Advancing a Collective of Diversity Initiatives: Intersections between Institutional and Grassroots Efforts

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Association of American Colleges and Universities
January 25th, 2017
March 17, 1942

On St. Patrick’s Day, Rev. John J. McEleney, S.J., and six of his Jesuit brothers officially meet for the first time, creating Articles of Association and By-Laws for an institutional entity for both high school and college-level education: The Fairfield College of St. Robert Bellarmine. This is the beginning of both Fairfield College Preparatory School and Fairfield University.

• As the religious order declared at its 32nd General Congregation in 1975: “The mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement.”
Collective of Initiatives to Advance Diversity

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<td><strong>Curriculum:</strong> Gen Ed Revision BLM Course</td>
<td><strong>Programming:</strong> Inter-group dialogues</td>
<td><strong>New Employees:</strong> Re-establish orientation</td>
<td><strong>Data Collection:</strong> Banner data clean up project (students and faculty)</td>
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<td>Faculty Development: FDEC Day Brown Bag Lunches Critical Conversations</td>
<td><strong>First-Year Students:</strong> Orientation FYE</td>
<td><strong>Current Employees:</strong> Multi-cultural competence training modules</td>
<td><strong>University Structure:</strong> Re-organized Office of Student Diversity and Multi-cultural Affairs</td>
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<td>Faculty Recruitment and Retention: Faculty Consultant for Diversity</td>
<td><strong>Student Government:</strong> FUSA Forums</td>
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<td><strong>Executive Personnel:</strong> VP for Human Resources, with emphasis on PD</td>
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Starting the Conversation

• 2004: Father von Arx appointed 8th President
  – Arrived on a Diversity platform

• 2005: Institutional Diversity Council formed

• 2005-2007: Conversations around Diversity emerged
  – Learning circles, workshops, trainings, forums

• 2007-2010: Institutional data collected and reviewed
  – Demographics of community, “cross-cultural” surveys developed and administered
  – Enrollment and Retention efforts analyzed

• 2010-2011: Bias prevention panel created
  – Became the current Bias Response Team
Diversity Vision Statement 2011

As a Jesuit and Catholic institution, Fairfield University’s commitment to the God –given dignity of the human person requires that we create an environment that promotes justice and fosters a deep understanding of human and cultural diversity. Fairfield is committed to encouraging dialogue among those with differing points of view in order to realize an integral understanding of what it means to be human. The University recognizes that transcending the nation’s political and social divisions is a matter of valuing diversity and learning respect for individuals, in their similarities and their differences. Fairfield will continue to integrate diversity in all facets of University life – academic, administrative, social, and spiritual – as together, the community seeks to realize a vision of common good that is rooted in genuine human solidarity.

Fairfield University defines diversity in the broadest sense, reflecting its commitment to creating a more inclusive community that is reflective of the richly diverse global community of which we are part. Diversity encompasses not only racial, ethnic, and religious diversity, but also diversity of socioeconomic contexts, cultural perspectives, national origins, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, abilities, and educational backgrounds.
Triennial Assessment Plan

2014
Year 1:
NSSE
HERI Faculty
Annual Reporting
Demographic Data

2015
Year 2:
Campus Climate Survey

2016
Year 3:
Focus Group Interviews

2016
2014: The works begins

Grassroots Movement

- Stag Statue Demonstration
- Die-in Demonstration
- Creation of Racial Justice is Social Justice (RJSJ) with students, faculty and staff

Institutional Agenda

- PIDC forms a Subcommittee on Assessment
- Demographic data collected and cleaned up in Banner
- 3-year surveys administered: NSSE and HERI faculty

#BLACKLIVESMATTER
2015: The work continues

Grassroots RJSJ
- RJSJ starts meeting regularly
- Developed summer workshop for RJSJ with PIDC
- BLM course developed to run every fall semester for students to create action plans for spring semester

Institutional Agenda
- Assessment PIDC develops new campus climate survey administered spring
- Analyzed demographic data and accepted PWI as history and current state
- PIDC endorsed RJSJ and co-sponsored summer workshop
Fairfield Makes Headlines in 2016

Students at Fairfield University Just Threw an Extremely Offensive Party

Blackface doesn't always involve makeup.

‘Ghetto-themed’ party prompts university investigation
2016: The work intensifies

Grassroots Response
- FUSA holds Open Forum for discussion about the party
- RJSJ hosts 2\textsuperscript{nd} summer workshop
- FDEC Day, Breakfast Club, CAE critical conversations
- General Education curriculum to include social justice
- Black Student Union forms

Institutional Agenda
- Despite suspicion PIDC engaged 30 students in 9 focus groups
- PIDC engaged 60 faculty & staff in 9 focus groups
- 400 transcript pages and 4 months later—all data from 3 years were aggregated
2016: Triennial Assessment Unveils Tensions
2017: Next Steps

• Contracted with International Design Consulting firm, *Continuum Innovation* to assist us in developing a new Diversity Initiative with actionable steps for our community
Conclusion

• Campus climate as it relates to diversity is a complex and evolving phenomena.
• In our experience, advancing a collective of diversity initiatives to bring about change requires long-term commitment to both grass-roots efforts and institutional agendas in ways that intersect and support each other.
Thank you

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Discussion

• Does your institution have a diversity vision statement?
• What types of identities and experiences would you expect to be present on your campus?
• How have you encouraged intersections and collaborations of campus constituents from various angles of diversity initiatives?
• Have you assessed campus climate? How might you initiate this process?
• What types of groups have formed on your campus in response to #BLM?
• What events have helped move your campus toward more inclusion?
• Questions you have of us and the work at Fairfield University?