



The College of Arts & Letters sponsored a delegation of faculty and staff to attend AAC&U's Conference on Diversity, Equity and Student Success.

Scan this QR code for more detailed documents of their main takeaways and points of intrigue from the 3-day virtual conference.



College Delegation

- Dr. Melinda Wilson Ramey, College of Arts & Letters
- Dr. Rebekkah Mulholland, Department of History
- Dr. Scott Perkins, School of Music
- Dr. Brenda Romero, Department of World Languages & Literatures
- Dr. Beatrice Russell, Department of World Languages & Literatures
- Dena Lemus, SAGE Director
- Kya Webb, SAGE Academic Advisor



American Association of Colleges and Universities

Can We Handle Truth?

Conference on Diversity, Equity, and Student Success
March 9–11, 2023

PLENARY ADDRESSES

Mary Ann Villarreal

Vice President for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, University of Utah; Chair, AAC&U Board of Directors

Michelle Asha Cooper

Vice President for Public Policy and Executive Director of Lumina's Washington, D.C. Office; Former Deputy Undersecretary at the U.S. Department of Education; Former President and Chief Executive Officer, Institute for Higher Education Policy

PRESENTERS

A broad spectrum of leaders from Sacramento State, the CSU, California, and throughout the United States

FIVE COMMON THEMES/ISSUES/CONCERNS

- Many good things happen when there is a bottom-up approach to DEI efforts, which requires a lot of work at the department level
- Many programs don't know what their colleagues are working on because of siloing (i.e., when people are working on different things simultaneously but in isolation)
- There is often an unevenness in commitment to DEIBJ work among faculty within departments and departments within colleges
- DEIBJ efforts often suffer from "passive resistance," in which people come up with excellent plans but don't work to implement them
- Most schools lack rubrics for assessing the effectiveness of initiatives, and they lack accountability measures for inaction

WHAT SOME SCHOOLS ARE DOING

- Providing considerable training and support
- Offering financial incentives (not just reassigned time) to motivate faculty involvement
- Making DEIBJ work part of the RTP process
- Not allowing colleges or departments to hire new faculty until they had put DEIBJ initiatives in place. This was a resolution that was passed by the Faculty Senate and approved by the President at San Diego State

Special thanks to the College of Arts & Letters and Dean Sheree Meyer for the opportunity to attend this conference.

AAC&U Diversity and Student Success Conference

March 9-11, 2023

Sac State Delegation Member: Brenda Romero

ATTENDED SESSIONS

- Conference Welcome and Opening Plenary
- We Belong, Creating a Culture of Inclusivity: A Model for Adaptation
- Departmental Action Planning: Embedding DEIB Practice at the Unit Level
- Confronting America's Racial History
- Embodying Leadership: Leading Authentically

LESSONS LEARNED

- You don't need to give up who you are in order to lead
Uncomfortable conversations in the classroom are very educational.
- Affinity groups are key to promote a sense of belonging
- The term 'predominantly white institution' is used without thought being given to its significance; that race and racism are the cornerstones upon which these institutions were built.

POTENTIAL ACTIONS

Campus or College-wide:

- Host a Social Justice week
- Create a DEIBJ Certificate for faculty

In Class:

- Use literature to bring up conversations about racism.
- Draw comparisons between two countries and their way of coping with their history of racism; for example slavery in the US vs. the Holocaust in Germany.

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Fostering a Growth Mindset

- We can work to support Growth Mindset in our Institutes by adjusting classroom norms (by focusing on effort and strategic used abilities improving over time with practice)
- Growth Mindset: Students understand that they can get smarter through hard work, use of effective strategies, and help from others when needed
- Fixed Mindset: The belief that intelligence is a fixed trait that is set in stone at birth.
- It's important to create comfort zones where challenges and "failure" are welcome
- Struggle is where the learning happens and it's also important to share stories of our "failures" with students to help give perspective
- It's important to reflect on our own biases

The Power of Collaboration in Holistic Student Support

There are 3 major aspects of collaboration in unified action in student support: Networking, Coordinating, and Incorporating

- **Networking:** Working with faculty and other entities on campus is important so that everyone knows who they are working with, what departments they work in, and how they could possibly work together to help students at every possible point.
- **Coordinating:** Important to bring people together or creating a networking retreat. Being able to coordinate and network is not just an exchange of info, but also the sharing of ideas to achieve a common purpose. It could be: Financial aid, micro aggressions, helping international students etc. It is important to understand that coordinating is about eliminating barriers, sharing information, and exchanging info about our students such as their majors and courses they are taking.
- **Incorporating:** More than sharing information or activities: At this level, we are shifting and sharing resources which could be financial, access to people, etc.
- Holistic approach is to align time, space, and purpose: Synchronization of time is about the way we meet student needs in a timely manner, space is the environment in which we work, and purpose is to understand our why...why are we doing this? What is the importance of our position and to do the work that we do?
- **Stuart ship:** Holding people accountable for the work that we do. In a holistic approach, it's important for us to be sensitive to students' struggles, understanding how they feel, whether they are experiencing alienation on campus, and whether they have an outlet for someone to talk to when going through struggles. It's also important for us not to just see them as an ID number but to know how to connect with the student on a holistic level. Without viewing them holistically, we won't be able to understand them as students as a whole.
- It's important to prioritize relationship building in order to effectively help our students.

Example: Bringing together departments such as; admissions, DEI departments, etc. so that we are able to help students at each point. This way we can check in with each other about the student, what we know about the student, what are their needs, early warning systems about the student know if they are in jeopardy of failing etc.

Supporting Students' Well-being: Diverse Faculty's Perspective

- Teachers need to understand how emotions impact teaching and learning
- Children's Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is directly influenced by the teacher's own social-emotional competence as well as their pedagogical skills
- Facilitating a climate of inclusiveness and acceptance can help to promote respect and dignity as well as acceptance and honoring of diversity
- Students should be active participants in the learning process as they are co-custodians of knowledge
- Supporting International students in the classroom: It's important to use more universal references, use more explanation if you use subculture/pop culture examples
- Supporting International students outside of classrooms: Understanding the constraints/restrictions due to visa status (field experiences, internship selections), it's important to also offer social support

AAC&U DIVERSITY AND STUDENT SUCCESS CONFERENCE (MARCH 9-11, 2023) LARGEST TAKEAWAYS

Dr. Beatrice Russell

Associate Professor of French. French Area Head Program
Department of World Languages and Literatures. California State University, Sacramento.

Exclusion of Black People's History in Curriculums.

The History of slavery and Jim Crow segregation laws have relegated Black people to second-class citizen status and the abolition of these institutions, and their legacies still resonate throughout the larger culture in the US. Institutions of Higher Education in the USA have excluded from textbooks the history of slavery, the economic contribution of enslaved Africans, and Black excellence and resilience. The truth is that Black history is American history, and we know that slavery is “unmedicated evil” and the truth is too uncomfortable to confront so institutions of higher education relegate the history of Black people to Ethnic Studies programs instead of confronting the terrifying truth. African- American Studies Programs emerged in the 1960's in the US with the main objective to fill the gaps left in curriculums across disciplines. Marginalizing the History of black people in curriculums is harmful to everyone and does not prepare White students to be critical thinkers of the true history of their country (USA) which would help them become better global citizens. Now is the time to correct this gross oversight.

Student Evaluation of Teaching and the Implications for Equitable Faculty Review, Tenure, & Promotion Practices: Findings, Opportunities & Challenges when Speaking Truth to Power. Dr. Nicole Maccalla.
University of Southern California.

Student Evaluation of Teaching is a normalized part of a student's academic experience. Qualitative and quantitative scores are used in faculty review for tenure and promotion.

- Misuse of student feedback disproportionately harms underrepresented and historically marginalized faculty, throwing a wrench into concurrent efforts to recruit and retain diverse faculty at all academic ranks.
- White professors are seen as having all the positive qualities of a ‘teacher’ at the expense of faculty of color because student questionnaires are designed to give an advantage to White professors.

Previous studies found that Black faculty are rated lower than Whites in:

- Quality, knowledge, competence, clarity, expertise, and helpfulness.
- Black and Hispanic faculty are rated lowest.
- Black and Hispanic rated higher on the measure of “easiness”.

Redesigning Student Evaluation of Teaching and Findings

Redesigning Student Evaluation of Teaching by removing some questions open to ‘racial’ bias and adding student learning outcome questions, the pre- and post-quantitative and qualitative scores show marked improvements and the potential to ‘bridge’ the gap between Whites and Black faculty numerical scores.

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LINKS

- <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2019/06/07/nonwhite-faculty-face-significant-disadvantages-tenure-track-opinion>
- Head Count of Full-Time Faculty by Tenure Status and Race/Ethnicity <https://www.calstate.edu/csu-system/faculty-staff/employee-profile/csu-faculty/Pages/headcount-of-full-time-faculty-by-tenure-status-and-ethnicity.aspx>

CAN WE HANDLE TRUTH?

Conference on Diversity, Equity, and Student Success

Dena Lemus, SAGE Director, College of Arts & Letters

THE QUESTIONS

Can our campus handle the truth? Are we prepared for what the data might tell us?

Do we want to be part of the ski team vs. the basketball team?
Are we struggling in silos or taking steps as a team?

There is talk about the importance of diversity, but where is it in the budget?

Are our students succeeding because of us or in spite of us?

Do we always review our policies and practices through an equity lens?

THE ANSWERS & ACTIONS

SURVEYS

You can't change what you can't see. Find out what we are missing.

SHIFT POWER. SHARE POWER.

Let students be a part of the discussion/planning and therefore part of the solution.

USE TOOLS WE ALREADY HAVE.

CANVAS is a toolkit for student success that students are already familiar with.

STOP FOCUSING ON FIXING THE STUDENT TO FIT THE INSTITUTION AND START FOCUSING ON FIXING THE INSTITUTION TO FIT THE STUDENT!

HOW GRATITUDE.

You never know what it took a student to make it to class or your advising appointment today.

Conference Session:

Intentionally Planning for Equitable Retention and Student Success

Monica Flippin Wynn | John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education

Victoria McGillin | Gardner Institute

Are you ready?

Have you identified retention as an institutional priority and commitment

Have you identified diversity, equity and inclusion as institutional priorities?

Do you have commitment from the top?

Are you prepared to work in an institutional team and include diverse stakeholders?

Are you ready to dig into disparities and review policies/practices contributing to those disparities in outcomes?

Will you be ready to utilize institutional evidence to move the work forward?

Are you ready to share and receive feedback in addressing unjust design in student success.

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WHAT

What evidence should you use?

- ▶ Data democratization/ Data literacy/ Data through an equity lens
- ▶ Quantitative evidence?
- ▶ Qualitative evidence?
- ▶ Where can you find this data?
- ▶ Is student voice represented?

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What does reviewing policies and practices through an equity lens mean?

- ▶ Who is being served/Not served?
- ▶ Who is being penalized disproportionately?
- ▶ What disaggregated data do you have on who is being impacted by this policy/practice?
- ▶ Who regulates the policy/practice? How representative is that body?
- ▶ Is the policy or practice based on the premise that the student needs to be fixed, or that the institution needs to be fixed?

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