

A Fresh Approach: Ethnic Diversity On Campuses In America

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ABSTRACT

The Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) has defined its legacy. The HBCU developed campuses to prepare African-Americans for a variety of careers. They are considered to be specialized educational system within higher education. This system provided a way for many African-Americans to showcase their intellectual abilities. The HBCU's historical context and missions primarily focus on African-Americans (Roebuck & Komanduri, 1993). As education for African-Americans changed, access to college became more inclusive. More HBCU's face adversity and diversity, with challenges brought on by a more diverse student population. This article describes how the HBCUs must look at ethnic diversity on campuses. Then begin the challenge of modifying traditional missions based on serving one type of ethnic student population.

Keywords: Diversity, multiculturalism, institutional transformation, chief diversity officer

INTRODUCTION

The Higher Education Act of 1965 defines designated HBCU as a historically black college or university established before 1964 with the primary mission to educate “black” Americans (Department of Education, 2008). Wars and legal cases provided the historical background for the development of the HBCU. HBCU schools prepared African-American students by offering leadership roles in areas of agriculture, mechanics, law, medicine and politics. A historical resilience confirmed how a specialized higher education system evolved over time, especially during times of scarce economic resources, accessibility and capacity to serve African-American students (Thelin, 2004). History described a time when African-Americans struggled through society. These struggles were due to inequality, racism and restrictions to advancement. Education was the historical platform used to remove restrictions and provide equality of life. During slavery, African-Americans established an educational system. Hall (1973) stated that “slaves were granted apprenticeships to learn specific skills from white skilled workers” (p.2).

Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois were influential in the establishment of HBCUs. Washington (1903) wrote, “slaves learned skills on plantations as the first structured educational system” (p.5). Along with farming, some skills described by Washington included brick masonry, sewing, housekeeping, and blacksmith. These basic skills were essential to survival, and allowed the plantation to serve as the first infrastructure of an educational system. In addition, further advancement of African-Americans led to the need for additional educational training in math, science and religion for pursuing careers as teachers, doctors, minister or lawyers (Provenzo, 2002). In an essay, W.E.B. DuBois (1903) provided a theory about the HBCU’s role of education and leadership for African-Americans. He described education as a system that African-Americans can use to prepare “exceptional men” to go forth and educate others (Talented Tenth, p.33).

The Civil War played a role in the government prompting the advancement of African-Americans. The government began the transition to a more formalized educational system that allowed “blacks” to be educated on property or land under the First and Second Morill Acts. The First Morill Act of 1852 allowed for land to be donated to colleges for agriculture and mechanics (Higher Education Resource Hub, 2008). The Second Morill Act of 1890 allowed for further expansion of colleges, and prohibited the practices of inequality, such as admitting student based on race (US Department of Agriculture, 2009).

Historical Supreme Court cases also had an impact in the development of the HBCUs. The landmark *Plessy v. Ferguson* ⁽¹⁸⁹⁶⁾ established “separate but equal” in public education ^(Kaplin and Lee, 2007). Plessy paid for a first-class seat on a train and was asked if he was “colored” to determine if he needed to give up his seat on the train. Plessy felt this was not fair when he paid the same price as “white” travelers. This landmark case prompted society to continue to look at equality through the lens of justice. The HBCU educational system began to take shape and offered methods to ensure equal opportunity. Another landmark legal case includes *Brown v. Board of Education* ⁽¹⁹⁵⁴⁾. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Higher Education Act of 1965 also marked a period of moving from segregation to desegregation.

This article is based on a historical journey of HBCU’s. It is divided into three parts. The first part provides a historical, methodical and systematic description of the HBCU. The second part defines types of diversity on the HBCU campus, and changing student demographics. Finally, the third part provides an analysis of research and literature about best practices to serving diverse student populations of HBCUs.

HISTORICAL JOURNEY OF THE HBCU

Methodical and Systematic

The educational methods of HBCUs were built on the foundation of skilled trade workers. The first approach started during slavery. Slaves gained skills working on plantations, and then granted apprenticeships ^(Hall, 1973). The trades of sewing, brick masonry, blacksmith and farming were an investment to the economy. After apprenticeships, skilled workers attended training at Northern Schools. Donations and philanthropy started the movement toward an industrial segregated school system. Industrial schools were formed in the North but many failed. They were unsuccessful due to the opposition of African-Americans becoming self-sufficient. Other obstacles included limited funding and poor structural condition.

Training manuals were developed to teach certain techniques. African-American skilled trade workers were learned through the methods of apprenticeship, training manuals and job experience. Historians described this method of industrialized training as a combined effort of Southern and Northern industrialists. Wagoner ⁽¹⁹⁸¹⁾ described the efforts to remove the stigma of slavery by “Southern industrialists and Northern philanthropists” as means to a “workable scheme of social organization” ^(p. 459). This industrialized method helped develop numerous colleges and universities with missions in educating African-Americans. These colleges and universities were developed based on a method the industrial education. Governmental practices, politics and policies continued to play an intricate role in the development of comprehensive programs based on industrial skills. The Higher Education Act of 1965 gave rise to the HBCU designation. The campuses were designated as public or private.

There are two HBCU institutions that paved the way in using the industrialized method to train African-Americans in higher education. Cheney University was the first established HBCU in North America. It started as the Philadelphia Institute for Colored Youth, and land was purchased to teach “mechanics and agriculture” ^(Hall, 1973). Hampton Institute and Tuskegee University were recognized for industrial education. They served as models for starting “Industrial Art or Applied Science” departments ^(Provenzo, 2002). Amendments to the Higher Education Act ⁽¹⁹⁶⁶⁾ allowed for additional industrial arts courses, and considered “critical subjects” to improve instructions.

As a growing debate took place about trade skills versus professional skills, so did the debate of HBCUs. These debates were based on liberal versus “practical education” ^(Thelin 2002). Other HBCU colleges started to offer courses in philosophy, English, sociology and religion. These courses were geared toward the graduate planning to work as a teacher, minister, doctor or lawyer. The debates were viable to a culture trying to survive through an era of inequality. The logic behind historical debates proved a mode of strength to empower the HBCU toward an essential legacy in higher education.

DEFINING DIVERSITY

Types of Diversity

The HBCU historical commitment to educate one type of population came about by being excluded from higher education. The resistance to desegregation in higher education has disappeared. Because of the great push toward diversity, clear and concise definitions are being established. Ranley⁽²⁰⁰⁹⁾ used the Oxford dictionary definition of diversity as “the condition or quality of being diverse, different, or varied; difference, unlikeness - an example, the human race”^(p.1). As students are faced with difficult and diverse demands from society, campuses are using research to examine “perceptions and attitudes” of particular groups as they relate to racial/ethnic diversity (Hurtado, Milem, Pedersen and Allen, 1999). Many campuses are dealing with racial/ethnic diversity on campuses through institutional transformation. Hurtado, Milem, Pedersen and Allen^(1999, p. 20) describe institutional transformation as having a multicultural approach that bring about change in students social and academic life on campus.

DIVERSITY IN STUDENT POPULATIONS

Diverse Student Trends

To date, there are 105 HBCUs [see Appendix] 2-and 4-year colleges/universities across the United States (Department of Education, 2008). The majority are located in Alabama and North Carolina. The National Center for Educational Research⁽²⁰⁰¹⁾ reported student enrollment as the following:

1. Over 200,000 students attend a HBCU.
2. 90 % of HBCU students attend 4-year institutions while 10% attend 2-year colleges; and the rate of women is higher than men.
3. More students attend a 4-year institution compared to 2-year colleges.
4. Student demographics found that in 2001 82% of students were African-American compared to 1976 in which 85% of the student population was African-American.

Admissions for African-Americans have been opened at other traditional colleges. Sims⁽¹⁹⁹⁴⁾ cited a 1971 report by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education that by the 21st Century enrollment must increase to about 2 million at HBCU’s to be similar to other institutions. The National Center for Educational Statistics⁽²⁰⁰¹⁾ reported that 10 % of HBCU students attended 2-year institutions, and were more likely to attend public versus private, non-profit institutions. Current data has led to further debate about the HBCU existence and diversity. Experts have asked critical questions about the HBCU ability to redefine its mission. Two questions for consideration are: 1) Is there a need for the HBCU? 2) Can the HBCU be changed or advanced into a diverse culture?

DISCUSSION

The Chronicle of Higher Education (Shireman, 2003) suggested ways for colleges to assess campus history and data as they relate to diversity issues. The study suggested ten key questions for college officials:

1. How do we define diversity?
2. Why do we have this particular array of students
3. Who gets financial aid?
4. How successful are our students?
5. What multicultural education are students receiving?
6. What does it feel like as a student to be here?
7. Who are faculty leaders?
8. What are our relationships with nearby communities?
9. Who is thinking about these issues on our campus?
10. What do we want to change, and how will we know that we have changed it?

This article provides insight on administration taking steps in visionary change. The scope leads to an overarching approach while examining the HBCU institutional missions.

In an interview with *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Roach, 2009) Mary Broad, President of the American Council on Education, she states,

“I don’t think you ever have to modify your historical mission. But the understanding of diversity that exists in HBCUs can logically be extended to other students of color, to rapidly growing Hispanic population, to Asians. There is an understanding and a sensitivity at HBCUs that you might not see at other institutions and the richness of the experience in the classroom when you have students from many different races and backgrounds is what helps to enhance the learning” (p.12).

This statement discusses the possibilities for HBCUs to modify their current missions to represent culturally diverse students.

Another approach discussed is the administrative position, chief diversity officer. Some criticize this position as a way of removing responsibility for ensuring diversity from other top administrators (i.e. President, Provosts). Williams and Golden (2008) explain that research on this role has found two important characteristics that lead to change using collaborative and integrative leadership. Key concepts from this article can also be applied at other college campuses. At an HBCU this may also help increase the number of underrepresented groups on campus.

A study by Ioannou (2009) provides research assessing diversity through a survey that found campuses can be successful based on “recruitment, retaining, marketing and communication diversity, provide education for diversity and climate for diversity” (p.17). This survey was conducted at a large non-HBCU campus; however, it can apply at any campus that will allow participation by faculty, staff and students. Dwyer (2006) reviews how HBCU campuses are dealing with diversification. His research data shows a growing rate of white and other minority students attending HBCUs which create more diversity. Dwyer further discusses the HBCU multicultural literature, calling it “scarce, disparate and unconnected” (p. 47). This examination of various literature continues to raise the question about diversity at HBCU campuses. More concepts are derived, but there still remains the need for a connection to global aspect of diversity in higher education.

Much of the literature about diversity at today’s HBCUs is very limited. Research seems to focus on racial/ethnic diversity, compared to other issues defined by multiculturalism. Dwyer (2006) notes limited literature in higher education about multiculturalism on HBCU campuses. The research recognizes that literature does not focus on the existence of “multiculturalism on campus, or how multicultural education” at primary and secondary levels prepares students for HBCUs (p.41). There appears to be a need for current research about multiculturalism in higher education, especially at specialized campuses like HBCUs.

As HBCUs deal with changes in student trends, they must face the challenge of looking at diversity beyond race and ethnicity. It is suggested that diversity be explored based on issues such as gender, religious practices and students that considered as English as a second language learners (ESLL). Campus administrators need to explore the impact of diversity at all levels on campus personnel, and students. Davis and Swartz (2008) state, “...the approach to coping with diversity issues is through deliberate, conscious, and consistent application of carefully thought-out policies and procedures” (p.11). Therefore, it is highly recommended more research examine campus policies and procedures to ensure diversity.

SUMMARY

Conclusion

As student demographics are changing on HBCU campuses, an increase for diversification is warranted. This appears to be broad campus research rather than individual students or faculty. HBCU education is becoming more diversified, and research is needed with other minority students. Sims (1994) described the HBCU mission as

bringing students together in non-threatening environments for tradition, pride, and leadership development. Two areas can contribute to further research: 1) additional research based on Sims viewpoint about the HBCUs mission, and 2) using transformation theory to study institutional transformation as it relates to multiculturalism at HBCUs.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

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APPENDIX

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Alabama

Four-Year Public

Alabama A&M University

Four-Year Private

Concordia College Selma

Miles College

Oakwood University

Selma University

Stillman College

Talladega College

Tuskegee University

Two-Year Public

Bishop State Community College

Shelton State Community College, C.A. Fredd Campus

Gadsden State Community College, Valley Street

J.F. Drake State Technical College

Lawson State Community College

Trenholm State Technical College

Delaware

Four-Year Public

Delaware State University

District of Columbia

Four-Year Public

University of the District of Columbia

Four-Year Private

Howard University

Georgia

Four-Year Public

Albany State University

Fort Valley State University

Savannah State University

Four-Year Private

Clark Atlanta University

Interdenominational Theological Center

Morehouse College

Morehouse School of Medicine

Morris Brown College

Paine College

Spelman College

Arkansas

Four-Year Public

University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

Four-Year Private

Arkansas Baptist College

Philander Smith College

Florida

Four-Year Public

Florida A&M University

Four-Year Private

Bethune-Cookman College

Edward Waters College

Florida Memorial University

Kentucky

Four-Year Public

Kentucky State University

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (cont'd)

Louisiana

Four-Year Public

Grambling State University
Southern University A&M College
Southern University at New Orleans

Four-Year Private

Dillard University of Louisiana
Xavier University

Two-Year Public

Southern University at Shreveport

Michigan

Two-Year Private

Lewis College of Business

Missouri

Four-Year Public

Harris-Stowe State University
Lincoln University

Ohio

Four-Year Public

Central State University

Four-Year Private

Wilberforce University

Pennsylvania

Four-Year Public

Cheyney University of Pennsylvania
Lincoln University

Maryland

Four-Year Public

Bowie State University
Coppin State College
Morgan State University
University of Maryland Eastern Shore

Mississippi

Four-Year Public

Alcorn State University
Jackson State University
Mississippi Valley State University

Four-Year Private

Rust College
Tougaloo College

Two-Year Public

Coahoma Community College
Hinds Community College, Utica

North Carolina

Four-Year Public

Elizabeth City State University
Fayetteville State University
North Carolina A&T University
North Carolina Central University
Winston-Salem University

Four-Year Private

Barber-Scotia College
Bennett College
Johnson C. Smith University
Livingston College
Shaw University
St. Augustine's College

Oklahoma

Four-Year Public

Langston University

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (cont'd)

South Carolina

Four-Year Public

South Carolina State University

Four-Year Private

Allen University

Benedict College

Claflin University

Morris College

Voorhees College

Two-Year Public

Denmark Technical College

Two-Year Private

Clinton Junior College

Texas

Four-Year Public

Prairie View A&M University

Texas Southern University

Four-Year Private

Huston-Tillotson University

Jarvis Christian College

Paul Quinn College

Southwestern Christian College

Texas College

Wiley College

Two-Year Public

St. Philip's College

West Virginia U.S.

Four-Year Public

Bluefield State College

West Virginia State University

Tennessee

Four-Year Public

Tennessee State University

Four-Year Private

Fisk University

Knoxville College

Lane College

Lemoyne-Owen College

Meharry Medical College

Virginia

Four-Year Public

Norfolk State University

Virginia State University

Four-Year Private

Hampton University

Saint Paul's College

Virginia Union University

Virginia University of Lynchburg

Virgin Islands

Four-Year Public

University of the Virgin Islands

Source: US Department of Education (2008). *"White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities"*. Retrieved on June 13, 2009 from <http://www.ed.gov/about/inits/list/whhbcu/edlite-index.html>.

NOTES