The Hispanic Association of College and Universities (2013) has established the Annual Latino Higher Education Institute for early, mid and top-level faculty, staff, administrators and other higher education leaders to interact, network and explore strategies for effective institutional change.
6. There is an ongoing partnership between the Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education (APAHE, 2013) and Leadership Education for Asian Pacific (LEAP) to offer the Leadership Development Program in Higher Education (LDHE) with the specific goal of developing the next generation of Asian American senior executive in U.S. Colleges and Universities.
7. Lastly, there are specialized initiatives on marginalized populations like the American Indian Leadership program offered by Penn State University's (2013) College of Education.

In addition to providing gateways for developing skill sets; through participation, organizations will promote the development and sustaining of larger professional networks for minorities. Also, institutional support shows a commitment to growing diverse leaders, which--in turn--can promote a sense of organizational loyalty. #

Transform Data, Assessment, and Information Sharing

Informing policy requires using rigorous data and assessment of initiatives in addition to scholarly research that is focused on conceptualizing the administrator gap. Through data and assessment, we are able to gain insight on policies and programs that aid us in illustrating the progress and current standing of the institution. Moreover, the feedback allows us to analyze practice and discuss means for improvement--which will be discussed later in more detail.

In the realm of scholarship, there is still much to learn about administrators of color in higher education. Studies investigating the condition of administrators of color in higher education have usually been directed towards student affairs professionals or those directly tied to the diversity mission of the university (Holmes, 2004; Jackson, 2001; 2002). In organizational research, much attention has been paid to the strategic dimension of diversity policies, systems and processes, but less thought is given to the normative dimension such as career experiences and sociocultural development (Jackson, 2004; Pless & Maak, 2004). Therefore, it is essential that these gaps should be addressed and brought into the mainstream.

However, what we do know is that the scholarship points toward a need to make comparative assessments of diversity programs. Through the use of comparative research we could examine common features and factors of particular programs such as success, challenges, program components, inputs, outcomes, drivers, and approaches. Further, with studies implicating mixed findings from diversity initiatives, more research is needed to discern the rationales behind the results. For instance, when research reports a negative relationship between a diversity effort and expected outcomes; what are the mitigating factors? Another question that should be addressed explores the nature and role of leadership development programs. Specifically, when designing programs, what factors contribute the most to the career trajectory and advancement of the participants of color? To an even further degree, one could use these assessments as a means to develop a national study to monitor the representation of administrators of color in higher education. Or, the data could be used to develop a public consortium to examine the multiple dimensions of diversity leadership in higher education, non-profit, and corporate sectors. In doing so, these measures could aid stakeholders to grow the academic conversation on diversity leadership and develop policies and practices are the most successful or scalable.

Conclusion: Future Considerations

If stakeholders truly want to matriculate people of color from access to influence and power, they must first promote policies that advance equity. A substantial body of empirical research confirms that leadership diversity is beneficial to the learning, growth, and development of the institution as a whole (Brown, 2004). Thus, policymakers at all levels must be willing to defend race/gender-conscious initiatives on college and university campuses. In addition, we must use scholarship to serve as an authoritative voice in policymaking and a means to encourage institutional stakeholders to look at diversity beyond the numbers. As Ospina & Foldy (2009) suggests, despite the developments in the field, race remains separate from the mainstream discussion of the leadership tradition which promotes the normalizations of whiteness. DiTomaso & Hoojberg (1996) supports this notion and reasons that the shortfall of race in leadership literature is due--in part--to current models of leadership which are full of implicit

theory that further perpetuate inequities. Moreover, current diversity scholarship seldom explores leadership, which implies an emphasis on creating a diverse workforce as opposed to a diverse leadership. Therefore, it is opportune to not only develop scholarship but to use both mainstream and action research to grow a process of systematic action and reflection among scholars, practitioners, their institutions, stakeholders, policymakers, and other constituents.

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