Faculty ICT Coordinator,

From the SelectedWorks of Dr Williams Emeka Obiozor

Spring 2010

Exceptional Black Students in American Colleges and Universities: Classroom Challenges, and Anticipated Support from Instructors and Professors

Dr Williams Emeka Obiozor, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka-Nigeria

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Lock Haven University is preparing students for global success. Students can choose from a wide selection of undergraduate majors and graduate programs. The university has a strong international component and offers study opportunities in 21 foreign countries.

At Lock Haven University, student learning is not confined to the traditional classroom. The university’s laptop initiative and campus-wide wireless access have made it possible for faculty to engage students in ways not possible before. The educational experience is enhanced and expanded through active learning opportunities including internships, field experiences, service activities and undergraduate research. Student engagement is a hallmark of the LHU experience.

Additionally, the natural environment provides unique learning experiences in a variety of disciplines. LHU offers a beautiful, rural setting that promotes quiet thought and reflection, and yet is within 4 hours of New York, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.

Lock Haven University is also known for its friendliness and sense of community. Faculty and staff are committed to helping students succeed, and the diverse student body is small enough for people to really get to know one another. At The Haven, students receive a “big university education” while enjoying a small college lifestyle.

Small college lifestyle, Big university education
The mission of the Pennsylvania Black Conference on Higher Education, Inc. (PBCOHE) is to provide programs and services which help ensure that the post-secondary educational needs and aspirations of African Americans in particular are met, and to work in concert with members of other underrepresented groups in the Commonwealth.

*The Pennsylvania Black Conference of Higher Education Journal was designed to support the mission of the PBCOHE.*
Submission Guidelines

PBCOHE Journal editorial board seeks contributions that support the mission of the Pennsylvania Black Conference of Higher of Education. Authors are encouraged to provide submissions of empirical research, scholarly papers, position papers, book reviews, best practices, and issues relating to factors affecting African Americans and other racial and ethnic populations, who are under-represented in higher education. The board is particularly interested in works that chronicle, analyze, critic, evaluate and examine programs, services, and curriculum which help ensure that the post-secondary educational needs and aspirations of African Americans in particular are met, and to work in concert with members of other under-represented groups in the Commonwealth.

1. Abstract and Author. An abstract of no more than 100 words must accompany each manuscript. Author identification should appear only on the title page and should include academic rank or professional title and applicable university and departmental affiliation.

2. Style. For final acceptance, use APA style.

3. Submissions. Authors should submit manuscripts, which should be no more than 4,000 words as a Word document as an email attachment to the editor. The editorial review board will review the manuscript and attempt to make decisions and notify authors within 90 days. Manuscripts are accepted for review at any time and should be emailed to the editor, Sharon Stringer at sstringe@lhup.edu.
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Greetings and welcome to the spring 2010 issue of the Pennsylvania Black Conference on Higher Education Journal. This Journal strives to support the mission of PBCOHE as well as provide a forum for discussion and review about issues relevant to the sustainability and promotion of racial and ethnic diversity in higher education.

The journal commemorates the 40th anniversary of the PBCOHE. In it you’ll find a look at the past, present and the future. Immediate past president, Terrell W. Jones provides an historic account of the challenges in higher education as well as offers strategies for its continued viability in his article *Looking Back and Looking Forward*. In the article *Fortune’s Folly*, a journalist-turned-professor notes the 100th anniversary of the NAACP and the absence of an important contributor to the civil rights movement, Timothy Thomas Fortune. The author notes that prior to the founding of the NAACP, Fortune, a publisher and journalist, used his work to expose the injustices that blacks faced in employment, housing, and education. In the article, *Exceptional Black Students in American Colleges and Universities*, the author champions diverse students with learning disabilities and offers suggestions on how the same can be empowered to improve their own access to higher education. In *Unveiling the masks of diversity*, the author examines the cultural experiences of Central Pennsylvania educators and offers suggestions on how their experiences can be used to develop diversity training.

It is important to note that this journal owes its existence to those who had the foresight to call it into being. Much appreciation is given to the Honorable K. Leroy Irvis, founder of the PBCOHE. Without the PBCOHE, there would be no journal.

The success of this publication can also be attributed to the hard work and dedication of its former editors. I’d like to thank Alicia King Redfern, Jannis V. Floyd, and Shon Smith, who preceded me in the responsibility as editor. Without their diligence and commitment, this commemorative issue would not be possible. I would like to also acknowledge the journal’s review board, whose members willing read the many manuscripts submitted for publication.

And to you the readers, thanks. This work continues only with your help. Please continue to submit your manuscripts and ask your colleagues to consider the same. The editorial board will thoughtfully and carefully review all submissions.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon B. Stringer
Lock Haven University
sstringe@lhup.edu
Looking Back and Thinking Forward

by

Dr. W. Terrell Jones

At last year’s annual conference, many of us spent an enjoyable evening at a 70s party. The music, dress and dancing made for a great time. The event got me thinking about the 70s when I started college. In 1968, I began my college experience with a welcome from the Dean of Academic Affairs at my college. Many times, people do not remember what was said at welcomes and graduation speeches; they don’t generally leave a lasting impression. However, after speaking for a few moments, the Dean said something I still remember many years later. He said, “Look to your left and then to your right, one of you will not be here in four years to graduate.” In the 70s, one of the ways institutions of higher education measured their value was by the number of students who were not successful. Interestingly enough many institutions of higher education have lower student graduation rates now than they did in the 70s. As we look back at the 70s and celebrate the beginnings of the Pennsylvania Black Conference of Higher Education, we should also be willing to think about our mission and the future of our organization.

Our world was much different in 1970s. The Berlin Wall was erected, the three Americans most admired by college aged young people -- John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. -- had all been assassinated. We had student protests and demonstrations at most of our institutions of higher education and shootings of college students at Kent State in Ohio and Jackson State in Mississippi. During the 70s, our national policies on higher education were shaped by the late 1960s federal policies and programs that stressed inclusion and equality of opportunity. In 1970, the Census...
Bureau reported the 378,000 African-American students (nearly 70% of the total) were attending predominantly white colleges and universities (Fleming, 1984). Busing was a highly-contested remedy to achieve desegregation in K through 12 school districts. Many institutions of higher education experimented with open-admissions policies, which set the stage for anti-affirmative action backlash and the Supreme Court Bakke decision.

In 1970, the Honorable K. Leroy Irvis, Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, convened a conference of black college presidents, vice presidents, deans, department chairs, directors, teachers and other needed political leaders and professionals. At the beginning of our organization, the major higher education issues in Pennsylvania for African-Americans were access, affordability and climate. In response to the needs of African-American students, faculty, staff and administration, our conference was created to provide input into the formation of a master plan for higher education. Mr. Irvis is also remembered for his commitment to diversity and inclusion exemplified by the passage of legislation creating the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency and Equal Opportunity Program, the state’s community college system, the Minority Business Development Authority and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

As part of the Master Plan, the Pennsylvania Black Conference on Higher Education was formed with the mission to ensure equal education for African-Americans and other minorities in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The primary concern of the first conference in 1971 was the advancement of African-Americans in higher education. At that first conference, community college education and its affordability and quality, developing a student loan program, and establishing an organization that would have as its primary goal the advancement of African-Americans were the issues discussed.

In the 70s there appeared to be a real emphasis on access to higher education within the state. With what seemed to be an almost unlimited pipeline of K through twelve minority students, little attention was paid to our rapidly decaying and increasing minority and low-income urban school systems. Also in the 1970s, there appeared to have been more synergies between the goals of minority professionals in higher education and minority leadership in the Pennsylvania legislature.

Generally speaking in today’s economy and political reality, higher education no longer enjoys its historical unquestioned priority, support, and funding from state and federal agencies. As we look to the future of PBCOHE, accountability and advocacy for policies and programs with proven track records of minority success must become the hub of the organizations’ priorities and actions. According to the most recent statistics the national graduation rate for African-American students is an appallingly low rate of 45 percent (JBHE Weekly Bulletin, Dec. 10, 2009). This means that over half of Pennsylvania’s 104,377 African-Americans presently in college will not graduate in six years and are likely to leave college in debt without a degree (Pennsylvania Facts 2009). The low graduation rate also sounds a warning siren for the future economic health of our state and nation.
On our Web site the stated purpose of PBCOHE is “to ensure that the educational needs of minorities and African-American students in Pennsylvania are addressed. PBCOHE shall facilitate meeting this goal by utilizing its individual and collective resources for developing and implementing effective educational programming.” The review and analysis of state and federal legislation for effect on African-Americans and other minorities in higher education in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is also an objective of PBCOHE. Additionally, the Conference is responsible for providing a means of communication and for consulting with local, state and federal agencies, both private and public, to encourage co-sponsorship of the Conference efforts. Any future vision of our organization’s mission must consider the following:

1. Large gaps in minority student graduation rates by socioeconomic indicators. Students from first generation and/or low income families are much more likely to not graduate. This gap holds constant when you control for academic ability. In summary, minority students with high academic potential and low financial resources graduate at a lesser rate than minority students with limited academic ability and adequate financial resources.

2. African-American men are much less likely to graduate from college than African-American women (Bowen, Chingos and McPherson, 2009). Also, African-American men are less likely to go to college than African-American women. Our organization must develop new strategies that stress early recognition of talent pools in primary school and partnership with other external stakeholders to address this crisis situation.

3. The recognition and inclusion of Hispanic students’ educational concerns and Hispanic professionals. In 1970, Pennsylvania did not have a large Hispanic population (less than 1 percent). However, today the Hispanic community has grown and now makes up over 4.5 percent of the state’s population and nationally is the largest ethnic minority group in the United States. Our in-state Hispanics also make up a much larger share of the K through 12 population and many of our minority students identify themselves as either multiracial or multiethnic (Pennsylvania Facts, 2009). To not find more ways to include our Hispanic population into our organization weakens our mission and potentially threatens funding sources.

4. Curriculum transformation and teaching reform will also need to be a priority for PBCOHE. There is a belief among many scholars and a growing number of citizens that higher education has a moral responsibility to accommodate diversity and to transform itself to more closely reflect the array of cultures represented in our society. There is now a rapidly growing body of literature in a range of areas that offer both subtle and profound educational practices that
prevent discrimination and support diverse student groups. Given our history and membership we should be poised to be leaders in this area.

5. Increasing our support for students with financial need is essential to our future. Over the past ten years our organization doubled both the number and amount of our financial scholarships. I think we should be proud of that accomplishment. However, we may also need to re-evaluate what we consider merit. Higher education institutions now give out more financial support based on merit than need. The questions we have to answer are: should our academic scholarship also consider need? Is a first generation, low income student who out performs his or her academic predictors less meritorious than a second generation college student with a high GPA? Is a community college student working two jobs, raising a family and doing well academically worth considering for our scholarship support?

6. Develop a K through 16 framework for improving Pennsylvania education. Institutions of higher education can not improve college graduation rates without improving the quality of the students and the quality of primary school instruction. Identifying talented students early and providing those students with academic enhancement programs, parent support strategies and financial planning for college insights are strategies well worth our consideration. These are long-term sustainable strategies that influence partnerships with school districts and other external stakeholders.

7. Global and social justice should be integrated into all aspects of our organization. This includes, but is not limited to, the importance of learning different languages, understanding cultural sensitivity and diversity and, above all, knowledge, respect and an ability to understand our connection to the lives and welfare of each other with respect for the planet on which we live.

8. Finally, we have to find ways to include young professionals into PBCOHE. I am hopeful that the recruitment of new professionals will be one of the top priorities of our next meeting of the Think Tank.

I close with one of my favorite K. Leroy Irvis quotes: “Get to know yourself! Find out what your abilities are and keep adding new ones! Never let anyone tell you what you cannot do – unless to do it would be foolish or impossible. Be sure that you climb and help someone else to climb. Keep learning!”

W.Terrell Jones
PBCOHE President, 2008 to 2010
Pennsylvania Black Conference On Higher Education

References:


http://www.jbhe.com/latest/index121009.html
Fortune’s Folly

By

Claire Serant
St. John’s University

Abstract

No one mentioned the name of T. Thomas Fortune when the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) marked its 100th anniversary in February 2009. The 19th century newspaper publisher and journalist was years ahead of the NAACP in attempting to establish civil rights to unite African-Americans in this country.

Fortune used his three weekly newspapers: The New York Globe, The New York Freeman, and the longest published The New York Age to call for educational equality in public schools, anti-lynching laws, housing and job discrimination, all of which would be embraced by blacks. Fortune’s National Afro-American League (NAAL) was formed on January 15, 1890. Three years earlier, Fortune’s editorials helped create several “leagues” in large and small cities similar to the NAACP’s branch offices. However, financial woes forced Fortune to sell the Age to his benefactor Tuskegee Institute founder Booker T. Washington in 1907. The sale caused Fortune to lose a main platform for his editorial voice. Civil rights advocates Ida B. Wells-Barnett and W.E.B. DuBois, both journalists who had written for Fortune’s publications and several others concerned citizens both black and white, founded the NAACP without him. Fortune suffered a nervous breakdown in 1908. He eventually recovered and wrote for The Negro World, Marcus Garvey’s magazine and several other publications before he died in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on June 2, 1928. This paper, entitled Fortune’s Folly, will examine factors that led to the NAAL’s demise and subsequent omission from the NAACP’s rich history.

Pre-cursor to NAACP

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is the oldest civil rights group in the nation and is known for championing the rights of disenfranchised people of color. This year, the Baltimore, Maryland-based NAACP, which was founded in New York on February 12, 1909, celebrated its 100th anniversary.

The names of some African-American leaders affiliated with the organization’s beginnings such as Ida B. Wells-Barnett, W.E.B. DuBois, Mary Church Terrell are well known.
According to the group’s website, the NAACP was originally comprised of 60 members, of which seven were African-American. The early participants were upset with repeated acts of lynching nationwide and a 1908 race riot in Springfield, Illinois – where President Abraham Lincoln was laid to rest. The website credits DuBois and his leadership as head of another civil rights group - the Niagara Movement - with the NAACP’s start.¹

However, there is no reference in NAACP’s history of Timothy Thomas Fortune’s early influence. Fortune (1856-1928) was a New York publisher and journalist who was widely considered the “dean of Black journalists” because of his “accomplishments and militancy,” according to a Black History Month article that ran in the St. Petersburg Times in February 1991 (Johnson, 1991).²

Fortune wrote scathing editorials about the inequalities in education, employment, housing, and the legal system that “Colored Americans” or “Negroes” faced in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He was born a slave in Marianna, Florida, and was nine years old when the Civil War ended in 1865. He learned typesetting as a printer for a local newspaper the Marianna Courier and later worked as a printer’s assistant for the Jacksonville Daily Union. Limited economic opportunities for blacks during the post-Reconstruction period eventually forced Fortune leave his home state. He settled in Washington, D.C. where he attended Howard University.

Fortune arrived in New York City in 1881 after leaving college. He first worked as a printer for the Weekly Witness, a religious newspaper. Later, he and George Parker, another black Witness printer, the pair started Rumor, a short-lived newspaper in lower Manhattan.

But it was the printers’ first successful venture, the New York Globe started in 1883 that set Fortune on his editorial path to cover race relations in this country. Fortune also worked per diem as a printer-turned-reporter for the New York Sun, a white mainstream newspaper for a short time before making the Globe a full-time enterprise.

Eventually Parker and Fortune parted ways over the political direction of the paper and the scrappy Florida native published two more periodicals, the New York Freeman and the longest published the New York Age, which lasted until 1960.

Fortune’s weekly periodicals picked battles with ineffective political leaders of all races. Fortune frequently published articles that challenged editors of mainstream journals who downplayed or ignored the race issue.

Fortune also helped publicize the term “Afro-American,” according to his biographer, Emma Thornbrough to discourage the use of less accurate descriptions of blacks of all hues in this nation as “Colored” or “Negro.” Fortune said “Afro-American” described him and others of his race as “Africans from African who lived in America.”³ (Thornbrough, 1972)

Use of the phrase caught on in some circles, but the term did not become popular with most blacks until the emergence of Civil Rights movement in the 1960s.

Just as Fortune promoted racial consciousness among blacks, he was equally passionate about women finding their voice. He encouraged women writers such as Phila-
delphia’s Nellie F. Mossell (also known as Gertrude Bustill Mossell) to write a women’s column in 1886. The column, which often appeared on the front page of Fortune’s publications, offered advice to black women about maintaining their virtue despite the world’s second-class treatment. When abolitionist and women’s suffragist Susan B. Anthony died in 1906, Fortune devoted at least two columns worth of space on the New York Age’s to acknowledge her significance to his readers and the black race.

Fortune was also an astute visionary with his weekly emphasis on the economic, political and social struggles blacks encountered in Brazil, Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, and Liberia putting the fight for racial equality on a global stage.

He allowed a teenager, W.E.B DuBois, to write for his newspapers as a correspondent. Fortune also gave Ida B. Wells-Barnett an outlet for writing when she was threatened by whites and told that she would risk death if she returned to her newspaper The Memphis Free Speech and Headlight. However in 1887, Fortune’s financial dependence on Tuskegee Institute founder Booker T. Washington for his newspaper’s existence helped fray Fortune’s once close relationships with Wells-Barnett and DuBois.

That same year, Fortune forged ahead with plans to create an organization to advocate for the civil rights of Afro-Americans – the Afro-American League (AAL). Three years later, the group gained momentum as branch offices were started in several cities and a new name was established – the National Afro-American League (NAAL) in 1890. Through Fortune’s publications, blacks in both cities and rural areas kept in contact and on the same page toward their fight for equal rights.

Independent Race Man

Fortune prided himself as being an “independent, non-partisan race journalist.” That description pleased his readers but not all black leaders. His forceful editorials called for blacks to not commit themselves to established political parties. Instead, he urged his readers to observe which parties supported Afro-American interests through action.

“In national affairs it does not seem wise to me for the League (sic) to commit itself officially to any party,” Fortune wrote in a January 1890 editorial.

“Let parties commit themselves to the best interests of Afro American citizens, and it will them be time enough for us to commit ourselves to them. We have served parties long enough without benefit to the race. It is now time for parties to serve us some, if they desire our support,” he continued.  

Unlike most black journalists of that time, Fortune was not in awe of Frederick Douglass’ position as the elder statesman for the black race and his strong ties to Republicans.

“I am in favor of any and everything that will build up the race; I am opposed to any and everything that will pull it down. I think Mr. (Frederick) Douglass is a grand man: I love him as a man and honor him for the splendid work he has done for the race: and I regret that Mr. Douglass is so narrow, discourteous and ungenerous as to deny me the
right to be Prohibitionist which I allow him to be a Republican. I wish I could hope that he might grow broader and more tolerant of the views of colored men who do not look through his spectacles.”

Fortune continued, “I do my own thinking; I shape my own conduct; I think, as an American citizen, I am competent to be my own master; and although the lane I am traveling may be a long and serpentine one, I think it will turn up at the end."

He brought the same attitude to his fellow league members when he promoted the new group in the pages of his newspapers for several years leading up to the league’s first convention, which was held January 15, 1890, in Chicago.

“Fortune has done more than any other person in the country to bring about a healthy discussion of the Negro’s political status and to divorce him from a blind adherence to political parties, wrote Lemuel W. Livingston, of Washington, D.C. in a November 5, 1887 letter to the editor.  

“While most of the would-be leaders hesitate to admit that so young a man was foremost in bringing about such desirable results, all, save a few chronic office seekers, have adopted his views and are now strenuously advocating independent political action as the surest way for the Negro to make himself felt as a factor in American politics,” he added.

Rallying Cry

Fortune had used the Irish National League, which was a political party in Ireland in 1882 as a model when he conceived the Afro-American League (AAL) copying the group’s platform of self-government and economic reforms.  

The AAL’s mission was clear: to make sure blacks could vote in the South; end the practice of lynching; eliminate chain gangs that were prevalent in the South’s criminal justice system; end inequalities in education, employment, housing and transportation and all lodging accommodations.

In November 1889, Fortune began the arduous task of convincing league members that they should meet to form a national presence. In the November 16, 1889 edition of the New York Age Fortune issued the following appeal to AAL members to attend a meeting at A.M.E. Zion Church in New York to discuss the race problem.

“Let the colored citizens of New York rally to a man. Let Zion church be crowded to its utmost capacity. Don’t fail to attend. Let the New York branch of the league be the largest in the country, eclipsing even Boston, which now has the lead, with Philadelphia a close second.”

Fortune’s organizing efforts caught the attention of Louisiana’s former governor, a black man Pinckney Benton Stewart (P.B.S.) Pinchback.

“I see no way to remedy the dreadful condition of the colored people in several of the Southern States, except by creating a more friendly public sentiment toward that people among liberty-loving people in the North, whose friendship, in the past, has contributed so largely to the elevation of the Negro,” Pinchback wrote in a letter to the New York
Age that was published on December 7, 1889.

In that same issue of the New York Age, an Afro-American League branch in Philadelphia that was organized on December 3. The Rev. William Henry Heard of the local African Methodist Episcopal Church was named president. Executive committee members included John S. Durham, a journalist associated with the Philadelphia Times and Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, who later replaced Frederick Douglass as Haiti’s United States ambassador. Two weeks later, another league was established in Bedford, Pa., that had the Rev. J.A. Mulligan as president. When the National Afro-American League convention convened in Chicago on January 15, 1890, Fortune was convinced the Afro-American push for civil rights was unstoppable.

“I congratulate you that you recognize the fact that a great work remains for you to do, and that you are determined, with the countenance of Jehovah to do it,” Fortune told convention attendees.

He continued, “And, finally, I congratulate myself that I have been chosen as the humble spokesman to voice at this time and in this manner that high resolves which move you as one man to perfect an organization which shall secure to ourselves and to our children the blessings of citizenship so generally denied us.”

Non-partisan party

The 135 delegates from 23 states who attended the Chicago convention were primarily Afro-American, although league membership was open to “persons who were 18 years of age or older without regard to race or sex.”

“The spirit of agitation which has brought us together here comprehends in its vast sweep the entire range of human history,” Fortune told the crowd. “…We stand for the race, and not for this party or that party, and we should know a friend from a foe when we see him.”

Fortune’s anti-party statement was necessary because many league members were disenchanted with the Republican Party, which did little to help them with civil rights matters. They were concerned about southern Democrats who allowed lynching and other methods of intimidation towards Afro-Americans to exist without rebuke. The league members were also weary of Afro-American politicians who were blinded by their own desire for success and who did not agitate for laws that would aid the masses.

“I have served the Republican Party, the Prohibition Party and the Democratic Party, and I speak with the wisdom of experience when I declare that none of them cases a fig for the Afro-American further than it can use him,” Fortune said.

Fortune devoted the entire issue of January 25, 1890 issue of the New York Age to recounting the historic meeting for readers. He urged each “league” to pursue courses of political action that best serve their communities. By doing so, Fortune attempted to delegate some of the responsibilities of operating a new organization to each group.

“We stand for the race, and not for this party or that party, and we should know a
friend from a foe when we see him,” Fortune told NAAL participants at the first convention.10

League members voted for a southern minister and educator Joseph Charles Price of North Carolina as the league’s national president. When the league held its second convention in July 1891 in Knoxville, Tennessee, noticeably absent were nationally known Afro-American political leaders such as Frederick Douglass and P.B.S. Pinchback. At that time, Fortune was elected president of the national organization which had little funds to support its many causes.

One of the league’s first legal efforts involved Philadelphia minister William H. Heard’s mistreatment on a train line in the south because of the Jim Crow laws. Apparently, Heard was on a Pullman train car with a first-class ticket in Nashville, Tennessee when he was “forced to leave the car” and go to the “Colored” section. Fortune hired the league’s counsel, Judson Lyons, to sue the Pullman Company and the Nashville, Chattanooga, and Saint Louis Railroad “if an amicable arrangement could not be worked out.”

**Lacking funds**

The outcome of the case involved railroad officials meeting with Fortune and Heard. The officials “agreed to dismiss the conductor who ejected Heard and reimburse Heard $250. Still, Fortune and Heard wanted to sue the rail company but “the effort was dropped because of lack of league funds.”

Fortune’s attempts to get league members to donate money to the new civil rights group failed. His exasperation is noticed in an appeal for funds in the October 17, 1891 edition of the *New York Age*.

“The work of the Afro-American League cannot be prosecuted without money. The money must come out of the pockets of the members of the race, but it does not come out.” 10

He continued, “We can not expect others to help us when we persistently refuse to help ourselves.”

Fortune wrote appeals for league contributions in the October 31 and November 14th 1891 editions of the *New York Age*.

“The Afro-American League is not a self-sustaining organization by a good many dollars. On the contrary, it is financially one of the poorest organizations of the kind in the world. And yet there are people who complain because the officers of the League refuse to rush into expensive litigation without the means to prosecute causes as they should be. Law is expensive and tedious business. A great many wise people refuse to understand this material aspect of the matter.”

The league stopped functioning as a group in 1898, but was replaced by the National Afro-American Council, which lasted until 1908. Many of the council’s members, like DuBois, became involved with the Niagara Movement and later the NAACP.
The lack of funding for the NAAL, resulted from the philosophical divide among many blacks. Some supported more prominent leaders such as Tuskegee’s Booker T. Washington, who wanted to accommodate whites and W.E.B. DuBois who started the Niagara Movement in 1905 with Boston Guardian editor William Monroe Trotter. Trotter and DuBois were considered more radical. Trotter also had ties with Fortune. He wrote for Fortune’s periodicals as a young journalist, but grew to dislike Washington’s financial influence on the paper and distanced himself from Fortune.

The Niagara Movement was a civil rights group that evolved from a meeting of 29 business owners, teachers and clergy who were denied admittance to hotels in Buffalo, New York and gathered at Niagara Falls to convene. Some of the members of the new group also participated in other civil rights efforts. But Niagara members were opposed to Washington and his financial influence on newspapers like the New York Age to serve as public relation outlets for Washington and Tuskegee. In response, Fortune’s New York Age wrote scathing editorials about DuBois and Trotter, defending the Alabama educator and his institution. In a March 1905 editorial, Fortune sharpened his attack against Trotter and DuBois on behalf of his benefactor.

“The frenzied Boston editor has contrived in the past three years to shark up a list of comrades of his own fester. Most of these like Editor Trotter (sic) himself, are enraged with the consciousness of their own mediocrity: in some few others, like Editor Trotter again, this passion is envenomed by the memory of terms disgracefully served in prison. The personnel of his company ranges from the rabid doctrinaire to the jail-bird: but all concur in hating everything successful.”

Fortune sold the Age Washington in 1907. The following year, Fortune became depressed from the deaths and sickness of several close relatives along with his unyielding financial woes and suffered a nervous breakdown. Fortune’s wife of 29 years, Carrie Smiley Fortune, divorced him. Upon recovering from his mental woes, Fortune began working as an editor with The Negro World, a magazine run by Black Nationalist leader Marcus Garvey and several other publications. Fortune died in Philadelphia on June 2, 1928.

Perhaps, Fortune’s omission in the history of the NAACP was legitimate because he was not involved with the group. His political views and that of his benefactor Washington clashed with the NAACP founders who had closer relationships because they worked on several civil rights-related efforts over the years. Besides the Niagara Movement there were women’s clubs, political clubs, churches, colleges and other Afro-American leaders who fostered working relationships with prominent whites who are among the NAACP’s founders.

“There were many instances of personal relationships which led to interaction among the signers of the (NAACP’s) Call (to action),” said Dr. Linda S. Moore of Texas Women’s University in her 1994 dissertation on the subject. Moore pointed out that DuBois had known Jane Addams, founder of Hull House, a settlement house for poor families in Chicago as an attendee of Niagara Movement.
meetings and that Ida B. Wells-Barnett knew many of the white women NAACP signers because they were involved in women’s rights organizations. Also, DuBois’ study of Philadelphia blacks called *The Philadelphia Negro* took place at in a poor neighborhood that Susan Wharton and Mrs. Rodman Wharton, descendants of a wealthy local Quaker family were familiar with the area’s struggles. DuBois’ Philadelphia project was sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania which was highly regarded by the Wharton family.

The lack of relationship collateral is most likely why Fortune’s National Afro-American League and the Council failed. Organizations cannot succeed simply on a common factor of race and injustice alone. Also, DuBois recognized early that creating a national publication for black intellectuals would provide revenue for the Niagara group. In 1904 and 1907, DuBois attempted to start two publications *Moon: Illustrated Weekly* and *Horizon*, according to sociologist Manning Marable. However, it was under the NAACP’s stronger foundation that DuBois, as head of publicity and editor of *Crisis* magazine helped bolster the new civil rights group.

In conclusion, Fortune failed because he did not have enough emotional and financial support. He needed black and white intellectuals with deep pockets to make the NAAL a success. Fortune was too closely aligned with Booker T. Washington whose Tuskegee Institute was built on a theory of agricultural and industrial training being the savior for blacks. DuBois and others disliked Washington’s growing influence among influential whites. Many of the blacks who were associated with the NAACP’s founding were not Washington fans.

And once Fortune sold his *New York Age* to Washington, the once fiery journalist who was in deep in debt and under stress was no longer useful to his former benefactor. NAACP leaders never mentioned Fortune’s NAAL efforts because the “race man” never stood with them.
Bibliography

Exceptional Black Students in American Colleges and Universities: Classroom Challenges, and Anticipated Support from Instructors and Professors.

by

Williams Emeka Obiozor, Ed.D.
Department of Exceptionality Programs
College of Education
Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania
Bloomsburg, PA

Abstract

This paper centers on classroom issues confronting Black students of African descent in American colleges and universities. The aim is to highlight current social and academic challenges facing exceptional Black students in higher institutions in the United States, as well as reflect on anticipated support from the instructors, professors and administrators. There are diverse social and learning issues concerning exceptional Black students in the colleges and universities across America which the faculty and administrators should be aware of. Black students who enroll in American colleges and universities have different skills; many are gifted while some have disabilities. The various college activities, programs or projects on campus are expected to be student-centered, target retention, peaceful co-existence and academic success of every student, irrespective of nationality or race.

If the academic and social life on campus is not favorable to Black students, high achievement and graduation rates would be difficult to attain. This is where the poor enrollment and drop out issues of exceptional Black students become imminent. Ignoring diversity and learning difficulties of exceptional Black students in a college or university setting may have grave consequences and effect to the student, parent, institution and entire society.

This paper discusses college student diversity, especially the need for exceptional Black students to recognize and utilize their own potentials, talents, educational needs, goals, individual abilities, and fulfillment of both institutional and parental expectations while on campus. This paper addressed these issues with recommendations.

About the Author
Williams Emeka Obiozor, Ed.D., is an assistant professor, Department of Exceptionality Programs, College of Education, Bloomsburg University. His research fields interest include special education, adult education, leadership and innovation in education, teacher training and girl child education in Africa, community development, and vocational and transition services.
Background

This paper takes a cursory look at the academic and diversity issues confronting exceptional black students in the United States institutions of higher learning. A Black student may be considered to be exceptional when he or she experience difficulties in learning, as well as whose performance is so superior that modifications in the curriculum and instruction are necessary to help such individual fulfill his or her potentials. Exceptional students also have physical attributes or abilities (or both) which differs from the norm (either below or above) to such an extent that the student requires an individualized program of special education and related services to fully benefit from education (Heward, 2009; Hardman, Drew & Egan (2008); Hallahan & Kauffman (2003).

Generally speaking, providing learning opportunities to exceptional Black college or university students with great or less abilities is a difficult challenge for instructors and professors, whether in a four-year degree awarding college/university or two-year community college setting. This could be attributed to the exhibition of peculiar differences from Black students in the classroom or campus environment – for instance, in behavior, learning abilities, physical attributes, talents, performances and achievements. Furthermore, these Black students are considered to be exceptional because they may experience challenges or difficulties in learning; end up with poor or excellent performances in assigned academic or social tasks.

Hardman, Drew & Egan (2008) and Heward (2009) explained that some students have extraordinary abilities (such as gifts and talents), learn quickly and use what they learned in new situations; while others have learning or intellectual disabilities, need intensive repeated practice, have difficulty maintaining and generalizing new knowledge and skills. Hardman, Drew & Egan (2008, p.5) summed up this discussion when they stated that; “people who are exceptional, whether gifted or disabled, often enjoy individualized assistance, supports, or accommodations in school and society.”

In the light of the above, Black students who are exceptional possess diverse attributes; they are challenged in different settings, as well as require support services from their institutions, in order to become successful in the classroom and on campus. Black college students form part of the diverse population, and with such diversity, every higher institution must be cognizant of the differences, qualities and needs.

The Diversity Challenge

Hallahan & Kauffman (2003) stressed that the concept of diversity is inherent in discussing exceptionality. While diversity issues addresses race, individual characteristics and cultural differences in any given society, college instructors and professors serve as diversity candidates who oversee several aspects of student development and learning experience. In discussing diversity further, it should be noted that American colleges and universities enroll students from hundreds of racial groups and thousands of immigrants.
with cultural differences. Shackelford (2005) believes that instructors and professors as diversity candidates, brings unique perspectives or outlooks to the institution. A typical diverse classroom requires student learning that relates to positive perspectives on life; acknowledging and/or tolerating individual differences, as well as address multicultural issues as they relate to given situations.

Furthermore, diversity as a set of conscious practices involves understanding and appreciating interdependence of humanity, cultures, and the natural environment; Recognizing that personal, cultural and institutionalized discrimination creates and sustains privileges for some while creating and sustaining disadvantages for others; Building alliances across differences so that we can work together to eradicate all forms of discrimination (LAS, 2008). On a daily basis, Black college students on campus are concerned with the points presented by LAS.

Diversity includes, knowing how to relate to those qualities and conditions that are different from our own and outside the groups to which we belong, yet are present in other individuals and groups. These include but are not limited to age, ethnicity, class, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, sexual orientation, as well as religious status, gender expression, educational background, geographical location, income, marital status, parental status, and work experiences.

Therefore, exceptional Black college students expect their college or university to be committed to fostering diversity by offering a welcoming, safe, and supportive environment for all students. Diversity challenges students, staff and faculty participation in nurturing a learning and student centered environment that respects differences in culture, age, gender, gender expression, race, ethnicity, national origin, physical ability, sexual orientation, and religious affiliation. In other words, colleges and universities across America are challenged to promote community interaction among Black students whether African, African-American, and African-Caribbean students with Caucasians or other racial student population on campus, as well as facilitate dialogue between the Black community and the broader community. Such effort and achievement promotes diversity, as well as contributes to multicultural education on campus.

The Disability Challenge

A disability could be viewed as any physical, sensory, mental, or emotional condition or characteristic that materially limits one or more major life activities; it is also known as a handicap, although disability is the currently preferred term. According to the legislation and guiding principles developed to empower and provide support services to individuals with disabilities, example, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 1990, ushered the rights for people with disabilities and their families; and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - Federal law requiring accommodations for people with disabilities in the community and work place.

Aside from the belief that all individuals can learn and be given equal educational
opportunities in the inclusion setting; Berry (2009) argued that all persons are capable of
growth and development, hence, should be given opportunities to excel. Black college
students with disabilities receive accommodation(s) based on documentation of their dis-
ability. Such students requesting accommodation(s) are responsible for initiating services
by providing the College/University Disability Services Office with appropriate documen-
tation which should be prepared by a physician, psychologist, and psychiatrist, etc. The
documentation should include information about how the student’s disability will affect
his/her ability to equally access the educational opportunities, programs, and activities at
college/university.

Instructors and professors are expected to recognize the documentation on student
disability and provide the necessary support required by the exceptional Black student in
the classroom during instruction and assessments/tests. Some of the exceptional students
can handle their disability whether it is cognitive, physical, communication, social, emo-
tional, or adaptive skills; or a diagnosed physical or medical condition while others may
need as much assistance as possible.

In a typical inclusion classroom setting on campus, most exceptional Black male
and female students could have disabilities, which have often been referred to as
“handicapped” in laws, regulations, and everyday conversations” (Hallahan & Kauffman,
2003, p. 6). Based on the earlier definition of exceptionalities, the discussion explores
the area of disabilities which could cause Black student attrition. Some of the disabilities
may be easily identified in the classroom, while others could be hidden disabilities.

For a better understanding of this discussion, there is a need to highlight the differ-
ent types of disabilities, according to the 1990 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
(IDEA) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Some of the visible disabilities of Black students in higher institutions include; Learn-
ing Disability: A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved
in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an
imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calcula-
tions, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain
dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not apply to individuals
who have learning problems that are primarily the result of physical or mental disabilities,
behavioral disorder, or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

Behavior Disorder: A condition with one or more behavioral characteristics that are:
exhibited at either a much higher or much lower rate than is appropriate for one’s age;
documented as occurring over an extended period of time in different environmental
settings within the school and home or community; and interfering consistently with the
student’s educational performance. This interference with educational performance shall
not be a result of intellectual, sensory, cultural, or health factors that have not received
appropriate attention.

Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): A syndrome generally characterized
by inattention, distractibility, impulsivity, and hyperactivity.
Communication Disability: A disorder such as stuttering, impaired articulation, language impairment, or a voice impairment that adversely affects an individual’s educational performance.

Autism: A developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction of the student. It adversely affects a student’s educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. Students with autism vary widely in abilities, intelligence, and behaviors.

Hearing Impairment: A physical disability and impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects an individual’s educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness in this division.

Mental Disability: Significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period that adversely affects an individual’s educational performance.

Orthopedic Impairment: A physical disability means a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects an individual’s educational performance. Example, impairments caused by congenital anomaly, disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures).

Visual Impairment, including Blindness: A physical disability, means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects an individual’s educational performance. (http://www.dubuque.k12.ia.us/specialed/index.html).

The Drop Out, Attrition and Retention Challenge

New data from the Beginning Postsecondary Student survey (BPS: 96/01) gave us insight into the challenges facing students, educators, and policy makers in the retention debate:

a. One quarter of all students who enter postsecondary education for the first time end up at another institution before attaining a postsecondary degree.

b. Almost half (46 percent) of first-time students who left their initial institution by the end of the first year never came back to postsecondary education.

c. Students who attend full-time or whose attendance was continuous were much more likely to achieve their degree goals than other students. However, only about two-thirds of students were continuously enrolled.

d. 50 percent of four-year students who did not delay entry into PSE earned their degree at their first institution, compared to only 27 percent of students who were delayed entrants.

e. 42 percent of students whose first-year grade point average was 2.25 or less left postsecondary education permanently (Studentretention.org, 2005). Exceptional Black college student experiences in dealing with their abilities or dis-
abilities in the classroom in higher education settings are quite different from what is obtained in the K-12 public schools system. In the public schools system, drop out and attrition could be curtailed and several students retained through district wide/school accommodations, modifications, assessments and evaluation by special educators. Such students are placed in special education programs, in accordance with the provisions of the 1990 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is developed in the special education program for exceptional students to meet their learning needs and improve on their social skills in the least restrictive environment. The special education teachers in these public schools develop instructional activities and related services, set up learning objectives and goals in the needed subject areas, monitor students’ progress and conduct evaluation until graduation.

When these students enroll in college, the case is different. Although some still enjoy specialized services on campus, they only receive such support if they disclose to the institution or professors about their disabilities or exceptionalities. Those who do not seek assistance or disclose similar problems may end up struggling or not being able to cope, and subsequently drop out of college.

This scenario is entirely different for such exceptional Black student in the college or university settings. It takes special training, unique instructional skills, maturity and strong cognitive abilities for the instructors and professors in any given higher institution to understand these exceptionalities and provide the needed academic/instructional service and supports in the classroom without discontent and discord from exceptional Black students. Although exceptional Black students form part of the diverse group of students who attend class with learning problems; it is this author’s utmost belief that these students have learning and cognitive abilities to excel in the classroom and on campus if encouraged, motivated and supported. The onus, also, lies on the students to identify their felt needs, develop self-determination skills, and seek help in the areas where they are deficient – reading, note-taking, completing assignments, test-taking, research, time-management skills, social interactions, among others.

It is pertinent to note that exceptional Black students go on academic probation or even drop out of college when professors or teachers show no concern on their academic plight or lack of support services to deal with academic and socio-cultural issues, whether they are personal or ecological problems. The students should discuss the academic problems which they encounter daily in their classrooms or social relationship needs on campus, as well as identify possible strategies to solve them, by taking advantage of the available abundant support services on campus which promote meaningful teaching-learning process and student achievement.

In another perspective, Allen (1993) argued that since the majority of students attending college today meet the nontraditional concept of schooling, it behooves higher education administration and faculty to understand why students drop out of school and why they stay in school.

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This paper is guided by some theoretical models on student attrition which would assist us in understanding the discussion on issues facing exceptional Black students in higher institutions. The acclaimed Student Integration (Tinto, 1982), the Student Attrition (Bean, 1980) and the Conceptual Model of Non-Traditional Student Attrition (Bean, 1982; Bean & Metzner, 1985) models attempted to theorize the causes of attrition specifically for the non-traditional student in higher education (Wylie, 2004). For instance, Metz (2002, p.4) described Tinto’s original theory as involving five specific factors that contributed to student retention:

1. A student’s pre-entry attributes (prior schooling and family background);
2. Goals and commitment (the student’s individual aspirations in the institution);
3. Experience at the institution (academics and faculty and peer interactions);
4. External commitments while at the institution; and
5. Integration both academically and socially.

According to Noel, Levitz & Saluri (1985) the major themes related to attrition appear to be academic boredom and uncertainty about what to study, transition/adjustment problems, limited and/or unrealistic expectations of college, academic under-preparedness, incompatibility, and irrelevancy. Another theorist on student attrition, Brad Hald; he revealed that in the second edition of his book, Tinto (1993, p. 85) argues against models of attrition that “see student departure as reflecting some shortcoming and/or weakness in the individual, further reinforcing the fifth aspect of his attrition model: the subjective category of integration. In essence, Tinto is arguing that a student may be passing classes with flying colors and still decide to drop out for reasons unrelated to “shortcoming and/or weakness.” He suggests that the act of dropping out should not necessarily carry a negative connotation.

In the light of the above, Ishitani & Stephen (2002, pp., 6-7) stated John Bean’s attrition model includes another set of five facets: (1) routinization – the idea that student life becomes routine; (2) instrumental communication – how well an institution distributes information about student life; (3) participation in classroom decisions; (4) integration; (5) distributive justice – whether rewards are consistent with effort expended. All these definitely present clear picture of our student attrition and retention problems in various American colleges.

Further Discussion of the Problem

Exceptional Black students on campus could have any of the disabilities highlighted earlier, and would need some form of support services to be successful in a higher institution. Some of these students may not have the courage and brevity to report such disabilities to the College/University Student Disabilities Office which could be found in different institutions of higher learning.

A major reason for not reporting could be to avoid labeling or stigmatization, but these students fail to realize that with the support and assistance from the university, it
becomes easy to navigate their academic activities on campus. There is no doubt that
the faculty and staff of every higher institution is equipped with innovative tools and
resources to conduct student-centered instruction and provide related services. They
possess different expertise in a variety of areas, with strong teaching background and
professional service profiles to face the challenges in the classroom. This is evident from
their rigorous years of training and research in different fields.

Furthermore, these instructors, lecturers or professors possesses skills in large class
instruction, use of classroom technology, knowledge of research methodology, planning
and implementation of service learning projects, course-embedded assessment, engaging
students in learning, as well as interpersonal skills which benefit and enhances students’
learning, research and academic achievement.

Although American colleges and universities utilize the above mentioned teaching-
learning facilities, they still experience exceptional Black student attrition. This paper
examined the reasons behind exceptional Black student departure from the classroom
and campus environment, aside from family or financial problems.

The Classroom Signs

Higher institution teachers in different departments are sometimes confronted with
exceptional Black student behavioral issues and pressing academic problems – some
are displayed in the classroom, others could be noticed when they fill student evaluation
forms at the end of the semester. Among the signs of exceptional Black student issues in
the classroom (Obiozor, 2009) which could be a signal to the teacher concerning student
diversity or disability could be as follows:

a. Issues of punctuality and regular attendance
b. Inactive class participation
c. Sneezing uncontrollably
d. Incompletion of assignments
e. Late submission of assignments
f. Making homophobic remarks
g. Text messaging during lectures
h. Talking out loud in class
i. Disrespect of the teacher
j. Anxiety during quizzes and test-taking problems
k. Poor overall academic achievement, etc.

All these problems in the classroom could be as a result of a ‘hidden’ learning dis-
ability which can force the students not to pay attention in class, fail tests, withdraw from
the class or drop out of college. Institutions of higher learning have lost a great number
of exceptional Black students in this area.

Many studies and literature reviews (like the ones mentioned in this paper) have
voiced similar sentiments on Black college student attrition and called for efforts at their
retention. It becomes imperative that more attention has to be given to these issues to encourage exceptional Black student retention and academic growth. It is also important for these students to work with their teachers to find creative ways to deal with classroom problems before they escalate, leading to their drop out.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What factors contribute to inappropriate exceptional Black student behaviors in the classroom?
2. What factors contribute to the dropout of the exceptional Black students?
3. How does diversity and disability issues affect the Black student’s class participation and achievement?
4. How can instructors and professors identify the exceptional Black students’ with learning disabilities in the classroom even when they are not notified by the university?
5. Where can exceptional Black college students and faculty get information and assistance and available support services on campus?

**The Retention Challenge**

Higher institutions face the challenge of retaining their exceptional Black students in the classroom no matter the issues they encounter. Exceptional Black college students leave the classrooms or campus dorms for a number of reasons. According to the *International Center for Student Retention*, a 1975 research article by Vincent Tinto, “Dropout from Higher Education: A Theoretical Synthesis of Recent Research,” spurred more than twenty-five years of dialogue on student retention and persistence in higher education (Studentretention.org., 2005).

Although “retention” has been a major issue in higher education, minority students, including exceptional Black students, are highly affected in the nation. Access and completion rates for African American, Hispanic, and Native American students have always lagged behind those for white and Asian students. The same is true for low-income students and students with disabilities (Gladiex and Swail, 1998). There are also arguments that with the high minority growth and diversity issues in American society and public schools, there is an urgent need to address, today’s retention and diversity problems before it explodes.

**More Factors to Student Dropout**

Based on the author’s personal classroom experiences and extensive research; there are several factors which contribute to why exceptional Black college students leave the classroom and campus as found in the research literature. This could be summarized as
follows:

a. Academic Preparedness – How were the exceptional Black students prepared to face the freshman challenges - study skills: reading, writing, math and research activities?

b. Classroom/Campus Climate – Is it favorable for exceptional Black student interactions and studies?

c. Commitment to Educational Goals and the Institution – How does the university vision and mission meet exceptional Black student academic and social goals?

d. Social and Academic Integration - How committed are the University, Student Government Board, and Student Center Programs to attaining the goals?

e. Financial Aid – access by exceptional Black students from low income and minority groups.

f. Family Issues – to what extent can exceptional Black students receive social support and counseling services on campus?

Resource & Support Service Center in Higher Institutions

Higher institutions have all kinds of programs and services provided on campus for all students and faculty alike. Black students and teachers should take advantage of these programs and services to work mutually in the classroom.

The university offices or college service centers are located on campus with different names depending on the institution. The institution’s website or campus catalogues usually have the list and locations where the services are provided. Here are examples of the type of services provided by different campus centers for all students.

The Bloomsburg University Model

Student Support Services

Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania has a great student and faculty support model for everyone on campus. Exceptional Black students should take advantage of these free support services to assist them in solving their learning problems, other academic and social needs. The same kind of support programs and projects are available in different American institutions of higher learning, and the author implores all students and faculty to access them for their social and academic success in the classroom, and campus environment.

Office of Accommodative Services for Students with Disabilities: This kind of office offers a wide range of activities designed to support and enhance the performance of students with disabilities. Services include, but are not limited to: provision of accommodative testing, note takers, scribes, interpreters, readers, auxiliary aides, adaptive
equipment, and liaison between students and faculty in classroom accommodations. The office also serves as an advocate for the student in issues of accommodation beyond the classroom, and acts as a liaison with other campus offices.

Act 101/Educational Opportunity Program: In this special program, students receive special support in instruction, academic advising, counseling, tutoring, financial aid advising and other assistance as necessary in maximizing their opportunity for success in college. Students admitted through this program take diagnostic tests to ensure correct placement in classes and most new students participate in a summer program prior to the first semester of their attendance where special assistance in tutoring and counseling is given to address specific academic, financial, and social needs.

Developmental Instruction: This program provides academic advisement, instruction, tutoring, and other support to assist students in their academic endeavors and to maximize their potential for success in college, especially those students that enter through Act 101 and EOP. Success in college is defined as achievement of academic good standing and graduation. Services include credit and developmental courses in reading, writing, and mathematics; developmental laboratories, professional tutorial assistance, and advisement. The department supports the university’s retention effort, especially among the high-risk groups and the ethnic minority groups at the university.

International Education Office: This type of office advises and counsels international students on personal, intercultural, and academic matters while they are completing their academic programs on campus; prepares college students for student teaching, internships, and employment opportunities abroad; assists international students with immigration, housing, health insurance, and on and off campus employment; facilitates intercultural exchange through cultural activities and events organized by various international clubs and associations on campus; and clarifies expectations of international students between their homes and American culture through various cross-cultural, community outreach activities.

Office of Diversity and Retention: This office develops, coordinates and implements programs and services to assist students of color in achieving their educational goals. The office engages students in the educational process to enhance their opportunity to succeed.

Student Support Services: This office is available in every higher institution and serves a select group of students who have completed the application process and have met eligibility criteria established by the government. Services available to program participants include free professional tutoring by individuals with master’s degrees in their fields, special interest workshops, mentoring, individual and group counseling as needed, academic advisement and advocacy, cultural and recreational opportunities.

University Tutorial Services: This office offers assistance designed to support and enhances the performance of university students. Peer tutoring is available upon request in a variety of courses and is provided by students who have distinguished themselves by superior academic performance. Any student requesting tutorial assistance need only
complete a brief application in order to apply for the free service.

Office of Multicultural Affairs: The Office of Multicultural Affairs is established in higher institutions to support the social and academic development of multicultural students through specific academic support services, and to educate the entire academic community through sponsored or co-sponsored programs. Institutions of higher learning that have supported the founding of multicultural affairs offices recognize that such units provide a distinct level of programming and educational services that addresses the specific challenges and issues faced by historically under-represented individuals and/or groups (HUIs) include, but are not limited to, United States citizens of African, Asian, Hispanic/Latino/Chicano and indigenous descent, disabled, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender individuals, women and religious groups. The staff of this office is dedicated to helping students succeed and graduate from college or university.

Campus Child Center: A well-organized institution must have a Campus Child Center which provides day care services for children of college students, faculty, staff, alumni and community children who are eligible for child center services. Service hours are usually from morning to evening. Children served are from ages six months to 12 years with flexible scheduling options for such students who are parents.

Student Career/Employment Center: Institutions of higher learning have Student Career or Employment Centers which employs approximately part-time student employees in a variety of positions throughout the campus. Student employees on campus enjoy flexible schedules and convenient locations to work on campus. They receive good pay, the development of leadership skills, team work/team building skill development, technical skills, human relations, decision-making and problem solving.

Center for Counseling and Human Development: Different individuals have difficulty adjusting to the challenges of college life. It’s not unusual to feel anxious or uneasy about course work, relationships, or the day-to-day pressures of the university. The Center for Counseling and Human Development at any given campus is a place where you can go to talk out your problems or just get things off your chest. The process of counseling may be challenging at times, but it can also lead to very positive outcomes. And your visit is confidential.

Available services includes: Such a Center assists students in the development of human relations skills and personal growth. Typical counseling concerns may include: study skills; depression; relationship issues; stress management; assertiveness and effective communications; racism, sexism, and homophobia; human sexuality; anxiety; drug and alcohol abuse; eating disorders; survivors of rape, incest and sexual assault; depression; ACOA and family issues; self-esteem. Psychological counselors also provide programs on these topics upon request by student organizations, residence halls and classroom faculty. Other services include professional consultation to faculty and staff about student concerns and academic and non-academic grievances.
Recommendations for Students and Teachers

a. Be alert and attentive to student behaviors in class – comments, giggles, questions, facial expressions, homophobic comments. This could be a sign of some learning problems or disability; address them immediately after class. As for the exceptional Black student, you can access assistance from the appropriate offices on campus so that you can receive uninterrupted education and succeed in class. Be respectful and concentrate in your class demands and responsibilities because you are accountable for your actions.
b. Make strong emphasis on interpersonal communication. Establish friendly but professional relations with your teachers and classmates – when you seem to be faced with issues of punctuality and regular attendance, talk with your teacher or counselor on campus; take teacher suggestions for counseling at any time you feel there is a need. Talk about your disability, and how you can be assisted to overcome them in class (where possible) especially if you keep failing your quizzes and tests; adhere to your teacher’s demand for active participation in class, ask questions when confused, seek clarifications on assignments in order to be able to complete and submit them on time. Challenge yourself to confront your social and academic fears.
c. Faculty should develop an open door policy whereby diverse and exceptional students will be free to meet with them on or off office hours to discuss their academic needs. Exceptional students should take advantage of such opportunities to meet with their teachers to discuss academic or learning difficulties.
d. Exceptional Black college students: when confronted with personal problems, have the courage to meet with counseling experts on campus. Be confident on your abilities and skills to make the right choices and advocate for your learning needs.
e. Universities should set up campus-wide retention programs – to look at student issues on academic and social integration of minority students and individuals with disabilities right from their first day in school. This program should be incorporated in the projects of the various Living and Learning Communities on Campus, as well as related groups. Faculty members should be encouraged to work with exceptional Black students and other groups to learn about their learning needs and aspirations. The administrators of the program should adopt a strategy and framework to build a student retention plan that incorporates the individual needs of their students and institution (Studentretention.org, 2005).
f. The exceptional Black college students should utilize test-taking tips and support from the teachers.
g. Faculty should apply differentiated instruction and other teaching strategies
in the classroom: Use audio-visual materials and resources in the classroom - projectors, slides, videos, films, posters, etc, and any useful teaching-learning technology tools for instructional delivery.

h. Faculty should teach exceptional Black students the APA writing styles and guide them on the research process in the first week of class.

i. Faculty should notify the different student assistance offices on campus when they discover exceptional students with disabilities. Students may be shy coming forward to present their case to them. Talk with the students and encourage them to visit the office for support. It’s free!

j. Faculty should liaise with these offices especially those responsible for diversity and disabilities to provide periodic information to exceptional students on available services.

k. Faculty should invite guest speakers and professionals to the classroom to share ideas and testimonies with exceptional students.

On diversity: The university should take diversity efforts to the next level by packaging comprehensive, coordinated action, where student learning and educational training benefits everyone on campus, and this process should be demonstrated in several ways – conferences, workshops, seminars, fairs, festivals, scholarships, etc.

These events on campus should be spearheaded by the Office of Multicultural Affairs, and should highlight curricular, co-curricular, and creative institutional models that enable faculty members and administrators to develop, implement, assess, and continually learn from the experience of fostering diverse learning environments -- environments in which all students develop, in increasingly sophisticated ways, critical knowledge, skills, and capacities for work and citizenship (www.diversityweb.org).

Conclusion

Every institution of higher learning must be committed to embracing diversity within the campus and to the individual rights of each member of that campus community. Identifying exceptional Black students with disabilities and supporting them in the classroom in order to achieve success on campus is a commitment for the leadership, the faculty and staff of every higher institution. The institutions must strive to provide diverse students and individuals with disabilities with support services and other reasonable and effective accommodations to ensure equal access to different college programs. The exceptional students should be willing to accept these services without shame or feeling of inferiority.

To improve Black college student retention, every higher institution should work further with special education faculty and staff to provide specially designed instruction, to meet the unique needs of eligible exceptional Black students includes the specially designed instruction conducted in the classroom, and in other settings on campus; etc.
The specially designed instruction will assist the individuals in taking advantage of, or responding to, educational programs and opportunities on campus.

Special education provides a continuum of services in order to provide the educational needs of each eligible individual regardless of the nature or severity of educational needs. The university should also increase need-based financial aid for low-income, at-risk students; Use the campus’s social and cultural activities to keep students focused; and, encourage academic advising outside the classroom (Alliance for Equity in Higher Education, 2001).

Also, teachers should encourage multicultural diversity in the classroom, as well as carefully observe exceptional Black college students in the class and provide the needed instructional support and facilities to succeed in their course. This is because the classrooms serve as a hub for social, intellectual and cultural activities for all students, irrespective of their disabilities or race.


**Web Support**

http://dsp.berkeley.edu/TeachStudentsWithDisab.html

http://www.bhsu.edu/StudentLife/Learning/DisabilityServices/tabid/162/Default.aspx

http://www.diversityweb.org/

http://www.bloomu.edu/resources/counseling.php

http://www.bloomu.edu/academic/services.php

http://www.dubuque.k12.ia.us/specialed/index.html

http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/Policy/IDEA/index.html


http://www.las.iastate.edu/diversity/definition.shtml

http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/DIVERSITY
Unveiling the Masks of Diversity: The Development of Cultural Awareness and Diversity through Identity

by

Kimetta R. Hairston, Ph.D.
Penn State University - Harrisburg

Abstract

Identity is a relevant component to be explored when an individual critically reflects on personal experiences. Cultural attributes define a person’s internal and external identity, and often these identities intersect and impact their experiences. This paper focuses on the research conducted by the author titled “Four Stages of Diversity.” The findings are from an array of educators and students from Central Pennsylvania with diverse racial and cultural backgrounds who examined their internal and external cultural experiences as they relate to the local community, schools, and the communities in which they grew up. The “isms,” such as racism, sexism, classism, etc., within the experiences were addressed, and realizations arose, which led to developing skills for implementing diversity and cultural awareness in education.

We Wear the Mask
We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.
Paul Lawrence Dunbar, (1896/1944)

Introduction

A mask is often referred to as a tool for concealment that hides and portrays an identity simultaneously. As individuals walk through life, they wear many masks in society that are both personal and professional. At times people subconsciously conceal their internal identity depending on the situation and/or environment they are in, or to be

Dr. Kimetta R. Hairston is an Assistant Professor of Education at Penn State University, Harrisburg. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Hawaii. Her research includes the integration of diversity and cultural awareness into education and the community. She is President of the Pennsylvania National Association of Multicultural Educators.
Identity is the collective set of characteristics by which a thing is definitively recognizable or known, or the set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). However, the external identity never goes unnoticed because of visible attributes like race and gender (Delgado, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Ogbu, 1995). As individuals shift through life experiences, the masks they use to conceal their inner selves may be taken on and off to correspond with what they are encountering. The key in wearing masks, however, is the unveiling the true diverse identities that lie behind them and this can be both a frustrating yet enlightening experience. As Crenshaw (2009) points out, identity can be a site of resistance for different subordinate groups or a “positive discourse of self-identification for others” (p. 244).

In order to capture the true identities of educators and students in Central Pennsylvania, professional development workshops in diversity and cultural awareness training sessions must occur. In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Sheffield (2008) pointed out that the majority of minority students are taught by a majority of White teachers. He also emphasized that White teachers dominate in numbers with regard to graduating from teacher education programs. This data can be directly correlated with the programs at many Central Pennsylvania colleges. In an effort to make sure that student teachers are prepared, diversity training has been integrated into the teacher education program (Hairston, 2008). Through these workshops, participants not only learn how to incorporate curriculum practices that will shape them into culturally responsive educators, but explore personal experiences that shape their internal and external identities. Moreover, they reinforce diverse teaching styles and identify the plethora of learning styles so students can receive an equitable education. Teachers’ self-reflection and development of cultural consciousness are imperative for improving educational outcomes for their students, especially those from minority backgrounds (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). These self-reflections were revealed in Four Stages of Diversity.

The Four Stages of Diversity

The Four Stages of Diversity emerged in findings resulting from ongoing research conducted by the researcher over the past 5 years (Hairston, 2006). The stages include: 1) the process, 2) the realization phase, 3) the implementation of practicing diversity in education, and 4) living within Diverse City.

In Stage One – the unmasking phase - individuals self-examine their cultural values and beliefs and reflect in writing on their past experiences with regard to 12 culture attributes. The attributes include: race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality, religion, ability/disability, social status, nationality, health, language, and geographic region (Cushner, McClennan & Safford, 1996). This process is called the Culture Learning Process (CLP) and was created for individuals to understand each cultural attribute from a personal perspective (Cushner et al.). The researcher took the CLP a step further by dividing it into
two distinct perspectives for the participants to examine. First, the participants reflect on cultural experiences as a youth, and, second, they reflect on the attributes as an educator (or adult) while highlighting educational experiences. The process was also modified by the researcher to include a discussion phase that begins with two questions: (1) How do you define diversity? and (2) Do you consider yourself a cultural being? These questions are the foundations for the reflective experiences in Stage One that encouraged the participants to unveil their internal cultural identities.

Stage Two, the realization phase, evolved from data findings from the past 5 years that concluded that once individuals self-reflect in the CLP, realizations emerge during the discussions at diversity training sessions. These realizations are revealed as participants discuss their experiences with racism, classism, sexism, and other prejudices or ethnocentric views within the cultural attributes. For example, often participants begin to realize that past experiences with racism stem from hearing racial jokes and epithets from parents and/or grandparents. Some even refer to minorities as “those people.”

In Stage Three, the implementation phase, participants begin to discuss how stereotypes in education can be eliminated and how to add cultural awareness and differentiated instruction into classroom settings. Implementation by teachers in the training is often related to curriculum development and teaching practices. Implementation by other participants is related to perceptions and respect toward other individual cultural differences they encounter in the American education system and in society as a whole.

Finally, Stage Four – living is Diverse City - is an ongoing, self-conscious stage that all participants must commit themselves to far after the diversity training is complete. Over the years, data have been collected for this phase through emails and letters from past participants and surveys distributed on future dates by the researcher as a follow-up to the participants to see how the diversity and cultural awareness training affected their everyday lives.

For the purpose of this paper, two training sessions at the same educational institution were conducted and the main objectives identified for the participants included having a concrete understanding of the term diversity and its implications within individual and settings; demonstrating knowledge of how other cultures compare and relate to the American culture in educational and societal settings; responding constructively to cultural differences and demonstrating cultural awareness and diversity as it relates to education in America; and gaining a repertoire of knowledge about oneself and others throughout the Four Stages of Diversity.

**Methods**

During the fall of 2008, student teachers at a Central Pennsylvania University were encouraged to take a diversity and cultural awareness training workshop as part of their fifth and seventh semester orientation in the Elementary Education Program. The National Council of Accreditation for Teacher Education (NCATE) mandates that universities and
colleges have an obligation to diversity for all of its students, faculty, and staff. Therefore, diversity training, as well as the integration of diversity into courses, is essential and often enforced (NCATE, 2002). Two training sessions occurred on two separate dates; however the following describes the basis for both training sessions: As many diverse individuals entered the room, India Arie’s music video, titled Video, echoed throughout the room: “I’m not the average girl from your video and I ain’t built like a supermodel but, I learned to love myself unconditionally because I am a queen.” Some of the participants swayed to the beat, others sang along, while others ignored it altogether and went straight for the morning coffee, juice, and pastries provided. Nonetheless, the mood was set for a day of learning and individuality. Some participants knew at least 2-5 other people in the room, while others were there alone. However, they all immediately found familiar faces, consciously or not, and began to sit and gather at tables. After the participants were initially asked to write down their definition of diversity on a note pad, my definition of diversity was made clear to the participants. The definition of diversity was revealed on the projector screen for the entire group to see, and it stated that diversity acknowledges and respects a person’s total identity and social existence based on his or her individual social values and beliefs (Penn State University NCATE Diversity Committee, 2008).

As the sessions began and all of the participants were settled in, becoming comfortable and chatting, I announced, “Please move around and introduce yourself and when you are done, find a seat at a table with at least four people that you do not know.” There were sighs, there were smiles and nervous laughs, but they all cooperated and ended up in new territories with individuals with differences from themselves ranging from race, age, gender, class, and educational knowledge. A student commented: “I’m a little nervous and I don’t know what to expect because I usually sit where I am comfortable, but, ok, I am open to meeting new people and discussing issues.” Most of the participants moved with no delay. The reason this initial “switching of seats” occurred was to allow the participants to have access to real discussions, interact with people they did not know. It also brought interesting experiences from different perspectives together; as another student stated, “I would not have gotten a broader sense of the workshop if I had stayed with people I knew. The new people gave me an insight to their personal cultural beliefs and identities. I did not have to rely on stereotypes to figure them out.” The Four Stages of Diversity were introduced and the first stage, unveiling the masks of diversity, began. The ultimate goal of the training sessions was to prepare pre-service teachers for diversity in the field of education and to help them gain practices that reflect effective teaching strategies while listening to the perspectives of faculty, teachers, students, and other participants in the room.

**Participants**

There were a total of 142 participants that included 92 pre-service student teachers from an Elementary Education program. Out of the 92 student pre-service teachers, there
were: 78 White females, 3 African American females, 2 Indian females, 2 Asian females, and 7 White males. In addition to the student teachers, to make the workshop more diverse with regard to age, race, gender, cultural experiences, and educational background, 21 education faculty and staff members, 11 Black Student Union (BSU) officers and members, 6 African American teachers, and 2 administrators from local school districts, and 10 young African American male students from a local urban alternative school program were in attendance. Because of the large number of participants and some scheduling conflicts of the pre-service student teachers, I requested that there be two separate sessions. There were 72 participants in the first group and 70 in the second group. The number differences in the groups did not affect the diversity or content in the sessions. The student teachers voluntarily attended the sessions as part of their Elementary Education semester orientation, while the other participants were invited. The participants were asked to remain open and share personal experiences and to understand that it is perfectly natural to feel uncomfortable discussing “touchy” topics. They were reminded to be professional at all times, communicate even if they got frustrated, and respect each individual in the room.

Data Collection

All materials collected were anonymous and confidential. The only identifiers were race, age, and the participant’s status in the training (i.e., student, faculty member, administrator, etc.). Data were collected from three sources. The first was an open-ended reflection paper that was given at the end of the training sessions. It asked the following: Prior to this experience did you consider yourself to be a “cultural being?” Why or why not? What identities were unmasked (Stage One)? Did you have any realizations and, if so, please elaborate on the most significant (Stage Two)? How will you continue to implement diversity in education and in society (Stage Three)? What step will you take toward living in Diversity City and/or do you think that this (Stage Four) is possible? What is the most memorable component of the Diversity Training? The second source was the training session evaluations given to each participant by the university’s Continuing Education Department. This survey included closed-ended questions that addressed demographic information, overall ranking of the session, overall ranking of the facilitator, and two open-ended questions that asked: What would you change or add to the session, and was the training session valuable you to as a (student, teacher, administrator, etc.)? The third source was the comments collected from the discussion activities during the sessions in which participants wrote comments on worksheets, note cards, chart paper, and graphic organizers. For the purpose of this paper, the key issues highlighted in each of the sources were the references to identity, realizations, implementation, and moments when participants became uncomfortable and/or wanted to reflect on diversity in education as a whole. The following is data combined from participants who participated in the two sessions.
Revealing the Four Stages of Diversity

Stage One: Unveiling the Masks

The first stage of diversity is intense and personal because individuals begin with the examination of their family history upbringing, all within the realm of 12 cultural attributes. As reflections of the personal experiences occur, conscious and unconscious realizations about identity and prejudices often surface. It is during this phase that identities begin to intersect and cultural experiences are examined internally. Proponents of Intersectionality see race, ethnicity, gender, and class as linked and intertwined, and the multiple identities become complex and can be both dominant and targeted at the same time, resulting in both internal and external conflicts. Often these conflicts arise based on stereotyping or within perceptions that individuals have of others (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Hairston, 2004). For example, one Black male student stated that when he was in front of the group describing what it was like for him to be a Black male youth and to go through school where he felt his teachers did not care about him because he was Black, saw some of the White teachers in the room bow their heads, especially one White man. He said, “Were they ashamed of me, themselves or were they like the teachers that failed me as a child? Why are white people so afraid of me?” As he discussed his experiences the white man raised his hand and he began to share what it was like for him in school. The young man stated, “He was a White man who was from an inner city background. We had similar identities. From this one moment in the training, I learned that stereotypes are harmful, but I also realized my identities: I am a Black, male, from the inner city, a student who had problems in school, and I was raised by a single mother and regardless of race and gender, there are other people who have similar experiences.”

This student assumed that the white participants were stereotyping him. It was not until he was able to unveil and reflect on his other identities that he realized race and gender were not the only factors in his experiences. He also unmasked similarities with a white male in the room that he may never have encountered prior to this session. Cornell and Hartmann (2007) explain that “ethnicity and race are not simply labels forced upon people; they are also identities that people accept, resist, choose, specify, invent, redefine, reject, actively defend, and so forth” (p. 81). The student unmasked his identities and learned from the other participants. Moreover, another participant, a white female pre-service teacher elaborated on stereotypes, stating: “Today I felt so uncomfortable and it was because I was literally forced to take a look at who I am as an individual. I knew that growing up my parents was racist, but as I talked in the smaller group activities and listened in the larger group activities, there are so many differences in perceptions and the way that black people and white people see things in America.” She concluded by saying, “As a white lady going into teaching, my heart races because I want to teach, but I have forgotten that I will encounter so many cultural differences and come in contact with so many different children.”
In order to truly understand how others perceive one another, people must unmask their cultural identities when discussing experiences. They must also accept that they stereotype people and that they are stereotyped by others. External attributes like race, gender, and ethnicity are assumed to be the only factors as to why an individual may or may not have a particular experience, but it is important to unveil other identities in order to see that other people have similar experiences as well. This leads to cultural awareness. A faculty participant reflected that he never thought about how other people saw him and that he never thought about his race as a privilege. He said, “I readily blurted out stereotypes of many groups of people in the room, as they all laughed and kept a professional insight, but when it came time for them to stereotype me, I was awed. People see me as a white man who has power, but I am also diverse with regard to my language (dialect from the south), my religion and my geographical location.” In the end he realized that all of these identities were masked behind his race and gender. He said, “In order to get them unmasked, I have to be willing to reflect and have conversations about the experiences that surround them.”

The first stage of diversity allowed the unveiling of identities, which begin the process toward establishing cultural awareness and respect. The next phase, Stage Two, exposed the participants’ realizations.

**Stage Two: Self-Realizations**

The purpose of Stage Two is to evoke self-realizations from the participants’ experiences. *Webster’s Dictionary* (2009) defines self-realizations as when a person realizes or fulfills an assumption that constitutes a person being their ideal self with regard to their personality or perceptions. During Stage Two, realizations surface during the revisiting of experiences the participants’ had during childhood. Often this is the most uncomfortable stage for participants because the “isms” are often revealed (i.e., racism, sexism, classism, etc.). However, feeling uncomfortable is natural when discussing stereotypes or other “isms” (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). During Stage Two participants use their responses from Stage One in an activity called “What have you heard?” This interactive activity allows participants to list stereotypes and then share them aloud regarding all of the groups represented in the room (i.e., black women, white women, inner city youth, teachers, etc.). As the stereotypes are shouted out, the “group” stands in front of the room. For example, a pre-service student teacher participant stated: “I never knew that people stereotype white women the way that they do. I learned today that as an individual I am diverse, and when I teach I must teach individuals and not races or stereotypes and I must bridge gaps with my parents - just in case they have preconceived notions of me.” Another pre-service student teacher stated: Feeling uncomfortable is a terrible feeling, but thanks! I realized I subconsciously listened to stereotypes and believed them from my own parents, they were racist, they still have racist views. Wow!” Moreover a college professor added: “The stereotypes of different groups were powerful. We ended
up talking about the differences between Blacks and Whites, and that is because of the numbers represented in the room. I will continue to disturb and disrupt my students. I always tell them to recognize and own their biases and prejudices and work through them. It was great that the students felt uncomfortable today. Thanks for bringing in the urban young males from the alternative program; they added an entirely unexpected perspective of stereotypes to the room.”

The main purpose of Stage Two is for the participants to understand and respect that everyone has hidden realizations. Through dialogue, a more conscious understanding of one’s self, as well as the perceptions that one has of others is revealed and when individuals begin to question themselves, they begin to process how others feel. During Stage Two, this questioning can lead educators to re-visit their curriculum for biases and understandings of diverse learners (Spradlin & Parsons, 2008). A pre-service student teacher reflected on the most memorable component that she gained from the Diversity Training were the different feelings and emotions that each group expressed on all of the topics covered. She explained that the feelings of being uncomfortable and speaking on diverse issues really opened her eyes and allowed her to feel what others were feeling, as well as to see what others have been through. She said, “There are many of these topics that I have not even thought about, and I really think that I learned a lot and I think everyone learns and sees things differently from different perspectives, and I have not had the experiences that some of the other people in my groups, and it really opened my eyes. It’s about learning about these differences and trying to incorporate our lessons in everyday living.”

After the realization discussions subsided, the diversity training sessions shifted into the solution stage, which is Stage Three – implementation.

Stage Three: Implementing diversity in education from three perspectives

The implementation of diversity in education comes in many segments, from curriculum development and multicultural education to personal connections with students and culturally responsible pedagogy. However, a combination of all the segments is an indication that the participants benefited from the first three stages of diversity. Curriculum was defined two ways by Franklin Bobbitt (as cited in Flinders and Thornton, 1998) as (1) the entire range of experiences, both undirected and directed, concerned in unfolding the abilities of the individual; or (2) the series of consciously directed training experiences that the schools use for completing and perfecting the unfoldment” (p. 17). With these two definitions in mind, in Stage Three of diversity, it is essential that all perspectives and groups come together to develop curriculum that it culturally responsible and equitable for all students. The following reflections demonstrate these three perspectives: First, a young inner city Black male student reflected that after I during the breaks several college students and teachers came up him and wanted to know if he could say one thing to his teachers, what would it be. He said, “Show them that you
care. That really is all that matters to a child in school, he needs to know that his teacher cares. Today, thanks to my teachers in the program and Dr. Hairston, I am giving back to my community.” Next, a teacher indicated that he was glad that there were important conversations discussed that helps student teachers prepare for future students. He expressed, “The training really opened my mind to realize that we need real solutions to broken problems facing America’s education system. I will help to continue to implement diversity in education by getting to know each of my students, their needs, backgrounds and cultures.” Finally, a month later, I received an email from one of the administrators who had participated in the first training session; he stated: “After a structured Diversity Training workshop, our staff became even more committed to planning and delivering diversity-based lessons for two important reasons. First, the workshop reinforced our teacher’s commitment to creating lessons regularly that energized all students to become motivated to learn every day. For example, the teachers reported after the workshop that they did not realize how important it was for them to promote students to make connections to the daily lesson objectives.”

With these three perspectives it is evident how the Four Stages of Diversity are effective for diversity and cultural awareness training. Another faculty member added, “The most memorable component that I gained from this Diversity Training is that Americans are so diverse and different but we need to come together. We need to unite and back each other up. The Four Stage of Diversity is quite effective in making this happen.”

As the training came to an end, the final stage was introduced, Stage Four – living in Diverse City.

**Entering into Stage Four**

Stage Four of diversity is the action phase. It can be observed through personal endeavors, lifestyle changes, and other implications that a person understands and commits to diversity. During session one, tears were shed by some of the pre-service teachers. At times they felt that they were being singled out. As the training came to an end, they began to process the entire day and realize that the attacks were not personal. This is normal during diversity training and actually shows how self-reflection can bring out perceptions and experiences that are often concealed or masked (Steele, 2009; Tatum, 2009). During session two, the discussions were more in depth, and several participants shared and gave first hand examples of their experiences with racism, classism, sexism, and other “isms.” This group seemed to work through the experiences and discussion at a different level and process the information in a less personal manner. Tatum explains that White people who have had diverse racial and ethnic experiences tend to openly discuss and relate to issues of “isms” in a more comfortable manner. When this occurs greater steps toward diversity and cultural awareness occur (Spradlin & Parsons, 2008; Tatum). A pre-service student teacher expressed that the diversity training did help her see how the world really is “without the “sugar coating” of how white people perceive.”
She discussed how hearing the insights and thoughts of her Black peers and colleagues was a true eye-opener. She stated, “Through all of this, I felt a bit attacked because of the fact that I’m white. But at the same time this was needed because for once in my life I actually understood what it feels like to be attacked. It really provided a real perspective on the true life of Americans today. I hate that this exists in our world and hope to show my students and their families that I want to make a difference. I may only be one person, but being in this education major can allow me to have an effect on children’s lives.”

Many masks were taken off in the two sessions, and several of the participants indicated that they never wanted to put them back on, especially those that masked racism, sexism, and classism. With the unveiling of the masks, stage four of diversity can manifest. At this stage all participants have to decide if they will be an adversary for diversity or an ally. If they choose to be ally then they dedicate themselves to the following: to keep learning from someone who is different from them, speaking up for voices not present, letting their actions speak louder than words, accepting and becoming comfortable with criticism and feedback, accepting that others may stereotype others, challenging the norm, and knowing that working toward diversity is never done. All decided that they wanted to be allies from a show of hands that were raised in the room. In a sense they were moving into Diverse City. The following is a poem that I wrote and read to the participants; it is my description of Diverse City:

Look around, within, and in between yourself, for the spaces that lie there define you and your being. From the color of your hair to the skin that you dwell in, from the words that come from your lips to the accent that pronounces them.

You are living in Diverse City.

Some say Diverse City only has residents who possess attributes only audible or visible to the human eye. Skin color, hair textures, physical impairments or defects. Some say residents speak in a million different dialects. They define the residents by race, gender and ethnicity, and often they say “those” people are from other cultures and places no one really wants to be.

You are living in Diverse City.

Some say Diverse City is more than a visible habitation; the residents there are from all types of generations. Men, women, other gender identities, young and old, some healthy; others with an infectious disease. Some driving or being driven in Mercedes and Limousines, others walking, taking the subway, riding bicycles, all being affected by high gas prices.

You are living in Diverse City.

If you are a woman of color or creed, you are in Diverse City.

If you are a man with a special need, you are in Diverse City.

If you are an individual from anywhere in the world and have cultural identities that empower your beliefs and ideas, you are in Diverse City.

Don’t try to escape because it is virtually impossible. You see, Diverse City is located
inside you. Your status, your ability, and the way you speak and are spoken to. Your religion and political take on issues and the way people define you in society. Believe it or not, you don’t have to be a person of color to be diverse; you just have to be different and willing to embrace the differences around you, between you and inside you.

So those who were not aware and had no clue that all things that make you unique, make you diverse too, I say welcome. Welcome to a realization, welcome to America, welcome to life, and welcome to my world… Welcome to Diverse City.

Final Reflection

Diversity training is important for educators. In order for teachers to educate students to be responsible citizens, they have to undergo discussions and share experiences about themselves first. Throughout my ongoing research of the Four Stages of Diversity, I have found three important implications. First, the stages allow educators to visit, compare and contrast, and discuss their cultural values and beliefs, and integrate the experience into their everyday educational curriculum developments and educational settings. Second, as participants discuss how cultural attributes are evident in their lives, they begin to compare and contrast their experiences with one another and their students, and educational practices from their personal experiences. Third, they assist teachers in becoming culturally responsive in their teaching styles, curriculum development, and in creating cooperative classroom environments; moreover, the stages encourage teachers to motivate their own students to learn about diversity and become responsible citizens. Unveiling individual masks is pertinent for the success of education in American society. Taking off the mask, having a personal conversation and reflecting with oneself can provide understanding of biases, prejudices, and privileges. Teachers as students will become productive, culturally aware, and responsible citizens who will transcend cultural awareness to their own students and curriculum practices. Finally, unmasked and dedicated, we will all strive toward living in Diverse City.
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PBCOHE Organizational Leaders

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PRESIDENT
Dr. John B. Craig
Assistant Dean
Public Service and Social Sciences
Delaware County Community College
901 S. Media Line Road
Media, PA 19063
jbcraig@hotmail.com
610-359-5297

VICE PRESIDENT/PRESIDENT ELECT
SLDI DIRECTOR
Mr. Albert Jones
Assistant to the President for Social Equity
Lock Haven University of PA
East Campus, J-202
Lock Haven, PA 17745
ajones@lhup.edu
570-484-2838

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
Dr. W. Terrell Jones
Vice Provost for Educational Equity
The Pennsylvania State University
314 Old Main
University Park, PA 16802
wtj1@psu.edu
814-865-5906

SECRETARY
Mrs. Pertrina Marrero
Director, Multicultural Center
Mercyhurst College
501 East 38th Street
Erie, PA 16546
pmarrero@mercyhurst.edu
814-824-2369

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CHAIR
Dr. George Agbango
Professor
Bloomsburg University
400 East 2nd Street
Bloomsburg, PA 17815
gagbango@bloomu.edu
570-389-4516

TREASURER
Ms. Verona Blaine
Asst. VP, Outreach & Regional Services
PHEAA
1200 N. 7th Street
Harrisburg, PA 17102
vblaine@pheaa.org
717-720-2063

CENTRAL REGION DIRECTOR
Dr. Laurie Cannady
Assistant Professor of English
Lock Haven University of PA
401 North Fairview Road
Raub 402
Lock Haven, PA 17745
lcannady@lhup.edu
570-484-2429

EASTERN REGION DIRECTOR
Mr. Roger Jackson
603 Firethorn Drive
Douglassville, PA 19518
PBCOHE Organizational Leaders

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WESTERN REGION DIRECTOR
Dr. Erroline Williams, Manager
Professional Development and Outreach
Duquesne University
210 Rockwell Hall, 600 Forbes Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA  15282
williamse976@duq.edu
412-396-5631

PARLIAMENTARIAN (Appointed)
Mr. Lawrence Dowdy
Executive Deputy to the President
President’s Office
West Chester University of PA
Philips Memorial Building, Room 105
University Avenue and High Street
West Chester, PA  19383
ldowdy@wcupa.edu
610-436-6974

HISTORIAN (Appointed)
Dr. Brenda Sanders Dede
Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs
Office of Research and Graduate Studies
Clarion University
108 Carrier Hall
Clarion, PA  16214
bdede@clarion.edu
814-393-2337

NEWSLETTER EDITORS (Appointed)
Ms. Patricia Hopson-Shelton
Assistant VP for Social Equity
Millersville University of PA
PO BOX 1002
Millersville, PA  17551
social.equity@millersville.edu
717-872-3787
Ms. Cheryl Hodges
Employment Specialist
Millersville University of PA
PO BOX 1002
Millersville, PA  17551
cheryl.hodges@millersville.edu
717-872-3787

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Dr. Sharon Stringer
Associate Professor of Communication
Lock Haven University of PA
Robinson Hall #603
Lock Haven, PA  17745
sstringe@lhup.edu
570-484-2092

IEML CO-DIRECTORS (Appointed)
Dr. Richard Arnold      VACANT
5013 Trail Side Court
Jeannette, PA  15644
arnold@edinboro.edu
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Harrisburg, PA 17104
kbrunson@state.pa.us
717-783-8494

SCHOLARSHIP CHAIR (Appointed)
Dr. Judith A. W. Thomas
Dean, Social Sciences & Behavioral Studies
Lincoln University
1570 Old Baltimore Pike, PO Box 179
Lincoln, PA 19352
jthomas@lincoln.edu
484-365-8151

COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMITTEE CHAIR (Appointed)
Mr. Robert Hill
Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs
University of Pittsburgh
400 Craig Hall
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
hillr@pitt.edu
412-624-8891

BUSINESS LIAISON-THINK TANK CHAIR (Appointed)
Dr. Francene Haymon (Retired)
Association of Multicultural Counseling & Development
102 Parkside Place
Cranberry Twp, PA 16066
francene@connecttime.net
724-776-4314

MARKETING & FUNDRAISING CHAIR (Appointed)
Mr. Reginald Irvis
Director, Outreach Services
PHEAA
1200 N. 7th Street
Harrisburg, PA 17102
rirvis@pheaa.org
717-720-2049

CONFERENCE COORDINATOR (Appointed)
Ms. Shantia McCoy, MSN, RN, CRNP
3625 Welsh Road, N36
Willow Grove, PA 19090
shantia403@msn.com
215-906-1985
Pennsylvania Black Conference on Higher Education

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