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Developing Interactive CDs to Address Racial Intolerance on Campus

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Developing Interactive CDs to Address Racial Intolerance on Campus

Abstract

The Diversity Opportunity Tool (DOT) is an innovative problem-solving multimedia tool to improve the ability of students, faculty and staff to deal with acts of intolerance on their campuses. User selection of an incident triggers a brief video depicting a typical incident of intolerance. Users can consider a number of alternative responses to the incident and then select among them; selection triggers a vignette of the likely outcome of the response. The computer provides information and resources that would help in dealing with the incidents of the kind being considered. A portion of DOT will be presented and a discussion about race and ethnic relations in higher education held.

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As predominantly white colleges and universities have been more successful in attracting greater numbers of students of color to their campuses, they have become acutely aware that the integration of different ethnic and racial groups does not come without tensions. Many students and faculty within the majority population are not prepared to deal with this diversity. Their inability to cope with campus diversity is manifest in the many hostile acts of intolerance directed at persons of color on campuses across the country. Less overt intolerant behavior abounds. These acts of intolerance often cause students of color to feel isolated and uncomfortable. For both the offender and the victim, the opportunity to learn from the pluralism of the community is lost when these acts are not responded to, or are responded to in nonproductive ways. Students and faculty who want to address the problem of intolerance on college campuses find that effective resources seldom are available.

The project has produced an innovative problem-solving multimedia tool to improve the ability of students, faculty, and staff to deal with overt and subtle acts of intolerance on their campuses. This product is a computer driven, interactive CD simulation, called the Diversity Opportunity Tool (DOT). DOT simulates several common "critical incidents" of intolerance (e.g., direct verbal harassment, or discriminatory acts). User selection of an incident triggers a brief video depicting a typical incident of intolerance. Users are asked to consider a number of alternative responses to the incident and to select among them; selection triggers a vignette of the likely outcome of the response. The computer prompts users to seek further information and resources that would help in dealing with incidents of the kind being considered.

Although application of this technology can take several forms, the most common would probably be utilization by an individual student, the training of residential campus student affairs personnel (including professional and student workers), and orientation for graduate teaching assistants and new professors. DOT is more likely to be used by faculty than other common strategies for addressing racial and ethnic climate concerns because it can be experienced privately, it is research-based, and can be used as a

teaching tool in some courses. Also, when production is incorporated into a for-credit course, the production process itself can become a transportable and replicable learning experience for those who use the process to update or make DOT campus-specific.

Presenter

Alma R. Clayton-Pedersen is Vice President for Education and Institutional Renewal at the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U). She is Co-director of AAC&U_ Network for Academic Renewal (a series of working conferences), and director of the Greater Expectations Institute as well as several grant-funded projects that focus on organizational learning and sustaining change efforts. Dr. Clayton-Pedersen is a national leader on issues of institutional change, particularly collaborative leadership, student preparedness for college level work, retention and success, and linking diversity and academic excellence. She is co-author of *Enacting Diverse Learning Environments: Improving the Climate for Racial/Ethnic Diversity in Higher Education*, which provides a framework of the dimensions of campus climate and illustrations of promising practices to enhance the climate for diversity. She has fifteen years of campus-based experience, including directing a significant number of studies on student engagement and retention, and campus services. Her consulting expertise is on diversity, success of underrepresented students, policy, organizational learning, and program development and evaluation. Clayton-Pedersen received a B.S. from UW-Milwaukee in community education, and both the M.Ed. in human development counseling and the Ph.D. in public policy from Vanderbilt.