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# Innovative Alliances: Cultivating Diversity Through Polytechnic Partnerships

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# **Innovative Alliances: Cultivating Diversity Through Polytechnic Partnerships**

## **Abstract**

*Opening with an overview of a three-year FIPSE Grant, the presenters will guide a lively exchange of innovative approaches to cultivate and sustain diversity by forging alliances with multiple internal and external partners. Workshop participants will learn of cutting-edge strategies to enhance diversity and improve campus climate at their home institutions.*

### **Denise M. Campbell**

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Educational leaders, researchers, and politicians point to the digital divide that separates under-represented students from successful careers in the new economy. Polytechnic colleges provide a bridge over that gap. However, they can only do so if they establish and nurture partnerships with K-12 schools; mentor prospective applicants over time; gradually introduce students to digital technologies through industry and community aligned partnerships; insure that admission criteria facilitate campus goals; target retention so that admissions is not a revolving door; support and counsel under-represented students on campus such that they achieve maximum levels of success; and overall, fulfill the institution's educational mission by preparing all students to function in the diverse communities and work environments represented throughout the state and indeed the nation.

California's Proposition 209, which banned weights for race and ethnicity in admissions and retention, dramatically affected Cal Poly's ability to recruit and retain under-represented students. Cal Poly's quandary about how to be diverse is unusual in the California State University system; it is the only one of twenty-three campuses that is entirely impacted-with four times more applicants than openings. This dilemma, though, is national in scope. In many states selective, public universities work under rulings that limit affirmative action to schools with histories of explicit discrimination. Because Cal Poly's technical programs are portals to the new economy, the campus is fertile ground for testing new strategies for social representation.

Through an outline of issues and steps that led to the acquisition and implementation of a three year Fund to Improve Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) Grant, the presenters will guide a discussion of innovative approaches to cultivate and sustain diversity by forging alliances with multiple internal and external university partners. The discussion will

include concepts of equitable access; targeted, legal outreach and recruitment; mentoring and tracking strategies; "fast track" support versus remediation; institutional data collection and campus climate analysis; grants, advancement and donor cultivation; workforce preparation initiatives; faculty and student exchange programs; tapping overlooked power brokers; diversity as a facilitator of achieving learning outcomes and educational goals; and sustaining the momentum.

Workshop participants can expect to leave the session with supplemental resource awareness, and cutting-edge strategies for enhancing diversity and improving campus climate at their home institutions. A lively exchange of ideas and innovation will be central to the presentation format. Participants will have the opportunity to share best practices and benchmark standards for realizing and sustaining diversity as a fundamental value to the core educational mission of higher education.

### **Presenters**

**Denise M. Campbell**, as a Special Assistant to the Provost for University Initiatives provides overall leadership and management in the Division of Academic Affairs for community-based learning and diversity related initiatives, academic advising coordination, engaged institutional partnerships with other educational community organizations, assists with the leadership of the University Diversity Enhancement Council, and serves as the Project Coordinator for Cal Poly's FIPSE grant to research diversity enhancement strategies. She currently serves as Chair of the Black Faculty and Staff Association, a recognized recommending body to the University President. Ms. Campbell formerly served as a student affairs administrator at American University, the University of California, Irvine and San Diego campuses, and most recently as Associate Vice President for Student Affairs at Cal Poly University, San Luis Obispo which included management of departments such as career services, judicial affairs, student life and leadership, housing and residential life, health and counseling services. She has received numerous awards for her contributions to diversity enhancing efforts throughout her career.

**Dr. Harold Hellenbrand**, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at Cal Poly University, San Luis Obispo, is the Principal Investigator for a Fund to Improve Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) Grant project that researches innovative approaches to recruiting and retaining under-represented students for polytechnic programs in the post affirmative action era. Dr. Hellenbrand authored the University Diversity Enhancement Plan and serves as Chair of the University Diversity Enhancement Council. He has written and supervised the implementation of the Centennial Campaign Plan for the College; and launched the implementation of a comprehensive campus climate assessment plan, including the development of a hate crime/biased incident response process. At the University of Minnesota, Duluth, he planned and implemented outcomes and assessment schedules for the College. Sample of courses instructed: *African-American Literature of the Twentieth Century*.