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Assessing Diversity: A Cost Benefit Analysis of Culture Centers and Targeted Students' Success

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ASSESSING DIVERSITY: A COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS OF CULTURE CENTERS

AND TARGETED STUDENTS' SUCCESS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

By

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B.A., Michigan State University, 2011

2013
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WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

April 25, 2013

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED
UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY <u>Melissa Anne Ortiz</u> ENTITLED
Assessing Diversity: A Cost Benefit Analysis of Culture Centers and Targeted Students' Success
BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE
OF <u>Master of Arts</u>

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Abstract

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Assessing Diversity: A Cost Benefit Analysis of Culture Centers and Targeted Students'
Success

The intent of this study was to examine the relationship between funding diversity

initiatives in higher education and targeted minority students' academic success. The

study explored the relationship between the funding of two culture centers at an IHE in

the Midwest and the graduation rates of the targeted minority student populations.

Analysis of the data did not determine a significant relationship between the two

variables. One culture center funding had a strong but not significant relationship with

targeted student graduation rates and that relationship may become significant with

additional longitudinal data. In addition analysis determined significant differences

between the funding of the two centers and significant differences among the graduation

rates of the targeted minority populations at the IHE. As more states align larger portions

of IHE funding to performance, IHEs will benefit by understanding what and how

diversity initiatives contribute to student success. By evaluating diversity initiatives as

this study did, IHEs will be able to identify effective initiatives that can be expanded and

further contribute to providing all students the opportunity to succeed.

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Acknowledgements

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Dedication

I dedicate this research project to my loving husband who showed me endless support and encouragement. I also would like to dedicate this research project to my parents, my coworkers, and the Department of Leadership Studies in Education and Organizations. The faculty, staff, and students offered guidance and support in every way possible.

I. Introduction

As the population of the United States becomes more diverse, Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) are becoming more multicultural. From 2000 to 2010 the percentage of White students, or students who identified as White, dropped 23% (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). IHEs represent a blend of cultures. Because IHEs are committed to developing the complete student, the IHEs' mission to embrace diversity becomes more important as the world becomes more globalized. The economy reflects the globalization of the nation and the world. Globalization demands not only awareness but also proficiency in diversity. IHEs' funding for diversity proficiency initiatives contributes to their graduates' successful participation in the developing global society.

IHEs express commitment to student development; the commitment includes helping all students understand diversity and succeed as students. In addition IHEs provide services to help diverse students persist and graduate, services that require funding. The relationship between diversity initiative funding and student success provides evaluative data for policy makers reviewing the impact of diversity initiatives.

IHE culture centers or multicultural centers demonstrate a diversity initiative that in some cases has been around since the 1960's. Culture centers have taught and celebrated diversity on college campuses for decades. One approach to examining the

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effectiveness of culture centers is a cost benefit analysis. At the state and institutional level, recent changes in funding models make a cost benefit analysis of culture centers possible. A cost benefit analysis allows the stakeholders to review the funds spent in relation to the diversity initiatives' goals.

Politicians want transparency of IHE services for consumers and stakeholders, and they want to reward IHEs that excel and punish IHEs that do not (Selingo, 2012). In order to attain the desired transparency politicians continue to shift how they allocate IHE funding. Beginning in the 1990's many state governments shifted IHE funding allocations from an incremental model (number of students enrolled) to a performance-based model (student success). As a result more states are adopting performance- based models.

One common element of performance-based allocation is student course completion, a total of the number of courses completed by enrolled students. A second element of performance-based allocation is the completion rate for a bachelor's degree in six years (Selingo, 2012). Student success measured using these elements makes a cost benefit analysis possible because both elements are tracked.

Currently IHEs invest money in affirmative action offices, culture centers, and the incorporation of diversity into general education curriculum. Professionals intentionally design classes, programs, and experiences to help foster student development so that IHEs are producing well rounded and mature individuals ready to be the leaders of

tomorrow. In addition, IHEs record retention and graduation rates of students differentiated by populations as identified by the U.S. Census. However, IHEs do not examine the correlation between the funding invested in diversity programming and the student success of the targeted populations, specifically graduating with a bachelor's degree in six years time or less. At a comprehensive research institution in the Midwest, this study determined the correlation between funding for two culture centers and student graduation rates of the populations targeted by the two culture centers.

Statement of the Problem

Institutions of higher education (IHEs) commit time and resources to promoting diversity on campus. Colleges and universities create and staff affirmative action offices, include diversity components in general education requirements, and fund culture centers. Some IHEs include a commitment to diversity in a mission statement and some culture centers within IHEs include a commitment to minority student success. Methods for providing funds to culture centers and fulfilling their mission statement for diversity initiatives are not consistent across institutions. Diversity initiatives are typically evaluated at the micro level based on the success of the specific diversity program; the evaluation may or may not be related to measurable student outcomes. IHEs record and publish retention and persistence rates for all students.

The average student in the United States completes a bachelor's degree in approximately six years. The relationship between the funds invested in diversity

initiatives and the targeted populations' outcomes and successes is rarely examined.

Currently IHEs cannot demonstrate a link between the investment in diversity initiatives and fulfillment of diversity missions specifically related to student outcomes for students in the targeted populations. This study identifies the correlation between the funding invested in two culture centers and the targeted minority students' bachelor's completion rate within six years at the comprehensive research institution.

Assumptions

For the study, the researcher assumes that the research institution's Office of Institutional Research accurately tracked student graduation and persistence rates at the chosen four-year research institution. In addition it is assumed that budgetary data provided accurate funding allocated to and spent by the African American Center (AAC) and the Asian Hispanic Native American Center (AHNA) at the research institution.

General Research Hypotheses

The study investigated the relationship between the amount of funds spent by the two culture centers at the research institution and the graduation rates of the students of the targeted populations.

The study will investigate the following research questions:

Research question 1. Does a relationship exist between the funds invested in the two culture centers and the graduation rates of the targeted minority students?

Research question 2. What is the difference in the level of funding of the two culture centers at the IHE?

Research question 3. What is the difference among the graduation rates of African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students at the comprehensive research institution?

Research Hypothesis 1. A significant relationship exists between the funds invested in the two culture centers and graduation rates of targeted minority students.

Research hypothesis 2. A significant difference exists between the funding levels of two culture centers in the research institution.

Research hypothesis 3. A significant difference exists between the graduation rates of the African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students at the research IHE.

Null hypothesis 1. There is no relationship between the funding the IHE invests in two culture centers and graduation rates of students in the targeted populations of the two culture centers.

Null hypothesis 2. There is no difference between per student expenditures in the African American Center and the per student expenditures of the Asian Hispanic and Native American Center.

Null hypothesis 3. There is no difference between the graduation rates of the African Americans, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students at the research IHE.

Significance of the Study

Examining the funding of two culture centers in relation to graduation rates of targeted minority students will provide guidance for future diversity initiative funding. The guidance is significant for IHEs because many states have begun to implement performance based budgeting, meaning that state funding is dependent on student performance. Minority college student populations continue to grow; future IHE funding for minority college student programs will be influenced by the success of current minority college students. This study's findings could contribute to a decision to reevaluate funding for diversity initiatives.

A scarcity of research exists that examines the funding invested in diversity initiatives in relation to student outcomes of the targeted populations. This study seeks to quantify the relationship between the funds invested in diversity initiatives and the success rates for students targeted by the initiatives. This study will contribute to the literature documenting the impact of IHE culture centers.

Scope

The study will be limited to examining funding from 1999 to 2011 for two culture centers at one 4-year public research institution in the Midwest. The culture centers included are the African American Center (AAC) and the Asian Hispanic and Native American Center (AHNA). Graduation rates for undergraduate students from targeted

populations (specifically African American, Asian, Hispanic and Native American students) at the research institution are included in this study for the years 2004 to 2011.

The funding invested in incorporating diversity into the curriculum was not investigated because there are currently no funds allocated specifically for the efforts. Incorporating diversity into the curriculum is not funded as one line item. In addition the amount of funding invested in individual cultural groups through student activities, such as the Indian Student Association, was excluded from this study because the data were not itemized by individual ethnic groups. The findings cannot be generalized to populations or other IHEs because the findings are representative of the research university's funding algorithms and two culture centers.

The researcher currently is a graduate student pursuing a Masters of Arts in Student Affairs. The researcher is a minority from a predominately White suburb and attended a PWI for her undergraduate education from 2007 to 2011; she does not have any relationship with the two culture centers being examined. Although the researcher represents the type of student included in the study, she is not reflected in the quantitative data examined.

Definitions and Operational Terms

- Affirmative action**:** an executive order mandating equal opportunity for minority populations (Executive Order, 1965)

- Culture Centers: "support and resource centers that serve students from single cultures" (Patton, 2006)

- Diversity Initiative**: "**efforts of colleges and universities to move from the rhetoric of inclusion to the practice of equity (Musil et. al, 1999, p. x)

- Ethnic group: distinctions generally focus on such cultural characteristics as language, history, religion, and customs (National Center for Biotechnology Information, 2004)

- Performance based budgeting: "allocating resources to institutions based on the extent they achieve previously established goals, objectives and outcomes" (Gaither et al.,1994) (as cited in Layzell, 1999).

- Racial group: "self-identification by people according to the race or races with which they most closely identify. These categories are sociopolitical constructs and should not be interpreted as being scientific or anthropological in nature. Furthermore, the race categories include both racial and national-origin groups." (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009).

- Social capital**:** access to social networks that proffer encouragement and advice in making educational decisions (Nunez, 2009)

- Student success**:** degree attainment in six years or less (U.S. Department of Education, 2011)

- Student engagement**:** "the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other educationally purposeful activities" (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2013)

Summary

Culture centers at IHEs strive to support a multitude of student outcomes that contribute to student course and degree completion. Currently the effectiveness of culture centers is not evaluated at the macro level due to lack of tracking of the particular targeted students the centers serve. In addition there is a paucity of published literature that examines how culture centers contribute to student success and ultimately graduation. The study contributes to the literature by examining the costs and benefits of two culture centers at a comprehensive research institution in the Midwest. Moreover, the study provides insight for future evaluation of diversity initiatives at a unique time when IHEs are led further into the era of accountability.

II. Review of the Literature

Introduction

IHEs express commitment to holistic student development that includes helping all students understand diversity. Today's world reflects a transition into a more multicultural, global society; college graduates will be employed in organizations that demand cultural awareness and proficiency. The fact that IHEs continue to fund and support diversity initiatives to contribute to the graduates' understanding of diversity demonstrates their commitment.

Tinto (1993) stressed the importance of student membership and academic and social integration for continued persistence in college. The confidence and ability to integrate is also referred to as social capital. Merging diversity both academically and socially creates more social capital for the students and contributes to IHEs graduation rates; higher graduation rates in turn could contribute to greater fiscal allocations from states. Given the role diversity awareness and proficiency can play for society and IHEs, it is important that there is an understanding of the relationship between funds expended for diversity initiatives and the targeted student outcomes. The literature review presents the background information needed to investigate the relationship.

Diversity and Multiculturalism in Higher Education

Diversity and multiculturalism in higher education is a topic of interest to many. Singhal (2007) defined diversity simplistically as a variety of people with distinct group affiliations (Singhal, 2007). Milem, Mitchell, Chang, and Antonio (2005) defined diversity on that foundation, but defined it as more than various populations' affiliations: "engagement across racial and ethnic lines comprised of a broad and carried set of activities and initiatives" (Milem et al., 2005, p. 4). Gilbert (2000) combined the two definitions: "as the organization's commitment to 'recruit, retain, reward and promote a heterogeneous mix of productive, motivated and committed workers' with the mix referring to race/ethnicity, gender, and physical abilities" (as cited in Singhal, 2007, p. 95).

The discussion above about the meaning of the term diversity represents a variety of concepts. Krishnamurthi (2003) defined multiculturalism using the term 'diversity' as a "representation of people that exemplifies all cultural and congenital differences" whereas multiculturalism "seeks to promote the valuing of diversity and equal opportunity for all people through understanding of the contributions and perspective of people of different race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and physical abilities and disabilities" (p. 263). As demonstrated in this definition, many authors use diversity interchangeably or synonymously with multiculturalism and valuing

diverse populations and contributions (Jones & William, 2006; Milem et al., 2005; Nunez 2009; Singhal, 2007).

Assessing IHE Diversity Initiatives

There is a paucity of published research that documents how IHEs fund diversity initiatives, but an excessive amount focused on affirmative action and methods to create a more diverse and harmonious population on college campuses (College Board, 2004; Garrison-Wade and Lewis, 2004). Recommendations for creating a diverse college population include methods designed to improve the racial climate on campus and to include a diversity component in general education university curriculum (Krishnamurthi, 2003; Nunez, 2009;Villalpando, 2004).

In assessing diversity initiatives, several studies evaluated specific programs. For example, El Puente, a bridge program between secondary schools and IHEs in the University of California system and UCLA's Academic Advancement Program, provided tutoring and counseling to help Latino students navigate through the college system (Gandara, 2005; Nunez, 2009). Jones and Williams (2006) conducted a qualitative study examining the experiences of students who utilized an African American Student Center (AASC) at a predominately white institution (PWI) in the Northwest United States.

Although literature regarding diversity initiatives exists, the literature does not address how IHEs fund the initiatives or how culture centers impact student outcomes. Patton (2006) claimed Black culture centers were essential for both academic and social

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support for minority students given that students could not attain the same support anywhere else at the university. The author explained that the academic and social support affected Black students' success, though much of the author's evidence was anecdotal. Jones and Williams (2006) also provided qualitative evidence from focus groups that illustrated that an AASC provided positive academic and social outcomes for Black students at a specific PWI in the Northwest. However, Jones and Williams (2006) also suggested that a statistical analysis of retention and enrollment and longitudinal studies should be conducted to better illustrate the impact of the AASC.

Assessment of IHEs diversity initiatives have focused on specific initiatives or provided methods that were typically used to assess individual programs (Krishnamurthi, 2003). The author's suggestions were not methods unique to assessing diversity. The methods were typical in assessing any initiative including clarifying the objectives, determining the impact, communicating benefits, addressing expectations, identifying opportunities for improvements and studying how the initiative contributed to the school's policies and missions.

Culture Center Missions

It is not uncommon for a culture center to include a commitment to both social and academic support. The Asian Hispanic and Native American Center at a comprehensive research institution in the Midwest included in their mission statement that the center was created to "support the academic, social, and cultural needs of Asian,

Hispanic, and Native American students" [quote follows without source attribution to provide anonymity]. The AAC mission statement stated that "The center functions to address a broad spectrum of academic, cultural, and personal concerns of [the research institution's] Black student population" [quote follows without source attribution to provide anonymity]. However, it is also common for a culture center not to include academic concerns of specific populations when the mission is to educate the larger community on cultural matters. Ohio State University's (OSU) multicultural center's mission illustrates the commitment to the larger community. The OSU's underrepresented populations are served both socially and academically in a variety of ways through different programs through their Office of Diversity & Inclusion. OSU's multicultural center mission states that its intention is "to facilitate the inclusive shared learning experiences of students where all can engage in dialogue, challenge barriers, and build collaborative relationships" (Ohio State University, 2008).   In contrast to the research institution's culture centers' missions, OSU's multicultural center's mission did not include academic concerns of minority populations; OSU addresses those needs in various ways through a different approach.

Some authors believed that the persistence and retention of minority students from underrepresented populations was dependent on students' academic and social engagement (Oseguera, Locks, & Vega, 2009; Nora, Barlow, & Crisp, 2006; Tinto 1993). Engagement or "membership in academic and social communities must exist as a

condition for continued persistence" (Tinto, 1993, p. 120). Student engagement allows students to feel comfortable and familiar on college campuses; engagement can help to build students' networks and confidence. Some authors describe the confidence gained from student engagement as social capital (Nunez, 2009; Walker, 2007).

Nunez (2009) was concerned that so "…few studies have addressed how cultural and social capital affect Latina/o students' outcomes after college enrollment, although there are implications that these factors influence college outcomes related to transition and retention…" (Berger, 2000) (as cited in Nunez, 2009, p. 191). Walker (2007) explained that the African American Culture Center at North Carolina State University provided services that build the social capital Nunez (2009) described. The African American Culture Center provided services such as peer mentoring, counseling, academic services, to name a few (Walker, 2007). The services contributed to social capital by providing minority students the encouragement and guidance needed to navigate the college system and utilize services available to them, thus contributing to student success.

Affirmative Action

In 1965 President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Executive Order "mandating government contractors to 'take affirmative action' in all aspects of hiring and employing minorities (Brunner, 2002)" (as cited in Garrison-Wade and Lewis, p. 24, 2004). Executive Order 11246 requires federal contractors that are federally funded or assisted and "have contracts that exceed $10,000 from discriminating in employment decisions on

the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. It also requires covered contractors to take affirmative action to ensure that equal opportunity is provided in all aspects of their employment" (Executive Order 11246, 1965). Affirmative action has a unique history in the United States and from the time when affirmative action was introduced in the United States, the executive order has been used as a tool to both promote and challenge the necessity and legality of diversity initiatives in higher education. As a result of the executive order, IHEs revised their missions to include creating diverse populations on their campuses and to recruit minority student populations (Garrison-Wade & Lewis, 2004).

U.S. Supreme Court Cases Addressing Affirmative Action

As IHEs began to include race in admissions policies, court cases arose claiming reverse discrimination. The most notable cases included *Regents of University of California v. Bakke* (1978), *Gratz v. Regents* (2003), and *Grutter v Bollinger* (2003) (Garrison-Wade & Lewis, 2004; Mccorkle & Pangilinan, 2010).

Garrison-Wade and Lewis (2004) described *Regents of University of California v. Bakke (1978)* as the first case questioning the legality of affirmative action policies. Allan Bakke, a Caucasian male, claimed he was denied admission to the University of California's medical school because the school's quota system reserved positions for students from minority populations who often had lower test scores and lower grade point averages (Garrison-Wade & Lewis, 2004). The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that quota

systems in IHE admissions violated the Equal Protection Clause of the fourteenth amendment. However, even after the decision the U.S. Supreme Court ruled, "institutions of higher learning can still consider race as one factor, among many, in the admission process" (Garrison-Wade & Lewis, 2004, p. 24).

Mccorkle and Pangilinan (2010) explained that *Gratz v. Regents (2003)* transpired after students Jennifer Gratz and Patrick Hamacher applied to the University of Michigan's College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LSA) and both were denied admission; two minority students with lower test scores and lower GPAs were admitted. The University of Michigan's admissions policy was based on a point system. Gratz and Hamacher challenged the policy because 20% of the points required for admission were awarded to applicants based on applicants' race or ethnicity. The students claimed the points system violated the Equal Protection Clause of the fourteenth amendment. Using the Bakke (1974) decision as precedent, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that while LSA had a compelling state interest to try to attain a diverse student body, LSA did in fact violate the Equal Protection Clause (Mccorkle & Pangilinan, 2010).

A third case in which Barbara Grutter was denied admission to the University of Michigan's Law School eventually reached the U.S. Supreme Court in 2003. Grutter challenged the University of Michigan's Law School admissions policy in *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003) (Mccorkle & Pangilinan, 2010). The university was committed to creating a "critical mass" of minority students so that students from underrepresented

populations would not become tokens or a spokesperson for their populations and so that there was "meaningful" representation of the minority populations (Mccorkle & Pangilinan, 2010). The U.S Supreme Court ruled that a "critical" mass was not a quota since it did not provide a specific number, percent, or range of applicants the university expected to attain (Mccorkle & Pangilinan, 2010). The Supreme Court applied restrictions in that IHEs could aim for a critical mass, but for a limited amount of time. "The court expressed its hope that, '25 years from now, the use of racial preferences would no longer be necessary to further the interest approved today'" (Regents of the University of California v. Bakke) (as cited in Mccorkle & Pangilinan, 2010, p. 233). The U.S. Supreme Court introduced five elements that would be used to review race-conscious policies in IHE admissions under strict scrutiny:

(1) individualized consideration for each applicant

(2) the absence of a "quota" system

(3) serious, good faith consideration of race-neutral alternatives [policies or initiatives]

(4) lack of undue harm to members of other racial groups

(5) time limitations on the program [specific race conscious initiatives]

(Mccorkle & Pangilinan, 2010, p. 32)

The three court cases described depict both wins and losses for diversity initiatives in higher education (Garrison-Wade & Lewis, 2004). Ultimately the three

major U.S. Supreme Court cases challenging affirmative action outlawed quotas and point systems that are a disadvantage for any candidate (Garrison-Wade & Lewis, 2004). However, the U.S. Supreme Court allowed IHE's admissions policies to consider race in the admissions process so long as race is not the only determining factor (College Board, 2004).

Campus Culture Centers

Black culture centers, and also other culture centers, have existed since the late 1960's when students of color were admitted in larger numbers to predominately white institutions (PWIs) (Patton, 2007). Black culture centers were established in response to Black students organizing and feuding with administration for their own space on campus. The culture centers relieved feelings of isolation and marginalization on college campuses for students of color, not limited to Black students. Similar to the Black culture centers, other culture centers were created to serve other students of color from underrepresented populations including Asians, Hispanics, and Native Americans. "While each of these centers is designed to meet the needs of specific populations, they also serve a greater role in sharing the culture, traditions, and values of these populations" (Patton, 2007, p. 75).

In 2007 Patton examined a common dilemma IHEs face between the desire to support worthwhile causes and shrinking budgets through a case study in which she constructed the case of Phillips University. The IHE administration wanted to eliminate

individual culture centers and combine the Black identity center, the Latino identity center, and the office for Native Americans into one multicultural center. As budgets dwindle IHEs often face pressure to move individual cultural centers into one multicultural center. Baptiste, Director of the Black Cultural Center during Phillip University's transition from cultural to a multicultural center warned that "merging the culture centers would weaken the strong identities that each center currently has" (Patton, 2007, p. 78). Sanchez, Director of the Latino Culture Center at Phillips University, expressed the need for Latinos to have their own space on campus because of the "many ethnicities that existed among Latino students and the need to have a space that focused on creating a stronger sense of community among this population" (Patton, 2007, p. 78). Each population being served in the centers was unique and had unique needs. Some culture center directors felt merging the centers into one would dilute each individual culture. The shift from individual centers to a multicultural center and the concerns that came along with such a monumental shift has affected many IHEs, which is why Patton selected such a scenario to depict (Princes, 1994).

Methods to Help Minority Students' Success

Villalpando (2004) and Nunez (2009) acknowledged IHEs are struggling to promote and manage diversity effectively. Whereas Krishnamurthi (2003) expanded on incorporating diversity into the university curriculum, the author also explained that

access and success in higher education meant not only recruitment and retention but also inclusion of under-represented populations on campus.

Krishnamurthi (2003) asserted that focusing on access and success of diverse populations would create a better racial climate on college campuses. A better racial campus climate would allow for more interpersonal relationships to form, contributing to minority students' persistence. The increase in minority students' persistence and graduation would demonstrate IHEs promotion and successful management of diversity.

Dumas-Hines, Chochran, and Williams (2001) and Stuart (2012) articulated what needed to be done in order to retain Latino students, but the authors did not project the costs associated nor the possible funding sources to implement their suggestions. Dumas-Hines et al. (2001) discussed creating a comprehensive plan and suggested that universities build upon what they had that was already working. Dumas-Hines et al. (2001) also emphasized the importance of maintaining diverse faculty and staff in addition to a diverse student population. The retention strategies Dumas-Hines et al. (2001) presented were based on a review of literature and research of 29 institutions in the Midwest. The retention strategies included methods such as "forced and academic mentoring, minority mentees, self-esteem/positive image activities, cultural diversity/sensitivity training" (Dumas-Hines et al., 2001, p. 5).

Stuart (2012) suggested a visual infrastructure, a physical structure such as a building or office devoted to diversity. A physical structure would demonstrate an IHE's

commitment to diversity and a diversity-based agenda. Stuart (2012) also stressed the need for a chief diversity officer and a specific budget for maintaining and managing diversity initiatives on campus. For example Cleveland State University created a campus wide diversity program and a diversity council for each college in the university.

Challenges for Diversity Initiatives

Fusch (2012) and Gonzalez and Ballysingh (2012) discussed the shortcomings that were common to many schools in implementing diversity initiatives. The common mistakes and challenges included not having a large enough budget to create and maintain diversity initiatives. "They simply did not have enough financial resources to meet student demand" (Gonzalez & Ballysingh, 2012, p. 282). Gonzalez and Ballysingh (2012) did not specify what demands could not be funded but the shortfalls caused the directors to question "their capacity to sustain program quality and outcomes" (Gonzalez & Ballysingh, 2012, p. 282). Additionally the few projects the directors could create were serving too few students to have a significant impact on student graduation rates (Fusch, 2012). The unsuccessful projects could also be attributed to the lack of funding. Lastly, the students served were not tracked thus directors could not determine the effectiveness of many initiatives. The shortcomings Gonzalez and Ballysingh (2012) discussed were common mistakes many IHEs committed.

Gonzalez and Ballysingh (2012) attributed ineffective initiatives to the creators ignoring the existing literature, specifically the literature on Latino students in higher

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education. Gonzalez and Ballysingh (2012) asserted that many diversity programs are

created based on the experiences and assumptions of staff, faculty, and administrators.

Intermittently program directors would cite authors on student engagement such as

Vincent Tinto or George Kuh (Gonzalez & Ballysingh, 2012). While Gonzalez and

Ballysingh (2012) did not discredit these theorists they asserted the theorists are

underutilized and that other literature exists specific to minority populations. Gonzalez,

Stone, and Jovel (2003) and Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen (1998)

demonstrated a few examples of the neglected literature Gonzalez and Ballysingh (2012)

discussed. Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen (1998) examined how the

students' perspective of campus climate can impact students' sense of belonging at that

school. Gonzalez, Stoner and Jovel (2003) claimed that access to social capital in

community colleges could influence Latinas to continue and further their education at a

university.

Diversity Initiatives Funding Implications for IHEs

As state financial support for IHEs decreases, accountability for the allocation of

limited state funds for effective programming becomes imperative. "Lawmakers are

increasingly dangling public funding as a carrot in the march toward reform" (Hermes,

2012, p. 27). Many states are tying funding to performance indicators of IHEs.

"According to a recent survey by the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO,

1997), three fourths of the states (38) currently report or use performance indicators for

higher education in some way" (Layzell, 1999, p. 236). Over a three-year span many states that had no intention of moving toward performance based budgeting expressed intention to do so in 1997 (Layzell, 1999). Some states require IHE funding to be directly linked to performance. "Having a direct linkage means that the attainment or lack of attainment of an objective as measured by a performance indicator has a direct impact on the resources provided to the institution" (Layzell, 1999, p. 243).

Ohio and Florida specifically included degree attainment and a reduced time requirement to complete a degree as measures of successful performance (Hermes, 2012, p. 27). "Ohio also recently implemented a plan that will entirely base funding for four-year institutions on outcomes" (Hermes, 2012, p. 28). Stuart (2012) from Cleveland State University explained IHEs could not meet "their overall completion goals without succeeding with our underrepresented students" (Stuart, 2012, p. 1). Helping struggling minority college student populations' persistence and graduation could influence the funds the IHEs receive from the state.

Conclusion

Although the published literature documents investigations and evaluations of specific diversity initiatives (Gandara, 2005; Nunez, 2009), none have specifically documented whether an IHE met its mission related to diversity in more than one facet or how diversity initiatives were related to student outcomes. Although the best practices the literature highlighted proved useful; they provided little in illustrating how funding for

diversity initiatives affected retention, persistence, or graduation rates of targeted

minority students. Instead current literature demonstrated incongruence in evaluating the

costs and benefits associated with diversity initiatives.

III. Methodology and Design

The study examined the relationship between the funds invested in two culture centers and graduation rates of the culture centers' targeted populations at a public, 4-year, open access, research institution. Correlation analysis highlighted the significance of the relationship between the two variables. In addition the study examined to what degree differences existed in the funding of the two culture centers and to what degree differences existed in graduation rates of the targeted populations of the two culture centers including African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students at the research institution.

Research Design

The research design was a post hoc design using extant data. Annual funds spent were averaged over a six-year period. The average funds spent annually by the AAC were compared to the six- year graduation rates of all first time, degree seeking, African American undergraduate students.

The average funds spent annually by AHNA were compared to the average six-year graduation rates of all first time, degree seeking, students that belonged to groups included in AHNA's targeted population: the Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students combined.

Graduation rates were determined by taking the total number of students that graduated in that year and dividing it by the number of students enrolled in the targeted population. For years beyond 2006, the institution did not have the graduation rates reported for first time, degree-seeking students that graduated in six years or less. Instead, the total number of enrolled students was used as the divisor.

The year to date (YTD) budgets of the culture centers were used to configure the per student expenditures. The per student expenditure was determined by taking the amount the center spent in one year and dividing it by the number of students enrolled in the target populations in that one year. The per/student expenditures of the AAC were then compared to the per student expenditures of AHNA for the years 1999 to 2011.

In addition the six-year graduation rates for the minority student populations targeted by the two culture centers at the research institution were compared for the years 1999 to 2011. The minority student populations included African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students. The populations with the two largest average graduation rates, African American and Hispanic students, were compared. Data for the research IHE were gathered from the Office of the Provost and Office of Institutional Research.

Population and Sampling

The sample included the African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American undergraduate students as provided by the research institution's Office of

Institutional Research in its composite Factbooks for the years 1999 through 2011.

Graduation rates included first-time degree seeking undergraduate students that began

and completed at the research institution within six years.

Setting and Environment

The study was conducted at a comprehensive research institution in the Midwest

of the United States. Two culture centers were included in the study: AHNA and the

AAC. Both budgetary, enrollment, and graduation data included years ranging from 1999

to 2011.

Data Collection

Data were gathered from the records of the Office of Institutional Research and

from the Office of the Provost. Graduation rates and enrollment numbers of

undergraduate African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students from

1999 to 2011 were taken from the composite Factbooks released each year from the

Office of Institutional Research. The years 1999 to 2011 were used because

undergraduate student graduation rates are recorded nationally based on graduation in six

years. In order to gain the most accurate depiction of the possible relationship between

funding and graduation rates, budgetary data were averaged over six-year periods.

Budgetary data were averaged over six year periods because that figure would depict the

amount the center spent on average during a graduate's time at the institution. It was

assumed students that graduated in 2005 began their college education in 1999.

Budgetary data were provided and initially deciphered with the help of the Business Manager in the Office of the Provost.

Data Analysis

Preliminary investigation included determining if graduation rates for the students targeted by the culture centers increased during the time preceding and following the creation of the culture centers. Of interest specifically was when centers incorporated academic concerns of the targeted students into their mission statements. AHNA committed to academic concerns from the creation of the center in 1997. The AAC could not definitively determine when academic concerns became a part of the center's mission and unfortunately earlier drafts of the mission statement were lost. The newest mission statement of the AAC includes academic concerns as part of the center's current mission. Thus the initial relationship between culture centers and graduation rates could not be determined.

The National Center for Education Statistics (2011) recorded graduation rates of first time postsecondary students who obtained their bachelor's degrees within six years after starting their education in IHEs. In order to compare similar data the researcher compared the research institution's graduation data to the national data of students who were reported completing their bachelor's degrees within six years after starting. The national graduation rate averages that were used as the comparative cohort began in 2004 at public open admissions universities. The targeted populations at the research IHE who

obtained their bachelors in 2009 in six years would have also begun in 2004. The comprehensive research institution included in the study was also a public open admission institution. The cohort comparison between the national averages and institutional graduation rates is presented in the results section.

The correlation between the funds invested in the culture centers and the targeted populations' graduation rates was determined using a two tailed test ($p<.05$) Pearson's correlation coefficient. A correlation was determined using the six-year average of the cumulative money spent by both centers and the aggregate group graduation rates. A *t*-test was used to determine whether a significant difference existed in the funds invested in the culture centers at the IHE.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) of graduation rates of African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students was conducted to determine if significant differences existed amongst the graduation rates of the different targeted populations at the research institution.

The analysis is presented by each research question.

Research Question 1

Does a relationship exist between the funds invested in the two culture centers and the graduation rates of the targeted minority students?

Pearson's correlation was used to assess the relationship between funds invested in the culture centers and the graduation rates of the targeted populations. First, the

annual amount spent by the AAC was averaged over six year intervals starting with 1999

to 2004 and ending with 2006 to 2011. A correlation analysis was implemented using the

graduation rates of the African American students at the IHE. Graduation rates were

recorded by degree completion in six years. The same procedure was used to compare the

six-year average annual amount spent by AHNA and average graduation rates of the

Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students. A two-tailed correlation test was

conducted because the research hypothesis was non-directional. A critical value was

compared against the obtained value to determine whether or not the null hypothesis

could be rejected at the $p < .05$ level.

Graduation data were available from 1999 to 2011. Because graduation rates are

recorded based on degree completion in six-years, budgets were averaged over a six-year

period. Eight six-year blocks were included in this study. In order to reject the null

hypothesis for either culture center the obtained value had to be greater than the critical

value of .71 (df =6) at the significance level of $p < .05$.

Research Question 2

What is the difference among the level of funding in the two culture centers at the IHE?

A t-test for independent samples was chosen (df =24) because there were two

independent groups: the funds invested in the AAC versus the funds invested in AHNA.

The researcher predicted that a significant difference existed between the per student

expenditures for the two culture centers. A direction to the difference was not hypothesized. A two-tailed *t*-test was used.

Research Question 3

What is the difference among the graduation rates of African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students at the comprehensive research institution?

Analysis of variance (ANOVA), *F*-test, was used to assess the third research question. It was hypothesized that a significant difference existed among the minority populations. ANOVA was chosen because four groups were being examined. Single factor ANOVA was used because only one factor, graduation rates, was being compared. The obtained value was compared to the critical value. The degree of freedom between groups was 3 and within group was 47, $F(3,47)$.

Summary

The study used extant data to examine the relationship between funding of two culture centers and the targeted population's graduation rates. The study examined the difference between the funding of the two culture centers at the research institution to determine if a significant difference existed. In addition, the study determined if a significant difference existed among the graduation rates of the minority students targeted by the two culture centers at the research IHE. Data were acquired from the institution's Office of Institutional Research and the Office of the Provost. Statistical tests were run to determine the significance of the relationships and the results are presented in Chapter 4.

IV. Results

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between two culture centers' yearly average spending and graduation rates of the targeted students within six years time at a comprehensive research institution in the Midwest. Graduation rates were recorded to include full-time, first time, degree seeking undergraduate students. Data were gathered from the yearly budgets of the AAC and AHNA and the institution's graduation rates. Analysis of the collected data provided greater insight into the relationship between funding culture centers and targeted populations' graduation rates at the research institution. The study also examined the significant differences between funding of the two culture centers and graduation rates of the targeted minority student populations at the research IHE during the study period.

The study began by comparing national average graduation rates by minority populations to the graduation rates of the minority populations at the research institution. It was expected that the degree attainment levels would be similar for minority populations at the national level and the research IHE. After comparison the researcher determined that the African American and Native American student populations at the IHE graduated at a higher rate than the national average, the other populations including Asians and Hispanics graduated at a lower rate than the national average. See Table 1.

The comparison provided insight into how graduation rates of minority students at the

national level compare to the graduation rates of minority students at the research IHE.

Table 1

National and Institutional Graduation Rates (2004-2011)

	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Native American
National Average	17.00	34.40	28.40	10.60
Research IHE	22.96	13.94	21.37	24.56

The results are reported by research question.

Research Question 1

Does a relationship exist between the funds invested in the two culture centers and the

graduation rates of the targeted minority students?

Null hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between the funding the IHE invests in two

culture centers and graduation rates of students in the targeted populations of the two

culture centers.

Results

Tables 2 and 3 present funding and graduation rates for the two centers in the

study. In order to reject the null hypothesis for either center the absolute value of the

obtained p value had to be greater than the critical value of .71 (df =6) at the $p <.05$ level.

The obtained value calculated for the AAC was .01. The obtained value for AHNA

was .67. The null hypothesis was not rejected for either center. The YTD six-year average spending of the AAC did not have a significant relationship with the graduation rates of the African American students at the research institution. See Table 2.

Table 2

AAC Spending & Graduation Rates

Year	6 year mean spending	Year	Graduation Rate
1999-2004	$190,068.69	2004	27.11
2000-2005	$200,701.81	2005	25.22
2001-2006	$222,034.04	2006	23.91
2002-2007	$246,317.93	2007	26.94
2003-2008	$292,527.19	2008	29.5
2004-2009	$328,100.88	2009	22.96
2005-2010	$351,656.56	2010	25.03
2006-2011	$385,744.06	2011	27.20

Although for AHNA the null hypothesis could not be rejected at the .05 level (p <.05), the obtained value (.67) calculated between funding and graduation was much

closer to the critical value (.71) than the relationship demonstrated by the AAC (.01). See

Table 3.

Table 3

AHNA Spending & Graduation Rates

Year	Mean 6-year spending	Year	AHNA Graduation Rate (%)
1999-2004	$127,025.89	2004	19.19
2000-2005	$131,377.56	2005	19.96
2001-2006	$144,270.43	2006	18.02
2002-2007	$159,365.25	2007	20.68
2003-2008	$175,096.08	2008	19.05
2004-2009	$188,745.60	2009	17.29

Research Question 2

What is the difference between the level of funding in the two culture centers at the IHE?

Null hypothesis 2. There is no difference between per student expenditures in the AAC

and the per student expenditures of the Asian Hispanic and Native American Center.

Results

Table 4 contains the funding data for the two centers studied. In order to reject the

null hypothesis for research question 2 the obtained value had to have an absolute value

greater than the critical value of 2.06. The absolute value of the obtained value for these

data was 6.97 and the critical value for rejection of the null hypothesis presented was

2.06, meaning that there is a significant difference between the two centers' per student

expenditures and the null hypothesis could be rejected. $t(24)=6.97$ $p=.00000033$.

Although the researcher did not hypothesize which center spent more money per student,

Table 4 documents that AHNA had more funds to spend per student.

Table 4

AAC and AHNA Student Expenditures

Year	AA enrolled	AAC	AHNA enrolled	AHNA
1999	1323	$129.03	390	$265.37
2000	1290	$141.55	345	$335.14
2001	1263	$92.39	403	$290.02
2002	1278	$168.63	406	$356.26
2003	1314	$164.87	428	$337.70
2004	1468	$162.29	443	$309.20
2005	1503	$156.02	496	$261.30
2006	1518	$204.61	516	$373.99
2007	1559	$168.31	561	$369.78
2008	1816	$271.35	651	$367.80
2009	2112	$203.64	700	$323.48
2010	2277	$166.70	768	$222.85
2011	2173	$202.04	772	$204.61

Research Question 3

What is the difference among the graduation rates of African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students at the comprehensive research institution? Null hypothesis 3. There is no difference between the graduation rates of the African Americans, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students at the research IHE.

Results

Table 5 presents the data for the ethnic groups targeted for this study. In order to reject the null hypothesis for research question 3 the absolute value of the obtained value had to be greater than the critical value of 3.60. The obtained value calculated was 10.31. The degree of freedom was 3 between group and 47 within group. Because the obtained value (10.31) was higher than the critical value (3.60) the null hypothesis can be rejected. There was a significant difference among the graduation rates of the African Americans, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students at the IHE. $F(3,47)=10.31$ ($p < .001$)

Because the differences were significant, a second t-test was conducted comparing the graduation rates of the two groups highest average graduation rates, African American students and Hispanic students at the IHE. In order to reject the null hypothesis presented the obtained value (3.56) had to be greater than the critical value (2.06). Because the obtained value was greater than the critical value the study, a significant difference existed between the two populations' graduation rates. $t(24)=3.56$

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(p =.00157). The *t*-test documented that the graduation rate of Hispanic students was

significantly higher than the graduation rate of African American students.

Table 5

Targeted Minority Graduation Rates

Year	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Native American

1999	23.96	13.58	18.45	13.6
2000	21.24	10.00	15.73	22.22
2001	18.45	17.11	27.84	11.63
2002	20.03	20.16	9.62	14.29
2003	26.33	16.14	18.55	26.00
2004	27.11	21.24	15.67	18.00
2005	25.22	21.07	20.73	11.54
2006	23.91	15.55	22.58	14.89
2007	26.94	22.40	19.27	15.09
2008	29.52	18.13	21.24	16.00
2009	22.96	13.94	21.37	24.56
2010	25.03	16.03	19.58	8.51
2011	27.20	16.37	19.40	4.65

Summary

The results for research question 1 demonstrated that there was not a significant relationship between the funds either culture center spent and the graduation rates of the centers' targeted populations. The results for research question 2 demonstrated that a significant difference existed at the research IHE between the funds the centers had to spend per/student. The results for research question 3 demonstrated that a significant difference also existed among the graduation rates of the minority populations targeted by the culture centers at the research IHE.

V. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between funding of the two culture centers and the targeted student populations' graduation rates. Furthermore the study sought to determine whether a significant difference in funding existed between the two culture centers at the research institution. Lastly, the study intended to explore whether a significant difference existed among the graduation rates of the minority student populations targeted by the culture centers at the research IHE.

Statistical analysis did not identify a significant relationship between the funding of either culture center and graduation rates of the targeted minority student populations. Significant differences were found between the amount of funding available to each center and their enrollment populations. In addition the study documented a significant difference in the graduation rates of the minority student populations targeted by the culture centers at the IHE. Summary, conclusions, and recommendations are provided for each research question.

Research Question 1

Does a relationship exist between the funds invested in the two culture centers and the graduation rates of the targeted minority students?

A significant relationship did not exist between the average six-year funds spent by the AAC and the graduations rates of African American students at the IHE. A

significant relationship did not exist between the average six-year funds spent by AHNA and the graduation rates of the center's targeted population including Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students. However, given the small data set the relationship at the IHE could become significant once more data becomes available. AHNA had a stronger relationship but not at a level that was statistically significant.

The results of the study, particularly given how close AHNA was to a significant relationship, indicate that the relationship between funding the culture centers and the graduation rates of the targeted minority student populations is a relationship to continue to explore. Patton (2006) claimed Black culture centers were essential for both academic and social support for minority students given that students could not attain the same support anywhere else at the university. The author explained that the academic and social support affected Black students' success. Jones and Williams (2006) also provided qualitative evidence from focus groups that illustrated that an African American Student Center provided positive academic and social outcomes for Black students at a specific PWI in the Northwest.

IHE budgetary formulas are moving towards a performance-based model and whether performance indicators include graduation or course completion, it would be informative to know whether the centers have a positive relationship with student performance as the literature depicts (Patton, 2006; Jones & Williams, 2006). The potential relationship becomes increasingly important if the funding formula for IHEs

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changes in a way that rewards student graduation rates. The absence of a significant relationship is worth investigating, because if culture centers cannot demonstrate their impact, funding may be funneled to areas where an impact on student success is being demonstrated.

Research Question 2

What is the difference among the level of funding in the two culture centers at the IHE?

A significant difference existed in the level of funding of the culture centers at the IHE. At first review it appears that the AAC had a larger budget. In 2011 the AAC spent approximately $439,046, whereas AHNA spent $157,960. However, the research IHE had more African American students enrolled than Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students combined. Thus AHNA spent more per student with a smaller budget.

The significant difference in per/student expenditures of the two centers is more interesting in light of the findings for research question 1. AHNA had a stronger relationship than the AAC between the funds spent and the graduation rates of its targeted minority populations. AHNA had more money to spend per student. It is possible greater funds was a factor in affecting the stronger relationship demonstrated in the results of research question 1. There was a greater correlation between the funds AHNA spent and their targeted populations' graduation rates. Unfortunately there is a void in the literature about decision-making regarding funding of culture centers in IHEs, so one cannot anticipate how a center attains more or less funding each year.

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One wonders, if more funds were devoted to a culture center, would the significant relationship between the funds spent per student and the graduation rates of the targeted populations strengthen. Gonzalez and Ballysingh (2012) explored challenges university personnel struggled with when implementing diversity initiatives. The authors claimed, "They simply did not have enough financial resources to meet student demand" (p. 282). The shortfalls they discussed included capacity to maintain program quality and affect outcomes (Gonzalez & Ballysingh, 2012). Fusch (2012) expressed concern that the few projects directors could create were serving too few students to have a significant impact on student graduation rates; the author attributed unsuccessful projects to lack of funding. The above referenced findings causes one to wonder about the impact culture center budget allocations have on the graduation rates of targeted populations.

Research Question 3

What is the difference among the graduation rates of African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students at the comprehensive research institution?

There was a significant difference among the graduation rates of African American, Asian, Hispanic and Native American students at the IHE. More specifically, there was a significant difference between graduation rates of the African American and Hispanic students. The graduation rate of the African American students was higher than the national averages for the cohorts compared, with approximately 23% graduating at the IHE compared to the national average of 17%. The Asian student population

graduated fewer than 14% and the Hispanic student population graduated less than 22%; nationally approximately 34% of Asian students and over 28% of Hispanic students graduated in six years time or less at similar institutions.

It is surprising that graduation rates for African Americans were above the national average because research question 1 documented that the AAC did not have a significant relationship between the funds they spent and their targeted population's graduation rates. It is acknowledged this population could have still benefitted from the center, despite the absence of a relationship between funding and graduation. It is also acknowledged that students fail to persist for reasons beyond the control of the IHE.

On the other hand, AHNA's targeted populations may not receive the same attention as African Americans receive in AAC since the center targets very different ethnic groups with very distinct cultures. The national figures illustrated that Asian students and Hispanic students at the research IHE specifically graduated at a much lower rate than national rates. Vincent Tinto explained that "membership in academic and social communities must exist as a condition for continued persistence" (Tinto, 1993, p. 120). It is possible students in the AHNA community cannot find the same membership of community at the IHE that African American students can because the enrollment of students in their ethnic groups is drastically smaller. In *Grutter v. Bollinger (2003)* the U.S. Supreme Court allowed the University of Michigan's Law School to aim for a critical mass of minority students in admissions. As a result of this ruling, IHE's are

allowed to aim for a critical mass of minority students so that students from

underrepresented populations do not become tokens and feel isolated on college

campuses (Mccorkle & Pangilinan, 2010). A critical mass of minority students at an IHE

could also provide for the membership Tinto described as necessary for persistence.

Limitations

Although the study highlighted significant findings for some research questions the study

had the following limitations:

- The results of the study are limited to the 4-year public, open access, research

  institution in the Midwest.

- The data set was small and only included graduation rates for the years 2004 to 2011

  and undergraduate student enrollment from 1999 to 2011.

- The graduation rates were limited to first time, degree seeking, and undergraduate

  students at the research institution that graduated with a bachelor's in six years or less.

- Academic preparedness of the students being targeted was not incorporated into the

  analysis, nor was the amount of remedial courses taken by the targeted populations.

- Funding was compared, but personnel costs were included in financial data. This

  prohibited comparing program costs to program costs. If the centers had similar

  staffing the comparison of the two centers could have been compared in more detail

  to highlight similarities or differences.

- The researcher could not determine the number of students who actually visited the center. The data was not available. Also it could not be determined how often or for what purpose students used the centers.

- The study did not examine specific interventions, activities, or services delivered by the centers. The data was not available.

- The AAC targeted one racial group, but AHNA targeted three very different ethnic groups. This difference was not examined.

- Qualitative data was not collected, meaning the student voice was not represented. It was not discovered what the students who used the centers gained from their experiences with the centers and how the experience contributed to their social capital or academic success. Also it could not be determined why some students in the targeted populations never visited the centers.

- The study did not include assessments that may have occurred within the centers to track or monitor student success internally. The centers did not have assessments that pertained to the study.

- Examination of diversity initiatives at the IHE was limited to data that were specific to the culture centers. However, it would be more beneficial if the amount of funding that is funneled to all diversity initiatives at an institution could be evaluated together. Unfortunately, university budgets are not designed in a way that makes this type of examination an easy process.

Future Research

     Future research should include a more in depth examination into culture centers. For example, if budgets were similar for culture centers, personnel costs could be compared for the leadership of the centers. Programming, academic support services, and strategic interventions could be compared. Assessments could be implemented for programs specifically designed to increase student outcomes. Student populations that utilized the centers could be tracked from the time they first use the center to when they graduate. The same students could be interviewed or meet in focus groups prior to graduation to provide qualitative insight into their experiences with a culture center in college. Interviews could provide insight into why students visited the center initially and perhaps why some of their peers chose not to utilize the centers. It would also be beneficial if graduation rates of the targeted populations were regularly compared to national averages for similar cohorts so that culture centers could have a point of comparison to either work towards or compare to when requesting additional funding.

     AHNA targeted multiple populations while the AAC only targeted one population. Future research could conduct a comparison of two culture centers at different institutions where only one ethnic group is targeted. And finally a comparison of two multicultural centers' impact on student outcomes at different institutions would be particularly insightful.

Implications for the field

  The study presents key findings for both student affairs professionals, as well as higher education administrators. In the era of accountability student affairs professionals can document their impact on student success and contribution to the university mission by assessing the work that they do. Specifically in culture centers, as budgets dwindle, professionals are forced to become more competitive for fewer funds. If professionals align the work that they do directly to student success, many stakeholders would benefit. Reporting the positive outcomes could attain more funding for IHE state allocations. Professionals could help their centers attain more fiscal resources from the institution's general fund. Most importantly the students would benefit from greater services and service delivery, contributing to their academic success.

  With specific assessments of culture center programs IHE administrators could see the success or struggles of culture centers and fund them accordingly. Professionals would be held accountable for the stated mission. In addition stakeholders and politicians could hold IHEs accountable for the stated mission in terms of diversity and minority student success. By tracking the relationship between funding and diversity initiatives, professionals could evaluate programs and policies at the micro level in a meaningful way. As assessment evolves to be an expected activity in student affairs, culture centers could create evaluative plans that determine if objectives and missions are met.

Conclusion

Although the study did not show a significant relationship between the funds invested in the culture centers and the graduation rates of the targeted populations, it is a relationship that should be explored to understand why the relationship is not significant and what the IHE or centers can do it make it significant.

As IHEs continue to commit themselves to diverse populations and student success, professionals will be compelled to be diligent in how they assess their work and initiatives. As more states align larger portions of IHE funding to performance, IHEs will be forced to measure and track student success for all students. As more states align larger portions of IHE funding to performance, IHEs will benefit by understanding what and how initiatives contribute to student success. By evaluating diversity initiatives as this study did, IHEs will be able to identify effective initiatives that can be expanded and further contribute to providing all students the opportunity to succeed.

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