Working with a Diverse Student Population

Westminster College
Salt Lake City, UT
Module Agenda

This module is separated into three parts that will examine the history of diversifying higher education institutions, the current campus climate research, and the college community's roles and responsibilities on campus concerning diversity and inclusion.

Part 1: Overview of Access and Expansion of Higher Education

Part 2: Examining Diversity on Campus

Part 3: Diversity and Inclusion at Westminster College
Overview

This module will also take a linear and conceptual approach to understanding how faculty work with a diverse student population. Each part becomes less broad and more introspective as the module moves along. While navigating through the presentation, attempt to frame your knowledge of and positionality to this particular topic by responding to the series of questions posed throughout the presentation. The following slide lists questions to aid you through the process before we begin.
Points of Inquiry

By the end of this module, participants should be able to respond to the following questions:

● What are some policies and initiatives that led to a broadening of access to higher education institutions for traditionally underrepresented populations?
● Why is following and promoting inclusionary practices important for everyone a part of a campus community?
● What are some of the complexities of defining diversity?
● What are specific elements featured in Hurtado’s campus climate model that depend heavily on faculty support?
● In what ways does Westminster College acknowledge and work to sustain its diverse student body?
Part 1:

Overview of Access and Expansion in Higher Education
The U.S. First Higher Ed. Institution: Harvard College

Ever since its establishment in 1636, Harvard has earned the respect of people in the U.S. and abroad on account of its academic rigor and excellence.

Though Harvard continues to be a highly selective school, the institution only granted access to people of select dominant groups at its conception and many years afterward. Can you surmise who the typical Harvard student was almost 400 years ago?
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts
Established 1636

- Race: Caucasian
- Sex: Male
- Socio-Economic Status: Upper Class
- Founded to train clergyman
- Acceptance Rate: 5-10% (Highly Selective)
Harvard & Westminster College

- Research or recall your knowledge of U.S. History--what other populations existed in 1636 who would not have had access to Harvard College?

- Compare the information presented on the last slide to populations you’d expect to see at Harvard College now. What student info do you believe to be the same? What has shifted?

- Now, think about Westminster College--how do you think Harvard’s history has shaped our own and other higher ed institutions? Take into consideration our history as a small, liberal arts college with a former religious affiliation.
Expansion of Access to Higher Education

Not without its many struggles, upsets, and failures, the state of higher education has since admittedly progressed since 1636. There is still a great deal to accomplish to assure that higher education is accessible and affordable for all communities, but the nation has enacted legislation on a state and federal level that has increased accessibility concerning institution type and costs, thus allowing for different types of higher education student experiences.
As we examine how the student body of these higher education institutions diversified, we also have to take note of how post secondary education expanded, which allowed communities who traditionally did not have access to higher ed to matriculate at institutions that would be the best fit for their needs and expectations. Concerning institutional access, we now have:

- 2-yr colleges (community, junior, and technical colleges, etc.) and 4-yr colleges
- Public: (ex. Land Grant institutions)
- Private: (religious-based, single-sex, etc.)
- Special-interest (Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving, Native American-serving, etc.)
- Distance Education (online)
Here are some outlets in which students have access to additional funds to cover educational costs:

- Federal
  - Grants
  - Loans
  - Work-study program
- Private scholarships
- Low-cost institutions, e.g., two-year colleges

Many prospective and current students face economic barriers when deciding whether to start or continue their postsecondary education. The Higher Education Act of 1965 sought to “strengthen the educational resources of our colleges and universities and to provide financial assistance for students in postsecondary and higher education.”
End of Part I: Questions on Access

- We’ve listed two resources, institutional type and financial aid opportunities, that have allowed more people to find college accessible to them. Are there any other important factors missing that made it easier for a variety of populations to pursue a post-secondary education?

- The former slides have provided a very basic list of things implemented to make college more accessible to some. What do you perceive as some of the shortcomings of institutional and economic initiatives that still continue to block some people from successfully pursuing a college education?

- Can you localize some of the strengths and limitations of access and expansion initiatives to Utah or Westminster College (as one of the few private, small liberal arts colleges in the state) specifically?
Part 2: Examining Diversity on Campus
In Part I, we took time to look at some initiatives that allowed a diverse population of students to matriculate on campus. In this section of the module, we will take a look at the dynamics of a higher education institutional space that acknowledges and works to sustain a diverse population. But first, let’s take a step back think about why a diverse population is important.
Importance of Diversity
Within and Beyond Academia

- Individuals educated in diverse settings are far more likely to work and live in racially and ethnically diverse environments after graduation.

- Individuals who studied and discussed issues related to race and ethnicity in their academic courses and interacted with a diverse set of peers in college are better prepared for life in an increasingly complex and diverse society.
A university education with a diverse student population holds great potential to disrupt patterns of racial and ethnic segregation established by segregated cities, neighborhoods, and lower education systems.

We often think of higher ed institutions as an insular community, but in actuality, they have the power to inform and enact change in the larger community they are a part of. This is why we see a lot of institutions either doing community outreach (University of Utah’s University Neighborhood Partners) or collaborating with local organizations (Westminster and Promise South Salt Lake).
Dismantling Discrimination to Higher Education

Efforts to expand access to higher education occurred via legislative mandates to mitigate discriminatory policies and practices. Instead of changing requirements to access existing institutions, (e.g., Harvard College), other (separate) institutions were created, perpetuating exclusion by design:

- Colonial Colleges (religion)
- Women’s Colleges (gender)
- Normal (Teachers) Colleges (vocation)
- Land-Grant (Public) Colleges/Universities (agricultural/mechanical arts/industry)
- (Historically) Black Colleges/Universities (race)
- Two-Year/Community Colleges (economic)

Post-WWII Expansion (partial list)
- GI Bill (1944)
- Vocational Education Act (1963)
- Civil Rights Act (1964)
- Economic Opportunity Act (1964)
- Adult Education Act (1966)
- Americans with Disabilities Act (1990)
- Workforce Investment Act (1998)
Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the overlapping or interconnectedness of different social identities that are most commonly subject to systems of oppression, or how multiple oppressions are experienced (Crenshaw, 1989). It's important to note that some people may identify as belonging to more than one underrepresented group.

For example, you may encounter different members of the campus community who identify as being a member of various identity-based, social, political, and/or geographic marginalized groups like the ones listed on the previous slide.

Also remember that some people may be visibly a part of an underrepresented group (e.g. an African-American student) while another's association with a certain group cannot be discerned by merely looking at the individual (e.g. an LGBT student).
Another way to explore the complexities of building plans and initiatives that strive towards diversity and inclusion would be to examine Hurtado et al’s campus climate model. Hurtado is a prominent researcher within the field of diversity and access in higher education at UCLA. Take note of the different forces and dimensions featured in Hurtado’s model.

Questions on Campus Climate Framework

Now that you’ve seen Hurtado et al’s campus climate framework, to the best of your abilities, respond to the following questions:

- Which points in the framework do you believe faculty shape on campus and/or in classrooms?
- Which points in the framework do you believe faculty are far removed from?
- Which things, if any, do you believe can only be successfully achieved through state or federal mandates?
- In your opinion, how do you see Westminster’s initiatives and practices fitting into this framework?
Now that we’ve explored a brief history of diversity endeavors along with recognizing the importance of cultivating and sustaining a diverse student population, let’s now take a look at how some of Westminster’s current endeavors are working in accordance to evolve and positively progress our campus community of learners.
Part 3:

Diversity and Inclusion at Westminster College
Defining Diversity and Inclusion

Each institution defines diversity and inclusion in its own way. Often times, plans and initiatives are put into place to assure that long-term endeavors to cultivate and sustain a diverse campus population progress in a reasonable timeframe.

It’s our role as faculty to continue this work and create a welcoming environment for all students, recognizing the fact that select populations have not traditionally had access or have just gained access to higher institutional spaces.
Promoting Diversity and Inclusion at Westminster

Here are three important documents drafted by Westminster College that speak to diversity and inclusion in various degrees. Before going to the next slide, please take time to familiarize yourself with the following documents below:

- College-wide Learning Goals: https://www.westminstercollege.edu/assessment/
- Strategic Plan: https://westminstercollege.edu/strategicplan/?parent=15399&detail=16097
- Draft Diversity and Inclusion Statement: https://westminstercollege.edu/diversity-and-inclusion/
Questions about Diversity at Westminster

- How do these documents address both the visible and invisible diversity of campus?
- One of the College-wide learning goals is to promote “global consciousness, social responsibility, and ethical awareness”. In what ways would a diverse campus body better prepare the campus community to achieve this goal?
- Within in the Strategic Plan, there’s clear mention of mentoring. How do you personally see yourself as being a mentor or being the recipient of mentoring?
As we think about diversity and inclusion, remember that faculty roles and responsibilities go beyond the classroom.

**Campus Involvement**

- Understand roles/responsibilities as a member of the campus. See Handbook for New Faculty
- Working in accordance with Title IX
- Provide and nurture safe/brave spaces on campus
End of Part III: Final Reflection

To conclude, take some time to reflect on these questions. Some questions may be easier to answer than others. In fact, there are no right answers--some questions involve module participant taking the initiative to start an intra and inter-community dialogue in order to shape their own thoughts about diversity and inclusion.

- What do you believe to be a faculty member’s role(s) in contributing to a welcoming teaching and learning environment on campus?
- In your opinion, what has Westminster done or is currently doing to build a healthy campus climate for students, faculty, and staff?
- What place does community and civic engagement have in establishing a strong diverse population on campus?
- What does a diverse population look like? What groups would you expect to be represented? What would a diverse population do or need to prosper?
Appendix: Resources

Below are a few resources that explore diversity and inclusion that were consulted to create this teaching module:

**Getting to the What, How, and Why of Diversity on Campus**
Patricia Gurin and Biren (Ratnesh) A. Nagda

**Broadening Our Definition of Diversity**
Tori Haring-Smith

**How Does Racial/Ethnic Diversity Promote Education?**
Patricia Y Gurin; Eric L Dey; Gerald Gurin; Sylvia Hurtado

**The Benefits of Diversity in Education for Democratic Citizenship**
Patricia Gurin, Biren (Ratnesh), A. Nagda, Gretchen E. Lopez

**Transformational Tapestry Model: A Comprehensive Approach to Transforming Campus Climate**
Susan Rankin and Robert Reason

About This Module

This module is the first of a two-part module “Working with a Diverse Student Population”, supported by a Griffin Grant for Adjunct Faculty Development. This project was coordinated by Adjunct Faculty Coordinator Hikmet Loe. Adjunct faculty were invited to apply for a Griffin Grant. The following adjunct instructors were selected to develop the module with support from the listed full-time faculty:

Part 1 (Conceptualizing Diversity in Higher Education):

Nkenna Onwuzuruoha, with Tamara N. Stevenson, Assistant Professor, Communication

Part 2 (Diversity and the Classroom Environment):

Nancy Garrison, with Christopher Davids, Assistant Professor, Psychology
Looking Ahead….

**Classroom environment:** As we saw in the Campus Climate framework, curriculum and pedagogical practices play a role in establishing a positive campus climate. Also remember that a major role of faculty members is to control and moderate the classroom to establish and maintain a safe learning environment, yet one where students feel comfortable to push back against certain pre-conceived ideas.

Nancy Garrison and Christopher Davids have collaborated to specifically address how to work with a diverse population within a classroom setting. Their module acts to complement this one. In particular, the Garrison and Davids’ module moves beyond the history of diversity efforts to explore how to recognize faculty privileges and biases in order to master impactful instructional practices that will create a thriving learning environment.