Welcome to Campus
Planning for Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity

by Caitlyn Clauson and John McKnight

Creating and sustaining a more welcoming and inclusive campus environment positions both institutions and students to succeed in a more diverse world.

DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

Higher education institutions, by all accounts, are more diverse today than ever before. A recent report from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) cites increases in college attendance among every racial minority group between 1976 and 2015, and Gallup notes that the number of millennials who identify as LGBT increased from 5.8 percent in 2012 to 8.1 percent in 2017 (National Center for Education Statistics 2018; Newport 2018). A 2016 NCES survey finds that 19 percent of undergraduates report some type of disability—from limited mobility to learning disabilities to mental health concerns (National Center for Education Statistics 2016). There is also greater socioeconomic diversity among students: the number of Pell Grant recipients nearly doubled within the last two decades to 7.1 million students in 2016 (Chingos 2018). Students are also more likely to come from urban versus rural environments, according to the NCES (National Center for Education Statistics 2015).

This steady increase in student diversity over the past several decades is demonstrative of the enduring success of the U.S. higher education system. From the 1944 G.I. Bill, which brought an unprecedented number of returning World War II veterans into higher education, to the Pell Grant, which provides degree pathways for lower-income students, expanding access to higher education has been a national priority for decades. Student populations now, more than ever before, represent the rich diversity that defines our country. This evolution also coincides with the changing values, priorities, and needs of millennial students. Student activism and advocacy for greater diversity is on the rise. The bottom line for many of today's students is clear: now more than ever, values matter when selecting a school.

Institutions have responded to this changing context in multiple ways. This article explores the programmatic and administrative responses as well as the physical planning and design opportunities associated with creating and sustaining more diverse and inclusive campus environments.

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PROGRAMMATIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSES

To understand the current challenges facing U.S. colleges and universities with regard to diversity and inclusion, it is helpful to review some historical context, including a discussion of the national racial climate over the past few generations.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: 1960s–1980s: MOVING FROM A "SAFE HAVEN" TOWARD AN "OASIS"

At the height of the tumultuous civil rights era, the first cultural centers in American higher education were established and functioned primarily as "safe havens" for Black students who were "expected to assimilate into the White racial fabric of PWIs [Predominantly White Institutions] and accept the existing institutional culture—a culture plagued by racism, oppression and discrimination" (Patton and Hannon 2008, p. 142). At larger institutions, Black cultural centers were soon followed by others dedicated to supporting Asian, Hispanic/Latinx, and Native American students. These new centers quickly became mini student affairs divisions, as staff often duplicated all of the typical student services available on campus for just their respective student populations (Patton and Hannon 2008).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a new wave of multiculturalism in the United States influenced college enrollment and led to significant shifts in curriculum and cultural life on college campuses. Many campuses merged the separate cultural centers of earlier decades into multicultural affairs offices to respond to expanding definitions of campus diversity, which had come to include gender identity or expression, nationality, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, and other key identities. Young (1991, p. 52) described the new multicultural offices and centers as representing an "oasis … shared willingly with everyone and … the property of all who seek [it] out … viewed as a place of relief from the surrounding sameness … [and a place] where cultures meet, exchange, interact, and then emerge renewed … made stronger by the sharing."

THE EVOLVING MISSION OF CULTURAL CENTERS: 1990s–2000s: PROVIDING SUPPORT, IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT, AND EDUCATION

There has been some debate among multicultural education practitioners and researchers about the missions of cultural centers evolving from directly serving the needs of underrepresented populations to providing social justice education for the broader campus community (Young 1991). However, there was widespread consensus in the 1990s and 2000s that this functional area needed to respond to dramatically shifting national demographics and find ways to advance the intercultural competence of all students in order to prepare them for an increasingly diverse global workforce (Lee et al. 2012). It also became clear in the early 2000s that multicultural affairs offices needed to better collaborate with student activities and other "mainstream" student affairs offices to bring intercultural competence from the margins of the student life experience to the center (figures 1 and 2).

THE CREATION OF THE CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER ROLE: 2000s–2010s: INSTITUTIONALIZING THE WORK OF EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Student activism in the early 2000s, together with drastic shifts in the demographic composition of college and university campuses over the three prior decades, resulted in the establishment of new senior-level positions dedicated to diversity and inclusion. The position of chief diversity officer (CDO) was created to address broader institutional needs left unaddressed by multicultural centers, equal employment and affirmative action offices, and cultural student organizations (Worthington, Stanley, and Lewis 2014). By 2007, the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE) was formally established to create a learning community and career network of professionals charged with advancing institutional goals related to diversity and inclusion (Worthington, Stanley, and Lewis 2014). In a 2017 survey of more than 80 chief diversity officers, 62 percent of the respondents said that their positions were inaugural for

their campuses—a sign that the chief diversity officer role continues to grow (Aguilar, Bauer, and Lawson 2017).

Although CDO titles, job descriptions, budgets, and management portfolios varied from campus to campus, their overall goals were quite similar: to identify the needs of historically marginalized students, provide them with direct support, and join them in their advocacy on campus (Harvey 2014). The CDO was tasked with bringing about structural or systemic changes, often against both subtle and overt forms of resistance (Harvey 2014).

Figure 1 **Connecticut College's Unity House: Student and Staff Event**

Connecticut College students just after attending a "family meeting" at Unity House.

Image courtesy of Connecticut College

Figure 2 **Connecticut College's Unity House: Photo Exhibition Reception**

Image courtesy of Connecticut College

THE URGENT CALL FOR INTERSECTIONALITY: 2010s AND BEYOND: ADDRESSING GROWING IDENTITY COMPLEXITIES AND BUILDING COALITIONS

There has long existed a perception that multicultural centers and cultural student organizations, especially those dedicated to the study or promotion of a particular racial or ethnic group, may promote self-segregation by race (Patton 2006). This perception is heightened when centers exist in standalone buildings outside of normal campus traffic patterns (Patton and Hannon 2008). On many campuses, cultural center spaces seemed exclusionary and were often located too far away from food services, social activities, library resources, and other campus essentials.

For example, at the University of Florida, the state's flagship institution located in Gainesville, the Institute of Black Culture and the Institute of Hispanic-Latino Cultures were "off the beaten path" for much of their existence, and their programs were generally targeted toward only students in those populations. Now that both historic buildings have been removed, early designs for new centers call for them to be co-located and share a significant amount of common space. This shows a more recent trend of historically marginalized communities wanting to be in closer proximity to one another while also maintaining a sense of their own space. These communities are often seeking a strong sense of connection within their own group as well as solidarity with others.

On the whole, college campuses have become much more diverse in terms of race, gender, generational status, nationality, ethnicity, linguistic background, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, and socioeconomic status, among other social identities. There is also great variation in students' feelings about the salience of their identities—that is, the degree to which their identities are important to them. As the population has become more diverse, so too has its needs and interests. The CDO role and portfolio has had to expand in scope to include all of these social identities and more in making strides toward more equitable and inclusive campus communities (Worthington, Stanley, and Lewis 2014).

Against the backdrop of a challenging national sociopolitical climate, there is a call within the literature (Zambrana and Dill 2009)—affirmed by the lived experiences of students—for diversity programs and initiatives that better address *intersectionality*, a term coined by critical theorist and legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (2015). This concept seeks to address the fact that individuals who are part of multiple marginalized groups have distinct, and often compounded, experiences of discrimination and other forms of oppression. Activists within two major contemporary social movements, #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo, have used intersectional analyses to make their respective agendas more inclusive of women and LGBTQIA people of color (Brown et al. 2017; Onwuachi-Willig 2018). Similarly, greater awareness of and sensitivity to intersectionality on college and university campuses have changed the strategies that higher education institutions and cultural centers are deploying to support student diversity (Harris and Patton 2017).

This is a moment to reflect upon the history of diversity and inclusion efforts on college campuses, reassess current student needs and interests, and develop programmatic changes and enhancements that will ensure our effectiveness in contributing to the cultural and intellectual life of students for generations to come. Employing an intersectional approach requires all professional staff to be cross-trained

on issues affecting the identity development processes of a variety of communities.

PHYSICAL PLANNING AND DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES

Over the decades, campus settings have similarly evolved to keep pace with the changing nature of diversity, inclusion, and equity initiatives, with the overarching intent of creating more welcoming and inclusive environments. The following section explores physical planning and design responses through three lenses: heritage and identity, community and dialogue, and accessibility and wellness.

HERITAGE AND IDENTITY

The ability of individuals to see their identity reflected in their surroundings is essential to creating an inclusive environment. Whether implicit or direct, aesthetics and campus history connote meaning and influence each individual's perceptions of welcome and belonging. Building names, campus traditions, and even presidential portraits in formal or ceremonial public spaces subtly communicate a history that is—in an overwhelming number of cases—predominantly male, White, and upper class.

The homogeneity of traditional campus building forms can even reinforce feelings of exclusion and intimidation by highlighting a singular vernacular. For students coming from vibrant urban communities with strong histories of expression and variety, it can be challenging to see how familiar cultural and aesthetic reference points align with the frequently neutral and uniform palettes, and sometimes imposing architecture, of classic campus settings. Opportunity exists on campus to plan and design for moments of variety and physical expression in both interior and exterior spaces.

Lewis & Clark College, like many institutions across the country, has seen an increase in the number of students from urban environments. The college is situated adjacent to the city of Portland, Oregon, nestled in a heavily wooded, low-density residential neighborhood. Many students unfamiliar with dark sky settings expressed a nervousness at nighttime. In response, the college re-lamped the campus with LEDs to improve lighting and conducted flashlight tours. Recent master planning efforts at Lewis & Clark resulted in

recommendations that in many ways seek to mimic the urban environment. A new, dense residential precinct is imagined to emerge in the heart of campus, anchored around a significant hardscaped plaza (figure 3). At both Lewis & Clark College and Connecticut College, the conversion of existing vehicular roads into extensive and well-lit pedestrian promenades reinforces the sense and cadence of a city block. These and other design strategies can help students feel more at home.

Figure 3 **Lewis & Clark College: Imagined Residential Precinct**

Image courtesy of Sasaki

While identity can be expressed at the campus scale, there is also the need to provide spaces that cultivate individual identity at a smaller scale. Institutions can support students through their personal development by creating "safe spaces" for identity exploration. Just as students are expected to progress through their academic lives, gaining new skills and knowledge as they advance, they should be enabled to develop competencies in cross-cultural interaction at a comfortable pace.

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To that end, new spaces for diversity and inclusion should take into account the stages students follow in their own identity development processes. At Connecticut College, similar to the University of Florida, there is a desire to co-

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locate some of the offices that were previously physically separated on campus. The goal is not to dissolve the distinct missions, purposes, and identities of these cultural centers, but rather to encourage students to find comfort within their own safe spaces before crossing the threshold of other spaces that might require higher levels of confidence.

At Connecticut College, the master plan proposes a new space that brings together previously separated affinity groups. The idea is that while this new intersectional space should be placed in a central location, it should exist independently from highly visible public spaces like the student center. This is a response to the feeling expressed by students and faculty from historically marginalized groups that too much exposure may lead to their feeling under surveillance by other members of the campus community. This new space should provide students with a sense that they are able to exist free from judgment, harassment, or discrimination on the basis of their various social identities and allow them to build solidarity with others who are also seeking a more just and equitable college atmosphere.

COMMUNITY AND DIALOGUE

While the above-mentioned safe spaces are essential for the formation of identity development, there is also the need to provide spaces that support an institution's social justice education goals for the broader campus community. Diversity, inclusion, and equity organizations frequently host programs on intercultural competence, which can also be encouraged and promoted through the physical environment. Intercultural competence requires awareness, but all too frequently the physical organization of a campus or the physical design of specific building or landscape spaces reinforces siloes and avoidance, whether intentional or not.

Thoughtful campus planning and design can create awareness by intentionally shaping pedestrian movement in a manner that promotes interaction and dialogue. At Lewis & Clark College, pedestrian circulation previously relied on two pedestrian bridges that crossed a ravine. In 2017, the bridges were taken offline for maintenance, so more students had to walk by the student center to get to class. What emerged were new social interactions and spontaneous encounters both among students and with administrators in the student center. This new route became the common avenue for all students and is formalized in the master plan as a new pedestrian promenade.

Reorienting the flow of pedestrians doesn't always require the removal of other connections. Making specific pathways more inviting and welcoming through landscape treatment, lighting, paving techniques, and furnishings also encourages greater pedestrian activity, which can facilitate more social interaction and awareness. Locust Walk at the University of Pennsylvania, Bates Walk at Bates College, and the recently opened Einhorn Family Walk at Syracuse University provide successful examples in which pedestrian movement is encouraged through design strategies. Interestingly, these spaces also serve as places for protest—another important consideration when advocating for the rights of all.

Like pedestrian promenades, informal "third spaces" on campus provide opportunities for spontaneous collaboration, unexpected connections, dialogue, and awareness. The University of Calgary's "Take Your Place" program was an ambitious initiative to integrate informal places throughout its campus. In celebration of the institution's 40th anniversary, the university designated 40 spaces at key campus crossroads within its internal pedestrian network to be repurposed as informal learning and social spaces over time. Students from the university's Faculty of Environmental Design program helped design the spaces in a low-cost, high-impact manner.

The use of transparent materials in such spaces helps promote awareness. Rather than shroud activity behind opaque walls, transparency highlights activity, piques interest, and invites dialogue and engagement.

ACCESSIBILITY AND WELLNESS

Truly welcoming campuses are inviting and accessible to all. The unfortunate reality, however, is that the vast majority of higher education facilities were constructed prior to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, which prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities and requires public facilities, services, and programs to be fully accessible. Buildings constructed and modified after the adoption of ADA are required to comply with the ADA Standards for Accessible Design. The act also calls for the removal of barriers from existing structures. Doorways, bathroom sizes, curb ramps, accessible routes, handrails, elevator access, access ramps, and parking spaces are among the elements addressed by the standards.

Accessible design serves to benefit all. Karen Braitmayer, an architect, consultant, and policy advocate for accessible design, states, "design and accessible design—there's no difference.... People thought this was going to negatively impact the quality of our buildings, due to specific things being done for a special group of people, but everyone benefits from this" (Sisson 2015, "A New Monumentality," ¶ 2).

While accessible design focuses on accommodating the needs of people with disabilities, in some instances the design response creates a unique and separate experience for those being accommodated. There has been a recent shift toward universal design, defined as "the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design" (North Carolina State University Center for Universal Design 1997, ¶ 1). A notable principle of universal design calls for the "same means of use for all users: identical whenever possible; equivalent when not" (North Carolina State University Center for Universal Design 1997, Principle One, Guideline 1a). For example, rather than have a separate accessible entry for those with disabilities, universal design principles would call for a single accessible entry for all. If a campus were designed from scratch today, ADA standards

and universal design best practices would be the logical starting points.

Institutions are also embracing fully accessible non-discriminatory spaces. More than 150 institutions across the United States provide gender-neutral bathrooms and more than 200 provide a form of gender-neutral housing (Milshtein 2017). Private and lockable showers and toilet stalls with partitions that minimize or eliminate visual sightlines, communal sink areas, and multiple means of egress are components of gender-neutral spaces that not only support transgender and non-binary students but also seek to benefit all.

There has also been a recent emphasis on making wellness an implicit, integrated, and seamless part of a student's day-to-day experience. Initiatives range from large-scale capital investments in new wellness centers that consolidate physical health and recreation, counseling, nutrition, sustainability, and, at times, academic, research, and career components to smaller-scale programming initiatives. With the demand for mental health services on the rise, it is important that institutions provide adequate space for counseling facilities. In an effort to destigmatize mental health on campus, some institutions are situating counseling centers in more central locations with discrete access options available as well. Other examples include introducing tech-free zones, reinforcing connections to outdoor environments, and bringing vegetation into interior spaces.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

It is important to reflect at this juncture in the national conversation on the end goal of initiatives that promote openness and inclusion on college and university campuses. At the core of such initiatives is a renewed institutional commitment to both listening to the needs and desires of current and future students and providing an excellent education to all students, irrespective of their experiences

and background. It has long been said that the students of today are the leaders of tomorrow. Initiatives that create welcoming and inclusive environments support a growing number of students from all walks of life—giving them every available opportunity to succeed and contribute in the future.

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