

**CDI Seminar Remarks**  
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**The James Irvine Foundation**  
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I am delighted to be with you at this Annual Seminar of the Campus Diversity Initiative (CDI) – our fourth one. On behalf of Irvine, I thank you for giving your precious time to participate in this two-day meeting. We are pleased to have here so many of the people who are engaged in diversity work at their campuses to advance the academic success of under-represented students in California.

I would like to first acknowledge and thank the Evaluation Resource Team (ERT) and in particular the three Co-Directors, Alma Clayton-Pedersen, Sharon Parker, and Daryl Smith, and their associates, Jose Moreno, Research Analyst at CGU, and Danny Teraguchi, Research Associate at AAC&U, for their commitment to CDI and its goals and for their expertise and contributions to each CDI campus and the initiative overall. We all benefit greatly from your dedication and involvement – thank you.

The focus of my remarks today is on the role of evaluation in promoting the sustainability of the CDI diversity work.

First, I'd like to address the concept of sustainability. Sustainability is open to different interpretations and use. I first became aware of this when I was working for CARE in Africa. I was evacuated from Sudan during the first Gulf War and sent to work for the duration of the war in London. Every week, my British colleagues would bring to the attention of others how their fellow Americans in the field had misused the English language in various written correspondence, often as a subject for a few laughs. One that came up all too often was the word "sustainability." Sustainability is a word that we don't find in the English language dictionary. I'm sure you've all had that experience of using a Word processing spell check and getting the message of "Not in Dictionary" for sustainability and therefore having to add "sustainability" to your customized dictionary. So where does the word "sustainability" come from? And how should we be applying the concept to our work?

The concept of sustainability emerged with the environmental movement in the 1970's with the concern that our western lifestyles are depleting natural resources. A seminal book, Limits to Growth, as well as other bestsellers predicted the decline of our economy and even civilization if we did not live in a more sustainable manner - that is in harmony with the environment.

Only more recently has sustainability been used in the context of social programs. Sustainability in this context can refer to multiple aspects of a program. One can assess sustainability from different perspectives: financial, institutional, or impact. Examples include:

- A financial perspective: Maintenance of a certain project activity (ex: summer bridge program continues to operate after external grant support ends).
- An impact perspective: Capacity of a target population to continue a practice without ongoing project intervention (ex: a faculty member adopts and continues to practice new

pedagogical approaches that acknowledge and are appropriate for diverse learning styles and students after initial training and grant support ends).

- An institutional perspective: Capacity of an organization to continue project activities (ex: qualified staff in place, committed leadership, values behind the program are in evidence in an institution's mission and its policies, and/or a revenue stream has been identified to support the activity).

We have found at the Foundation that it is important to be clear at the outset when referring to sustainability, and to develop objectives to clarify what aspect of sustainability is expected and indicators to measure progress toward the sustainability objectives. All too often, however, too much focus is given to the first example, maintaining a program or an activity, rather than sustaining an initiative's capacity to deliver results.

With CDI, we have encouraged campuses to focus on the third type of sustainability - that of the institutionalization of diversity efforts. Some activities will certainly need to be sustained, and key individuals within the diversity programs will need to continue to uphold new values and practices, but some activities may no longer be relevant and if sustainability is focused only on individuals, they come and go or the effort may not be broad or deep enough within the campus to lead toward an institutionalization of the diversity efforts and the long term effects that we all aspire toward.

In addition to clarifying sustainability objectives, we find it is important to clarify how they will be achieved. Assumptions about program sustainability tend to be very simplistic or not well thought out. Many foundations have designed programs that assume sustainability will happen if the following sequence of activity is adopted: design, demonstrate, evaluate, disseminate and wait for other large-scale public or private funding to underwrite continued operation or even expansion of the program. I see this happening on your campuses as well. While that may have worked in the past, we all acknowledge that today's funding context is quite different. This also implies a different role not just for program design but for evaluation as well.

In the past, public agencies, policymakers and foundations turned to evaluation as a way to judge whether a demonstration program was successful and worth funding in the above scenario. Evaluation still plays this role of demonstrating worth of a program appropriately and in many instances. However, at Irvine, we believe that evaluation can serve another important purpose – that of a management tool to refine strategy, improve performance, and demonstrate accountability within an institution. In addition, at Irvine, we don't solely fund programs – but we understand programs live in an organizational context and that we need to invest in institutions to deliver high quality programs and sustain them.

This approach to evaluation and programming is evident in CDI. For CDI, we wanted to go beyond the usual patchwork or lists of program activities that campuses had proposed and that we had funded in the previous 15 or more years of our diversity efforts that usually had limited duration or even limited effects. We therefore have focused our grants on institutional capacities and changes in addition to funding specific programs.

Along with this focus in our funding, the CDI evaluation is designed to support institutional change and capacity development. We have observed that when an evaluation is tailored to address the needs of the respective campus and in particular senior level decision-makers, the evaluation is more likely to be used to refine and improve institutional strategy and programming, to demonstrate accountability, to communicate a story to various constituents in order to attract other resources and commitment, and to make budgeting decisions.

The important ingredients are: 1) a clear and common framework to discuss strategy and results (i.e. the evaluation plans); 2) a select number of indicators to monitor progress; 3) a process to engage campus leadership and other appropriate stakeholders in examining and reflecting on that data to pinpoint any major issues and inform changes; and 4) an emphasis on analysis and reflection rather than reporting upward within an institution or outward to funders.

The approach to evaluation within CDI is one of organizational learning, which blends OD with evaluation and evaluation with program work. The learning approach to evaluation is one that supports efforts to assess, learn, and adapt and not think about our work in a static way in which we need to hold everything constant until the end of the grant period and see what was achieved. Rather, it is important that evaluation is connected to the decision-making context within which evaluation is being conducted and that the appropriate and senior level stakeholders are engaged in using the data.

In this way, I see that evaluation represents not just a key source of information but also offers a set of processes and other supports to promote success AND sustainability.

At this stage of the CDI, it is important that each campus, along with Irvine, respectively address this issue of sustainability at each of our institutions:

- What do you mean by sustainability in the CDI context?
- What are your sustainability objectives? What is it you specifically need to sustain within the institution?
- How will sustainability be achieved?
- What evaluation data and processes can support progress toward this sustainability?

We look forward to learning about how you are addressing these questions. On behalf of the board and staff of the Irvine Foundation, please accept our sincere gratitude for the important work you are doing on your respective campuses that will have relevance and significance in the field of diversity and higher education and for youth in California now and in the future. Thank you.