THE CHALLENGE OF INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

Moving Research into Practice

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Student Demographics and Equity

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Many of today's college campuses are host to unparalleled levels of America's youth continue to diversify, and high school graduation rates are relatively high in comparison to previous decades, meaning that the college-going population is more diverse than ever.[1] At the same time, barriers to access and equity are pervasive, and institutions still struggle to support a positive campus racial climate. In this chapter, I will review key trends in student demography as related to race, diversity, and gender and will comment on some of the particularly salient challenges to equity and diversity prevalent within higher education. In particular, I will identify areas of strength and challenge for Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) institutions and make suggestions for how institutions can effectively respond to these challenges. Challenges and responses to supporting racial/ethnic diversity in the student body and supporting positive race relations are listed, as well as recommendations around supporting low-income students, women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) students, and religious pluralism. I conclude by highlighting the need for institutions to adopt an equity-minded approach to addressing these issues and understanding the roots and continuing of inequality in higher education.

Demographic Trends

The American college-going population continues to diversify, more reflecting the demographics of the overall country. However, significant inequities and barriers to college access still exist, with low-income students and underrepresented minority (URM) students, a group that consists of black or African American, Latino/a, Southeast Asian American, Pacific Islander Native American, and indigenous students, being more likely than white and more affluent peers to not attend college. Low-income and URM students are also more likely to attend community college or for-profit institutions instead of traditional four-year institutions.[2] These trends are troubling due to the generally low transfer rates between community colleges and four-year institutions, as well as the high cost, low graduation rates, and on occasion, suspect practices of for-profit institutions.

One continuing trend is the increasing enrollment of women at many institutions,[3] as well as the increase in international students. Recognizing enrollment breakdowns by both race and gender unveil troubling inequities. Enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates are particularly low for URM males, in addition to challenges that males in general may be experiencing in the college pipeline.[4] Approximately one-third of students at private, four-year institutions are students of color, meaning that support for these students is critical for the sustainability of CIC institutions.[5] Encouragingly, black and Latino/a students have higher graduation rates at four-year independent colleges overall, versus four-year public and for-profit institutions.[6]

With increasing diversity comes the continual need to attend to a student body that is highly complex in its needs. Although the foundations of supporting the campus climate for diversity that emerged during the 1990s and 2000s are still relevant and needed, campuses need to evolve in how they are tailoring and implementing these policies to fit the needs of today's campuses. US high schools still maintain a high level of racial homogeneity,[7] and more and more students are coming to college with a greater knowledge around diversity issues due to exposure through the media, classmates, or other sources. At the same time, prior to college they are developmentally unprepared and unequipped to handle complex issues of diversity and difference in ways that go beyond superficial platitudes toward colorblindness or "can't everybody just get along?"[8]

Colleges need to be prepared to make significant investments to make sure their students are ready to deal with the complexities of citizenship in a diverse democracy. Such actions are both in line with the mission of many CIC institutions and are critical to ensuring the survival and relevance of institutions in a diverse and complex society. With their small size, focus on student learning, and close-knit student communities, CIC institutions are in a prime position to support the flourishing of diverse student bodies. Indeed, CIC institutions have an important role to play in supporting the overall educational pipeline and promoting equity and social mobility for diverse populations.

Challenges to Supporting a Racially Diverse Student Body

CIC institutions must continue to work hard to recruit and retain racially socioeconomically diverse student bodies. The challenges are clear: Most institutions do not reflect the diversity of the country, which is rapidly diversifying at an unprecedented rate. Most institutions, particularly private four-year institutions, also lag significantly in socioeconomic diversity.[9] At private, non-doctoral four-year institutions in 2012, 33 percent of students came from families making less than $40,000 a year, a rate that slightly exceeds the proportion of low-income students at private doctoral four-year institutions and public institutions.[10] However, there is still considerable work that needs to be done for higher education to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor.[11] Further, the events of Ferguson, the Black Lives Matter movement, and beyond have highlighted the systemic inequities that contribute to continued racial inequality in our country. Black or African American, Latino/a, Native American, Southeast Asian American, and Pacific Islander students are more likely to start their college journey in community colleges, where they face significant hurdles to transferring and completing a four-year degree.

The ability of institutions to consider race as one of numerous factors holistic admissions process has been affirmed and reaffirmed in the two *v. Texas* Supreme Court cases. While most high-profile affirmative action cases have addressed public institutions such as the University of Michigan and the University of Texas, Austin, CIC institutions that receive federal funds (i.e., basically all institutions) are affected by Supreme Court rulings. The continuously precarious legal landscape for race-conscious admissions may discourage institutions from investing significant resources in recruiting students of color. This trend presents a significant threat to the lack of racial/ethnic diversity in student bodies. A tempting option for some institutions may be to eliminate or diminish any emphasis on race, either due to the uncertain sustainability of race-conscious admissions or because of a genuine conviction that inequality is defined solely by social class in this country.

However, consideration of both race/ethnicity and social class during the admissions process is still greatly needed.[12] Research indicates that admissions policies that strongly consider *both* race/ethnicity and social class in the admissions process are more effective in boosting both racial *and* economic diversity than policies that only consider social class.[13] Further, it is critical to note that recognizing the race/ethnicity of applicants is relevant in assessing the in which SAT scores come from, given that the rate of participation in SAT preparation classes varies between racial/ethnic groups.[14] Further, disparities exist in terms of which groups benefit from taking SAT prep, even when key background characteristics are controlled for.[15]

Recommendations: Opportunities for CIC Institutions

While higher education and CIC institutions face numerous challenges to recruiting a diverse student body, they have numerous tools available to take a proactive stance toward boosting diversity. A report from the American Council on Education affirms that colleges use a variety of methods, both race-neutral and race-conscious, in seeking to bolster diversity in enrollment.[16] There is no reason that institutions need to abandon race-conscious approaches, and they can be combined with other approaches to cast the broadest net possible to recruit talented students of all races and economic backgrounds.[17] It is imperative that universities are intentional and unfaltering in their commitment to recruiting and enrolling racially and socioeconomically diverse student bodies, including the use of targeted financial aid in order to encourage enrollment and retention for diverse student populations. Some options viewed as effective by admissions practitioners in the ACE report include making the SAT/ACT optional and building articulation agreements or transfer partnerships with local community colleges.[18]

Responding to these options, given that many CIC institutions are smaller and private, they may be in an optimal position to become SAT-optional as a means of promoting equity and opening the door to a more diverse applicant pool. Jonathan Lash, the president of CIC institution Hampshire College, wrote a highly positive review in the *Washington Post* of the college's decision to go SAT-optional.[19] He noted that the overemphasis on rankings and test scores ran counter to his institution's mission and values around diversity, and shortly after enacting the policy, the percentage of students of color rose a noteworthy ten percentage points. The percentage of first-generation college students also rose from 10 percent to 18 percent as well. Lash noted other advantages to the policy shift, stating that the overall quality of the applicant pool increased. Being able to have a more focused applicant pool streamlined the admissions process and allowed reviewers to more clearly discern interest among applicants. Tellingly, the yield of applicants rose from 18 percent to 26 percent. Lash's narrative shows how intentional measures to boost diversity need not be at odds with ensuring quality; indeed, diversity enhances quality

and helps an institution better live out its mission and goals. Further, going SAT-optional is another way to combat the widespread disparities around the SAT prep methods that were mentioned earlier in this article.

Specifically seeking a mix of students from different economic backgrounds *within* each racial/ethnic group can help encourage cross-racial interaction, spurring the educational benefits of diversity.[20] Healthy interaction across race is linked to retention,[21] and thus universities should be aware of the need to recruit and retain students from different economic backgrounds from each racial/ethnic group. Retaining low-income students in particular will likely require proactive intentionality and will be further addressed in this chapter.

One population within a diverse student body that requires special attention is undocumented students. An increasing presence on college campuses, private colleges have the special opportunity to offer need-based financial aid to these students. Supporting these students requires special attention and leadership, as well as investments in making sure that there is ample support for students whose status may affect their ability to participate in campus life. With their close-knit communities that can respond more flexibly to unique student needs, CIC institutions have the special chance to play a leadership role in this area. Institutions should have visible designated staff able to address the myriad of concerns that come from immigration status, making them accessible resources for this population of students. Financial aid offices also need be attuned to the sensitivity of undocumented students' situations.

Challenges to Race Relations at Smaller Private and Liberal Arts Colleges

Most CIC institutions are either smaller private and/or liberal arts colleges, and these types of institutions have great promise for nurturing a close-knit community of students and nurturing a positive campus racial climate. However, they also present certain challenges. While diversity is certainly more than numbers, the campus racial climate is interlinked with demographic features of the student body.[22] Due to their relatively small enrollments, even if an institution is 10 percent to 20 percent students of color, the actual numbers of racial/ethnic minority students may still be relatively small. For example, if an institution of 4,000 students has a 5 percent black or African American student population, that would be 200 black students. In contrast, a large state institution of 20,000 may have only 5 percent black or African American students, but that would result in 1,000 black students—enough to form multiple niche

communities. Thus, the small size of the racial/ethnic student populations at smaller institutions may feel stifling or challenging to students of color.[23] Many CIC institutions are also located in places that are somewhat limited in racial/ethnic diversity, offering fewer off-campus options for students to find support and community. Thus, institutions must work hard to foster an intentional sense of community on campus, creating programs and initiatives that are attractive to students of diverse backgrounds.

However, recent years have seen a growing number of racialized and racist incidents on college campuses, along with the rise of social media technology, which enables a rapid-fire dissemination of such incidents across campuses and even nationwide. Beyond overt instances of racism, institutions need to learn how to diagnose more subtle manifestations of racism on college campuses. Some CIC institutions are religiously affiliated, and researchers have documented that the dominant form of discourse among white Christians is colorblindness—a tendency to downplay or even refuse to recognize the continuing significance of race.[24] Such an approach is highly limited in its ability to diagnose and address inequities related to race.[25]

Recommendations for Supporting Positive Race Relations
Response to Hate Crimes

In the case of overtly racist incidents, colleges should implement protocols for both reporting and responding to harmful hate crimes and race-related incidents. These incidents not only have a detrimental effect on those who are immediately targeted, they can also have a broader chilling effect on the campus, sending the message that diverse populations are not welcome. Unfortunately these incidents continue on college campuses across the nation, and colleges must be ready to send a strong message that they are unacceptable.

Response to Subtle Racism, Supporting Student Activism, and Dialoging Openly on Race

Changing a culture around how individuals talk about race and identity on a campus is challenging but possible. Creating and supporting both curricular and co-curricular opportunities to have a dialogue about race in an open fashion is important. One type of program with an impressive track record is the intergroup dialogue program, where students are brought together over the course of a semester to hold a dialogue on a component of identity.[26] Groups are typically split between majority and minority status members (e.g.,

whites and students of color, low-income and upper-income students, men and women). Throughout the semester, facilitators help students to discuss openly issues that are typically swept under the rug, while accompanying their efforts with relevant academic readings and coursework.

Colleges can also model discourse around more subtle manifestations of racism by holding campuswide dialogues, forums, and—in the case of religiously affiliated colleges—chapel or other worship service programming. Provocative texts such as *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander (on the mass incarceration of black men) or *American Apartheid* by Douglas Massey (on housing segregation) could be adopted as campuswide readings or first-year book projects. Getting students to understand how systemic inequality over the years has led to current-day manifestations of inequality such as the prison industrial complex, the underrepresentation of faculty of color, and K-12 educational inequality is critical to helping them understand the world around them. All of these activities can help foster more complex ways of thinking and analyzing the world, a goal vital to CIC institutions.

Recent years have seen a renaissance of student activism in response to persisting racial inequities. Student activism and administrators have historically had a complex relationship, but educators should recognize that activism represents a critical opportunity for learning and development, as students grapple with how to respond to campus and societal injustices. Indeed, college campuses are a crucial training ground as students deliberate on how to participate in a diverse democracy.

Support for Ethnic Student Organizations

Supporting student organizations that cater to particular racial/ethnic groups (e.g., Black Student Alliance, Asian American Student Association) is an important part of fostering a healthy campus racial climate. Contrary to popular belief, these groups do not foster "self-segregation"; instead, they are either statistically unrelated to students' interactions across race and have even been linked to significantly higher levels of cross-racial interaction overall, and higher rates of interracial friendship for Latino/a students.[27] Students of color have by far the highest rates of cross-racial interaction and interracial friendship on college campuses,[28] and they need time among peers of a similar racial/ethnic background as a way of refueling and having some same-race community, which can be a source of strength as they seek to navigate interacting with students of other races. It seems counterintuitive, but supporting ethnic stu-

dent organizations is needed to *avoid* campus balkanization; they are rarely the source. These organizations often work together, creating other opportunities for interracial cooperation and coalition building. Having senior-level campus administrators show support for such groups by attending their programs and events on occasion can send a strong signal to students of color that their presence is both welcomed and valued.

Administrative Support

Creating and supporting an administrative structure to support campus diversity and equity efforts is essential. Due to budget constraints, it may be tempting for institutions to consider consolidating administrative roles related to diversity; for instance, reassigning the responsibilities of a chief diversity officer to another position. Another critique of administrative positions related to diversity is that they relegate the responsibilities related to diversity to a single person (or small group of people) when in fact diversity is the responsibility of everyone. Cultivating a healthy campus climate for diversity cannot be, and should never be, the job of just one person or even a small group of people. That said, supporting campus diversity requires so much intentionality and leadership that it is essential that there are people throughout campus whose sole role is to provide leadership and centralization for diversity-related efforts, and these same individuals can also work throughout campus to make sure that other units on campus have support for diversity-related programming and initiatives. A chief diversity officer (CDO) position is particularly critical to ensure that advancing diversity is an integral part of institutional culture and top-level priorities.[29] Such a position can provide valuable coordination across campus and advance and support faculty diversity. Having a high-visibility, senior-level (ideally cabinet-level) position sends a strong message to the campus community about institutional priorities and investments.

In addition to a CDO position, institutions need multiple individuals and programmatic units running and coordinating support for diversity efforts across campus. It is essential to maintain positions for diversity-related co-curricular engagement. We encourage institutions to think beyond just one position to meaningfully address the unique needs that exist on their campus. We encourage CIC institutions to realize that supporting diversity at the co-curricular level cannot just be a one-person job, even on a small campus. Institutions should create infrastructure for ensuring that staff across campus receive training and continuing education around diversity-related issues be-

cause diversity affects the fabric and day-to-day operations of every facet campus life.[30]

Diversity and Academic Affairs

At the vast majority of institutions, the diversity of the professoriate needs constant monitoring and proactive outreach to support the recruitment, development, and retention of faculty of color and women. CIC institutions are known for their commitment to students and intimate learning environments. Faculty of color in particular are known for greatly enriching academic environments with not just traditional forms of scholarship (i.e., publishing in academic outlets), but using scholarship to give back to students, communities, and society—all forms of creativity that can contribute to the academic climate that many CIC institutions seek to foster.[31] Retaining faculty of color and women needs to be a special priority in fields in which they tend to be underrepresented, such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics departments. Leadership from the CDO, provost's office, and academic departments is critical to making this happen. The provost's office in particular should incentivize the hiring of diverse faculty in order to send a clear message that faculty diversity is a key priority. Clear and supportive parental leave policies and on-campus daycare facilities are also essential to retaining talent and supporting faculty diversity, and too many institutions have lagged behind in proactively supporting the needs of diverse families.[32]

In addition to diversifying the faculty, it is critical to provide academic infrastructure for diversity-related curriculum. At many institutions, course requirements related to the critical and nuanced study of diverse populations are a beginning step to making sure that all students have the opportunity to study these issues in the classroom. Strengthening women's or gender studies and ethnic studies (African American, Latino/a, Native and indigenous peoples, and Asian American studies) courses is critical in ensuring that students have opportunities to participate in courses that reflect their own history and heritage, as well as to learn about populations that are different from their own. Such courses also have a strong tradition of incorporating service learning and civic engagement components, reflecting unique partnerships between academic and student affairs that can spur deep and meaningful learning among students. These types of courses are a natural fit for CIC institutions, given their historic commitment to the liberal arts and student learning.

Recommendations on Supporting Low-Income Students

Earlier in the chapter, challenges to recruiting and retaining low-income students were listed as the key need in supporting a diverse student body. Small private colleges need to be proactive about supporting low-income students. It is critical that colleges build partnerships with high-need high schools to build a pipeline of students who would not otherwise consider their institution.[33] Because CIC institutions are private, the initial high cost of tuition will likely cause "sticker shock" among families. Education and awareness around financial aid and scholarship opportunities are crucial in order to encourage applicants from a diverse pool of students. Research indicates that low-income and first-generation students are more likely to be familiar with "name brand" institutions (e.g., Harvard, MIT), but less familiar with institutions like small private colleges such as those found in the CIC.[34] Further, low-income students are less likely to have access to adequate college counseling.[35] The combination of these forces means that CIC institutions must be proactive about reaching out to lower-income populations through partnerships with high schools and communities.

Once low-income students are enrolled, institutions must be proactive about the ways they may be more vulnerable due to the cumulative costs of day-to-day college life. Colleges may consider hosting food pantries and taking other measures to address food insecurity among students.[36] Special funds to assist with purchases such as textbooks or even winter coats send a message to students that colleges care about their holistic needs and recognize that many students cannot take it for granted that their financial needs will be met by their families. Making social class part of everyday conversations on campus can help break the norms set by the dominant culture of privilege. Addressing low-income students' sense of belonging is also vital. In one social psychology-based intervention, an institution had more advanced students address new first-year college students about some of the fears and insecurities they had when starting college as first-generation students.[37] Critically, the older students discussed how they were able to persevere and overcome challenges incrementally, finding their place in college. The intervention was linked with participating first-generation students being more likely to seek out campus resources and having higher grade point averages. They also had higher levels of psychological well-being, perceived social fit, and appreciation for diversity,

showing the impact on the psychological transition to college.[38] Overall, the experiment demonstrates the relevance of addressing the more subjective but still highly relevant emotions around belonging in the collegiate setting that affect success for traditionally disenfranchised populations. As we have noted, such interventions can play a pivotal role in closing the social-class achievement gap.

Recommendations on Supporting a Positive Climate for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Women

In addition to racial and economic diversity, college campuses across the country have been constantly challenged to become welcoming places for LGBTQ students. More recent years have also raised questions about how colleges are equipped to support the unique needs of transgender students, and it is important to have university staff tasked to keep abreast of the constantly changing national conversation and movement around how to best support these students. As noted for race-related incidents, it is essential for universities to clarify both their reporting and response protocols for responding to hate crimes or incidents that target these communities.

Related to transgender students, institutional reforms can include, but are not limited to, the allocation of gender-neutral bathrooms or ensuring that no single-usage bathroom is gender-specific and gender-neutral or mixed-gender housing in residence life. Normalizing the use of preferred pronouns is another step institutions can take toward cultivating a culture where conversations around gender identity are common. Employee benefits for faculty and staff must seek to equitably address benefits for same-sex households and make sure that human resources units are equipped to support both individuals and families. Student affairs educators can support robust programming and creative dialogues that can help bring awareness, understanding, and critical thinking to LGBTQ students. Colleges should also be aware of the intersectional identities of their students; that is, the differences in the experiences between LGBTQ students of color and white students, or how the experiences of LGBTQ students may differ markedly depending on social class.

CIC institutions include a number of religiously affiliated colleges who are just beginning to address the existence of LGBTQ students on their campuses, and it is important to provide safe spaces for student development. LGBTQ alumni groups are springing up at religiously affiliated institutions, and student organizations are seeking the right to gather and recognize their exis-

tence. There are unique challenges to supporting LGBTQ students at these institutions given the evolving conversations around sexual orientation and identity. Instead of denying the existence of this issue, which could lead to a seriously negative climate for mental health for these students, religiously affiliated CIC institutions might consider how to support LGBTQ students in their particular contexts and have a dialogue with students to better understand their needs. At the end of the day, all institutions exist, in theory, to support the holistic development of their students—mind, body, and spirit. It behooves religiously affiliated institutions to not deny the existence of a crucial aspect of students' identities and instead begin to ask critical questions about what it means to care for one another in a community as students prepare to serve others in a diverse democracy.

Additionally, sexual assault prevention is a top and unavoidable priority for campuses, and Title IX regulations require that universities address this tremendous need. For too long colleges have failed to lead proactively in this area, but recent years have brought national media attention on the continuing barriers to promoting a safe environment for women. It is essential for CIC institutions to take ownership of this issue, demonstrating leadership and clear support that a climate detrimental to women will not be tolerated. Once again, intersectionality is relevant in that unique challenges may affect the safety and well-being of women of color, and institutions should ensure that sexual assault prevention is not simply delivered through a one-size-fits-all model. Women continue to make strides on college campuses, and at many campuses they have been outpacing male students in enrollment and graduation. However, a more nuanced look unveils that female students still face unique challenges and barriers in the college arena. Colleges should be proactive about supporting and encouraging female enrollment and success in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics majors, areas that still tend to be male-dominated.

Recommendations for Fostering Religious Pluralism

The last section of focus under the umbrella of diversity and equity may be surprising to some, but recent years have seen a rise in high-profile incidents of anti-Semitism on campus, and just as colleges have struggled for many years to support racially diverse student populations, it is clear that supporting religious pluralism is also a consistent, albeit less outwardly visible, challenge. Numerous thorny issues related to deeply held convictions persist, be it beliefs around

sexual orientation or the religious-political dimensions of conflicts in the Middle East. Some of these issues play out uniquely for religious communities and others cut across different faith traditions. A general consensus is that most colleges are ill equipped to recognize the relevance of religion and religious pluralism, let alone support it and harness it as one of richness in a diverse community. Engagement in interfaith activities has been linked to numerous positive outcomes,[39] and they are key to preparing students for citizenship in a diverse society.

Furthermore, recognizing the importance of religion and spirituality in students' lives is critical to supporting the needs of racially diverse populations, with many students of color reporting high levels of religious and spiritual engagement.[40] Religious and spiritual engagement are positive predictors of psychological well-being across racial/ethnic populations, and faith can play a particularly important role in fostering resilience among students of color.[41] Opening dialogue around religion and spirituality can also open the door for conversations around meaning and purpose, providing rich frameworks to help students explore issues of vocation, calling, and character as they seek to construct lives that will serve others.

There are no easy answers, but it is necessary for university leaders to be aware of the importance of supporting religious pluralism as part of a broader campus climate of diversity. Supporting religious pluralism does not mean watering down one's own faith or convictions or espousing a generic "lets all get along" rhetoric. It can actually lead to great moments of conflict, but it also opens the door to teach students how to engage in difficult dialogues with civility, understanding, and grace, all critically needed for citizenship in a diverse democracy. Organizations such as the InterFaith Youth Corps have taken leadership on this issue and have numerous materials and trainings that can support student affairs educators and faculty on how to engage around these issues both inside and outside of the classroom.

Religious diversity and pluralism are worth addressing because many faith traditions espouse frameworks around justice and equity. CIC institutions that are religiously affiliated in particular should pay careful attention to these principles and seek to live them out in their specific context. Such frameworks can provide a powerful foundation for students and educators to recognize the importance of diversity, equity, and justice for all students. Nonsectarian CIC institutions can also encourage students to recognize the mandate for justice

that cuts across faith traditions, and spur conversations about how one's worldview paradigm connects to questions of meaning and purpose.

Conclusion: A Call to Equity-Mindedness

At one point it may have seemed that diversity was another to-do item on a task list that once completed could be checked off forever. However, it is clear that not only are needs related to student demography, equity, and climate never-ending, demanding constant attention, the needs themselves are always evolving as diverse student populations continue to evolve and new concerns arise. Given these key issues surrounding today's students, it is important for CIC institutions to adopt an equity-based perspective, or "equity-mindedness,"[42] to understand the challenges facing twenty-first-century student bodies. Equity-mindedness refers to the importance of looking at broader institutional, structural, and sociohistorical realities in understanding inequality, instead of putting the blame for such inequities on individual students and/or a particular cultural group's supposed deficiencies.[43] When addressing disparities that exist in college enrollment and graduation rates of diverse populations, it is easy for educators to invoke a deficit-based perspective, viewing disparities as largely stemming from the failure of the student or the student's culture to support enrollment and retention. In contrast, equity-mindedness takes into account "the sociohistorical context of exclusionary practices and racism in higher education and the impact of power asymmetries on opportunities and outcomes for [students of color]. Individuals who are equity-minded attribute unequal outcomes to institution-based dysfunctions."[44] Such a perspective widens understanding of the complex sociohistorical forces that influence student trajectories in higher education, and also emphasizes the institution's role and responsibility in ensuring student outcomes. In particular, Bensimon and colleagues[45] demonstrate how the prevalence of deficit-based perspectives among educators and practitioners have an adverse effect on students.

For CIC institutions, particularly those struggling to recruit and retain student body diversity, an equity-minded perspective can be a crucial paradigm shift. Instead of wondering what is wrong with students, or why certain populations might be lagging behind others, an equity-minded perspective shifts the responsibility to the institution. It requires institutions to understand their role—both the possibilities and potential limitations—in a society that continues to be stratified by race and class. Adopting an equity-minded perspective

can disrupt the harmful myths relating diverse student populations on campus, such as the misconception that they or their families do not value or support education. It helps broaden one's focus beyond the student as the sole agent in his or her success to unveiling the complex ecosystem of social forces—from financial aid policy to community resources to employment opportunities—that shape the ability of students to flourish on college campuses. With students of color making up one-third (and growing) of the enrollment at private, four-year colleges,[46] recognizing the broader social forces that affect their success and engagement in higher education is vital.

Taking an equity-minded perspective into account, this chapter has highlighted the institution's responsibility in promoting a positive campus racial climate and making institutional-level reforms to better support diverse student populations. Prioritizing these issues and considering structural and institution-wide reforms is a first step in making sure that a commitment to diversity is accompanied by a commitment to equity. To further an equity-minded perspective on campus, CIC institutions might consider resources like the Center for Urban Education's Equity Scorecard, which could help facilitate critical conversations between faculty and practitioners to uncover the subtle but influential attitudes around students that hinder and inhibit success. Institutions have used the Equity Scorecard to help identify the barriers that deter student success and generate campus planning to address inequities between groups.

In line with equity-mindedness, institutions bear the majority of the responsibility for student success, and there is a particular need to invest resources in the students who may be a numeric minority but are greatly deserving of attention and time. In fact, under an equity-minded framework, these students may even need a greater amount of time and investment given the historic injustices that have been perpetuated throughout history and adversely affected educational opportunity and success. This overview can only provide a bird's-eye view of some of the issues paramount to campuses today, and certainly these issues (and others) will play out at different institutions due to campus context, history, and other dynamics. Institutions should consider how their unique campus cultures and institutional histories will shape both the way that diversity-related issues have manifest themselves on campus, as well as institutional responses in the past, present, and future. In a time when our country is seeing unprecedented diversity but our colleges and universities have not yet caught up, the urgency behind recruiting and retaining diverse and equitable student bodies is clear.

NOTES

1. "Racial and Ethnic Representation."
2. Ibid.
3. Sax, *Gender Gap in College*.
4. Harris III and Wood, "Student Success."
5. Council of Independent Colleges, "Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity."
6. Council of Independent Colleges, "Student of Color Graduation Rates."
7. Orfield, "Reviving the Dream."
8. Gurin et al., "Diversity and Higher Education."
9. Carnevale and Rose, "Socioeconomic Status, Race/Ethnicity."
10. Council of Independent Colleges, "Enrollment by Family Income."
11. Still, the percentage of students who come from affluent families ($120,000 or more of annual income) exceeds the percentage of low-income students across institutional type.
12. Park, Denson, and Bowman, "Does Socioeconomic Diversity."
13. Reardon et al., "Can Socioeconomic Status Substitute?"
14. Park, "It Takes a Village."
15. Byun and Park, "Academic Success."
16. Espinosa, Gaertner, and Orfield, "Race, Class, and College Access."
17. Reardon et al., "Can Socioeconomic Status Substitute?"
18. Espinosa, Gaertner, and Orfield, "Race, Class, and College Access."
19. Strauss, "What One College Discovered."
20. Park, Denson, and Bowman, "Does Socioeconomic Diversity."
21. Chang, "Does Racial Diversity Matter?"
22. Garces and Jayakumar, "Dynamic Diversity."
23. Park, "Are We Satisfied?"
24. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*.
25. Park, "Race and the Greek System."
26. Zúñiga, Naagda, and Sevig, "Intergroup Dialogues."
27. Bowman and Park, "Interracial Contact on College Campuses"; Kim, Park, and Koo, "Testing Self-Segregation."
28. Park, "Clubs and the Campus Racial Climate."
29. Williams and Wade-Golden, *Chief Diversity Officer*.
30. Smith, *Diversity's Promise*.
31. Antonio, "Faculty of Color Reconsidered."
32. Ward and Wolf-Wendel, *Academic Motherhood*.
33. Espinosa, Gaertner, and Orfield, "Race, Class, and College Access."
34. Hoxby and Avery, "Missing."
35. McDonough, *Choosing Colleges*.
36. Aries, *Race and Class Matters*.
37. Stephens, Hamedani, and Destin, "Closing the Social-Class Achievement Gap."
38. Ibid.
39. Mayhew, Rockenbach, and Bowman, "Connection between Interfaith Engagement."
40. Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, *Cultivating the Spirit*.
41. Park and Millora, "Psychological Well-Being."
42. Bensimon, Harris III, and Rueda, "Mediational Means."
43. Ibid.

44. Ibid., 9.
45. Ibid.
46. Council of Independent Colleges, "Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity."

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REACTION
Mary B. Marcy

The changing profile of contemporary students is a major issue for all people working in higher education and has particular resonance on Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) campuses that have long sought to provide opportunity and access. In this chapter, Julie J. Park provides a good summary of the challenges that all institutions of higher education face as the student profile evolves. She rightly highlights how an increasingly diverse student body demands that campuses assess their ability to support student success. Her comprehensive definition of diversity beyond race, which includes sexual orientation, gender identity, and religion, brings a broad perspective to the work.

Park lists numerous recommendations to support a racially diverse student body: addressing race relations on campus, encouraging supportive race relations, supporting low-income students, fostering religious pluralism, and creating a positive climate for sexual orientation, gender identity, and women. Her overview provides a valuable tool kit for leaders of colleges and universities, outlining not only challenges but also highlighting some of the most promising responses to supporting a diverse student body.

Many of these recommendations are fine examples of how institutions can provide broad opportunity. There are, however, two significant challenges for implementing these ideas at CIC institutions. First, approaches to diversity are most effective when undertaken in an integrated and comprehensive manner, no more so than at small independent colleges. Second, many of the approaches

advocated in this chapter would demand significant new resources for implementation, also a challenge for many CIC institutions. Thus, I invite readers to embrace the outline of her well-researched chapter and think innovatively about their own campuses when considering implementation.

Most CIC institutions cannot approach these issues by adding staff, new programs, or physical space. The myriad challenges facing CIC institutions (including fiscal pressures, increased compliance, and enrollment concerns) require creativity and innovation more than addition. But the changing student demographic also represents a particular opportunity for CIC institutions.

The research presented by Park reinforces the notion that changing student profiles can be a path for CIC institutions to reconnect and reaffirm our mission. Many of our institutions were founded with a strong religious or values-based philosophy that challenged us to educate and elevate students in a spirit of inclusivity; today, we know that the percentage of underrepresented and low-income students at CIC institutions exceeds that of the rest of higher education. Our missions provide the framework for evolving in response to rapidly changing student demographics.

Park accurately describes CIC institutions' small scale, their focus on student learning, and their close-knit communities as attributes that will support diversity and inclusion on campus. Our relatively modest size allows for both nimbleness and integration. For example, interdisciplinary learning can be an effective model for diverse populations, as it invites faculty and students to make connections across difference. Similarly, service learning and co-curricular programming at CIC institutions have been shown to elevate student progress in areas such as cultural awareness tolerance, empathy, and the ability to relate to others. At many CIC institutions, including my own, such high-impact practices are central to the learning experience, fully integrated into the institution, and are particularly effective in supporting the educational attainment of diverse students.

It is important to read Park's recommendations with an eye toward the spirit of community central to our campuses, and to approach with caution those responses that will build or reinforce silos. For example, her recommendations to consider test-optional admissions and strengthen partnerships with community colleges are areas in which CIC campuses have been successful, and which can continue to strengthen their outreach. Her recommendations for providing leadership through a chief diversity officer are certainly possible, and this is an approach my own campus embraces. However, it is challenging

for many CIC institutions to create multiple levels of diversity leadership and programming, given size and budget realities. Instead, my campus, as well as other highly diverse CIC campuses, can be most successful in ensuring broad ownership of diversity work not only through education but also through clear action. For example, consciously working to create a faculty, administration, and staff profile that reflects the diversity of our student body is a tangible means of supporting a diverse student body.

Park's call for "equity-mindedness" is particularly welcome in this context. Citing the work of Estela Bensimon and the Equity Scorecard Project at the University of Southern California, we are challenged to look at student outcomes as a pattern of institutional responsibility rather than only student responsibility. This approach requires that we adapt our systems and approaches to embrace the realities of today's students.

Many of our campuses have more diversity in the student body than in the communities in which we are located. Park mentions that this context means "fewer off-campus options for students to find support and community." Her point is well taken, but I would suggest that it is a larger issue than merely having fewer off-campus options. At Dominican University of California, our students come to a campus located in an affluent suburb populated primarily by older, more homogenous residents. Our diverse students are somewhat out of place in the neighborhood and may be treated differently by businesses, the police, and others. For these reasons, it is imperative for us to cultivate strong and proactive external relations with our neighbors in order to expand the university community to be a neighborhood community, which includes our students. At Dominican, this means student-neighbor meals, invitations to attend students' events, and regular communications with the neighborhood association. Our neighbors have offered to provide students with career advice and mentoring. In a partnership with neighbors, our students are better served and have the opportunity to reach across generational and class differences. Service learning projects and community engagement work tie our students to the local community and provide further forums for discussion across difference.

We have also actively established partnerships with the local police. We recently developed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) regarding sexual assault investigations, are in discussions to create a similar MOU regarding racial issues, and this work has led to other on-campus programming, providing students the opportunity to have a dialogue with the police department. This new partnership with the local police demonstrates how our institutions

can be creative and innovative in our approaches to the multiple issues we face. This partnership is an opportunity for our students to engage in a meaningful dialogue on a national issue that affects many of them. For the police, they can begin to understand the fear and frustration experienced by communities of color when confronted by police officers. This programming is the kind of co-curricular dialogue that can readily occur on small campuses and leads to other discussions and student activity.

This chapter highlights an issue central to our campuses' identity and success: how we can effectively educate an increasingly diverse student body. The research and context are valuable tools for embracing the students of today—and of tomorrow.