

STRATEGIC DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP

ACTIVATING CHANGE AND
TRANSFORMATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Foreword by William G. Tierney

for every member of their faculty. A central fund might be generated to provide support for department chairs and deans to pursue minority faculty and women in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields that goes beyond the normal search processes. Every search committee might have to prove that it is casting a broad net in its searches, maximizing the chances for achieving greater diversity. Finally, every new diverse faculty member might receive a mentor and have the option of participating in a yearlong leadership development series that includes access to special workshops designed to increase his or her productivity. This type of effort would touch a broad swath of the institution in deep and meaningful ways. Box 4.3 provides a description of a compelling set of gender-based transformational change efforts being pursued by the NSF.

BOX 4.3

The National Science Foundation Advancement of Women in Academic Science and Engineering Careers Institutional Transformation Program

Over the next several years, one of the places that may prove ripe for understanding the process of achieving transformational diversity change is in the work funded by the NSF Advancement of Women in Academic Science and Engineering Careers (ADVANCE) program. The primary goal of the ADVANCE program is to develop systemic approaches to increasing the representation and advancement of women in STEM careers, thereby contributing to the development of a more diverse science and engineering workforce. The program emphasizes creative strategies and approaches, including a specific category referred to as *Institutional Transformation*, which are awards that support comprehensive programs for institution-wide change.

Institutional Transformation projects include a research component designed to study the effectiveness of the proposed innovations to contribute to the knowledge base informing academic institutional transformation. With transformation awards at Brown University, the University of Arizona, the University of Wisconsin, and several others, this five-year project should reveal a number of lessons regarding the diversity transformation process.

Some of the ADVANCE strategies include (a) search committee training programs, (b) campus climate survey projects, (c) developing New Women in Science and Engineering research centers, (d) equity workshops, (e) targeted mentoring initiatives, (f) department-level diversity committees, (g) family-friendly policies, and (h) policies designed to enhance the climate of inclusion for women.

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Given that this five-year effort is receiving hundreds of millions of dollars in support, with more than 30 institutions receiving awards, this project is ripe for providing a number of lessons regarding the institutional diversity transformation process. Diversity champions should watch the maturation of this effort to learn about the successful techniques that were used at the institutions funded by the NSF.

Source: National Science Foundation (2008).

Strategy as the Key Building Block of Institutional Transformation

Critical to developing a transformative diversity change agenda is an understanding of the difference between a strategy and the tactics that support it. Strategy centers on knowing where you want to go and focusing your organizational energy to accomplish a particular set of goals to advance the institution's diversity agenda. CDOs, diversity requirements, diversity symposia, targeted recruitment efforts, urban marketing efforts, domestic partner benefit programs, ethnic and gender studies departments, LGBT safe zone initiatives, women in science and engineering efforts, and study abroad programs are all examples of the tactical building blocks of strategy. Frankly, too many of our diversity efforts take place in the tactical realm, lacking an overarching strategic plan. Although important in themselves, these initiatives, if not integrated in an overarching strategy, will exist in disconnected silos, a set of free-floating and truncated possibilities. This is not to say that every diversity effort must live under the same organizational structure. To the contrary, one of the strengths of higher education is the creativity and entrepreneurial possibility that exists because of its decentralization. What it does suggest is a need to understand how all of the pieces of the diversity puzzle fit together and how organizational restructuring and creative partnerships can foster a whole that is greater than its parts.

To accomplish our objectives in a world of limited resources and expanding needs, we simply must coordinate our efforts through a shared vision. Efforts that are linked collaboratively can obtain greater resources and achieve greater recognition than efforts that are not coordinated. The distinction between strategy and tactics is key, because for too long institutions have developed discrete diversity tactics without thinking through how these tactics come together to support an institution's overall diversity objectives. Strategy is about developing a sustained vision for structural and cultural change that connects the dots between tactical elements like programs,

policies, and resources. One reason for outlining the different types of organizational diversity dimensions that exist in higher education is to equip campus leaders with the appropriate conceptual frameworks for understanding where campus diversity capabilities can be found and how they complement each other. Box 4.4 provides an example of a campus-wide diversity strategy that fosters democratic outcomes for all students.

BOX 4.4 A Democratic Outcomes Strategy

One example that comes to mind is the goal of ensuring that all students have a baseline diversity competence that allows them to view the world from multiple perspectives and take the position of others when interacting in diverse groups and teams. To reach this goal of establishing what P. Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin (2002) refer to as *democratic outcomes*, an institution must develop and align capacity to build a clear and cohesive agenda to accomplish this goal.

This might mean developing a new general education diversity requirement anchored to a clear set of student learning outcomes that every student must fulfill; establishing a new summer diversity leadership institute for the campus's most high-profile student leaders; building a course credit intergroup dialogue program collaboratively between the various departments and the campus multicultural center; and relentlessly marketing the program to students, ensuring that a large number participate.

The strategy might also include establishing a diversity-themed common book reading project that all incoming students would read before enrolling as first-year and transfer students. Another goal might be to ensure that more than 75 percent of all students have a global experience before graduating, and to make securing resources to meet this goal a major part of the institution's next capital campaign fund-raising effort.

Taken collectively and assessed over time, these tactical moves are an example of how an institution might ensure a high level of democratic outcomes among their students. *Strategy*, in its most traditional sense, is defined as the ability to create linear alignment between goals, structures, and models of organizational behavior (Bolman & Deal, 2003). And although this is not the only way to develop strategy, it is where every leader should begin in his or her efforts to provide strategic diversity leadership on campus.

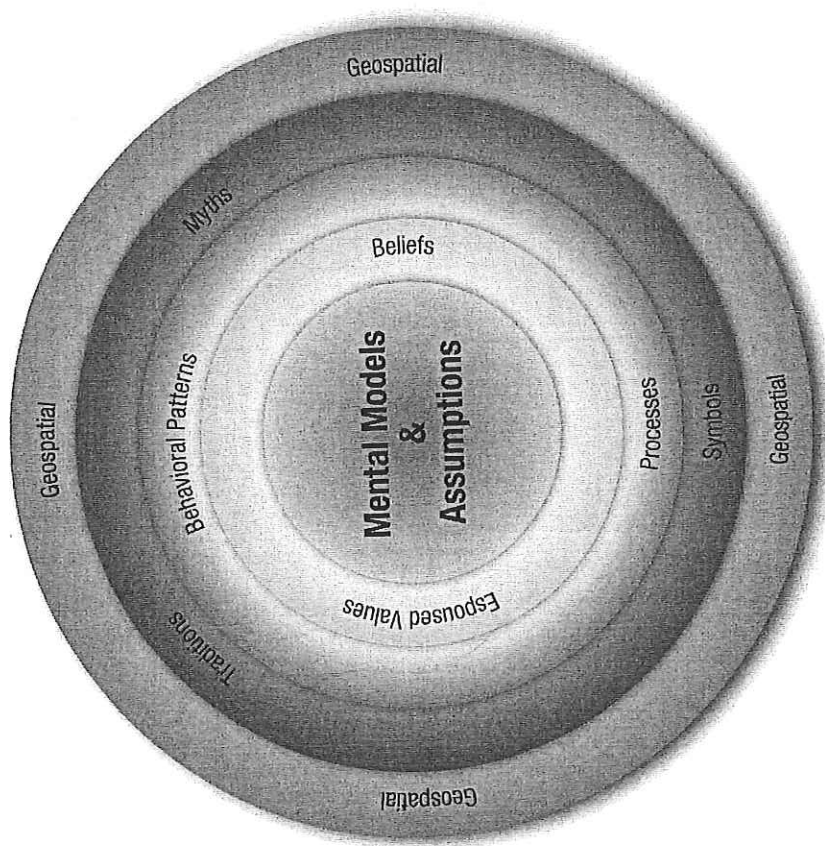
Transformational Change Must Shift the Institutional Culture

Change that makes diversity a matter of excellence is neither a simple adjustment nor an isolated event: it must be transformative. To truly achieve transformative change we must address the institutional structure and culture. Culture is the most challenging organizational attribute and is perhaps best understood as a piece of fruit with a soft outer membrane and tough inner core. As described by Edgar Schein (1985), cultures have multiple overlapping layers. On its outermost, superficial level, culture is easy to see, manipulate, and change. Superficial changes to a campus culture might include inserting minority student pictures into brochures and websites, relocating the multicultural center to the heart of campus, or developing a new mural that depicts diverse traditions in a student union "heritage room." Although superficial cultural changes can be complicated by campus politics and competing interests over resources, this level of change is typically easy to accomplish. Figure 4.3 shows how various cultural spheres can overlap.

The second level, composed of traditions, myths, and symbols, is less tangible and represents patterns of thought and action that are more unique to a specific campus. Examples include graduation ceremonies and well-known campus stories and events. Here the cultural change effort may center on creating LGBT graduation or orientation events as part of a strategy to include and celebrate this group on campus. Another example is to infuse diversity into academic life by featuring a minority author in a common book reading program that involves the entire freshman class and their professors.

The third level is composed of routine, "everyday" behavioral patterns and organizational processes that are even harder to change. Some examples include how faculty search committees often exclude ethnically and racially diverse job candidates in their standard recruitment policies. Rather than casting a broad net and proactively seeking out diverse faculty candidates, many search committees still only make recruitment calls to trusted colleagues whom they have worked with for years. Or they fail to post their jobs in a publication like *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* or attend meetings like the National Society of Black Physicists' Annual Conference. Because they are unable to change their normal patterns and behaviors, many hiring and human resource personnel are unable to diversify their applicant pool, and thus by extension the diversity of the faculty.

FIGURE 4.3
Multiple Models of Organizational Culture



Source: Adapted from Schein, 1985.

This level and the fourth level of institutional culture, espoused values and beliefs, most closely reflect the deeply embedded values and beliefs of an organization's culture. It is at this level that diversity efforts are most commonly resisted because they challenge not just the institutional culture of colleges and universities, but also the pervasive cultural assumptions held by larger society. These broader assumptions include measuring student "potential" through standardized test scores alone, making tenure decisions on a cryptic and arcane set of expectations, or maintaining exclusionary

campus traditions for their own sake. For many people, even those with good intentions, promoting diversity is unconsciously associated with lowering standards or meeting quotas. The cultural values gap between the current crop of institutional leaders and today's generation of students is especially wide. More often than not, it is the senior administration and staff who hold stubbornly to a set of symbols, myths, traditions, and behaviors that do not affirm diversity. It is for this reason that creating transformational change is so difficult.

To promote transformational change, the institutional culture must shift at several levels. The task is to identify ways to create a powerful vision and then implement concrete programs and policies that will lead to transformational change. Otto Scharmer, a founding codirector of the Society for Organizational Learning, argues that the key condition for transforming an organization's culture is to find the strategic leverage point. Drawing on his father's work as a farmer, Scharmer (2007) notes that each culture has two worlds, "the visible realm above the surface and the invisible realm below" (p. 7). The leverage point is "at the interface between the two worlds, where they meet, connect, and intertwine" (p. 7). Thus, to create and sustain inclusive learning environments, institutions must seek those places where the visible elements, such as symbols and myths, intersect with the invisible elements, such as administrative structures and unconscious priorities. Hence, a campus-wide diversity plan is insufficient to transform the culture, unless the plan is supported by an implementation strategy that is complex, evolving, and at once both centralized and diffused. Box 4.5 addresses the issue of leadership development as a platform for diversity-themed transformation.

BOX 4.5 Building Human Capacity to Lead Diversity Efforts

One of the most powerful levers for creating change can be found in an institution's human resources, namely its faculty and administrative leaders. From this vantage point, institutional leaders have three options for developing a team of strategic diversity leaders:

1. Remove people from office who no longer meet the expectations of an institution's emerging diversity agenda.

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The Difficulty of Transformational Change

Transformational change efforts by diversity officers and committees are effective only insofar as they can be implemented. For a change to be transformative, it has to be shared and executed at multiple points within the institution, moving organically in such a way that it touches everyone. Resources must be committed over time and senior leadership must be involved in a substantial way. For change to be transformative, not only structures but core assumptions must evolve. Too often campus diversity plans are one dimensional, resulting in minor tactical adjustments. Either campus leaders do not understand the process of institutional transformation, or are afraid of the backlash that comes from trying to challenge the way things "have always been done." For example, Virginia Tech² and the University of Oregon³ experienced this challenge directly when courageous leaders at those institutions began connecting the diversity conversation to the performance management systems of their institutions in a substantive way. In both instances, the conversation began regarding the development of best-practice diversity accountability systems. The systems involved assessing faculty's individual contributions to the campuses' diversity agenda as part of their annual review (Virginia Tech), and evidence of culturally competent skills (University of Oregon). In both instances, these more aggressive accountability techniques were met with staunch resistance from a small, vocal group of diversity opponents locally and, in Virginia Tech's case, nationally.

Diversity champions need to appreciate that the most ambitious diversity efforts, while often offering the best means of moving the diversity agenda forward, inevitably rock the boat. Indeed, often a clear sign that an institution is doing something meaningful occurs when diversity opponents and their sponsoring organizations emerge to fight it. The challenge stems not just from the well-financed efforts of conservative opponents, but more diffuse resistance from within the ranks of general diversity supporters. These individuals may support the idea of diversity, but lose conviction once faced with concrete plans that require them to change their assumptions and traditional procedures. One assistant vice president at a midsized university in the Southwest had this to say about a nominally supportive colleague in her office:

Everything was great until we started talking about real accountability and requiring someone to do something; then the conversation changed. My liberal faculty colleagues left me standing at the altar as I was the only one lobbying for something aggressive and intentional. No one had the stomach to stand up and fight for something that would really put some skin

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2. Cultivate new understanding, attitudes, and skills among current administrators, faculty, and staff.
3. Bolster the efforts of those already involved in campus diversity efforts by enhancing their visibility and ability to work.

Although in some cases changing an institution's leadership culture requires making personnel decisions, in most cases institutional leaders should focus on enhancing the efforts of existing staff. This means developing human performance enhancement strategies designed to educate faculty, staff, and students regarding the definitions, framework, skills, and abilities required to help foster a more diverse and inclusive campus culture. The use of the term *educate* is meant to emphasize that leadership development is best accomplished through a confluence of learning pedagogies and not simply "diversity training workshops."

Traditional diversity training programs aligned with the Affirmative Action and Equity Model may not necessarily expose participants to opportunities for transformational change. Granted, these workshops are important because they provide an opportunity to help all students feel welcome on campus. Done right, they help foster a more inclusive campus culture in which all students, regardless of background, are prepared to succeed in a diverse, multicultural, global society. However, transformational change requires more than basic diversity training around interpersonal dynamics, sexual harassment, and the benefits of diversity. It requires creative leaders facilitating new skills, abilities, and understanding in faculty, staff, and administrators. One example of this strategy hails from the University of Connecticut, where a 90-minute lunch session called "Conversations on Diversity" created a forum for the president, provost, deans, and vice presidents to engage in working meetings around diversity topics like minority faculty recruitment and retention strategies, and the promotion of women and minorities in the STEM disciplines. These meetings took place several times a year and feature prominent scholars and researchers addressing issues of diversity from both a scholarly and concrete perspective, not only describing the challenges but also prescribing solutions.

To truly transform institutional culture, campus leaders must help colleagues develop new ways of thinking. In transformational change, the entire community undergoes a fundamental shift in attitudes and understanding. This is the goal of the "Conversations on Diversity" program at the University of Connecticut. In the absence of new mental models to interpret current diversity priorities and contexts, campus leaders will continue to rely on flawed, incomplete, or otherwise unproductive strategies built from their past experiences.

in the game around requiring new behaviors and expecting people to actually do something different as part of their performance review. We can talk all we want about accountability, but until we change the parameters of what we expect, nothing will happen.

Change requires courage, a fresh take on where the institution is at this present moment and where it needs to go in the future. It also requires sustained effort to achieve the goals and objectives that have been established. It is always a challenge to introduce something different into familiar contexts.

Dynamic Diversity DNA

The author developed the term *Dynamic Diversity DNA* to help strategic diversity leaders locate their institutions along a continuum of diversity-themed planning and implementation. Taken together, the strategic diversity idea, diversity infrastructure, senior leadership support, planning systems, change activation techniques, and financial resources constitute an institution's *Dynamic Diversity DNA*. Just as a double-helix strand of DNA is held together by bonds between base pairs of nucleotides whose sequence spells out the exact instructions required to create a unique organism, the *Dynamic Diversity DNA* of an institution has six base pairs of institutional diversity nucleotides. Figure 4-4 show how these building blocks combine and recombine to determine the form an organization takes, and whether it can achieve its diversity goals.

The *Dynamic Diversity DNA* image helps us appreciate the unique ways that an institution will shift and reconfigure in response to its compositional building blocks. No building block stands alone; they are all interdependent. Therefore, steps taken to modify any or all of the building blocks must be coherent, coordinated, and clear. Changing any one element in isolation is likely to affect the other five in unintended ways and may set the organization back rather than move it forward. Indeed, this is often the case when a new leader comes on board and has a radically different idea of how the strategic diversity plan should be framed and implemented. In some instances, this may lead to a strengthening of the various aspects of the *Dynamic Diversity DNA*. In other instances, it may lead to weakening, especially if the new leadership simply does not view diversity as a priority. Does the new leadership have a vision for how to accomplish its diversity goals and are they based on a combination of well-researched evidence,

FIGURE 4.4
Dynamic Diversity DNA

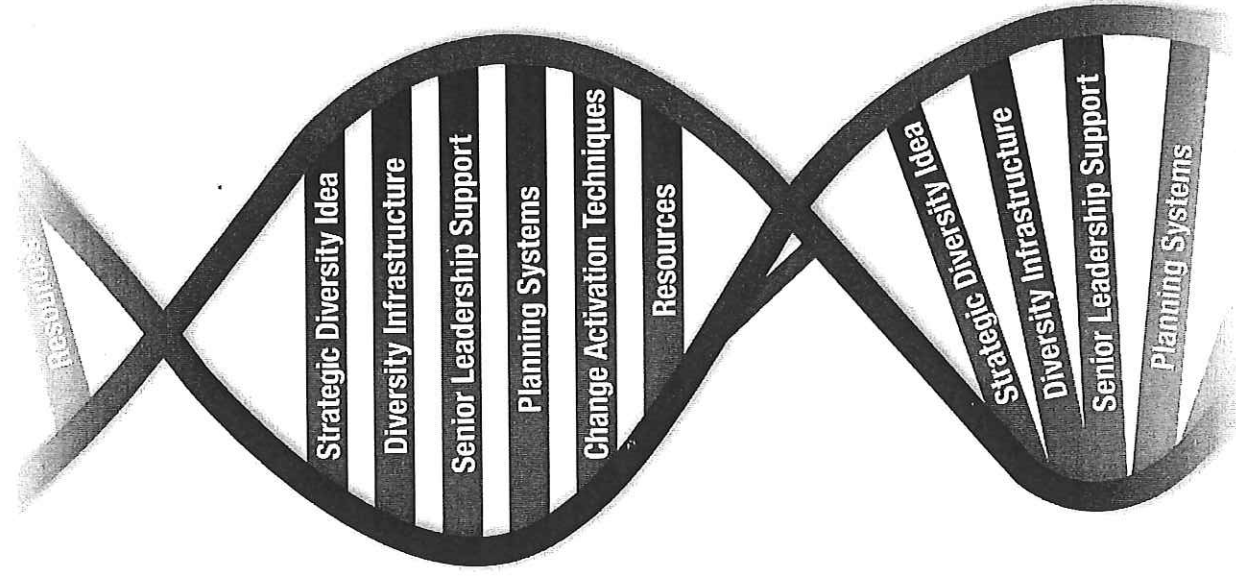


TABLE 4.3
Dimensions of Dynamic Diversity DNA

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Strategic Diversity Idea	The way diversity is defined and how the institution engages diversity as a matter of strategic priority
Diversity Infrastructure	Presence of dedicated institutional diversity offices, initiatives, and committees, particularly at senior levels of leadership and governance
Senior Leadership Support	Presidential and provost-level support that includes the commitment of academic deans, senior administrative leaders, and faculty governance systems
Strategic Planning Systems	Presence of logistical and staff resources to guide the campus community in an inclusive stakeholder process that produces a strategic diversity plan
Change Activation Techniques	Presence of incentive, accountability, and reporting systems to drive, reward, and encourage change, along with effective systems for assessing and, when necessary, revising the plan and redirecting resources and activities
Resources	Presence of staff, financial, and other resources to implement strategic diversity plan

national best practices, and the specific needs of the particular institution? Or is the new leadership guided by a combination of ignorance, instincts, and whim?

The only imperative is that the six building blocks of Diversity DNA work together rather than at cross-purposes to move the campus diversity agenda forward. Given the imperatives for diversity, institutional leaders need to give serious consideration to recombining their *Diversity DNA*. Achieving organizational alignment can differ depending on the institution. There is no universal prescription or right answer.

Stages of Institutional Diversity Movement

These building blocks are organized in a stage model of growth and development that hinges on two related dimensions of *intentionality* and *resource*

allocation. As these two dimensions increase, institutions often become more focused and ultimately successful in pursuing their campus diversity agendas. As reflected by the straight line in the model, movement from lower to higher stages involves increasing complexity, sophistication, and comprehensiveness in the diversity planning and implementation process, as institutions go from launching the discussion on campus to moving through ever more progressive stages of diversity planning, resource allocation, and capacity building. The model describes increasingly complex ways that institutions evolve their diversity efforts in a particular direction. Without an intentional allocation of resources and a strategic commitment to using best practices, creating economies of scale, linking conversations, and clarifying focus, institutions are left with a diversity implementation process of doing something for a limited period and then wondering why they were not more successful. Even then, without constant evaluation and revision, institutions can build an ambitious strategic diversity agenda that works for a limited period and then sputters, leaving the leaders to wonder why they were not as successful as they had hoped. Figure 4-5 shows how success hinges on the two twin factors of the allocation of resources and the intentionality of efforts. It also illustrates how as the institution's Diversity DNA shifts, the institution will find itself in a different space along the dimensions of intentionality and resource allocation—hence the double-helix aspects of the model in Figure 4-4 have been incorporated into Figure 4-5.

The Dynamic Diversity DNA stage model has a different focus from diversity stage models developed by Chesler (1994) and Jackson and Holvino (1988), which focus on general cultural dynamics of institutions as they move from homogenous to multicultural communities. Rather than a general orientation toward organizational culture, the Dynamic Diversity DNA model focuses on whether institutions are intentional in building diversity-themed capacity from a formal structural perspective. Such structural change includes establishing dedicated offices, unit, plans, budgets, and initiatives to achieve an institution's stated diversity goals (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Williams et al., 2005). It is not a commentary on an organization's culture, or its movement from being a space of exclusion to one of inclusion, although it stands to reason that if an institution is moving more intentionally and allocating greater resources, the institutional culture should become more diverse and inclusive in response to those efforts.

As several scholars have noted, institutions are always on a continuum with regard to issues of capacity development and cultural change (Chesler, 1994; Jackson & Holvino, 1988; Katz & Miller, 1997). When working with