



From *Intersectionality in Action:
A Guide for Faculty and Campus Leaders for Creating
Inclusive Classrooms and Institutions*
Edited by: Brooke Barnett and Peter Felten

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Chapter 7

Striving for an Inclusive and Nurturing Campus: Cultivating the Intersections

Jon Dooley, Elon University

Lucy LePeau, Indiana University

Imagine that your institution has accepted an invitation to be part of a national initiative for strengthening diversity and inclusion in higher education and has received a grant to support this effort. Although your campus has made strides in recent years, faculty, staff, and students agree there is significant room for improvement. The representational demographic diversity of the campus has increased, but many members of the campus community (students, faculty, and staff alike) still report feeling marginalized and are concerned about decision-making at the institution and whether the commitment to diversity and inclusion is genuine. The curriculum has benefitted from previous diversity infusion projects, but in a recent campus climate study, many respondents noted the absence of particular perspectives and voices in the curriculum. And

where concerns have traditionally been centered on racial diversity within the curriculum, increasingly the questions have become about multiple perspectives, identities, and histories: race, gender and gender expression, sexual orientation, political affiliation, national origin, disability, socioeconomic status, etc. Campus curriculum committees and the academic senate were already raising the issue of diversity within the curriculum prior to the institution's acceptance into the cohort for the national diversity and inclusion initiative. Campus life has been another area of concern. Even as the campus has become more diverse, climate surveys suggest that students do not interact with individuals different from themselves (race, religion, political orientation, socioeconomic status) at higher rates. Students with both dominant and non-dominant identities describe a campus climate that does not feel inclusive or supportive of diversity. Students also assert that they are consulted in regard to campus decision-making but are shielded from the politics behind closed doors. Similarly, staff and faculty with marginalized identities at the institution are predominantly younger and in positions with limited power and influence, reporting that leadership decisions affecting campus climate happen "to them" rather than "with them." Some faculty and staff have pointed out that every few years an incident on campus raises attention to the issue, protests take place, and promises and proclamations are made, but progress has seemed slow. Many campus constituencies are also challenging the institution to focus on multiple forms of identity in the co-curricular experience, raising concerns that the resources of the multicultural center in the division of student affairs are limited and focused primarily on race. In this context, you are excited to be part of the high-profile initiative for diversity and inclusion. The announcement of the initiative and grant in Washington, DC was well-publicized and resulted in enthusiasm on campus, in the community, and among alumni. The new effort is ready to commence. How will you engage the complex work of cultivating an

inclusive campus for all members of the campus community (students, faculty, and staff), with a particular focus on intersectionality and multiple forms of identity?

Although the vignette is hypothetical in its construction, the central challenges it presents are common among postsecondary institutions of all types across the country. In spite of decades of focus on diversity (i.e. valuing and learning across differences related to identities such as religion, culture, and race) and inclusion (i.e. identifying how privilege and evolving oppressions influence experiences of campus educators in different environments, enacting programs, policies, and practices aimed to dismantle systematic marginalization, and doing ongoing reflective work in this process of creating welcoming environments), many individuals and institutions are not satisfied with the progress that has been made on their campuses. The vignette describes what have become two central components of that environment – the “curricular” or in-class setting and the “cocurricular” or out-of-class experience. While these contexts may be separate structurally, most students do not experience higher education as solely one or the other, and their learning transcends these boundaries of campus organization and environment. Further, campus educators (a term we use to include both faculty and staff) often want to bridge these organizational divides. In this chapter, we address intersectionality in the campus environment, both in terms of multiple forms of individual identity and in terms of organizational culture and how multiple areas of the campus come together to address diversity and inclusion. After describing these key contexts, we highlight pathways for effective campus partnerships to support diversity and inclusion, and offer recommendations for establishing and nurturing effective partnerships that improve campus environments.

Intersectionality and Multiple Forms of Identity

Identity is not developed or understood in isolation. Systems of power, privilege, and oppression in society shape how an individual experiences and makes meaning of intersecting identities in different environments. Intersectionality addresses multiple interlocking systems of oppression rather than examining inequities solely through a singular lens such as sexism, racism, and classism (Crenshaw, 1991; Nash, 2008). Specifically, Crenshaw (1991) through legal studies first explained that women of color who experience domestic violence are oppressed in ways that antiracism and feminism fail to address. The structure of the law forced women to choose to acknowledge their injuries either by their race or their gender rather than addressing discrimination simultaneously (Crenshaw, 1991; Nash, 2008). Crenshaw (1991) illuminated gaps in the legal system that reinforced an essentialist view of identity: “Because women of color experience racism in ways not always the same as those experienced by men of color and sexism in ways not always parallel to White women, antifeminism and feminism are limited, even on their own terms” (p. 1252). Despite the value of that insight, debates continue about what intersectionality is, who is intersectional, and how to thoughtfully employ intersectionality as a methodology to inform policies and practice in higher education (Mitchell, 2014; Nash, 2008; Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014).

Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007) provided a useful model for understanding how intersectionality and multiple dimensions of identity are influenced by an individual’s environment, the capacity for making meaning and filtering out contextual influences, and understanding of the individual’s own identities and the salience of particular aspects of those identities in varying environmental contexts. Like an earlier version of the model (Jones & McEwen, 2000), they suggested that a core sense of self (personal attributes, characteristics, and identity) is surrounded by dimensions of identity such as race, gender, sexual orientation, social

class, religion, etc. They acknowledged that identity is understood and experienced within the context of family background, sociocultural conditions, current experiences, career decisions and life planning. This context plays a role in the fluidity and salience of particular dimensions of identity to their core sense of self (Abes et al., 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000). The later version of this model introduced the concept of a meaning-making filter that individuals possess, with varying degrees of complexity. An individual with a more complex, 'foundational' meaning-making filter is less influenced by contextual influences, such as peers, family, norms, and stereotypes, than an individual with less complex 'transitional' or 'formulaic' meaning-making capacity (Abes et al., 2007).

When considering environmental influences on intersectionality and student identity, it is important to consider not only the campus environment, but also students' identity development – both their self-perceptions and their developmental capacity to understand and filter the messages they receive from the context of their environment. Students' experiences at colleges and universities are often interpreted and understood through the lens of a single aspect of their identity (e.g. race, gender, disability, or social class) without regard to other aspects of identity, nor to the salience that dimension of identity has to the student.

In the vignette presented at the beginning of the chapter, these tensions are emerging, as students challenge the institution to focus diversity efforts on multiple perspectives, identities, and histories and, in doing so, more explicitly address the identities that individuals are finding most salient in their lived experience in the campus environment. Singling out individual aspects of identity for research and assessment may provide clarity and can assist in identifying challenges within campus climate, but ignoring the complexities of salience and intersectionality may also contribute to 'oppression olympics,' whereby two or more groups are examined to

determine which is more oppressed than another. When campus educators forefront intersectionality in research or practice, they should center the experiences of marginalized groups in this work and avoid reinforcing the experiences of individuals and groups with privileged identities and further oppressing those with marginalized identities (Wijeyesinghe and Jones, 2014). Campus educators, in both academic affairs and student affairs, should deconstruct how particular institutional policies, programs, and practices are designed, for whose benefit, and why.

Campus Environments That Support Diversity and Inclusion

Several researchers have described the importance of examining multiple aspects of campus climate to understand environments that support diversity and inclusion (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005; Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005). More recently, Hurtado and colleagues (2012) built upon the work of previous scholars in developing a Multicontextual Model for Diverse Learning Environments (DLE model), which acknowledges the multiple contexts that influence higher education institutions (socio-historical context, policy context, community context, and external commitments) and the importance of the institutional climate for diversity (historical, organizational, computational, psychological, and behavioral) as they shape individual student processes, outcomes, and success. The DLE model accounts for intersectionality and multiple forms of identity and places the teaching and learning that occurs within an institution at the center of the model. Curricular and co-curricular contexts are described as parallel, but separate, processes that influence student outcomes and success based on such factors as “who we teach (student identities), who teaches (instructor identities), what is taught (content), and how it is taught (pedagogies/teaching methods)” (Hurtado et al, 2012, p. 49). Unfortunately, in describing

learning environments as either curricular or co-curricular, Hurtado and colleagues relied on a classic division between ‘classroom’ or ‘out-of-class’ learning that suggests that the campus environment for diversity and inclusion is experienced in isolated contexts, rather than in a web or network of campus experiences that influence each other and work together in more complex ways.

At many institutions, particularly four-year colleges and universities and/or those with a strong residential component, the divisions between curricular and co-curricular aspects of the campus life can be pronounced. Arcelus (2011) suggested that these divisions between curricular and co-curricular approaches could be traced back to an earlier debate about the nature of an undergraduate education and theories and approaches espoused by John Dewey (1938) and Robert Hutchins (1936). Arcelus indicated that Dewey’s focus on meaning-making, experiential learning, and a constructivist approach to education can be viewed as most congruent with co-curricular learning environments and provides a philosophical basis for the work of student affairs educators and academic administrators. Meanwhile, the writings of Hutchins focus educational attention on intellectual inquiry and a liberal arts education that provides a common academic core curriculum focused on reading and discussing great books in the Western tradition, engrossing students in the life of the mind. Arcelus suggested that Hutchins’ approach undergirds the perspectives that many faculty hold today, with a particular focus on curricular learning. The debate continues, according to Arcelus, and contributes, in part, to a ‘fragmented and competitive campus,’ where faculty and student affairs staff vie for centrality to the institutional mission, resources, and students’ time and attention. In this context, academic primacy and a life of the mind competes with education of the whole person when it is quite possible that all campus educators can exemplify commitment to the whole person.

Thus, partnerships between academic affairs and student affairs can serve as a medium for campus educators to interrogate where gaps and inequities in educating the whole student exist on campus and reveal where organizational policies, practices, and procedures reinforce competition between academic affairs and student affairs at the detriment of student success and learning. It is critical, therefore, to consider the value of intersectionality in relation to the ways faculty, students, and staff occupying multiple social locations perceive campus environments and the ways campus environments affirm and/or oppress intersecting identities of faculty, staff, and students. Partnerships also challenge faculty and student affairs practitioners to face stereotypes they may have about each other and their respective cultures.

When addressing situations similar to the case example provided by the vignette at the beginning of the chapter, careful consideration must be given to the nature of partnerships and who is “at the table” when launching initiatives for diversity and inclusion. Campus educators must demonstrate a shared responsibility and commitment to ongoing work necessary to create welcoming and inclusive environments for students (Arminio, Torres, & Pope, 2012; Clayton-Pedersen et al., 2007; Hurtado et al., 2012; Milem et al., 2005; Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005). Structures within institutions often privilege or marginalize particular campus stakeholders, for example situating influence and campus leadership with the faculty and leaving students and staff at the margins. Without examining and altering inequities, systems that oppress faculty, staff, and students in campus environments remain firmly intact. Because every institution is different, campus educators need to attend to the specific context of the institution when designing robust diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Effective Partnerships for Diversity and Inclusion

In an examination of partnerships for diversity and inclusion between academic affairs and student affairs areas, LePeau (in press) found three variations among the partnerships that served as an important pathway to successful implementation of diversity and inclusion initiatives. In a '*complementary pathway*,' academic affairs and student affairs professionals worked separately within their respective divisions to advance diversity and inclusion. Although the work was complementary, it did not require individuals to address cultural contradictions between the areas. For example, individuals in academic affairs addressed changes to the general education curriculum while those in student affairs addressed programs in the residence halls that examined issues of race, class, and gender. In a '*coordinated pathway*,' the partnership between academic affairs and student affairs was marked by a shared vision for diversity and inclusion, professionals assuming hybrid roles between the two divisions, campus committees that led to communication across units, and a recognition of the cultural contradictions of one division having more power and influence than the other. In a '*pervasive pathway*,' partnerships between academic affairs and student affairs were the campus norm, grounded in the understanding that individuals in both units are considered educators on the campus. As they supported diversity and inclusion initiatives, individuals from these two units worked from a shared vision, rethought classroom pedagogy and co-curricular programming to consciously address social identity, blurred the organizational boundaries between academic affairs and student affairs, challenged cultural contradictions between the two divisions, considered shared governance, and made partnerships between academic affairs and student affairs the standard operating culture on campus. Faculty and student affairs practitioners accomplished initiatives in every type of partnership; however, the most transformative type is the pervasive pathway because faculty and student affairs practitioners altered inequities in organizational policies and practices.

The cultivation of effective campus partnerships to support an inclusive campus climate for all students, faculty, and staff requires intentional focus and commitment. Grounded in previous research on effective partnerships (LePeau, in press; LePeau, 2015), the six recommendations presented here are designed to help individuals and campus groups navigate the complex work required to address diversity and inclusion in the campus partnership.

1. Recognize your own identities and intersections

Case studies about diversity in higher education often challenge readers to consider multiple approaches as they reflect on how they would respond to complex situations. Weigand and LePeau (2012) encouraged case study respondents addressing issues of diversity and inclusion to also foreground their own identity as they formulated their response. Faculty and administrators who are working together to shape and influence campus climate cannot ignore that they are simultaneously shaped by that environment, their previous environments, and the multiple forms of their own identity (oppressed and privileged) that are salient to themselves and to those with whom they interact. Taking time to carefully reflect on one's own identity and intersections in the context of establishing effective partnerships contributes to authentic interactions and an appreciation for the complexities of intersectionality. In responding to the situation presented by the introductory vignette, for example, it would be important for each of the individuals involved in developing a campus initiative for diversity and inclusion to carefully consider their own multiple forms of identity, how they relate to the campus environment and challenges presented, and how they take on different forms of salience and intersection with the multiple identities of other individuals involved in responding. In a coordinated pathway, leaders from *both* student affairs and academic affairs appointed to committees could infuse practices such as: incorporate readings to engender ongoing professional development and reflection about

how positionalities of committee members inform the work, change facilitator roles during meetings to bring in different voices, and provide opportunities for both written and oral feedback to be gathered by committee chairs about the process. The ongoing reflection required to surface identity, power, and privilege in a complex situation presented by the vignette requires time and energy that cannot be shortchanged when establishing effective partnerships. This work is difficult and requires campus educators to build in time during day-to-day work and committee meetings, rather than relegating these activities to retreats and trainings, to regularly consider how one's identities influence practice. These conversations may unearth how practices may reinforce (even if unintentional) dominant cultures in campus environments.

2. Examine who creates and is charged to implement inclusion initiatives

Students do not experience campus environments in isolated silos that mirror organizational charts for educational institutions. Likewise, learning occurs across environmental contexts, inside the classroom and beyond. Effective partnerships that holistically address diversity and inclusion across the campus begin with goals that are designed collectively, with a broad representation of campus constituents coming together. In the spirit of the adage, 'people support what they help create,' such coalitions, including both academic affairs and student affairs educators, lead to commitment to diversity and inclusion across multiple contexts throughout the campus and help move past the power differential and debates about the primacy of roles in colleges and universities. The example of the vignette at the beginning of the chapter illustrates that challenges with diversity and inclusion are not experienced in an isolated part of the campus environment (curricular or co-curricular), and any effective response must then, necessarily, include individuals from across the campus working together collaboratively, in careful coordination. Leadership for the initiative must similarly transcend traditional

boundaries. For example, if faculty create annual reports that go only to the provost, and student affairs professionals generate annual reports that go to the chief student affairs officer (sometimes reporting to the provost and sometimes not), there are too many opportunities for duplication of efforts without any coordination. This practice is typical of an institution operating in a complementary pathway. The people in positional leadership need not only to know about what initiatives have been accomplished, but also consider ways to bring together diverse resources (e.g. financial and personnel) toward meeting objectives to shift efforts to more coordinated and pervasive approaches.

Furthermore, when positional leaders such as deans, vice presidents, provosts, and presidents formulate committees or work groups, they should critically examine the composition of the teams. Leaders might consider the number of faculty and staff employed at the institution and consider whether committee members are representative of the proportion of faculty and staff from both academic affairs and student affairs departments. For example, if a committee has a faculty representative from every academic unit, but only one or two student affairs staff and one or two students, the composition may reflect an imbalance in structural and power dynamics that will be an impediment for the work of the group.

As an example response to the vignette, a campus on a complementary pathway might use a multiple-committee approach, with separate teams of student affairs staff and academic affairs faculty and staff working on initiatives within their purview, with a careful understanding of what each group is working on and responsible for. A coordinated pathway might have those two groups being subcommittees of a unified structure (with proportional representation of educators from both groups), led by individuals who have developed strong relationships and reputations as ‘boundary crossers.’ To address the issues presented in the vignette in the spirit of

a pervasive pathway, the idea of a campus team with individuals from different areas of campus would not be an anomaly, but would be standard operating practice and an expectation of the campus leadership. In this spirit, a blended team of students, faculty, and staff would work collectively and collaboratively to surface and address the multiple issues, questions, possibilities, and opportunities presented by the complex set of circumstances. These teams may create spaces for campus educators and students to take a multidimensional approach to inclusion efforts because people are not charged to make suggestions solely on the basis of a singular role or identity (i.e. faculty only focused on curriculum, students focused on representing their respective club or organization) but rather looking at the institution as a web as we referenced earlier in the chapter in relation to the DLE model. These spaces may also provide an opportunity to address questions about how interlocking systems of oppression show up (e.g. ethnocentrism, sexism, trans*phobia, religious intolerance) in the environment from an intersectional rather than singular identity standpoint.

3. Cultivate relationships with campus constituents

Campus committees or working groups established to address diversity and inclusion are often responding to incidents of concern, or institutional priorities linked to dissatisfaction with the current situation. Such work typically feels urgent, creating pressure to recommend and implement solutions quickly. But addressing the complexity of intersectionality and working across campus contexts requires substantial time and effort to nurture authentic relationships that have the capacity to enable individuals and teams to effectively address diversity and inclusion. Campus working groups that comprise a broad representation of campus constituents can also result in groups of individuals who do not normally collaborate to be immersed in complex work together. These relationships can be difficult to form when constituents have experienced bias

and oppression on campus. The vignette at the beginning of the chapter provides examples of the mistrust and disappointment with prior efforts that require careful attention as a team is assembled for a new initiative. Effective relationships in this context should be established and cultivated in a deliberate fashion, building capacity before incidents happen.

Each of the authors has served on successful campus committees where care, focus, and attention was paid to relationships and it was an expectation that members of the group invest the time required to address issues of power, privilege, and oppression within the campus environment and the committee itself. Likewise, we have each experienced working groups and campus environments where mistrust was bred by a lack of transparency, unrecognized privilege and unhealthy power dynamics, and a lack of commitment on behalf of key stakeholders to invest time in developing productive relationships. Not surprisingly, the ability of the committees or groups to affect positive change in the campus environment was a direct reflection of the quality of the relationships among the individuals and departments expected to address diversity and inclusion on campus. All campus educators, operating from any pathway to partnerships, need to attend to cultivating relationships.

4. Actively engage students as partners

Relationships and partnerships for advancing campus diversity and inclusion efforts should not be exclusive to faculty and staff. Any truly inclusive response to the challenges of shaping culture requires the contributions of all members of the campus community, including students as partners and leaders. Initiatives often take place over a number of years; the sustained work required can sometimes present barriers to student participation (not the least of which is how and when to schedule meetings). And yet students can be the most effective agents in

shaping and influencing campus culture, a group whose contributions should be considered essential to a successful effort.

Harnessing the power of student contributions requires identifying strategies for students to engage in meaningful roles, listening carefully to student voices about proposed solutions they recommend for challenges they perceive in the campus climate, viewing students as partners in campus leadership, and carefully cultivating future student leadership and engagement in diversity and inclusion initiatives. Moreover, students may unearth issues of marginalization *not* present in strategic plans and grant-supported campus-wide initiatives. Campus educators are challenged to join students (when students desire) or work with students to figure out how to mobilize their own efforts in building more inclusive environments rather than looking for students to support administratively-driven initiatives.

With a tremendous diversity of student perspectives, caution should also be taken to avoid asking a handful of students to serve as “representatives” for all student perspectives or expecting students to participate in a way that reinforces binaries in identities or unintentionally makes them choose between identities. Instead, structures should be designed to maximize the inclusion of a diverse range of student perspectives in campus decision-making processes and working groups. Students should be invited and encouraged to offer insights about intersectionality that faculty and administrators may miss. One strategy might include the implementation of regular, comprehensive campus climate studies, which often take the form of campus educators administering campus-wide surveys followed by conducting focus groups. Not only can such a strategy ensure a range of perspectives can be heard and acted upon, but over time, the comprehensive and systematic collection of student input can also encourage a more nuanced understanding of student perspectives that can account for intersectionality.

Another strategy might be to include an additional intentional feedback loop before final recommendations or decisions are made, which invites students to describe important considerations or intersectionality that may have been overlooked in the process. Addressing the complexity of multiple, intersecting forms of identity requires the inclusion of student voice in diversity and inclusion efforts to be systematic, ongoing, and situated at multiple levels of the institutional structure. An institution that uses these comprehensive strategies may shift toward standard operating practices found in a pervasive pathway. Furthermore, these proposed strategies may address the concern expressed by students and staff in the opening vignette about initiatives happening “to them” rather than “with them,” through the adoption of processes that encourage more administrative transparency.

5. Seek out internal and external mechanisms to assess institutional efforts

The vignette exemplifies how policy-makers, national associations, and foundations sponsor grant-funded programs for colleges and universities with the hopes of catalyzing institutions to make deep and systemic change. These initiatives can be powerful because campus constituents can learn from researchers and practitioners at similar and different institutions about how they engage in addressing oppression and striving to create a welcoming campus climate (LePeau, in press). Campus constituents are often charged with writing project reports to chronicle their progress toward meeting their intended learning outcomes. What happens when learning outcomes are *not* met? How are institutions holding themselves accountable to continue the work once the grant-funded project ends? It is not enough to rehash strategic planning documents or redefine institutional mission statements to reflect appreciation for diversity. Institutions need to re-administer campus climate surveys, conduct assessments to understand students’ experiences in multiple environments (beyond satisfaction surveys and

course evaluations), and teach students to integrate climate assessments into the ways they organize and lead clubs and groups. Campus educators must ensure that assessment results are critically analyzed, publicly communicated, and acted upon. A simple Google search for “assessment of campus climate for diversity” yields multiple examples of campuses that are boldly choosing to be transparent about their self-examination and are inviting members of their own campus community (not to mention broader public stakeholders beyond the campus) to hold them accountable to measuring, reporting, and responding to progress with diversity and inclusion efforts.

6. Transform organization structures and systems

Effective pathways and partnerships for diversity and inclusion often necessitate addressing any divisions or barriers (perceived and real) between academic affairs and student affairs on college and university campuses (LePeau, 2015; LePeau, in press). This can happen through informal actions that encourage individuals to work beyond their particular departmental or functional area context, or it can be encouraged more formally by creating new organizational structures that bring together educators from multiple areas of the campus into new units or new relationships. For example, reorganizing new departments, institutes, or centers that simultaneously address academic and co-curricular campus contexts and are staffed by individuals with non-traditional position descriptions, or creating new opportunities that bring faculty and staff together as co-educators in campus learning experiences (classes, certificate programs, study abroad, service and immersion programs, or other engaged learning formats) that address diversity and inclusion. Innovation will look different from campus to campus, and should be responsive to the unique environment, context, and goals of the institution.

Conclusion

The vignette at the beginning of this chapter started with campus educators naming and acknowledging barriers to building an inclusive campus environment. Because national grants or initiatives encourage institutional teams to make their efforts context specific, the ideas presented in the vignette are merely hypothetical. When campus educators are doing ongoing work to create more inclusive environments, there are real faculty, students, and staff involved; each person possesses individual stories and lived experiences about how they experience campus environments. Thus, it is imperative to acknowledge the nuances missing from this vignette when applying the six recommendations for enacting change in your own environment. The strengths of the people learning and working in one's own institution need to be honored. A campus educator at different institutional types (i.e., community college, minority serving institution, HSI, HBCU, PWI, tribal college, religiously affiliated institution, liberal arts college, research university) in different regions of the country will view issues of inequity from one's own positionalities and one's own knowledge of the particular campus culture and climate. Campus educators who enter the work of forming intersections from an asset-based angle where everyone is perceived as contributing to student success have the potential to move beyond the rhetoric of valuing diversity to creating ongoing change.

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