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**Leading The Next Paradigm for
Transformative Diversity Leadership.**

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If you've ever felt chilly in the latter part of the spring semester or you've wondered why certain people on your campus seem to have all the comforts of home although you paid the same amount of tuition, you just might be at an institution that needs to do a climate study.

American institutions of higher education should be the doorway to examples of equity, inclusion and diversity. Yet 2015 was marked with record numbers of student demonstrations, most established to demand what institutions already proudly boast as core values of their mission – equal care for all students, a welcoming workplace for faculty of all ethnic backgrounds and upward mobility for all constituents due to its transparent ethics and civic responsibility. To make matters more sobering, the 2016 Inside Higher Education report confirms that “presidents tilt toward being more unsympathetic than sympathetic to protesters’ demands and actions.” Given these conditions on campuses around the country, institutions should want to make change come quickly. If you do, consider using a climate study to launch your transitional efforts and to get relevant information about students’ concerns before a list of demands lands on the desk of the president, or his/her successor.

Of course conducting a climate study as a single act of good faith is far away from doing anything that substantiates positive change. But it certainly could be more than just a simple exercise. It could be the gateway to learning what could or should be done in the eyes of those experiencing the climate as it currently exists. It could also begin the process of gaining significant and critical insight into about five components of campus life: institutional history, legacies of inclusion or exclusion, compositional or structural diversity, psychological dimensions of the climate and the behavioral dimensions of the climate. (Hurtado et al., 1998; 1999) As such, climate studies possess the wherewithal to provide the knowledge needed for institutions to manage the responsibility for global representation among its constituents.

In addition, diversity administration, if it is to be successful at all, needs data resulting from climate studies to support initiatives and projects that satisfy the needs for both institutional ROI and student development into multicultural scholars, athletes and citizens. There is an inherent responsibility for institutions to make the line of sight between institutional goals and human behaviors more visible and plausible to everyone. Climate studies, or the results of climate studies, help make this a reality by providing the data which identifies junctions between points A and B. Using climate study data to get from A to B sets a precedence for meeting students, faculty and staff where they are in their respective journeys to pluralism and even helps shape new constructs for campus traditions and local atonement. Without such data, institutions get lost in creations of “feel good” or nugatory diversity programs. Bowman and Deal, 2003 cautions about this as they remind us that "problems arise when structure is poorly aligned with circumstance."

I've learned in my 24 years in higher education that pre and post-work surrounding the onset of a climate study serves best to ensure that those promoting, conducting and summarizing the study are aligned for action and accountability. Pre-work such as determining why a study should be done and how respective populations will be afforded adequate participation is essential to an inclusive and credible research process. Just as important is the plan to keep the report resulting from the study off the shelf and referenced frequently like a mantra for social justice and constituent goodwill. It makes all the sense in the world to consider root causes and preferred

outgrowths before and after such a costly investment of institutional resources. It also makes sense to anticipate establishing structures that elevate how people are taught, trained, charged and rewarded.

While each major component of a climate study undertaking can be both challenging and painstaking, I still applaud the valor of going forward into the landscape for new beginnings and relationships of all kinds. As you do, it is wise to seek consultant support that assists with outlining pre and post work as well as providing surveys that result in substantial conclusions and insights. Campus Climate Surveys is equipped with relevant surveys for each constituent group as well as services for pre and post work that ensure appropriate and flexible thinking at the start and end of each survey. In addition, services to help with specific recommendations such as diversifying the faculty are supported via INSIGHT Into Diversity's listing of consultant firms like Diversity Works, Inc. that specialize in assessing hiring processes and paradigms.

The time is now to intentionally respond to America's students with benchmarking steps toward diverse and warm campus climates. Conducting a climate study as early as possible not only sets the course for this response but it carves pathways to achievement of diversity accreditation criteria, non-traditional partnerships and exponential returns on investments. There have been many attempts at other ways to address social concerns within higher education. Many claim to result in change, but few can claim to make progress. Regardless of methodology or results, one thing remains clear. The road to substantial change begins with relevant inquiry. Be a good study.