

Disability as Diversity: Perspectives of Institutions of Higher Education in the U.S.

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Abstract

Institutions of higher education (IHEs) in the U.S. have implemented policy and practices to support on-campus diversity initiatives. Experiences with diverse populations are particularly relevant to young adults, who are developing their worldview by evaluating their perspectives and the perspectives of others. Because most of the conversations about diversity involve dimensions such as race, gender, and ethnicity, disability or ability is often omitted from such discussions. This study sought to review mission statements and diversity materials of four-year college and university websites in order to understand the extent to which disability is included as a dimension of diversity. As these materials provide the tone and values of the IHE, it may be possible to understand how these schools view disability in relation to diversity. Mixed methods were used to explore the extent to which IHEs include disability in their mission or diversity statements as a way to expand on the notion of diversity within their student body, staff, or faculty. Findings show that most of the randomly selected four-year IHEs ($n = 300$) do not include disability within their mission or diversity statements. Those who do are often found to include statements that describe campus cultures that are inclusive of students with disabilities and more likely to consider a diverse campus, inclusive of disability, an enriched community. Implications for further research and practice provide recommendations based on the literature on how to improve their inclusiveness of students with disabilities in IHEs.

Keywords: disability, diversity, institutions of higher education, inclusive models

Institutions of higher education (IHEs) in the U.S. have implemented policy and practices to better represent the diverse population of the country (Williams & Clowney, 2007). The benefits of a diverse student body are well-documented (Bowman, 2010; Denson, 2009; Denson & Bowman, 2013; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Hurtado, 2007), and as such, IHE campuses are generally eager to embrace diversity (Williams & Clowney, 2007).

In order to further understand diversity, Loden (1996) presented a framework that identifies primary and secondary dimensions of diversity. The primary dimensions identified by Loden “represent properties and characteristics that constitute the core of our diverse identities” (p. 15). Loden originally identified six dimensions (age, ethnicity, gender, mental/physical abilities and characteristics, race, and sexual orientation), but has since added an additional three (income, spiritual belief, and class; Loden Associates, 2010).

Secondary dimensions involve characteristics that may have more variable impact on the life of an individual and may be more apt to change (e.g., geographic location, family status, work experience, political beliefs).

Approximately 11% of students enrolled in postsecondary education programs have identified themselves as an individual with a disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Yet, most of the conversations about diversity involve race, gender, and ethnicity. Domains related to ability and disability are often excluded from diversity frameworks and descriptions (Davis, 2011; Hurtado, Griffin, Arellano, & Cuellar, 2008). The absence of disability from many visions of diversity is troubling. When excluded from this conversation, the notion that diversity exists outside the realm of disability is perpetuated. Including disability as a form of diversity reinforces the notion that there is no *normal* and reduces the *othering* of individuals with disabilities (Davis, 2011).

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This research seeks to understand the extent to which *ability* or *disability* is included in diversity statements at four-year colleges and universities in the U.S. Understanding the extent to which IHEs recognize these individuals as being part of the diverse make-up of their campus will help guide those interested in developing programs to provide on-campus opportunities for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In addition, the use of key terms such as ability or disability, provides key supportive language for students who plan to attend IHEs. Use of these terms also reflect more comprehensive inclusivity when referring to diversity as a whole; diversity not only focused on culture, race, ethnicity, language, and sexual orientation, but also on different abilities.

Benefits of Diversity in Higher Education

Although people of all ages can benefit from experiences with people different than themselves, Gurin et al. (2002) noted that involvement in a diverse culture may be especially beneficial to the traditional undergraduate students (i.e., young adults), who populate IHE campuses. To support this idea, Gurin et al. explained that early adulthood is a time in which lifelong social and personal identities go through significant development. When young adults are exposed to ideas, individuals, practices, and cultures different than their personal previous experiences while attending an IHE, the impact of these experiences may have significant influence on personal development.

More specifically, Gurin et al. (2002) theorized that meaningful and genuine experiences with diverse individuals provide benefits in two primary outcome domains. First, *learning outcomes* from exposure to a curriculum that is both rich with diversity and features interactions with peers from diverse backgrounds “will foster a learning environment that supports active thinking and intellectual engagement” (p. 14). Second, student experience in diverse educational settings may also lead to positive *democratic outcomes*. Opportunities to engage with individuals different than themselves will allow students to better understand and make meaningful contributions to our increasingly diverse society. Both outcomes are possible only when peers have genuine experiences with a student body that includes diverse backgrounds.

Hurtado (2007) identified three primary grounds to support the need for diversity in IHEs, including practical, theoretical, and empirical rationale. In a practical sense, diversity is necessary in higher education because institutions are preparing today’s youth to live and succeed in an increasingly diverse world. This theoretical rationale is grounded in the idea that learning in a diverse setting allows individuals to better understand the perspectives of others, while

evaluating and developing personal beliefs. Hurtado cited research that describe benefits of experience in diversity-rich environments and participation in diversity-specific courses on students IHE campuses, including: (a) an increase in the ability to see the world through the perspective of another individual, (b) a deeper interest in social issues and societal improvements, (c) stronger belief in social equality, (d) heightened view regarding the importance of making civic contributions, and (e) increased likelihood to vote in a state or federal election.

Other research has pointed to additional benefits of a diverse campus. Supporting the notion that exposure to individuals who are different from ourselves increases understanding, Denson (2009) reviewed relevant literature and found that experiences with a diverse student body has the potential to reduce bias. Bowman (2010) conducted a similar review of relevant literature and found that learning on a diverse campus may lead to increased cognitive skills (i.e., skills commonly associated with problem-solving and critical thinking) and cognitive tendencies (i.e., proclivity towards a style or approach to thinking). Barron et al. (2007) explored student perceptions regarding campus diversity and found that experiences with diverse students empowered students by increasing knowledge and allowing for a better understanding of one’s own background and perspectives. The notion that experiences with a diverse student body lead to improved *democratic outcomes* (Gurin et al., 2002) is also supported by Denson and Bowman (2013) who found that such opportunities increase an individual’s comfort and confidence when interacting with people who are different than themselves. The authors suggested that this comfort may also lead to an expanded sense of civic duty as well as increased participation in civic activities.

Although scholars point to the benefits of a diverse student body, students also recognize the value of involvement with a diverse peer group. Campbell-Whatley, Lee, Toms, and Wang (2012) found that students generally supported activities related to campus diversity. Faculty may also appreciate the benefits of serving a diverse student body. Gordon, Reid, and Petocz (2010) used qualitative methods to explore the perceptions of Australian instructors at IHEs to better understand their perspectives relating to diversity. Although some participants noted that diversity is a nonfactor in relation to their teaching, most had positive views that went beyond those featured in institution policy and promotion. One participant explained the importance of diversity as a teaching strategy by noting, “I see diversity as a tool to open minds” (p. 986).

Disability as Diversity

The Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA, 2008) defines *disability* as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual” (Section 12102). Being that over 20% of adults in the U.S. have some kind of disability (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017), these individuals are certainly a significant part of our diverse society. Although frameworks involving diversity are moving beyond non-ethnic dimensions (e.g., Banks, 2016), disability is often omitted from conversations about diversity (Davis, 2011; Hurtado et al., 2008).

Davis (2011) explained the illogic in excluding disability as part of diversity, noting that “diversity also represses difference that isn't included under the better-known categories of race, ethnicity, and gender. In other words, diversity can exist only as long as we discount physical, cognitive, and affective impairments” (para. 5). Davis argued that medical models have made it difficult for disability to be recognized as a form of diversity. When viewing human differences through a medical model, the term *normal* is desirable; people generally desire to hear this term when receiving information about personal health from a physician. However, within diversity studies, which celebrate human differences, the term *normal ethnicity*, for example, would be an unwelcome guest. Davis explained, “as long as disability is seen in this medical sense, it will therefore be considered abnormal and outside the healthy, energetic bodies routinely depicted in celebrations of diversity” (para.11). In the context of higher education, this focus on the use of a medical model of disability is perhaps reinforced by the necessity of students to provide medical documentation to become a part of this group in the eyes of an IHE (Shallish, 2017).

This exclusion of disability from conversations about diversity is also present in the postsecondary setting. Shallish (2017) interviewed individuals at postsecondary institutions who are involved with diversity initiatives. One interviewee who worked for recruitment and retention of students from underserved populations “acknowledged that ‘disability fit perfectly into [his program]’ even though it was never mentioned as part of the committee’s charge” (p. 25). In a review of application essays for a faculty diversity position, Lee Baker, Schmaling, Fountain, Blume, and Boose (2016), found that individuals applying for the position generally emphasized gender, race, class, and ethnicity in their writing. The low-level of disability-related language in applicant discussions suggests that they do not view this as a primary dimension of diversity. An author of this paper recently

participated in their IHE’s new faculty orientation. Although presentations were rich with valuable and necessary discussions about diversity, disability as a dimension of diversity was not once mentioned.

Mission Statements and Diversity

Beliefs about diversity are commonly stated in official documents produced by IHEs (Wilson, Meyer, & McNeal, 2012). These documents provide the tone and values of the institution, creating a specific culture, goals, and foci within the institution (Cochran & David, 1986; Davis, Ruhe, Lee, & Rajadhyaksha, 2007). As such, schools that value diversity may include mention of this in their mission statement.

With the main focus of policy, research, and literature focused on race, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity as part of *diversity* in higher education, Shallish (2015) stated that institutions of higher education do not acknowledge disability as a social, cultural, and political construct and identity making it difficult to build inclusive notions of the purpose of a college education. She called for colleges to interrogate policies, practices, and definitions of disability within a construct of diversity, in order to shift the purpose, practices, and services provided to all students. Similarly, Wilson et al. (2012) stated that institutions’ self-reflection of their statements and language used to describe diversity may help explore discussions of what this language means and how it is being carried out. They too express that perhaps this will help institutions of higher education improve.

According to Wilson et al. (2012), out of 80 IHEs mission statements, 59 (75%) referred to diversity with only 19% of it defining it in terms of ethnicity or race. Also, 65% (or 52) of them included a separate diversity statement with 18 of them being official statements from the institution. This information, along with data collected from this study, provides statistical information as evidence of further work that IHEs must do in order to truly embrace and support diversity in their campuses.

Gabel, Reid, Pearson, Ruiz, and Hume-Dawson (2016) explored websites for California State University (CSU) campuses to understand the extent to which disability was represented in prominent organizational materials. In addition to exploring factors such as accessibility and visual presence of disability in promotional materials, the authors sought to find the extent to which disability was included as diversity in materials. Of the 23 CSU webpages, only one IHE included the descriptor *diversity* to be associated with information related to disability. In addition, although the researchers found many photos depicting racial and ethnic diversity, they were unable to find

any representation of an individual with a noticeable physical impairment.

In order to better understand the extent in which IHEs include disabilities in their mission or diversity statements as ways to expand on the notion of diversity within their student body, staff, or faculty, the following research questions were explored:

1. Do IHEs include disability within their (a) mission statement and/or (b) diversity mission statement?
2. To what extent do IHEs include disability within their mission statements?
3. Are there are differences between IHEs, including disability in their mission statement or diversity statement depending on the (a) number/percentage of students with disabilities in their campus, (b) Carnegie classification, (c) geographic location, (d) urbanization type, and (e) institution size?
(a) If so, what are those differences?

Methods

Research Design

A sequential mixed methods research design (quant-qual; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) was employed in order to provide evidence for the exploration of the research questions. Phase I consisted of acquiring data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System ([IPEDS]; National Center for Educational Statistics, n.d.) according to specific variables: (a) Carnegie size/status, (b) geographic location, and (c) percentage of students with disabilities. In a deductive manner Phase I was employed in order to better understand the relationship between four-year IHEs and the number of students with disabilities enrolled in each one. For example, the initial rationale for exploring the data using these specific variables about IHEs was based on our observations of IHEs focusing more on inclusive practices (e.g., more postsecondary education programs for students with intellectual/developmental disabilities located on Eastern U.S.) than others, as the differences were observed in geographic location, Carnegie classification, and other demographic information. We define inclusion at IHEs as an “all-encompassing access to admission, programs, events, classes, and physical spaces within the college and university environment” (Myers, Lindburg, Nied, 2013, p.7). Most importantly, inclusive practices must be thoughtful and proactive as well as purposeful to meet the needs of all people.

Once the data ($n=300$) were collected, coded, and analyzed, it informed Phase II (qualitative phase).

Phase II consisted of hand sorting and coding qualitative data of the universities that included a specific mention of disability in their mission statement or their diversity statement. The qualitative data were then analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in order to further explore the phenomenon of the mention of disability in mission and diversity statements by IHEs. Finally, a meta-inference (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) was formed based on both the quantitative and qualitative results in order to have a more well-rounded picture of how four-year IHEs discuss or prioritize disability within their mission and/or diversity statements.

Data Collection

A total of 2,104 four-year-colleges and their information were obtained through the IPEDS. Once the data were downloaded, a power analysis was conducted using g-power 3.1 software for an effect size of less than .3 ($p = .05$). The power analysis suggested a sample of 300 cases. Using a web-based randomizer, 300 out of the 2,104 colleges in the list we randomly selected in order to better guide the qualitative strand, or phase II of the study. Mission statements and diversity materials from the selected IHEs were then coded by hand by viewing their institutional website using the following criteria: (a) Is disability mentioned in the mission statement?; (b) Is there a diversity statement or diversity page/information about diversity?; and (c) If so, is disability mentioned as part of this diversity information? More specifically, a dichotomous coding where 0 = *No Mention*, 1 = *Yes Mentioned*, was employed by the three researchers. The specific search terms used within each university's search engine were: (a) Mission Statement and (b) Diversity Statement.

Data Analyses

Quantitative. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted in order to see the differences between groups (No mention/Yes mention) with the percentage of students with disabilities in their campus, geographical location (region), Carnegie status, urbanization type, and institution size. In addition, descriptive statistics and frequencies were obtained in order to better understand the mentions of disability in institutions of higher education.

Qualitative. Once the quantitative data were collected and analyzed, coding of the mission or diversity statements that mentioned disability or abilities began. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and document analysis (Bowen, 2009; Patton, 2015) were used in order to better understand the manner in which the term *disability* was discussed. Deductive themes

and patterns were then coded using content analysis (Berg, 2007). Organization of the mission and diversity statements and coding was first conducted by one of the authors. Another author assisted in the coding to seek coder triangulation. A third author was only involved in the coding if the two first authors were not in agreement with the way it was coded. Once all the data were coded separately, all three authors discussed agreement for each code until 100% of the coding was agreed upon. Therefore, inter-coder reliability was achieved. All three coders hold a doctoral degree in special education with expertise in students with disabilities within higher education.

Results

Mission and Diversity Statements by the Numbers

Descriptive statistics show that out of the 300 randomly selected institutions of higher education, 113 had more than 3% of students with disabilities enrolled in their undergraduate program. Out of these, 89 IHE had 3-9% students with disabilities enrolled in their total undergraduate population, 22 with 10-20%, and two with more than 20%.

A total of 153 out of the 300 (51%) IHE mentioned diversity in their mission statement, and only 14 (4.6%) of them specifically included disability in it. In addition, we found 163 out of the 300 (54%) IHE incorporated a diversity statement or vision within their website, that was separate from the mission statement of the IHE. More specifically, out of these 163, only 68 IHE included (23%) disability or different abilities within diversity statement.

Differences Among Institutions of Higher Education

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to understand the differences between institutions of higher education based on the percentage of students with disabilities on their campus, Carnegie classification, and geographical location. To test for error of variances, homogeneity tests were run and met ($p > .005$).

Differences by enrollment of students with disabilities. The MANOVA results included differences between institutions of higher education depending on the percentage of students with disabilities enrolled in their undergraduate program and their mention of disability in the mission statement ($F(4)=6.32$, $p=.000$), inclusion of a diversity mission/vision statement or vision as a separate website ($F(4)=11.66$, $p=.000$), and disability mentioned within the diversity mission/vision statement ($F(4)=3.78$, $p=.005$). In other words, differences were observed depending on

the number of students with disabilities enrolled in four-year IHEs and the inclusion of disability within their mission or diversity statements.

Other differences. To better understand these differences, a MANOVA was conducted on factors such as Carnegie classification, size of the institution, and geographic location. Differences in Carnegie classification were only observed in the inclusion of the diversity statement/vision ($F(18)=5.3$, $p=.000$) and disability included within the diversity statement/vision ($F(18)=1.76$, $p=.03$). In addition, differences also depended on the size of the institution when including diversity within their mission statement ($F(5)=2.81$, $p<.05$), having a separate diversity mission/vision statement ($F(5)=19.59$, $p=.000$), and disability included within their diversity mission/vision statement ($F(5)=3.33$, $p<.01$). There were no differences observed between different regions.

Inclusion of Disability in Mission or Diversity Statements

Although the quantitative results provided information about inclusion of disability in mission and diversity statements, as well as differences observed between various descriptive information of IHEs, these needed to be understood at a deeper level. It was important to understand how the inclusion of disability in the mission or diversity statements within IHEs differed. Therefore, an exploration of each statement was made in a qualitative manner using thematic analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and document analysis (Patton, 2015).

Disability in mission statements. Analysis of 300 IHE mission statements resulted in 14 statements that included disability. Mission statements were coded for use of the word disability and words used in mission statements that were reflective of campus culture. An analysis of these words revealed three main themes: disability included in a format commonly found in non-discriminatory policies (e.g., Title IX language; disability as part of a list of dimensions of diversity), disability included as one of many types of difference, and disability as part of a campus culture that emphasizes social justice.

Demographic data. Demographic data for the 14 IHEs that had disability in the mission statement can be found in Table 1.

Non-discriminatory language. Four of the 14 IHEs included language reflective of Title IX. The phrase "without regard to" was included in these statements, followed by a list of terms referring to dimensions of diversity. Each of these statements referred to disability using the specific terms "disability" or "handicap." An example of a statement reflecting this

language and term use was “The University provides educational opportunities to all eligible persons without regard to age, gender, ethnicity, race, religion, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation.”

Disability as one of many human differences. Mission statements reflecting the theme disability included disability as one of many types of human difference. One university mission statement referred to specific disabilities including “learning disabilities and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and other learning differences.” Disability was also used to describe campus culture; recognized as part of “an environment of belonging with differences” and “a community that values differences”, including “ability or disability.”

Social justice. Mission statements used language reflective of a campus culture that emphasizes social justice. For example, one university mission statement discussed disability in the context of overcoming prejudice “occasioned by” disability and a list of other terms reflective of diversity. Another reflected the theme of social justice in their reference to personal dignity. Specifically, this university referred to “physical ability” as a “condition,” one that cannot be mitigated, as “human beings have innate dignity... made in the image and likeness of God.” A third university referred to disability as part of a “full spectrum” of individuals on their campus which provides a campus environment based on mutual respect, engagement and learning for everyone.”

Disability in diversity statements. Analysis of 300 IHE mission statements revealed 68 diversity statements that included disability. The diversity statements from 30 IHEs were selected and analyzed for words describing disability in the context of diversity, as these 30 IHEs discussed diversity in a meaningful way; not just part of a list of dimensions of diversity (e.g., Title IX, non-discriminatory language). This analysis revealed four main themes: disability as a part of campus community; disability as a part of an inclusive campus; respect for diversity which includes disability, and disability as one of many human differences.

Demographic data. Demographic data for the 68 IHEs that had disability in the diversity statement can be found on Table 2.

Disability as part of community. Disability as part of the campus community was included in 28 of the 30 IHE diversity statements. Specifically, disability was included as a part of diversity, and diversity a part of what enriches a community. Diversity was valued “because it enriches our campus community” which constitutes “individuals from an array of backgrounds and perspectives.” Diversity was also de-

scribed as a “varied community of people and human characteristics, ideas, and world views.” A common theme within community was the value of perspectives of individuals within a diverse community, again, one which includes those with disabilities.

Disability as part of an inclusive campus. Inclusion was a prominent theme, occurring in 23 of the 30 IHE diversity statements. Inclusion was included in many diversity statements; “inclusion encompasses diversity and enhances it.” Definitions of inclusion included statements such as “Inclusion refers to active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity,” and “Inclusion is engaging the uniqueness of the talents, beliefs, backgrounds, capabilities and ways of living of individuals and groups.”

Respect for diversity which includes disability. Diversity statements of 17 IHEs included respect in their diversity statements. Respect was discussed as a value (i.e., “values of mutual respect”), listed as a “principle,” and as a behavior (i.e., “all members of the community are treated at all times with dignity and respect”). Respect was discussed in conjunction with the terms “dignity” and “difference,” a way individuals behave toward others regardless of and with appreciation for unique identities, including those with disabilities.

Disability as one of many human differences. The theme of disability as one of many human differences was included in 14 of the IHE diversity statements. A campus culture that recognizes human difference was referred to as “fundamental to a comprehensive education;” something to be embraced, appreciated, and valued. Diversity statements identified human difference as something to be engaged with to create a “culture of belonging.” The understanding and appreciation of human difference was discussed as part of enriching the university community; “our differences enrich us all” and are part of an environment that “finds ways to utilize ... differences to promote higher levels of achievement by all members of the community.”

Meta-Inference

Based on the quantitative and qualitative results of this sequential mixed-methods study, we can infer that IHEs are more likely to discuss disability in their diversity statements as the number of students with disabilities increases in their student population. Although the inclusion of “disability” in overall mission or vision statements is rare, they are often found within private institutions or those who have the majority of their student population are students with disabilities. It can also be inferred that for those IHEs that do discuss disability within their diversity statements, they often discuss diversity as part of what enriches a

community, describe diversity as human differences that should be embraced, and describe engagement with diversity, including disability, as inclusion. This is unlike almost half of the general mission statements that focused on a more generic stance following a Title IX type of message. Therefore, a meta-inference can be made that those IHEs that discuss disability in their diversity statements are often found to be more inclusive in their use of language regarding students with disabilities as part of a diverse community.

Discussion

A mixed-methods study was conducted to explore the extent to which IHEs view disability or ability as a dimension of diversity. While 51% of IHEs include diversity as part of their mission statement, most do not include disability within their mission or diversity statements. Only 4.6% of the 300 IHEs randomly selected for this study included disability within their mission or vision statement in which half of them discussed disability at a surface-level using wording similar to a non-discrimination statement. In addition, when exploring the diversity statements of these same 300 IHEs only 22.6% of them included wording regarding students with disabilities or different abilities. When investigating these at a deeper level using qualitative analyses, findings show that these statements often included students with disabilities as part of the community, in inclusive ways, with respect, and also as a difference. As the meta-inference shows above, the inclusion of students with disabilities in IHEs mission or diversity statements are uncommon, but those that do can be very inclusive as the number of students with disabilities increase in their student population.

As mission statements tend to present broad information about an IHE (Cochran & David, 1986; Davis et al., 2007), the low-level representation of disability-specific language is perhaps not surprising. Proponents of diversity may be alarmed to see that slightly more than half of IHEs in this study included any mention of diversity in their mission statement. While general diversity may be front and center of an institution's values or mission, serving individuals with disabilities is generally not a primary focus for most IHEs. One school randomly included in this study did focus on serving students with high-incidence disabilities, and as such this was featured prominently in their mission statement.

Similar to the findings presented by Wilson et al. (2012), the results of this study suggest that IHEs may view diversity as primarily being comprised of dimensions more commonly associated with diver-

sity (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender). Whereas diversity-specific materials on IHE webpages may be a more appropriate placement of disability-specific content (when compared to a mission statement), this was excluded from over 75% of IHE websites.

Implications and Recommendations for IHE Disability Services

As many IHEs promote diversity as a thread in their campus fabric (Williams & Clowney, 2007), it is important for there to be a recognition of disability as a dimension of diversity. If an IHE is interested in providing a variety of perspectives through supporting diversity initiatives, it is necessary to include efforts to include individuals with disabilities in this conversation. Higbee, Katz, and Schultz (2010) recommended that personnel in higher education start by evaluating and reflecting upon their personal perspectives regarding disability. Providing an outlet for staff and faculty to explore personal prejudices may be a successful strategy in recognizing the importance of individuals with disabilities in the culture of the campus (Loden, 1996). When views that lead to *othering* of people with disabilities, it may be challenging to have a genuinely inclusive environment. IHE personnel should become familiar with models of disability that differ from the traditional medical model. O'Neil Green, Wilis, Green, and Beckman (2017) described the benefits of a university culture that views disability based on social justice models; lenses focused on access rather than differences promote disability as diversity rather than a deficit.

Because of their need to focus on compliance of legally mandated supports, IHE disability services (DS) may be supporting a deficiency model of disability and reinforcing the notion that students who access the services are "needy and burdensome" (Kroeger & Kraus, 2017, p. 221). In order to reinforce disability as a form of diversity, actions taken by a DS office to promote a social model of disability may include (a) evaluating language in DS materials that reinforces a deficit model, (b) exploring service delivery practices that remove burdens not experienced by students without disabilities, (c) supporting faculty in implementing equalizing practices, such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL), (d) building relationships across campus to increase influence in decisions involving physical space and technology, and (e) developing and promoting opportunities for members of the community to explore disability from a social justice perspective, rather than one of pity.

It may be prudent for DS providers to collaborate with departments and faculty on campus who are intrinsically motivated to promote disability as a form

of diversity and work toward inclusivity and accessible instructional practices such as UDL (Myers et al., 2013). Finn, Getzel, Asselin, and Reilly (2015) highlighted the importance of partnerships across campus with administrative offices and individuals with positive reputations among faculty to successfully access faculty who might not otherwise demonstrate interest. Finding a common concern among faculty (e.g., lower student success rates, higher student attrition rates) that may best be addressed by accessible instructional practices may also be effective in implementing practices that support a diverse student body, including students with disabilities. Moore, Smith, Hollingshead, and Wojcik (2018) refer to this as “finding a ‘trojan horse’ to serve as a catalyst for change” (p. 42).

DS offices may also promote reframing the view of disability by reviewing the university structure under which these services are housed. Rather than including this as an entity under *student affairs*, housing these services in a diversity-focused department will aid in shifting perceptions away from the traditional medical model of disability (Aragon & Hoskins, 2017). Doing so reduces the stigma and supports the notion that disability is just one of the many forms of human diversity. In addition, overt campus-wide recognition of disability as part of a diverse student body may reduce the stigma perceived by students who may benefit from accommodations and perhaps help these students to feel more comfortable seeking accommodations. Further, recognition of disability as part of a diverse student body served in college classrooms may open the door to broader faculty implementation of UDL in college courses. Curriculum based on the UDL principles can benefit all students on campus (Burgstahler, 2015).

Also, individuals who are involved with campus diversity (e.g., hiring, student recruitment, course development) need to make active efforts to include disability in diversity initiatives (Higbee et al., 2010). O’Neil Green et al. (2017) outlined a framework to promote access as a means to include individuals with disabilities as part of a campus culture. The four-pronged approach features: (a) a *steering committee* comprised of stakeholders at all levels of the IHE to lead and guide efforts related to access; (b) an *advisory committee* with members from every campus department to ensure each area is well-connected with the campus access efforts; (c) *working groups* to identify barriers and promote access in different domains such as physical spaces on campus, employment, classroom instruction using the framework of UDL, etc.; and (d) a *chairs coordinating group*, which allows the heads from each working group to

discuss projects and challenges related to their mission. As a result of these efforts by campus leaders and a more immediate improvement, the inclusion of disability/ability as part of the diversity and mission/vision statements could lead to enhanced inclusive efforts at IHEs (Myers et al., 2013). In addition, an expansion of the Association of American Colleges and Universities guiding principle of “making excellence inclusive” (AACU, n.d.) should be discussed to account for the inclusion of disabilities/abilities as part of these efforts.

IHEs may consider the development of programs designed to provide higher education opportunities for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs). Such programs are becoming increasingly common on college and university campuses across the U.S. (Weir, Grigal, Hart, & Boyle, 2013). These programs are typically not degree-granting, but rather are focused on providing opportunities for individuals who may not meet the typical admissions criteria to participate in higher education (Grigal, Hart, & Weir, 2012). Providing integrated on-campus opportunities for students with IDD may be an effective strategy for peers and staff to have genuine experiences with these individuals who are different from themselves. As the notion of intellectual disability is socially constructed (Banks, 2016), interaction amongst peers can be a factor influencing perceptions. If an IHE is truly interested in promoting diversity by representing a cross section of the population on their campus, individuals with IDD must be included as well.

Finally, as results from this study suggest, IHEs with larger numbers of students with disabilities are more inclusive of disability as part of diversity in mission and diversity statements. As the number of students with disabilities who attend IHEs increase (U.S. Department of Education, 2016), we might anticipate increased recognition of disability as part of a diverse campus and increased efforts to reflect this view in university web-sites and documents. Ultimately, this results in a reciprocal relationship: universities who promote disability as part of a diverse campus may attract more students with disabilities; more students with disabilities on campus may drive a university to place a higher value of students with disabilities as a part of their student body.

Implications for Future Research

Future research should include a more comprehensive analysis of all IHEs as they relate to diversity (Wilson et al., 2012) and disability (Davis, 2011). With this in mind, a breakdown of type of institutions as well as differences between private and public IHEs could be helpful to better understand the

efforts being made to make the climate on campus more inclusive. In addition to the analysis of more data, other documents can also be analyzed to better answer these research questions (e.g., recruitment documents, admissions documents, disability/accommodations center information, faculty support and training, financial aid documents, evaluation criterion for accommodations). Also, the exploration of the impact of the addition of disability/ability language to diversity or mission/vision statements as it relates to the strength or support of disability services for students with disabilities attending IHEs. Finally, a mixed method study in which students with disabilities enrolled in IHEs discuss their views on the inclusivity of their campus in comparison to the mission/vision and diversity statements would be valuable.

Limitations

Limitations of the current study include the hand-sorting data collection based on the IHE's website. Some websites did not include a clear avenue to their mission/vision statements or to their diversity statements. As a result, some instances of relevant information may have been inadvertently omitted during the data collection phase. Others may have used language that described their diversity statement (e.g., equity plan). Although the quantitative data collected was randomly selected, the randomization of the IHEs could lead to missed mission/vision statements that are more representative of the overall population. In addition, the search criteria included both private and public institutions in which public IHEs are held to a specific set of guidelines by the U.S. Department of Education than those private IHEs. Finally, qualitative data could have been interpreted differently if the experiences of the researchers were different.

Conclusion

IHEs in the U.S. value a diverse campus; opportunities to engage with peers from a variety of backgrounds enriches both the academic and social components of the college and university experience. These experiences are essential to the development of young adults into citizens of the world. While disability or ability is often not viewed as a dimension of diversity, IHEs should consider this as they work to develop a campus that provides a true representation of society. Including mention of disability in mission statements and diversity statements is meaningful; such actions identify the IHE as one who is willing to support disability as one of many forms of human difference.

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Table 1*Descriptive Statistics of IHE Mission Statements where Disability is Included*

Variable Description (%)		Overall Percentage (Number)
IHEs with population of students with disabilities (larger than 3%)	4	14.4 (2)
	5	7.1 (1)
	7	21.4 (3)
	15	7.1 (1)
	17	7.1 (1)
	100	7.1 (1)
Region	New England	0 (0)
	Midwest	21.4 (3)
	Great Lakes	14.3 (2)
	Plains	7.1 (1)
	Southeast	28.6 (4)
	Southwest	0 (0)
	Rocky Mountains	14.3 (2)
	Far West	14.3 (2)
	Outlying Areas	0 (0)
Carnegie Classification	Doctorate – Moderate Research	14.3 (2)
	Masters – Large Program	35.7 (5)
	Masters – Medium Program	7.1 (1)
	Baccalaureate – Arts & Sciences	14.3 (2)
	Baccalaureate – Diverse Fields	7.1 (1)
	Faith Related	14.3 (2)
	Arts, Music, & Design	7.1 (1)
Institution Size	Under 1,000 students	21.4 (3)
	1,000 - 4,999 students	42.9 (6)
	5,000 - 9,999 students	21.4 (3)
	10,000 - 19,999 students	14.3 (2)
	20,000 students or more	0 (0)

Note. n=14.

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics of IHE Diversity Statements where Disability is Included*

	Variable Description	Overall Percentage (Number)
IHEs with population of students with disabilities (larger than 3%)	4% - 9%	42.3 (27)
	10% - 14%	9.4 (6)
	15% - 20%	4.8 (3)
	None reported	43.8 (28)
Region	New England	12.5 (8)
	Mideast	18.8 (12)
	Great Lakes	12.5 (8)
	Plains	9.4 (6)
	Southeast	15.6 (4)
	Southwest	10.9 (7)
	Rocky Mountains	6.3 (4)
	Far West	14.1 (9)
	Outlying Areas	0 (0)
Carnegie Classification	Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges	1.6 (1)
	Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity	17.2 (11)
	Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity	7.8 (5)
	Doctoral Universities: Moderate Research Activity	12.5 (8)
	Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs	17.2 (11)
	Master's Colleges & Universities: Medium Programs	7.8 (5)
	Master's Colleges & Universities: Small Programs	1.6 (1)
	Baccalaureate – Arts & Sciences	21.9 (14)
	Baccalaureate – Diverse Fields	6.3 (4)
	Special Focus Four-Year: Medical Schools & Center	3.1 (2)
	Special Focus Four Year: Other Health Professions	1.6 (1)
	Special Focus Four Year: Engineering Schools	1.6 (1)
Institution Size	Under 1,000 students	7.8 (5)
	5,000 - 9,999 students	12.5 (8)
	10,000 - 19,999 students	18.8 (12)
	20,000 students or more	15.6 (10)

Note. n=68.