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## **Higher education administrators' response to student activism and protests**

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This study examines college and university leaders' responses to student activism and protest on U.S. college campuses between Fall 2014 to Summer 2016. This study utilized a phenomenological research tradition, which facilitated a depth of understanding of how administrators' strategies, or other resources, enhanced campus leaders' ability to proactively respond to the demands and actions of student protesters. The hermeneutic phenomenological design, which is grounded in a constructivist epistemology, enabled the exploration of similar and differentiating themes among the administrators' experiences (Moustakas, 1964). A 30 to 45-minute individual interview was conducted with seven individuals who participated in NCORE 2016 and who held positions working directly with incidents of student activism on their campuses. The results revealed that while different types of institutional brands benefit from activism, the difference seemed to be realized in the resources the institution allocates to support and foster activism and inclusion. Recommendations for appropriate responses ranged from listening to students and bridging upward communications with university leaders, to ongoing learning and developing a plan based on institutional needs and available resources. The views of constituencies revealed varying ideas and opinions, but the best leaders will navigate the path that enables tough decisions without alienating key players who are critical to the success of the efforts.

**Keywords:** administrators, student activism, protests

Across the United States, tense racial situations have garnered national media attention, and social media has provided outlets for opinions about these incidents to be voiced and debated. Since fall 2015, the voices of college students have been loud, and higher education administrators have faced the challenge of responding to student activism and protests (Johnston, 2015). Johnston believed that similar to the activists of the 60s, today's activists can have a lasting impact on higher education. For many administrators, this is new terrain. This study explores college and university leaders' responses to student activism and protest on U.S. college campuses.

### **Purpose of the Study & Research Question**

The purpose of this research project was to understand higher education administrators' response to student activism and protests. This objective is explored by seeking deeper explanations and answers to the following research question: During

recent student activism events that occurred on the campus where they worked, what were the responses employed and outcomes achieved by administrative leaders?

## Literature Review

### *Student Activism on College Campuses*

On November 9, 2015, the University of Missouri (“Mizzou”) President and the Chancellor of the University of Missouri system resigned (Izadi, 2015). Race-related incidents had drawn national attention to the university. Izadi noted that in Ferguson, not far from the Columbia campus, protests of the police shooting of a black male occurred just a year earlier. Izadi outlined a series of racial incidents that brought the national spotlight on the University of Missouri. Such incidents included homecoming protestors who blocked President Timothy Wolfe’s car when they did not receive a response addressing the campus racial tension, a graduate student’s hunger strike, and finally, black football players who joined the protest by threatening to forfeit a football game, which would have cost the University \$1 million. The football coach tweeted a picture in support of his players who demanded the President’s resignation.

These incidents demonstrated that members of the Mizzou campus community contradicted the Mizzou Statement of Values that appears on the university website, and reads:

A hallmark of our community is respect — for the process by which we seek truths and for those who engage in that process. Such respect is essential for nurturing the free and open discourse, exploration and creative expression that characterize a university. Respect results in dedication to individual as well as collective expressions of truth and honesty. Respect is demonstrated by a commitment to act ethically, to welcome difference, and to engage in open exchange about both ideas and decisions (“Mizzou statement of values”, 2015).

These incidents brought national attention and the media spotlight to Missouri. The failure of administrators to engage in open dialogue with constituents on key issues such as closing of the *University of Missouri Press*, elimination of tuition waivers for some graduate assistants, and elimination of graduate student health insurance subsidies, were indicative of a lack of adherence to the aforementioned Mizzou credo (Jago, 2015). Arthur Jago, Professor of Management in the Trulaske College of Business at the University of Missouri, serves as a member of the Faculty Council on University Policy. He believed that many of the conflicts that led to the resignation of the President and the Chancellor could have been avoided by seeking input from faculty, staff, and students who were likely to be impacted by any changes. Miller and Stuckey-French (2015)

discussed the missteps by former president, Timothy Wolfe, in closing the University Press and Wolfe's disregard or misunderstanding for the international significance of the 54-year-old press.

Although much attention has been given to the students' dissent at the University of Missouri, many other institutions across the country, large and small, public and private, have experienced recent student protest and activism in various forms. For instance, married couple and faculty members at Yale, Erika and Nicholas Christakis, experienced this backlash from students when Erika responded to a request asking students to think through their Halloween costumes and try not to be offensive (Times, 2015). Her response, "Is there no room anymore for a child or young person to be a little bit obnoxious... a little bit inappropriate..., offensive?" (Times, 2015, p. 34). Students' demands for Nicholas Christakis, her husband, who was also a master of one of the residential colleges, to step down from his position quickly went viral.

On November 12, 2015, sophomores of Amherst College in western Massachusetts protested in the Frost Library to show support for marginalized groups on campuses throughout the world (Dickson, 2016). Over 1,200 students joined a sit-in and the group, Amherst Uprising, was formed. This group developed a list of 11 demands, and on November 15, President Martin responded with a promise of systemic changes (Dickson, 2016).

These incidents have challenged higher education leaders to respond in a timely and effective manner. These administrators often look towards national organizations for guidance on new and emerging challenges. The Education Advisory Board (EAB) described the source of recent student protests that have occurred at 51 different colleges and universities ~~schools~~ (EAB, 2015). Demands of protesters have included an increase in the diversity of the faculty, diversity trainings, funding cultural centers, requiring certain classes for students, and increasing the diversity of a student body. EAB (2015) referenced Libresco (2015), who suggested that administrators should respond to these demands in the spirit of respect. He further explained that demands might violate academic freedoms which college students might not understand. Meeting the demands of one group can cause challenges for another equally important constituency. Recent experiences have magnified the importance of having a process that engages all campus constituencies as administrators attempt to address campus challenges. This study focuses on the actions of higher education leaders who were responsible for addressing and responding to student activism between Fall 2014 to Summer 2016.

Jayakumar (2015) pointed to long term benefits to diversity, particularly when students experience a positive campus climate. Garces and Jayakumar (2014) affirmed that structural diversity alone could be negative if not paired with factors of dynamic diversity, which provides overall positive campus climate. Bain (2004) reported on the work of Steel (1999) who found that viewing self through the lens of negative stereotypes negatively impacts individual's accomplishments. This also correlates with the findings of Jayamura (2015), who asserted that not addressing the campus climate is a disservice to the minority population and can cause more harm than good.

At universities across the U.S., graduation rates for Black and Hispanic students tend to lag behind Asian and Whites (López, 2003). Addressing the negative experiences of students can indirectly address lower achievement. Referring to López's research on critical race theory, education institutions should reexamine how policies or standard practices might disenfranchise minority students in our community (2003).

Expanding the inclusion initiatives across campus serve to fill this growing need as the campus aims to recruit a diverse student population and improve campus climate (EAB, 2015). Providing casual and formal training programs enable all members of the community to be exposed to new ways of being and responding. The EAB briefing provides *guidelines: listen, don't arrest, during student protest* (EAB, 2014) as a tool for administrators. When these guidelines are no longer necessary, and students report common incidents of positive cross-racial interactions, the objectives of these initiatives will be realized.

## **Methodology**

### *Research Design*

This study utilized a phenomenological research tradition, which facilitated a depth of understanding of how administrators' strategies, or other resources, enhanced campus leaders' ability to proactively respond to the demands and actions of student protesters. In addition, this study explored how administrators' responses impacted the lived experiences of all who were involved in the protest. The hermeneutic phenomenological design, which is grounded in a constructivist epistemology, enabled the exploration of similar and differentiating themes among the administrators' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). To uncover a better understanding of this phenomenon, this study examined individual administrators' responses and analyzed the responses according to the position held by the campus leader on their campus. Since administrators' roles and behaviors depend on interactions with institutional culture, an interpretive method in a social constructivist context, (i.e., qualitative methods) seemed the most appropriate research design to utilize and gain the essence of this phenomenon (Hays & Singh, 2012). This study entailed reviewing and analyzing the phenomenon of administrators' experiences with student campus protest, while gaining a greater understanding of the essence of their experience. According to Patton (2002), the focus on the essence of the experience is best undertaken as a phenomenological study.

### *Instrumentation and Participants*

As higher education adjusts its approach to student activism and protest, campus administrators are often sought out to intervene (Bowerman & Schmidt, 2014). Administrators who participated in the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE) 2016 were invited to participate in a thirty to forty-five-minute interview to further explore administrators' response to student activism and protest. The reviewer

looked for patterns consistent with prior research, as well as a deeper understanding of views of meaningful response to activism and protest. All individuals included in this study served as an administrator on a college campus in the United States. Participation in this study was advertised using an email to NCORE participants and via word of mouth.

#### *Data Collection Procedures*

An in-person or phone interview was used to explore administrators' response strategies. Patton (2002) outlined some key guidelines for interviews including limiting the number of questions and using a skilled facilitator. The interviews were audio recorded for audio analysis. I followed Miles and Huberman (1994) guidelines for using a contact summary sheet after each data collection, and I have been trained on facilitating interviews and focus groups.

A thirty to forty-five-minute individual interview was conducted with seven individuals who participated in NCORE 2016 and who held positions working directly with incidents of student activism on their campuses. The request to be in this part of the study was initially expressed in person at the conference or via email to conference workshop facilitators. The administrators who agreed participated in the interview at a time and location of their convenience. Two participants had schedule conflicts; so a telephone interview was conducted. The remaining five interviews were completed face-to-face.

#### *Participants' Anonymity, Confidentiality and Exposure to Student Activism*

This research is anonymous. Participants were informed of possible release of information in the form of direct quotes and summation of experiences. Participant first (pseudo) name could be released in presentation of findings. Data collected is aggregated so that results cannot be linked to individual participants. However, examples with specific individual's experiences are cited. Participants included five African American males of which three identified as belonging to Generation X, and two identified as a member of the Millennial Generation, one Hispanic female who identified as being a member of Generation Y, and one non-conforming woman who identified as being a member of Generation X. All participants had administrative roles that placed them in direct response to student activism efforts on their campuses.

#### *Institutions*

Five of the interviews for this study were conducted in person at the hotel site of the national conference and two interviews were conducted on a college campus via phone. Some administrators were employed at institutions with a tradition of significant activity related to student protest and activism; others described their campus as places where activism would not have been previously anticipated. Six of the represented institutions were public and one was private. All institutions were predominantly white. All participants were employed at four-year institutions with student population ranging from 10,000 students to more than 36,000. All participants had roles working within offices for diversity and inclusion. Of the seven administrators who were interviewed, four were middle managers and two of these four had more than ten years work

experience in a diversity area, and three individuals had three years or less experience in the diversity field on a college campus.

## Results

### *Campus Climate and Expectations*

To better understand administrators' response to student activism, it is important to understand the campus climate in which the activism occurred. According to interview participants, each institution's history and brand played a significant role in the campus climate and thus the nature of the student dissent and activism.

An administrator at a highly selective liberal arts institution described an environment that was supportive of student activists. In an environment that promotes an institutional model of community outreach, student activism could be considered significant to the brand of the institution. While different types of institutional brands benefit from activism, the difference seemed to be realized in the resources the institution allocates to support and foster activism and inclusion.

For instance, students from one institution experienced support from administrators and campus police when they sought to join public protest and outcry related to police brutality and *The Black Lives Movement*. This administrator described a coordinated effort between senior administrators, campus police, local political representatives, and general public safety in an effort to keep the student activists safe during their participation in a public protest. This participant explained:

Because of the culture, even if someone [administrator or faculty] didn't feel that students should be involved, they wouldn't say it. Campus police escorted us to a set point where we [administrator and student activists] met students from other institutions who were also participating in the protest (personal interview, June, 2016).

While the expectation of this administrator was to support and join students in protest, this was not the expectation of other participants in the study. Student activism also manifested in different forms and included sit-ins, teach-ins, joining other protest in urban areas, and presenting lists of demands. One administrator described responses as a learning process while others acknowledge the uncertainty and sometimes frustration that resulted from the absence of guidelines or institutional stance on an issue. During the NCORE presentation, administrators described feelings of uneasiness, explaining that it was difficult to decipher when to make comments via students' social media. Some administrators described what seemed like a tense situation where the culture seems ambivalent to unsupportive of activist behavior, and as a result they felt a fear of being accused of helping students with demands.

The impact of campus culture and resources to support activism is further linked to participants' recommendations outlined at the end of this study. The remainder of the study covers findings for the research question which guided the study, and closes with other findings and recommendations for practice.

**Research Question:** During recent student campus activism events, what were the responses employed and outcomes achieved by administrative leaders on the campuses where participants worked?

Administrators applied strategies reflective of the campus climate, culture, and their given position. The results of this study indicate that an individual's positional level within the institution, access to upper level administrators, and political savvy played a key role in campus leaders' responses to student activism. Having a trusting relationship with key student leaders was also important. Overall administrators aimed to give students a space to talk and engage in dialogue related to the issue of concern. Administrators typically described their responses as providing an ear for students and a process of genuine listening and willingness to meet students 'where they were'. Those who had an existing relationship and routine communication with students, described a more proactive response. For instance, one participant described responses to a highly publicized event on national media: "Students were texting me all weekend. I reached out to my VP and asked that he send out a campus wide email." This example demonstrates the ability to intervene as a result of being actively engaged with students and upper administration. This theme is also visible from the list of recommended strategies compiled from interviewing all seven administrators.

### **Recommended Response to Student Activism**

#### *Listen to Students and Develop a Plan to Help Reach Goals*

Acknowledge what is going on; Meet students where they are; Check into the pulse of students; Bring partners to the table to discuss and work out action plan; Be aware of conversations staff are having around issues of student activism and protest.; Figure out a way to meet needs of the entire student so they can be successful. This includes students' self-care needs (personal interviews, June, 2016).

#### *Be a Conduit to Facilitate Upwards Communication*

Administrators, who were directly working with students, recognized students desire to communicate directly with upper administration. One administrator recommends: "Upper administration have regular meetings with student leaders"; while another participant suggested that students "reach out to high level administrators before calling them out; so they are aware of the problem and have the opportunity to respond." These administrators outlined the following recommendation for fellow administrations facing student protest and activism.

Students want to hear from upper administration; mid and lower level administrators should manage up for overall success. The position provides perspective to be in touch with students and understand their needs as well as the institutions' needs. Provide appropriate language and even statistics and talking points to support senior administrators as they attempt to support students in board of visitors' forums (personal interviews, June, 2016).

Inform upper administrators on appropriateness of engaging the entire community on specific messages and potential impact to the community. While one situation might call for campus-wide messages, in another situation, it could cause more harm than good. One participant described his response to a campus-wide message on campus crime. The message was sent out by campus safety and included pictures of minority males. He pointed out that the pictures were believed to resemble male athletes on campus. Such messages caused further disruptions in the campus environment, and student activists pointed out that no such messages have ever included pictures of white suspects. The higher education administrator stated:

Not all the right people are always in the room when decisions are being made. This could lead to distrust in student population. They [students] questioned administrators' motives or even blamed them for allowing negative messages to be distributed by other administrators on campus [saying] why did you let this happen (personal interviews, June, 2016)?

This quote highlights the importance of upper administration being cognizant of the ripple effects of decisions made across campus, and the importance of consulting with key partners.

#### *Be Self-Aware*

This recommendation outlines a pattern of being connected and communicating across the institution. Managing the needs of all constituencies could demand time and resources, and the time sensitive nature of student activists on college campuses increases the stress factor for administrators involved. While these are basic and seemingly common sense recommendations, so many other factors influence administrators' ability to follow this basic recommendation. For instance, how much access a mid-level or entry-level administrator has across a campus is influenced by the size of the institution, the key players on the campus, and standard operating practices. Access and communication channels strongly influence administrators' behaviors. Understanding the culture could be an initial step; however, protest and activism tend to be about bringing about change to the campus culture and standard practices. This fact was not

lost on these participants who tactfully recommended for others to be self-aware. Know one's abilities, connections, influence and, of course, access channels. Similarly, administrators advised that individuals take stock of personal resources and support structure and be cognizant of what you are willing to sacrifice.

*Develop a Plan Specific to the Needs and Resources of Campus*

The individuals who participated in this study were all in roles that addressed inclusion and diversity initiatives on their institution. These offices tend to have a small staff. As was the case in Missouri, student lists of demands included training across the campus which tend to require additional resources to be able to provide such training. Administrators recommend considering an approach that will have the most positive impact on their specific institutions. One participant explained, "It is no longer enough to take best practices from one institution and apply them on your campus." It seems to be a time where administrators are being held accountable for decision in the public arena.

*Creating the Mold*

The newness of the terrain for this generation of higher education administrators was very visible in the policies or even lack of policies. Overwhelmingly, campuses did not have any policy or their existing policies required major updates to reflect issues that were the focus of student activism. Of the institutions represented in this study, one campus' leaders recently sent out draft policies to the campus community for feedback. And several other campuses acknowledged revisions being drafted. The presence of outdated procedures to guide administrators in responding to student activists added to an already complex situation.

All participants had recommendations for further diversity and social justice training for all administrators; and they emphasized that this should include upper level administrators. Suggestions for further development included webinars, bringing experts to campuses, and participation in national conferences such as NCORE.

*Ongoing Learning and Development*

Participants also expressed strong recommendations for continuous learning for Student Affairs administrators and willingness to extend expertise beyond practice to include theoretical frameworks and research. Referring to resources on responding to campus activism, one participant stated:

It should be a part of all curriculum in Student Affairs and higher education programs. There should be a class on politics and how to deal with activism...and again in training when administrators come to a new university. For instance, 'Here is how we deal with this'. So it is a mission driven, student centered approach to student activism (personal interviews, June, 2016).

Another administrator pointed out the importance of knowing who the experts are on individual campuses. Having a reference "list of experts", enables the entire campus to

be able to easily find and recruit experts who might be able to provide training and development for ongoing needs.

In the process of this qualitative study, information that was not part of original reviews of literature were also uncovered. The themes of personal care and politics were reoccurring from the interviews and the presentations during the conference. Both areas are relevant to higher education administrators who might be in a position to address student activism.

**More about the Research Question.** What were the outcomes achieved by administrative leaders?

With any high profile issue the views of varied constituencies could be critical. Student activism incidents related to race relations and police brutality were widely covered in mass media and disputed on social media. This increases the stakes as every voice and opinion got coverage. All administrators faced the challenge of managing up, as well as, monitoring and managing images to the benefit of their various constituencies. Administrators' actions and reactions to student activism were constantly assessed by their constituencies. In this section of the study, administrators assessed the outcomes of administrative responses based on their reflections and opinions of the views of various constituencies.

#### *Students' Views*

From participants' perspective, student views of administrators' response to student activism, was that campus leaders often view students with an outdated lens that treats students as children. Additionally, participants observed that students tend to view front line administrators on their campuses as not empowered to make decisions, lacking urgency and accountability, apathetic, engaging in blame shifting, reactionary, and out of touch. One noted exception was one participant who worked at a private institution. This individual believed that students' views were that of a supportive and active community.

The culture of the organization seems to influence the administrators' responses, as well as how others view their actions. For instance, one participant described an instance in which images of students protesting on campus were used in promotional materials to recruit students to an activist-type institution. During NCORE, this participant served on a panel with student activists who also described being attracted to an institution because of promotional material of student activists (taken out of context). This student described how he later realized that the students were protesting actions of the institution.

#### *Administrators and Faculty Views*

Administrators and faculty assessment of the effectiveness of administrative response represented a wide range of views, from agreement to complete disagreement.

Some participants believed that administrators on their campus provided adequate response; others rated their leaders as cluelessness, silent and confused.

*Public and Alumni Views*

Participants reported that public and alumni responses to the handling of campus protests varied based on the make-up, geography location, proximity, and the level of connection or involvement with the institution. For instance, one participant described the sentiment of distrust in the community that still lingers from the Tuskegee syphilis experiment.

*Athletics*

The presence and level of intercollegiate athletics on a campus also seemed to influence the culture, and hence response from the various constituencies. Some participants mentioned potential changes to sports policies to limit student athletes' participation in protest or activism. This seemed to be the result of the threatened boycott of the University of Missouri football team.

*Other Factors Impacting Administrators' Responses*

Participants described the heightened stress levels experienced by campus leaders during these times of protests. Faced with new challenges, these administrators were stressed by the need to make non-routine decisions in a brief period of time when they were taxed for time, and when their actions were under public and media scrutiny. Most of the campus leaders were experiencing protest and activism for the first time. Participants described situations of having to work long, emotional hours. One participant who lived in an urban area described not being able to get a break from protest even when at home.

I could hear protesters outside my door and helicopters above. It got to the point where I felt better when I was at work even though it was difficult. At least I had people around me who could relate to the situation we were facing (personal interviews, June, 2016).

While this situation was one of the extreme examples, others described stressful events when they were fairly new in their position and while trying to navigate the needs of students and the institution. Simultaneously, they had to quickly read the institution's culture and assess personal capital as they made decisions.

Most participants described a culture in which they felt in the middle, where meeting the needs of students would conflict with institutional policy and decisions. Some participants described feeling uncomfortable when having to report to upper level administrators on conversations they held with students. One very experienced participant commented:

That's it - If we are made to feel that if we are meeting the needs of students, somehow that's in contradiction to the institution. Meeting the needs of the student is meeting the needs of the institution. We don't say yes to everything, but here is the real timeline. We won't wait until you graduate and then drop the list (personal interviews, June, 2016).

This participant goes on to describe administrators' ability to "sit in the space of 'both and' - where we understand the students, and we know what it's like to be a part of the institution." She expressed that training and exposure could bring fellow administrators to this place where they become comfortable in the role of advocating for the needs of students and the institution. She believed that administrators could learn to "respond appropriately and decline to engage in actions that violates students' rights or dignity."

### *Support and Care*

Support and care were mentioned as important, but those participants who mentioned this theme did not describe any forms of support from the institution beyond words. In fact, participants advised fellow administrators to be aware of their individual situations when working in the activist environment. "Know what you can afford to do or not do, know your support structures." While participants in this study did not express fear of losing their positions, it was mentioned several times during presentations at the conference. What participants did mention was not wanting to be forced into a response that felt like "you're selling your soul."

### **Guide Your Practice with Research**

Research related to the issue of racial discrimination on predominantly white campuses revealed the challenge is great, particularly for students whose prior experiences were likely to be with individuals of their own race. As the administrators in this study recommended, "know and refer to existing research." Gurin, Hurtado, Dey & Gurin (2003) outline four key dimensions for campus racial diversity measures to help negative inter-racial interaction and encourage diversity and inclusion on predominantly white institutions: structural/numeric diversity, cross-racial interactions, curricular diversity, and campus climate.

Being familiar with this type of research could help administrators approach inclusion by incorporating strategies that engage the entire institution as opposed to having expectations that campus culture will be changed by the efforts of a few administrators. Being able to present proposals that include prior research also enables administrators to reach faculty and upper administration in a language they understand and respect. One participant advised on the importance of "managing up and providing relevant talking points to upper administrators."

With increased pressures on slipping admittance to enrollment rate, it is not only imperative that universities continue to diversify the student body, but it is a matter of the overall fiscal health of the institutions. Diversification of the student population is essential for the institution to maintain enrollment numbers and fiscal health. Increasing

the numbers will also help to naturally encourage cross-racial interactions. According to Jayakumar (2015), the number of students of color is important in shaping a diverse campus with the desired positive interactions. He pointed out that increasing the numbers alone, tend to influence the perception of less discrimination. Workshops and casual programs to encourage interactions, learning and diversity experiences are shown to benefit students whose precollege environments were homogeneous and minimize colorblind behaviors that contribute to segregation and alienation (Jayakumar, 2015).

#### *Curricular and Co-Curricular Diversity*

While academic freedom is valued, opportunities for faculty to expose students to diversity readings and experiences in the curricular and co-curricular environments could enhance the overall campus environment. This area also presents the opportunity to add to the research of scholars such as Terenzini (2001), Antonio (2004), and Astin (1993). Scholarships and awards could assist in moving forward the research initiatives and channel students' research towards issues of diversity, inclusion, and creating a positive campus climate. Others have mentioned mandatory training for every freshman (Izadi, 2015), in addition to, encouraging faculty to incorporate materials on inclusion training in their curriculum. Encouraging civic engagement courses provide additional opportunities for students. These courses could foster awareness and learning by interactions and exposures to systemic racism in the community, while at the same time provide intentional reflection and guided discussions. The resources to support civic engagement around race-relation and training resources to support faculty incorporating these issues into their curriculum are essential, as well as, the oversight and assessment of the process.

Rose and Dowdy (2014) provide guidelines on fostering diversity and inclusion in student groups. They include key support initiatives for the student groups including resources in the multicultural office, diversity training, advising, and facilitating dialogue. According to Alemán and Alemán, (2010) and their work on critical race theory, engaging in discussions around race and racism is challenging but necessary. Hence, ensuring that those individuals charged with facilitating this process are prepared for the challenge is vital for the success of the overall initiative. Training programs should enable individuals to quickly realize how transferable the skills are to working environments, which represents increasingly diverse working populations.

Constituencies will have varying ideas and opinions, but the best leaders will navigate the path that enables tough decisions without alienating key players who are critical to the success of the efforts. Our responsibility is to provide the necessary services to help all our students, including the traditionally underserved populations. Furthermore, as an educational institution, our role is key in addressing the fundamental societal challenges. The current challenge is creating an inclusive success story for America.

#### **Disclosure Statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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