

Braiding Diversity Ideologies for Institutional Change

Megan Madison

Heller School for Social Policy and Management

Abstract

The Diversity Steering Committee at Brandeis University was formed in 2012 to implement a key component of the Heller School's 2011 Strategic Vision. The committee includes faculty, staff, alumni, and students and is charged with "develop(ing) programs, policies, and procedures that will permanently embed equity, inclusion, and diversity in the fabric of Heller's academic and work environment."

Supporting this work, the presenter conducted informal interviews with center and institute directors to explore the ways in which the school's commitment to diversity is implemented through research and scholarship. Through these interviews, the presenter simultaneously gathered information about the status of the school's diversity work and engaged faculty and staff in reflective conversations around the topic.

This poster summarizes the findings from those interviews, highlighting both the challenges and promise inherent in the multiplicity of diversity ideologies employed by interviewees.

Intended Audience

Students, faculty, and/or administrators involved in advancing diversity work on their campuses.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to:

- Gather information to inform the Diversity Initiative
- Investigate the ways in which our commitment to diversity is actualized through **research and scholarship**
- Engage faculty in **reflective conversations**

Research Questions

This project was organized around the following questions:

- 1.How do the directors of the various institutes/centers at Heller **conceptualize diversity and equity**?
- 2.How is the school's commitment to diversity and equity actualized in the work of the institutes/centers?
How does it play out day-to-day?
- 3.What are some of the **complexities and challenges** related to diversity and equity?
- 4.What can we do to advance this work?

Methods

Data Collection

Eight informal open-ended interviews with research institute and center directors.

- Approximately 45 minutes each
- Detailed handwritten notes
- Digitized and expanded within 48 hours
- Ongoing memo writing

Data Analysis

Notes were reviewed, open-coded, and then secondarily coded for "diversity perspectives."

Role of the Researcher

I recognize that my status as a PhD student and my social location as a visible woman of color shaped both the dynamics of the interviews and my analysis.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the researcher recommended the use of a **Strategic Diversity Leadership Scorecard (SDLS)**. Moving the conversation from abstract and theoretical to the realm of the practical, this tool braids together the various diversity ideologies by **articulating specific outcome indicators for each of the four goals** outlined in the model to the left.

The SDLS also helps to:

- Establish a baseline and monitor progress
- Develop data collection procedures
- Build institutional capacity
- Identify strategic priorities, and
- Increase transparency and accountability

The Committee adopted this recommendation and is now beginning to collect data on indicators relating to teaching and learning.

References

Williams, D., A. (2013) Strategic Diversity Leadership: Activating Change and Transformation in Higher Education. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

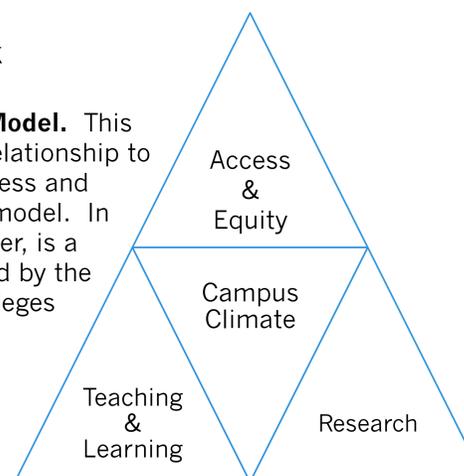
Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the engaged participation of the Diversity Steering Committee and Heller's research centers and institutes. Thank you!

Theoretical Framework

This project used Prof. Damon A. Williams' **Strategic Diversity Goals Model**. This framework places four overarching goals of campus diversity work in relationship to one another. Representing both a starting point and an aspiration, access and equity for historically underrepresented groups forms the peak of the model. In the center, representing the glue that binds the rest of the goals together, is a multicultural and inclusive campus climate. This goal is then buttressed by the points with which diversity intersects with the foundational aims of colleges and universities: teaching students and producing scholarship.

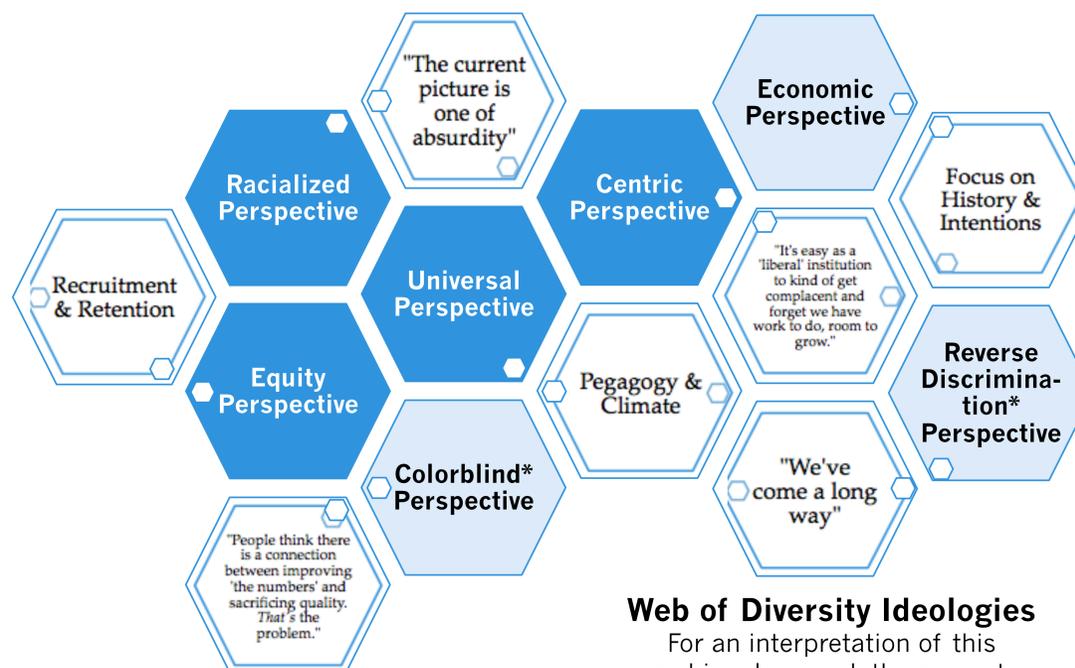
"[Diversity] can no longer be viewed in isolation as tangential to the institution's mission, but rather as integral to the institution's core competencies and values"



Findings

The interviews revealed the following:

1. Universal support for diversity as a general idea
2. Ambivalence and broad range of opinions around current status of diversity
3. Strong desire for an action plan, and
4. Many different perspectives about what diversity means, why it matters, and how it is achieved:



Web of Diversity Ideologies

For an interpretation of this graphic, please ask the presenter

Sample Strategic Diversity Leadership Scorecard (SDLS)

| Diversity Goal ¹³ | Indicators | Data Source |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Access & Equity <i>Heller achieves access and equity for historically underrepresented minorities and women, increasing admission/hiring, graduation, and promotion rates, while achieving at levels comparable to the majority population</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment and outreach to promote a more diverse applicant pool Percent of US students of color (by race/ethnicity and by program) Percent of faculty/research staff of color (by title) Minorities and women in leadership positions Percent of students not US citizens (by program) Graduation rates for students of color and not US citizens | <p>TBD</p> |
| <p>Multicultural & Inclusive Campus Climate <i>Heller will be a welcoming, safe, and inclusive environment where every member of the institution feels a sense of belonging and is able to participate fully in the life of the institution</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceptions of satisfaction Perceptions of campus climate Presence of vibrant student working groups and other diversity-related co-curricular activities Decrease in the number of diversity incidents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course evaluations Focus groups and/or interviews conducted in collaboration with working groups Analysis of responses to online student feedback form |
| <p>Learning & Diversity <i>Diversity is infused into the Heller curriculum and cocurriculum ensuring that students, faculty, and staff are prepared for a diverse, global, and interconnected world</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percent of courses with integrated diversity content Classrooms in which faculty are modeling and students are developing a high degree of cultural intelligence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum review (content analysis of syllabi and classroom observations) |
| <p>Diversity Research & Scholarship <i>Heller advances scholarship and research around domestic, international, and intersectional issues of diversity</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total number and value of grants designed to drive research and scholarship in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion Exemplary research and scholarly output that advances social justice | <p>TBD</p> |
| <p>Strategic Diversity Leadership Capacity <i>Heller has the strategic diversity capacity to engage diversity as a strategic priority</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of diversity policies Diversity included in faculty and staff performance review Participation rates in diversity training during orientation Mentoring, career advising, and professional development | <p>TBD</p> |

¹³ From (Williams, 2013, p. 261)