



2019

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Recommended Citation

Gordon, Sarah R.; Yough, Mike; Finney, Emily A.; Haken, Andrea; and Mathew, Susan (2019) "Learning about Diversity Issues: Examining the Relationship between University Initiatives and Faculty Practices in Preparing Global-Ready Students," *Educational Considerations*: Vol. 45: No. 1. <https://doi.org/10.4148/0146-9282.2167>

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Learning about Diversity Issues: Examining the Relationship between University Initiatives and Faculty Practices in Preparing Global-Ready Students

Sarah R. Gordon, Mike Yough, Emily A. Finney, Andrea Haken, and Susan Mathew

The purpose of this study is to examine the divide between faculty perceptions of diversity and the pedagogy they employ in teaching about diversity as juxtaposed against an institution that has a course requirement embedded in the undergraduate curriculum as a way of promoting cultural competency. The timing of such an investigation is apropos. The exponential rate of international globalization has resulted in increased dependency on higher education and its administration to prepare its graduates for a global economy (Lilley, Barker, and Harris 2014; Matus and Talburt 2015). However, the need for cultural competence remains strong within the United States as diverse populations account for more than 90% of the population explosion (Day and Glick 2000; King, Perez, and Shim 2013). This increase in diversity poses complex and difficult questions about diversity education (Banks 2011). Businesses engaged in the global market demands employees to be effective in their interactions and communications with diversified colleagues (Gurin, Nagda, and Lopez 2004; King, Perez, and Shim 2013) and are seeking diversity-related knowledge, skill sets, and experiences in prospective employees who represent themselves as university ambassadors (Jayne and Dipboye 2004). The general public, as well as scholars and college students themselves, expect universities to provide students with an education that prepares them to work in a diverse and international society (Price and Cascoigne 2006; Griffith et al. 2016; King, Perez, and Shim 2013).

In response, many universities have developed policies and opportunities such as foreign language requirements, general education requirements, study abroad experiences, and internationalization at home programs to help facilitate student learning on issues of diversity (Harrison and Peacock 2010; Hunter, White, and Godbey 2006; Griffith et al. 2016; Prieto-Flores, Feu, and Casademont 2016). Other examples include implementation of diversity courses, modified pedagogical practices related to discussions of diversity and student reflections, and/or included course content dealing with a systemic approach to a diversified society (Mayhew and Fernandez 2007). Despite such initiatives, college campuses have been locations that have presented social issues concerning differences in people. Recently, protests related to race issues have occurred at the University of Missouri and University of Virginia have illustrated the continuing need for diversity knowledge education in college curriculum.

While these efforts are important, scholars argue that an institution's commitment to diversity is most evident in its curriculum (Mayhew and Grunwald 2006). Yet, many instructors have been resistant to integrating diversity-related content into their courses (Minnich 1995; Mayhew and Grunwald 2006), and proposals for mandated diversity-related courses have been controversial (Jaschik 2015; Maryuma and Moreno 2000). In addition, not all students are willing to engage in and/or be open to diversity interactions (Bowman 2014). Mayhew and Grunwald (2006) found that whether a faculty member decides to participate in diversity-related activities in the classroom depends on the faculty member's beliefs about diversity and his/her perception of values and practices upheld by their discipline, academic department, and the university's overall

commitment to diversity. This is unfortunate as instructors have the potential to assist students in learning from one another, promote personal and professional growth, and create more inclusive and safe climates in the classroom (Bigatti et al. 2012).

The Present Study

Astin (1993) examined faculty pedagogical practices to address diversity topics. He found a low correlation between the emphasis that faculty place on diversity and that of the institution. What remains unclear is how faculty integrate their own ‘sense making process’ and scholarly understanding about diversity with pedagogical practices in a manner that fulfills university-mandated diversity and internationalization educational outcomes *and* promotes students’ experiences with diversity issues. The purpose of this study is to examine this gap. Specifically, the scope of the present study is to examine faculty understanding about diversity outcomes and the associated practices they employ in the context of the institution’s diversity course requirement embedded in the undergraduate curriculum.

This research study was conducted at a large land-grant university in the U.S. southern plains. Approximately 74% of undergraduates are considered “in-state” students, while 3% were from countries outside the U.S. and are approximately 75% identify as Euro-American. Many different terms have been used to address the concept of diversity as a learning component of higher education, including *multiculturalism*, *intercultural sensitivity*, *cultural intelligence*, *global competence*, *cross-cultural awareness*, and *global citizenship* (Deardorff, 2011, p. 66). Our university uses the term *diversity*. Diversity is considered a general education outcome and is formally built into the undergraduate curriculum by two course designations—‘D’ (‘diversity’) for courses that focus on domestic diversity issues and ‘I’ (‘international’) for courses that focus on contemporary international issues. Per university guidelines, these course designations are mutually exclusive (i.e., a course cannot hold both designations). For D courses, more than half of the course content must be related to at least one socially-constructed group in the United States. Goals for diversity courses are that students would (a) critically analyze historical and contemporary examples of the group(s), (b) critically analyze the distribution of benefits and opportunities afforded these groups, (c) understand how the group(s) relate to the student’s discipline, and (d) demonstrate this understanding through written work. For I courses, more than half of the course content must emphasize contemporary cultures outside the U.S. Goals for international courses include (a) critical analysis of at least one culture outside the U.S., (b) understand how the designated culture(s) relates to global systems, and (c) demonstrate this understanding through written work. This formalized portion of the curriculum is important to point out as one interprets the results of the study, as it demonstrates a formal commitment on behalf of the university to prioritize diversity issues as a part of the curriculum—faculty and staff are, in theory, aware of this ‘requirement’ at the institutional level.

Method

Data collection occurred in two phases: (a) an open-ended survey, and (b) in-person interviews with select participants. Interviews were considered the primary data source for the study, and the online survey was meant to provide context and serve as a means of triangulation to aid in trustworthiness and credibility (Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba 2011). Further, in recognition that

context is important, descriptions of the university and course requirements (in preceding paragraphs) along with descriptions of participants, sampling, and findings in this study are reported with sufficient detail to allow a framework for comparison and facilitate judgments about transferability (Creswell 2014; Erlandson et al. 1993).

Participants. All instructors-of-record for undergraduate courses in Spring 2017 were recruited for participation (N = 1604). Three-hundred thirty-six agreed to participate, with 209 answering the most relevant questions of the survey. The “typical” participant was a Caucasian (n=125), female (n=83), between 30-39 (n=55), at the rank of Assistant Professor (n=36) who does not currently teach a course with a ‘diversity’ or ‘international’ designation (n=119), nor has taught a study abroad course (n=141). This typical participant was also a U.S. citizen (n=139) who does not fluently speak a language other than English (n=119), has traveled outside the U.S. (n=154), but has not lived outside the U.S. for six months or more (n=110). Fourteen survey respondents were purposefully selected for interviews with 13 agreeing (see Table 1 for an overview of interview participants’ characteristics). Twelve were U.S. citizens. All identified as Caucasian. Three reported speaking a language other than English. Two had taught a study abroad course; two taught a course designated ‘D’ or ‘I’. All had traveled outside the U.S., with five reporting having lived outside of the U.S. for six months or more. Most (n=9) considered it their job to have discussion about diversity issues in the courses they taught. Of 13 selected for interviews, one was unable to participate due to scheduling conflicts resulting in 12 interview participants. Given the variability of size in some of the departments represented by the participants, individuals were identified only by number in presentation of the results.

Table 1: *Overview of Interview Participants*

Self-Reported Gender	
Male	7
Female	5
Gender Variant/Non-Conforming	1
Teaching Role	
Graduate Teaching Assistant	3
Adjunct Faculty	1
Visiting Faculty	1
Assistant Professor	3
Associate Professor	4
Professor	1
Area of Study	
Arts & Sciences	3
Agricultural Sciences	2
Business	2
Education	2
Human Sciences	1
Not Reported	2

Do you consider it a part of your job to have discussions about diversity issues...	Yes	No
In the courses that you teach?	9	4
In individual interactions with students?	7	5
In departmental/faculty meetings?	5	8
In committees you are a part of?	6	7

Procedure. Participants were sent a link to the open-ended survey. Questions included what it means to teach diversity, whether it is considered a part of the job, as well as willingness to participate in a follow-up interview. Four members of the research team read through the survey data of those who indicated they were willing to participate in follow-up interviews (N = 63) and individually rank-ordered them based on their responses. The research team then met to discuss their rankings and identify 10-15 participants for interviews. Interview participants were selected based on their relatively wide-range of survey responses (e.g., those believing it was their job to teach about issues of diversity as well as those who do not). Participants who provided survey responses that lacked detail or appeared contradictory were given priority (e.g., believing it to be part of their job to discuss diversity in the classroom, but not during one-on-one meetings with students). Additionally, participants were also selected who had been initially individually flagged by multiple members of the team as having survey responses deemed worthy of further exploration due to the uniqueness of their responses.

Analysis. Qualitative survey and interview data were analyzed using Saldaña's (2013) and Creswell's (2014) coding guidelines. Researchers coded the data separately, then two researchers came together to compare codes and create themes. Two other members of the team served as 'auditors' to assure consistency and credibility. Each auditor flagged data that they perceived to be miscoded or had the potential to receive multiple codes. Their notes were then given to the coding team for further discussion and analysis. The same process was used to analyze the interview data though the team members changed (i.e., one member of the coding team for the survey data joined the audit team for the interview data and vice versa).

Results

Survey Data (from Interview Participants). Descriptive data for survey responses for select items of the interview participants are found in Table 1. The survey included an open-ended item: "How, if at all, do you teach about inclusivity and/or diversity issues?" Responses were coded into eight categories: (a) Discussion, (b) course materials, (c) incorporating different points-of-view/perspectives, (d) role modeling, (e) personal experiences/humor, (f) application and "formal" learning activities, and (g) none. Many responses fell into multiple categories, for example, using materials to incorporate different perspectives into the course.

A number of participants reported that they used *discussion* as a way to teach about inclusivity and diversity issues. Responses indicated that discussion serves to (a) explore how issues affect diverse groups of people; (b) promote empathy; (c) investigate generational issues, stereotypes, and cultural differences; (d) consider diversity from multiple perspectives; (e) more deeply

engage in the course material; and (f) encourage reflection about where differences come from. As one participant wrote,

[Teaching diversity] means to present differing ideas and encourage thoughtful reflection and discussion on those ideas. A student may not agree, but should be able to see where the difference in thought comes from and appreciate another person's right to it. It should represent the various kinds of people in the world and how their experiences are different, but relatable to others.

Use of *course materials* was a second way in which participants reported they teach about diversity. Examples of course materials and the way they are used include (a) use of music to introduce students to under-explored perspectives, (b) exploration of required reading to illuminate the social and cultural construction of identity, (c) use of readings to raise questions about diversity and to critically examine the way in which we read, (d) use of film to promote perspective-taking, (e) inviting guest speakers/lecturers who represent diverse perspectives and/or backgrounds, and (f) archival research to critically examine the voices that are included/excluded. Several participants referred to use of materials more broadly to discuss and even problematize concepts of diversity. As one participant wrote,

I include as wide a range of "diverse" ideas and identities in the materials I teach as I can and I am quite open about the cultural context for all the materials I teach and the identities of those who produced the materials I assign my students. Sometimes that is even the topical focus of the course. I push past "inclusivity and diversity" towards "justice," in fact, since "inclusivity and diversity" just mean "the conventional people made room for the not so conventional people to be there," not that there is any meaningful attempt to take them seriously in the same ways conventional people generally expect.

Participants used a variety of methods to *incorporate different points-of-view or perspectives* when teaching on topics of diversity. Examples include: (a) Encouraging students to perspective take the presented opposing points-of-view, (b) comparison of different points-of-view within the classroom, (c) having students "imagine if" they were in a particular situation/context, and (d) use of examples that include diverse groups or individuals. Regarding the use of examples, one participant wrote,

I use examples that include diverse groups and sometimes individuals throughout the course. I also include exercises where students can freely express their views and others can see that not everybody thinks as they do. Students on teaching evaluations often comment that they were surprised about the range of views on key issues and they liked reading the views of others. That means their eyes were opened, and they are now more aware of similarities and differences with others.

Role modeling was a strategy a number of participants reported as a more concrete way to teach about issues of diversity. Participants reported that they attempted to be role models by, (a) being open to minority opinions and highlighted contributions from underrepresented groups, (b) making extra effort to assure that students representing various minority groups feel welcomed

and valued, (c) trying to make all feel valued as individuals, (d) noting conclusions that have been drawn from assumptions or superficial data, (e) assuring that all voices are heard, (f) taking advantage of “teachable moments,” and (g) “treating everyone the same.” One participant shared that her presence as a female in a male-dominated field serves as a role model. As she wrote,

[I am a role model] By my very presence. I am a female teaching in a traditionally male discipline, in a large department with only one, full-time female professor and less than 15% female students in my classes. In the examples that I give my students, I refer to “your future supervisor or boss” as “he or she.”

Several participants reported role modeling by taking a “color blind” approach in treating everyone with respect or with fairness. One participant wrote,

I don't emphasize minorities or women, I emphasize the best science regardless if the researcher was male, female, black or pink. My students see that I am unbiased because I call on everyone to participate in my class, not just the women or the students of color, but all of my students.

Another participant wrote, “[I am a role model in that I] Treat everyone with fairness. Appreciate cultures and language BUT DO NOT give EXTRA attention to certain groups who use the diversity flag to hide behind [all caps used in the original].”

Use of *personal experiences and humor* was another way participants reported teaching about issues of diversity. Those listing this method often shared they felt sharing of personal experience increased relevancy and thus appeal of diversity. Others shared that use of personal stories makes the topic less threatening to some students. As one participant wrote,

I like to do this through personal story telling, sharing experiences that I have had, knowing that others probably differ in their approach. Then, I invite others to share their stories. Then, they are just stories, not pronouncements of right or wrong ideas.

Others share that humor also serves to decrease threat. As another shared,

Practice fairness, make mistakes and admit it, apologize often, point to current events and issues, make fun of my person, [my] “Dutchness,” age, height, weight, shoe size, bald spot (it's actually an extra eye so I can watch you while writing on the board), brand preference of cell phone (it's an old-guy safety device), make fun of my country when appropriate, and openly mock Trump's Muslim ban and "the Wall" knowing half the class is represented by those two issues and is genuinely afraid.

Several participants noted they *apply more “formal” learning activities* to teach issues of diversity—often as a way to connect use of discussion to appreciating varying points-of-view. For example, one participant noted that s/he has students interview “a person who does not belong to their identity group, however they define that, so that students have an idea about the diverse makeup of [this university].” Another wrote of a role-playing activity incorporated in her/his class as a way to develop perspective-taking,

I find role-playing effective and purposely put people in unfamiliar "roles" to let them experience a new set of ideas. Anonymous questionnaires completed by class members and then randomly distributed to everyone are very eye-opening for my students, when they are responding to the various scenarios based on another person's beliefs.

A number of participants stated that they *do not teach on topics of diversity*. Reasons varied. Several stated that they do not believe their discipline lends itself to such topics. For example, one participant stated that "I don't teach that in math class" while another stated "I am in engineering/sciences, so I do not teach about the issues [of diversity]." Another participant went beyond indicating a belief that her/his discipline did not lend itself to topics of diversity, but that it would actually be inappropriate to do so. As this participant wrote, "I should not and do not. I teach in a generalizable science field." Others indicated that, though they may not explicitly teach on the topics of diversity, this may happen as an indirect result of particular discussions or the way group work is structured. As one participant shared,

I don't actively teach it. I expect the students to work well in groups which often include students of other races, genders, religions, and nationalities. This is expected once the students reach industry and I try to bring that atmosphere to my class.

Still others shared that they do not teach on such topics because they were not sure how to do so or felt insecure in doing so as a new teacher. One participant wrote, "I don't know and I am not sure how to incorporate [diversity] in my classes." Another stated, "As a relatively new teacher, I have avoided the subject of diversity; I feel too insecure in the classroom still."

Interview Data. Interviews were conducted to provide further insight into the methods used to teach on issues of diversity. Interview data was coded and grouped into categories based on questions from the interview protocol: (a) Responsibility, (b) goal of incorporation of diversity in the curriculum, (c) goal of learning D & I issues in class, (d) how goals are communicated, (e) assignments/classroom experiences, (f) knowing goals were achieved, and (g) factors that influence discussion.

Whose responsibility is it to teach students about diversity and international issues?

Responses to this question were grouped under four codes. Three participants stated that it was the *parents'* responsibility for teaching their children about diversity issues. One participant spoke of diversity as a "contrived" construct, and that race issues would be resolved by mutual respect—something parents are responsible for teaching, "parents are the ones who should be teaching respect" (Participant 57). Two participants stated they believed the responsibility rests with *everyone*:

It takes a village to raise a competent well-educated child, and so I think that's something that should be done in the home. It is also something the responsibility of the broader community in which the child lives and yes, of course, as higher educators. (Participant 31)

Six participants stated it is the responsibility of the *course instructor*. Unlike those who responded that it is the parent's responsibility, the responses that it is the responsibility of the instructor were more nuanced. For example, Participant 82 stated,

I think that the faculty who is responsible for teaching a class is actually kind of responsible for teaching this topic in the classroom. It might not directly relate to their specialty, their field of research, their field of whatever it is that they are teaching, but I think that, as a leader in the classroom, they are responsible for making students feel comfortable even in a diverse class to, you know, speak their opinions, participate in class, and to be active inside the classroom and comfortable. And so I think that's solely the instructor's responsibility; not the students.

Four participants believed the responsibility for teaching issues of diversity rests with the *university* in general, including the university as an institution as well as administration. Several participants noted that the responsibility may ultimately lie with the instructor, but it is the university's responsibility to provide the support to make this possible. This is summarized by Participant 51 who stated, "I think there should be a culture within the university and the institution. It should be the responsibility of everybody, including the instructor. But there has to be the conditions created that allows the instructor to do so." Participant 83 noted that this begins with "freedom to talk about those issues in the classroom." Participant 51 added that there needs to be "support in training for those of us who want to improve our pedagogies and strategies for engaging in these, because I think often times people want to but don't feel like they can." While Participant 17 stated that he believes it is the university's responsibility ("They [students] should probably have a diversity class"), he believes students should be able to "CLEP out" if they are able to demonstrate "a wealth of knowledge in human diversity."

What is the goal of incorporating "D" and "I" courses into the undergraduate curriculum?

Responses to this question resulted in 13 codes grouped under four themes. Eight participants felt the goal of a course on diversity was to promote *personal and intellectual growth* of students. These participants felt diversity courses should help students "broaden their horizons." In describing a study abroad experience, Participant 57 said, "Once they saw that their life was bigger than Oklahoma they were like 'Wow! Let's go!' A lot of our students have very, very, very, near sided views of life in the world and their place in it."

Similarly, several participants felt the goal was to help students develop an appreciation for "other cultures and other people, and maybe an appreciation for their own perspective" (Participant 8). As Participant 261 said, "not just to expose them but to help develop an appreciation and a commitment to learning more about diverse cultures and ways of thinking, learning, and being in the world." Critical thinking was also viewed as an important outcome of intellectual growth. As Participant 8 said, it "may be they really never thought critically and deeply about their own type of view on different types of aspects in life, different people, experiences, and different perspectives." Finally, two participants noted that the purpose was to help students better appreciate their own background and viewpoints. As Participant 66 stated,

Many times you have people who are a little bit more liberalized, I mean that not in a political sense, but in an understanding of other people's views. When they come to

college because they see a variety of different people with different perspectives, and they see their views presented evenly and reasonably, as opposed to sort of the polarization that can happen in news media and that kind of thing.

Two participants believed the goal was to promote *global awareness*—awareness of global issues, to draw attention to possible solutions, and appreciate one’s individual role. Participant 31 stated that this goal “ensures that our students have knowledge not only about what is happening not only with this particular country but they are paying attention to our country’s role in the structures and dynamics that occur in the global level.” This also entailed an awareness of “actions they take knowingly or inadvertently play in the problems and potential solutions” (Participant 31).

Two of the twelve participants viewed the goals of diversity courses to be more *pragmatic* in nature. Participant 17 summed this view up in the following statement:

I believe that in the end, our final job is to get our students hired. They’re going to end up working at different companies and locations around the world, in many cases, and around the country, that are very diverse in terms of ethnicity, religious freedoms... just the way people behave. They need to learn and understand that not everybody is exactly like them, and then they are going to have to work with people like that to get along in today’s business world.

And finally, two participants stated that they *did not know* what the university’s objectives were in incorporation of diversity courses into the curriculum. For example, one participant said, “I don’t know what the university’s goal is, and I’m not sure how courses get designated as D & I.”

What are the goals you have for your students regarding their learning of D & I issues in your courses? Responses to this question resulted in nine codes grouped under six themes. Five participants said their goal would be that students would experience a *change in perspective, thinking, and/or behavior*. Participant 66 noted that the higher education experience promotes a change in perspective. He said,

I think naturally, we’re a transformative experience because it’s higher education, right, but it depends on the student. If we start with a baseline of I don’t know anything about other cultures aside from my own or viewpoints aside from my own, then it’s going to be naturally transformative from a very minimum baseline of let’s get them thinking about other views.

Participant 51 shared how she structures the learning environment to promote a change in perspective,

You know, it’s hard to be articulate when you’re trying to shift into a new frame of thinking. So just to kind of recognize that and just to emphasize that it’s okay for people to change their minds, that we’re really engaging in this, sort of, communicative, rather than debate-style classroom environment. I think to talk about these issues, they are for everyone, they often get at deeper things about ourselves. We can’t be often emotionally

distant from the things that we're learning when we're talking about race or gender, class or culture, because we all are gendered, raced, classed, cultured people, right.

Four participants shared that a goal for their students was *open mindedness*. For Participant 82, this was the most important goal she has for her students. As she said,

I would really like them to have an open mind to every kind of opinion—whether they agree or not. It's not about 'agreeing'—talking about the 'right thing' or the 'wrong thing.' I just want them to have an open mind, open ear—to be open to any kind of new information that they might hear, even if they don't believe in that, or if they have specific beliefs. I think that would be the one, only goal that I'd like my students to have.

Two participants stated that they wanted their students to see how diversity was *relevant to their discipline*. Participant 83 summed this view up with the following,

I think my role as a teacher of theater arts is to make sure that diversity is something that people will understand and can approach from a nonjudgmental place because if you are judging the character you are working on in a play or judging the characters you are reading about in a play you cannot do the character or the play justice.

Participant 31 noted that the discipline itself served as a guide for navigating diversity-related topics. This participant shared,

I remind them that this is a class in the Social Sciences. So, if you are going to make an opinion based claim, you need to either be prepared for, or be prepared to, offer empirical evidence of that opinion or that backs up that opinion or be prepared to have somebody question that opinion, based on the empirical evidence that they have access to.

Equality was a goal of two of the participants in their teaching. Participant 23 stated that discussions about diversity are “not needed based on the fact that I teach that all people should be treated the same.” A more nuanced response came from Participant 38, who noted that content from his field—environment and wildlife—“should not be a white thing, or an affluent thing, or a male thing. We think natural resources are the foundation for everything, it's sort of what we teach.”

Two participants said that their goal for students is that they would leave their course with a true *understanding* of what diversity means. From Participant 51's perspective, course content cannot be understood without an understanding of how different individuals construct knowledge and how this affects policy. As she said,

Especially with the movement to standardized curriculum and standardized testing, it represents knowledge in very particular, kind of essentialist, universalist kinds of ways. That actually masks the way that it privileges one, or certain ways of knowing that there are powering dynamics in that. And so, my goal is for students to be able to read dynamics of diversity in power and culture in these places where they're told 'this isn't

culture, this is just knowledge' right. To see, to think about epistemology complex ways, and to really try to understand what's beneath.

Finally, two participants said that they do not have teaching goals related to diversity. Participant 227 did not see how issues of diversity were relevant to the content of the course she teaches.

Because I teach math, I can't say that I have any goals that relate to that [diversity]. I'd love for them to somehow come away from my class with something in those areas, but I don't see that. It doesn't really happen just because of the subject that I teach, there's not really any way that I have of incorporating it other than possibly they do group work in the class so maybe they come into contact with someone they wouldn't ordinarily otherwise but that's pretty small scale.

How are goals/objectives related to diversity communicated to your students?-Responses to this question resulted in seven codes ranging from *explicit* modes such as the syllabus, written materials, and during instruction to more *implicit* modes such as how the course is structured and how expectations are communicated.

The most frequent explicit mode of communicating goals to students was through the syllabus—nearly half (i.e., six) of the interview participants reported inclusion of such goals in their syllabi—though the way this was communicated varied. For example, Participant 8 sees this as a starting point. For Participant 51, including these goals provides an avenue for discussion. As she stated, “when you're talking about your syllabus and trying to explain why we are reading these things what's the purpose... just telling them these are the kinds of these we are going to be challenging ourselves to think about.” For Participant 261, this goal is simply the required statement about diversity. Three participants said these goals come out during discussion. For Participant 261, diversity is “just part of the fabric of the course.” Conversely, Participant 8 stated that he simply “tells” students that “everyone is equal.”

Four participants stated that their goals are communicated to students more implicitly. For example, Participant 31 stated that his course is structured to promote discussion from various perspectives. Participant 51, the nature of the course itself communicates to students what the expectations are. As she said, “It's a lot easier to communicate that [expectations] with students who are in a class with a title ‘multicultural education,’ right, versus a class where students expect one thing and they don't expect to be thinking about issues.” Finally, Participant 261 stated that, though issues about diversity do get brought up during a semester, he is not confident that he “can articulate those goals too precisely.”

Describe the assignments you give students to help them learn about issues of diversity.

Ten participants described a variety of assignments (representing fifteen codes). This range included inviting guest speakers (Participant 8: “Bring real people in”), profile development (of others students; Participant 23), observation (Participant 83), character development (Participant 83), volunteer work (Participant 57), and “hands on experiences” (Participants 8 and 57) among others. The most frequent assignments reported were around discussions (four participants) and research papers (four participants). Though Participant 38 claimed that he did not have any specific assignments to address issues of diversity, he did offer that his “students bring material

to the class that they want to discuss and sometimes that hits on that issues as well and sometimes it doesn't."

How do you know those goals/objectives are achieved? Responses to this question resulted in thirteen codes. There were few examples of more formal assessment or objective measures. Most were subjective and informal. Four participants referred to the level of reflection in students' written work. Two participants reported observing how students engage with one another. Four participants claimed that they did not know when these goals were met. As Participant 261 said,

That's a really difficult thing, to know if the goals are achieved, because part of it for me is to get students to develop a habit of mind in engaging diversity and thinking about points of view other than their own as a lifelong process. So how do I know? You know I don't on some levels.

Participant 57 shared, "I know what they tell me—it does mean it's accurate."

What factors influence the ways in which you discuss diversity issues in your classes?

Responses to this question resulted in 18 codes grouped into four themes. Six participants cited *student interpersonal factors* such as student demographics, cultural background, and individual beliefs systems. Participant 218 shared that, "Race is a tough one. I mean all of those can be tough but I think race is particularly challenging maybe with this population at [this university]." Participant 83 acknowledged the role student factors play in class discussions.

The factors that influence it [discussion] would be understanding that the room is made up of diverse students from opposite political realms. For the most part our students are white, for the most part. They are Christian. And certainly at the university-age we don't get a lot of age diversity in the room. But [I am] thinking about their politics and their religious beliefs their moral compass as it relates to diverse issues.

Six participants noted the role that *student behavior* plays in shaping discussions on diversity. Participant 8 noted that sometimes students do not ask questions or are afraid to express their opinions. Participant 38 noted that discussion is greatly influenced by the topics students bring to class. Similarly, Participant 218 noted that it depends on what students are interested in—what they "want to get into." Participant 51 stated that she had experienced students who "were very resistant, were very angry with me for raising the kinds of questions that I did."

Ten participants cited *teacher factors* that influence the nature of discussions. Participant 31 noted that he is mindful of the materials he chooses for students to prepare for discussion. As he stated, "I try to temper the sources that I provide students whether they are reading materials or videos in class or things of that nature such that they feel like they are getting multiple perspectives on a particular problem." He also said that he shares his membership "of these minority communities and so I have some understanding of what it means to be an under represented person in the United States." Participant 261 looks for ways to connect diversity issues to current events while Participant 227 tries to make connections to the course content. Conversely, two participants stated that they did not hold discussions on diversity. As Participant 23 stated, "[Discussion] is not needed based on the fact that I teach that all people should be

treated the same.” For Participant 57, discussions around diversity are problematic as they are, from her perspective, off target. As she stated,

See I have a whole problem with making diversity an issue because it just goes back the fact we are making an issue means we don't have any...but again, if we learned to treat everyone with respect we wouldn't have these issues...and making it an issue seems to me it's like teaching CPR without having anything to practice on. It's a lesson without any application unless you can come up with some real... and even when I give those three assignments, the word diversity never enters my vocabulary because it is about learning to see someone else's point of view and appreciate it. And the whole diversity topic to me is, like I said, a contrived sort of thing and what we should be talking about is respect.

Finally, four participants cited *institutional factors* that influence discussions about diversity. Two participants specifically noted the political climate of the institution—one noting that it was liberal and another that it was conservative. Though she sees issues of diversity as important, Participant 82, a Teaching Assistant, said that she felt underprepared to navigate these discussions. As she noted,

It's a very sensitive topic which I actually haven't taken any training on it. That is something that is not offered for students. It is offered for faculty. It's something that I wanted to take. But, so, I'm not really sure how to conduct a conversation of sensitive topics in a classroom. Which, I would want kind of a training for that.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine these faculty practices within the context of a university with an embedded course requirement to promote cultural competency. The goals of these courses can be summarized thusly: (a) to critically analyze historical and contemporary groups/cultures, (b) understand how these groups relate to the student's discipline, and (c) to demonstrate this through written work. Several of the participants in the study went above and beyond these objectives while others fell short in teaching global readiness. Not one of the 209 participants provided evidence that these objectives served to guide their instruction and achieving global readiness.

Specifically, our data provided little evidence that the goals to *critically analyze historical groups or cultures* set by instructors were accomplished. Interview participants were asked what they believed the goals were for incorporating diversity and international courses in to the curriculum. Responses varied from the promotion of student personal and intellectual growth to preparing students for a competitive job market to admissions of not knowing what goals the courses were intended to meet. When asked about their own goals, here too, responses varied. A number of the interview participants did report attempts to encourage critical thinking in the classroom—to meet *instructor-generated* goals by getting their students to examine their own perspectives and the validity of perspectives that differ from their own. While the university diversity goals were not the focus of the present study, we believe it is important to note that—while well-intentioned—these goals may do more harm than good, in that, the language

objectifies non-White groups. The larger narrative of the present study is that these diversity goals are seemingly meaningless to instructors. This lack of accountability also meant that some instructors felt licensed to teach that everyone is the “same,” ignoring the background, culture, and socio-political realities that result in individuals having very different experiences within the same space. This “colorblindness” permits the instructor to discount their own racial identity while failing to capitalize on these strengths of their students (Milner 2003).

We also failed to find evidence that instructors had goals that students *understand how these groups relate to the student’s discipline*. Indeed, few participants even made the connection between issues of diversity and their discipline. Most of those who did claimed that issues of diversity were irrelevant (e.g., mathematics, Participant 227). Others saw diversity as a means to better prepare their students for the workforce (e.g., Participant 17) or to better understand the course material specifically (e.g., Participant 83).

Finally, there was little evidence that instructors expected to *demonstrate their understanding of diversity issues through written work*. Four of the participants did refer to a level of reflection they hoped to find in students’ written work, but others admitted to not knowing if these goals had been achieved or not. No participant made references to objective indicators of change.

Implications

Many institutions of higher learning incorporate statements regarding the value of diversity to the mission of the campus (Milem, Chang, and Antonio 2005). Further, “dozens—perhaps hundreds—of institutions already require their students to take at least one course that explores diversity in some manner” (Brown 2016, para. 6) as a way to demonstrate the value they place on helping their students learn about global diversity issues. However, results of this study indicate that the valuation of diversity is not clearly and cohesively disseminated to faculty and students. There are no other studies that we know of that specifically explore this connection/disconnection between university values and faculty implementation. Our data indicates that the connection between what the university claims as their diversity goal and how faculty are instructionally implementing that goal is broken. Thus, this data provides evidence that institutions of higher learning cannot assume that saying diversity is valued is enough; more must be done to ensure that the goals of the university are clearly articulated *and* translate into the classroom.

In addition to a clear definition and mission from administration, departments should take the initiative to outline departmental diversity goals. The results from this study show that there is a break-down in communication from the administration to the department or program level. STEM faculty may feel that diversity education is not their subject area (e.g. “I am in engineering/ sciences so I do not teach about the issues of diversity).” Unfortunately, this sort of departmental initiative may be difficult to achieve since 8 of 13 interview participants for this study indicated that it was not part of their job to have discussions about diversity issues in departmental faculty meetings.

While our data failed to provide *reason* for why specific practices were employed, they did provide an array of strategies to move students toward personal and professional growth in terms

of their understanding of diversity and cultural competence. Methods included (but not limited to): (a) discussion as a means to explore how particular issues impact diverse groups of people and promote empathy, (b) use of readings and film to promote perspective-taking, (c) guest lectures who represent diverse perspectives or backgrounds, (d) role-playing to promote perspective-taking, and (e) role modeling. While these results may suggest that faculty are taking steps to address issues of diversity, it is important to stress the importance of the need for the institution to provide trainings or workshops to support its initiatives as not all faculty may feel equipped to engage in such practices or may fail to see their importance. For example, Participant 82 stated a strong interest in learning how to facilitate difficult conversations on diversity issues. Conversely, Participant 23 stated that s/he models diversity by modeling how to treat everyone the “same.”

At the same time, our data provided insight into the perceived challenges instructors face in discussing diversity-related issues—specifically, the student interpersonal and behavioral, teacher, and institutional factors. Here too, institutions could take the lead in assuring that instructors are properly equipped with the skills to successfully conduct such conversations. For example, trainings could focus on how to engage students in meaningful dialog who had not been exposed to people from historically marginalized groups prior to coming to the university, or to empower those who may hold dissenting opinions to share them—and how to structure learning environments in such a way that value a variety of perspectives. At the department level, groups could be created to develop and disseminate resources and literature on how to promote discussions that have the potential to transform and challenge the (mis)conceptions that students bring to the classroom.

Limitations and Future Directions

The scope of the present study was limited to faculty practices associated with diversity at a university with courses embedded in the undergraduate curriculum to promote cultural competency. Though we failed to find a strong link between university initiatives and pedagogy, future studies should examine such relationships across institutions investigating global readiness. Such an analysis may identify initiatives that do impact practice. Similarly, it is likely that ‘diversity’ is conceptualized differently across universities and disciplines, warranting attention in future studies. Relatedly, future students should examine the impact such initiatives have on student outcomes—whether they provide students with transformative experiences or a propensity toward, or increased value of, perspective-taking. Finally, future work should be conducted to better understand how diversity is conceptualized or understood by faculty as such conceptualizations are likely linked to the instructional practices in which faculty engage as well as the value they place on such initiatives.

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