

Thoughts and Practices on Recruiting and Retaining Diverse Students

Changming Duan
CCPTP

Greetings and gratitude from CCPTP to CoA and to you all for this opportunity and honor to be here with you today!

CCPTP sees recruiting and retaining diverse students as part of our mission, and has set it as an overarching theme of the organization and goal of training. CCPTP has made significant efforts at both organizational and program levels, and achieved quite successes. It is also recognized that there is still much to be done.

At this point of time, 25% to 35% of student body are students of diverse cultural and individual backgrounds is really common among Counseling Psychology training programs across the nation, even in many programs located in parts of the country where diversity is rare.

The key to success and continuing success: making continuous and systematic Top-Down and Grass Root level efforts simultaneously.

Top-Down:

The role of national professional organizations (e.g., CoA, APA Div 17, and CCPTP) can not be overemphasized. These organizations provide structures, theoretical basis, guides, and rewards for programs' effort and are sources of motivation and inspiration for program faculty to pursue our mission and goals consistently (grass root efforts).

First, the CoA's G& P has served as an effective guide and our CCPTP representatives to CoA have done a great job in keeping program directors informed and updated about CoA's activities, which has helped the programs create and maintain a "mind set" for recruiting and retaining diverse students.

APA Div. 17 has contributed tremendously to directing, inspiring and motivating individual faculty members to commit themselves to the course – members always feel "pumped up" or "renewed" coming back from APA convention or other Div. related activities. This helped us sustain our efforts in increasing diversity in our programs directly. Additionally, various Div. initiatives have facilitated the programs' effort in recruiting and retaining diverse students by generating resources. For instance, the Div. 17 presidential initiative by Dr. Puncy Heppner—internationalizing counseling psychology -- has in a visible way enlarged the international applicant pool for counseling psychology programs across the nation. Last year's presidential initiative by Dr. Roberta Nutt – integrating various APA practice guidelines (e.g., guidelines for working with the culturally different, LGBT, women, older adults, etc.) -- has helped to make counseling psychology programs more attractive to those who are interested in diversity and multicultural issues,

especially those with diverse backgrounds who want to find a friendly environment to study in.

CCPTP has taken leadership in addressing diversity issues and recruiting and retaining diverse students by integrating these important topics completely into the organization's thinking, planning and operation. These important topics are present in different forms and shapes at all CCPTP board meetings and membership conferences. As the result, CCPTP helps the programs to exchange good ideas and perfect their practices by providing a forum, a structure, and a check point. An example: a couple of years ago when one training director experienced difficulty in dealing with a situation where a student refused to work with LGBT clients, the CCPTP board and the whole membership joined in the discussion at the conference and via internet, which resulted in a major effort led by CCPTP board members in developing a "value statement" for the training programs. This value statement has helped greatly in accurately advertising our programs and attracting diverse students to the programs.

Grass-Root level effort:

With a strong "mind-set" and a commitment that we want to invest our effort in recruiting and retaining diverse students, which is the foundation for the success of our profession, counseling psychology faculty members work hard to carry out this mission. It is recognized that one key to the success of recruiting and retaining diverse students is maintaining a diverse faculty. Although I do not have precise statistics, faculty in doctoral level counseling psychology training programs across the nation has been quite diverse – definitely beats the national norm. Using our program (University of Missouri at Kansas City) as an example – five of the eight training faculty members are faculty with diverse cultural backgrounds, including that in race, gender, and nationality.

To recruit and maintain diverse faculty, we need to work with the administration. In many of our counseling psychology programs, the program faculty tries to serve various leadership roles in the school, college, or department the program is in (e.g., college of education, Dept. of psychology). Getting involved in different committee work, offering workshops and educational programs, inviting the dean and other members of the leadership to our multicultural events, etc. have been common practice. These effort may help us earn understanding, support and appreciation to our goal to recruit and retain diverse faculty from the dean and our colleagues.

At individual faculty levels, the faculty vigorously pursues research in diversity related areas, initiate discussions about critical issues, and get actively involved in national professional organizations as ways to attract diverse students and faculty.

At the program levels, we focus on the following areas of effort to recruit best and diverse students:

- 1) Advertising – actively advertising our programs, which have a strong emphasis on diversity. The majority of CCPTP member programs have

highlighted the program mission that has a strong emphasis on diversity visibly on their program website.

- 2) **Attracting** – attracting diverse applicants by making the program a friendly place for them. Above 99% of the CCPTP member programs offer a course on diversity, for instance, that reflects the program’s commitment to diversity and is appealing to many diverse applicants.
- 3) **Advising** – we start the advising process before applicants apply. We respond to potential applicants’ inquiries by giving them all needed information and helping them see what can be expected from our programs – again showcasing our diversity focus.
- 4) **Assisting** – after applicants come through the pipeline, we try to offer as much assistance as possible – pairing them up with student mentors, helping them applying for funding, especially various minority students fellowships, offering them strongest assistantship packages possible, orienting them to see the potential of the larger community where the program is located, etc.

Successfully recruiting and retaining diverse students is an important foundation of our profession’s survival and success in the years to come. The Top-Down plus Grass Root level effort needs to be continuous and persistent.

This is all I have time for today. Thank you all very much!