



Mental Health Matters

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

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New Research on The Benefits of Diversity in College and Beyond: An Empirical Analysis

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A racially and ethnically diverse university student body has far-ranging and significant benefits for all students, non-minorities and minorities alike. Students learn better in such an environment and are better prepared to become active participants in our pluralistic, democratic society once they leave school. In fact, patterns of racial segregation and separation historically rooted in our national life can be broken by diversity experiences in higher education.

These are not assumptions but rather conclusions built on strong evidence derived from three parallel empirical analyses of university students, as well as from existing social science theory and research. The new research was conducted last year at the University of Michigan and will be used as part of my testimony as an expert defense witness in the lawsuits brought against the University's admission policies.

An objective reading of the research, the most broad and extensive series of empirical analyses ever conducted on college students in relation to this issue, will answer many questions that have lingered during our nation's debate over the merits of diversity in higher education. Primary among those is whether the need to ensure diversity constitutes a compelling government interest and whether admission policies that help ensure diversity are thus essential.

Students come to universities at a critical stage of their development--a time during which they define themselves in relation to others and experiment with different social roles before making permanent commitments to occupations, social groups, and intimate personal relationships. In addition, for many students college is the first sustained exposure to an environment other than their home communities.

Higher education is especially influential when its social milieu is different from the environment from which the students come and when it is diverse and complex enough to encourage intellectual experimentation. Students learn more and think in deeper, more complex ways in a diverse educational environment.

Complex thinking occurs when people encounter a novel situation for which, by definition, they have no script, or when the environment demands more than their current scripts provide. Racial diversity in a college or university student body provides the very features that research has determined are central to producing the conscious mode of thought educators demand from their students.

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Students with the most diversity experiences during college had the most cross-racial interactions five years after leaving college

There is a consistent pattern of positive relationships between diversity in higher education and both learning and democracy outcomes. This pattern holds across racial and ethnic groups and across a broad range of outcomes

A university composed of racially and ethnically diverse students is essential not only to the intellectual well-being of individual students but also to the long-term health of our American democracy.

Does Diversity Make a Difference?

The American Council on Education and the American Association of University Professors

More than two-thirds of faculty members responding to a recent survey reported that students benefit from learning in a racially and ethnically diverse environment. In addition, more than 40 percent noted that diversity provides interactions important for developing critical thinking and leadership skills.

85% number of faculty members said that diversity has not diminished the quality of their institutions. Students and faculty also agreed that learning in multi-racial/multi-ethnic classrooms has a positive impact on students' cognitive and personal development because it challenges stereotypes, broadens perspectives, and sharpens critical thinking skills.

90% number of faculty members indicated that neither the quality of students nor the intellectual substance of class discussion suffers from diversity.

2% number of those surveyed said that diversity in the classroom impeded discussion of substantive issues.

69% believed that diversity was important for developing students' willingness to examine their own perspectives.

70% reported that diversity is important for exposing students to new perspectives.

Slightly less than one-third of faculty respondents said that the presence of racially diverse students led them to adjust their course syllabus.

Approximately one-quarter said that they changed their teaching methods to encourage discussion in their classes.

20% reported developing new courses in response to a diverse student population, and roughly the same percentage reported reexamining the criteria they used for evaluating students.

More senior faculty (in terms of years and rank) were somewhat less positive about the value of diversity and less likely to address issues of diversity than were respondents generally.

The report cites several features that contribute to this effective diverse learning environment: (1) a learning-centered rather than teaching-centered philosophy;

(2) interactive teaching techniques, such as small group discussions, student presentations, debates, role-playing, problem-posing, and student paper exchanges; and

(3) a supportive, inclusive classroom climate.

"Diversity is a compelling interest because it contributes to the learning process. Race is not a proxy for a point of view, but students learn from the similarities across racial lines and the differences within groups."

(Jonathan Alger, Assistant General Counsel, University of Michigan and former AAUP counsel)

Effective Teaching for the Multicultural Classroom

Lee Knepfelkamp, Professor of Higher and Adult Education, Teachers College, Columbia University

One of the challenges facing faculty committed to creating a transformative curriculum is how to design a learning community that is reflective of both our multicultural society and individual differences among citizens. To teach students to participate effectively in a democratic and pluralistic society, one needs to respond to the needs of various groups within our classes as well as to individual students. Thus, the pedagogical challenge of individualism and diversity within the classroom mirrors that same challenge within the larger American society.

Every classroom is a cultural community reflective of the disciplines and perspectives studied, the authors, the students, and the professor. One can argue that successful learning requires an intercultural approach where students are responsible for listening (and reading and experiencing) to understand--both the perspectives of others (peers, authors, faculty) and for understanding their own perspectives and how they acquired them. **Students can come to understand that learning is about the generation, mutual reflection, and critiquing and expanding of ideas and concepts, and that this is most effectively done in a collaborative and non-competitive environment.**

One effective approach to this challenge is to attend to the variety of learning styles in any college classroom. Understanding multiple learning styles allows one to focus on individual students' own learning styles; sub-groups within a classroom community; and the class as a learning community

Learning Styles

Global Learning Style	Analytical Learning Style
learn by experience	learn by reasoning
image oriented	text oriented
depends on insight and intuition	depends on logic and reasoning
cooperative, collective	competitive, individualistic
subjective and poetic	objective and rational
avoids standing out	asserts self
prefers indirect expression	prefers direct expression

Adapted From Cultural Inclinations in Learning Styles by Shunichiro Ito, Bunkyo Gakuin College, Tokyo, Japan

Helpful Resources on Diversity and Learning Styles

Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Hutchings, Patricia and Andrew Wurtzell, eds. *Knowing and Doing: Learning Through Experience*. New Directions for Teaching and Learning 35. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988.

Kolb, David A. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1983.

Kolb, David A. "Disciplinary Inquiry Norms and Student Learning Styles: Diverse Pathways for Growth." in Arnold Chickering, ed. *The Modern American College*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1983.

The Learning Style Inventory (Self-Scoring Inventory and Interpretation Booklet) and *The Learning Styles Inventory Users Guide* are both available through - Hay/McBer, 116 Huntington Avenue, Boston, Mass. 02116; 617/4377080.

Communication Style Differences

American Indians	Asian Americans and Hispanics	Whites	Blacks
1. Speak softly/slower	1. Speak softly	1. Speak loud/fast to control listener	1. Speak with affect
2. Indirect gaze when listening or speaking	2. Avoidance of eye contact when listening or speaking to high-status person	2. Greater eye contact when listening	2. Direct eye contact (prolonged) when speaking, but less when listening
3. Interject less/ seldom offer encouraging communication	3. Head nods, nonverbal markers	3. Head nods, nonverbal markers	3. Interrupt (turn taking) when can
4. Delayed auditory (silence)	4. Mild delay	4. Quick responding	4. Quicker responding
5. Manner of expression low-keyed, indirect	5. Low-keyed, indirect	5. Objective, task oriented	5. Affective, emotional, interpersonal

From: Counseling the Culturally Different by Sue & Sue, 1990, New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Some Patterns of Cultural Differences

▪ **Communication Styles**

Some white Americans typically consider raised voices to be a sign that a fight has begun, while some black, Jewish and Italian Americans often feel that an increase in volume is a sign of an exciting conversation among friends. Thus, some white Americans may react with greater alarm to a loud discussion than would members of some American ethnic or non-white racial groups.

▪ **Attitudes Toward Conflict**

In the U.S., conflict is not usually desirable; but people often are encouraged to deal directly with conflicts that do arise. In contrast, in many Eastern countries, open conflict is experienced as embarrassing or demeaning; as a rule, differences are best worked out quietly. A written exchange might be the favored means to address the conflict.

▪ **Approaches to Completing Tasks**

Asian and Hispanic cultures tend to attach more value to developing relationships at the beginning of a shared project and more emphasis on task completion toward the end as compared with European-Americans. European-Americans tend to focus immediately on the task at hand, and let relationships develop as they work on the task.

▪ **Decision-Making Styles**

In the U.S., decisions are frequently delegated. In many Southern European and Latin American countries, there is a strong value placed on holding decision-making responsibilities oneself. When decisions are made by groups of people, majority rule is a common approach in the U.S.; in Japan consensus is the preferred mode.

▪ **Attitudes Toward Disclosure**

In some cultures, it is not appropriate to be frank about emotions, about the reasons behind a conflict or a misunderstanding, or about personal information.

DIVERSITY AT CAPS

Cross-Cultural Training Program

The program was initiated to assist counselors in training to develop skills in working with the diverse nature of the IUPUI student body.

Counselors in training engage in weekly didactic sessions regarding clinical skill development. Of the ~15 training sessions in the fall semester, 2-3 are devoted to the area of diversity and cross-cultural work. Counselors in training are asked to explore their own cultural identities and the impact of their values and beliefs on therapeutic work. Case examples are provided and discussed with a focus on the influence of race, ethnicity, country of origin, first language, sexual orientation, religion/spirituality, socio-economic status, etc. on the counseling process. Discussions of the impact of individual identities on the counseling process are integrated into other training sessions throughout the year.

CAPS' CLIENTS:

Gender	CAPS' Clients	CAPS %	University %
Female	1516	65.1	57.7
Male	814	34.9	42.3
Total	2330		

Race/Ethnicity	CAPS' Clients	CAPS %	University %
Asian/Pacific Islander	119	5.2	2.9
Black/African American	271	11.9	9.4
Hispanic/Latina(o)	79	3.5	2.0
Native American	26	1.1	0.3
White/Caucasian	1726	75.7	85.4
Other	58	2.5	--
Total	2279		29,953
No Answer	67		

Age	CAPS' Clients	CAPS %	University % (2003)
18-20	330	14.5	20.6
21-24	775	34.1	31.2
25-28	510	22.4	17.8
29-35	359	15.8	14.8
36-39	88	3.9	4.8
40-44	106	4.7	4.3
45-49	63	2.8	3.4
50-54	29	1.3	1.9
55+	15	0.7	0.9
Total	2275		

Class	CAPS' Clients	CAPS %	University %
Freshman	369	17.5	18.6
Sophomore	416	19.7	19.3
Junior	432	20.5	11.7
Senior	449	21.3	20.0
Masters	215	12.6	21.1
Doctoral	51		
Dental	35	4.9	8.2
Medical	18		
Law	49		
Other	31	1.5	--
Non-Degree	23	1.1	1.1
Non-Student	21	1.0	--
Total	2109		

CAPS Upcoming Events:

Alcohol Awareness Day

Tuesday, September 6
11:00am to 2:00pm
University College (UC) Lobby

Depression Screening Day

Thursday, October 6
10:00am to 4:00pm
University College (UC) Lobby

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

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*The Division of
Student Life and
Diversity*