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A Vision Beyond Division

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Multiculturalism represents a challenge to policies, programs and practices designed to bring about educational equity for women and under-represented populations. At most predominantly white institutions, the integrating of multiculturalism into the fabric of the environment must be in conjunction with increasing the number of knowledgeable women and under-represented persons into the instructional structure. The goal of multiculturalism must be to develop both academic and social progress based upon a high standard of academic integrity and scholarship.

Multiculturalism is often an intense issue on most college campuses. Since it deals with highly controversial and politicized issues, that challenges academic policies and practices, multicultural education has been harshly criticized. The debate surrounding it has polarized some college communities. Most often faculty members determine which, if any, path multiculturalism travels in their institutions. In some institutions, faculty members see it as an educational resource that enriches and positively transforms the total educational experience into a more holistic one. But, in most institutions, faculty members use their fear of the unknown as a divisive wedge which can and will prevent their college from reaching its mission.

The purpose of our presentation is to take a critical look at how faculty, staff and students on predominantly white institutions: (1) view the goals of multiculturalism vs. the goals of the general educational mission of their colleges; (2) judge the inclusion of multiculturalism in their college communities to be appropriate; (3) support multicultural initiatives in their communities; (4) express a desire for and appreciation of multiculturalism on their campuses.

The demand for multicultural inclusion in the everyday life of the total college experience is steadily increasing. This is one of the most profound and compelling challenges facing American education in the twenty-first century. The issues surrounding multiculturalism will not disappear. Today's declining enrollments and increasing cost will not allow many of our more traditionally, predominantly white institutions to ignore the call for a more holistic approach to education.

To better explore the concept of multiculturalism in higher learning, we plan to identify specific barriers, actions toward the removal of barriers, the appropriate ways to build support for new initiatives and how to institutionalize activities and initiatives.

PRESENTERS

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