University of Nebraska - Lincoln
DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Sixth Annual National Conference, POCPWI

People of Color in Predominantly White Institutions

10-31-2001

Winning On for the Gipper: Diversity Strategies and Initiative at Notre Dame

Hugh R. Page Jr., Ph. D.
Associate Professor, Theology and Director, African and African American Studies Program, University of Notre Dame

Richard Pierce Ph. D.
Carl E. Koch Assistant Professor, History, University of Notre Dame

Gina Shropshire Ph. D.
Academic Advisor and Concurrent Assistant Professor, Mendoza College of Business, University of Notre Dame

Lynn Todman Ph. D.
Visiting Scholar and Adjunct Faculty African and African American Studies Program, University of Notre Dame

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/pocpwi6

Part of the Race, Ethnicity and post-Colonial Studies Commons

Page, Hugh R. Jr., Ph. D.; Pierce, Richard Ph. D.; Shropshire, Gina Ph. D.; and Todman, Lynn Ph. D., "Winning On for the Gipper: Diversity Strategies and Initiative at Notre Dame" (2001). *Sixth Annual National Conference, POCPWI* . Paper 3.
http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/pocpwi6/3

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the People of Color in Predominantly White Institutions at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sixth Annual National Conference, POCPWI by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Winning One for the Gipper: Diversity Strategies and Initiatives at Notre Dame

Abstract

One of the enduring images linked to the University of Notre Dame is that of injured football player George Gipp imploring Coach Knute Rockne to "Win One for the Gipper. " Similarly, people of color and conscience at Notre Dame struggle with formidable challenges in implementing diversity into areas of faculty retention, university initiatives and community outreach, all while remaining sane. The panelists will discuss innovative successes and continuing efforts that can be adapted by others seeking a game plan for diversity.

Panelists:

Hugh R. Page, Jr., Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Theology and Director, African and African American Studies Program, University of Notre Dame

Richard Pierce, Ph.D.

Carl E. Koch Assistant Professor, History, University of Notre Dame

Gina V. Shropshire, Ph.D.

Academic Advisor and Concurrent Assistant Professor, Mendoza College of Business, University of Notre Dame

Lynn Todman, Ph.D.

Visiting Scholar and Adjunct Faculty African and African American Studies Program, University of Notre Dame

The composition of this panel is reflective of the strategy that we have employed to increase the awareness of race and racial issues at the University of Notre Dame. The panel members come from differing departments and institutes, yet each has overseen efforts to aid people of color in their transition and tenure at the university through their involvement with the African and African American Studies Program. While Notre Dame is a predominantly white institution, such a characterization masks many of the elements that make Notre Dame a unique university with special opportunities and challenges. This panel, consisting of four presenters, will dissect the areas of spirituality, community outreach, faculty recruitment and retention and programmatic initiatives, which in combination form a holistic approach towards increased diversity effectiveness. Below, find a short description of the proposed presentations.

1. Notre Dame, as a religiously affiliated university, has as one of its missions the obligation to respect spirituality. One of the presentations takes the university's mission a step further and examines how spirituality can be used to increase administrator effectiveness. Such emphasis is not germane only at religious based institutions; indeed, the potential employment of spirituality is as widespread as are faithful people. In a more secular approach, it would be the seeking of balance, but this presentation argues that spirituality may provide the balance. This session's purpose will be to look critically at the personal spirituality out of which Dr. Page's work as director of AFAM has emerged (as well as an assessment of his successes and failures) and the pragmatic implications of what might be termed a "spirituality-infused" leadership style for people of color in predominantly white institutions of higher learning.

2. Notre Dame is blessed to be located near urban centers that can make use of the many talents and services found at the university. The Urban Research and Development Initiative (URDI) is the vehicle through which the engagement of community Reeds and talents and university resources are brought together in fruitful ways. The basic premise underlying the URDI is that communities have needs and universities have resources that can positively affect those areas of concern. The basic principles that guide our work are the following:

- We are committed to the pursuit of social and economic justice and equity;
- We exercise that commitment by listening and responding to community-identified needs;
- In responding to community needs, we work as multidisciplinary teams. The teams are comprised of Notre Dame faculty, staff and students of various disciplinary backgrounds. The teams are also comprised of members of the communities with which we work. These people are *the* experts on the needs, issues and problems that confront their communities and they have a clear understanding of the solutions. The role of the Notre Dame team members is to provide technical expertise as well as some of the energy required to implement the solutions;
- The ultimate goal of the URDI is to facilitate and enable community self-sufficiency.

3. While involved in our community, we have not lessened our commitment to the recruitment and retention of people of color among the faculty. One of the more damning phrases heard by those interested in increasing the faculty of color on predominately white campuses is, "Well, there just isn't anybody [qualified] out there." Such a statement becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. One of the presentations will explain the processes by which Notre Dame's African and African American Studies Program sought to increase the number of African American Ph.D. holders and provide undeniable examples of quality ABD's willing and able to work at Notre Dame through the Erskine Peters Fellowship Program. The Peters Fellows programs is in its second year and through it we host African American graduate students at the ABD level and provide them with resources similar to those enjoyed by Assistant Professors. We do not select Fellows with our own needs in mind; instead, we choose candidates based on the quality of their work. To date, each of our Fellows has secured tenure track positions in the academy after spending a year on Notre Dame's campus.

4. In an effort to bring together various departments and constituents at Notre Dame the African and African American Studies Program sponsored, "Conceptualizing Diversity for a New Millennium", a two-day symposium on diversity in higher education. This symposium facilitated conversation among faculty, administrators, staff, graduate and undergraduate students to examine each of their specific needs in the Notre Dame community. Through the symposium we found that we were neither communicating nor coordinating diversity efforts across the campus. While we learned that communication is important to support our efforts it is equally important to harmonize and strategize to achieve success in supporting minorities at Notre Dame. This presentation will highlight the results of bringing a campus community together for a diversity discussion and outline future directions as a result of this symposium.

After the presentations the panel will open the session for questions and comments from

the audience.

Presenters

Dr. Hugh R. Page, Jr. is an Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible at Notre Dame and the Director of its African and African-American Studies Program (AFAM). He holds M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Near Eastern languages and Civilizations from Harvard University. His areas of specialization include archaic Hebrew poetry, the anthropology of myth and ancient Near Eastern spiritualities.

Dr. Richard Pierce is The Carl E. Koch Assistant Professor in the History Department. His work involves issues of urban infrastructure, political economy, race and sport in urban America. His current book project focuses on the history of African Americans in Indianapolis during the 20th Century and the intricacies of demographic shifts and political negotiation. Pierce teaches Urban, African American, Civil Rights and cultural history courses at the university. He has functioned as a lobbyist for the Organization of American Historians, serves as an Editorial Advisory Board Member for the Indiana Magazine of History and is the coordinator of the Erskine Peters Fellowship program at the University of Notre Dame. Pierce's essay, "Negotiated Freedom", appears in Indiana History 2000 (Indiana University Press) in summer 2001.

Dr. Gina Shropshire is an Academic Advisor and Concurrent Assistant Professor in the Mendoza College of Business. She specializes in teaching diversity classes and planning diversity programs at Notre Dame. Her research interests include cultural identity, foreign language learning and academic achievement of African-American students in predominantly white universities. Dr. Shropshire completed her B.A. degree at the University of Notre Dame and her M.A. and Ph.D. degrees at Purdue University.

Dr. Lynn Todman is a visiting scholar and adjunct faculty for the African and African-American Studies Program at the University of Notre Dame. Her area of specialization is urban affairs. She has worked for the Woodrow Wilson Foundation and served as a consultant to the South Shore Bank in Chicago. She was Assistant to the President at Western Michigan University prior to joining the faculty at Notre Dame. She holds a Ph.D. from M.LT.