

Exploring Diversity in Higher Education Management: History, Trends, and Implications for Community Colleges

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As college and university campuses direct their efforts to include more diverse populations of students, campus leaders must consider whether there is merit in having a diverse population of administrators as well. The issue is of particular importance to the community college sector, since it is a primary point of entry into higher education for both traditional and nontraditional students.

The issue of diversity at the community college administrative level will be explored through discussions on the history of community colleges and management theory, the changing demographic in higher education, and how the changes affect community college administration.

Community Colleges

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) suggests that the institutions known today as community (or, in certain locations, county) colleges began as high school-based institutions that offered vocational education, teacher's education, and a certain level of general postsecondary education (n.d.). Eventually, the high school-based institutions grew into junior colleges, serving communities that did not have a larger university or four-year institution nearby (Bragg, 2001). Through the early 1970s the term "junior college" was used to describe the development and growth of the post-high school/pre-university institution; the term "community college" has been used in place of the terms "junior" or "two-year" (Harper, 1971, p. 258). The use of the term "junior college" to define these institutions that offered postsecondary courses and programs of transfer to universities has been attributed to William Rainey Harper (Bragg, 2001; Brint & Karabel, 1989; Erdman & Ogden, 2000; Pedersen, 2001). Alexander and Willett (1920) found three separate definitions for the junior college: 1) the first two years of university education; 2) various "minor colleges," primarily in Missouri, that arranged to offer two years of college-level education that prepared students to transfer into their junior year elsewhere; and 3) a two-year extension of high school education that provided college-level experiences. The close connection to secondary education created a difficult image for these emerging higher education institutions:

The two year institution's claim to being a genuine college rested almost exclusively on its promise to offer the first two years of a four-year college education. Yet the junior college

was never intended, despite the high aspirations of its students, to provide anything more than a terminal education for most who entered it; indeed, at no point in its history did even half of its students transfer to a four-year institution (Brint & Karabel, 1989, p. 205).

The perception of junior colleges added an additional complication. As Frye (1993) explains, junior colleges were initially developed with two seemingly opposing missions—the first, to allow access to higher education for those who previously had no access and the second, to offer terminal degrees; “[b]ecause of this dichotomy of emphasis for two-year colleges, internal relations with universities and secondary schools [were] strained” (p. 6). The institutions began gaining wider acceptance when the associate’s degree was developed and the number of job training programs increased during the 1940s and 1950s; as enrollments increased, more colleges were built. Harbeson (1941) suggests that the growth of the community college movement came during the early part of the twentieth century when legislation allowed for the payment of college operating costs out of state revenue. The two-year college’s reputation as a ‘college for the community’ (Roberts, 1971) began to increase; the institutions have become as eclectic as the communities they exist in. Community colleges began offering technical and specialty programs, corporate training, pre-college education (such as Adult Basic Skills programs), and state-supported “To Work” programs in addition to degree programs. These offerings became part of the community college mission through curricular changes which were influenced largely by the individual communities that support each institution; while input from local and state agencies also played a part in the changes, civic organizations and area residents were much more integral to the process (Zoglin, 1981). There has also been an increase in the number and variety of certificates and degrees offered by community colleges over time:

Many community college students—especially older and part-time students who hold full-time jobs—neither want nor need to pursue lengthy educational programs...The certificate programs appeal to those who want to upgrade their current skills or acquire new ones, increasing their job opportunities in the marketplace (Kasper, 2002/03, p. 17-18).

Two-year colleges tend to have lower tuition costs when compared to universities: community college faculty tend to spend more time teaching than university faculty, who are often involved in research or other activities. Research suggests that the emphasis on teaching lowers the cost of education and allows students to receive more individualized attention (Kane & Rouse, 1999). However, their reputation has been scrutinized by scholars who would suggest that two-year colleges hinder the economic growth of the marginalized populations that fill their classrooms (Cohen, 1990; Dougherty, 1988) by creating a ready supply of vocational labor rather than supporting degree completion and transfer.

Farnsworth and Cissell (2006) comment that the university systems in many countries outside the United States are very selective; there is a lack of mobility between social and economic strata because postsecondary education for the low or middle class is essentially nonexistent. Economics, along with cultural and social norms, impact the focus and success of community colleges in developing countries; the scope and reach of postsecondary education at this level is evolving due to financial support and direction from community colleges in the United States

(Powers, 2007; Shannon, 1971). Yet the institutions in the United States also face economic difficulties: budget cuts to higher education have forced institutions to increase tuition and fees; rate increases often price postsecondary education out of range for American lower and middle income families and individuals. Kirp (2003) describes the decrease in state funding to California's colleges and universities as a financial "hemorrhage;" between 1960 and 2003, the state government's contribution to the overall higher education budget decreased from 54 percent to 22 percent (¶ 7). The impact on community colleges in California resulted in an estimated loss of 90,000 students (¶ 8). In order to stay in operation, many two-year colleges seek outside funding in the form of grants and partnerships:

As colleges take control of their resources by increasing their partnerships with businesses, a shift away from the values of liberal education, such as civic engagement and democratic ideology, as well as critical content, can be expected to continue or even worsen (Weisberger, 2005, p. 135-136).

A problem arises when these colleges move away from their early mission—to provide courses and programs that prepare students for university transfer—toward a more vocationally oriented focus: how to provide access to baccalaureate programs for educationally and economically marginalized populations (Freeman, 2005; Weisberger, 2005). Valadez and Killacky (1995) state that in addition to providing liberal education, transfer opportunities, and vocational training, community colleges must provide typically underserved students with "knowledge about their community and society at large, and prepare them to make informed decisions concerning their futures" (p. 7).

Between 1965 and 1992, the number of students enrolled at public community colleges doubled from 26% to 48%; the numbers of women (Gill & Leigh, 2000, p. 165) and minority students increased dramatically over the period as well (Kasper, 2002/03, pp. 19-20). Prior to this period, students of color were specifically not enrolled in many colleges and universities (particularly in the southern United States) due to segregation. Miller's 1962 study, following the work of Lane (1933), found that out of out of the 114 public junior colleges in existence at the time in seventeen southern and border states, only 14% served African-American students (p. 387). The study concluded that in order to meet their overall mission the two-year colleges would need to involve all segments of the areas in which they existed; this involvement would be accomplished through equitable programs that "...[met] the needs of the total community rather than those of its segments" (p. 395).

There has been a shift toward higher ethnic and racial minority populations at community colleges in the United States; by 2001, 12.3% of students taking credit-bearing courses were African American, while enrollments for Hispanic students had reached an all-time high of 14.4% (Lum, 2004, p. 58). The Chronicle of Higher Education reported that half of the nearly three million African American and Hispanic college students in the United States were attending community colleges (Evelyn, 2003). Most of the nation's community college presidents indicated that their institutions were not prepared for the demographic shift, listing a number of areas of concern, such as

- ♣ training front line staff regarding language and cultural differences;
- ♣ creating offices or departments that specialize in issues specific to international students in order to address the needs of foreign-born students and their families; and
- ♣ changing the public image of the institution to reflect a more multicultural campus.

However, the chief concern for community college presidents with regard to managing a changing student demographic related to how the need for a more diverse faculty, staff, and administrative population would be addressed (Pluwise, 2006). Community colleges continue to show increasing diversity within the student body, yet the level of diversity among community college leaders has not increased at the same rate (Vaughan, 1996). Institutions that are seeking to attract a diverse group of faculty, administrators, and staff must be prepared to consider whether the structure of the organization will be adequate (Underwood, 1999) as well as how the organizational structure is influenced by historical and modern management theory.

Management Theory

It is suggested that theorizing about management began with the impact on society of the British Industrial Revolution (McClellan, 2005). As society developed identity based on emerging industry, early theorists appeared; these theorists often worked in industry and their theories were based on direct observation. F.W. Taylor, credited as the founder of systems engineering, published a pinnacle text in 1911 in which he defined the purpose of management: “the principle object of management should be to secure the maximum prosperity for the employer, coupled with the maximum prosperity for each employee” (p. 5). The French theorist Fayol is also credited with making significant contribution to early management theory (Allen, 1998; Fayol, 2000; McClellan, 2005; Wren, 1995). His theories were based on his experience as a business manager, rather than on department-level work experience (Williams, Kondra, & Vibert, 2004); from the position of director, he determined that management was something that should be taught. His book *Administration Industrielle et Générale* was published in France the same year as Taylor’s *Principles*, so the two have been described as both contemporaries as well as rivals. Fayol developed fourteen principles of management that were focused on how workers’ actions and activities could be directed; the principles are still applicable to today’s workplace (Fells, 2000; Rodrigues, 2001). Further, Fayol developed five rules for business administration that are also still relevant to current work environments, but his closing remarks to the International Congress of Mining and Metallurgy in 1900 get to the real issues of administrative responsibility:

The administrative function has many duties it has to foresee and make preparations to meet the financial, commercial, and technical conditions under which the concern must be started and run. It deals with the organization, selection and management of the staff. It is the means by which the various parts of the undertaking communicate with the outside world, etc. Although this list is incomplete, it gives us an idea of the importance of the administrative function (Wren, 1995, p. 8).

Fayol seemed concerned that management theory be just as involved with the welfare of employees as with the company structure and bottom line. Later theories also create a similar bridge between business operations and employee relations (Carson, 2005; Humphries and Einstein, 2003). Even more current theories such as Cyert and March's (2003) suggest that the relationship between the people and the process is very complex:

The modern "representative firm" is a large, complex organization. Its major functions are performed by different divisions more or less coordinated by a set of control procedures. It ordinarily produces many products, buys and sells in many different markets. Within the firm, information is generated and processed, decisions are made, results are evaluated, and procedures are changed (p. 1).

This 'behavioral theory of the firm' moves away from a focus on the numbers of product produced (Harris, 1990) to a focus on the human resource and other relational components within the company (Cyert & March, 2003); further, the theory includes a study of the structure of organizations and how employees use communication to inform work patterns.

While it appears that modern management theories have incorporated many of the principles developed by Taylor, Fayol, the Gilbreths and others, over time more attention has been placed on the impact of the human element (Dwyer, 2005). This human element has even greater impact on the organization when studies include the influence of culture, race, or ethnicity as variables. For example, the concept of Japanese management theory has evolved from the more socio-cultural approach of the 1960s, to studies of corporate ownership in the 1970s, to labor management and practices in the 1980s, to end almost back at the beginning with a renewed interest in knowledge management (KM) and human resource management studies in the 1990s (Hayashi, 2002). Much of the Japanese management research and theory-creation of the 1990s was fueled by new American research areas; however, much work was done to specifically look at female labor and practices in the Japanese organization as well as how Japanese cultural norms integrate into more globally recognized management practices.

There are organizations where management theories have been affected by societal change as well as cultural influence; Beatty, Nkomo, and Krier (2006) undertook a study to ascertain whether theories of management in South Africa have been developed in such a way as to account for the different cultures, expectations, and ethnicities that may not be addressed by the more prevalent American and European management theories. The results of the study indicated that the development of management theory in South Africa is currently based less on local context than on "Western contexts" (p. 6) and that more qualitative research and reporting utilizing local researchers may help with the development of more culturally-relevant theories.

More colleges and universities are being seen as business entities; there is a need to keep close watch on financial inputs and outputs, human resource allocation, and customer service in education just as in business. To that end, Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) are using management principles to implement change and quality improvement (Deem, 1998; Helms,

Williams, & Nixon, 2001; Keller, 1983).

Each new change requires that IHEs review internal decision-making and strategic planning efforts (Forsyth & Furlong, 2000; Swenk, 1999).

Administrators must be prepared to use sound planning in order to meet the needs of all students on campus (Colón, 1991). This may prove at times to be a difficult task, particularly when there is contradictory information regarding how the modern IHE should be managed (Pool & Robertson, 2003). Further, there have been many management theories developed that were purportedly specific to higher education but turned out to be either inappropriate or ineffective for long-term planning (Birnbaum, 2000). Historically, part of the problem has involved “a shortage of [management] training programs for college and university administrators” (St. John, 1980, p. 285). Colleges and universities struggle to develop a ‘universal’ management system, due in part to all the variables that distinguish one institution from another.

Management development is an incremental process; as one set of management needs is addressed, another set will emerge, until a relative balance is reached between the demands placed on the system by its formal structure and the capacity of its management system to meet those needs (p. 299).

The following sections will examine whether current IHE management practices are addressing issues related to the changing student demographic and whether the demographic changes within the student body have influenced demographic changes within administrative levels, particularly at community colleges.

Today’s Higher Education Demographic

Statistics continue to point out that there is a monumental shift in the racial and ethnic makeup of the world population (Boggs, 2002), yet researchers contend that students of color are not being provided the same levels of opportunity and access to higher education as so-called white students (Astin, 1994; Rendon & Hope, 1996) and that the level of inequity is connected to entrance testing and assessment (Astin, 2002). Issues of diversity in higher education goes beyond America’s borders; researchers in Australia and Great Britain, for example, have studied the impact of racial and ethnic diversity on classroom and institutional systems as well (Meek & Wood, 1998; Modood, 1993; Ramburuth & McCormick, 2004; Thomas, 2002). Despite the various bleak statistics, there is solid evidence that student diversity in higher education is desirable because it helps advance “the missions of colleges and universities” (Wilds, 2000); campus diversity also contributes to student academic and personal growth (Hurtado, 2001).

In addition to whether institutions are prepared for learning is a serious question as to whether institutions are prepared for diversity. Such a shift requires a different rationale for thinking about change. If the institution is concerned about the capacity to deal with diversity, then

attention is on the entire community. Diversity among faculty, staff, and students is seen as important not only for the support such individuals provide for specific groups but also for the importance of diverse perspectives to institutional success and quality (Smith & Wolf-Wendel, 2005, p. 49).

In order to “prepare for diversity,” IHEs should consider how diversity or a lack thereof impacts institutional success, where such success is defined by evidence of financial stability which is supported by strong enrollment, retention, and transition figures. Human resource departments, in addition to chief officers, need to consider how a lack of racial and ethnic (as well as religious, sexual, and ability-related) diversity within the administrative, faculty, and staff levels affect a diverse student body; Winston (2001) found that institutions rated positively on their level of diversity also tended to be rated positively in other areas. Selden and Selden (2001) suggest that all public organizations begin analyzing themselves in order to develop into multiculturally-sensitive organizations; such an effort is made more difficult as schools, colleges, and other public organizations attempt to become more efficient through streamlined processes and smaller budgets.

As colleges and universities continue to implement strategies designed to ensure student success amid uncertain financial times, many institutions are less able to provide support for diversity departments or offices. The changing educational and workforce demographic requires that institutions make an effort to be inclusive; to that end, IHEs include “diversity statements” alongside their vision and mission. However as Allison (1999) points out, such statements often “...take on levels of symbolic and political meaning in the workplace that can, by their very nature, create barriers in the form of resentment and non-responsiveness toward ‘people of difference’” (p. 78). Although the impetus to diversifying the workplace may have been out of necessity to comply with affirmative action legislation, for example, it appears from Allison’s research that many organizations have failed to commit to truly eliminating inequities.

One way in which IHEs can move beyond a cursory level of acceptance of differences would be to attend to how students, faculty, staff, and administrators function within the institution and within the larger society; without this more systemic understanding, institutions continue to foster relationships based on a level of power and privilege traditionally held by the (racial, ethnic, ability-level, &c) majority (Braboy, 2003; Hansman, 1999). An example of the power and privilege issue is evident in faculty appointments; a review of tenure track hires in the United States reveals that men are more often tenured and receive higher salaries than their female counterparts (Majesky-Pullmann, 2007). The issue of who gets tenure is not exclusive to the United States; methods of promotion and related issues have been under scrutiny, especially in Germany, where the system has been described as “outdated and inefficient” (Enders, 2000).

The individuals who serve in leadership positions within colleges and universities need to be aware of the various cultures that exist within their institution as well as understand that while similarities will exist, no two IHEs have exactly the same cultural dynamic. Within each institution, the various administrative levels, divisions, and departments have a way of being that differs from the ways of being within other levels, divisions, and departments. The internal

organizational culture must be given as much attention as individual cultures and societal expectations (Kezar & Eckel, 2002).

As leaders in education work to guide their institutions in an ever-changing environment, they must attend to their own strengths and weaknesses in certain areas, including

- ♣ their own cultural competencies
- ♣ their own biases
- ♣ their desire to develop improved levels of cultural competency (for themselves and for the other staff, faculty, and administrators)
- ♣ their ability to engage the various constituencies served by the institution
- ♣ their ability to develop diverse collaborative partnerships and strategic alliances

Research findings related to secondary education suggest that job descriptions and evaluative measures should show a focus on the importance of these cultural competencies (IEL, 2005); the expectations and suggestions appear appropriate for higher education administration as well (LaBare, 2005; Reed, 2005).

Issues of diversity impact all levels of higher education, yet the discussion of diversity as related to the community college seems particularly important. Changing business needs which influence economic trends and labor demands mean that community colleges must attract or have the ability to train leaders who are adaptive and generative learners (Senge, 1990). Adaptive learning skills require the ability to anticipate and address an understood need. For example community college leaders apply adaptive learning skills when they increase the number of student seats for in-demand courses. Generative learning skills require the community college leader to have creative vision; the leader uses this skill to develop programs for markets or customers that have not expressed interest or need yet. The role of the community college leader continues to evolve toward a more participatory function, despite the evidence that there is still a high level of bureaucratic process (Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006).

Succession planning is an issue of concern within the community college sector (McCall, 2006; McClenney, 2001); current leaders are preparing for retirement, yet there seem to be too few administrators in the leadership pipeline who are prepared for institutional level positions. More graduate level institutions are creating programs designed to provide those individuals interested in community college leadership with the required skills; these programs should focus on issues related to diversity in order to provide appropriate skills for new leaders (Gibson-Benninger, Ratcliff, & Rhoads, 1996). There is a need for change within higher education; new community college leaders will benefit from an understanding of the transformational approach:

The transformational approach...requires that leaders become social architects. This means they make clear the emerging values and norms of the organization. They involve themselves in the culture of the organization and help shape its meaning. People need to

know their roles and understand how they are contributors to the greater purposes of the organization (Northouse, 2004, p. 183).

Change agency necessitates involvement on the part of the leader; s/he must be prepared to participate in making institutional change, which often requires both emotional and intellectual investment (Yoder, 2005). This investment is important for all higher education leaders, but community college leaders in particular must examine “their practices and assumptions” as related to the level and scope of interpersonal exchanges that occur on the open-access campus; further, open communication helps facilitate change at institutions where there are students who may require remediation and may come from underrepresented groups (Education Commission of the States, 2004).

The two-year higher education institution presents a unique challenge for leaders: how should the public image of a community college look, particularly those that serve educationally, economically, and culturally diverse constituents? There must be a commitment to diversity at the top levels of administration, faculty, and staff as well as an effort to overcome the “rhetoric which has produced limited visible results” (Farmer, 1997). Research reveals that while almost 50% of the so-called racial and ethnic minority students in America’s higher education system attend community college, close to 90% of the presidents of those institutions were white, less than 5% were African American, approximately 3% were considered Hispanic, and the balance were considered American Native, Asian American, or from some other so-called minority group (Vaughan, 1996).

Public sector organizations have an even more difficult recruitment challenge because they are often seen as less desirable employers than private sector firms. Several public sector executives...complained that the combination of typically lower salaries and fewer perks makes education, government, and other not-for-profit organizations a poor choice for many talented, credentialed, nontraditional candidates. As one educator noted, any person of color who could be hired as a professor can also be hired into the private sector with a considerably better compensation package (Morrison, 1996, pp. 143-144).

Recruitment of leaders from diverse backgrounds is often difficult for community colleges since as public organizations their budgets tend to be less flexible and pre-employment training is typically nonexistent. Yet the issue of diversifying the campus goes beyond bringing in for example, more women or more persons of color as administrators, faculty, or staff; it is necessary to explore and attempt to understand intragroup issues that impact institutional relationships (Sims, 2006). Concerning successful diversity recruitment in general, colleges must ensure that the following issues are clearly addressed (p. 1200):

- ♣ There must be a clear and universal definition of diversity—all members should understand what is meant by diversity within the context of their institution.
- ♣ The definition of diversity must be consistent—while it is important to recognize the language of the law as related to diversity, colleges should develop their definition to include institution-specific language.

Once a coherent definition of diversity is established, it can be incorporated into recruitment and succession plans (Wallin, Cameron, & Sharples, 2005).

Improving recruitment efforts is not the only area of importance; colleges must consider attrition rates related to staff, faculty, and administrators from underrepresented groups. Sims (2006) suggests that issues associated with a lack of on-campus mentoring, feelings of isolation, and hostile environments are factors that lead to attrition. Specifically related to attrition is the notion of employee morale (Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999); employees who feel like valued members of an organization tend to stay with that organization. Current research efforts are focused on what policies and procedures have been developed to maintain diversity at administrative and senior-level staff positions, particularly within the departments that provide service to students (Jackson, 2002) because it is this area of the institution that is typically where first contact with college personnel occurs: if the student body includes more persons of color, researchers suggest that they will have a better overall educational experience via their interactions with staff members of color (Jackson & Phelps, 2004; Mendoza, 2007).

Implications for Future Research

Community colleges will need to prepare for a continuing climate of change: community and local economic needs shift as populations grow or diminish; as the educational, economic, and cultural makeup of student populations change, leaders must be prepared to nurture their staff members beyond former methods of recruitment, hiring, and development. There must be campus-wide support for diversity in student, staff, faculty, and administrative bodies. While diversity statements make for positive accreditation reviews, practical education and open dialogue regarding the practice of inadvertent racism is necessary for success (RegionWise, 2005). Further, an understanding of other success barriers that nontraditional candidates face (such as workplace prejudice; lack of career planning; unsupportive work environments; inability to learn the organizational system because of workplace prejudices; lack of communication with co-workers from different backgrounds; and problems related to the career/family balance) can help open the doors of opportunity within two-year institutions (Center for Survey Research & Analysis, 2003; Morrison, 1996).

What particular steps can community colleges take to develop more diversity within their administrative and other senior-level positions?

- ♣ Study and share. Research findings related to recruitment and retention of faculty, especially within four-year colleges and universities, is quite extensive. Two-year institutions must look closely at themselves and begin sharing the findings with one another and the larger academic community as well, since research regarding diversity within community colleges is limited (Jackson, 2003).

- ♣ Communicate within the institution. While most community college leaders would agree that there is a need for diversity within all levels of the institution, discussions about how to accomplish the goal must go beyond the executive level. Inter- and intra-departmental dialogue that will help staff, administrators, and faculty to air out issues related to resistance to diversity

as well as internal racism issues is important (Kayes, 2006).

- ♣ Re-assess hiring practices. Associated with internal communication efforts is the need to properly align search and hiring initiatives with the “voice” of campus diversity: Although search committees are one part of the diverse hiring picture, diversification of faculty and staff at US colleges and universities can not occur without their eyes being opened to the various biases, assumptions, and stereotypes that influence their perceptions, judgments, and decisions...inclusive educational cultures that retain diverse students and employees can not be created without knowledge and skills in intercultural competence (Kayes, 2006, p. 69).
- ♣ Support and encourage. Community college leaders must recognize that when recruited employees feel valued in their positions, they are more likely to stay with the institution; further, they will also be more likely to encourage colleagues to apply for employment. Employees tend to feel valued when there are opportunities for advancement within the institution (Lewis, 2005). Community colleges must establish an advancement pipeline for their employees—particularly those from underrepresented groups if diversification is indeed a goal.

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