

COMMENTARY

Chief Diversity Officers and the Wonderful World of Academe

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The chief diversity officer (CDO) position is new in the realm of higher education administration. Charged with helping their institutions become more diverse and inclusive, the people who occupy these positions face a variety of challenges as they attempt to modify change-resistant institutional cultures. Still, the emergence of the CDO position as a useful, even important, administrative appointment provides an opportunity to broaden representation in the academy among the student bodies, faculty, and administration, and perhaps even within the curriculum.

Keywords: diversity, inclusion, higher education, institutional change, academe

The analysis provided by Leon (2014) in his article, “Designing the Chief Diversity Officer Position,” in the current issue of *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* is important and useful in gaining a better understanding about where the chief diversity officer (CDO) currently fits in the framework of the academic enterprise. The models that have been identified offer valuable insight into the ways that different institutions of higher education regard the CDO position, and they illustrate various organizational designs that offer the individuals who occupy these posts a range of opportunities to help their institutions change in order to meet increasing expectations that they will be diverse, inclusive environments. Leon (2014) correctly concludes that, “no two CDO roles are alike,” in part, because no two higher education institutions are exactly alike.

Still, one aspect of the difficulty that CDOs face in their attempts to transform their environments, irrespective of their specific setting, is the realization that the very institutions that employ them are designed to maintain—not to

reconfigure—the existing social structure and the consequent patterns of opportunity and mobility. This realization explains the caution, hesitation, and sometimes outright resistance to modifying internal structures and to implementing remedial measures that would facilitate accomplishing the very goals of diversity and inclusion that the institutions claim they want to achieve. Far from receiving unqualified and unstinting support for their efforts, CDOs should be prepared to encounter “passive resistance” when the push for cultural change offends powerful constituencies, be they students, faculty, administrators, or sometimes, even alumni.

Although external observers often consider colleges and universities to be very liberal social environments, change resistant behaviors and attitudes loom large within these institutions as a means of maintaining the privileges enjoyed by those individuals and groups for whom the system offers the legacy of preferential treatment. Further, the very history and evolution of higher education institutions in America plainly reveals that the academic culture has willingly embraced the exclusion of minority group members. Only within the past few decades have colleges and universities recognized diversity as a positive construct, and the extent of institutional commitment to this goal is certainly not uniform. Not only has the impetus for this change occurred within a relatively re-

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cent time frame, but it has come largely from outside the institutions, rather than from within, for as Williams and Wade-Golden (2013) pointed out, the academic CDO position mirrors a trend that was established earlier in the corporate and governmental sectors. “Just 20 years ago,” Stokes and Wheeler (2014) stated, “the CDO title was nonexistent”.

It should not be surprising then, that the roles and responsibilities of CDOs in colleges and universities are, at this point, something less than definitive. These are relatively new positions in the academic community, and their very existence chronicles a change in policy and practice for institutions of higher learning in this postcivil rights movement era that we now enjoy. Although it is comforting for us to pretend that it was a very long time ago when postsecondary institutions honored the now disgraced cultural traditions of racial segregation and unapologetic discrimination, we are only briefly removed from that reality, and the impact of the structural dynamics of a social system based on White supremacy continues to affect us a nation. The emergence of the CDO role and its recognition as a useful, even important, administrative position provides an opportunity to direct institutional action toward the diminution of patterns of privilege that have been part of the academy from its inception.

Having been provided by the *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* editors with the opportunity to comment on Leon’s article, it is important in my view, to place the creation of the CDO position into historical and social context. The observations that I make are informed by my varied and enriching experiences in the world of academe where over more than four decades, I have held faculty and administrative positions across the spectrum of postsecondary institutions, from a community college to an Ivy League university, including a stint as the inaugural CDO at a major public research university. In addition, I have enjoyed the vantage point of a senior-level position at the nation’s premier higher education policy organization, which resulted in visits to scores of college and university campuses to address diversity issues, concerns, problems, and opportunities.

At the various stops along the way of my career path, I have both experienced and witnessed manifestations of individual and institutional resistance to diversity. My research and

scholarly activity has been focused on the cultural and social factors that affect underserved populations, with particular emphasis on college and university settings, and I have authored a number of publications on diversity-connected matters that have appeared in a range of academic and popular outlets. My immersion in the area of academic diversity causes me to be both hopeful and cautious, because the reality is that whether teaching-centered or research-focused, religious or secular, large or small, urban or rural, America’s colleges and universities, with only rare exceptions, have been as consistent and persistent as other social institutions in reflecting the aversion to diversity that historically has been an ingrained trait of the national character and psyche. But, just possibly, change may be in the offing.

Williams and Wade-Golden (2013) presented three models of organizational diversity and highlight the transition from the Affirmative Action and Equity Model of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, to the Learning, Diversity, and Research model of the 1990s and 2000 while observing that “in recent years, the diversity umbrella has expanded to include a broader range of populations, including native populations, persons with disabilities, faith based communities, members of the LGBT community, veterans, and foreign nationals among others.” Clearly and fortunately, there has been a noticeable modification in institutional behavior regarding inclusiveness over the past 30 to 40 years, but not nearly as much as might be expected, considering our national pledge to provide liberty, justice, and opportunity for all. Significant improvement has been made in promoting diversity and inclusion within colleges and universities in such previously stigmatized categories as gender, sexual orientation, and handicapped status so that previous discriminatory practices are being demonstrably eroded, even while issues of race and ethnicity continue to be focus areas of controversy and litigation.

Kerr (1963) identified “consistency with the surrounding society” as the justification for the modern American multiversity. If he is correct, then the rapidly changing national demographic mirror which reflects increasing percentages of Hispanics and African Americans in the overall population, accompanied by the liberalization of longstanding social prohibitions, would suggest that the academic community will embrace

and pursue diversity in all its manifestations. Almost all predominantly White colleges and universities now seek to increase their enrollment of undergraduates of color, and this is a necessary but not sufficient measure of diversity, because a genuine institutional commitment would also include representation of people of color in the faculty and senior administration ranks that goes beyond tokenism, as well as modifications in curricula to include appropriate representation of the contributions of people of color.

As CDOs attempt to help their respective institutions actualize their stated interests in becoming more diverse settings by enlarging their populations of African Americans and Latinos, which are drastically underrepresented in regards to their proportion of the overall population, they can expect to encounter and confront barriers, large and small, individual and institutional. There will continue to be selfish-interest groups and individuals—the “diversiphobes”—that oppose institutional actions to promote diversity when it increases the representation of people of color. They contend that it mandates a weakening of traditional standards of excellence as they invoke nostalgia for those “good old days” when the academy was homogeneous and monocultural, all the while conveniently ignoring the blatant contradictions between American ideals and exclusionary policies, both within the academy and the larger society. Although expanding the parameters of inclusiveness is an appropriate endeavor, recent United States Supreme Court rulings remind us that the inequities in higher education faced by traditionally underrepresented racial and cultural groups continue to fester. CDOs must bring the most difficult and complicated aspects of institutional practice into the light, and not simply settle for general representations of institutional improvement, for as higher education leader Charlie Nelms framed the situation, “while diversity is important, it is not a substitute for equity” (C. Nelms, personal communication, January 20, 2014).

Surface or Substantive Change?

The range of responsibilities and expectations that individuals in the pathbreaking chief diversity positions are charged to pursue vary widely, for the position description and duties

tend to be institution specific. So, far from being typecast, “sitting CDOs come from a broad range of backgrounds and career tracks. Within the academy, they include human resources, EEO and AA offices, student affairs, faculty, academic administration and enrollment/admissions. Other backgrounds include diversity positions in health care or the corporate sector, leadership consulting, diversity training, ministry and more” (Witt/Kieffer, 2011). In theory, a CDO faces the possibility of becoming either a “savior” or “scapegoat” at his or her institution, depending on the degree and depth of institutional support and commitment that is extended. As Leon (2014) surmises, if the person receives the necessary authority resources and support to be effective, then the selection of a CDO will serve as a recognition that the college or university is ready to begin the transformation process toward becoming more diverse and inclusive, but the risk is always present that the individual will be thrust into what Williams and Wade-Golden (2013) called “the latent role of a diversity fixer.” The phrase refers to situations that are problematic and/or embarrassing for the institution where the CDO is expected to step in to address them, often bereft of any previous knowledge of, or involvement in, the matters at hand.

At the 2011 annual meeting of the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education, while addressing an audience that included a number of academic CDOs, Professor Evelyn Hu-DeHart, then Director of the Center for Race and Ethnicity at Brown University, expressed concerns about CDOs being viewed as resident “fixers.” She argued that, as the ultimate administrative authorities for their institutions it should be chancellors and presidents, not CDOs who bear the ultimate responsibility for increasing diversity on their campuses. CDOs should be pushing for more equity and Black and Hispanic representation on their campuses, she said, while cautioning the audience about helping their institutions create the impression that they were far more concerned with diversity and equity than is actually the case (Schmidt, 2008). An internationally recognized scholar and long-time diversity advocate, Hu-DeHart was criticized by some CDOs who felt that her remarks undermined their credibility. Their responses illustrate the sensitivity and duality that the CDO positions

engender as they are absorbed into the administrative hierarchy.

When asked, in an interview in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (June, 2011), if having more and more colleges hiring CDOs was a good thing I was attempting to make a point similar to the one raised by Hu-Dehart. My response was, “I think it *can* be a good thing. But it can also be a bad thing because it provides an opportunity for institutions who want to be disingenuous to say, ‘We’ve hired someone and this person will fix everything. Despite our history, this person will make everything right.’ And then if they don’t, the institution can put the blame on them.” My comments became grist for the mill of a very different audience than CDOs and, in a right-wing publication called *Minding the Campus: Reforming Our Universities* (Bauerlin, 2011), the diversiphobes offered this observation: “From the very first question and response, the interview casts an illuminating light on the mentality of diversity officials, an outlook that does not promise objective and fair interpretations of campus policies and practices.” The sweeping generalization that I represented and spoke on behalf of all “diversity officials” only amplifies the absurd notion that everyone who falls within this category interprets campus policies in a subjective and unfair manner, or more precisely, in a manner that challenges the continuation of manifestations of white privilege.

It is precisely because they are change agents whose charge is to diversify the campus that CDOs “skate on thin ice” and are subject to criticism from both ends of the political spectrum. Although the current social milieu generally presumes that enlightened institutions will have a CDO as part of their administrative structure, Leon’s research acknowledges that actually making an impact as a CDO within one’s institution can prove to be a tricky undertaking, and the degree of progress accomplished through one’s efforts will likely be subject to a variety of interpretations. Thus, although in most instances, appointing a CDO is an important step forward in recognizing and responding to the demographic, social, and political changes that are taking place in the society, the burden of institutional change cannot be put on the shoulders of that person alone. It is both unfair and unreasonable to presume that in short order and by him/herself, the CDO will be able

to correct longstanding practices and manifestations of the institutional culture that support inequitable treatment of certain individuals or groups. The role, as Leon (2014) notes, must be equipped to fit the institutional demands.

In relatively “safe” categories where the college or university is likely to gain positive publicity and image enhancement for its diversity initiatives, such as increasing the recruitment of veterans and international students, and making the campus environment a more welcoming one for students and faculty from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community, the CDO will almost certainly receive encouragement and support from various interested parties who are in favor of additional institutional diversity along these lines. Other more contentious areas, such as hiring racially and ethnically underrepresented faculty and instigating culturally sensitive curricular reform, are likely to prove to be much more challenging targets for institutional change.

What Happens Next?

Stokes and Wheeler (2014) focused their analysis largely on diversity in the corporate arena but many of their observations hold true for the academy as well. They pointed out that

It’s important to look at the future now because it is a pivotal time for the CDO role and for diversity and inclusion work . . . there will be a significant changing of the guard, from those who experienced the world in one way to those who have a different perspective. To ensure their diversity pipelines are well populated, current CDOs will not only have to consider who will one day assume their roles, but also what diverse talent is available for any leadership position.

This observation applies to the academic community as well, but the situation becomes more complicated when the diffuse nature of institutional governance and the influence of various external constituencies, such as alumni and legislators, are taken into account. A corporate chief executive officer (CEO) arguably has much more “control” over the policies and practices within his or her operation than an academic president or chancellor. Whereas the business leader is directly responsible to a board of directors and secondarily to the company shareholders, the ability to institute change within the organization and in a timely manner is usually a prerogative of the CEO, and he or

she can exercise that authority with a fair amount of latitude.

Even though academic institutions are increasingly prone to adopting a corporate approach to administrative activity where anticipated outcomes are defined and measured, specific goals for diversity and inclusion often remain vague and nonspecific. The academic CDO position carries with it a measure of complexity that reflects the ambiguity of the decision making process that is inherent to the higher education community, and the responsibilities will only be successfully carried out if the individual can convince key institutional players to engage in the change process.

One of the most significant, and sometimes vexing, efforts required of a chief diversity officer calls for cultivating allies among those who already hold stature and significance within the institution—senior faculty members and administrators. The configuration of the academic hierarchy means that this cluster of influential figures will be primarily, but not exclusively, composed of White males, and it is extremely important to have them assume some measure of ownership of the necessity to increase institutional diversity and the responsibility to expand this perspective to their peers throughout the academy. (Harvey, 2011)

According to Witt/Kieffer (2011), “a sophisticated set of negotiation, diplomatic, communication, and analytical skills will be required to be successful, regardless of the CDOs academic credentials and background.” One critically important aspect of the success of the CDO in postsecondary settings will be the degree to which key players within the community view the work of that person as central, rather than peripheral, to the future well-being of the institution. To that effect, the CDO will need for the aforementioned accomplished White colleagues to serve as advocates for the attainment of the goals set by the diversity office, not only in formal institutional settings but also in informal social gatherings with their colleagues where “talking shop” frequently occurs.

In the corporate world, Stokes and Wheeler (2014) contended that,

To meet the challenges that come with leading diversity strategy today and tomorrow, creating value for the bottom line and ensuring a diverse workforce has the access and opportunities needed to succeed, CDO’s need to speak the language of business and be seen as business leaders first and diversity leaders second.

Will future academic CEOs be held to a similar standard? Organizational stratification in the academy is convoluted because while the cohort of faculty members are clearly identified by rank and title, the institutional administrative personnel function within a parallel hierarchy, and the tension between the two groups on matters of academic policy, as well as financial priorities appears to have increased over the past several years. As the CDO position is, by definition, an administrative appointment but one that overlaps substantially into areas that traditionally are considered academic affairs, it may become increasingly important for the CDO to have established him or herself as a credible academician prior to moving into a role where he or she will be expecting to provide input on such matters as faculty hiring and course approval. It seems plausible that a person who is appointed to a position of academic CDO in the future may need to have held a faculty position at some point in his or her past, preferably with tenure, to fulfill various responsibilities that fall within the purview of academic affairs.

The Race Is On

Lynch (2013) maintained that “there is a lot of attention placed on the changing face of college students, but I feel that for college campuses to be effective long-term, diversity in faculty needs to be a paramount concern,” and on this point I heartily agree. Although significantly larger representations of African American and Hispanic students can be considered to be an inevitability in postsecondary institutions in the future, a similar statement cannot be made in regards to the representation of these two underrepresented groups among the cadre of faculty members, which are the positions from which individuals usually move into senior level administration in the academy. But, difficulty lies ahead in appointing a diverse group of CDOs, let alone administrative officials in positions as presidents, chancellors, or provosts if these future leaders are expected to have held tenured faculty positions.

Over a decade ago, Gaff (2000) observed that although

The faculties of colleges and universities remain overwhelmingly white, at this time, the academic profession, facing a turnover of large numbers of faculty

members, has the opportunity to shape the future to look more like America and more like the increasingly diverse student population. It has an opportunity as well to exercise leadership with regard to human equality.

The increased representation of faculty of color is important on the campuses of predominantly White colleges and universities because by their very presence, these persons transmit a message to White students and their White faculty colleagues about the academic and intellectual capacity contained within the respective groups that they represent, although they simultaneously provide role models to the students from the underserved communities (Harvey, 2011). Further, upon earning tenure, these faculty of color are positioned to influence a variety of institutional policies and procedures, potentially over several decades if they choose to remain in place.

The sparse representation of African American and Hispanic faculty echoes the concern that Hu-DeHart raised in her comments at the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education. After four decades of affirmative action, African American faculty still account for only 5.1% of the nation's faculty, and Hispanics are less than 3% (Harvey, 2013). As these are positions of potential power and influence within the academy, access to the faculty ranks has proven to be a difficult endeavor for scholars from the African American and Hispanic communities, even when they have backgrounds and accomplishments that are equal to, or in some cases superior to, their White colleagues. It is disconcerting that Turner's (2008) research reveals that despite having equal or better credentials than their White counterparts, African American and Hispanic aspirants were less likely to receive the faculty position they were seeking.

Cataloging Knowledge: Curricular Control

According to Picca and Feagin (2007), "one reason that racial barriers persist on our college campuses is the failure to educate students, at all levels, about the nation's racial and ethnic history. Thus an important strategy for dealing with racist attitudes and racial ignorance lies within the traditional mandate of higher education: Provide a complete and critical education for all college students in regard to the nation's racial history, including the historical and contemporary realities

of racial prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination." The sense of marginalization that is prompting students of color to recognize and articulate the need for curricular reform was displayed recently when a group of student activists at the University of Michigan specified seven demands addressing the lack of diversity and inclusion at the institution.

The Being Black at Michigan movement included this statement on the list that was presented to the University administration: "We demand an opportunity to be educated and educate about America's historical treatment and marginalization of colored groups through race and ethnicity requirements through all schools and colleges within the university" (Freed, 2014). Many occupants of the academy will strongly contend that the process of curricular development has been "neutral" and "objective," but the record shows a marked difference throughout the intellectual domain in the treatment accorded to Whites and people of color in textbooks and other curricular materials.

In the academic community, "the mechanism to determine 'acceptable' material is its placement in the curriculum, the unit of delivery is the course, and the measurement of value is the course credit. Information not found within the course offerings in the curriculum, and thus not receiving credit, is considered to be suspect, flimsy, or simply non-academic" (Harvey, 2011). This arrangement, Tierney (1991) argued,

...serves to privilege Western, patriarchal culture on the one hand while simultaneously repressing and marginalizing the voices of others who live outside of the dominant centers of power, that is those others who have been deemed subordinate and/or subjected to relations of oppression because of their color, class, ethnicity, race or cultural and/or social capital.

Changing national demographics, along with ethical responsibility, signal that it is past the time for the academy to correct this situation. Though perhaps an uncomfortable area of engagement for some CDOs, their push for diversity and inclusion must include curricular reform as an important element, and the legitimacy, let alone the value of diversity requirements and ethnic studies courses will likely remain a political minefield well into the future because at present, "we're still locked into a curriculum, which whether we acknowledge it or not, celebrates a Western European ethos" (June, 2011).

Leadership Matters Too

Sensitive and concerned presidents and chancellors are critical actors in furthering diversity within the academy, and this pool is almost entirely composed of individuals who are members of the racial majority. A pictorial presentation of top Ivy League administrators in *The Chronicle of Higher Education's* Diversity in Academe edition of June 2013 made a stark visual statement about the situation at some of the nation's most highly regarded colleges and universities. Under the title, "The Look of Leadership in the Ivy League", the photographs reveal a paucity of people of color in those positions. With Ruth Simmons, "the Jackie Robinson of the Ivy League," (Patton, 2013a) having recently stepped down as President of Brown, the Ivy League institutions now have no people of color serving in either chief executive or chief academic officer positions and very sparse representation in the other senior-level administrative appointments.

The Chronicle article examines the difficulty that has been expressed in identifying "qualified" people of color for faculty and senior administrative positions, to which University of Pennsylvania professor and former chair of the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, Mary Frances Berry, responded "there's a lot of talk about 'fit.' No one overtly says, 'we don't want minorities.' That would be tacky" (Patton, 2013b). But, obviously the Ivy League is not the only set of higher education institutions that lack diversity at the top. A recent [American Council on Education \(ACE\)](#) report titled, "On the Pathway to the Presidency," tracked leadership at 149 institutions and found little change in the racial and ethnic composition over the past 25 years. The percentage of presidents and chancellors from ethnic and racial minorities was 13%, a scant 5% increase in this category since 1986.

An appointment at the top position of any organization has both substantive and symbolic importance, so the paucity of African Americans and Hispanics in these positions also makes an important statement and the recent selection of Michael Drake to the Presidency of the Ohio State University highlights the small numbers of people of color who hold such positions (Watson, 2014). Ohio State is a member of the Association of American Universities (AAU), the nation's most prestigious consor-

tium of institutions of higher learning, and of the 62 member universities in the AAU, only one other institution is led by a person of color. Dr. Drake will move to Ohio State from the University of California-Irvine, which is also an AAU member, but in the 114 year history of this prestigious organization, only five other universities that are current AAU members have ever had an African American or Hispanic CEO. AAU institutions are highly regarded for their research productivity and sometimes considered to be in a "class by themselves," but recent data reveal that across the spectrum of higher education institutions only about four percent of the nation's college and university presidents and chancellors are African American and only about 3% are Hispanic (Selingo, 2013). Having been employed in three AAU universities, I would argue that there are a number of people of color who could more than adequately fill the top positions at the nation's predominantly white institutions.

The Emergence of NADOHE

My perspectives on diversity issues were influenced immensely by the time I spent at the ACE), the nation's preeminent higher education policy organization. As a membership organization that encompasses the full spectrum of postsecondary institutions, in addition to its work to impact public policy, ACE also offers a range of programs to support higher education initiatives. As Vice President and Director of the Office of Minorities in Higher Education, a unit whose name was later changed to the Center for Advancement of Racial and Ethnic Equity (CAREE), I was privileged to lead these efforts. CAREE organized biennial national meetings, known as the Educating All of One Nation conferences, which drew participants from the various strata of the higher education community, including diversity officers, faculty members, and chief executives, and provided research, effective practices, and policy so that participants could take useful materials and examples back to their campuses.

My arrival at ACE coincided with active involvement by the organization with a strategic ally known as the [Business-Higher Education Forum \(2003\)](#), to develop a report that offered this rationale for why diversity matters: "Inclusiveness and tolerance are in keeping with America's values of

fairness and justice, and have helped build the foundation for the most dynamic economy and society in the world. Forum members believe that the more we do to make schools, universities, and workplaces diverse, inclusive, and welcoming, the more our society benefits. This principle is supported by evidence that racial and ethnic diversity in higher education contributes to the learning experience of all students on campus, and to the civic, social, and economic life of our society as a whole.” (2003).

Subsequent interactions with representatives of the Business-Higher Education Forum led me to the realization that several corporations had already established a senior level position within their administrative structure to monitor and implement practices and to measure results in the diversity realm. The individuals who carried out these responsibilities were identified as CDOs, and their posture and influence usually seemed to be quite a bit ahead of what was taking place in the academy. Having been privy to earlier drafts of *Investing in People* (Business-Higher Education Forum, 2003), which included a statement in the Executive Summary that read “Racial and ethnic diversity on campus enhances the learning environment for everyone. Higher education has embraced racial and ethnic diversity as an essential component of quality and success in academe. And the research backs that up,” corporate executives were often surprised to discover that progress in the academy had been so limited and halting.

In May 2003, I invited a number of CDOs, about two thirds from the higher education community and one third from the private sector to come together at the Ohio State University. The discussion was free-flowing and illuminating as individuals spoke about the various opportunities and constraints that were connected to their organizational structures, and shared specific practices that moved the diversity needle forward in their particular settings. At the conclusion of the meeting several of the academic CDOs indicated their interest in continuing the discussions, and more specifically in pursuing the possibility of establishing a national professional association specifically for CDOs in institutions of higher education. A database and listserv of individuals across the nation who held CDO positions in colleges and universities was developed and the ever expanding listserv was used to provide information to its members

that a meeting of interested parties would take place at the 2005 Educating All of One Nation conference. Over 80 chief and senior diversity officers showed up at the announced time and place, and those persons in attendance were enthusiastic regarding the development of a national organization.

The overwhelming interest and willingness of volunteers led to the establishment of several subcommittees that worked on various aspects of establishing a national organization and after substantive review and discussion, the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADHOE) was formally launched with 112 forward-looking institutions of higher education serving as the founding members. Williams and Wade-Golden (2013) pointed out that ACE helped support the foundation of NADOHE, but they understate the significant amount of grass-roots activity that occurred behind the scenes when they write that the organization “almost overnight” registered the charter institutions. At any rate, NADOHE is now routinely recognized as the principal organization of chief and senior diversity officers in higher education, and it continues to service what I identified in 2009 as the “growing need for higher education to leverage and maximize investments in diversity initiatives, provide opportunities for cross-institutional exchange and fertilization of ideas, and to enhance professional standards among diversity professionals” (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013).

In 2009 I left my position at ACE to become the inaugural CDO at the University of Virginia. As the leadership positions in NADOHE are restricted to CDOs of higher education institutions, the appointment at UVA also qualified me for consideration for such a post and I was extremely gratified to be elected as the inaugural president. The annual NADOHE conference takes place in conjunction with the ACE annual meeting because an integral part of the organization’s agenda remains providing the ultimate decision makers in higher education institutions with the information and motivation to increase diversity and inclusion on their campuses. One very important measure of the value and flexibility that is increasingly being attached to the CDO position can be seen in the fact that individuals who are part of the original membership of NADOHE are now moving into key administrative posts at different colleges and universities. As of this writing, two former NA-

DOHE board members, one of them a past president of the organization, have been selected for college presidencies, while another person holds the position of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at his institution. Others are certain to follow in their footsteps.

Conclusion

Despite the formidable challenges to increased diversity, the changes that I have seen in American society and in its institutions of higher education cause me to believe that colleges and universities will continue to be more diverse and inclusive, and that progress will be made even in those areas that have been most resistant to change. The cautious optimism that I carry reflects the increasing number of institutions that are creating and supporting positions of CDOs as well as a rising consciousness among students, and an expectation that their chosen academic homes will invest the necessary resources to create environments that support and celebrate diversity. The ongoing resistance to increased diversity in colleges and universities will no doubt persist in certain narrow-minded enclaves when the result is greater participation of people from racially and culturally underserved communities, and I have no illusions that the path to greater diversity and equity will not include a variety of hurdles and obstacles along the way. Nevertheless, I think the summary statement that I made in my *Chronicle* interview still applies: "We have to be honest and insightful about what still needs to happen even as we recognize and celebrate the progress and changes that have taken place," but I think a quote from Nelson Mandela captures the situation in more poetic terms. He said that, "after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb" (Freed 2014).

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