

Saturday, October 18, 2008

7:45 – 9:00 A.M.

ROUNDTABLE 2: Closing the Loop: Connecting Research and Practice to Advance Inclusion, Excellence, and Equity

This session will provide intimate and practical discussion about improving educational outcomes for historically underserved students and will seek to establish stronger linkages between the complementary work and mutual goals of researchers and practitioners. A review of these abstracts in advance will prepare participants to engage in a two-way exchange of ideas centered on the following questions:

- 1) How can researchers' make their findings most helpful to practitioners' everyday work?
- 2) How can practitioners contribute to making existing diversity, inclusion, and equity research most useful for advancing educational improvement efforts?
- 3) How can researchers and practitioners establish reciprocal understandings of the character of each other's work for the purpose of refining the information that advances their mutual goals?
- 4) What are the challenges researchers face in defining and measuring campus practices and learning outcomes?
- 5) How might researchers and practitioners collaborate to overcome these challenges to help ensure underserved students achieve essential learning outcomes?

1. Project Title—Educational Outcomes for a Multicultural Society: A Focus on Students and Institutions of Higher Education (Planning Phase)

Project Team: Dr. Sylvia Hurtado, Principal Investigator; Cynthia Alvarez, Research Analyst; Lucy Arellano, Research Analyst; Marcela Cuellar, Research Analyst; Chelsea Guillermo Wann, Research Analyst

Abstract

The specific aim of this project is to examine individual and institutional factors that advance the success of diverse students and prepare all students for participation in a diverse democracy. We are focusing on three types of student outcomes that include skill sets for lifelong learning, competencies for a multicultural society, along with outcomes of achievement and retention. We plan to introduce a set of instruments and classroom-based assessments to learn more about student diversity experiences and their link with these learning outcomes, and begin to help campuses promote an undergraduate education that brings diversity to the center of its educational and public service mission. We are planning to administer these pilot instruments in Spring 2009 at a set of institutions that are currently involved in institutional transformation for the academic success of a diverse student population. We believe these activities may help us become more informed about the conditions that are optimal for creating diverse learning environments.

The goals with these activities are to 1) help campuses develop a greater awareness about diversity on their campus, inside and outside the classroom, 2) assist them in assessing and developing undergraduates' skills for work and citizenship in a pluralistic democracy, and 3) help campuses create the conditions for realizing the benefits of diversity in the learning process. Our eventual goal is to be able to model the work for many more campuses to be engaged in attention to their climate, practices, and outcomes to promote the success of diverse students.

2. Project Title—How prepared are faculty to build inclusiveness on campus?

Project Director: Dena Samuels, Senior Instructor and Coordinator of Building Inclusiveness Programs, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs

Abstract

How prepared are faculty to build inclusiveness on any campus? Which attitudes, knowledge, and behavior can promote campus inclusiveness? How do systemic oppression and privilege in society work to include some and exclude others? In the spring of 2007 at University of Colorado – Colorado Springs (UCCS), our chancellor convened the Building Inclusiveness Group (BIG) to research and develop a professional development program for building an

inclusive campus climate, under the auspices of the Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity. The recommendations of the BIG committee were incorporated into the campus diversity strategic plan adopted as policy by the Board of Regents in June 2007. Dena Samuels and another colleague was asked to create the curriculum for universal inclusiveness workshops for the campus. The workshops are based on “The BIG Idea:” that every person has the power to transform organizational culture to be more inclusive. These workshops are being offered to administration, faculty, staff, and student leaders. The goals of the workshop are: to raise awareness, examine our attitudes, and realize our roles in building inclusiveness on our campus. Currently, Samuels is collecting data on the effectiveness of these workshops. The survey instrument she is developing, however, is a pre- and post-test, which does not specifically mention the BIG Idea. Samuels is prepared to discuss the design of this instrument and how it might be used to measure faculty preparedness for building inclusiveness on any campus.

Project Website http://www.uccs.edu/~diversity/about_bi.html

3. Project Title—Efficacy of Science Educational Enrichment Activities

Project Director: Merna Villarejo, University of California, Davis.

Abstract

Our study questions whether undergraduate science enrichment activities prepare and encourage targeted minority students to pursue biology-based professions, in general, and research careers at the PhD level, in particular. Participants in the Biology Undergraduate Scholars Program (BUSP) at UC Davis were much more likely than non-participant minority students—and more likely than the white/Asian student majority—to graduate with biology degrees, and biology degrees with high GPAs, thus ensuring that they are academically prepared to pursue careers in biomedical science. Multivariate logistic regressions revealed that undergraduate research experience is strongly associated with positive graduation outcomes for students of all races and ethnicities. BUSP alumni responses to a career paths survey suggest that while supplementary instruction is key to students’ academic success, undergraduate research experience substantially increases the number of individuals who ultimately pursue biomedical PhDs by allowing some “pre-med” students to discover their love of research through direct exposure to the research environment. A notably distressing finding is that the practical aspects of a career in science research (balancing work and family, finding stable employment, salary level) are seen as nearly universally unattractive by our alumni, even those who have selected the research path. Interviews revealed that the social, cultural and professional capital students gained through BUSP enrichment activities were considered vital to professional success, especially for students who were the first in their families to attend college. (see J.Res.Sci. Teaching; JWMSE; CBE-Life Sci Ed, in press). Also, attend AAC&U session Promoting Access and Engagement, Saturday, Oct.18, 9:15-10:45 am in the Assessment strand.

4. Project Title—Teaching for Justice in the Borderlands

Project Director: Jack A. Hill, Texas Christian University

Abstract

This project articulates narratives of transformative pedagogical praxis in the light of experiences of marginalization in the U.S. borderlands. The “borderlands” represent flash points of encounters with difference—where persons of different races, ethnicities, genders and classes come into contact. Because we live in a pluralistic society, “encounters with difference” represent potentially liberating resources for teaching for justice in the US. By interviewing and observing classroom practices of professors who expressly focus on such encounters, this project seeks to identify ways that these encounters are integrated into their teaching, including the use of “methodological triggers”—such as testimonio-like pedagogy and counter-narratives. The emancipatory power of these triggers will be elucidated in narratives that situate them within the larger context of each professor’s philosophy of teaching, including their strategies for elucidating fresh approaches to diversity and addressing conflicts. The narratives will then be disseminated as a book, utilized in course revision and shared with colleagues in workshops.