

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership

Educational Administration, Department of

---

9-19-2016

## Colleges of Education: Impact on Racial Equity

Jean Haar

Minnesota State University - Mankato, jean.haar@mnsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/ciel>



Part of the [Educational Administration and Supervision Commons](#), and the [Educational Leadership Commons](#)

---

Haar, Jean, "Colleges of Education: Impact on Racial Equity" (2016). *Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership*. 2.  
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/ciel/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Educational Administration, Department of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

# Colleges of Education: Impact on Racial Equity

Jean Haar

Minnesota State University, Mankato  
[jean.haar@mnsu.edu](mailto:jean.haar@mnsu.edu)

The American Educational Research Association (AERA) shared a powerful statement in response to the Charleston Shootings and Racism in America:

Education has both a responsibility and an opportunity. As the first social institution children experience outside of the family, education is a significant context of social and substantive learning related to hate, bigotry, and racism in society.... We call on the education research community to further commit itself to examining how school environments may exacerbate race bias and racism, how schools educate their students about such issues, and how mutual understanding and respect for all people can best be learned and taught. Researchers have a responsibility to address these issues, and government and private funders of education research are encouraged to support high-quality research initiatives. It is also essential that educators and school leaders receive the tools, training, and support they need to build curricula with substantive exploration of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination, and to provide students with meaningful opportunities to build their capacities for compassion, empathy, and acceptance (2015).

By their very nature, Colleges of Education have a heightened level of responsibility and opportunity to impact racism as they not only prepare future educators but also support current educators. As dean of a College of Education, I have been involved in strategic planning, goal

setting, and data analysis that on the surface reflects an effort to address cultural competency and the need for preparing a more diverse pool of educators; however, the AERA message jolted me into more closely examining whether or not the college is truly meeting its obligations and having an impact on the existing racial disparity in education.

### **The Current Landscape**

Throughout the United States, the inability to ensure high levels of learning for students of all races persists. Since 1975, White children have consistently outperformed African American and Hispanic children. National Assessment of Educational Progress data report no significant change in the width of the gap in achievement levels between students of color and White students (2012).

Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) data reveal a predictable racial disparity pattern that mirrors the national pattern. Mathematics and reading data from the last five years show a steady and unchanged racial discrepancy between the achievement levels of White and Black students, with White students demonstrating results approximately 30% higher than Black students (2014).

The National Center for Educational Statistics reports, “From fall 2002 through fall 2012, the number of White students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools decreased from 28.6 million to 25.4 million, and their share of public school enrollment decreased from 59 to 51%. In contrast, the number of Hispanic students enrolled during this period increased from 8.6 million to 12.1 million students, and their share of public school enrollment increased from 18 to 24%” (Kena et al., 2015). The changes in student enrollment demographics in conjunction with achievement gaps heighten the urgency to improve the predictable achievement trajectory for students of color.

The changing enrollment percentages of students in public schools also bring to attention the contrast between student demographics and educator demographics (Table 1).

### **Minnesota State University, Mankato College of Education Efforts**

In 2010, the College of Education (COE) at Minnesota State University, Mankato was one of 14 higher education institutions selected

**Table 1.** Student and educator demographics in Minnesota

	Diversity Percentage	Source
State of Minnesota K-12 students	28.51	MDE, Spring 2014
State of Minnesota K-12 teachers	3.81	MDE, Spring 2014
Minnesota State Mankato students	20.56	ISRS, Spring 2015
Minnesota State Mankato faculty	11.54	ISRS, Spring 2015
College of Education students	12.26	ISRS, Spring 2015
College of Education faculty	7.84	ISRS, Spring 2015

ISRS is the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System (MnSCU) Student Records system

by the Archibald Bush Foundation to transform teacher-preparation programs in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota. The intent of the initiative was to dramatically change how colleges and universities recruit, prepare, place and support K-12 teachers, and how higher education institutions work with their K-12 partners. As a component of its plan, the college created a Maverick Recruiter Coordinator position and crafted a more focused approach to recruiting students of color. Outcomes from the approach include the implementation of scholarships for students of color, a Teachers of Tomorrow program, and a pilot priority registration initiative.

**Scholarships.** The college addressed a common hurdle with recruiting students of color for the profession by establishing scholarships that begin year one. With admission into professional education not occurring until the end of year two, many of the existing education scholarships are not implemented until students are accepted into a teacher preparation program. Realizing this limited recruitment efforts, the college worked with university personnel and solicited donors to financially support potential teacher candidates of color from the beginning of their college experience. The change has increased the number of recruits and, along with the Teachers of Tomorrow program, has resulted in a gradual increase in enrollment from 2.9% in 2009 to 7.8% in 2015.

**Teachers of tomorrow.** The Teachers of Tomorrow (ToT) program began with eight students in 2010 (then called Teachers of Achievement) and now supports more than 20 students. It is an academic

support program designed for students from traditionally underrepresented groups. Through targeted, rigorous and purposeful support, the program addresses academic, social and emotional issues participants face as college students. A signature ToT strategy is to not only recruit, retain and graduate teacher candidates of color, but also engage, expose and immerse students of color with their white counterparts to develop and cultivate culturally compatible teachers.

The Maverick Recruitment Coordinator and the college's Student Relations Coordinator are instrumental in the implementation of the program. They have developed a program that provides support for students of color who find themselves on a predominately-white university campus and who may find the expectations associated with teacher preparation programs confusing and unwelcoming. The program is developed around characteristics found to support retention for students of color (Otoo, 2014; Schmuck, 2011):

- Sense of belongingness
- Bridge gaps from student culture to institutional culture
- Authentic faculty student interaction
- Strong social and emotional support systems
- Scholarships

Fenwick (2001) stated that communities without minority associations or other minority groups or clubs have difficulty attracting new minority candidates. Students coming directly from high school expect to enjoy some sense of bonding with colleagues of their own culture; the ToT program creates a sense of belonging.

The success of the program was affirmed through an awarded Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) Inclusive Excellence Grant given "to support programs and activities having a measurable impact on the access, opportunity and success of students from underrepresented groups in a systematic fashion."

**Priority registration.** The Maverick Recruitment Coordinator and the Student Relations Coordinator also successfully submitted a four-year pilot study proposal requesting priority registration for Teachers of Tomorrow. Priority registration allows participants, although in different points in their plan of study, to enroll in the same courses/sections. Fenwick (2001) asserted minority students in undergraduate teacher-preparation programs need extra academic and social support

once admitted to a college or university. As part of the program design, students receive one-on-one and group mentoring to build community belonging and academic stability.

Anticipated outcomes from priority registration include:

- Better program alignment with University strategic priorities
- Increased positive impact on academic progress and student belonging
- Increase in probability for four-year degree completion
- Strengthening program foundation for developing and implementing a learning community

**Intercultural competency and development advisory board.** Another area within the college centered on addressing racial equity is the college's Intercultural Competency & Development Advisory Board. The board is one of five advisory boards in the college. Its purpose is to guide the college in advancing a learning community that welcomes, values, supports and respects all persons and promotes an environment free of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation or disability. One outcome of the advisory board has been the implementation of college-wide cultural competence working definitions to increase awareness, understanding, and a common language in preparing culturally competent educators. The advisory board is also providing guidance in the development and assessment of the college's 2015-2016 workdays, which are focused on heightening the awareness and implementation of intercultural competencies in the college's programs, policies, and procedures as well as the development of racial equity competency among White faculty, staff and administrative members.

**Racial equity leadership development initiatives.** In addition to college-wide efforts, the Department of Educational Leadership has fully invested in redesigning and implementing program, professional development and conference experiences focused on increasing the knowledge and skill of school leaders around racial equity.

**School administrator preparation.** The department redesigned its school administration preparation program to embed research and practices that impact the disparaging and racially predictable gap in

student achievement. Acknowledging the existence of the achievement gap is cited as one of the most important steps leaders can take to address equity work in their buildings (Kafele, 2014; Haycock & Jerald, 2002; Wooleyhand, 2013). More progress towards closing the achievement gap has been noted in schools that are intentional about addressing the existence of and need to close the gap than in schools who did not make such clear and intentional decisions. The redesigned program, along with the department's close work with school districts in the Twin Cities area, has not only improved school leader preparation around racial equity but has also resulted in a steady increase in diverse student enrollment from 8.5% in 2011 to 16.6% in 2014.

***Courageous principal leadership institute.*** The department has also invested in the development of the Institute for Courageous Principal Leadership. The institute's mission is to develop principals who lead with fearlessness, skill, self-knowledge and racial competence to eliminate achievement, teaching and participation gaps and whose leadership is driven by results and a moral imperative to create schools that fully engage, educate and include **every child**.

The purpose of the Institute for Courageous Principal Leadership is to build the cultural agility of principals to provide effective leadership in their increasingly diverse school communities. The institute provides a two-year instructional leadership development program with the following goals: (1) to increase principals' ability to advance educational equity and eliminate gaps in racially predictable achievement, teaching, and participation; and (2) to build principals' leadership capacity to facilitate, create and sustain technical and adaptive change that significantly improves achievement for **all students**.

Quantitative and qualitative data collected on the institute's participants demonstrate a positive impact; for instance, after attending the institute, there was a discernable shift in how participants thought about, and implemented, their leadership goals, and how they responded to strategic leadership questions. Three transformations were reflected in qualitative data:

- **Staff-to-Student Focused Language:** Participants' language shifted from staff-focused to student-focused after taking part in the institute.
- **Use of High-Leverage Leadership Practices:** After attending the institute, participants were able to communicate

and think through leadership challenges using high leverage leadership practices such as goal setting, feedback, and a focus on student relationships.

- **Cultural Awareness and Engagement:** When asked about their top three goals, there was evidence to suggest participants gained a greater understanding around the importance of a school's internal culture with data reflecting a 75% increase in mentions of the "school climate/overall building culture/environment" goal.

***Racial equity conference.*** The department has established an annual "Leading Courageously for Racial Equity" conference. The conference features a keynote speaker (supported by a donor contribution) and breakout sessions that involve university and K-12 presenters who share research and practices focused on addressing racial equity.

### **College of Education Opportunities**

Although there have been changes within the college that increased the preparation and support of future educators around cultural competency and racial equity, many opportunities remain. The number of students and faculty of color in the college needs to more adequately reflect the changing demographics of students, families, and communities. This requires greater investment in the areas of recruitment, relationships and environment. There is also a need to increase the scope and involvement by faculty, staff and administration around intercultural awareness and preparation. Key is understanding and correcting implicit actions that hinder relationships and support for students and faculty of color. For instance, the Maverick Recruitment Coordinator received the following message from a college faculty member:

I am the new coordinator of the Graduate Teaching Licensure (GTL) Program. This is a program that helps candidates who have received a degree in something other than teaching to get their teaching license. In my first semester as the GTL coordinator, I failed miserably in a critical area, retaining teachers of color. We were able to recruit three highly intelligent and gifted women into the GTL program; however, before the end of the first semester all three women left the program. I had no doubt that these three women would be a true gift to the education

profession. As I met with each one to discuss why they were leaving it was evident that they felt very alone and isolated. As the coordinator of the program, I take this very seriously. I do not want to have this happen to another candidate. I was wondering if you might have some time to discuss what supports I could provide candidates in the future. I would appreciate any insights that you might have.

Another area of opportunity is the continued review of policies and procedures that unintentionally limit inclusivity and promote exclusivity. Three college employees of color, one faculty member, the Maverick Recruiter Coordinator, and the Student Relations Coordinator, are instrumental in ensuring students of color voices are heard and appropriate changes are made. For instance, based on feedback about challenges from field and student teaching experiences, efforts are being made to place teacher candidates of color in the buildings of racial equity leaders who have participated in the Courageous Principal Leadership Institute. Finally, there are significant opportunities to improve assessment and evaluation processes associated with graduates of the college's preparation programs and professional development trainings. The ability to demonstrate how graduates are positively minimizing the existing racial disparity in education and are meeting the needs of students of all races is paramount to the college's mission and purpose.

With a heightened awareness and sense of urgency, the college is intent on more actively advancing its role and responsibility to impact racial equity, holding fast to AERA's message and, more broadly, to Ron Edmonds words shared in a 1978 speech, *Some Schools Work and More Can*: "We can whenever, and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need, in order to do this. Whether we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far" (Education Advisory, 2007).

## References

American Educational Research Association. (June, 2015). *AERA Statement on the Charleston Shootings and Racism in America*. Retrieved from <http://www.aera.net/Newsroom/NewsReleasesandStatements/AERASTatementontheCharlestonShootingsandRacisminAmerica/tabid/16005/Default.aspx>.

- Education Advisory. (2007). *Effective School Checklist*. Retrieved from <http://education-advisory.org/2007/08/effective-schools-checklist/>
- Fenwick, L. (2001). *Patterns of Excellence: Policy Perspectives on Diversity in Teaching and School Leadership*. Atlanta, GA: The Southern Education Foundation (SEF).
- Haycock, K. & Jerald, C. (2002). Closing the achievement gap. *Principal*, 82(2), 20-23.
- Kafele, B. (2014). Closing the attitude gap. *Principal Leadership*, 15(5), 32-35.
- Kena, G., Musu-Gillette, L., Robinson, J., Wang, X., Rathbun, A., Zhang, J., Wilkinson-Flicker, S., Barmer, A., and Dunlop Velez, E. (2015). *The Condition of Education 2015* (NCES 2015-144). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>.
- Minnesota Department of Education, (2014). *Data Center: Report Card*. Retrieved from <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Data/index.html>
- National Assessment for Educational Progress, (2012). *The Nation's Report Card*. Retrieved from [http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/ltr\\_2012/age9r.aspx](http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/ltr_2012/age9r.aspx)
- Otto, M. O. (2014). *Preservice Teacher Candidates of Color: An Endangered Species?* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California).
- Schmuck, K. (2011). *Increasing teacher diversity: Contributions of a college of education recruitment and retention program*. Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text.
- Wooleyhand, C. (2013). Putting beliefs into action. *Principal*, 92(5) 10-13.