

Policy-related Excerpts from
Making Diversity Work on Campus: A Research-Based Perspective
a publication from AAC&U's [Making Excellence Inclusive](#) initiative

"The evidence, gathered on behalf of the University of Michigan in its defense of its affirmative action policies before the Supreme Court, indicates that diversity must be carried out in intentional ways in order to accrue educational benefits for students and for the institution." p. iv

"Institutional leaders must learn to think systematically and multidimensionally as they consider the types of policies and procedures that will maximize the educational benefits of diversity. However, our assessment of current efforts to institutionalize diversity on campuses suggests that most campus leaders have fallen well short of this goal. In the sections that follow, we provide a conceptual framework for understanding diversity that we believe will help educators think more systematically and comprehensively about making diversity work on their campuses. We then offer a set of recommendations for specific institutional policies and practices that, in light of the framework, can help to maximize the educational benefits associated with diversity." p. 13

"Institutional programs and policies that increase the compositional diversity of a campus play an important symbolic role by communicating to interested internal and external constituents that diversity is a priority for the campus and its leaders. Hence, it is not surprising that Hurtado and colleagues (1998, 1999) argue that compositional diversity is the single dimension of the climate that most campus leaders think about when they consider creating programs and initiatives targeted at improving the climate. However, there is also a tendency for institutional leaders and policy makers to focus only on this dimension. In fact, a frequently forwarded assertion is that a "critical mass" of people from different racial groups must be present if diversity is to work on our campuses. In forwarding the idea of a "critical mass," campus leaders must be prepared to respond to questions about how to determine how much diversity is enough to achieve the educational benefits of diversity. For the reasons described earlier in this paper, we do not believe this is a productive argument to pursue. Moreover, when the focus is solely or primarily on compositional diversity, we have a tendency to focus on diversity as an end in itself, rather than as an educational process that—when properly implemented—has the potential to enhance many important educational outcomes." p. 15-16

"We find evidence of [the historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion]...in the maintenance of policies that serve a homogeneous population on predominantly white campuses" p. 16

"Take a multidimensional approach. Specific policies may not be effective with all students in the same way. Therefore, it would be wise for campus leaders to utilize a multidimensional approach to diversity and anticipate that the effects of diversity policies may differ. For example, Duster (1992) found that at the University of California-Berkeley, white students preferred informal opportunities to engage diversity

while African Americans desired formal campus programs. Similarly, students of color benefit educationally from same-race interaction in ways that white students do not.” p. 19

“Addressing compositional diversity requires proactive institutional policies that seek to develop and maintain diverse student bodies. The underrepresentation of African Americans, Latina/os, and Native Americans in higher education is often viewed as a “pipeline” problem. The implication of this problem for institutions is that compositional diversity efforts need to begin prior to the admissions process. Furthermore, while press attention typically goes toward admissions policies such as race-conscious practices, effectively attending to compositional diversity requires committed efforts on several fronts.”
p. 20

“Diversity as Policy”

Campus statements. Ideally, the institution’s commitment to diversity should permeate policy in all areas of institutional life. A first step in signaling an institution-wide commitment to diversity is for the top campus leadership to issue statements of support, purpose, and action. Statements such as those at Carnegie Mellon University, Colby College, and the Universities of Michigan, Nebraska, and Western Washington are good examples of publicly stated commitments to diversity.⁶ These statements establish principles for diversity and education, and in some cases, set forth goals for creating a welcoming and safe environment for interaction across groups and for diversifying the curriculum, faculty, and student body. Such statements can also provide an organizing framework for specific diversity initiatives—initiatives that communicate to students in a tangible, unambiguous way that institutional commitment to diversity is strong, steady, and proactive. The campus community can also use these statements to hold their institutional leaders accountable for keeping their diversity-related promises. Faculty diversity policies. A particularly important area of institutional policy for diversity is the recruitment and retention of faculty of color. Faculty, along with staff, serve as an institution’s front-line representatives, and in the academic realm, faculty are also the⁶ AAC&U lists many other examples of statements on its DiversityWeb resource site. See

www.diversityweb.org/diversity_innovations/institutional_leadership.²⁴ embodiment of authority on campus. Students are painfully aware when there is discrepancy in diversity between the faculty and student bodies on their campus, and failure to actively and publicly pursue a more diverse faculty sends a message of insincere commitment to diversity. In this way, faculty diversity initiatives are not only important in their own right (a point that will be discussed later), but they also serve to enhance the perceived climate for diversity.” pp. 23-24

“Institutions need to understand how their policies and practices influence student perceptions of institutional commitment to diversity and intergroup relations.” pp. 22

Reference:

Milem, J. F., Chang, M. J., & Antonio, A. L. (2005). [Making diversity work on campus: A research-based perspective](http://www.aacu.org/leadership/2005/making_diversity_work_on_campus.aspx). Washington, DC: Association American Colleges and Universities.