

Perspectives

Community College
Leadership for the
21st Century

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The institutions that are rated most highly in terms of diversity are also rated highly in relation to other measures of organizational success.

- Mark D. Winston

Building and sustaining a diverse leadership pipeline will not be possible without improved results in recruiting...from all segments of American society.

- Vernon A. Jordan

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Diversity in the Executive Suite

Andrew C. Jones, EdD

Senior Advisor to the CEO, Base 11
Costa Mesa, California

In their 1991 book, *Underrepresentation and the Question of Diversity*, authors Rosemary Gillet-Karam and John and Susan Roueche wrote, "There are over 1200 American community colleges... 90 percent of them are headed by white men; and almost 90 percent of their faculties are also white." Regrettably, not much has changed in 25 years. Women have been the primary recipients of diversity efforts, now representing 27 percent of CEOs. Minorities represent just over 12 percent, while faculty numbers are approximately flat. This trend is problematic for a number of reasons, including a diminishing pipeline of white faculty and administrators as significant numbers edge toward retirement and an overall decline in the white population, coupled with a rapid increase in minority populations, primarily Hispanic, possessing limited access to options that lead to prosperity.

Economic and egalitarian challenges are also prominent. Among them is the fact that the primary tool for long-term income stability – social security – requires three productive workers paying into the system for each retiree. The lack of inclusion of minority candidates in the educational and corporate pipelines may project what could become a disastrous economic outcome for our nation.

One potential asset to help address this challenge is the community college, arguably the least appreciated educational resource in the world. Yet this invaluable asset has over 1100 US-based institutions not counting the branch campuses, satellites, and centers, which certainly propel them to over 1500 regionally accredited entities. Over 6.8 million students attend, which accounts for almost half of all US undergraduates and nearly 60 percent of the minority student population in the US. It has often been called the Ellis Island of US higher education, accepting students from all walks of life to include returning veterans, immigrants, first generation college-going, incumbent workers, displaced homemakers, disabled, disenfranchised, endowed, highly-gifted, and highly-motivated persons of every hue, philosophical, political, and religious persuasion known to mankind. It is unequivocally the most diverse institution in the world; that is, with regard to its students.

This is not the case for persons of color at the decision-making level. I will use minority and person of color interchangeably in this article. As for my own journey after four decades of higher education experience which included twenty years in the four year sector, I found myself in the vibrant and dynamic, yet underappreciated community college environment. I suspected that the glass ceiling, the notion of privilege and dominant interest and the ever-present "isms" would be less

impactful in this multicultural haven. I was wrong. There is no Camelot for diversity in US community colleges. This is not to say that there are no colleges, nor even college districts, that are diverse and working diligently at becoming and/or maintaining equity. However, the vast majority of US community colleges do not, and will not, reflect this goal.

Diversity for the purpose of this article is being operationally and narrowly defined as ethnic or racial. Empirically, I am defining diversity as "a difference of." Diversity therefore is a difference of race and ethnicity. While statistically more women are represented in the executive suites of community colleges, when we look at ethnicity and race, persons of color pale in comparison to the percentage of minority students served. We are diverse in a myriad of ways, but not in perhaps in one of the most important elements – leadership.

While statistically more women are represented in the executive suites of community colleges, when we look at ethnicity and race, persons of color pale in comparison to the percentage of minority students served.

Some guided questions might help set the context for the article.

- ▲ What is the problem?
- ▲ Is there a problem?
- ▲ Why is it important to have persons of color in the executive suite and more specifically as CEOs?
- ▲ Is there a conscious, intentional effort being made to exclude persons of color from executive positions in higher education?
- ▲ How complicit are people of color in maintaining this status (stereotype threat syndrome, career extension, blocking, etc.)?
- ▲ How do we fix the problem?

The lack of visible, well-placed persons of color in community colleges may provide disincentives to minority students' aspirations and achievement. Numerous studies support the idea that students achieve at higher levels when persons of similar background are represented as visible and positive (role models). Executives of color may be better suited to understand the needs of minority students and marshal internal forces within the college to address them. Minority executives may be more open to implement changes needed to address the challenges that all students present due to some of the experiences that they have had to undergo. These attributes may be discerned in the form of multidimensionalism or uni-dimensionalism. Largely, we are talking about how we

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EMERGING LEADERS' PERSPECTIVES

Diversity is critical to the mission of any complex organization and specifically to community colleges. Research generally supports the notion that diversity presents an opportunity for organizations to excel, as well as an obligation to adapt to changing demographic conditions. Therefore, it is critical that colleges maintain a commitment to a fully diverse working environment that is both inclusive and free of discriminatory obstacles to advancement. We posed the following question to emerging and national leaders. Their answers appear below.

Danyelle Gregory, MA

Coordinator of Pre-College Programs
Ferris State University
Big Rapids, Michigan

Creating a diverse culture in higher education has been an increasingly critical topic. However, truly diversifying the leadership within our institutions, specifically community colleges, will require an institutional commitment on all levels. I believe that there are two key strategies that will aid in a forward movement of diversity initiatives on community college campuses:

Diversifying the Pipeline. Historically faculty positions have been the pipeline to senior level leadership in higher education. Unfortunately, oftentimes these positions lack a diverse pool of candidates. Institutions should ensure that they are practicing diverse recruiting strategies such as vetting candidates from more inclusive roles. This can be done by intentionally recruiting candidates from the Student Affairs Departments, which often have a higher concentration of minorities. In addition, community colleges should ensure that job postings are reaching a diverse pool of candidates by communicating the information to the local community.

Mentorship. Mentorship has been identified as a key factor to success and retention in the workplace. Community colleges should create and support mentorship programs that target minority faculty and staff. Because literature supports the notion that minority students and professionals are less likely to develop mentoring relationships than their white counterparts, it is important that community colleges promote and support mentoring programs amongst this population.

Mentoring is a tool that supports the career development of a minority administrator's experiences in institutional cultures and is an important aspect of minority's career success (Jones et. al, 2012). For instance, senior level minority faculty and staff should mentor an entry/mid-level minority faculty or staff member. This interaction creates a sense of belonging and confidence that encourages minorities to step into leadership roles within the institution. These relationships provide guidance to the "unwritten rules" of the institutional culture and may provide strategies for coping with the day to day obstacles that faculty and administrators of color often face.

Personally, relationships with my own mentors have given me the confidence to pursue many of the leadership roles I have held or currently hold and the desire to want to mentor others. Mentoring has a trickle-down effect that results in the recruitment and retention of minority faculty and staff, and an increase in the likelihood that those individuals will pursue leadership roles in the future.

Reference

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QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

Given the proven value of diversity in leadership, what recommendations can you offer to build a more diverse leadership cadre?

...[T]he traditional path to the presidency offers little diversity and inclusion.

- Sean L. Huddleston

Sean Huddleston, MEd, EdS

Chief Officer, Diversity, Inclusion & Community Engagement
Framingham State University
Marlborough, Massachusetts

Diversifying the presidency in community colleges will not be easy, as many of the traditional paths to the chief executive officer role also lack diversity and inclusion. According to a 2015 survey of community college chief executive

officers, over 70 percent of sitting CEOs will retire within the next 10 years, and most people who ascend to the role of CEO at community colleges typically served as a Chief Academic Officer/Provost, or have held some other senior administrative position (Amey and VanDerlinden, 2002). Unfortunately, less than six percent of people who serve in these roles are also members of minority groups (González, 2010). Still, all is not lost. I offer three recommendations for community colleges to consider for building and sustaining a more diverse pool of leaders:

- 1. Sound the Alarm.** Community colleges need to ensure that the impending crisis in available candidates for leadership is well communicated both inside and outside of their ranks. This is not new. As early as 1996, communicating with professional minority organizations, church groups, and other community organizations to improve diversity in leadership at community colleges was suggested (Foote, 1996). Enlisting the help of people and organizations with a vested interest in developing and securing opportunities for diverse leaders helps identify innovative approaches to addressing this need.
- 2. Rewrite Tradition.** As noted, the traditional path to the presidency offers little diversity and inclusion. Consequently, community colleges must begin to look to other leadership roles that attract more professionals of color and require transferrable skills to meet new imperatives. One such role to consider is the Chief Diversity Officer (CDO). Partners from leading executive search firm Witt Kieffer note that "CDOs are attractive candidates to move up in the administrative ranks, even into presidential and provost positions" because they often confront complex issues and lead organizations to achieve more equitable outcomes (Leske & Tomlin, 2014).
- 3. Reach In.** González (2010) argues that higher education does not effectively identify, mentor, and promote diverse pools of internal candidates through succession planning. By identifying promising faculty or administrators who may demonstrate the potential to lead, institutions can create career development plans that will help to prepare them for leadership. The plan should include strategies to secure the academic credentials, leadership skills, and professional experience necessary to succeed in the new role, as well as exposure to sitting community college CEOs.

References - To view complete list of References, click here: <http://bit.ly/2csoNtf>

Danyelle Gregory currently serves as the Coordinator of Pre-College Programs for Ferris State University. She has previously held college access positions with Western Michigan University and Kellogg Community College (MI). Danyelle earned her Bachelor of Arts from The Robert B. Miller College, and Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Affairs from Western Michigan University. Ms. Gregory is currently pursuing her Doctorate in Community College Leadership at Ferris State University.



Sean L. Huddleston serves as Chief Officer of Diversity, Inclusion & Community Engagement for Framingham State University. He has previously held diversity leadership positions with Grand Valley State University and Cornell University, as well as with major corporations and non-profit organizations. He earned his MEd and EdS degrees from Grand Valley State University and is a Cornell University Certified Diversity Advanced Practitioner. Currently Sean is enrolled in the Ferris State University DCCL program.



NATIONAL LEADER PERSPECTIVE

Diversity is critical to the mission of any complex organization and specifically to community colleges. Research generally supports the notion that diversity presents an opportunity for organizations to excel, as well as an obligation to adapt to changing demographic conditions. Therefore, it is critical that colleges maintain a commitment to a fully diverse working environment that is both inclusive and free of discriminatory obstacles to advancement. We posed the following question to emerging and national leaders. Their answers appear below.

Diversity - Maximizing Enabling Perspectives

Michelle R. Howard-Vital, PhD

Executive Vice President and Provost
Florida Memorial University
Miami Gardens, Florida

Some research suggests that diversity in the workforce, in its broadest conceptualization, leads to greater productivity, competitiveness, and innovation, but getting to, and sustaining that diversity is often challenging. Census data also indicate that America continues to evolve into a nation of persons with a broad range of ethnic and racial characteristics. Thus, it could be argued that employees from diverse backgrounds, possibly because of the range of perspectives and experiences they bring to bear, could enhance an institution's ability to respond, initiate, and thrive globally. So, why are we still struggling to capture the benefits of diversity in many colleges and universities?

[I]f broad-based talent, in all its diverse forms, was visibly embraced by college presidents, trustees, and other leaders, there would be more diversity in the workforce on college campuses.

After serving on numerous search committees at various colleges, I have noted that oftentimes committees recommend candidates who satisfy a social comfort or fit, unwittingly narrowing the institution's range of potential intellectual capital and talent. Yet, I suspect, if broad-based talent, in all its diverse forms, was visibly embraced by college presidents, trustees, and other leaders, there would be more diversity in the workforce on college campuses. Further, departmental leaders, like chairpersons, might help broaden the concept of fit and minimize staff concerns by highlighting the benefits of diverse viewpoints for solution-finding and innovation. If leaders focused more attention on the positive outcomes of diversity, there would probably be a broader acceptance of different world views, and possibly global benefits of broader pools of talent.

One way to highlight the benefits of diversity is by hiring leaders who have had positive experiences with diverse workforces earlier in their careers. In my first teaching position in Chicago, for example, there was an extremely diverse faculty, staff, and student population. Decades later, I still treasure the many personal and collegial results of teaching in such a diverse college. These advantages have helped form my personal and professional identity. As a new English faculty member, my colleagues stimulated me to learn about a broader range of literature, to write poetry, and to earn my doctorate. The faculty's diverse backgrounds enriched our department discussions, curriculum innovations, and views of America. It was a fun and stimulating place to work. Needless to say, these experiences in the college's enriched environment set the tone for an appreciation of diverse perspectives for the rest of my career.

Over the years, I have been exposed to various forms of diversity in nine institutions of higher education in four states. Numerous collegial

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interactions have further expanded my concept of diversity and the need to embrace diverse perspectives in order to recognize opportunities, to solve seemingly intractable problems, and to prepare students to compete globally. Because of this exposure, I feel connected to the intellectual potential of a much larger learning community.

Now, I am currently working with amazing colleagues in one of the most diverse areas of America – South Florida. At my current university, faculty diversity

probably developed because of its geographical location. While the region is connected to the continental USA, our "panhandle" extends toward the Caribbean islands and South American countries. To say that working in an environment of such diverse faculty is intellectually stimulating is a huge understatement. Conversations and decision-making are undergirded with observations from different world experiences and educational perspectives on human potential, political strategies, and future global directions.

By the same token, to state that there are not sometimes adjustments that must be made with this much diversity would be disingenuous. However, a rallying call to focus us on our common strategic goals usually minimizes distractions.

So, how can institutions harness and employ the vast potential of broader talent?

- ▲ Recognize that diversity is a multi-faceted concept that goes far beyond gender, ethnic backgrounds, and regional differences.
- ▲ Understand that the digital connectivity that most of us use daily has changed everything, and there is no closing the door to global viewpoints and talents.
- ▲ Encourage the development of diverse teams to lead specific initiatives and recognize and reward the teams at faculty/staff forums.
- ▲ Support faculty exchanges with institutions around the world that will demonstrate the broad expansiveness of viewpoints and intellectual capital.
- ▲ Engage in conversations honestly about the changing demographics in America, the region, and world, so that these changes can be framed as assets.
- ▲ Assign freshman reading materials that explore the lives of others like the anthology *Freedom* by authors who draw attention to global human rights issues (Amnesty International, 2009).
- ▲ Hire exceptional administrators and leaders from different backgrounds, experiences, and languages with an openness to explore talent from various parts of the nation, world, and different generations.

Dr. Michelle Howard-Vital is Executive Vice President and Provost at Florida Memorial University where she works with a team of talented and diverse faculty committed to improving higher education for the next generational of leaders. She is also the former President of Cheyney University (2007-2014), Interim Chancellor of Winston-Salem State University (2006-2007), Associate Vice President for the University of North Carolina System at its General Administration in Chapel Hill (2003-2006), and Vice Chancellor for Public Service /Associate Provost at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (1993-2003). She earned her MA from the University of Chicago and her doctorate from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Dr. Howard-Vital has over 35 years of experience in various roles in higher education, and she has worked in four states—Illinois, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Florida. Of all of her accomplishments, awards, and publications, Dr. Howard-Vital is most proud of earning full professor.



QUICK TAKES
Highlights
from the Field

Leadership, Diversity and Inclusion: Insights from Scholarship

by Research Center for Leadership in Action, NYU Wagner

The authors suggest that a key question in assessing equity within any sector is the extent to which leadership positions are equally distributed among members of different groups. Finding the general scholarly literature on diversity in leadership to be limited, they recommend that the academic literature should look more closely at diversity in leadership ranks, not just in numbers. Further, they discuss ways to support organizations to be better able to harness diversity. Access this work here: <http://bit.ly/2cd4ekT>

Director's Diversity in Leadership Study: Overcoming Barriers to Advancement

by Vernon A. Jordan

Jordan served as Chair of the Director's Diversity in Leadership Study, addressing obstacles in the pathway to senior CIA levels and how those obstacles affect the organization's diversity. Applicable to community colleges, this report articulates the importance of diversity in leadership in the enhancement of performance, including decision-making and problem-solving; effective use of the workforce's talents; greater cultural competence to enhance performance; more innovation; and promoting the organization as an employer of choice in an increasingly diverse nation. Access this work here: <https://www.cia.gov/library/reports/dls-report.pdf>



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EDITORIAL STAFF
Jeanne Bonner, PhD, Editor
Mara Jevera Fulmer, EdD, MFA, Design & Production Editor

To send comments or receive a copy of this publication, please contact us at: ccallian@fsu.edu

Diversity in the Executive Suite (continued from page 1)

see the world, systems and processes, and the ways we have perspective. Difficult to quantify, but impossible to ignore, these forces either propel us toward success or relegate us to inaction.

One crucial goal is to broaden or modify what are considered as acceptable pathways for ascension and succession in the community college leadership sector.

The problem is that the paucity of persons of color in positions of leadership provides us inadequate opportunity to test the theory. One mistake, or the perception thereof, in the administration of a person of color too often proves fatal. Persons of color in executive roles have no less desire to be successful than anyone else. Very often they are brought in as a sign of change or following a particularly tough economic or scandalous episode or situation. Given initial support, these leaders are frequently and quickly alienated and often isolated from the mainstream decision-making hierarchy. Sometimes these executives are asked to do the impossible and when they begin to make the changes necessary to begin that journey, they are abandoned and often attacked by the very people who brought them into the position.

When a white male fails or doesn't meet certain expectations and he moves on, it is/was considered an individual failure or bad fit. However, in many cases when a person of color meets the same fate, it is often an indictment of the group or all persons of color and easily justifies an either conscious or subconscious decision to not engage in any more diversity efforts.

Board members from different districts converse and exchange experiences and sometimes unintentionally influence their colleagues. Other scenarios may involve active and intentional efforts to prevent persons of color from ascending to the executive level, particularly the presidency/chancellorship. Moreover, some board members or supervisory executives hire persons of color because they believe the person of color wants the job so badly that the individual will comply with every whim and desire of the hiring authority.

Sometimes persons of color do want their "chance at the golden ring" so badly that they accept positions they are not yet ready to assume. While rare, it does happen and often leads to another nail in the coffin for minority candidates. The failed white executive's experience will never or rarely "pull down the race." And typically, it is seen as an individual failure, not an indictment of a group.

Aaronson and Steel popularized the notion of stereotype threat. One of the best descriptions I've found is, performance can be undermined because of concerns about possibly confirming negative stereotypes about one's group. I can tell you that I have both observed victims and have personally been a victim of this phenomenon.

Suffice it to say that it is not desirable that just by virtue of being born black, brown, red, or yellow one has to constantly be on the defensive regarding others' notions of inferiority. What about the person of color who is so concerned about the perception that he or she will be biased toward other persons of color? So much so that they deliberately and intentionally block the pathway of

candidates of color. The thinking behind this action is that the fewer persons of color present, the fewer things can go wrong and the less scrutiny one will receive. I have observed and attempted to counsel some persons of color regarding the perception that they are averse to hiring other persons of color. Some admit that they were gun shy and others thanked me for the alert, while a few categorically deny any such position.

In my view, there are several major touch points that must be addressed to correct the problems that abound. Let's begin with the institutional fixes:

- ▲ There must be a commitment from the board of trustees in the form of an actionable policy and executable plan, not just a policy statement.
- ▲ Mission alignment and modifications to reflect diversity aspirations must be present.
- ▲ Faculty and staff have to be held accountable through evaluation and annual assessments.
- ▲ Bias training needs to be routinely embedded into the fabric of the institution.
- ▲ Search committees must be trained annually to practice inclusiveness and recognize bias of all kinds.
- ▲ Institutions must take risks and venture outside of their internal cultural comfort zones.
- ▲ The institution has to clearly articulate the gains and positives to be achieved by embracing diversity.
- ▲ Rewards and sanctions must be applied.

Preparation for individuals must include:

- ▲ Sensitivity, phobia, and bias training;
- ▲ Behavior modification training;
- ▲ Opportunities to safely and regularly discuss the rationale for change around diversity;
- ▲ Awareness of opportunities to examine the heart.

One crucial goal is to broaden or modify what are considered as acceptable pathways for ascension and succession in the community college leadership sector. Strategic changes must be initiated in the community college culture to allow people of color to act and respond outside the norms established for them by the traditional hiring and placement hierarchies. Achieving this simple, but difficult goal will create the atmosphere that finally allows community colleges to reach the great promise and aspiration of full inclusivity.



Andrew C. Jones, EdD, has served as an executive administrator for over 30 years, most recently as Interim Executive Vice Chancellor for Education and Technology at Contra Costa Community College District in California. Currently Senior Advisor to the CEO, Base 11, his previous positions also include Chancellor of the Coast Community College District, Executive Vice Chancellor of Educational Affairs for the Dallas County Community College District, and President of the Community College of Baltimore County. Dr. Jones led several national initiatives to address the declining role of males of color in higher education, to promote increased faculty diversity and development, and to foster student success through the use of technology, process improvement, and predictive analytics. Recently retired, Dr. Jones remains involved with several nonprofit, professional, and start-up entities and continues his involvement with statewide workforce efforts in developing STEM based entrepreneurial initiatives to enhance the working learner and promote the notion of knowledge acquired through doing. He holds a doctorate in education and public policy from Temple University and a master's degree from the University of Maryland.