



Association
of American
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Universities

Making Excellence INCLUSIVE

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Making Excellence Inclusive is designed to help colleges and universities fully integrate their diversity and educational quality efforts and embed them into the core of academic mission and institutional functioning. Through this initiative, AAC&U reenvision diversity and inclusion as a multilayered process through which we achieve excellence in learning; research and teaching; student development; institutional functioning; local and global community engagement; workforce development; and more.

New Grant from Lumina Supports Expansion of Making Excellence Inclusive

AAC&U has received a new grant from the Lumina Foundation for Education to expand its work on Making Excellence Inclusive (MEI). With this new support, AAC&U will build the capacity of colleges and universities in three state systems in California, Oregon, and Wisconsin to improve underserved students' level of academic success by broadening their participation in a set of educational practices shown to be effective. The project will support institutions as they track, document, and monitor underserved students' access to these practices and how they are benefiting from them. It will also help institutions increase the number of students with access to the practices and build campus leadership for educational change.

The larger MEI initiative, directed by AAC&U vice president Alma Clayton-Pedersen, was launched in 2002 and seeks to ensure that all students get an education of lasting value. To accomplish this goal, MEI redefines notions of diversity, inclusion, and excellence. While it is important to graduate more students from all parts of our society, the degrees we confer must signify students' achievement of a broad set of learning outcomes. They include outcomes in four broad areas—knowledge, skills, responsibilities, and application. These outcomes are essential for success in today's world and they are described in AAC&U's report, *College Learning for the New Global Century*. In each of these areas, the learning derived from an understanding of our diverse communities and our global interdependence is a defining feature of educational excellence in today's world.

Beyond what students learn, MEI also involves a redefinition of campus inclusion and seeks far-reaching changes—changes in core assumptions about educational excellence and in the ways institutions are organized and managed. If colleges and universities commit to making excellence inclusive, the commitment should affect how we teach, which students actually benefit from our best practices, how we lead and organize our institutions, and how we support educational creativity and innovation. This new vision of inclusive excellence will also require more intentional action on the part of campus leaders at all levels including faculty members and student affairs educators. Decades of educational research has shown that more diverse environments are better learning environments. But simply composing a more diverse student body isn't enough.

Colleges and universities must collect and disaggregate data on all their students to answer critical questions and to advance their commitment to making excellence inclusive. They need to know how well students are doing, in what educational practices and programs they participate, what they say about their experiences, at what rates they progress and graduate, and whether they are thriving in the workforce and in graduate programs. These institutions must develop leadership for diversity work at all levels to make real progress. The new Making Excellence Inclusive work will assist campuses in answering these questions and improving learning outcomes for all.

The Lumina-supported MEI project is part of AAC&U's ongoing LEAP initiative, Give Students a Compass. See page 8 for state system liaisons in Compass, and for more information on MEI, see www.aacu.org/inclusive_excellence. ■

News from AAC&U Initiatives

Making Excellence Inclusive—A Strategic Priority for Today’s Challenges

Carol Geary Schneider, president, AAC&U

The recently released “Minorities in Higher Education” report from the American Council on Education makes clearer than ever that America faces an education crisis related to, and nearly as urgent as, the current economic crisis. As *Inside Higher Ed* put it in its article on the report, “the latest generation of adults in the United States may be the first since World War II not to attain higher levels of education than the previous generations.” This disturbing trend can be explained mostly by our collective failure to educate students of color and those from lower socioeconomic groups. This is yet more data in a growing body of evidence pointing toward the urgency of “making excellence inclusive” in higher education.

Global Century. They include four broad areas of learning—knowledge, skills, responsibilities, and application. In each of these areas, the learning derived from our diverse communities and the understanding of the interconnectedness of our globe are defining features of what counts as excellence.

Students, in other words, must learn much more about people different from themselves. They must learn much more about the rest of the world. They also should learn how to be effective practitioners in diverse settings—in their communities, their workplaces, and their families. They must see how attention to the diversity of opinions, lifestyles, cultures, and backgrounds is required in order to be

low number of “admits,” and that much-coveted label “highly selective.”

Whereas excellence in the past has been equated with selectivity, excellence in the twenty-first century will be determined by high expectations, high support, high hands-on practice, and a very high degree of faculty and staff collaboration to create a much more intentional and goal-oriented educational experience. Excellence in the future will require us, in short, to focus as a community both on “essential outcomes” and on collective practices across the curriculum that help students achieve them.

Once we set these high expectations for ourselves, the next challenge is to attend to what happens to students, as they progress, over time. We have to be assertive about our shared expectations, and we have to be proactive in asking whether all students have actually worked on the expected outcomes across the curriculum. We must ask whether the faculty are collectively taking responsibility for shared goals? Did courses across the curriculum emphasize these goals? Did assessments provide formative—and eventually summative—evidence of students’ achievement? Did we disaggregate our data? Did *all* our students achieve the needed learning?

Answering all these questions is central to the challenge of truly making excellence inclusive. Watch the pages of this newsletter as well as AAC&U’s Web site for resources, projects, data, and reports—all designed to help campuses as they work in their own settings to answer these questions and fulfill the promise of American higher education and truly “make excellence inclusive.” ■

Excellence in the future will require us, in short, to focus as a community both on “essential outcomes” and on collective practices across the curriculum that help students achieve them.

AAC&U’s Making Excellence Inclusive (MEI) initiative includes, but also moves beyond, the goal of getting more students to graduate from college. Our MEI initiative seeks to redefine notions of diversity, inclusion, and excellence. If our nation and our students are to succeed and thrive, we must do more than just graduate more students from all parts of our society. The college degree must also signify their achievement of a broad set of learning outcomes—outcomes that are essential for success in today’s world. AAC&U describes these twenty-first century educational outcomes in its LEAP report, *College Learning for the New*

a personally and socially responsible individual in the twenty-first century. Excellence, then, in the LEAP vision depends on knowledge of and experience with diversity and global issues.

At first glance, AAC&U’s efforts to make excellence inclusive may seem only a statement of core values—for higher education and certainly for the AAC&U community. Yet this concept has far-reaching and potentially disruptive implications for every aspect of educational practice. We can no longer assume, for starters, that “excellence” in the student body means primarily what it came to mean in the twentieth century—large applicant pools, a

Making Excellence Inclusive Campus Resources from AAC&U

Making Diversity Work on Campus: A Research-Based Perspective

by Jeffrey Milem, Mitchell Chang, and Anthony Antonio



The authors discuss recent empirical evidence, gathered on behalf of the University of Michigan Supreme Court defense, demonstrating the educational benefits of diverse learning environments. Included are numerous suggestions for how to engage diversity in the service of learning, ranging from recruiting a compositionally diverse student body, faculty, and staff to transforming curriculum, cocurriculum, and pedagogy to reflect and support goals for inclusion and excellence. *(Also available online)*

Making a Real Difference with Diversity: A Guide to Institutional Change

by Alma R. Clayton-Pedersen, et al

This monograph provides readers with a step-by-step guide for implementing, evaluating, and sustaining comprehensive diversity work on campus. It offers a set of promising practices and selected quantitative and qualitative findings pertaining to efforts to enhance college access and success for underrepresented students, increase the presence of underrepresented minority faculty, and strengthen overall institutional functioning regarding diversity. *(Also available online)*



More Reasons for Hope: Diversity Matters in Higher Education



Honoring the late Edgar Beckham and his profound influence on higher education, *More Reasons for Hope* examines the trends in diversity education since an earlier AAC&U monograph published a decade ago called *Reasons for Hope*. The monograph features a major address by Edgar Beckham that identifies intellectual, structural, and political challenges that need to be addressed in the next generation of diversity work. It charts progress and setbacks and includes more than thirty current exemplary campus diversity programs, policies, and practices from across the country.

College Learning for the New Global Century

This report is about the aims and outcomes of a twenty-first-century college education. It is also about the promises we need to make—and keep—to all students who aspire to a college education, especially to those for whom college is a route, perhaps the only possible route, to a better future. This report, based on extensive input both from educators and employers, responds to the new global challenges today's students face. It describes the learning contemporary students need from college, and what it will take to help them achieve it. *(Also available online)*



High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter,

by George D. Kuh



The latest report from AAC&U's LEAP initiative defines a set of educational practices that research has demonstrated have a significant impact on student success.

Author George D. Kuh presents data from the National Survey of Student Engagement about these practices and explains why they benefit all students, but also seem to benefit underserved students even more than their more-advantaged peers.

Online Publications

Achieving Equitable Educational Outcomes with All Students: The Institution's Roles and Responsibilities

by Georgia Bauman, Letitia Bustillos, Éstela Bensimon, M. Christopher Brown, and RoSusan Bartee

Toward a Model of Inclusive Excellence and Change in Post-Secondary Institutions,

by Damon Williams, Joseph Berger, and Shederick McClendon

See www.aacu.org/programs/inclusiveexcellence/papers.cfm for online publications.

To purchase AAC&U publications see www.aacu.org (click on Publications).

It Takes a Whole University: Inclusion and Excellence at CUNY

Alma R. Clayton-Pedersen, vice president, Office of Education and Institutional Renewal, AAC&U

In a dynamic and collaborative new multicampus initiative, Dr. Henry Vance Davis, recently appointed university dean for recruitment and diversity, is placing both inclusion and excellence at the center of strategic planning across the City University of New York (CUNY). As part of AAC&U's MEI initiative, AAC&U vice president Alma Clayton-Pedersen is working with CUNY in this systemwide initiative.

CUNY serves more than 400,000 students on twenty-three campuses spread throughout New York City's five boroughs. Founded in 1847 to serve a student population from a wide range of communities, CUNY comprises eighteen undergraduate colleges—including liberal arts, research, and community colleges—and five graduate/professional schools. It is the largest urban university in America and it is among the nation's most diverse. This

complexity and diversity presented both challenges and opportunities as the central office launched *Inclusion and Excellence at CUNY*.

Davis has attempted to create a process that takes into account the size, complexity, nuances, and needs of each campus, and the university overall, even as it focuses everyone's attention on pursuing interconnected goals of creating inclusive campus environments and increasing access to excellence for all CUNY students. In this sense, Davis argues that inclusion is fundamental to excellence, requiring institutions to seek more than just numerical racial and ethnic diversity among students or faculty. CUNY is seeking, instead, "sustainable diversity."

CUNY's initiative works from the ground up and from the top down to help campuses produce their own strategic plans that are both actionable and manageable. Since the initiative began in earnest in spring 2008, all of the CUNY campuses have developed strategic planning teams that include senior academic administrators; faculty from a wide variety of disciplines; human resources personnel; student-affairs educators; students; security and facilities directors; institutional researchers and registrars; as well as union representatives and affirmative action and compliance officers. With all these leaders at the table, Davis hopes to generate widespread commitment to inclusive excellence across all areas of campus life. "Making excellence inclusive," Davis says, "is not just a one-person or one-office job; it requires complete and intentional institutional learning and cooperation."

To advance its ambitious goals, Davis worked within existing campus governance

structures to spread the word about the initiative and launch a series of campus dialogues about Inclusion and Excellence at CUNY. Some of the topics covered in these dialogues included campus-specific challenges, and prioritizing strategies that address obstacles to success, campus environment, and assessment. In addition, a university-wide forum on the initiative and an additional forum with the council of senior student-affairs educators have contributed to developing comprehensive campus plans.

Draft plans for individual campus and university-wide action address such issues as faculty and student recruitment and retention; creating a receptive climate for all campus constituencies; curricular change; promotion and tenure policies; global leadership development; faculty and staff reward structures; and multilingual Web site development.

The goal of *Inclusion and Excellence at CUNY* is to create a systemic presence of diversity and its associated elements at the core of the university community. It is more than a rhetorical commitment to diversity with numbers as end goals; it is creating a real plan of coordinated action that builds on CUNY's rich legacy of diversity and seeks to engage it for learning throughout the campus. Perhaps most important, the administrators, faculty, and staff who fostered the development of CUNY's legacy recognize the importance of such a planning process and they are deeply engaged in the effort as well as its success.

As Davis notes, "when diversity works, it works for everyone, and it takes everyone to make it work." ■



The Graduate Center, CUNY, photographer Jason Fulford

Summer Institute Will Assist Campuses in Making Excellence Inclusive

AAC&U's Greater Expectations Institute, to be held June 17–21, 2009, will focus on developing "Leadership to Make Excellence Inclusive." At this institute, teams from up to thirty colleges and universities will have the opportunity to work on their specific project designed to increase engagement, inclusion, and high achievement for all students.

Burlington, Vermont will be the host site for this intense, five-day institute designed to help campuses respond to national calls to improve the quality of undergraduate education for more Americans—including those historically underserved by higher education. It will center on: developing the multilevel campus leadership needed to expand institutional capacity; aligning institutional purposes, structures, and practices that advance all students achieving learning outcomes essential for success in today's world; and assessing progress.

Sessions and readings at the institute will help campus leaders work on issues such as

- raising and defining clear expectations for student learning;
- nurturing student's cognitive complexity, intercultural skills, and education for personal and social responsibility;
- leading comprehensive educational change efforts with widespread involvement and support on campus.

The Greater Expectations Institute is ideal for campuses working to create a culture of high expectations that fosters student and institutional learning. The institute's design rests on two beliefs: that a high-quality, practical liberal education should be the standard of excellence for all students, and that diversity and intercul-

tural competence are essential elements of a contemporary liberal education.

Focus on Leadership

The institute will help campuses develop multilevel leadership to succeed with educational change initiatives through a series of sessions, expert consultations, targeted reading, and ample time for teams to develop plans for action for when they return to campus. Teams will learn how to tap the contributions of various campus constituents and cultures to advance their efforts.



The University of Vermont—Burlington

Education for Personal and Social Responsibility

The 2009 institute will also focus on a set of learning outcomes essential for success in the twenty-first century but too often neglected in campuswide planning. Participants will explore ways to facilitate students' examination of questions about ethical responsibility to self and others, more precisely define the academy's role

in fostering students' development of personal and social responsibility, and create learning environments that prepare student to fulfill their obligations in an academic community, and as local and global citizens.

High-Impact Practices

A focus on expanding the use of a set of high-impact educational practices will also be a hallmark of this year's institute. Sessions will build on research summarized in the recent AAC&U report by George D. Kuh, *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter*. In that publication, Kuh describes why certain practices—e.g. first-year seminars, undergraduate research, and senior capstone projects—work to improve student learning outcomes especially for underreserved students. He notes that these practices work because they share certain features. They demand that students devote considerable time and effort to purposeful tasks. They deepen students' investment in their learning and their commitment to academics. They increase students' positive and purposeful interaction with faculty and peers. And they provide opportunities for students to see connections and integrate what they are learning from different aspects of their college experience.

The 2009 institute is an ideal vehicle to advance an important educational change initiative on campus and move an institution closer to its goals of ensuring that all students achieve important learning outcomes at high levels.

To learn more or apply to the Institute, see: www.aacu.org/meetings/gexinstitute. ■

Diversity Goes Beyond Numbers at the University of Denver

Laura Donnelly-Smith, associate editor/staff writer, AAC&U

When Jesús Treviño arrived at the University of Denver (DU) in 2002, one of his first undertakings was to change the name of the office he was hired to run. “I took the old Office of Multicultural Affairs and changed it to ‘Multicultural Excellence,’” Treviño says. “I wanted to get away from the ‘deficiency model’ that assumes minority students are broken, and if they come to this office, we’ll fix them.” Instead, Treviño, Denver’s associate provost for multicultural excellence, decided to focus on the positive from day one. He started a Community of Excellence Scholars program for high-need students that awards scholarships, and pairs students with mentors who can validate their experiences and support them as they progress through their undergraduate careers. He instituted a series of weekend Diversity and Unity Retreats in the Denver mountains where student leaders learn about topics like social justice and being an ally. And perhaps most important, he is working to ensure that diversity is as important outside of his office’s walls as inside.

A focus on diversity isn’t new at Denver, which enrolls roughly 4,000 undergraduates and 6,000 graduate students, of whom about 16 percent are students of color. The university hosted its first diversity summit in 2002, and in Chancellor Robert Coombe’s inauguration speech in April 2006, he called diversity “the edge that will make us champions.” What *is* new in Denver’s diversity work is the emphasis on “inclusive excellence,” a term developed by AAC&U to capture a multifaceted approach to diversity that focuses on student achievement, attention to cultural differences, and the creation of a learning environment that uses its diversity to enhance educational excellence for all students.



Diversity and Unity Retreat at the University of Denver

Making Excellence Inclusive

At the University of Denver, Treviño’s desire to extend his office’s reach coincided with a plan by Provost Gregg Kvistad to study how to attract more faculty of color. “I said, ‘Let’s focus not just on hiring, but really try to transform the institution,’” Treviño says. So last October, Kvistad invited Treviño to meet with the chancellor, vice chancellors, and deans to explain inclusive excellence. Since then, departments from across campus have signed on to the inclusive excellence concept. The deans at that fall meeting formed committees to draft inclusive mission statements for their colleges, and the division of student life did the same. DU’s athletics department, University College, and Sturm College of Law have all updated their missions to include an inclusive excellence component as well.

In the past, diversity had been addressed at Denver primarily in terms of numbers—the percentage of underrepresented students and faculty members on

campus or in a particular program—and almost exclusively from within the multicultural affairs office. Under the new campaign, which was officially introduced at the 2006 Diversity Summit, the responsibility for an inclusive and diverse campus is shifting to academic departments, units, and programs.

In the university’s human resources department, HR director Dick Gartrell and Treviño discussed how the inclusive excellence concept might be able to increase diverse hiring as well as improve performance management—how the university evaluates and provides feedback to its employees. Gartrell designed a new hiring and evaluation plan, and met with deans and departments to explain how the interviewing and hiring processes could incorporate inclusive excellence. “We’re encouraging behavioral interviewing—things like ‘Tell me about a time when you worked in a diverse group.’ Just identifying that we’re interested in these competencies when we’re interviewing can help us find the right person,” Gartrell says. In a recent search for a new assistant provost

for student life, the search committee asked candidates to prepare a presentation on inclusive excellence. “Rather than leaving the presentation topic to the candidate, we can give them the direction that this kind of topic is important to us,” Gartrell explains.

Expanding Definitions

An important part of the “inclusive excellence” concept is learning to look beyond race when thinking and talking about diversity. At the Diversity and Unity retreats run by the Office of Multicultural Excellence, it’s not just students of different races who learn cross-cultural communication skills—there is also attention to socioeconomic, regional, gender, and religious diversity. By teaching different groups to communicate effectively and recognize the similarities of their goals, students form connections that might not happen spontaneously. “The students come back to the classrooms from these retreats and spread [this message] around,” Treviño says. “Now the black student alliance might cosponsor a program with the queer student alliance. That didn’t happen before.”

DU’s office of academic advising currently has one adviser specifically trained in multicultural student advising. But this fall, the entire staff will receive this training. Melissa Martinez, the coordinator of multicultural advising, says the change will make diversity a wider responsibility. The most effective advising happens when everyone understands the issues students from various backgrounds face, she says. Martinez designed a multicultural student advising model that would start with outreach to a diverse group of prospective students and provide specifically tailored services to underrepresented students once they arrive at DU. While the model is still in the planning stages, Martinez has received positive feedback so far from many of the offices that would be involved—including financial aid, the international student house, admissions, and student life.

Measuring Success

One of the limitations of Denver’s approach to diversity is that it can be hard to measure progress. While traditional indicators show success so far—at DU, the persistence rate for first-year students of color last year was 95 percent, and the university hired 17 faculty members from underrepresented groups in 2006—staff members are aware that these measures can’t tell the whole story. “It doesn’t always make sense to measure things like retention, because a student who leaves really might be a better fit somewhere else,” Martinez explains. “The Office of Multicultural Excellence is working on outcomes assessments instead,” she says, “to measure what students have learned about multiculturalism, rather than simply the existence of a diverse student body at DU.”

Another potential problem is that Denver’s inclusive excellence campaign has come from administrators, rather than starting with students’ own expressed needs. But Treviño

is confident that the students are on board. “These ideas are coming from [administrators], but the students know we’ve been doing a lot of grassroots diversity work, providing safe places to talk about privilege and oppression as they haven’t been able to do before,” he says. “This is engaging education. We don’t have trouble recruiting students.”

Denver’s inclusive excellence campaign is still in its early years—the Multicultural Excellence office sees it as an eight- to ten-year project. But based on the response so far, Treviño says, the DU community seems eager to embrace inclusive excellence and to develop good measures to assess change.

“There are a lot of people still running what I call ‘revenge curriculum’ when it comes to diversity—‘I’ll make you feel as bad as you’ve made me feel!’” he says. “That doesn’t work. We want to set the standard for collaboration.” ■

Reprinted from AAC&U News (September 2007)



The Association of American Colleges and Universities invites applications for the 2009

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Application Deadline: **March 20, 2009**



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for deans, department chairs, and faculty working to advance integrative and engaged learning in and across disciplines

See www.aacu.org/meetings/engaging_depts to apply

How Are You Making Excellence Inclusive?

Making Excellence Inclusive (MEI) is an AAC&U initiative that continues to evolve since 2002 when it was launched with funding from the Ford Foundation. Over the course of seven years, many campuses have adopted the concept of Inclusive Excellence and have worked toward **Making Excellence Inclusive** (MEI). This newsletter features the work of MEI and highlights how campuses are putting MEI principles into practice. We will continue to showcase promising campus examples in future issues. If you are working to make excellence inclusive and think that others could learn from what you are doing, please send us a brief description of the work you are doing by e-mailing Nakia Bell, program and administrative assistant, at bell@aacu.org.



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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 1,150 accredited public and private colleges and universities of every type and size.

AAC&U functions as a catalyst and facilitator, forging links among presidents, administrators, and faculty members who are engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Its mission is to reinforce the collective commitment to liberal education at both the national and local levels and to help individual institutions keep the quality of student learning at the core of their work as they evolve to meet new economic and social challenges.

Information about AAC&U membership, programs, and publications can be found at www.aacu.org.

Making Excellence Inclusive

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