

Success in Attracting and Retaining Diversity Panel  
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Discussant Comments  
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The panel has admirably fulfilled its charge to provide concrete strategies for diversity recruitment and retention. I can only approach the discussion from a different perspective and propose some broad-based strategies.

First, since no one of us can understand all aspects of diversity, I think we must continually strive for greater understanding. One way to do this is to read, study, and research. As academics we know how to do these things. Another way is to partner with diverse faculty and students and learn as much as we can from them.

- We can seek input from the new student with a mobility disability about not only how best to accommodate his needs but how to sensitize the whole learning community to them.
- We can talk to the new young Latina faculty person who is overwhelmed with requests to serve on campus committees and students' dissertations about ask how her load can be shared and how we can support her efforts toward promotion and tenure.
- We can ask gay/lesbian/bi/transgender faculty and staff what employment benefits will support them and we can work to implement such benefits.
- That is, we can reach out to those who are different from us, even if we are sometimes uncertain how to do this, because I think we stand to learn and gain much by doing so.

Second, we can question and analyze prevailing beliefs and practices that may impede our progress toward understanding and facilitating recruitment and retention efforts. I believe that genuine attention to and affirmation of diversity goes beyond specific strategies, although these are obviously necessary.

To truly affirm diversity we (I primarily mean those of us in positions of influence) must be willing to examine prevailing practices and assumptions, as well as any personal resistance to change. We must be willing to pose the hard questions.

We might ask, for instance, if the climate in our training programs is truly welcoming to underrepresented and disenfranchised persons. We have generally assessed this in terms of recruitment strategies and numbers of persons representing diverse groups that the institution recruits. But we should go

beyond this and seek new and varied ways to evaluate climate issues. What are the particular challenges of first generation, ethnic minority, and working class students? What support systems are needed for faculty and students who are single parents? And how do we evaluate our efforts at improving climate?

Many positive changes have occurred in our profession, bringing fresh perspectives to bear. The doors are opening to diverse persons, albeit with some new challenges. We have many relatively new APA divisions focused on diverse groups, a social constructionist analysis in ascendancy, and more varied research approaches, including qualitative methods that respect the phenomenology of the disenfranchised.

All these changes are positive, and we should be open to the new ways of looking at the profession and the discipline that they offer. By examining issues with a fresh perspective, we can better understand and challenge the underlying biases inherent in long-standing beliefs and practices. In terms of asking such hard questions, I came up a few examples of issues on national scene that we might examine.

For instance, what is behind the current administration's attempts to urge colleges and universities to adopt race-neutral admission strategies? Are such admission strategies really fair? According to 2003 U.S. Census figures, racial and ethnic minority students are less likely to complete high school and less likely to succeed in college than white students. When you consider these data, I can only conclude that race-neutral admissions translate into a perpetuation of educational inequality. Supposed race-neutral strategies, in essence, deny the existence of racial discrimination.

Why are so many marriage protection measures being introduced at the state and federal levels? Try as I might I cannot see how the institution of marriage is threatened by extending its rights and privileges to gay and lesbian couples. So from my perspective, marriage protection is a euphemism for moral judgment of and discrimination against gays and lesbians.

And, my favorite: Why is the press even asking "Is America ready for a woman or African American president"? At the very least this notion winks at prejudice and at the very worst reinforces it.

To conclude, to date I think many approaches to diversity recruitment and retention have been additive – stir in some strategies and hope they mix with the rest of our programs. I urge all of us to push ourselves, to examine cultural biases and move beyond the additive approach. In this way we can truly embrace

diversity by making our efforts an integral part of our educational programs, the profession, and the discipline.