[INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE AND HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICES]

The First Year at LaGuardia Community College

■ PAUL ARCARIO, dean for academic affairs at Fiorello H. LaGuardia Community College, City University of New York

Since accepting its first incoming class in 1971, Fiorello H. LaGuardia Community College has been a gateway to college for thousands of students—immigrant, minority, low income, and first generation—who might not otherwise have access to higher education. One of seventeen undergraduate colleges of the City University of New York (CUNY), LaGuardia serves over 15,000 degree-seeking students and 39,000 students in noncredit and outreach programs. Among our degree-seeking students, approximately 60 percent are foreign-born, representing 156 countries and speaking

> We believe that students learn best when they can apply their skills to academic subject matter, rather than when skills instruction is separate from and prior to discipline-area instruction.

118 different languages, and almost half of these students have been in the United States under five years. Seventy-eight percent of our students are racial and ethnic minorities, 60 percent are first-generation college students, and nearly three-quarters of independent degree students report a family income of less than $25,000.

LaGuardia's rich diversity is a definite asset, as students learn to prosper in an environment that reflects the increasingly multicultural demographics of our society. But at LaGuardia, this diversity also translates into a campus of students who have been traditionally underserved by the educational system. In many cases, students are academically underprepared, with almost 80 percent of first-time degree-seeking students needing at least

one developmental skills course. Our students must also cope with the demands of their outside lives: almost half of new students work, 40 percent are enrolled part time, and all students commute. These contexts make it difficult to instill in students the sense of connection to the institution so necessary to college persistence. To translate access to success, our faculty and administration felt we would need to craft a multifaceted approach to the first year. We focused on two major goals to improve persistence and success: (a) fostering seamless transitions between developmental, English language learning, and discipline-area work, and (b) creating a sense of community and heightened engagement with the college.

Integrating Developmental and Disciplinary Work

A central aspect of community college education—certainly a large part of who we are and what we do at LaGuardia—is defined by developmental courses. At many institutions, basic skills reside at the fringe of the curriculum in a set of "precollege" courses that students must complete before pursuing courses in the major. At LaGuardia, for example, basic writing, reading, and English as a Second Language (ESL) are noncredit courses and are prerequisites to many introductory courses in the majors.

Unsurprisingly, incoming students have complained that their developmental course work is not connected to their reason for coming to college—that is, to study a particular field. As a result, students in developmental courses often do not feel connected to the college, their classes, and their academic aspirations.

Seeing this disconnect, we asked: How can we challenge our students, foster connection-making, and incorporate basic skills learning into the disciplines? Our answer has been to contextualize skills development within disciplinary coursework. We believe that students learn best when they can apply their skills to academic subject matter, rather than when skills instruction is separate from and prior to discipline-area instruction. In fact, LaGuardia has a long history of integrating basic skills and discipline-area instruction through our first-year learning communities, which have paired ESL classes with courses such as accounting, introduction to business, and biochemistry. Despite their success, our learning communities have historically served a relatively small percentage of incoming students. We saw a need not only to expand the learning communities, but also to connect extracurricular activities with the curriculum and provide students with more information about career development. We knew we could extend the learning communities' reach and improve our existing program in multiple ways.

First Year Academies

To create the cohesive and comprehensive first-year experience we envisioned, the college established First Year Academies. Linking student development services with curricular offerings, the academies are designed to focus the first-year experience around the major. Based on their intended majors, all incoming students now enter one of three academies (business/technology, allied health, and liberal arts). These academies function

LaGuardia Community College students work on their e-portfolios within the learning communities.

as "schools-within-a-school," combining a range of activities including discipline-specific New Student Seminars, a newly developed second-semester career development course titled Fundamentals of Professional Advancement, initiation of student electronic portfolios (e-portfolios), and an array of discipline-relevant cocurricular activities (such as career orientation and speaker events).

The academies' learning communities are particularly important to this integrative approach. The academies have both embraced existing ESL learning communities and created new communities focused on non-ESL basic reading, writing, and mathematics. Each academy now offers a series of learning communities that link developmental courses with credit-bearing disciplinary courses. Thirty-six percent of eligible students (that is, day students who need basic skill training) enroll in these communities. The faculty within each learning community collaborate to forge connections between classes. Learning communities place students who require basic skills courses in contact with their majors upon entering college, providing the opportunity to earn credits toward the major or general education requirements. ESL, for example,

has been paired with courses such as Accounting, Introduction to Business, Introduction to Computers, Introduction to Sociology, and Biochemistry. The learning communities also include a freshman seminar that offers academic and career guidance, as well as a "studio hour" where students begin constructing e-portfolios. Most importantly, the learning communities provide all students with the chance to *be* college students, both in name and through meaningful academic and social experiences.

Common Intellectual Experiences

As an entry point to higher education for many students who might not otherwise have access, LaGuardia needs to foster first-year students' sense of community and connectedness to the college. To create an intellectual experience that is shared among students in the First Year Academies, establish an academic tone for new students, and communicate our expectation that critical reading skills are key to academic success, we developed a common reading program. Each year a faculty committee selects a book that is accessible to students and rich enough in content to connect to discipline-area classes. Selections have included *Having*

Our Say: The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years; Esmeralda Santiago's *When I Was Puerto Rican*; Tamim Ansary's *West of Kabul, East of New York*; *The Laramie Project* by Moises Kaufman and members of the Tectonic Theatre Project; Art Spiegelman's *Maus*; Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*; and Ernest Gaines' *A Lesson Before Dying*. All incoming students receive the book free of charge, and a faculty team creates a Web site and study guide with links, resources, and suggested assignments. LaGuardia also holds a series of common reading events, which have ranged from a field trip to New York City's El Museo del Barrio to a multimedia and dance presentation on Afghanistan and the Islamic Diaspora. In addition, we have organized lunchtime book discussions with the college president, encouraged students to enter our annual essay contest, and provided students the opportunity to meet and question authors on campus.

The common reading also provides the basis for faculty-led discussions during Opening Sessions for New Students, an event designed to give students a feel for the college experience—the essence of which is engaging with faculty in the world of ideas. To set the intellectual tone, we plan the day as an academic conference, with a plenary session, faculty-led small-group colloquia, and concurrent workshops on topics such as leadership, women's issues, communication, student clubs, student success stories, community activism, and diversity. Survey assessments of our Opening Sessions program indicate that students consistently rate the opportunity to discuss the common reading with faculty members as the most significant part of the day.

E-portfolios in the First Year—and Beyond

Electronic portfolios are a key part of students' experiences at LaGuardia. LaGuardia's e-portfolio initiative provides students with a tool for collecting and

sharing their academic work and reflections on their learning. Students begin their e-portfolios during the First Year Academies and continually refine them as they move forward with their educations, always reflecting on their processes of growth and improvement. Students have integrated original paintings, drawings, oral interviews, family photographs, poetry, résumés, and a range of class projects that represent who they are as students and emerging scholars.

In the first year, e-portfolios place particular emphasis on guiding students to define and clarify their academic and career goals—prompting them from the outset of their academic careers to take responsibility for and reflect upon their learning. All sections of the second-semester career development course, Fundamentals of Professional Advancement, have an attached studio hour for intensive e-portfolio work. At the institutional level, e-portfolios also allow the faculty to assess student development by comparing students' work at the beginning of their academic careers with work created later. The work first-year students place in their e-portfolios thus provides a baseline for faculty to measure growth as students progress toward graduation. For more about LaGuardia's e-portfolio project, visit www.eportfolio.lagcc.cuny.edu.

Outcomes

While these programs continue to expand and evolve, we have been encouraged by their outcomes to date. Semester-to-semester retention rates for academy learning community students are 75.6 percent (compared with 71.7 percent for the college as a whole). Pass rates in academy learning community courses average 77.1 percent, versus 72 percent for the same courses offered as "stand-alones." For the learning communities' basic writing course, the pass rate is six percentage points higher than in stand-alone sections (69.5 percent versus 63.6 percent).

The academies are a work in progress. We are continually experimenting with how to use this structure to achieve what we believe are important first-year goals: creating opportunities for students to develop meaningful connections to the campus, to the faculty, to their chosen discipline, and to one another. ◉

[PERSPECTIVES]

First-Year Learning Communities: A Student's Experience

■ **SUZANA SJENICIC,** first-year student at LaGuardia Community College

In September 2008, I started classes at LaGuardia Community College. Not knowing what to expect from my professors, my classes, or my classmates, I was extremely nervous. I felt like I was entering foreign territory where anything could happen. I was anxious to find out what was waiting for me.

My nervousness didn't last long. At the beginning of the semester, Professors William Koolsbergen and Phyllis Van Slyck greeted us with friendly faces. They introduced us to the topics we would cover in the learning community cluster and explained that they would teach five classes, including one they would teach together. I loved the idea of having the same students in all my classes, and I was glad that Drs. Koolsbergen and Van Slyck would be my only professors. I was eager to begin my journey and had high expectations.

The cluster focused on the 1960s. Knowing that the sixties was a period of change and liberation for many social groups in the United States, I was excited to learn more. By writing essays, working on presentations and group activities, watching movies, and discussing topics as a class, we learned about the Summer of Love, the women's movement, gay liberation, the Vietnam War, and civil rights. Through my research, I discovered what different groups had been through, and I wrote many essays exploring my beliefs about equality.

Professor Phyllis and Professor Will made me feel at home in class. I loved going to school, no matter how much I had to study or how many essays I had to write, and I completed assignments with pleasure. The professors were always ready to help with assignments, answer questions, and make lessons fun.

I bonded with other students through the cluster, and we became great friends. We came together as a group to help each other learn, both inside and outside of school. We shared our different thoughts, beliefs, and interests, and we helped each other when we had questions about homework or assignments. We made each other's lives much easier. I believe that some of us will remain friends after we graduate.

Through the cluster, our professors showed us how exciting it is to follow our dreams and how many opportunities college offers. I am grateful that I was able to work with great professors and make good friends in my first semester. This experience has motivated me to move forward and reach toward the highest goals I have set for myself. ◉

[INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE AND HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICES]

The Ralph Bunche Societies:
Broadening Horizons, Expanding Opportunities

■ **BETHANY S. DICKERSON,** director of the Ralph Bunche Societies at the Phelps Stokes Fund

In an increasingly interconnected world, undergraduate students across all disciplines must prepare to become full and active participants in the global community—a community in which too few racial and ethnic minorities and members of the working class see themselves as participants. To reverse this trend, colleges and universities across the country are creating clear spaces for students to engage in high-impact educational activities like opportunities for diversity/global learning that enable students to become global citizens. As a contribution to this movement, the Phelps Stokes Fund launched the Ralph Bunche Societies (RBS) in 2006. Our

Visionary leaders exist in every community.

aim has been to help prepare minority students for participation in the global community and to expand academic and career opportunities for students.

This effort represents a continuation of nearly a century of work building bridges of international, intercultural, and interracial understanding. The Phelps Stokes Fund (PSF) has long worked with institutions of higher education (including minority-serving institutions) and other organizations to develop professional and leadership skills among peoples of all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Committed to diversity, inclusion, and social justice, PSF has consistently collaborated with select colleges and universities to raise awareness of global issues and opportunities and to promote active student and faculty engagement in international arenas. The Ralph Bunche Societies are a natural outgrowth of this work.

Creating Global Citizens and Making an Impact on the World Stage

Open to all, but with an emphasis on minority and working-class students, the Ralph Bunche Societies are extracurricular undergraduate student-led associations dedicated to developing global citizens. The societies aim to assist all members, regardless of their field of study, in becoming globally engaged through scholarly excellence, language proficiency and cultural awareness, community service and activism, and professional and leadership development—all while honoring the life work, legacy, and values of Dr. Ralph Johnson Bunche (1904-1971).

Bunche was one of PSF's distinguished leaders, serving as a member of the board of trustees for over twenty years. A scholar, educator, civil rights advocate, and world statesman, Bunche achieved international renown as the first person of color to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, awarded for his mediation of conflict in Palestine during the 1940s and early 1950s. The Ralph Bunche Societies are a fitting legacy given Bunche's influence on the Phelps Stokes Fund and in the world.

The Phelps Stokes Fund partners with interested colleges and universities to establish RBS chapters. These undergraduate student associations promote involvement by individuals who have not historically been encouraged to pursue studies or careers with international dimensions. These societies help student members apply their academic skills on a global scale.

Core Elements

Although each RBS chapter has the flexibility to select specific activities that appeal to its members, a few standard elements provide structure and guidance.

Toolkits. PSF provides each chapter with toolkits that focus on five key areas of concentration: the legacy, values, and work of Bunche; language and culture; global affairs and critical issues; leadership development; and international career opportunities and options. Resources and materials provided include DVD modules with accompanying educational materials; language-learning software; proposal-writing materials; and reading materials about Bunche, cultural awareness, and student leadership.

Small Grants. To assist with start-up costs, PSF typically makes available a small matching grant to each society for each of its first two years. PSF distributes small grants in response to applications or proposals submitted by RBS members.

Study Abroad. PSF provides information and guidance on study abroad opportunities and often provides study abroad scholarships to RBS members.

Internships. PSF provides information and guidance about internships in the public and private sectors to RBS members.

Language Learning. The fund explores creative and cost-effective approaches for exposing members to languages that may not be taught on campus. These include distributing language-learning software and establishing linkages with other universities to facilitate student exchanges for language learning.

Ralph Bunche Fellows. Beginning in 2010, the Phelps Stokes Fund will designate a minimum of ten students per year (nominated by their RBS chapters) as Ralph Bunche Fellows. Fellows must

consistently maintain a grade point average (GPA) of 3.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale, demonstrate a commitment to public service, and demonstrate a commitment to perpetuating Ralph Bunche's legacy. Fellows may apply for renewable grants (contingent upon resource availability) as long as they remain full-time students and active in the Ralph Bunche Societies. Recipients may use these renewable grants to support professional and leadership development activities with international dimensions.

Mentoring. RBS faculty and administrative liaisons pair students with faculty members, administrators, and community residents who share their global perspectives and experiences with their mentees. PSF also encourages RBS members to mentor local high school students, developing a pipeline of students who are prepared from an early age to effectively compete in the international arena.

International Linkages. The fund facilitates linkages among select U.S. and overseas universities to foster academic dialogue between RBS members and members of comparable international student groups. For example, the fund designs conferences, seminars, and learning events where U.S. students can network with their counterparts in Latin America. We currently collaborate with Winston-Salem State University (WSSU), Southern University, the University of Maryland-College Park, the University of Virginia, State Technological University of Chocó, the University of Santiago de Cali, and the State University of the Pacific Coast in Colombia.

Institutional Capacity Building. While institutional capacity building is not the Ralph Bunche Societies' central feature, the fund promotes a variety of activities that enlighten campus communities as well as RBS members. Activities include providing assistance in bringing international visitors to host institutions and coordinating

Phelps Stokes Fund President Dr. Badi Foster (back row, center) and director of the Ralph Bunche Societies Bethany Dickerson (front row, second from left) meet with members of the University of Maryland-College Park RBS chapter. (Photo by Janet Tunney, University of Maryland-College Park)

digital video conferences with experts on internationally relevant topics.

Information and Communication Technology. The fund is developing a Web-enhanced communication platform that will allow RBS stakeholders to efficiently exchange information. Participants can use this platform to post blogs, stream videos, and share information about internships and exchange opportunities.

Intentional Practices, Positive Results

Signs indicate that the Ralph Bunche Societies are here to stay. Approximately sixty undergraduate students are members of chapters at three universities—WSSU, the University of Maryland-College Park, and the University of Virginia—and nearly fifteen RBS chapters are in the pipeline. Through the societies, PSF has successfully facilitated several study abroad and internship experiences, created linkages to universities and students in Latin America, and facilitated professional and leadership development opportunities for RBS members. In addition, we have provided technical and financial assistance to RBS chapters, designed and hosted a successful global education and leadership conference at the University of Maryland-College Park, and facilitated the design of a course at Hampton University.

The fund plans to expand RBS in phases at interested minority-serving institutions, institutions that conferred honorary degrees on Bunche during his lifetime, and traditionally white institutions with significant minority student populations. We anticipate that these societies will spur an increase in the number of minority students with foreign language and area studies proficiencies, program and budget management skills, and an interest in international affairs; a greater portion of minorities pursuing careers with international components and globally applying their skills; and a critical mass of undergraduate students and faculty members who infuse internationalism and leadership development activities on campuses around the world.

Adhering to nearly a century of Phelps Stokes Fund tradition, RBS identifies and cultivates talent, fresh ideas, and innovative approaches to shaping global citizens. We know that visionary leaders exist in every community, so we stay connected to those often untraditional places that are fertile ground for new global leadership to emerge. Then we challenge ourselves and others to envision a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world and to make this image a reality. ◉

For more information about the Ralph Bunche Societies, please contact the Phelps Stokes Fund at 202-371-9544 ext. 237.

[INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE AND HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICES]

Educational Practices That Foster Intercultural Competence

■ **MARK SALISBURY,** doctoral student in higher education, and **KATHLEEN GOODMAN,** doctoral student in student affairs administration—both research assistants at the Center for Research on Undergraduate Education at the University of Iowa

Across virtually every facet of life, college students enter postsecondary education already immersed in an increasingly interconnected global village. Upon college graduation, this generation must be prepared to successfully interact across all kinds of differences, whether in the professional realm of the workplace, the social realm of interpersonal relationships, or the civic realm of democratic engagement and global citizenship. In other words,

We found three practices that had a significant positive impact on intercultural competence: diverse experiences, integrative learning experiences, and clarity and organization of instruction.

today's students must be interculturally competent: aware of similarities and differences between groups, and able to adapt their behavior and thinking to interact positively with those from other cultures, domestic or international. For this reason, many colleges and universities have identified intercultural competence as a desired learning outcome.

Yet surprisingly little is known about which postsecondary educational practices best foster intercultural competence. Many of Chickering and Gamson's *educational good practices* such as active learning and respect for diverse ways of learning have proven influential in college students' development (1999). Likewise, *high-impact activities* such as integrative research experiences, living/learning communities, and service-learning projects have been identified as fertile environments for student

learning (Kuh 2008). Still, educators and researchers have yet to clearly connect the dots between high-impact activities, educational good practices, and outcomes such as intercultural competence.

Examining the Data

To begin connecting these dots, we turned to the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (WNSLAE). This study of more than 7,500 students at twenty-seven U.S. colleges and universities measures college outcomes typically associated with liberal education, including intercultural competence. The study measures intercultural competence using a fifteen-item survey that establishes one's comfort with and understanding of similarities and differences between oneself and others (Miville et al. 1999). WNSLAE data also includes a wide range of external influences (such as race, gender, and academic ability) and educational practices (types of classes taken, participation in learning communities or first-year seminars, student-faculty contact, and so on) that are commonly associated with college outcomes.

We analyzed WNSLAE data in an attempt to home in on practices that foster intercultural competence while controlling for student background characteristics. We focused our research both on selected high-impact activities—

individual research opportunities, first-year seminars, learning communities, and volunteer activities—and on the range of good educational practices suggested by Chickering and Gamson.

Our findings support Kuh's caution regarding high-impact activities: "While high impact practices are appealing, to engage students at high levels, these practices must be done well" (NSSE 2007, 9). Within our sample, when taking into account the external influences of gender, race, academic ability, parents' educational attainment, and precollege intercultural competence scores, participation in the selected high-impact activities did not significantly influence students' intercultural competence. However, when we added to our analysis the degree to which students report experiencing a range of educational good practices, we found three practices that had a significant positive impact on intercultural competence. These were diverse experiences, integrative learning experiences, and clarity and organization of instruction.

Effective Educational Practices

Both within and outside of high-impact activities, the educational good practices found to most significantly improve intercultural competence were:

Diverse Experiences. Not surprisingly, students who engaged in substantive interactions with individuals different from themselves improved their intercultural competence. Given that for most institutions a truly diverse student body is still more an aspiration than a reality, providing students with diverse experiences often requires intentionality. Simply organizing a living/learning community—a process that can produce a fairly homogenous group—may not increase opportunities for interaction with diversity. However, creating experiences within the living/learning community that require sustained interaction across multiple differences combines

a high-impact activity with an educational good practice to foster increased intercultural competence.

Integrative Learning Experiences. Interculturally competent students must be able to integrate knowledge and skills acquired in disparate contexts, translating what they learn in school into skills they can use. High-impact activities that combine curricular and cocurricular elements require students to integrate knowledge and experience acquired in different environments. Within these activities, certain exercises—reflective writing, small-group discussion, and experiential learning that applies concepts to real-world experiences—help students connect the educational dots, deepen their learning, and improve their confidence in their ability to interact across difference.

Clear and Organized Instruction. When institutions educate toward liberal learning outcomes like intercultural competence that cut across majors and programs, they need to give students a clear understanding of the nuanced skills they will learn and how these skills will improve their lives. Clear and organized instruction sets the stage for successful learning. It articulates for students the content and scope of intended learning outcomes, the implications of acquiring skills, and the ways to recognize one's growth toward intercultural competence.

More Than Programs
Our analysis illustrates the complex challenges of crafting an educational process that demonstrably improves intercultural skills. Starting and maintaining successful service-learning initiatives, living/learning communities, first-year transition courses, and undergraduate research

programs requires substantial investments of time, money, and personnel. It can be tempting to prematurely celebrate the structural addition of high-impact activities and neglect the continuous task of attending to the day-to-day educational experiences and pedagogical methods within those structures. But as the AAC&U monograph *Purposeful Pathways* articulates, adding programs is only a first step—albeit an important one— toward intentional and assessable education (Leskes and Miller 2006).

The good news is that committed educators can implement educational practices that foster intercultural competence in any class or program without additional resources. There is no "one size fits all" solution to achieving desired college outcomes. Identifying educational practices that improve intercultural competence requires continuous outcomes-based assessments that focus on the daily process of educating. ◉

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University of Iowa (Photo by Doug Allaire)

Suggestions for Implementing Educational Good Practices

WNSLAE data suggest several ways that faculty can incorporate good practices both inside and outside of high-impact activities to maximize students' development of intercultural competence and improve learning more generally.

Diverse Experiences
■ Engage students in serious discussions with students or staff whose political, social, religious, racial, or ethnic identities or opinions differ from their own.

■ Provide opportunities and incentives (such as course credit) for students to attend lectures on current political and social issues or participate in cultural workshops.

Integrative Learning Experiences
■ Encourage students to identify historical, political, and social connections; identify connections between their intended careers and societal concerns; connect classroom learning with life events; and translate classroom knowledge and understanding into action.

■ Require students to integrate ideas or information from various sources, construct concepts from ideas learned in different courses, synthesize and organize ideas, and connect class readings with out-of-class experiences.

Clear and Organized Instruction
■ Give clear explanations: provide illustrations and examples to explain difficult concepts, and interpret abstract ideas and theories concretely.

■ Explain course goals and requirements clearly, and use class time effectively.

        —Mark Salisbury and Kathleen Goodman

[PERSPECTIVES]

Reframing Diversity as an Institutional Capacity

■ **DARYL G. SMITH,** professor of education at Claremont Graduate University

Diversity on college and university campuses is no longer a projection: it is a reality. In the context of compelling issues in the United States and abroad—changing demographics, immigration, health disparities, civil rights, and diversity in the marketplace, to name only a few—diversity provides powerful opportunities and serious challenges. In approaching these challenges and opportunities, institutional stakeholders must ask: How can we build our institutions' capacity to be effective, high-performing places where diversity thrives?

military, and even political parties seem to understand that diversity must be central to institutional effectiveness, excellence, and viability. It is time for our institutions of higher education to realize this as well.

Institutional Mission
Today's diversity imperative extends far beyond student success (although student success remains critical). Now the fundamental question is, are our institutions building the capacity to support their missions in a diverse society, and how? Building capacity

But putting diversity at the center of the mission is not enough. We must also determine how we will define diversity. Access and success for historically underrepresented populations remains diversity work's legacy and soul. Diversity also means addressing the growing and differentiated issues reflected by different groups across the country, whether related to race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration, or religion. And instead of seeing diversity as a laundry list or as dichotomous—where one has *either* gender identity *or* racial identity, for example—we must address the intersections and multiplicities of identities and recognize how campuses must now engage the complexity of diversity.

What expertise and talent will our institutions need to be credible, effective, and viable in a pluralistic society?

As we search for an answer, technology provides a useful parallel. Decades ago, institutions understood that their future viability would rest on their ability to build capacity for technology. They understood technology to be central, not marginal, to teaching and research: to how the institution communicated, built infrastructure, spent money, and hired faculty and staff. Over the past forty years, technology has changed continually, and institutions have adapted with it, developing the human, physical, fiscal, knowledge, and cultural resources to respond effectively to a technologically sophisticated world. As a result, technology is now part of every corner of institutional life.

Diversity, like technology, is a powerful presence, and institutions will not be credible or viable if they do not make diversity fundamental. Corporations, the

for diversity means setting diversity at the center of the institution's mission. It means broadening the discussion beyond admissions or undergraduates and varying it according to the institution's mission, location, and context.

In a September 2008 article for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Sheila O'Rourke described how the University of California at Berkeley's mission has driven diversity efforts. As a land-grant institution and a major research university, the school has identified three high-priority research areas to help it serve the state of California: diversity and democracy, racial inequities in schools, and race-based health disparities. These areas have affected hiring, resources, and community engagement. Their prominence has placed diversity at the center of the school's research mission.

Faculty Diversity
In thinking through our institutional missions, we must also consider the general rationale for diversity, especially faculty diversity. According to conventional wisdom, since student bodies are more diverse, faculty should be more diverse. But this reasoning is not sufficient to move our institutions forward. Instead of justifying diversity through student demographics, institutional stakeholders must ask: What expertise and talent will our institutions need to be credible, effective, and viable in a pluralistic society? This was the question when technology emerged as central. Today, it is the context for the diversity rationale and must be communicated clearly to scientists, senior administrators, board members, and academic departments. The arguments for faculty diversity are numerous and include:

1. Faculty diversity—in both hiring and retention—represents the institution's values concerning equity. Any institution that describes itself as committed to diversity while having a faculty demographic that suggests otherwise should be seen as disingenuous and hypocritical.

2. Faculty diversity is central to the academy's ability to develop

diverse forms of knowledge. A diverse faculty brings diversity themes to scholarship, increases diversity in the curriculum, and introduces different forms of pedagogy, including those that better engage students.

3. Faculty diversity helps the institution develop vital relationships with diverse communities outside and across campuses.

4. Faculty diversity is essential to the institution's capacity to make fully informed decisions at all levels. When faculty members from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds participate in decision making, their decisions are not only more informed and credible, they are also more likely to address power inequities.

5. Faculty diversity is essential for creating an environment that will attract persons from diverse backgrounds. Until sufficient diversity exists in campus departments and divisions, members of underrepresented groups will struggle to be seen as individuals and not as tokens.

6. Faculty diversity supports future leadership diversity. Since most academic administrators come from faculty ranks, a relatively homogenized faculty limits the future development of diverse leadership.

7. Faculty diversity provides role models for all. Undergraduates, graduate students, postdocs, and faculty members must be able to envision themselves in the roles to which they aspire. The absence of diversity in so many departments and fields sends strong signals about the degree to which those fields value diverse talents.

These arguments have both broad and deep implications. They apply to any higher education campus, but they are best engaged in each institution's specific context, with a focus on its mission, purpose, and culture.

Engaging Dialogue and Monitoring Progress

If higher education is to build its potential to identify talent and excellence,

it will have to interrupt its usual processes and engage in difficult dialogues about challenging issues. Higher education literature has explored the optimal conditions for bringing students together to realize the benefits of diversity. Now we must apply the lessons about students' difficult dialogues to creating the conditions necessary for dialogue at the institutional level. We must bring people from diverse backgrounds together at every level on campus, from the president's cabinet to administrative units, to student affairs, to ethnic studies, to women's studies and beyond.

As we pursue this vision, we must also monitor progress and engage change in strategic ways. The question guiding our institutions should be, "How can we know if we are making progress, and in what areas, so we can focus our resources and our attention?" We will need to monitor data related to conventional measures of student success, including disaggregated graduation rates, to identify and aggressively address achievement disparities. We will need to monitor faculty hiring for diversity, compared with faculty turnover, to avoid losing a significant opportunity to diversify the next generation of faculty. And we will need to monitor the diversity of the graduate student population, which will become our labor market. Monitoring these and other indicators will help ensure that diversity, like technology, is an imperative that can both transform and facilitate our campuses' core missions.
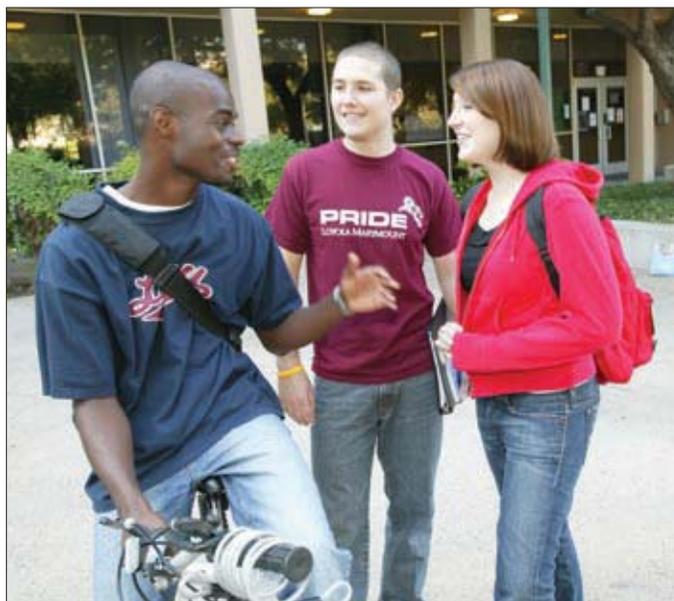
Loyola Marymount University

Higher education has a role in building a pluralistic and equitable society—a society that thrives because of diversity. But too many campuses and too many diversity task forces are paralyzed when it comes to engaging these difficult topics and politically charged data. Nevertheless, we are at a critical juncture for diversity efforts, a juncture that will require us to elevate our work to an institutional level. We must help higher education play a role in achieving democracy's promise: a pluralistic society that works. Few of us have lived or worked in that kind of setting. But achieving it is one of the challenges of our day—and one to which we must individually and collectively respond. ◉

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This article originated in a presentation at AAC&U's Diversity, Learning, and Inclusive Excellence meeting on October 17, 2008. A podcast of the presentation is available at www.aacu.org/meetings/diversityandlearning.*

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[CAMPUS PRACTICE]

Creating Change: Arts, Activism, and the Academy

■ **MIGUEL MARTINEZ-SAENZ,** assistant provost for the First-Year Experience and associate professor of philosophy at Wittenberg University

In 1940, Richard Wright challenged readers to confront how racial discrimination "touches the destiny of an entire nation." Since that time, American colleges and universities have expanded funding, programs, and access with an eye to diversity, opening their doors and

> *Educators will need to transcend the silo-minded thinking that sees student development activities as isolated from academic concerns, academic concerns as isolated from community engagement, and college campuses as isolated from local communities.*

deepening their significance in American democracy and culture. While promising, these inroads still stop short of their ultimate destination. We educators must continue to address issues of access, retention, success, and campus climate. But we must also make transparent how cross-cultural engagement coupled with hands-on experience implies and precipitates excellence. When, one might ask, do we allow the presence of diversity to speak to us, to change us, to educate us? When, more importantly, do we explore how our communities are linked together in a common fate?

To help students examine this notion of connectedness, educators will need to transcend the silo-minded thinking that sees student development activities as isolated from academic concerns, academic concerns as isolated from community engagement, and college campuses as isolated from local communities. Wittenberg University and the Springfield, Ohio, community recently

explored how to design and implement programs that bridge these gaps. In connection with Wittenberg's new first-year experience program, faculty, staff, and community leaders invited Bryonn Bain—spoken-word poet, prison activist, and educator—to deliver a series of performance-based programs that cut across campus and community. In fall 2008, Bain demonstrated how bridging the divide between the arts, activism, and the academy can shift consciousness and catalyze social change.

Bryonn Bain's Visit

Wrongfully imprisoned in a case of mistaken identity after attending the same elite schools as President Obama (Columbia University and Harvard Law), Bain responded to his experience by creating a groundbreaking one-man show that confronts America's unresolved conflicts regarding race. Wittenberg's planning committee felt that a visit from Bain might help accomplish several goals: to bring students in contact with a successful adult from a group that isn't well represented on campus (Bain is African American with Trinidadian roots), to help students see the connections between the arts and social engagement, and to position our first-

year experience as a locus for discussions about difference. Bain's visit challenged us all—faculty, staff, students, and community members alike—to rethink our views on education, the prison crisis, and even the election of Barack Obama.

In the Community: Bain's first community workshop was with a group of "at-risk" youth at Forging Responsible Youth, an after-school and summer mentoring program for at-risk students in Clark County, Ohio. Inviting students to articulate their aspirations, Bain facilitated a series of hip-hop-based interactive exercises with fifteen teenagers. The next evening, Bain led a community workshop with the anti-poverty Circles Campaign. Joined by more than fifty adults from a range of socioeconomic and ethnic groups, Bain performed poetry and facilitated a series of theater games inspired by Brazilian director Augusto Boal. These exercises served as an entry to discussion of the role of identity and difference.

In Concert: Interweaving his unforgettable tale of wrongful imprisonment with dozens of other voices, Bain's one-man hip-hop theater show, "Lyrics from Lockdown," led an audience of students, faculty, staff and community members, including high school students, on a journey through spoken word and song. Bain prompted the audience to reflect on how the racial demographics of prisons (where black and Hispanic males are between 55 and 60 percent of inmates) reveal underlying inequities, even in a nation that just elected its first black commander in chief (West and Sabol 2008).

In the Classroom: Bain lectured to a joint session of two first-year seminars: Making Coffee: Culture, Capitalism, and Consumption and Race, Gender, Class, and the Media. He traced the evolution of the prison industrial complex from its origins on the plantation before leading students in a writing activity on a controversy

surrounding an arts-based literacy project Bain created at a California juvenile probation center. In the afternoon, Bain led a second joint session of first-year seminars titled Moral of the Story and Ways of Seeing, Ways of Being. Here he examined how the working-class youth culture of hip-hop has evolved into a multibillion-dollar global movement. Interrogating stereotypes of hip-hop artists as thugs and gangsters, Bain led students to consider hip-hop as a social movement that can be a catalyst for change.

Program Outcomes and Outlook

To say Bain's visit exceeded expectations would be to understate his impact. On a campus with few faculty of color, Bain connected with and energized young African American students. His involvement in the first-year experience demonstrated to all students that the institution is doing its part to enact a diverse learning environment. His impact in the classroom was felt deeply. Faculty member Fitz Smith said, "[Bain] had students talking, and even rhyming...the same students who had not said a word over the entire semester." Bain's impact

on the community might have been the most profound. Liz Hale, Forging Responsible Youth's executive director, relates that months later, her students continue to talk about Bain's visit and reflect openly about the importance of giving voice to their dreams.

Following Bain's visit, Wittenberg University decided to establish an "Artist-in-Residence" program linking its First-Year Experience Office, the Community Service Office, the Center for Civic and Urban Engagement, and Student Development. This community-wide partnership will include joint programming with local groups such as Project Jericho, Infusion Campus, Forging Responsible Youth, and the local Circles Campaign. During fall 2009, Bain will return to Springfield to inaugurate the residency by helping develop a module for "arts-

Bryonn Bain engages in conversation with members of the student group Concerned Black Students.

based activism and engagement." In adopting this program, Wittenberg will demonstrate its continued commitment to increasing engagement with local communities as part of a comprehensive educational initiative. ◎

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Questions to Ask When Considering a Visiting Artist-Activist Program

1. **How can the institution move beyond the "silo" method in planning the event?** Charge a broad-ranging committee (including representatives from academic and student affairs, as well as faculty and students) with developing and implementing the program. This group must have access to a university-supported budget, preferably with money allocated specifically for this type of event.
2. **What challenges can the artist help the institution address?** The goals will vary by institution but should be well defined. For example, the committee may want to bring an artist from a group that isn't well represented on campus. The right artist can reinforce connections between the arts and social engagement. The artist can also help make the first-year experience a locus for discussions about difference, demonstrating the institution's commitment to a diverse learning environment.
3. **How can faculty incorporate the artist in the classroom?** While some courses (such as theater, art, and literature) have obvious connections to the arts, first-year courses can provide the foundation for an artist's involvement. Begin by working with faculty members who are sympathetic to the program's goals. Provide enough notice for faculty to modify courses so the artist's visit doesn't appear forced or ad hoc.
4. **Are university-community partnerships sufficiently robust to support community involvement?** Institutions must constantly cultivate relationships with local nonprofit organizations and communicate over what types of experiences might be of value to students and to the community. These partnerships are instrumental in identifying "arts-activism" programs that can be implemented seamlessly.

—Miguel Martinez-Saenz

[CAMPUS PRACTICE]

Service Learning and Learning Communities: Promising Pedagogies

■ **SHALOM STAUB,** assistant provost, and **ASHLEY FINLEY**, assistant professor of sociology and principal investigator for the Bringing Theory to Practice research study—both at Dickinson College

In 2001, Dickinson College adopted an ambitious strategic plan inspired by the vision of its founder Benjamin Rush. Following the Revolutionary War, Rush articulated the need for the college to provide a "useful education" that prepared students to be active citizens in the emerging republic. He called for students to gain knowledge of multiple disciplines and apply that knowledge to solving the problems of the day. Dickinson's 2001 strategic plan affirmed Rush's vision of a liberal arts education that prepares students for engaged lives of citizenship and leadership in service to society. Guided by the strategic plan, Dickinson sought to build upon its strengths—its commitment to global education, interdisciplinary initiatives, and both scholarship and teaching— through pedagogies that introduce students to active and interdisciplinary learning, including service learning and first-year learning communities. In the past few years, Dickinson has expanded its offerings in these areas, identifying promising outcomes related to student and faculty learning and engagement and learning several lessons along the way.

Implementing Engaging Pedagogies

We created learning communities at Dickinson by linking thematically related first-year seminars. Students in the learning communities live together and participate in out-of-classroom programs such as field trips and dinner discussions. Many of the learning communities explicitly encourage students to explore topics like environment and sustainability, global awareness, identity, social justice, and social responsibility,

and examine the relevance of these topics in their own lives. For example, as a result of their experiences in the current Environment, Science, and Sustainability learning community (taught by an environmental scientist, a historian, a chemist, and a computer scientist) students actively modified their behavior and residence hall features to achieve greater environmental sustainability. In the coming academic year, the Identity and Social Justice learning community (to be taught by a psychologist and a sociologist) will link courses on Identity, Diversity, and Social Justice and Feminism and Social Commentary.

In a separate initiative, Dickinson faculty have introduced service-learning and community-based research courses within sixteen different departments, crossing the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. Faculty members have developed service-learning courses for students at all levels, from first year to senior seminar. Dickinson has been particularly supportive of faculty who implement active service-learning pedagogy within the learning community environment. For example, a social-justice-themed learning community incorporated service-learning experiences for students at a local domestic violence shelter, food pantry, and Catholic worker housing. Encounters in these environments help students make the connection between ideas and issues covered in the course and the lives of individuals within communities.

Identifying Promising Trends

As a national demonstration site for the Bringing Theory to Practice project

(www.aacu.org/bringing_theory), Dickinson has studied first-year students' experiences in these service-learning opportunities and learning communities through surveys and focus groups. Our research indicates that first-year students benefit from incorporating community-based learning with academic work, whether in or outside of learning communities. Students who had engaged in service-learning activities found deeper connections to academic material, were sometimes moved to change their majors or modify their perspectives, and reported meaningful conversations with peers outside of class and engagement in campus activism. Students who engaged in service learning also tended to report lower levels and frequencies of alcohol consumption than other first-year students.

First-year students involved in service learning additionally showed higher levels of civic engagement than those who were not. Among research participants, students who were enrolled in service-learning courses or involved in experiential learning (exploration outside the classroom but not with a community partner) had the highest mean levels of engagement at the local, state, and national levels. Although first-year students in general exhibited less involvement at the local community level, those engaged in service-learning courses reported the highest engagement at this level in relation to other first-year students. This finding suggests that students' time with community partners translates into civically oriented behaviors (such as reading the local paper and attending community events).

Although service learning alone showed positive results, service learning within learning communities demonstrated additional value. Like students who engaged in service learning generally, students who engaged in service learning within learning communities tended to engage more frequently

in civically oriented activities than other first-year students. In addition, they indicated higher degrees of civic mindedness and moral development than other first-year students.

Best Practices: What We've Learned

Identifying "best practices" is critical for continued success. Our research identified two common links between effective service-learning courses and courses that incorporate other models of engaged pedagogy, such as learning communities. First, successful courses focus on themes that encourage critical thought and exploration. Focus group data suggest that themes premised on timely social or political topics with clear global connections—such as poverty and access to food, exploration of different cultures, gender and global inequality, and environmental sustainability—are particularly powerful in motivating student thought, activism, and engagement.

Second, effective courses show evidence of created social networks. This element requires deliberate action, even in promising environments like learning communities. Focus group data suggest that the most powerful student experiences have occurred in learning communities where peer-to-peer and faculty-to-student ties (or social networks) were fostered and supported. This mediating effect of social capital may contribute to both increased academic engagement and student well-being (see sidebar).

Conclusion

Dickinson continues to offer incentives and support for faculty who are willing to build learning communities and transform their classroom-based courses with active pedagogies like service learning. We now sustain roughly four learning communities per year, involving one quarter of faculty teaching first-year seminars and the same percentage of first-year students.

Although we have focused in this article on how service learning and learning communities benefit students, participating faculty consistently report that active pedagogies add value to their experiences as teachers and scholars

Our research indicates that first-year students benefit from incorporating community-based learning with academic work, whether in or outside of learning communities.

as well. Faculty members enjoy the higher levels of student engagement that these pedagogies produce. In addition, faculty find that by working with peers to develop and teach within learning communities, they gain exposure to new perspectives that help them reconceptualize familiar material. Similarly, interacting with local community partners to develop service-learning partnerships helps faculty members develop grounded theory, teach more dynamically, and connect their work to life experiences outside the classroom. ◉

Building Social Capital for First-Year Students

Our research has illuminated four key ways in which the deliberate creation of social networks through active learning pedagogies like service learning and learning communities can benefit students:

Generate meaningful social interaction. Learning community experiences, particularly when coupled with academic material, create an entry point for conversation among peers and faculty. Like all people, students who reside or work near each other will not necessarily interact, and even students living in the close quarters of residence halls can feel isolated or disconnected.

Provide opportunities for informal reflection. Students who interact frequently with other students or faculty have more opportunities for informal reflection. Reflection is imperative for students to fully assess the impact and meaning of their engaged learning experiences.

Create emotional supports. Students in learning communities gain a means for emotional support that is especially critical in the first year of college. First-year students in service-learning courses tend to report greater levels of stress (perhaps due to struggles with time management, working in an unfamiliar environment, and encountering issues of social inequality). In this context, peer alliances are helpful sources of encouragement and provide resources for coping.

Provide a protective shield against pressures to use or overuse alcohol. This shield effect works in two ways. First, students who are not inclined to drink alcohol increase their likelihood of finding others with the same preferences. Second, the peer group can function as an informal network of caretakers who, although they may not actively discourage alcohol use, are often aware of changes in drinking patterns or mental health among peers.

—Shalom Staub and Ashley Finley

[RESEARCH REPORT]

Best Practices for Supporting College Access and Success

Institutions and organizations around the country are investing time, money, and staff in investigating where educational inclusivity exists and what makes it work. The following recent reports ask: What is the higher education community doing to improve all students' access and success, and how can promising practices be applied more broadly?

Essential Elements of Engagement: High Expectations and High Support

Reinforcing the need to couple high expectations with high levels of curricular, programmatic, institutional, and financial support, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement's 2008 summary report analyzes student and faculty survey responses to identify how community colleges can best support student success. Recognizing that community college students often face a range of challenges related to academic preparation and outside responsibilities, the report encourages readers to see these factors not as barriers or excuses, but as realities to take into consideration when planning student services. Finding that students are most engaged within the classroom, for example, the report stresses the importance of linking student services with classroom learning.

With concise descriptions of best practices at colleges throughout the country, the report illustrates how schools can link assessment and action to achieve high expectations for all students. To access the report, visit www.ccsse.org/publications/2008_National_Report.pdf.

Accelerating Latino Student Success at Texas Border Institutions

In cooperation with eight Hispanic-Serving Institutions located along the Texas border, *Excelencia* in Education's recent brief identifies supports necessary to increase Hispanic students' enrollment and graduation rates. Recognizing

Recommended Resources on Selected High-Impact Educational Practices

Jayne E. Brownell, assistant vice president for student affairs at Hofstra University, and **Lynn E. Swaner**, assistant professor in the Department of Counseling and Development, C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University

First-Year Seminars

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Undergraduate Research

Council on Undergraduate Research. www.cur.org

National Conferences on Undergraduate Research. www.ncur.org

National Science Foundation's Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation (LSAMP). www.nsf.gov/pubs/2009/nsf09515/nsf09515.htm

Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program. www.ed.gov/programs/triomcnair/index.html

University of California-Los Angeles Undergraduate Research Centers. www.ugeducation.ucla.edu/ugresearch/

University of Michigan Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP). www.lsa.umich.edu/urop/

Service Learning

Campus Compact. www.compact.org

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that Texas has yet to meet the goals established by the state higher education authority in *Closing the Gaps by 2015: The Texas Higher Education Plan*, the brief calls for a concerted educational plan to close the achievement gap for Hispanic students, who currently constitute one-fifth of all public school students nationwide. The brief draws its recommendations from the successes of eight public universities and community colleges that enroll and graduate particularly high numbers of Hispanic students. It cites community orientation, intentionality, and commitment as the core of these institutions' successes and highlights such promising practices as learning communities, first- and second-year experiences, and mentoring programs for their role in increasing student success. To download the brief, visit www.edexcelencia.org/research/alass.asp.

The Science of Diversifying Science

At the Association for Institutional Research's 2008 annual meeting, researchers from the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California-Los Angeles presented a paper titled "The Science of Diversifying Science: Underrepresented Minority Experiences in Structured Research Programs." Seeking to identify programs and tactics that support students' scientific aspirations, the authors interviewed student focus groups at four institutions perceived as having undergraduate research programs that successfully support underrepresented minority students. They found that structured undergraduate research programs provide many benefits, including a sense of self-efficacy, particularly for students contending with cultural pressures such as stereotype threat. Based on these findings, the authors call for a "paradigm shift of inclusive excellence" that extends the positive aspects of scientific research into science classrooms so all students can benefit from the collaborative learning,

Figure 1: Impact of Educationally Purposeful Activities on First Academic Year GPA by Precollege Achievement Level
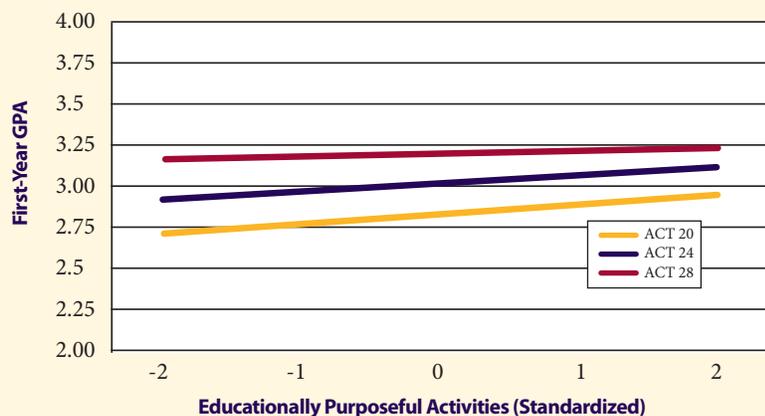
Participation in educationally purposeful activities has been shown to have a "compensatory" effect on students' college success and persistence. The slope of the lines in figure 1 illustrates that students with lower ACT scores experience greater gains in first-year GPA as a result of participation in high-impact practices. Source: Kuh, G. D. 2008. High-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

supportive mentoring, and interactive engagement these programs entail. To download the paper, visit www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/publications-conf.php.

Student Aversion to Borrowing

Issued jointly by the Institute for Higher Education Policy and *Excelencia* in Education, this recent report explores whether greater loan availability actually translates into greater success for students. By reviewing U. S. Department of Education data and interviewing focus groups and individuals, researchers discovered a host of cultural and economic factors that may affect students' choices about where to pursue and how to finance an education. For example, the report found that Asian and Hispanic students, as well as immigrants to the United States, were typically more debt-averse than those from other groups. Students who did not borrow to cover significant financial need were more likely to use other strategies—such as enrolling part time or working full time—that tend to detrimentally affect college persistence. The report suggests the need for more outreach and

support at both the high school and college levels, as well as greater communication with students about the long-term value of a college education. To download the report, visit www.ihep.org/assets/files/publications/s-z/StudentAversiontoBorrowing.pdf. ◎

Making Excellence Inclusive

AAC&U's Making Excellence Inclusive initiative is designed to help colleges and universities fully integrate their diversity and educational quality efforts and embed them into the core of academic mission and institutional functioning. Through this initiative, AAC&U reenvisions diversity and inclusion as a multilayered process through which we achieve excellence in learning, research and teaching, student development, institutional functioning, local and global community engagement, workforce development, and more. For more information on Making Excellence Inclusive or to access related publications, visit www.aacu.org/inclusive_excellence.