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Within the context of increasing national diversity, colleges and universities will face new challenges and opportunities in attempting to forge community from communities, both on campus and in society at large. This community-building effort must address, among its dimensions, the following: the proliferation of campus affinity groups; the challenge of facilitating constructive intergroup relations; the emergence and modification of identities; and the reconstructing of knowledge and restructuring of curriculum.

Building Community from Communities: Diversity and the Future of Higher Education

Diversity is an issue that just will not go away. That applies to society—make that the world—at large. And for that reason, as we enter the twenty-first century, diversity will remain one of the greatest challenges, while also providing some of the richest opportunities, for U.S. colleges and universities.

The Context of Diversity

The United States is undergoing the most dramatic demographic restructuring in its history. This involves an enormous increase in the number of those referred to as "people of color." In translation, this means that persons of African American, Hispanic American, Asian American, American Indian, and Pacific Island American ancestry are rapidly expanding their presence in the American mosaic.

Only 10 percent of the U.S. population in 1960, by 1990 people of color had become 25 percent of the nation. Moreover, demographic analysts foresee an acceleration of this trend. According to most projections, somewhere in the middle of the twenty-first century, Americans of "non-Anglo" ancestries will comprise half of the U.S. population. (I say "ancestry" because I have no idea how future Americans will construct racial and ethnic categories and identities, particularly in light of the growing number of offspring of interracial marriages.)

These domestic changes have been paralleled globally. Currently 93 out of every 100 of the world's children are born in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Eu-

rope, which made up one-third of the global population in 1900, has declined to only one-tenth. As of 1997, white people comprised only 17% of the world, a figure that may drop below 10% by 2010.

Implications for Higher Education

This national and global demographic drama inevitably influences the trajectories of American colleges and universities. Institutions of higher education need to prepare students for effective participation in a rapidly changing world. Moreover, according to a 1998 Daniel Yankelovich poll, funded by the Ford Foundation, more than nine of ten registered American voters (more than half of whom labeled themselves as politically conservative) indicated that the growing national and global diversity "makes it more important than ever for all of us to understand people who are different than ourselves."

In addition, the demographic changes are drastically altering the long-range national and global pool from which colleges and universities will draw students. As such diverse students converge on higher education institutions, they increase the variety of campus communities, and in so doing they raise serious questions about the significance of communities as well as the very concept of community.

The word *community* has become one of the most overused and abused terms in the English language. With disregard for the sense of common attachment traditionally inherent in the idea, the word is currently applied with little restraint to just about any geographic locale that happens to be embraced by political boundaries. This leads to such oxymorons as the labeling of suburban commuter polities as "bedroom communities."

However, colleges and universities may be no better when it comes to the jargonistic use of community. Can an individual really find community as a solitary member of an 18,000-student institution? This is a dubious proposition. Rather, most students who discover a sense of college community do so primarily by participating in smaller communities, which, in turn, may serve as launching pads to fuller participation in campus life.

This brings us to the issue of diversity. In relation to higher education, the concept usually elicits images and arguments, often contributing more heat than light, regarding diversity's usual suspects, particularly such polarizing topics as affirmative action and speech codes. Certainly these subjects are important. However, rather than revisit and rehash these oft-discussed topics, I have chosen to focus on four other diversity-related themes that I find of increasing importance and concern as I work with higher education institutions across the country. I believe that these four topics will become increasingly critical elements of twenty-first century higher education dialogue and decision making, particularly as they illuminate the complex intersection of diversity, communities, and community:

- the proliferation of campus affinity groups
- the challenge of facilitating constructive intergroup relations
- the emergence and modification of identities, and
- the reconstructing of knowledge and restructuring of curricula

Affinity Groups

Throughout human history, people have tended to want to be around people with whom they have something in common, and have aggregated around those commonalities to form affinity groups. There is no evidence that twenty-first century Americans will defy such a timeless, universal human propensity. Certainly this is true on multiracial, multiethnic university campuses. In fact, as the United States grows in size and cultural complexity, individuals of all backgrounds increasingly seek to discover and develop smaller group affinities to go along with their larger American identity. Race, ethnicity, gender, religion, culture, language, sexual orientation—all of these galvanize affinity groupings, providing sources of identity, foci for community, and even bases for alternative institutions.

The phenomenon also pervades institutions of higher education. Contemporary multiculturalism has dramatized the presence of diverse communities. Yet, in fact, affinity groups have long existed on college campuses. How about Hillels, Newman Clubs, and other religion-based organizations? How about fraternities and sororities, segregated by race and religion throughout most of their history? Long before the post-civil rights movement boom of Black, Latino, Asian American, Native American, and other organizations, college campuses teemed with communities of social and cultural affinity groups. Yet I can't recall anybody accusing them of "tribalism." The formation of self-selected campus communities based on perceived commonalities reflects the inevitable process of group aggregation.

But are communities of affinity groups inevitably good for the building of campus community? No, just inevitable. Because many students feel the need to aggregate around affinities in order to find a sense of belonging that cannot be satisfied merely by being on a megacampus, universities—particularly large universities—need to support such smaller communities of affinity. At the same time, however, campus affinity groups can have their downside. This occurs when students latch onto them in order to isolate themselves, to inhibit the access of others to full and equal participation in campus life, or to disparage or vilify others on the basis of *their* group affinities. The inevitable process of group aggregation can thereby regress into the avoidable process of self-segregation if students—of whatever background or affinity—become prisoners of single-hyphenation identities. Such thinking and action impede the development of a sense of campus community by impeding the building of connections with others who do not share those hyphens. Sometimes such self-segregated affinity groups also take actions that demean other campus communities, thereby undermining the basic idea of community.

Universities face the challenge of facilitating healthy, supportive, and affirming group aggregation while simultaneously trying to inhibit calcification into self-segregation. To do so, higher education institutions need to work to build bridges among communities. That challenge, then, gives rise to an opportunity—the fostering of inter-group relations through serious, civil intergroup conversation and collaboration.

Intergroup Relations

Let's return briefly to the social context. While restructuring rapidly in demographic makeup, the United States is also growing in numbers. Unoccupied (or sparsely occupied) space, America's historical safety valve, is dwindling, even as racial, ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity grows. As space declines—whether globally, societally, or on campus—it becomes increasingly difficult for affinity group communities to avoid bumping up against each other. During the twenty-first century, Americans of all backgrounds must increasingly share space as they live, work, and study closer and closer together. Such contact can result in more healthy intergroup relations, the discovery of better ways to coexist and, even more optimistically, the development of the ability to thrive through interaction and cooperation across differences. But, as world history has repeatedly shown, increased sharing of space, to put it mildly, does not always go smoothly or necessarily lead to better understanding. Wars, legal systems that oppress or marginalize selected groups, informal processes of group-based stigmatization and exclusion, and individual clashes arising from group-generated bigotry are often the result.

University campuses are certainly not immune to intergroup difficulties. Increasingly crowded campuses find themselves becoming arenas of proliferating varieties of individuals, communities, and affinity group organizations, who often embody contrasting and sometimes clashing values and behavior. As in society at large, such sharing of space does not always go well. Residence halls, classrooms, offices, dining areas, and public events become sites of informal, sometimes inevitable, interactions among those who come from varying racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, and other backgrounds. Statements by members of one group may offend the sensibilities or grate on the sensitivities of others, even on campuses that take pride in their communitarian atmosphere. Diverse cultural or religious behavioral patterns sometimes lead to misunderstandings, incompatibilities, and personal clashes, even on campuses that espouse the celebration of diversity. An environment of multiple languages—spoken by faculty and staff as well as by students—sometimes irritates those accustomed to a monolingually English atmosphere.

As one who lectures, gives diversity workshops, and troubleshoots on several dozen campuses every year, I find that the problem of space-sharing amidst growing diversity is virtually a universal higher education challenge that cannot be resolved by glowing mission statements or cheerleading platitudes about celebrating diversity or treating everyone as part of the human race. The creation of a sense of community that goes beyond the superficial requires a serious engagement with the process of building bridges among groups. Many of the intersections among those from diverse communities will occur naturally at the micro level through informal one-on-one or small group interactions. Yet the creation of a greater sense of campus community among communities also requires proactive efforts by campus leaders. Based on my observations and interventions, it appears that much, maybe most, of the effort to make diversity work comes from student affairs professionals and staff. For example, some of my most fascinating and enlightening campus visits have involved working with student advisors in resi-

dence halls. While faculty have the luxury of extended, often theoretical, discussions of diversity and can always refer their disagreements to the omnipresent subcommittees, residence hall advisors operate on the multicultural front lines, dealing with everything from seeming incompatibilities among roommate values and behavior to clustering of group-based communities in the dining hall.

Colleges and universities need to continue to seek innovative ways to promote positive cross-cultural and intergroup relations, particularly among students. These efforts should include at least two dimensions: the development of better understanding of differences; and the recognition, sometimes the discovery, of underlying commonalities. By simultaneously addressing both pluribus and unum, universities can avoid the obfuscation that occurs when people retreat into polar positions, whether "all people are basically alike" platitudes or such a fixation on differences that commonalities get lost in the shuffle.

The building of a more constructive sense of diversity and unity among commuting students creates special challenges, particularly for student affairs professionals. Yet avenues exist for promoting better intergroup understanding. Sometimes coordinated with courses, dialogue groups that focus on critical diversity-related issues can provide the framework and mechanism for facilitating interpersonal and intergroup insight, even friendships. In addition, campus initiatives focused on local communities have the potential for building bonds of understanding among participating students of diverse backgrounds.

Fostering healthy intergroup relations is not simply a matter of keeping the campus running more smoothly by avoiding or resolving problems. It is also part of the fulfillment of the university's responsibility to help students become more effective participants in a diverse democracy. Universities should strive to help students develop the commitment and ability to move and communicate successfully across lines of diversity, thereby contributing to a greater sense of campus community. After all, it is these very students who, in turn, will be the builders—or polluters—of both community and communities as they become more active members of the post-college world.

Emerging Identities

Now let's add an additional complication. The multicultural mosaic will not remain fixed. Diversity is dynamic, not static. New campus groups come into existence and flourish, while others diminish and sometimes disappear. New affinities or assertions of identity are constantly emerging, ultimately creating new communities. The following two examples—gay and mixed-race students—suggest the campus-level emergence of affinity groups and identities, either newly formed or socially liberated.

Centers and organizations based on sexual orientation have become increasingly common on college campuses. Moreover, from school to school they have taken different forms and have modified their inclusiveness, often reflected by their titles. Some organizations or centers began as gay (encompassing both men and women), but later evolved into explicitly gay and lesbian groups. In other cases such organizations specifically recognized other identities, such as bisexual and the transgendered. This has

had its analogue in the curriculum, with the burgeoning of courses and majors, including those labeled as Queer Studies.

Parallel to the organizational and curricular rise of gays and lesbians has been the emergence of organizations of mixed-race students. One of the most dramatic demographic changes of the past quarter century has been the growth of interracial marriage, particularly since the Supreme Court's 1967 Loving vs. Virginia decision eliminating state antimiscegenation laws. An inevitable result of this process has been the expanding number of students who embody not one but two or more racial heritages (along with students of multiple ethnic, religious, or cultural heritages). This has led to informal aggregations and sometimes campus organizations of students of mixed-race backgrounds. Many such students also encounter special challenges, sometimes resulting from the misperceptions of faculty, staff, and fellow students still mired psychologically in the dominant American monoracial categorical system.

The twenty-first century will find new affinity groups making their presence known and felt on college and university campuses. This process may include the emergence of relatively new identities, such as those of mixed-race faculty, staff, and particularly students. It may include the strengthening of long-standing identities—such as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender—that become more public because of an increasingly receptive environment or, conversely, the desire to form or find smaller communities because of the repressive climate of the larger campus community. Colleges and universities need to be flexible in recognizing and responding to these new and emerging identities, which may involve supporting new kinds of identity-based student or staff organizations. It may involve addressing the special needs of those who encounter difficult situations resulting from these identities. It may include holding forums dealing with these topics, particularly if the very presence of or reaction to some affinity groups creates campus controversy or opposition. It may also involve curricular changes that build from the presence of new groupings, address questions raised by their existence, and explore the significance of their experiences. Perhaps most challenging, it will call upon campuses to continue searching for ways to foster new senses and visions of campus community that are inclusive, not repressive or marginalizing, of these newly voiced identities.

Knowledge and Curriculum

To this point I have focused mainly on issues of campus climate and student affairs, with occasional references to curriculum. Let us now focus on the latter. Preparation of students for a multicultural future should not be left to the serendipity of student contact or the efforts of student affairs staff. Particularly through curriculum, faculty should also play a critical role in helping students become more constructive participants in a multicultural society and shrinking globe.

Like affinity groups, diversity in the curriculum is not a new higher education issue. It has been integral to higher education dialogues particularly since the 1960s, when the civil rights movement led to student demands for greater course attention to such themes as race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. Faculty and administra-

tors have responded in a variety of ways. Most dramatic has been the establishment of new majors, sometimes even departments, of women's studies and different varieties of ethnic studies. Such initiatives have had mixed results, ranging from sites of exceptional teaching and research richness to weak, diffuse, and marginalized programs of questionable value. Yet, aside from such lightning-rod, often fractious topics as new departments and majors, dramatic changes have also been taking place within traditional departments and disciplines. Over the past three decades the theme of diversity has become fundamental to many academic disciplines, particularly in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. This has included an extraordinary explosion of diversity-related research and reinterpretation that has fundamentally altered entire fields of study. Inevitably such knowledge reconstruction has influenced course work and even major requirements.

This has also led to controversy. Particularly in the past decade, opponents of such reforms have launched vigorous attacks on diversity-related scholarship and pedagogy. Some ethnic and women's studies programs have been eliminated, often on the grounds that they were too exclusionary in their focus. (Ironically, religious studies programs with a comparably tight focus have escaped the wrath of the antidiversity critics. Could it be that the latter have their own brand of political correctness?) Yet in the curriculum at large, diversity seems to have become firmly entrenched.

As a scholarly and pedagogical issue, the rationale for diversity-related education goes well beyond politics, ideology, student demands, and the media-overblown campus culture wars. According to the 1998 Yankelovich poll, more than ninety per cent of registered voters felt that colleges and universities should prepare "people to function in a more diverse society" and "in a more diverse work force," while two-thirds thought that college graduate requirements should include at least one cultural and ethnic diversity course and at least one course presented from the point of view of non-Western societies. At the same time, however, nearly one-third of those interviewed expressed concern that such courses *might* be nothing more than political correctness.

The poll suggests that, beyond the issue of student demands, diversity cheerleading, or antidiversity hyperbole lies a deeper, more widely recognized, maybe even consensual public challenge. Including through the curriculum, universities need to dedicate themselves more thoroughly to the serious and sobering task of preparing students for citizenship in a diverse democratic society and a shrinking globe. After all, these students will be voting on diversity-related issues. They may enter public service, which means working with diverse communities. They may become part of the private sector, where they will provide goods and services to diverse consumers while working in and managing organizations with diverse work forces. They may become involved in global activities, where dealing with diversity is basic to their endeavors.

In short, university curricula should help students obtain a more nuanced grasp of the complexities of diversity, develop a deeper understanding of myriad groups, and become more constructive contributors and bridge builders in striving for a twenty-first century sense of inclusive community, as people of different backgrounds increasingly share space in their daily lives. To do so, the curriculum should include a more

thorough exploration of such topics as the roles diversity has played in the past, principles and problems of interpersonal and intergroup relations, group-based power and privilege, progress and regress in the areas of justice and equality, and diversity-related challenges and opportunities of the future. A university curriculum that fails to help students grapple with such issues is failing in its obligation to contribute to a better future for both affinity-based communities and diversity-based inclusive community.

Conclusion

Nehru of India once said, "Life is like a game of cards. The hand that is dealt you is determinism; the way you play it is free will." Demographic changes and the shrinking globe guarantee that diversity and resulting affinity-based communities will be increasingly critical cards in that hand. Will colleges and universities meet the challenges and avail themselves of the opportunities to help prepare students to play that hand well, thereby contributing to a more just, equitable community of true interpersonal and intergroup understanding? Those are the diversity-related stakes for higher education as we enter the twenty-first century.

Suggested Readings

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