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ABSTRACT

Providing an overview of research in the areas of diversity and multiculturalism among students and faculty in postsecondary institutions, this report examines: (1) changes in ethnicity among college students nationwide, including enrollment, participation, and completion rates by ethnic group; (2) participation, retention, and graduation rates by ethnic group among students in Washington state's colleges and universities; (3) changes in Seattle's ethnic student population; and (4) research on students of color at North Seattle Community College (NSCC), including enrollment, retention, and graduation activity, variations in ethnicity based on gender, age, part-time versus full-time status, and student intent. In addition, the report examines other areas of multicultural research at NSCC, including a 1992 NSCC multicultural campus climate survey of students and faculty, and student tracking efforts at NSCC, involving collaboration with Seattle primary and secondary institutions. The paper indicates that while minority student enrollment in higher education nationwide grew by 7.2% between 1986 and 1988, participation rates (i.e., percent of a given group attending college) did not show the same growth. In Washington, students of color accounted for 65% of the total enrollment growth between 1987 and 1992 in the state's community colleges. Between 1976 and 1992, the proportion of Asian/Pacific Islanders in Seattle's public schools increased from 9.3% to 24.1%. Among full-time faculty at NSCC, 81% agreed that most faculty are sensitive to the issues of minorities, compared with 77% of community college faculty nationally. An 83-item bibliography is included. (PAA)

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CONDUCTING INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

ABOUT MULTICULTURAL ISSUES ON CAMPUS:

It's More Than Black and White

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I. INTRODUCTION

The following report provides an overview of research in the areas of diversity and multiculturalism among students and faculty in postsecondary institutions. It provides material describing trends in education of students of color in both 2-year and 4-year academic institutions as well as an introduction to the range of institutional research activity being conducted at North Seattle Community College in terms of multicultural student outcomes and campus climate assessment. Ultimately, this report will be useful to institutional planners and researchers, college faculty, student services staff, administrators, interested students, and others who wish to pursue their own research into multicultural student issues.

A. Changes in Ethnicity of College Students in the United States

This section presents a brief profile of the changing ethnic makeup of the postsecondary student body across the United States, in Washington state, and at North Seattle Community College. It outlines some of the most important factors pertaining to ethnicity of individuals who are choosing to obtain college educations in 2 and 4-year institutions.

Enrollment versus Participation in Colleges Across the U.S.

As the ethnic makeup of American society has changed, so has the ethnic profile of American college students. For example, between 1980 and 1989, the number of Americans aged 18 to 24 (the traditional college student age range) declined by 15% among whites and 4% among African-Americans but grew by 39% among Hispanics.

A distinction needs to be made between student enrollment and participation rates in American higher education. While enrollment refers to numbers and proportions of students enrolled in colleges and universities during a given period, participation pertains to the percentage of a given age group (typically 18-24 years old) that is currently enrolled in college or has attended college for one or more years.

College enrollments across the United States (both 2- and 4-year institutions) among students from all ethnic groups grew by over 16% between the late 1970s and late 1980s. Two-year colleges saw the fastest growth--almost 21%. Overall minority student enrollment in institutions of higher education has been growing as well--between 1986 and 1988 minority student enrollments grew by 7.2%. Among Hispanics the enrollment growth during these years was 10% and was concentrated in 2-year institutions, where 74% of all Hispanic students were enrolled on a part-time basis. Among Asian students enrollment in all institutions of higher education grew even faster--by 10.9%

between 1986 and 1988. Among African-American students, growth in this period was a more modest 4.6%. And among Native American students, enrollment growth at best was slight--in 1988 Native Americans represented only 0.7% of college enrollments.

In contrast, student participation rates nationally do not show this rate of growth. Generally, participation rates are lower for students of color than for white students. In 1989, for example, 58.9% of whites had enrolled or attended college for one or more years (i.e. participation rate), while 38.8% were presently enrolled. African-Americans' enrollments and rates of participation were lower--49.1% and 30.8% respectively.

Between 1976 and 1989, the college participation rates of Hispanics reversed. In 1976, Hispanics' participation was 3% higher than for whites, but by 1989 participation had fallen to 10% lower than for whites. This falling participation could be attributed largely to declines in high school graduations among Hispanics, among whom 44% were not completing high school by 1989.

Degree Completions

Another indicator of progress among students of color is the number of degrees awarded as a factor of time. Data are available on recipients of associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees and show significant contrasts on the basis of ethnicity. Among recipients of two-year (associate's) degrees, students of color (Asian, African-American, Hispanic, and Native Americans) collectively showed a 3.5% increase between 1985 and 1989, while whites showed a decrease during same period of 0.6%. Asian students' associate degrees increased the most--by over 25%--while Native Americans' degrees rose by 12.4% and Hispanics' by 4.5%. African-Americans' associate degrees actually decreased between 1985 and 1989 by nearly 4%. A total of just under 430,000 associate's degrees were granted nationally in 1989.

Among all types of awards granted by institutions of higher education, bachelor's degrees are awarded to the largest number of recipients. By 1989, over 1 million Americans received bachelor's degrees--a growth of 10.5% since 1976. Whites' numbers of bachelor's degrees increased by 5.7% during this period, while for students of color collectively, the growth was a much greater 41.7%. In 1976, whites accounted for 88.4% of all bachelor's degrees, while in 1989 they received only 84.5% of these awards. Among students of color, Asians showed the greatest gains between 1976 and 1989 in bachelor's degrees: 241% growth, while Hispanics and Native Americans had more modest growth of 65.9% and 15.7% respectively. Only African-Americans showed a decline in bachelor's degrees awarded in this period--1.9%. In 1976, African-Americans accounted for 6.4% of all U.S.

bachelor's degrees received, while in 1989 their proportion had fallen to 5.7%.

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Another statistical indicator of bachelor's degrees awarded in terms of ethnicity can be found from Mortenson (1993), who has calculated the "education equity index." This index indicates the proportion of Americans of color aged 25 to 29 who hold bachelor's degrees relative to whites of the same age group. According to this study, 36% of Asian-Americans, 27% of whites, 11% of African-Americans, and 9% of Hispanics aged 25 to 29 held bachelor's degrees in 1992. Between 1980 and 1991, the students showing greatest change in bachelor's attainment were Asian-American females, with a 7.3% increase, and African-American females, with a 1.9% decrease.

Among all types of academic degrees from 2-year and 4-year institutions, Master's degrees have demonstrated the greatest rates of ethnic diversification between 1976 and 1989. In 1976, 85% of all Master's degrees were awarded to white students, but by 1989 that proportion had decreased to 78%. While total Master's degrees awarded in 1989 roughly equalled the numbers granted to all students in 1976 (approximately 309,000), changes are significant among individual ethnicities. For example, degrees awarded to Asian-Americans nearly tripled by 1989 (from 3900 to over 10,700) and among Hispanics the numbers grew from 5300 to almost 7300, but among African-Americans the numbers dropped by nearly 33% (from 20,300 to just 14,000). Doctoral degree earnings among U.S. citizens dropped during the 1980s, from 25,500 in 1979 to only 23,200 in 1989. However, receipt of doctorates improved during these years by almost 50% for Asian-Americans and almost 25% for Hispanics, while the numbers of African-Americans receiving doctorates declined by nearly 20%.

In a separate report I have explored factors affecting success of students of color enrolled in Master's and doctoral programs in more detail (Kerlin, 1989) along with a wide range of published literature pertaining to issues affecting contemporary graduate student education in America.

B. Participation of Students of Color in Washington State's Colleges and Universities

Enrollments in Washington's institutions of higher education have generally increased for students of color, both in terms of total numbers of enrolled students and in terms of relative proportions of total enrolled students. In 1988, for example, students of color collectively represented nearly 14% of enrolled students in 4-year institutions, an increase from 1980 of 4%. Asian/Pacific Islanders showed the greatest increases in this period--from 5% to 8% of total enrolled students.

During the 1990-91 academic year, enrollment proportions for

undergraduate students of color in Washington's public 4-year colleges and universities were as follows: African-Americans--2.4%; Native Americans--1.3%; Asian/Pacific Islanders--9.2%; Hispanics--2.7%. Among graduate students, enrollment proportions were: African-Americans--1.4%; Native Americans--0.9%; Asian/Pacific Islanders--3.8%; Hispanics--2.0%. Generally, as the level of education increased, the proportion of enrolled students who were students of color decreased.

In Washington state's community college system, total student enrollments reached a peak in 1979-80, declined from 1981 to 1984, and began climbing again in 1985. However, in 1992, total statewide community and technical college enrollments were still over 20% below the 1979 figures due to enrollment caps placed on community college student bodies by the Washington state legislature. In spite of these overall enrollment limitations, students of color made great gains in community college enrollment both in total numbers and in proportions of total enrolled students. According to the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (1993), 65% of the total growth in student enrollments between 1987 and 1992 in the state's community colleges were among students of color.

When ethnicity is considered, the backgrounds of students enrolled at all of Washington's two-year colleges are as follows: For fall 1992, 80.4% of students were whites; 7.7% were Asians or Pacific Islanders; 4.9% were Hispanics; 4.6% were African-Americans; and 1.9% were Native Americans. By comparison, the population distribution across Washington state in 1992 was 85.7% whites, 4.9% Hispanics, 4.7% Asians or Pacific Islanders, 3.1% African-Americans, and 1.6% Native Americans. Hence Asians, African-Americans, and Native Americans were overrepresented in Washington community colleges, while whites were underrepresented and Hispanics were proportionately represented.

Between the years of 1986 and 1990, the numbers of new students enrolling statewide in community colleges generally declined, but varied widely on the basis of ethnicity. For this period, the changes in numbers of new students enrolling were as follows: All students, 23% decline; Asians, 4% decline; African-Americans, 4% increase; Native Americans, 18% decline; Hispanics, 2% decline; whites, 22% decline.

Retention and Graduation

Generally speaking, retention and graduation rates are higher among students of color enrolled in Washington's 4-year colleges and universities than among the state's community college students--a trend which is true across the United States. However, only limited data are available in the area of student retention within four-year institutions, and this area needs much greater investigation by institutional researchers.

In the absence of retention figures for Washington's four-year institutions, state data reports provide figures on proportions of undergraduate and graduate degrees awarded to students of color. In the 1990-91 academic year, African-Americans earned 1.8% of bachelor's degrees and 1.0% of graduate degrees; Native Americans earned 1.0% of bachelor's degrees and 0.6% of graduate degrees; Asian/Pacific Islanders received 7.1% of bachelor's degrees and 3.4% of graduate degrees; and Hispanics earned 1.9% of bachelor's degrees and 1.3% of graduate awards.

In the state's community colleges, African-American, Native American, and Hispanic students are being retained at lower rates than Asians and whites who have the same enrollment goals (i.e. plans to remain until associate's degrees or certificates are completed). Students of color in Washington's community colleges have also been found to have slightly greater likelihood of beginning their studies at the developmental (i.e. pre-college level) stage than whites. When rates of progress from developmental to college-level courses are also examined, students of color generally show lower rates of advancement to college-level classes. These last two findings confirm that students of color are succeeding at rates lower than are white students in community colleges in Washington. However, in spite of lower retention rates for students of color, these students' rates have been improving over time during the period 1987 to 1992. Students with greatest improvement in retention rates in this period are Hispanics, African-Americans, and Native Americans.

Just as among community college students nationwide, Washington's students of color in 2-year institutions are graduating with Associate's degrees at lower rates during a three-year enrollment period than are whites. In 1991-92, approximately 10% of whites graduated from Washington institutions with Associate's degrees within three years of initial enrollment, while the rates for Asians were 6.7%, Native Americans were 6.9%, Hispanics were 4.8%, and African-Americans were 8.3%.

It is notable also that statewide in Washington, students of color collectively were earning only about 10% of each type of award in 1991-92 (academic degrees, vocational degrees, and vocational certificates) in spite of their statewide enrollment rates of 20% of community college students. Additionally, rates of transfer from 2-year to 4-year institutions were lower for all students of color except Asians than for whites. For example, while 47% of transfer-oriented whites who started at Washington community colleges in 1985 transferred to 4-year institutions by 1989, only 24% of African-Americans, 33% of Hispanics, and 40% of Native Americans did the same.

Washington's higher education coordinating agencies have

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Identified goals for improving enrollment, retention, and graduation/transfer trends for students of color during the remainder of the 1990s as well as suggestions for assessing and improving institutions' climate of support for diversity. These plans, while offering only general guidelines, nevertheless provide solid goals and objectives by which the state's colleges and universities will measure their own progress in improving the general progress of students of color.

II. CHANGES IN SEATTLE'S ETHNIC STUDENT POPULATION

During the past two decades, the Seattle metropolitan area has experienced significant changes in the ethnic makeup of its population. Between 1970 and 1990, the proportion of Seattle citizens who are whites declined from approximately 87% to 75%. African-Americans increased from 7% to 10%, Asians from 4% to nearly 12%, and Native Americans from 0.7% to 1.4%, and Hispanics (who may also claim any of the other ethnic backgrounds) from 2% to 3.6% of all Seattle residents.

According to data provided by the Seattle Public Schools District, between 1976 and 1992 the proportions of students enrolled in Seattle's public schools who were white declined from 67% to 43%; Hispanic students increased from 3.2% to 7.2%; African-Americans from 17.4% to 23.0%; total Native Americans (American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Americans) from 2.7% to 3.2%; and Asian/Pacific Islanders from 9.3% to 24.1%.

In 1990, census data collected by the Seattle Community College District Office showed that for the entire District service area (which includes the campuses of North Seattle, Seattle Central, and South Seattle Community College), 77.4% of all citizens were whites, 8.9% were African-Americans, 10.7% were Asians, 1.4% were Native Americans, and 3.4% were Hispanics. However, the North Seattle Community College Service Area was shown to have a significantly higher proportion of whites: 88%, and lower percentages of African-Americans (2.0%), Asians (7.4%), Native Americans (1.1%), and Hispanics (2.8%). Nevertheless, as the changes in school enrollment ethnicity demonstrate for the 1976 to 1992 period, North Seattle Community College's service area is undergoing significant ethnic diversification, and these changes in ethnicity of school students will eventually appear in NSCC's student body enrollments as well.

In future years, North Seattle Community College will become more active in tracking the progress of Seattle-area high school students of color who enter NSCC and transfer, upon completing their associate's degrees, to 4-year colleges in Washington. A discussion of the multicultural transfer tracking project appears below in section III, part B.

**III. RESEARCH ON STUDENTS OF COLOR AT
NORTH SEATTLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE****A. Measurements of Enrollment, Retention, and Graduation Activity**

The ethnic diversity of NSCC's student body has already shown significant changes since 1980. Between 1980 and 1992, the proportion of enrolled NSCC students who are of an ethnic background other than white rose substantially--from 12% to nearly 30%. Asian student enrollment proportions grew at the fastest rate, rising from 6% in 1980 to nearly 20% in 1992. African-American enrollments rose from 3% to nearly 6% by 1992, Hispanics rose from 2% to 3%, and Native Americans remained at around 1% of all NSCC students. Whites showed the primary declines in enrollment proportions--from 88% of all NSCC students in 1980 to approximately 70% in 1992.

**Variations in Ethnicity Based on Gender, Age,
Part/Full-Time Status, and Student Intent**

When differences in gender, age, and other considerations are examined, ethnicity of enrolled NSCC students varies rather widely. Among white students enrolled fall 1991, only 43% were males, while among all students from other ethnic backgrounds, 48% were males. African-Americans (50%) and Asians (49%) had roughly equal proportions of male and female students, while 53% of enrolled Native Americans and 56% of Hispanics were females.

Age of enrolled NSCC students is also an important factor to explore in reference to ethnicity. Among enrolled students in fall 1991, Asians were substantially overrepresented (and whites underrepresented by roughly the same proportions) in every age group from below 20 through 25-29. For example, over 28% of students at NSCC below the age of 22 were Asians, while less than 64% of this age group were whites. This compares with campus-wide enrollment of 16% Asians and 74% whites. Students from other ethnic backgrounds (i.e. African-Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans) were more equally represented among all ages.

NSCC students' enrollments on a part-time or full-time basis (i.e. 10 credits/term or more) also vary widely by ethnicity. In fall 1991, only 35% of whites were enrolled full-time, but 47% of all other students were full-timers. Highest proportions of full-time students were among Native Americans (53%), Asians (49%), and African-Americans (48%). Notably, NSCC's student body is approximately 75% part-time, having one of the largest numbers of part-time students among all 27 Washington community colleges. NSCC also contains the third-highest proportion of part-time students among these same 27 institutions.

When broad areas of student intent (i.e. academic transfer, vocational, and basic skills) are examined based on ethnicity of

enrolled NSCC students, two findings are evident: (1) Between 1985 and 1991, the proportions of ethnic minority students in most intent areas generally grew, matching increased diversity of total NSCC students enrolled, and (2) minority student intentions shifted from primarily vocational (20% of vocational students in 1985 were minorities versus 24% in 1991) to primarily academic transfer (16% of enrolled students in 1985 were minorities versus 27% in 1991). Among basic skills students, Asians in 1985 and in 1991 made up 41%, African-Americans went from 3% to 7%, Hispanics from 4% to 8%, and Native Americans remained at 1%.

Variations in Student Retention Based on Ethnicity

At North Seattle Community College, retention of students based on ethnicity is highest among Asians, Hispanics, and whites. This finding is consistent with the fact that students from these ethnic backgrounds are more likely than NSCC's African-American or Native American students to complete Associate's degrees. Among NSCC students who enrolled in fall 1986, 51% of Asians, 49% of Hispanics, 45% of African-Americans, 44% of whites, and 28% of Native Americans were still enrolled three terms later. But among these same students, 21% of Asians, 15% of Hispanics, 15% of whites, and only 9% of African-Americans and 6% of Native Americans were still enrolled 6 or more quarters later.

In a study of retention among academic transfer students who first enrolled at NSCC in fall 1991, 67% of Native Americans, 59% of African-Americans, 57% of whites, 36% of Asians, and 33% of Hispanics who indicated they had planned to remain enrolled at NSCC for at least one year did not enroll at the college by fall 1992. While this non-enrollment may be classified as a "stop-out" rather than an actual drop-out due to recency of initial enrollment, variations in enrollment continuation nevertheless suggest that students with different ethnicities do not have identical enrollment patterns at NSCC. Typically, African-Americans and Native Americans show the lowest rates of retention in most programs of study at NSCC.

Currently, data on students transferring between NSCC and other 2-year and 4-year academic institutions in Washington are available only in summary fashion from most 4-year institutions, and are not listed in terms of ethnicity of transfer students. In the years ahead it will become increasingly necessary to elicit these 4-year institutions' cooperation in tracking community college transfer students in terms of ethnicity into and through the 4-year system in Washington.

Graduation Activity

At NSCC, the ethnic proportionality of total annual graduates (recipients of Associate's degrees, vocational

certificates, and high school diplomas) has typically come within two percentage points of matching enrollment proportions three years earlier for Asians and whites and within about one percentage point of matching enrollment proportions of African-Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans. For example, in 1987, NSCC student enrollments were 13% Asians, 3% African-Americans, 2% Hispanics, 1% Native Americans, and 81% whites. Of total NSCC graduates in the 1990-91 academic year, 15% were Asians, 3% were African-Americans, 2% were Hispanics, 0.3% were Native Americans, and 80% were whites.

What is equally notable among graduating students from different ethnic backgrounds is the type of award received. In 1991-92, Asians and Hispanics along with whites were more likely to receive Associate's degrees (both AA/AS and AAS), while African-Americans and Native Americans were more likely to receive vocational certificates. In 1991-92, Asian students received only 11% of AA/AS (college transfer) degrees but earned 22% of all AAS (vocational) degrees. Whites, on the other hand, received 84% of AA/AS degrees and only 72% of AAS degrees.

Finally, length of time from initial enrollment to graduation varies significantly by ethnicity for students at NSCC. Of students in both academic transfer and vocational programs who were examined for rates of graduation within three years of enrollment at NSCC, substantially lower proportions of Native Americans and African-Americans graduated than did their white and Asian classmates. For example, among students first enrolled for academic transfer credits at NSCC in fall 1989, 12% of whites and 11% of Asians graduated within three years, while only 7% of Hispanics and African-Americans and 4% of Native Americans graduated within the same period. Students enrolled from the outset in the Associate of Arts degree program showed less disparity in graduation rates in terms of ethnicity. Among those first enrolled in the program during fall 1989, 15% of Asians, 20% of African-Americans and Hispanics, 13% of Native Americans, and 19% of whites graduated within three years.

B. Additional Areas of Multicultural Research Involving North Seattle Community College

The 1992 Multicultural Campus Climate Study

In 1990, North Seattle Community College published a comprehensive mission statement outlining its primary commitment to quality teaching and learning. One component of the mission pertained to issues of diversity:

"NSCC will create a climate that affirms and endorses our diversity:

* By employing a staff that reflects the diversity of the students we serve;

- * by supporting a diversified English as a Second Language program;
- * by implementing multicultural and gender-balanced education throughout the curriculum;
- * by welcoming learning disabled and physically disabled students;
- * by supporting faculty/staff development activities that will help us be effective with all students and ourselves;
- * by making the community aware that we welcome all students and consider our diversity a community resource."

In the year following adoption of this mission statement, the college received a 5-year, \$2.5 million Title III grant from the U.S. Department of Education. One of four areas of funding by the grant served the goal, "to create a climate where cultural diversity is recognized and valued" through creation of a multicultural educational curriculum. With the grant's assistance, the college began outlining goals for expanding the multicultural curriculum at North, through both infusion of multicultural content into existing courses and creation of new courses focused specifically on multicultural issues in American society. A full-time faculty position was created and an individual was hired to teach ethnic studies courses as well as to offer faculty workshops on curriculum change and improved understanding of issues pertaining to diversity. Additionally, goals were outlined for assessing and improving ethnic student outcomes in college transfer and vocational programs as well as developing a multicultural student leadership program.

The Title III grant received by NSCC also provided for the Office of Institutional Research, which was created under the grant as well, to conceive and conduct a multicultural campus climate study during the 1991-92 academic year. Complete details of the study are contained in a separate report, "North Seattle Community College Multicultural Climate Survey 1992: Findings From the Student & Employee Surveys" (Kerlin, 1992b).

At NSCC, the climate study was conducted among both students and employees. A total of 639 students and 120 employees completed written surveys which were tabulated during summer 1992. In late summer, a focus group of multicultural services students participated in a videotaped interview in which survey results were summarized and students were asked to offer their own reactions to the results. A 20 minute version of the original 1.5 hour tape was prepared for general campus showing on Convocation Day in September, and all faculty and staff from the college were invited to attend. Offered as part of the Convocation Day theme of multiculturalism, the tape was shown following distribution of the survey results in executive summary form to those in attendance. Faculty and staff were then invited to participate in roundtable discussion groups focusing on the multicultural themes highlighted in the Convocation ceremony.

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Student Tracking Activities Involving Collaboration Between NSCC
and Other Seattle Area Institutions of K-12 Education
and Higher Education

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In 1992, North Seattle Community College obtained funding from the Ford Foundation for expansion of an existing office designed to assist students of color who ultimately planned to transfer, upon graduation, to a 4-year academic institution in the Seattle area. This office was the latest outcome of Ford's efforts to provide support to the Seattle Community College District's (SCCD) goals of enhancing minority student success. In spring of 1988, SCCD formed a coalition with the Seattle Public Schools as well as Seattle University and the University of Washington known as the Seattle Coalition for Educational Equity (SCEE), and members of the Coalition attended a Ford-sponsored multicultural student transfer workshop. Later that year, the Coalition was joined by the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce and Seattle Pacific University.

Among the research studies conducted by the Coalition was a tracking project of Seattle area high school graduates from 1982-83 that followed their progress into and through the 2-year and 4-year academic institutions in the Seattle area during subsequent years. In 1990, the Seattle Minority Transfer Team produced a report which indicated levels of success for students of color in area higher education institutions (see Blanchard et al., 1990). This study was a joint venture of the Seattle Community Colleges and the University of Washington's Offices of Admissions and Educational Assessment.

The 1992 Ford funding of NSCC's multicultural transfer office occurred simultaneously with support for similar offices at the other SCCD campuses as well as at the three participating universities in the Seattle area. Under stage II of the Ford Foundation's funding, participating campuses embarked upon a mission of training faculty and staff in areas of multicultural diversity as well as seeking to expand the information-sharing capacities and improve linkages among the institutions. A major defined goal under stage II is to increase the numbers of students of color who complete bachelor's degrees. This program of increasing student success is part of a 16 city network known as the Citywide Alliances program which is being funded by Ford and assisted by the National Center for Urban Partnerships.

Currently in 1993, the Coalition is in the process of designing a long-term student tracking research project which focuses upon the relative impact of the multicultural transfer centers on the success of students of color in participating institutions. This research study, which is expected to be implemented later in 1993, will attempt to improve existing student tracking data systems. It will follow over the next 10 years the educational careers of students enrolling during 1993

in good institutions' academic transfer programs from the Seattle School District. As such, this process of action research will undoubtedly enhance the functions of institutional researchers at all participating colleges as they conduct their own multicultural student research.

Other Institutional Research at NSCC Involving Faculty

Another important area of institutional research pertaining to multicultural issues on campus is the study of college and university faculty on both an institutional and national level. Significant questions in this area include proportions of faculty of color out of total institutional faculty who are tenure track employees; employment trends of faculty of color within institutions; and faculty opinions regarding their institutions, their jobs, their students and colleagues, and the issues felt to be most important to preserving the quality of worklife for faculty (Kerlin, 1992a; Kerlin & Dunlap, 1993).

At North Seattle Community College, attitudes of faculty toward multicultural issues were assessed through the 1992 campus climate study. Additional information on faculty attitudes was provided in 1993, when results of a 1992 national survey of college and university faculty were released to the NSCC campus by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) of the University of California at Los Angeles. Because NSCC was one of the institutions participating in the 1992 survey, results distributed to the Office of Institutional Research permitted comparison of NSCC's full-time faculty responses with those given by other public community college faculty across the U.S.

Among the HERI survey findings from NSCC were the following:

- * Asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the statement, "Most faculty are sensitive to the issues of minorities," 81% of NSCC respondents agreed compared with 77% of community college faculty nationally;
- * Asked whether "to create a diverse multicultural campus environment" was a high priority on campus, 81% of NSCC faculty agreed compared with only 52% nationally;
- * Asked whether "to recruit more minority faculty and administrators" was a high priority, 69% of NSCC faculty agreed compared with 46% nationally;
- * Asked to indicate agreement with the statement, "Many courses here include minority group perspectives," 60% of NSCC faculty but only 42% of national faculty agreed.

Faculty at North Seattle Community College reflect significantly higher levels of awareness and commitment to diversity than their colleagues nationwide. Because of this commitment, NSCC has made great progress in its mission of improving the campus climate for students of color.

IV. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

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This report has introduced a range of research issues in postsecondary education pertaining to student and employee diversity as well as the teaching of diversity awareness and sensitivity. In focusing particularly upon the research activities currently being conducted at North Seattle Community College, this report does not pretend to identify the full spectrum of issues needing further research when a collegiate institution or system strives to assess the quality and strength of its contribution to improving the success of students and employees of color. However, in this final section, I will propose some additional areas of needed multicultural research and I will also pose some questions of a philosophical nature which are critical areas for individual researchers to examine when conducting multicultural research.

Expanding the Research Agenda on Multiculturalism
in Higher Education

Much of the institutional research that has been conducted at North Seattle Community College in the area of multicultural issues has so far been of a first-order nature--that is, it has focused primarily on identifying quantitative data on enrollment, retention, graduation, and transfer rates in terms of differences of ethnicity. In fact, most institutional, state, and federal government reports addressing multiculturalism focus on presenting "the numbers" in order to define the scope of issues in multicultural student research. However, examination of broad trends in the success or failure of students and employees must focus on far more than just analysis of the numbers.

Ultimately to be effective, multicultural research at the institutional level must seek to understand the complex issues of human and race relations that define the core of the teaching/learning and employment environments in academic institutions--issues that often defy simple quantification. This presents a particular challenge to institutional researchers, who quite often are called upon primarily to provide numbers so that academic administrators, other campus personnel, and policy makers will be able to establish and carry out policy recommendations backed up by "hard data."

If hard numbers are the most common "what" obtained in multicultural research, then what remains a fundamental challenge to institutional researchers are the "why" and "how" questions: Why do students from different ethnic backgrounds demonstrate different educational outcomes in postsecondary institutions, even when they enter educational institutions with identical educational intentions and levels of preparation? Why is it so difficult for educational institutions to reduce the inequities in student outcomes (retention, graduation/transfer rates) that

are often reflected when ethnicity of students is taken into consideration? Is it possible that institutions are improving these outcomes in ways that traditional data collection methods are not capturing?

Of equal significance are questions of equality of access versus equality of outcomes. As academic (particularly 4-year) institutions become increasingly selective in order to choose students demonstrating the highest educational promise, what happens to the concerns about equity among students from lower income and educationally underprepared backgrounds? How can 2-year and 4-year academic institutions work more closely together to assure that greater numbers of "at-risk" students succeed without watering down the quality of existing education? Does starting at a community college enhance or diminish the likelihood that a student will ultimately earn a bachelor's degree when compared with the chances of a similar student who begins at a 4-year institution?

In seeking answers for these and similar questions, institutional researchers need to take a number of steps to expand their research focus: (1) examine their own assumptions, biases, and values about the issues of race relations, class, and equity in society and in educational institutions; (2) explore a variety of theoretical issues and questions regarding the role of higher education institutions in American society; (3) develop connections with a network of individuals within the institution who are also interested in exploring the deeper research questions that transcend the numbers--these individuals should include faculty from a broad array of disciplines, administrators, multicultural student specialists as well as other interested student services personnel, and students from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Institutional researchers and other individuals in academic institutions who are truly committed to improving or even transforming the racial climate at their institutions must be able to ask questions such as the following:

(1) If we wished to conduct a multicultural campus climate study or some similar institutional "self-study" that examined sensitive social issues such as racism on campus, would we receive support from our administration, our faculty and staff, and our students? Where would the opposition to such research come from, and how do we anticipate and respond effectively to it?

(2) In conducting research in order to explain the causes of student success or attrition at the college level, should most of the emphasis be placed on issues occurring within the college, or should more be placed on societal issues such as race, class, or gender stratification?

(3) How are race and class issues interrelated when the study of student attrition is being conducted? Are middle class students of color more likely to succeed than lower class whites?

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(4) When diversity is being examined or researched in higher education, how is the term defined? That is, who is to be included in the definition for the purposes of conducting the research? How does the researcher handle issues of gender, physical and learning disabilities, sexual orientation, age, nationality, native language when addressing diversity questions? Should the researcher alone define the concept of diversity (and the philosophy by which the study is subsequently conducted), or should a campus committee be formed to oversee all aspects of the research study from the stage of problem identification to the stage of presenting the results?

(5) What should the role of the institutional researcher be when he or she is presenting findings about sensitive issues such as racial or gender bias or harassment on campus-- "impartial" data analyst, advocate for change, or other?

(6) In conducting or consulting others about assessment- based classroom or institutional research that reveals clear differences in students' course or program outcomes in terms of ethnicity, what recommendations is the researcher prepared to make in order to address these differences?

While there are no "right" or "wrong" answers to these questions, it is critical that institutional researchers be able to ask them and ponder the answers with others on their campuses. Particularly in areas of multicultural institutional research, methods used will probably be determined more by human and social factors pertaining to the researchers and the campus environment than by any other cause. Perceived legitimacy of the study by a wide range of campus constituents is vital for establishing credibility when the results are ultimately presented.

Conclusion

An important goal for the institutional research office in both 2-year and 4-year academic institutions should be expanding the conversation about the quality of race relations on campus as well as the extent of student success in terms of ethnicity. Conducting institutional research about multicultural issues on campus is a process that can seek the advice of faculty from many intellectual perspectives, including the social sciences, law, humanities, organizational and management sciences, science and mathematics, as well as applied perspectives represented by student services professionals and other campus staff and

administrators. And researchers should never forget that students themselves represent a rich body of knowledge, experience, and suggestions that can greatly enhance the credibility of their studies.

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Researchers pursuing the subjects of multiculturalism and diversity in American education should also strive to widen the scope of information available and the level of awareness about racial issues in higher education locally--both within campus boundaries and across educational sectors--as well as nationally. To the extent possible, institutional researchers need to keep abreast of state and national policy issues that outline goals for improved success rates of students of color so that local campus efforts can mirror these goals. As well, researchers should critically examine their own values and assumptions as well as competing theoretical perspectives about race relations and the causes of racism and other forms of stratification within the society at large.

Through these expanded conversations, collaborative partnerships, and areas of research focus, campuses will have a greater capacity to become transformed into places where diversity is truly acknowledged, affirmed, and celebrated among employees and students alike. Given the right circumstances for its development on campus, multicultural research can become a thriving area of action research. In such circumstances, the institutional research office serves as a focal point and coordinating arm of broader campus efforts to improve race relations--sustaining the conversation while providing a growing body of information about multicultural research and activities both on and off campus.

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