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Higher Education and Diversity: Ethical and Practical Responsibility in the Academy

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The nation's current economic difficulties and politically contentious atmosphere have raised doubts, and even fears, among many members of the American population. Polls show that the concern that Americans feel about the country's future direction is at the highest level since the Great Depression, while the measure of confidence in elected political representatives is plummeting towards an all time low. Social institutions too have suffered an erosion in the public trust: the financial sector has been the recipient of public enmity as the gap between the wealthy and the rest of the population has widened; the religious establishment has experienced a declining membership base as a number of spiritual leaders have become mired in controversy and social mores have become less rigid and absolute; organized labor has been portrayed as an entity that is antagonistic to the public interest because of its stance on retaining previously negotiated benefits for its members; and even the higher education community has come under attack for its rising costs, mediocre graduation rates, grade inflation, sparse accountability, and athletic scandals, among other shortcomings.

Despite the criticisms however, the American system of higher education is still considered by many observers to be the best such operation of its kind in the world. (Bowen, 2005) (Harvey, 1998) This loosely connected network of two-year, four-year, graduate and professional education institutions continues to maintain its coveted position as the primary mechanism that the richest country in the history of the world uses to identify and prepare its future leaders. Further, in an environment of extraordinarily rapid change, where technical complexity and international connectivity become more apparent and intrusive every day, the necessity for well-prepared, knowledgeable leaders is more compelling than ever. As a result, American colleges and universities face an interesting set of external and internal forces that foment change at various levels. The institutions are attempting to establish adaptive institutional climates that are responsive to changing circumstances while they also proclaim their commitment to a set of historic and traditional principles and values that reflect the national ideals of fairness and equity.

In theory then, colleges and universities, like the larger society in which they are embedded, have historically endorsed the egalitarian American principles that are enshrined in the documents which were crafted to guide the founding and the continuing development of the Republic. However, the elegant literary flourishes of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights notwithstanding, for certain Americans, the operational realities of racism, discrimination and prejudice have trumped the theoretical articulations of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This American dilemma, the contradiction between the uplifting promises of inclusion and participatory engagement contrasted with the noxious

practices of exclusion and forced separation, has been at the center of this extraordinary national experiment from its very inception. It continues to this day, and is reflected in all of the societal institutions, including those dedicated to higher education.

Thousands of colleges and universities were established in the colonies and states of America since the founding of Harvard University in 1636 until the latter half of the twentieth century, and these institutions uniformly supported, rather than challenged, the existing societal practices of racial separation and discrimination. American institutions of higher education, be they public or private, have endorsed the egalitarian principles that provide the underpinnings of the society and celebrated the ideals of liberty, justice, and equality as incredibly powerful theoretical concepts. However, a candid review of the historical record clearly demonstrates that the nation has not truly realized those values and that the structural components, including colleges and universities, have often engaged in practices that actually contradict these lofty goals. In that period of the nation's history when African Americans could be legally enslaved, along with their allies and sympathizers who opposed this patently undemocratic practice, they focused their efforts on reclaiming the enslaved peoples' absolute, unequivocal freedom. But the victory by the North in the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln's executive issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation did little to open the doors of most colleges and universities to the former slaves and their descendants. In fact, "during the hundred years that followed the close of the Civil War, almost all academic institutions engaged in some form of discrimination against minority groups, and few made any effort to address the racial problems of the nation." Bok, (1982)

This extended period in which the higher education community either overlooked or supported racist practices lasted until the academy was shaken from its lethargy by the unforeseen eruption of the Civil Rights movement. A broad-based, media-savvy, campaign of grass-roots activism, the movement was largely populated by African American students and it exposed the blatant hypocrisy of the status quo in such a stark and revealing manner as to bring international attention to the situation. The resultant sense of national shame, embarrassment, and guilt led to the subsequent passage of federal legislation that forced a revision of discriminatory operational practices within the country's institutions of higher education, where the provision of opportunities and services to prospective students and faculty members had been unapologetically based on race and ethnicity, rather than on ability and individual competence. Psychological and physical intimidation and violence, even murder, were frequently used by whites to keep African Americans in their designated places, and as retaliation against those who dared challenge the sanctity of segregation and the unearned privilege of white Americans. But despite the serious threat to their physical well-being, "Black Southerners dissented from the racial orthodoxy of the twentieth-century South and as they challenged the discrimination and segregation that Jim Crow imposed, they contested both the "separate" and the "unequal" in the operation of the doctrine of "separate but equal."(Wallerstein, 2008) The emergence of the Civil Rights

movement also provided conscientious white Americans with an opportunity to contest the structured inequality that defined the social order. Years later, even some apologists for segregation came to acknowledge its inhumanity and contradiction of American principles. Kerr (1963) asks rhetorically, “what is the justification for the modern American multiversity?” then responds to his own question by saying, “History is one answer. Consistency with the surrounding society is another.” Unfortunately, the higher education establishment chose to demonstrate its fidelity to history and its consistency with society by functioning as a willing and complicit partner in the manifestation of racial discrimination throughout the nation for hundreds of years. Further, “denials notwithstanding, the available data show clearly that serious racial and ethnic barriers continue to be felt on our college campuses.” (Picca & Feagin, 2007)

One of the most frequently touted self-justifications of the academy has been its presentation as an ethically-rooted laboratory of inquiry where the initiates pursued truth and enlightenment, without regard to ideology, and with unadulterated objectivity. “Embodied in its faculties is the sense that institutions of higher education are places where ethical and moral considerations are viewed with extreme gravity.” (Harvey, 1991) Over the course of the nation’s maturation and with the evolving value and benefit of knowledge as a commodity, colleges and universities came to occupy a unique place in the social order. They emerged as the validators and authenticators of information and enjoyed the consequences of the societal maxim which proclaims that knowledge is power. From this lofty vantage point, members of the academy assumed the positional authority to establish an intellectual justification and rationale for practices and/or actions that might otherwise be regarded as inappropriate or even unacceptable. The capability to establish significant qualifying and sorting concepts for the larger society – determining the “natural order”, creating hierarchy, and assigning place, for example – became comfortably lodged in the ivory tower. Without needing to call attention to the fact, colleges and universities recognized that they had a valuable mechanism to buttress their intellectual infallibility as “they alone could award the degrees that are all but indispensable for a number of desirable careers.” (Bok, 1982)

The legitimization of white supremacy via the academy occurred partly through the manipulation of “objective scholarship”, and easily flowed from there into the political, economic, and social spheres. “Long-term racial oppression is grounded in discrimination and consequent inequity. It has generated a racial ideology that generally accents the superiority of white Americans and looks negatively at Americans of color.” (Picca & Feagin, 2007) Thomas Jefferson, one of the nation’s founding fathers, exemplifies this functional connection as Jefferson’s endorsement of a “natural aristocracy” of talent and virtue – the result of his scientifically researched comparative studies – reinforced the supremacy of whites over other races. By establishing the University of Virginia, he created an academic structure through which his ideas could be disseminated to the leaders-in-training of subsequent generations. Bernstein (2003) The justification,

maintenance, and extension of an inequitable social system requires that the transmission of information, both cognitive and affective, be skewed to uphold the explicit and implicit messages that have been sanctioned by the controlling authorities. The recognition that “knowledge production functions act as ideological filters within institutions” Tierney (1991) clarifies the crucial role played by colleges and universities in this process. By design and intention, the higher educational structure used its prominence and impact to underscore the assertion of inferiority of people of color by relegating them to categories such as sub-human, savage, and second-class citizens, which in turn validated their mistreatment, persecution, and enslavement.

Doing What's Right -- Acknowledging Ethical Responsibility

While the unvarnished pursuit of knowledge has been paraded as an ethical keystone of the academy, the “truth” that emerged from higher education institutions in regards to race was regulated by those individuals in the majority who possessed power and imposed their will on others by physical force and economic control. Truth takes on a particular image, character, and presentation when it can only be viewed through white-rimmed glasses, and it is not coincidental that knowledge, as endorsed by the intellectual community, ebbed over into the other foundational structures of the society since the leaders of those institutional pillars received their training and credentials in the academy. Thus, the minister comfortably transformed the “truth” of white supremacy into “revealed insight”, the politician into “the will of the people”, the civil servant into “good public policy”, and the teacher into “the appropriate curriculum and lesson plan”. The teachers’ involvement in this process took on cross-generational significance as they inculcated the orthodoxy of white supremacy within the school-age population. It also assured that even those persons with limited educational attainment were informed during their schooling experiences that the prevailing social system was appropriately designed and administered.

Institutions of higher education not only elevated the doctrine of white supremacy to a position where its foundation in supposedly unassailable biological and historical “facts” placed it beyond question, but they also used their power, position, and influence to extend the dissemination of this information down into the elementary and secondary schools. Colleges and universities then recognized and responded to “the influence of society in determining the ideological framework of the institution that defines what a curriculum is, how it will be evaluated, and who will evaluate it.” Tierney (1991) The transmission of acceptable knowledge establishes the desired perspectives of the individuals who serve as the pillars of the social order, and of those who will succeed them in these roles. In this particular circumstance, the higher education community, with its acceptance of white supremacy, willingly promulgated a warped ideology that served as the basis for the construction of an interlocking complex of political, economic, social, artistic, and religious structures which, through their vigorous reinforcement of the central concept, discouraged changes or challenges to the system.

The focus of the history and implementation of white supremacy is often concentrated on the South while, in fact, higher education institutions across the nation have at least tacitly supported, rather than contested the existence and practice of institutionalized racism. However, even prior to the abolition of slavery, a few notable exceptions existed to the selective and exclusionary practices that were standard in institutions of higher education. In 1826, Amherst and Bowdoin Colleges, two private institutions in Massachusetts and Maine respectively, graduated African American students. Oberlin College, a private institution in Ohio, admitted students in 1835 without regards to color. Clearly, these institutions raised the

equity bar higher than others cared to reach, as even in the North colleges and universities practiced discrimination without hesitation or apology. (Bowen, 2005) Their supposed differentiation in biological makeup and intellectual capability provided the basis for excluding students of color from institutions of higher education, thus preserving these stations for members of the privileged group. The rationale for denying admission became more nuanced over time such that in circumstances where moral or legal considerations might present potential complications, terms such as “character” and “fitness” were placed into use to justify exclusionary, racist practices, and articulately manipulated admissions policy lacked transparency, as they were deliberately, and self consciously designed to preserve a social order. (Bowen, 2005)

From a critical theorist perspective, the question would be posed as to whether there were deep social structures that leaders consciously or unconsciously used to support this system of injustice, and whether they acted to preserve the dominance of some groups while systematically suppressing others. Tierney, (1991) Actually, units of governments, at all levels, from local to federal, served this function for hundreds of years across America through the creation and application of a bevy of restrictive residential, occupational, and educational policies that favored whites over people of color. This situation was facilitated by an electoral process that denied or suppressed voting by African Americans, and minimized their abilities to initiate change through the ballot box. In the latter portion of the twentieth century, the federal government was generally considered to be a potent force on behalf of enforcing equal treatment for Americans of color. This posture had not always been the case though, as can be seen in 1890 when the post-Civil War passage of the second Morrill Act by Congress accepted the South’s “folkways” that codified existing segregation practices in higher education through the creation of a group of historically black land-grant colleges to mirror the existing white institutions, although with substantially fewer resources. Bowen, (2005) This hands-off, non-interference approach by the federal government, even in the face of blatant racial discrimination, was manifested for over three centuries and revealed both an acceptance of the doctrine of white supremacy and an implicit endorsement of this ideology at the highest levels of civic authority.

The social mores of the country were ultimately changed by a combination of legal pronouncements, civic enlightenment, and economic leverage which resulted in the desegregation of higher education, along with the rest of the society. The changed consciousness of the majority population suggested a tacit disavowal of white supremacy and delivered colleges and universities from the ethical conflict of claiming to be institutions that embraced equal treatment for all, while simultaneously denying admission and participation to selected individuals based exclusively on their racial background. This shift in perspective provided the higher education community with the opportunity to connect its actual practices to its articulated values, thus reconciling the ethical dilemma that had been conveniently ignored. Institutions of higher education have both ethical and practical responsibilities to bring into the academic domain as much variety and diversity as

possible so that colleges and universities support continued change and progress in society. Institutional leaders, as well as various constituent groups, now claim to recognize that a rich intermixture of races, cultures, perspectives, outlooks, and experiences will provide a more fertile and creative environment for learning and growth.

Bowen, (2005) recapitulates “what we see as the moral essence of the problem of race in American higher education – and in America. We see the need to address continuing racial disparities as a *moral obligation*.” The recalibration of the academy’s moral compass requires recognition of the necessity for increased diversity within the higher education community as a means of generating principled, constructive, broad-based analyses and recommendations that can lead to positive changes in the larger society. As colleges and universities are the settings where training and preparation is provided to those who will be leaders so they can carry out their responsibilities to those who will be led, the overtly male-dominated, Eurocentric structure of the academy has limited opportunities for participation, interpretation, knowledge production, and discovery, from Harvard’s founding until the present day.

Only recently have academic institutions begun to move away from the broadly held orientation that centered “authentic” knowledge almost exclusively within the realm of Western European males, while generally ignoring the perspectives, points-of-view, and even the substantive contributions of people of color to the development of the society. From an ethical standpoint, academicians should make every effort to provide to students and the general public the widest framework of the most accurate information that is possible to gather. This obligation is not currently being met as the range of inputs, perspectives, and points of view that are certified as intellectually valid through their inclusion in the curriculum continues to exclude those of certain groups and populations who have historically been intentionally prohibited from contributing to the existing framework of knowledge. “Demographic and social trends underscore the moral and practical reasons for all Americans to build a country that sincerely respects diversity and continues to expand social, economic, and political participation for all Americans. This society today pays heavy costs for maintaining racial and ethnic barriers.” (Picca&Feagin, 2007)

Even while acknowledging the central role that higher education played in the smooth functioning and projected progress of the American society until the latter half of the twentieth century, the operational posture taken by colleges and universities positioned them as “ivory towers”, which dictated a policy of non-engagement on such social problems as racial segregation. The Civil Rights movement ignited a period of significant social activism which resulted in subsequent demands for changes in other areas including military and foreign policy, environmental practices, and gender relations. The recognition that institutions of higher education can play important roles in addressing major social issues began to change the outlook, the sense of

responsibility, and to some degree the operational approach of the academic community. The changes in perspective have taken root and now are accepted to the point that the contemporary approach of the academic community calls for “engaged institutions” that attempt to apply some of their intellectual, technological, and financial resources to resolving certain major problems of our time. The continued manifestation of de facto segregation has resulted in numerous disparate conditions in communities of color as compared to predominantly white areas, and most colleges and universities are now comfortable in considering ways to address these differences as a valid part of their mission. So, without acknowledging a covert participatory role in the creation of a very unequal society, the higher education enterprise has largely come to recognize the huge disjunction between the words that we have come to adore and the deeds that we now abhor. “There exists some moral responsibility to see that minorities take their rightful places in an educated society. We are failing on that social objective, failing badly.” (Tierney, 1991)

America still contains rampant inequality, significantly structured along racial lines, but at the same time, the enormous social progress that has occurred over the last fifty years provides the basis for a firm belief that a substantially greater degree of equality for all Americans can be realized in the twenty-first century. Following the election of Barack Obama as the forty-fourth president of the United States, a significant amount of discussion ensued about whether social relations in the country had moved into a post-racial phase, that is, whether racial prejudice had ceased to exist as a major consideration in the lives of Americans. The President’s graduation from two prestigious Ivy League universities led some observers to conclude that the larger society, and by extension the postsecondary arena had reached an operative state where race was no longer an issue. While this circumstance would be highly favorable if it actually existed, unfortunately this is not the case.

“Race in America, and especially the treatment of African Americans, has been, and continues to be, the hardest marker of ‘disadvantage’ to counter – in large part because ‘color’ is such a visible marker and is associated with deeply ingrained stigmas and stereotypes.” Bowen, (2005) Clearly, Obama’s election is a watershed event in the political arena and demonstrates a certain measure of detachment from the prevailing racial ideology on the part of the voting population. The higher education community has an obligation to help continue this forward movement toward a less racially prejudiced society, and it should seize the opportunity to help the nation progress toward fuller implementation of some of its most cherished goals. The responsibility to help implement positive change is also rooted in the two inherent dimensions that coexist within the academy: ethical responsibility and practical responsibility.

De jure (by law) segregation has been effectively curtailed and the removal of the legal underpinning for racial discrimination was a major step forward in the transformation of American society. However, this

transition did not occur smoothly and without resistance, as “in some locations, vigorous opposition was expressed when important civil rights laws in such areas as employment and housing were passed during the 1960s. Uneven enforcement of these laws to the present day has contributed to the continuation of *de facto* (by custom) segregation in many U.S. social institutions.” (Feagin, 2002) For African Americans, the most noticeable area of progress has been within the political arena, where the gains can be clearly seen in varied geographic locations around the nation. Especially evident on the political front are the increased numbers of people of color serving in elected positions as mayors of cities, in state legislatures and executive offices, and even as members of the U.S. Congress, since the landmark Voting Rights Act was passed by the Congress and signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965. Income levels for African Americans have also increased since the demise of *de jure* segregation, and individuals from this community now hold various positions in the corporate sector for which they would not have received consideration in previous generations. Despite these advances however, the aftereffects of this long history, and the deep-seated stereotypes, limit opportunities and create divides that demean us all. (Bowen, 2005)

Meanwhile, *de facto* segregation continues to exist and it negatively impacts the lives of people of color. “For generations, blacks and other minority groups have struggled with the burdens of inequality, and although outright discrimination on racial groups has been prohibited for many years, its effects linger on.” (Bok, 1982) In every significant quality of life indicator, whether related to health, safety, employment, nutrition, life-span, or education, African Americans lag behind their white counterparts and the differences are disturbing: infant mortality rates for African American children are twice as high as the rates for whites; twice as many African Americans as white children live in a household where **neither** parent has full-time, year-round employment; the unemployment rate for African Americans is about twice that of whites; more than twice as many African American children have a mother with less than a high-school education than white children; the poverty rate for African American children is three times higher than it is for whites; the wealth gap between African Americans and whites increased fourfold between 1984 and 2007; the homicide victimization rate for African Americans is more than six times higher than the rate for whites; and, more than three-fourths of African American children born between 1985 and 2000 grew up in “high-disadvantage” neighborhoods, which are characterized by high levels of unemployment, welfare, poverty, single parent families, segregation and density of children under age 18, while only five percent of white children grew up in such neighborhoods. Public education systems continue to reflect increasing isolation and profound inequality for African Americans, and Orfield and Lee (2007) have pointed out that the consequences of this situation “become larger each year because of the growing number and percentage of nonwhite and impoverished students and the dramatic relationships between educational attainment and economic success in a globalized economy. The country’s rapidly growing population of Latino and Black students is more segregated than it has been since the 1960’s.”

Yes, We Can? Implementing Practical Responsibility

“American society’s movement toward a knowledge-based economy makes access to and completion of higher education critical – and even more so for populations historically excluded from full economic participation.” (Bensimon, 2005) From a practical standpoint, the rapidly increasing diversity of our nation becomes a critical reference point and raises the question of how colleges and universities intend to respond to that reality. “America has achieved one of the highest levels of educational attainment of any country, but it risks losing its preeminent position unless it can help much larger numbers of students from poor families and from minority populations to participate and succeed at the tertiary level.” (Bowen, 2005) Racial and ethnic diversity will increase substantially in the future and demographers predict that by the year 2050, if not sooner, no single racial group will be a majority of the country’s population. Birth rates and migration patterns indicate that Hispanics will show the largest percentage increase in the population during this period, followed by African Americans. Institutions of higher education must understand and accept their obligation to help to shape a positive future for the society. At this point, even as these demographic shifts occur, structural analyses of higher education as a social and cultural enterprise often reveal that “its major function is sorting and certifying certain classes of persons (most often white, and middle to upper class) for professional, managerial, and technical positions – positions that act to concentrate power and influence in the hands of those who often have it already.” (Tierney, 1991) The continued social cohesion and economic development of the nation, and its position in the global arena, will depend on the acceptance of diversity as an integral and valued aspect of the American character and identity. “If we are to continue to fuel the information society’s managerial and technological needs, who will do the work if minorities are not educated for these roles?” (Tierney, 1991)

As American society continues its inevitable and irreversible march into a future where people of color become the majority of the population, colleges and universities must meet their responsibilities to serve the greater good by creating diversified and representative, racially and culturally sensitive and responsive institutions by addressing four areas. First, they must identify, cultivate, enroll, support, and graduate substantially larger numbers of students from the underserved communities and prepare them to go forward to exercise leadership both within their respective groups and the larger society. Second, they must create meaningful academic and social opportunities for white students to engage and interact with their peers of color. The successful deracialization of American society is contingent on an informed acceptance by these students that in the evolving social order, their race offers them an equal, rather than a favored, role for participation and advancement. Third, faculty members from underrepresented groups must be present in numbers that extend beyond mere tokenism so that a clear message is conveyed to all students that members of all races have the intellectual capability to hold such positions, and fourth, curricula must be broadened to

debunk the myth that only people of European ancestry have been architects of and contributors to the development of American society, and acknowledge that there are antecedents to this civilization in various locations around the globe, not simply in Western Europe.

A lingering, and potentially highly significant consideration regarding student enrollment is encapsulated in former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's statement in 2003 that "we expect that 25 years from now, the use of racial preferences will no longer be necessary to further the interest approved today." (Bowen, 2005) O'Connor's statement was made to provide context to the court decision in the widely watched case of *Grutter vs. Bollinger*, which upheld race as a factor that can legally be used in the college admissions process. However, it is not possible to predict what degree of importance future judicial and executive authorities will attach to this pronouncement. The potential deadline does not appear to be an urgent factor in regards to current policy or practice in the higher education community, as already a third of the identified time period has passed, while only modest progress has been achieved in diversifying institutions of higher education, and the prevailing political atmosphere does not suggest that new far-reaching initiatives will be promulgated from government agencies. Given the highly charged and increasingly conservative nature of the current political atmosphere, it is quite likely that the Supreme Court will review another case involving the use of race in admissions decisions at public colleges and universities in the near future. Should the justices reverse the 2003 decision, the outcome would be that "many public colleges and universities would almost instantly become whiter and more Asian, and less Black and Hispanic. A judicial retreat from diversity would be deeply symbolic, too." (Liptak, 2011)

The calendar denotes a compelling reality because "by no later than the mid 2030s – and well before that in many large cities and states – the majority of students in the K-12 system will be students of color, and soon after that, the majority of students in the pool will be students of color and soon after that the majority of students in the pool from which we draw first-year college students will likely be students of color." (Picca & Feagin, 2007) Institutions of higher education cannot ignore the necessity of enrolling and graduating students of color. These colleges and universities will need to purposefully institute measures that broaden the range of qualities considered for admission and also reduce their reliance on standardized test scores. Expanding various institutional practices that will increase not only their presence, but also the opportunities for success for underrepresented students are valid and appropriate as "minority preferences correct at least in part for disadvantages that these students, as a group, have experienced – and will experience – in a country that is still affected profoundly by racial stigmas. Race matters in America, and that reality needs to be acknowledged." (Bowen, 2005) The repercussions surrounding this situation could have great significance because "if the diversity rationale falls apart in university admissions, it could start to test the societal commitment to it in other areas, notably private hiring and promotion." (Liptak, 2011)

Thoughtful steps will also need to be taken to improve college preparedness for students from underserved communities, and this endeavor will require a wider, broader, and more substantive collaborative relationship between the higher education and K-12 sectors. On the whole, the higher education community has not embraced significant responsibility for improving the performance of students of color in elementary and secondary schools, which has caused Prince to argue that the greatest problem in K-12 education is the arrogance of higher education. (Harvey, 2008) The practical connection between these two sectors is the basis for a more functional partnership than is currently the case and “such neglect on the part of higher education must change; higher education has a clear self-interest in improving school performance.” (Newman, Couterier, and Scurry, 2004) While the timing of the first intersection point between the two sectors to provide supplemental and intervention measures to students frequently occurs during the secondary school years, there is evidence to suggest that, especially for students from underserved communities, academic enrichment activities should be initiated while they are still in middle school to help raise both their performance and their aspirations. (Horn, 1997) Believing that it’s never too early to plant the seeds of high aspirations, higher education leaders in Texas are working with local school officials and parents to establish a college-going culture that starts in kindergarten. (Mangan, 2011)

The success of college outreach and early intervention programs in increasing the numbers of participating students whose academic preparation has substantially improved has been well-documented. (McDonough, 2004) These programs have been shown to be most beneficial to student populations that demonstrate the highest level of risk – low-income students with low college expectations and low student achievement. But despite their significant potential to engender a positive impact on underserved precollege populations, even on campuses where they have existed for decades, such programs tend to be marginalized, if not completely unrecognized, by the institutional authorities on campuses where they operate. (Harvey, 2008) Federally funded programs, such as Upward Bound, Talent Search, and GEAR-UP, have opened the doors to a college education for thousands of students of color who otherwise would not likely have realized this goal. Nevertheless, during the presidential administration of George W. Bush, these programs were proposed for elimination. Even though the proposal was defeated and the programs have realized bipartisan support in previous administrations, the current political emphasis on budget cutting and deficit reduction raises the possibility that the prospects for their continued funding are now more vulnerable than ever. About one-third of all colleges and universities are estimated to offer outreach programs of some kind that are intended to help prepare students from underserved communities to prepare for college (Chaney, Lewis, and Farris, 1995), but it may take a concerted campaign by higher education leaders, alumni of these programs, current students and their families to help preserve them for the next generation of prospective college attendees. Their demise would be a monumental blow to enhancing the prospect of increasing student diversity throughout the academy in the next generation and beyond.

In some respects, the racial attitudes of contemporary white students in colleges and universities mirror the diminution of the overt prejudice that was a commonplace sentiment among the members of previous generations. “Up to the 1960’s a majority of whites gave blatantly racist answers to opinion survey questions, and they did not mind expressing their racist views aggressively and publicly. Since that era, national opinion surveys generally indicate an apparent shift in whites’ racial attitudes towards a more tolerant and accepting outlook. The percentage of whites who publicly profess numerous blatantly racist stereotypes and related prejudices has declined substantially, although a majority of whites still admit to holding a few obviously racist stereotypes and prejudices. (Picca & Feagin, 2007) It is during this period that American society transitioned from being one in which, particularly in the South, segregation was the prevalent social pattern to one in which desegregation has become a common feature. Especially during the early part of this transitional period, a substantial measure of desegregation was accomplished in public schools, various employment settings, and governmental agencies. While there have been perceptible changes in attitudes about race among whites over the past fifty years, current research reveals that while white college students are reluctant to demonstrate racist behavior in a public setting, they are, nevertheless, prone to demonstrate these mannerisms when they are in the company of their friends in private settings. (Picca & Feagin, 2007)

Predominantly white colleges and universities, almost without exception, now profess to actively seek students of color as members of their undergraduate populations, and they consider a racially mixed environment to be a positive institutional feature. The desire to depict a diverse campus has become such an important consideration that the public relations materials that are disseminated by the institutions will offer a visual depiction of a student body that is more diverse than the actual enrollment figures. At the same time, on many campuses, the degree of substantive engagement of students of color is tangential and superficial at best in a culture that still tends to relegate them to the margins. Various reports that show increases in the numbers of minority students and graduates create an impression of unprecedented participation in programs, which effectively masks the reality. “In fact, despite numerical increases, African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans and other minorities continue to experience significant inequality in higher education, much as they did before the civil rights efforts. Simply put, numerical growth in higher education participation among underrepresented students has not amounted to parity.” (Bensimon, 2005) Merely being enrolled at a particular college or university hardly means that the students have meaningful and satisfactory experiences while attending the institutions. It is not uncommon for students of color to feel as if they are excluded from various academic and social opportunities that are available at their institutions, and at the least they find it more difficult than their white peers to be fully immersed in what should be a supportive and stimulating environment. Tierney (1991) posits that “the greatest social crisis facing the higher education community has been the seeming inability or unwillingness to welcome and educate social and ethnic minorities.” In order for

students of color to feel welcome, white students must modify behaviors that exemplify positions of privilege and instead engage in participatory activities that are inclusive rather than exclusive.

It appears that in “backstage” situations, which are settings and circumstances where interactions typically take place among whites only, students are often prone to engage in racist behavior and ethnic stereotyping. Even when particular white students feel personally offended by epithets, slurs, or other defamatory language that is used by their peers in these settings, they are unlikely to challenge or confront them about the insensitivity and intolerant nature of their comments. “The more common function of the backstage is as a safe space to relax certain frontstage expectations about openly racist commentaries and other overtly racist actions. In this relative safe space, racist commentaries and other actions are common and viewed as normal.” (Picca & Feagin, 2007) An unwillingness to participate in patently racist activity and speech in a public setting where it might be observed and criticized by others aligns with the presumptive pattern of acceptable behavior that now governs the actions of most Americans. But, this dualistic pattern of behavior on the part of white college students – the contrast between their statements, actions, and attitudes in the backstage versus those in the frontstage – raises questions and concerns about the depth and sincerity of their real feelings regarding equity and diversity. It also raises concerns about the practices they will follow and the policies they will endorse as they leave the academic setting to move into the workplace and the larger society. The covert racism that current students demonstrate in the backstage could well be manifested after graduation in their respective employment and residential settings in ways that could be problematic for people of color.

The Myth of Post-Racialism

Taylor (2008) observes that at a predominantly white institution, white college students may be able to largely exist without ever critically examining their race and the implications associated with it. When she asked her white students what their race meant to them, the responses were “normal” and “American”. This situation disturbed her because “if whiteness is viewed as the norm, the implication is that any race other than white is perceived as abnormal. This perspective of abnormal contributes to notions of racism.” Opportunities must be presented for white students to interact with students of color. The higher education community might consider this question: Is it fanciful to suggest that no concerned institution ought to send a graduate through its portals without having provided for that person a structured learning situation with members of another race? By increasing contact between students from different racial backgrounds, an institution can serve its primary role of educating students by expanding their outlooks, broadening their perspectives, and reducing their misconceptions. As educators, we recognize and accept our responsibilities to insure that students have certain levels of competence in communication and computation skills. Do we really have less responsibility for the introduction and cultivation of human relation skills – or have we simply failed to meet that responsibility? (Harvey, 1981) As far back as 1947, the Truman Commission acknowledged that colleges and universities have a unique opportunity to offer an experience in tolerance and understanding which grows out of democratic relations with students from various national and religious backgrounds. Further, the commission pointed out that to the extent that intolerant attitudes against members of minority groups are given support by our educational institutions, the fabric of democratic life is endangered.” (Bowen, 2005)

At this point in time, African American students, faculty, and administrators can be found on the campus of nearly all institutions of higher education, but most would probably hesitate before affirming – and in many cases, not hesitate at all before disputing – the proposition that full desegregation has occurred. The process, already under way in the 1960’s, remains under way five decades later. (Wallerstein, 2008) By 1970, the American academic profession, though it had ceased to be the property of one class and stock, remained largely the property of one sex (it was roughly 80 per cent male), and even more the property of one race (it was well over 90 per cent white). As for Blacks, their numbers outside the predominantly black institutions remained so minuscule that they lent themselves more to anecdotal pointings than to census counts. To what extent these lags can be attributed to a prejudiced profession rather than to an unfair, unequal society is an issue. (Clark, 1987) These observations remain salient today as the representation of African American faculty in predominantly white institutions continues to be distressingly low. The most recent national data available indicate that about 5.2 percent of the full-time faculty in America colleges and universities are African American and these figures include representation from the Historically Black Colleges and Universities, while Hispanics hold a scant 3 percent of full-time faculty positions in institutions of higher education. Negligible progress has

been seen in the representation of people of color on the faculties of predominantly white colleges and universities over the past three decades. While affirmative action has been generally considered to be a mechanism that would substantially increase the numbers of faculty of color, it is white women who have been the main beneficiaries of this policy as their representation in the faculty ranks has increased substantially over the past fifty years.

The paucity of faculty of color in the academy is frequently attributed to the small pool of qualified individuals who hold the appropriate credentials and accomplishments to be considered for these positions at predominantly white colleges and universities. The most frequently used method of selecting the successful candidates from the myriad aspirants is through the use of a search committee which is usually composed of faculty members with expertise within the particular area of study, and which supposedly weighs the qualifications of each person in an objective manner. But, research by Turner (2008) reveals that in such search situations, even when faculty of color present equal or better credentials than their white counterparts, they are likely not to be offered the position, and a white candidate with less outstanding qualifications will likely be the choice of the committee. So, contrary to the notion that qualified candidates of color cannot be found, there is evidence which demonstrates that even when individuals of color are part of the potential employment pool as aspirants for faculty positions, they tend to be less likely to receive serious consideration and are less frequently extended offers of employment than whites who have fewer credentials and accomplishments. These findings dispute the notion that search committees function as “color-blind” operations, and that candidates who are eligible for affirmative action consideration receive unfair favorable treatment that places them in an advantageous position relative to their white counterparts.

Nelson’s research (2007, 2010) shows that the disturbing disparity in hiring faculty of color is not field-specific, but is spread across several content areas, and is particularly noticeable in the scientific and technical fields where the available pool of prospective candidates has a disproportionately small percentage of people of color. Her comprehensive analysis of tenured and tenure track faculty in the top one hundred departments of science and engineering disciplines reveals that these individuals of color are seldom hired into faculty positions at the most highly rated research universities after they complete their doctoral studies. She observes that while “the percentage of underrepresented minorities in science and engineering B.S. attainment generally continues to increase, they are likely to find themselves without the minority faculty needed for optimal role models and mentors. In most disciplines, underrepresented minority faculty are so few that a minority student can get a B.S. or Ph.D. without being taught by or having access to an underrepresented minority professor in that discipline.” Given these circumstances, it is regrettable that defenders of traditional university approaches to bringing new members into the professoriate not only contend that universities have largely eliminated racial discrimination in faculty hiring, but also argue that

additional hiring of faculty members of color will lower the quality of teaching and research. (Bok, 1982) Simply maintaining the current approaches to faculty hiring will leave the racial representation unchanged for the foreseeable future, thus continuing the current and historical substantial overrepresentation by white males who are especially dominant in the rank of full professor.

The increased representation of faculty of color on predominantly white college and university campuses, especially those who hold tenure, is important for several reasons. Their presence sends a message to white students regarding the intellectual capacity of the various groups that they represent, while also providing tangible role models and examples for students from the underrepresented communities. In addition, the unusual structure of higher education employment operates in such a way that once a faculty member has earned tenured status, he or she essentially has a job for life and could literally remain at their chosen institutions for decades. Because a person who holds a faculty position is afforded an opportunity to be involved in the development and implementation of various policies through participation in shared governance through the institutional committee process, over a prolonged period of time, it may be possible to affect such substantial matters as admission requirements, financial aid policies, and determination of curricular offerings. “The faculties of colleges and universities, as well as doctoral students in the pipeline remain overwhelmingly white. At this time, the academic profession, facing a turnover of large numbers of faculty members, has an opportunity to shape the future faculty to look more like America and more like the increasingly diverse student population. It has an opportunity as well to exercise leadership with respect to human equality.”(Gaff, 2000)

Bringing a representative democratic ethos to higher education also necessitates including considerations of the perspectives and inputs of various groups that have historically been excluded from the academy in order to arrive at the most reputable and sound position on a given subject and the presentation of the most accurate information. Obviously, students from the underrepresented communities should be brought into institutions. But what is also necessary is that faculty of color be better represented to provide their culturally grounded considerations to enrich and refine the curriculum. Though independent think tanks and government research centers now provide many of the breakthroughs and revelations that inform contemporary society, the academy continues to play the major role in the transmission of information from one generation to another. “The University needs to attune its language, curriculum, and philosophy to more closely adhere to the ‘universal’ mission of the university. Just as America is not a ‘white’ but pluralistic nation, made up of a positive array of people of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, so the university should strive to be both academically excellent and pluralistic in its perspective and projected image.” (Hare, 1991) 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 offering credit, is considered to be suspect, flimsy, or simply nonacademic. This claim to authority partly “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.” (Tierney, 1991)

Numerous examples of discriminatory mistreatment exist for all of the non-white racial groups in the country, but they are routinely omitted from institutional curricula, and the travesty of these intentional exclusions is further scandalized by the absence of the mention of their positive contributions to developing and improving the society. “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” (Picca & Feagin, 2007) Acknowledgment is given to American Indians for assisting the European settlers in colonial Virginia and their subsequent participation in the first Thanksgiving, but the systematic and widespread brutalization of this population remains an academic oversight. The virtual peonage of Latino populations in the Southwest has not found its way into lessons about the settlement and expansion of the nation, nor has the victimization of Asian populations, including the forced incarceration of Japanese Americans during the Second World War. On the positive end of the representational spectrum, one struggles to find individuals from these racial groups who are identified in the curricula as having made significant beneficial contributions to the enhancement of American society, especially if the areas of sport and entertainment are removed from the analysis.

The circumstances that resulted in the largest slave revolt in the nation’s troubled past are unlikely to be the topics of discussion and analysis in the standard college-level course in American history. This particular event took place in Louisiana in 1811 and involved hundreds of slaves who took up arms in an attempt to gain their freedom. Before the insurrection was put down, several whites were killed as the slaves fiercely fought for their liberty. The revolt demonstrates the capability of slaves to organize themselves and their willingness to fight and die to obtain their freedom, which is an important dimension of the American historical narrative. It is historically noteworthy because it illustrates a determined effort by members of an oppressed minority to gain the rights that members of the majority enjoyed as a matter of birthright, and its violent putdown pointedly displays the harshness and brutality of the social system that had evolved after America had won her independence and established a framework for an inclusive, equitable nation. However, information about the 1811 insurrection is not presented, even in African America history courses, because despite its significance and

relevance to the America story, it runs counter to the sanitized approach that continues to be used in consideration of potential curricular material that reflects poorly on the nation's racialized past. As a point of contrast, John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, West Virginia in an attempt to initiate a slave uprising was a smaller undertaking and information about this event is likely to be taught in some American history classes. The context is quite different however, since instead of revealing the alienation of those being held in bondage, it represents the dissatisfaction that a particular free white person felt with the "peculiar institution." "A rejection of the Eurocentric bias that has permeated the language and the curriculum of the university is indeed a necessary first step, if all students are to gain a sense of their own centrality in the development of our world and our national culture." (Hare, 1991)

The Chief Diversity Officer – Savior or Scapegoat?

Higher education institutions have generally responded to diversity considerations by assigning duties or responsibilities to specific personnel to address particular matters such as affirmative action concerns or student support services. While language promoting, and even celebrating, diversity is routinely included in public relations materials and literature distributed by the institutions, many colleges and universities still do not have a senior-level administrative officer who has the authority and responsibility to coordinate diversity efforts and activities across the enterprise. A relatively recent development within the academy has been the creation of the role of Chief Diversity Officer, and while the title is somewhat self-explanatory, the responsibilities, authority, and resources that accompany the position vary widely from one institution to another. This innovation was actually borrowed from the corporate arena as several major firms instituted such positions beginning in the latter part of the twentieth century. At that time, there was a recognition in the business community that stronger connections to various racial and ethnic markets could expand the amounts of goods and services provided to those communities and could in turn increase a firm's profitability. Various firms appointed chief diversity officers to develop, coordinate, and implement strategies designed to service their clients and customers of color, and some astute observers within the higher education community copied this approach within their institutions.

Offering a meaningful prediction about the potential impact of the chief diversity officer in the academy is very difficult because the positions themselves are very context-specific. "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) Wide variability has also been seen in the placement of the chief diversity officer within the institutional structure. In the best case scenario, the position reports directly to the chief executive officer and is a cabinet level appointment. The selection of a chief diversity officer should be the beginning and not the end of transformational activity within a college or university, and the appointment can be a good thing for the institution if the individual is provided with the resources, tools, and authority to initiate and facilitate necessary changes and receives proper support.

A person who operates as the chief diversity officer under favorable circumstances should definitely be able to move the needle forward to help create a more welcoming and inclusive environment and enhance diversity at all levels of the institution. While creating a position of a chief diversity officer may or may not be an acknowledgement that an institution has been less than judicious in terms of past efforts to incorporate diversity across the operational spectrum, it is usually a recognition that more thoughtful planning and

coordinated action must be taken to meet both the challenges and opportunities that will be presented by the phalanx of demographic, economic, political, and social changes that the academy will encounter as the twenty-first century unfolds. “The superordinate goals of providing leadership for diversity and guiding change must direct the selection of the candidate, or institutions run the risk of hiring individuals that are woefully under prepared for the demands of such a complex, high-profile and politically charged position.” (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007)

On the other hand, a person who is appointed to a chief diversity officer position with only the title, but none of the necessary means to influence individual or institutional behavior, is almost certainly doomed to fail. As a designated change agent who operates within a change-resistant setting, the chief diversity officer will be constantly on the firing line. Expect the need for such a position to be challenged from various quarters and a measure of passive resistance to modifications in practice and policy. Some institutions will be more comfortable with simply appearing to embrace diversity, rather than make substantive changes in their environments, and they will withhold significant power and authority from the chief diversity officer and provide a minimal resource allocation to the office, but will still expect the person to correct longstanding institutional inequities and oversights. In such situations, the appointment presents either a direct or implicit message to the effect that, “we’ve hired someone (as CDO) and this person will fix everything. Despite our history, this person will make everything right.” (June, 2011)

While such an approach is transparent and disingenuous on its face, it nevertheless provides convenient political cover for colleges and universities that are not fully committed to maximizing diversity. Institutions of higher education now frequently employ a business model that uses specific indicators to determine whether satisfactory progress towards a particular objective or goal has been realized. Enhancing diversity is often touted as an institutional objective, but beyond the articulated statements of concern from institutional leaders and even the board of trustees, it is the distribution of resources that identifies what the actual priorities of the organization are, and thus what is truly important. An appropriate provision of resources, both human and financial, along with periodic assessments of progress should be applied to the diversity agenda just as they would be to other important aspects of institutional operation. Given the variety of constituencies that one has to placate in order to institute progressive change within the academy, moving any college or university towards increased diversity is a complicated, fluid, and challenging process, and while it is very unlikely for a chief diversity officer to be identified as a “savior” within his or her institution, it is quite easy for that person to become a scapegoat.

One of the most significant, and sometimes vexing, efforts required of a chief diversity officer calls for cultivating allies among those persons 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 necessarily 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. Ideally, these accomplished white colleagues would advocate for the chief diversity officer and the attainment of the goals set by that person, not only in formal, institutional settings, such as department meetings and faculty senate sessions, but also during informal and social gatherings with their colleagues where “shop talk” frequently occurs, such as during lunch appointments, bridge games, golf matches, and workout sessions at the gym.

“A sophisticated set of negotiation, diplomatic, communication and analytical skills will be required to be successful, regardless of the CDO’s educational credentials and background.” (Witt/Kieffer, 2011) However, even if they themselves possess tenured faculty status and a cabinet-level administrative appointment, in the eyes of many members of the academic community, the nature of the work undertaken by the chief diversity officer places that person in a peripheral, rather than a central, position in the institutional organizational design. The efforts of the chief diversity officer will likely be supported by the people of color on the campus and among alumni from these communities as well, but in order for meaningful and significant change to occur, it is necessary to shift the ownership of the push for increased diversity from that group to those people who have power, status, longevity, and seniority within the institution, as well as those individuals outside, such as corporate executives and media figures, who can bring leverage and influence to bear. Such allies are not only invaluable, they are critical, to achieving optimal results in the image-conscious, complicated environs of the American academy. Indeed, without their support and active engagement on behalf of increased diversity and equity, the prospects for substantial and sustained progress are greatly diminished. “To create educational and professional environments of the new millennium requires a shift in the organizational culture of colleges and universities. Although no single individual can transform an institution alone, the CDO can play a key role highlighting the priorities of the campus and incrementally moving it toward a long-range vision of inclusive excellence.” (Williams & Clowney, 2007)

Beyond the Horizon

The sense of social consciousness that colleges and universities now indicate through their designations as “engaged institutions” presents opportunities for the development of purposeful service learning activities that address some of the inequities and disparities that are still prevalent in communities of color. With appropriate input from the affected communities, productive activities can be developed to make use of the energy and expertise of students in ways that improve the living conditions of the residents in the underserved areas while simultaneously providing meaningful interactions between people from different backgrounds. Residential segregation continues to locate most people in neighborhoods where the majority of their neighbors are members of their own racial group, so college and university students usually come to their postsecondary institutions with limited engagement with people from other races. As a result, in the absence of personal contact, the perceptions about individuals from different backgrounds are likely to be influenced by media-influenced stereotypes.

Progressive, forward looking colleges and universities are identifying administrative units within the organizational infrastructure to offer service learning opportunities that help students identify and participate in various community based activities and collaborate with various civic groups and organizations. In addition, there is a component of the job description for college and university faculty that they will perform service, and this statement should be considered as both a rationale and an encouragement for members of this select group to provide hands-on contributions to underdeveloped parts of their communities. An inherent sense of friction is imbedded in many “town-gown” relationships that stems from the historic unwillingness of higher education professionals to utilize their skills and knowledge in catchment neighborhoods, especially when the residents of these areas are people of color. This is an appropriate point in time to underscore the value and importance of faculty service, not simply to the institution and the profession, but to the larger society as well.

It becomes increasingly clear, both from observation and research, that both college-age and pre-college learners are receiving information and communicating with others through technology more so than anyone would have thought likely just a few years ago. At a time when there seems to be an “app” for almost everything, serious consideration should be given to the development of computer applications that will be geared towards the reduction of racial prejudice and the celebration of diversity. It is not inconceivable that the effective use of high tech devices to convey messages of tolerance and open mindedness could result in a substantive change in individual and collective attitudes regarding race among the members of the upcoming generations. It was the Civil Rights movement and the subsequent alignment of political and social support to create a more just and equitable society that ultimately moved overt racial animus from being an acceptable mode of public expression to a form of behavior that now manifests itself in covert ways and in closed settings.

Now, it is the higher education community that must accept responsibility and lead by example to move society towards the elimination of prejudice and discrimination, using all of the intellectual and technical tools at our disposal. Within colleges and universities, scholars from various fields can hopefully cast aside the shroud of white racial supremacy and work in concert to develop applications that will broaden the spheres of both cognitive and affective development, offer comprehensive information for students about situations and circumstances that will provide a deeper understanding of how the nation and the world have evolved; connect them with their peers in other institutions to participate in substantive, interactive discussions and analyses; provide access to academicians beyond their home institutions who can offer additional insights through their research and practice; and engage with policy makers who have the capability to affect legislation that recognizes the value of diversity and the necessity for the continued pursuit of equity.

Equally as important, members of the higher education community must work in close conjunction with our colleagues in the K-12 systems to ensure that age appropriate teaching and learning materials infused with the critical concepts of diversity and pluralism are developed and used in these school settings as well. It should not be surprising to us that previous generations have accepted and promulgated the philosophy of white supremacy given that the transmission of that doctrine occurred through the schools and was reiterated and reinforced in those individuals who matriculated into institutions of higher education. By upholding a social orientation that deliberately forced a portion of the nation's population into second-class status, leaving them undereducated and thus underprepared to develop their skills and talents, the higher education community demonstrated a short-sightedness that directly contradicted its claim of envisioning the nation's optimal future. Now, the academy is being presented with the opportunity to reverse its unfortunate history in regards to race relations by thoughtfully making use of a set of new-era tools and devices that have the potential to be even more impactful in this arena than the materials and methods that have been the fundamental means of instruction, values development, and information delivery since the time of the industrial revolution. Members of the higher education community should creatively employ the new technologies to inculcate an appreciation of diversity, both as a part of individual development and as a key element of the ethos that binds the community of learners.

Finally, although colleges and universities tend to bemoan what has become broadly acknowledged as a widespread decline in the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge among the general population, they have not assumed any institutional responsibility to address this situation, or identified measures to reverse it. The nation's lowered standing on international measures of academic competence clearly does not bode well for the future, as students in countries around the globe are showing higher test scores than their American counterparts. Given this reality, the higher education community should work actively with community organizations to encourage and acknowledge high academic achievement throughout the pre-college years,

especially in underrepresented communities. Working with appropriate and relevant groups to establish a college-going culture throughout the K-12 system is an important first step in increasing the number of students from underserved groups who will pursue postsecondary education, but ongoing measures to acknowledge and reward students who demonstrate academic excellence are also needed. This concept is not new and perhaps was best articulated by the eminent African American scholar, W. E. B. DuBois, who called for the cultivation of the “talented tenth” among the members of his race – a group whose special skills and abilities would be developed to advance the well-being of the entire community. Times, circumstances, and demographics have changed dramatically since DuBois offered his approach, and given the needs and challenges of the age, the academy would serve the nation well by offering support and recognition to a new cadre of high achieving performers who might be called, the “imminent innovators”.

It would not be difficult for colleges and universities, should they choose to do so, to develop activities and programs that provide recognition in postsecondary settings for K-12 students who demonstrate meritorious academic performance during the school year. Hosting these students, along with their parents and teachers, in public ceremonies on college and university campuses, where institutional academic and administrative leaders offer commendation for their current success and inspiration for continued high achievement, provides a connection that will undoubtedly help to keep these young people on task. Postsecondary institutions can extend their mantles even further by cosponsoring a wide range of academically oriented events for various grade levels during the school year, such as academic quiz games, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fairs, musical and dramatic performances, writing contests, oratorical forums, art exhibits, and even re-enactments of important historical events. Colleges and universities can also provide participating students with certificates of achievement from the institutions and letters of congratulations to the parents. Ideally, such activities during the school year would be supplemented by a variety of summer programs for the imminent innovators in such important areas as entrepreneurship, global affairs, civic engagement, nutrition and exercise, and energy and environmental policy. Although at present, even funding for basic institutional operations is tightly constrained, assistance from philanthropic and local corporate supporters should be aggressively sought to provide the necessary financial support for these summer opportunities.

As the brain drain continues out of America and talented individuals choose to take their skills to various countries around the world, stimulating the imminent innovators becomes a prescient investment in the future of this country. Encouraging these students to aspire to higher levels of achievement and to reach their full potential in the process is a strategic step, as they are likely to become the home-grown solution to a potential decline in American technological innovation and economic prosperity. Currently, outreach from colleges and universities into underserved communities is most likely to occur when the institutions are

seeking recruits because of their athletic prowess and potential, rather than their academic capability and promise. It would send a different message altogether to the residents of these neighborhoods, both to the current generation of students and the cohort that will follow them, if the same level of interest and effort was extended by the postsecondary community to enroll the aspiring engineer or the budding entrepreneur as is presently given to signing the next star running back or point guard. Demographic realities dictate that institutions will need to matriculate increased numbers of students from these communities in order to meet their future enrollment goals, so it's quite actually prudent to establish synergistic relationships with potential feeder operations, sooner rather than later.

In a period of unparalleled technological and social changes, the academy confronts the push for change versus the pull of tradition. However, new technologies offer innovative ways to broaden the content and enhance the relevance of instructional materials and provide various means of assessing aptitude, motivation, and perseverance as alternative means of consideration for admission. Increasing the numbers of terminal degree recipients of color offers opportunities to increase faculty representation from those populations and demonstrate institutional acknowledgement of the importance and value of diversity. The backdrop has been set for courageous leadership to expand participation of historically marginalized populations in the academy. In short, America's system of higher education stands positioned to guide the nation towards a genuine enactment of its majestic goals and a realization of its promise. Hopefully, it will seize this opportunity, though even raising the prospect of substantive change will generate irrational resistance from those who are well served by the existing system and who benefit from the status quo. As far as the pernicious influence of racism within the academy is concerned, the statement by the inimitable comic strip figure, Pogo, comes to mind when he said, "we have met the enemy and he is us."

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