Beyond the Diversity Crises Model: Decentralized Diversity Planning and Implementation.

Damon A. Williams, PhD
Assistant Vice Provost
Multicultural & International Affairs (OMIA)

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Beyond the Diversity Crisis Model

Decentralized Diversity Planning and Implementation

Subhead to come.

by Damon A. Williams

Damon A. Williams is currently the assistant vice provost for multicultural and international affairs at the University of Connecticut. He is a national leader in the discussion of diversity, inclusive excellence, organizational change, and academic engagement. He has worked with over 100 organizations and is a widely sought-after keynote speaker, presenter, and consultant. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education (CSHPE).

Introduction

Too many diversity-planning efforts follow a reactive pattern that emerges when the campus is disrupted by a diversity crisis. Nationally publicized examples include controversial remarks by the president of Harvard University in 2003 regarding the ability of female faculty to perform in the sciences and the Duke University lacrosse team incident in 2007. These types of incidents, as well as the growing frequency of racially themed campus parties, focus new energy on the tacit and explicit diversity challenges that an institution must address. These incidents are impossible for senior institutional leadership to ignore and often activate the diversity crisis model approach to planning and implementation.[1]

On many campuses this model follows a well-choreographed process: diversity crisis leading to mobilization leading to institutional response (Guy, Reiff, and Oliver 1998; Peterson, Blackburn, and Gamson 1978; Williams and Clowney 2007). For many institutions, this is the only time they engage in a serious conversation about campus diversity issues. However, because of the need for a rapid response, their efforts often lack continuity and focus. Consequently, many institutional diversity initiatives are largely symbolic and fail to deeply influence organizational culture and institutional behavior (Williams, Berger, and McClendon 2005).

I argue that a more powerful decentralized diversity planning model should replace the diversity crisis model currently employed at many institutions. Based on interviews with the nation's leading diversity officers (Williams and Wade-Golden, forthcoming), a review of the literature (e.g., Cox 2001; Hurtado and Dey 1997; Peterson, Blackburn, and Gamson 1978), consulting engagements with numerous institutions, and my own experience as an officer charged with leading college and university diversity efforts, I recommend a 10-phase model. This approach, while guided by priorities established by the central administration, relies on planning at the decentralized unit level to embed an appreciation of diversity challenges and achieve desired outcomes at all levels of the institution.

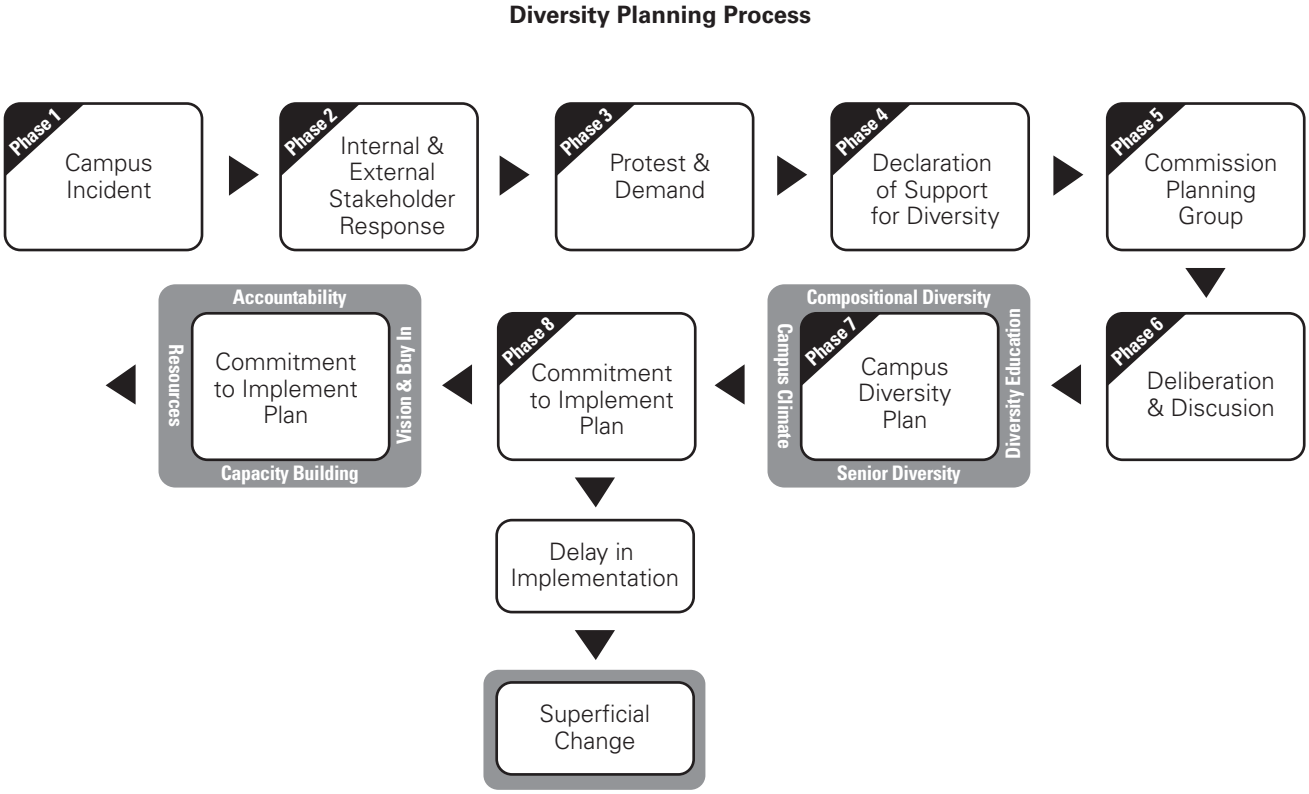
The approach is based on a three-year planning cycle that begins with the establishment of institutional priorities and the creation of an administrative oversight system (phases 1-3). The next steps address the development and review of diversity plans at all levels (phases 4-6) and the implementation of each unit plan (phases 7-9). Finally, in phase 10, each unit head is evaluated with regard to the progress made, and the next cycle of planning can begin. Before discussing this three-year model in more detail, I begin with a discussion of the diversity crisis model and why campus diversity initiatives often fail.

The Diversity Crisis Model

As outlined in figure 1, **[cr]** the diversity planning process often begins with a campus incident that brings new attention to campus diversity issues (Williams and Clowney 2007). This process usually involves stakeholder responses, a high-profile declaration of support from senior leadership, the commissioning of a planning group, deliberation and discussion by diversity planning teams, and the development of a diversity plan.

Although some plans may focus on a particular issue, like the Harvard University diversity plan with its focus on

Figure 1 **The Diversity Planning Crisis Model**



minority and female faculty, many diversity plans are quite broad. A review of numerous diversity plans noted that many included the following general recommendations:

- Increase the demographic or compositional diversity of the student, faculty, administration, and staff bodies.
- Implement mandatory diversity education and training initiatives for the entire campus community including faculty. This recommendation often includes a pointed focus on developing a diversity course or requirement as part of the general education curriculum.
- Appoint a senior diversity administrator or chief diversity officer to focus attention on campus diversity issues and "hold the institution accountable."
- Improve the campus climate through a range of different programs and initiatives.

What happens after the plan is developed is contingent on the institution's seriousness and commitment to implementing a powerful and evolving diversity change project. Change is difficult in higher education and, if we use past performance as a guide, change to create diverse learning and professional environments is particularly hard. At their core, higher education institutions are different from for-profit or nonprofit organizations (Birnbaum 1988). Illogical systems, vague and multiple goal structures, conflicts between espoused and enacted values, and loosely coupled systems of organization and governance are just some of the dynamics that make organizational change so difficult to accomplish in this context (Birnbaum 1988; Weick 1979).

These organizational dynamics confound the diversity implementation process, often leaving campus committees unable to adequately outline a multifaceted and evolving diversity implementation project. Consequently, senior leadership often receives diversity plans that have wonderful recommendations and analyses, but are less than clear when it comes to implementation strategy and the change management process. This may be one of the reasons why long delays often result once the plan has been developed, leading to superficial and incomplete diversity implementation efforts, particularly after the diversity crisis has been averted.

Any diversity planning and implementation effort will be successful only if it focuses on building capacity; cultivating vision and buy-in; establishing accountability processes; and providing an adequate level of financial, human, and technical resources by senior leadership to lead change over time (Guy, Reiff, and Oliver 1998; Williams, Berger, and McClendon 2005; Williams and Clowney 2007). Without this type of approach, most diversity plans are destined to fail.

Why Campus Diversity Plans Fail

To successfully lead campus diversity efforts, institutions must clearly address why diversity plans fail. In a recent monograph on organizational change and diversity for the Association of American Colleges and Universities, Williams, Berger, and McClendon (2005) outlined several reasons:

- failure to conceptualize diversity work in terms of changing the organization and enhancing institutional culture;
- resistance to the logic that diversity is fundamental to excellence;
- low levels of meaningful and consistent support from senior leadership;
- failure to allocate sufficient resources to the process of change;
- lack of a comprehensive and widely accepted framework to define diversity and track progress;
- lack of accountability systems and the means of engaging individuals in the change process at all levels; and
- lack of leadership and infrastructure to guide and facilitate the change journey and direct campus diversity efforts at all levels of the institution.

If we want our diversity planning efforts to be more than symbolic, we must address and overcome each of these points and approach the diversity implementation process with a focus on real change, results, and impact.

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One of the cornerstone models for understanding organizational change theorized that the forces driving change must be increased and the forces resisting change decreased for the change effort to be successful (Lewin 1951). When viewed from this perspective, it comes as no surprise that many campuses settle back into the same organizational behavior 12 to18 months after a diversity crisis.

In these instances, diversity planning and implementation efforts often fail to generate sufficient momentum to overcome the institutional culture and anchor new initiatives in the environment (Williams, Berger, and McClendon 2005).

As one examines the diversity implementation efforts of a number of colleges and universities, it is apparent that the best of what we know about organizational development and strategic planning is often ignored when it comes to implementing campus diversity plans. This is particularly true when the motivation for campus diversity efforts is an institutional crisis. As a result, high-profile diversity plans are often abandoned in the face of a resistant organizational culture and a less-than-committed senior leadership team. To make campus diversity efforts more than symbolic, institutions need diversity change processes that are multifaceted, dynamic, coordinated, and evolving.

The Three-Year Diversity Planning and Implementation Cycle: A Decentralized Approach

Because of the decentralized nature of higher education, centralized, campus-wide diversity plans are not enough (Williams 2007). They often fail to burrow deep into the culture and overcome institutional resistance, accrue sufficient buy-in for the change vision, place accountability with the right people, or develop strategies that match the environmental context in which campus change efforts must occur.

Institutions need a decentralized approach to diversity planning that complements central diversity plans and requires each school, college, and/or division to own the diversity planning and implementation process within a locally implemented and centrally orchestrated framework. The challenge is to develop an approach that will create strategic consistency and, at the same time, allow for freedom, individuality, and creativity in the planning and implementation process.

The diversity planning and implementation model outlined in figure 2 **[cr]** is comprised of several activities that should be included as part of a three-year planning and implementation cycle (Cox 2001). A leader at the dean or senior executive level should have formal authority for implementing the plan across the institution's various academic and administrative areas. During the three-year planning cycle:

- In the first year, each school, college, unit, department, or division will launch the process, achieve readiness, and write its diversity plan, which should be ready for implementation by the end of the year.
- In the second year, major aspects of the plan will be implemented, concluding with a quality review.
- In the third year, implementation will continue and an accountability review will assess the dean or vice president's efforts to achieve broad institutional diversity goals. This review should be used both as part of the merit review assessment process and to establish institutional accountability. (Some institutions may want to have an accountability review at the end of the second year.)

I propose a three-year planning cycle because it is long enough to allow for implementation of a meaningful project, but not so long that participants will lose sight of the original charge. The higher education literature on organizational culture and change suggests that transformative change may take as long as 10 to 15 years to achieve (Simsek and Louis 1994). Consequently, a one-time cycle is probably not enough, and the planning and implementation process should continue for several years (Cox 2001). This type of ongoing initiative requires an institutional commitment that can overcome changes in leadership and is anchored in the institution's mission, values, and overarching strategic documents (Williams, Berger, and McClendon 2005; Williams and Clowney 2007). In short, the proposed diversity planning process should be positioned as one subcomponent of the strategic planning cycle for the entire institution.

Phase 1: Launching the process. During the launch phase, the president and/or provost must establish a tone of seriousness and high expectation in all written and verbal communications about the diversity planning process. Without this emphasis, many deans and vice presidents will view the diversity planning effort as another symbolic activity not meant to foster real change.

Therefore, the planning process must begin with a clear and powerful charge letter that connects the diversity planning and implementation effort to the institution's strategic and academic plans and ties it to the institution's mission statement. By writing the letter in this way, senior leaders begin moving institutional diversity efforts from the margin to the center of the academic, mission, and strategic priorities of the institution.

This letter should also frame the institution's diversity planning efforts within a strategic context of environmental trends. The charge letter is important for establishing a new understanding of campus diversity that no longer hinges

Figure 2 **Diversity Planning and Implementation Model: Timeline and Action Steps**

Year	Phase	Action
Year 1	**Phase 1:** Launching the Process	The diversity planning process is launched with a powerful charge letter from the president/provost, a creative use of campus symbols and rituals, nomination of an executive diversity steering group, and events and activities designed to focus attention on the seriousness of the diversity change effort as a meaningful and high-profile institutional priority. Some of these events may be replicated in subsequent years.
	Phase 2: Creating the Diversity Planning Team	The dean or department head nominates a team from his or her area to lead the group through all phases of the diversity planning and implementation effort.
	Phase 3: Establishing Readiness	A series of readiness activities is implemented by each diversity planning team. Readiness activities are also implemented for the broad community within each institutional area where a diversity plan will be developed.
	Phase 4: Establishing a Culture of Evidence	This includes establishing a culture of evidence to track progress during the change journey, examining the diversity challenge, leveraging a confluence of quantitative and qualitative data that will establish whether important benchmarks are met, and tracking change.
	Phase 5: Writing the Diversity Plan	Each diversity plan should have several common elements, including but not limited to a statement of the challenge and the unit head's rationale for diversity; indicators of success; and recommendations in the areas of recruitment and retention, diversity education/research/scholarship, campus climate, and marketing and communicating diversity.
	Phase 6: Reviewing the Plan	After the diversity plan is written, the executive diversity steering group will review it and provide recommendations to the president/provost, who will then issue a recommendation for further revision or move directly to implementation. In this phase, further technical assistance may be provided by campus diversity officials, institutional planners, human resources professionals, and external consultants.

Year	Phase	Action
Year 2	**Phase 7:** Implementing the Plan	Each area implements its plan, leveraging all or some combination of activation strategies such as establishing strategic diversity themes, creating incentives, and recognizing diversity leaders. This phase should begin with easier tasks and constantly work toward the larger goal of overcoming systemic challenges.
	Phase 8: Reviewing Quality	A one-year diversity progress report is developed that details the progress made during the first year of implementation.
Year 3	**Phase 9:** Evolving the Implementation	The continuing implementation effort may be refined based on the results of phase 8 and further technical assistance. In addition, a major event may be held to bring new energy to the implementation's next cycle.
	Phase 10: Reviewing Accountability and Celebrating Successes	Each unit head is reviewed and assessed based upon his or her progress in implementing the diversity plan. This assessment will be one measure used to determine merit. At this point, a new diversity planning cycle may begin.

solely on a social justice rationale. In the 21st century, diversity is more than morally right and the continuation of the civil rights movement's legacy. Contemporary diversity plans must be framed using social justice, educational goals, and even business imperatives as the rationale (Cox 2001; Gurin et al. 2002; Williams, Berger, and McClendon 2005; Williams and Clowney 2007).

The need for campus diversity no longer hinges solely on a social justice rationale.

The charge letter should include specific university-wide diversity goals, provide explicit instructions, and communicate a clear message of accountability. Without clear and direct communication, some may not take the data analyses and plan development process seriously and may rely instead on information from recent accreditation reviews and annual reports.

Other important launch activities include:

- *Appoint a campus-wide executive diversity council* to review and provide strategic guidance during the diversity planning and implementation process. This group will review the diversity plans, provide guidance to the president/provost, and assist with coordinating the diversity plan across campus.
- *Involve the chief diversity officer and members of the institutional planning office* in all phases of planning and implementation (assuming these roles are already in place). These individuals will provide valuable insight into issues of diversity, the current status of data on campus, and the process of organizational change. By creatively leveraging these groups, institutions will buttress their diversity planning and implementation efforts.
- *Establish a financial plan* to provide new resources to help support campus-wide diversity planning activities. Some possible strategies might include taxing the annual budgets of every department on campus to create a centralized diversity resource pool, establishing diversity as a fund-raising priority of the development office, and placing diversity efforts at the top of the institutional priorities list.

The goal of phase 1 is for each unit to engage in a process of deep introspection and reflection about diversity from the unique vantage point of its particular school, college, or division. As noted in "Now is the Time," a

recent report by a coalition of higher education associations, localized reflection is essential to understanding the unique challenges and opportunities in a postsecondary environment that is diverse, decentralized, and focused on pursuing numerous organizational priorities (AASCU/NASULGC Task Force on Diversity 2005).

Phase 2: Creating the diversity planning team. Each school, college, department, and division should create a diversity planning and implementation team. Members of the planning team must be committed to establishing diversity as an institutional priority and creating a sense of urgency around the need to implement the plan. The dean or vice president should lead the team, along with one individual who might co-chair the committee and several representatives from the division to provide different perspectives. One or two members who have a clear understanding of the school, college, or division culture can help establish the boundaries of organizational possibility. These individuals may be questioning and, at some level, resistant to the process but must remain committed to delivering a product for the institution. Figure 3 **[cr]** presents several recommendations concerning team membership.

Phase 3: Establishing readiness. Institutional leaders must establish an ongoing process of achieving greater levels of readiness in every phase of the diversity planning and implementation effort. Establishing readiness for change is a vital step along the path toward implementing a high-caliber diversity plan. For the diversity planning team, readiness means being clear about the diversity planning and implementation process and providing tools to assist deans, vice presidents, planning teams, faculty, and others.

Figure 3 **Diversity Planning and Implementation Team**

Committee Member	Rationale
Vice President or Dean	This leader has overarching authority for implementing the diversity plan and the formal authority necessary to both direct important institutional resources toward it and oversee its success.
Associate Dean or Vice President	Each division should have at least one officer who has specific responsibility for overseeing unit diversity efforts. This individual is an essential contact with the chief diversity officer and others within central administration regarding questions, strategic assistance, and best practices.
Budget Officer	This individual can help identify resources, execute financial procedures, and develop cost-share mechanisms.
Department Heads	One or more department heads or their designees might be included on the team, both to provide a leadership perspective and to assist with implementation and buy-in.
Faculty/Staff Member at Large	At least one or two at-large faculty or staff members should be recruited to provide perspective, encourage buy-in, and share the change vision. These persons need not be the strongest diversity advocates, but should be focused on achieving the superordinate goals of the planning effort.
Undergraduate and/or Graduate Student	The student perspective is important in developing a high-performing plan and will provide valuable insight into student culture, expectations, norms, and challenges within the division, school, or college.

Some important diversity planning team readiness activities include:

- *Develop a decentralized diversity planning and implementation kit* that includes (1) the charge letter; (2) a brief on how to write a higher education diversity plan; (3) a diversity plan template that each unit head should use to write the diversity plan; (4) relevant campus-wide diversity planning documents, mission statements, and reports; and (5) a number of articles, monographs, and essays on issues of diversity.
- *Hold a diversity planning and implementation training session* with all deans and vice presidents who will be held accountable for diversity planning and implementation. This meeting will review the major components of the diversity planning kit, emphasize high expectations, and discuss potential implementation challenge areas.
- *Host individual preconsultation meetings* with academic deans, vice presidents, and members of their staffs before they begin to develop their unit-based diversity plan. These meetings will be hosted by members of the campus-wide diversity executive committee, members of the chief diversity officer's staff, and institutional planning professionals.
- *Assign a diversity planning and implementation consultant* to each school, college, or division to assist with any technical issues that may arise during the process. This consultant may be a member of the campus-wide diversity executive committee, a member of the chief diversity officer's area, an institutional planning professional, or a faculty/staff member with relevant skills and abilities.

It is equally important to establish readiness among the broad community of students, faculty, and staff within each area of the institution. Similar to the way plowing prepares a garden for a new flower to be planted, implementation leaders must prepare their communities in numerous and multifaceted ways if the effort is to be successful. Indeed, many faculty and staff may feel comfortable with the current reality and have no desire to participate in the change process.

Other readiness strategies to create readiness at the school/college level include town-hall meetings, department meetings, newsletters, and similar opportunities for discussing the diversity planning and implementation process. In some instances, members of the chief diversity officer's area, diversity consultants, and others may be deployed as thought leaders to help the group better understand issues of diversity. An additional strategy involves instituting faculty development seminars and briefing sessions that discuss recruiting diverse faculty, infusing diversity into the curriculum, or establishing inclusive classroom environments. The leadership of the divisional head is critical, as he or she helps to elevate diversity as a school, college, or divisional priority within the area.

Phase 4: Establishing a culture of evidence. Each area must establish a culture of evidence regarding its current state of diversity. This evidence might include both quantitative and qualitative information to generate dimension and understanding of the current state within a particular area of the institution. Although it is important to have quantitative data when possible, it is more important to have data that are consistently tracked and measured over time that can be used as indicators of movement (Collins 2005). Without these indicators, colleges and universities struggle to understand their current state of diversity and the progress that results from new initiatives and activities.

Some activities to establish a culture of evidence include:

- *Establish creative partnerships* with the affirmative action and equal employment opportunity office, the institutional research office, the registrar, and the office of admissions to identify academic, human resources, and other data systems that can be mined to generate new insights. Early conversations with these stakeholders can establish a system for providing data that can be helpful in specific institutional contexts.
- *Disaggregate data* in terms of race/ethnicity, minority/majority status, and gender to create an authentic process intended to achieve real change and not manage institutional perceptions. For example, students and faculty of Asian descent have realized tremendous gains in recent years, while African Americans, Latinos/as, and Native Americans have not made progress in certain areas. To report these data only at the aggregate "minority" level would mask these differences and is disingenuous, considering that diversity efforts are usually focused on increasing the numbers of historically underrepresented groups (e.g., African Americans, Latinos/as, and Native Americans).

By presenting these data over the course of 10, 20, and 30 years, institutions can create a powerful understanding of their progress or lack thereof with respect to the recruitment and retention of different campus constituencies.

- *Document the number of discrimination complaints* to begin to understand the environmental culture. These data in the aggregate can help an institutional leader determine whether there is a toxic environment for any particular group or whether there is a climate of safety where individuals feel supported when bringing up issues. Although some data cannot be reported in detail, this information is generally available in the equal employment opportunity office and is best viewed in comparison with other areas of the institution.
- *Conduct an organizational climate or culture* audit of each area. This may rely on a confluence of survey, focus group, and/or individual interview data from students, faculty, and staff regarding whether an area has a climate of inclusion or exclusion. Given the sensitivity of this information, an external consultant or on-campus survey center should conduct the study if possible. This type of data enhances the understanding of the potential toxicity or supportive nature of the climate for women, minorities, members of the disability community, or members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community. Although it is probably impractical to conduct new data analyses every year, establishing baseline data in year one provides a context for comparison as the change initiative moves forward.
- *Collect data that illustrates how each area is creating an environment* that leads to new types of diversity scholarship and prepares the entire institutional community to engage with difference. This might mean cataloging courses in a given school focused on issues of diversity; assessing a diversity training program; or summarizing the numbers of programs, initiatives, and speakers focused on issues of diversity.

These data should be used to develop a coherent statement that defines the diversity challenge for each particular area of the institution. The statement should both qualify and quantify the state of the organization and be used as a part of the diversity plan developed in phase 5.

Phase 5: Writing the diversity plan. The diversity plan should include a data-driven definition of the challenge; a unit-specific definition/rationale for diversity; implementation strategies across the four dimensions of recruitment and retention, diversity education, campus climate, and communicating diversity; a financial plan; and progress indicators to be monitored over time.

> Interpreting diversity within a local context helps each unit establish its own center of gravity.

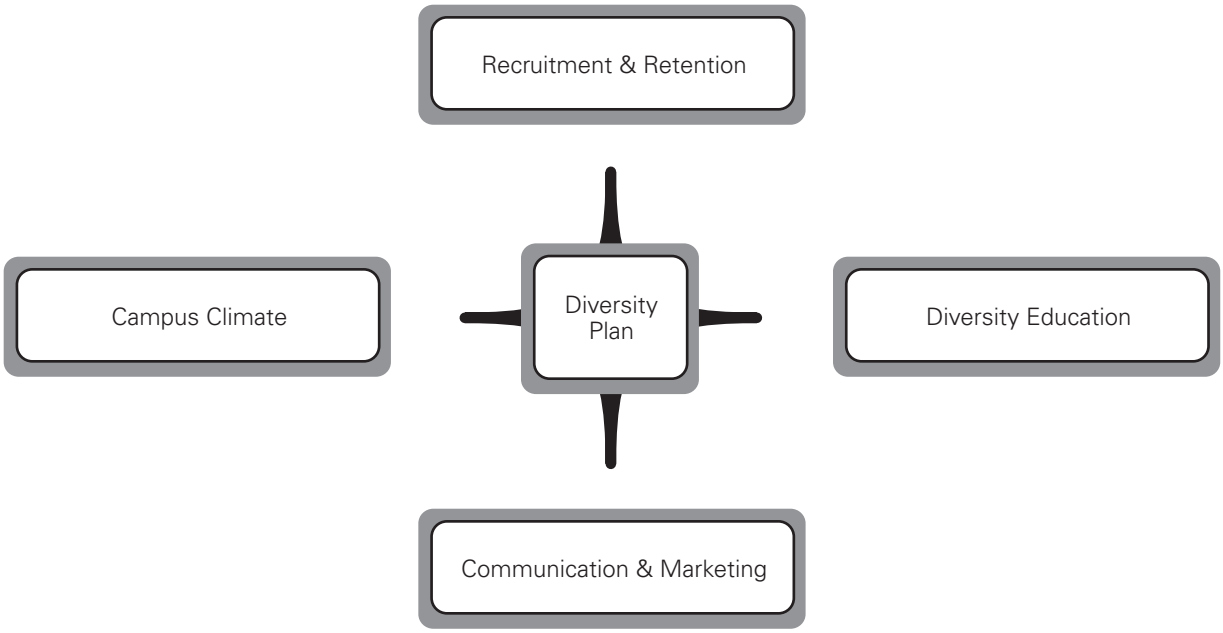
The diversity rationale statement defines what diversity means for the unit. While a general institution-wide definition of diversity is important, each unit (e.g., business school, school of education, college of liberal arts and sciences) must develop a specific philosophy or grounding statement that explains the importance of diversity to achieving excellence within the context of the individual school, college, or division. The reflective process of interpreting diversity within a local context will help each unit establish its own center of gravity with respect to campus diversity planning and move forward from this understanding.

Although a number of frameworks for structuring a diversity plan could be used (e.g., Hurtado et al. 1998; Smith and Wolf-Wendel 2005; Williams, Berger, and McClendon 2005), the simple framework illustrated in figure 4 **[cr]** allows for a breadth of activities intended to enhance the compositional diversity of the institution, build the unit's brand in terms of institutional diversity, achieve the educational benefits of diversity, create an inclusive campus experience for all, and track and monitor the change process over time.

The following discusses each of the four dimensions in more detail.

- *Recruitment and retention.* This dimension is at the heart of most diversity efforts and is rightfully the first thing that institutional leaders think about when discussing diversity issues in general. The focus of this dimension is on developing recruitment and retention activities for students, faculty, and staff that will lead to increases in the number of African Americans, Latinos/as, Native Americans, and other historically underrepresented groups.
- *Diversity education, research, and scholarship.* This dimension focuses on infusing diversity into the formal

Figure 4 **Four Dimensions of a Diversity Plan**



and informal curriculum and research endeavors of a particular school, college, or division. This dimension is accomplished through activities such as (1) courses that fulfill the general education diversity distribution requirement; (2) diversity-centered leadership and professional development programs and opportunities for faculty, staff, and students; (3) special programs to foster inclusive teaching pedagogies, such as managing classroom discussions on diversity topics and the appreciation of differences; (4) intergroup dialogue programs around difficult issues, and (5) special incentives to entice and recognize the infusion of diversity into scholarly inquiry.

- *Campus climate.* The campus climate dimension focuses on improving the environment for historically underrepresented groups, women, members of bounded social identity groups, and others. Although increasing the compositional diversity of the student, staff, and faculty bodies is important, it is also essential to sponsor programs and initiatives that stimulate intergroup interaction and create opportunities and spaces for diverse groups to feel welcome and have a sense of belonging. Some examples might include (1) sponsoring diversity speakers, (2) organizing brownbag lunches on diversity issues, (3) supporting ethnic and social identity affinity organizations (e.g., the Student National Pharmaceutical Association, National Black MBA Association student chapter, National Alliance of Black School Educators), and (4) establishing mentoring initiatives that pair junior and senior faculty members.

  It is also important to measure and assess the campus climate using a combination of quantitative and qualitative research tools designed to measure perceptions of the climate (Hurtado et al. 1998). Institutional data on campus climate, such as the number of incidents of racism and sexism, are meaningful to an institution's organizational learning and improvement process. These data are particularly helpful for understanding how women, minorities, and other social identity groups experience the various academic and social contexts of the institution.
- *Communicating and marketing diversity.* The final dimension of the framework centers on the process and nature of communicating diversity to students, faculty, staff, parents, and other stakeholders by developing brochures, Web sites, manuals, and other

documents that depict the range of diverse students, faculty, staff, and offerings that exist at the university, as well as on reporting progress on relevant diversity projects and activities.

Finally, the diversity plan should include a statement that describes how recommendations will be financed, as well as a timeline and indicators that will be used to assess progress over the course of three to five years. The diversity plan should be submitted, if at all possible, using an electronic system to ensure speed, accuracy, consistency, and ease of review.

Phase 6: Reviewing the plan. This phase is intended to enhance implementation using an organizational, l earning-centered approach:

- Members of the campus-wide executive diversity council appointed in the launch phase should review each plan. The council will comment on the quality of the plan, the clarity of the recommendations, and the overall merits of each school, college, or divisional effort.
- The committee will then draft recommendations for the president or provost, who will use this guidance to craft a written response to each proposed plan that is directed to the unit head.
- The chief diversity officer, planning professionals, or others may provide an additional round of technical assistance to guide the plan's construction and implementation.
- Finally, the plan is revised or the group is given permission to move to implementation.

In addition to enhancing the overall quality of each plan, this phase is intended to reinforce the seriousness of the process and the importance of engaging in planning and implementation activities that are more than symbolic.

Phase 7: Implementing the plan. As is the case with any strategic planning initiative, the real work of diversity planning is in making the school, college, or divisional plan work. Each unit must rationally pursue diversity recommendations while enacting a new understanding of institutional diversity and engaging the organizational community in an interpretive dance to capitalize on current efforts and build ever-increasing change energy (Senge et al. 1999). What follows are several strategies to activate the implementation process:

- *Launch with a high-profile event to create energy for the change.* Implementation should begin with a high-profile event that signals the implementation process, almost like the beginning of a major capital campaign (Hirschhorn and May 2000). Campus leaders must create visibility for the diversity project similar to that for a diversity crisis moment to draw energy into the change process. A major symposium, keynote speaker, or other opening activity will bring attention to the diversity planning effort, particularly if a featured speaker can provide a message consistent with the diversity planning vision.
- *Use strategic themes to sweep people into the implementation and enact new understanding.* Establishing a new strategic theme or connecting with a broader institutional or higher education strategic theme can shape and provide symbolic energy and focus for the diversity initiative (Hirschhorn and May 2000). Themes like "Inclusive Excellence," "Good to Great," "Finding Common Ground," "Now is the Time," "Engaging With the World," and others are broad enough to allow multiple definitions and yet narrow enough to invite interest and engagement.

  The key is to develop a theme that is "sticky," to quote Malcolm Gladwell (2000), author of the best-selling book on the viral spread of ideas, *The Tipping Point*. If the theme is sticky, it invites individuals to think about what it means. In a world where the diversity implementation effort must compete for the limited time and attention of faculty, staff, administrators, and students, a sticky theme is a key advantage in the battle to attract involvement, understanding, and buy-in (Gladwell 2000; Hirschhorn and May 2000). The development of this theme is particularly important in a diversity implementation effort that requires the reorientation of diversity as more than simply the "morally right thing to do."

  As an example, Towson University in Maryland and San Jose State University both used a campaign-style approach to launch their institutional initiatives. Towson University launched a "Now is the Time" diversity planning and implementation process with a splashy all-day conference. San Jose State University launched its "Inclusive Excellence" strategic planning efforts with a three-day, late-summer retreat featuring national-level speakers addressing an audience of nearly 100 key administrators, faculty, and staff.

  These events helped to inform the mental models and perspectives of key campus leaders and provided

them with an opportunity to not only learn new information but also to contribute to the refinement of goals, strategies, and ideas. Similar events could be held in the various schools, colleges, and units of the institution or even be hosted centrally with decentralized breakout sessions.

- *Embrace existing diversity activities as pilot and continuing efforts of the broader implementation.* It is valuable to look for current activities that can now be included as part of the broader diversity implementation effort. Making existing diversity efforts part of a greater whole creates more visibility for those mavericks and traditional diversity professionals who are often at the fore of institutional diversity efforts. This will both galvanize their work and amplify the efforts of other diversity initiatives within the school, college, or division.
- *Create incentives to drive involvement.* The effort must find ways to encourage support and involvement from the campus community. A key strategy is to develop incentive programs that provide new resources and attention for those involved with diversity implementation activities. Another well-tried strategy is the development of faculty, staff, department, and/or student challenge grants to provide seed resources and establish the entrepreneurial energy needed to move the change effort forward (Williams, Berger, and McClendon 2005; Williams and Clowney 2007).
- *Acknowledge diversity leaders and champions.* An additional strategy involves providing small development bonuses for faculty members engaged in diversity-related research and outreach efforts that bring new attention and recognition to the area of institutional diversity. These efforts should be showcased in press releases, newsletters, alumni communications, award banquets, graduation ceremonies, and at other opportunities.
- *Begin with low-hanging fruit.* A key theme of any change project is to look for easy early wins and use them to build momentum. Diversity implementation efforts are no different. The effort may die before it begins if the change project is too aggressive in its early stages. Momentum must be built over time as the effort both challenges the community to achieve new initiatives and supports them along the way. However, this strategy works only if the unit is committed to long-term change.
- *Do not let systemic challenges kill the effort.* Jim Collins, noted author of the widely read book on organizational excellence, Good to Great, argues in his social-sector monograph that organizations should strive to achieve "pockets of excellence" that provide starting points even in the face of overwhelming systemic obstacles (Collins 2005, pg. 31). These early initiatives become the foundation of success and breakthrough change, even though they may be imperfect in their outcomes.

  This point is crucial because change advocates and resisters alike often point to systemic obstacles as a rationale to do nothing. For example, many argue that the "lack of a pipeline" prohibits the recruitment of historically underrepresented faculty and/or students in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics areas. While no one would deny that the pipeline is challenged, this cannot stop an institution from approaching the effort with rigor, intensity, and creativity. It will take decades to build a pipeline, but institutions must act today if they are to achieve any improvement. So while institutions may work to build the pipeline for the future, they should also work to realize "pockets of excellence" today that will recruit and retain more students and faculty.

Individuals must be clear on the why—as well as on the why now—of institutional diversity change efforts.

- *Develop an ongoing diversity education component to quicken change.* Before individuals can embrace the change, they must be clear on the why—as well as on the why now—of institutional diversity change efforts in order to create understanding and, ultimately, persuade them to engage in the change process. Additionally, they must see the benefits of change and their role in accomplishing the institution's diversity goals. To accomplish this, conferences, symposiums, and faculty development seminars are essential.

  Additionally, some resources might be made available to send teams to advanced leadership development institutes to work on issues of diversity and organizational change. One example is the

Association of American Colleges and Universities Greater Expectations Institute. At this five-day intensive working institute, teams engage with thought leaders, administrators, and faculty on a number of different projects and initiatives focused on issues such as student engagement, infusing diversity into the curriculum, and developing/implementing campus diversity projects. This type of investment could help to provide direction and catalyze the efforts of both the executive diversity council and the various teams across campus.

Phase 8: Reviewing quality. Although change at its most basic level has been defined as unfreezing, moving, and refreezing the culture, this process is not so easily accomplished (Lewin 1951). Substantial interpretation and shift in values and beliefs are essential to secondary organizational change (Kezar 2001). The quality review is designed to provide feedback, which further sensitizes unit leaders to the expectations and requirements of the diversity change initiative and provides critical feedback for improving the implementation efforts of each school, college, or division.

Included in the quality review are:

- *The diversity progress report.* Each school, college, or division should possess information regarding its successes, challenges, and overall progress that it can use to write a diversity progress report that provides qualitative and quantitative evidence of the project's implementation. Measuring performance in the context of quantitative and qualitative goals focuses attention, reinforces progress, ensures rigor, and builds confidence.

  Some examples of the data that units should collect to help them establish a culture of evidence regarding their diversity efforts include information gathered in response to diversity speakers and program events, an evaluation of a diversity training initiative, or a summary statement of the work contributed by a subcommittee that developed a new diversity requirement as part of the school/college curriculum. Regardless of type, the focus is on reporting information that illustrates what has been accomplished during the implementation year. This report might also include information about the challenges associated with implementation.

- *Individual unit meetings.* The campus-wide executive diversity council will participate in the quality review process by examining each unit's report. Each unit head should meet with the appointed review team to discuss the specifics of the progress made and provide more detail regarding the implementation. The review team will then generate a response to each progress report and develop a summary statement for senior leadership that comments on the strengths and weaknesses of each unit's progress. Senior leadership should use this information to draft a statement for each unit head, which will be placed in the individual's professional development file. The goal of the feedback statement is to enhance quality and is offered with no consequence to the dean or divisional head.

- *Best practice meetings.* Senior institutional leadership might host a half-day symposium with each diversity planning team, during which each team would give a brief presentation summarizing its efforts and lessons learned during the first year of implementation. This sharing process will allow best practices to emerge and foster a common understanding of the challenges facing each implementation effort. Further, this public forum will capitalize on the competitive dynamics within postsecondary institutions as each dean or vice president hopes to distinguish himself or herself from peers. When possible, campus diversity progress reports might be placed on campus intranet systems and made available in other electronic and print forms to ensure a broad and public implementation effort.

The quality review should improve implementation and move the institution toward a performance standard that rewards success and holds individuals accountable for their efforts. In the end, the quality review should increase communication, establish clear expectations, and reinforce good performance within a spirit of cooperation, organizational learning, and teamwork.

Phase 9: Evolving the implementation. Each unit should evaluate the feedback received during the quality review and look for creative ways to evolve its implementation effort by asking, What is working? What is not working? What new initiatives might be put in place? What new human, financial, and technical resources are necessary? What new pilot initiatives should be developed? Although the same goals must remain in place, the implementation process should grow and develop over time like a living organism.

The third year of the diversity planning and implementation effort should begin with a unit-wide conversation about how the implementation might evolve to quicken the pace of change and continue efforts already underway. In many instances, current change strategies will be slightly revised to enhance their efficacy and chance for success, rather than be completely replaced with all new initiatives. The goal is to continue building momentum.

Communication and feedback loops create transparency regarding the diversity implementation effort. Some activities to accomplish this include holding town-hall meetings where updates are given about the project and dialogue ensues about implementation; placing a summary article from the diversity planning team in the unit newsletter; or creating a special Web site that periodically posts activities, meeting notes, reports, presentations, and even streaming video of important diversity activities.

Finally, members of the campus community should be given plenty of opportunities to provide feedback and suggestions for enhancing the implementation effort. At no point should the student, faculty, or staff communities feel closed out of the implementation loop. This is essential for building the credibility of the initiative, evolving the implementation effort, and moving toward accountability at multiple levels of the institution.

Phase 10: Reviewing accountability and celebrating successes. When persons are accountable, they are answerable for their performance on some measured dimension (Simons 2005). At the end of the three-year process, an accountability review will be conducted. Similar to the quality review, each unit will develop a diversity progress report that comments on its efforts across all three years with a specific focus on the second year of implementation. Again, the review team will analyze these reports and provide feedback to senior leadership. At this point, senior leadership should include this information as part of the performance review for each dean and/or vice president. Senior leadership should also establish the standard of quality used to assess the overall success of each implementation.

Successful leaders will be acknowledged in multiple ways. They might be publicly acknowledged for their successful implementation work. This might include coverage in the president's annual state of the institution letter or perhaps inclusion in the annual report to the trustees or board of governors. The goal is to create symbolic moments that further reinforce the importance of the implementation effort and establish a culture that encourages the institution to move forward (Williams 2007). Additionally, successful leaders will have their merit pay increase partially determined by the quality of their area's diversity implementation efforts. By comparison, less successful leaders will be held accountable for not implementing or achieving diversity plan goals (or at least making good-faith efforts). If possible, institutions might even consider developing a bonus structure for individuals who lead especially strong implementation efforts and rewarding units that did a particularly good job with implementation.

Lessons for Change Leaders

Historically, colleges and universities have engaged in the diversity planning process in response to institutional crises. When these crises occur, institutional leaders must in some way respond. Yet, reactionary diversity processes only lead to superficial change. Shifting demographics, the demands of the corporate community for diverse and culturally competent graduates, and the need to educate all students to succeed in a global and interconnected world make it clear that colleges and universities must develop a more powerful approach to diversity planning and implementation.

The decentralized diversity model presented in this article is conceptualized to achieve powerful diversity gains. Each successive three-year cycle should inevitably focus on developing new initiatives and achieving an even-greater level of accountability in regard to institutional diversity goals. In subsequent implementation cycles, diversity may perhaps be embedded in faculty merit reviews, made part of the standard assessment of teaching and learning, or made part of the tenure and promotion review process. These change goals might be established in the cycle 1 implementation and even more powerful change strategies put in place in subsequent years. The point is that each diversity cycle should engage change at deeper institutional levels. Over a series of implementation cycles, the change should be transformative and result in new institutional diversity capabilities.

Change happens incrementally through the interaction of the strategy, structure, and individuals involved with the change process. As a result, diversity change processes will different in each unit. Every school, college, or divisional diversity process will evolve in its own unique way. The strengths of the model are that it is fluid; it capitalizes on

the decentralized nature of the academy; and it allows for implementation to happen in a way that is grounded in localized actions, organizational learning, coordination, and accountability. Nevertheless, success requires consistent and meaningful commitment from senior institutional leadership.

Although long and difficult, this process is the only way to transform our institutions and better meet the needs of the 21st century. The future of higher education demands and deserves nothing less.

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Note

1. The mention of Harvard University and Duke University is not a commentary on those institutions' diversity planning or implementation efforts. These examples are given only to illustrate the type of diversity crisis that may trigger the diversity planning and implementation process on college and university campuses.