

Sit In/Stand Off:
*Harvard University,
The Progressive Student Labor Movement,
and the 2001 Sit In for a Living Wage*

Abstract

In 2001, a group of Harvard University students in the Progressive Student Labor Movement occupied Massachusetts Hall, the administrative building where the President, Provost and Vice Presidents have their offices. For twenty-one days, the longest sit in of a University building in history, the students occupied the first floor and refused to leave until the University implemented a “living wage” (then \$10.25 per hour) for all of its service workers, those directly employed by Harvard as well as those employed by contractors. During those three weeks, daily protests filled Harvard Yard, and the protestors received endorsements from national labor leaders, politicians at both the federal and local level, professors and students, and celebrities. President Neil Rudenstine, meanwhile, refused to negotiate with the students while they occupied the building. Harvard University fought a public relations war as the national media descended upon the campus; law enforcement became an increasing problem as a tent city sprang up on the lawn. Outside audiences such as the national media and labor union interests dramatically transformed a local issue into a national forum for fair wages within higher education at large.

I briefly explore the history of activism at Harvard which informed the administration’s responses to the events of 2001, and then explore in detail the events prior, during, and immediately after the sit in. The living wage sit in was a vivid demonstration of what happens when all stakeholders are not brought to the table, and is an excellent study of how institutional change functions within an organization with such a long history as Harvard’s. Negotiations were successful in ending the sit in and both parties defined it as a success, even though neither side achieved their initial objectives. Each was challenged to formulate the most compelling narrative in the media in order to win the hearts and minds of the public. This paper explores the many stakeholders and positions that emerged throughout the occupation, and suggests where there were missed opportunities to guide student and community learning connected to a campus incident that spread to the national stage.

All In The Family?:
The Changing Demographics of Black Students at Harvard

Abstract

Between the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census reports, there was a 41% increase in the number of foreign born Blacks to the United States; 84% of whom are from Africa and the Caribbean. The resulting impact of this new influx of Black residents in the United States has been felt in the labor and real estate markets, public education and with increasing measure, in higher education. In 2000, a Black American undergraduate at Harvard, Aisha Haynie, noticed that classmates were surprised to hear that she was “just Black” – a descendant of enslaved Americans – and not a recent immigrant or a first or second generation Black. Her senior honors thesis explored the demographics of Black students at Harvard and found that only a little *over a third of Black undergraduates were native-born, non-biracial, non-biethnic Black students*. This paper explores the literature on the cultural relationships between Black Americans, Black Caribbeans and Black Africans, highlights the discussion among members of the Harvard community as to the benefits and drawbacks to the changing demographics, and most importantly, offers a case study with current undergrads about how their identity within the Black community impacts their experience. The research shows that members of the higher education community are divided about whether or not this is even an issue; the axis of the debate is affirmative action policies and whether or not its intended beneficiaries, native-born Black Americans who have generationally suffered from inequitable educational opportunities, are once again being left behind as foreign born, biracial, biethnic or first and second generation Blacks, who do not identify with the Black American experience, are increasingly represented at highly selective institutions. The case study notes that the decreasing numbers of native-born Black Americans on Harvard’s campus is causing resentment and tension among students and a rift in the Black community. Finally, I offer policy suggestions that include: 1) Continue to implement affirmative action policies to diversity the campus, regardless of country of origin of Black students, 2) Increase efforts to recruit native-born Black Americans, 3) Offer equal support mechanisms to the different groups within the Black community, and 4) Change the application format so that Black students can indicate their country of origin and further research can be done.

The Unity for Gallaudet Protest of 2006:
The Emptying of the Institutional Garbage Can

Abstract

On May 1st, 2006 the Board of Trustees at Gallaudet University, the only liberal arts university designed exclusively for the deaf and hard of hearing, announced that it appointed Jane K. Fernandes as the 9th President of the University. Unbeknownst to the Board at the time, this announcement would incite a protest initially directed at the appointment of a Provost through a flawed search process, but expanded to highlight underlying issues facing the University, such as issues of governance, failed leadership, institutional memory, and changing. Ultimately, this protest raised the divisive question: “What does it mean to be deaf at Gallaudet?”

The Unity for Gallaudet protest was not simply a response to the presidential appointment of Dr. Jane Fernandes, but rather it was an explosion. It was the explosion of a cauldron of issues that had boiled underneath the surface of Gallaudet for years, searching for a means of escape. Adopting the Unity for Gallaudet protest as a means of evaluating Gallaudet as an organization, this paper addresses the role of the presidential search in institutional evaluation and exposing weaknesses and deficiencies in governance, and the importance of culture in institutional mission and transition at Gallaudet. It will conclude with recommendations for the institution as it attempts to move forward and begin to think about the search for a permanent president.

Marking Reform:

Do Institutional Efforts to Combat Grade Inflation Address the Root Causes of the Problem?

Abstract

Grade inflation is a topic that has inspired much public attention in recent years. Many outspoken critics fear that grade inflation is undermining college education and hurting society. The root causes of grade inflation are complex and involve an interactive web of competitive pressures, student and faculty cultural trends, institutional practices, pedagogical and philosophical developments, and governmental and societal forces. Institutions are responding with different interventions – many of which help to “stop the hemorrhaging” – but are unable to promote real change because they do not attack the root causes of grade inflation. In this paper I evaluate efforts at Dartmouth (expanded transcripts), Duke (achievement indexing), and Princeton (grade quotas) and find that such approaches are ineffective at targeting the underlying causes of grade inflation. I then explain why colleges and universities are limited in their ability to address such root causes, because of factors such as the organizational structure of institutions, relationships between constituencies, the difficulty of impacting cultural change, the need for collective action, competitive pressures, insufficient research on causes and interventions, and concern for unintended consequences of change.

The Dynamic Role of the Multicultural Education Requirement In Undergraduate General Education

Abstract

With the growing pressure from the public and governing bodies for colleges and universities to be held accountable for preparing their students for graduate school and the workforce, many higher education institutions have been reviewing their general education requirements for substance and value. In this debate, the role of multicultural education requirements, in the form of a single course or a pair of courses in non-Western cultures or a comparative course on the relationships between different ethnic groups in the United States, has been the subject of criticism and praise by administrators, faculty, and students. In this paper, I examine the criticisms of multicultural education “watering down” traditional Western curricula and the claim that these requirements are too basic and short to be effective in accomplishing the major goals of multicultural education: increasing students’ appreciation for different cultures and diversity and improving inter-group relations and communication. Critics have also claimed that the structure and content of multicultural education do not truly engage students in multiculturalism and diversity and are not well developed enough to help students make meaningful connections of diversity and multiculturalism to their lives. I will evaluate research and studies that address these criticisms and identify what types of courses and requirement structures may be the most effective in delivering multicultural education. In the next section, I will examine three institutions’ multicultural education models to identify the strategies and practices that may be especially effective in designing a multicultural education requirement.

Accidental Innovation:
*The Positive and Negative Consequences of Arcadia University's
First Year Study Abroad Experience*

Abstract

Arcadia University, a private, comprehensive institution located in Glenside, PA, prides itself on campus internationalization. Each year, the University offers a select group of up to 70 first-year students the opportunity to study in London, England or Stirling, Scotland during their first semester of college. The distinctive First Year Study Abroad Experience (FYSAE) was created to alleviate a housing shortage, but its consequences have extended well beyond the creation of additional beds. FYSAE has transformed Arcadia in many ways, solidifying its brand, raising its academic profile and giving it national recognition. At the same time, however, the implementation of the program has raised questions about the value of study abroad to an institution. As Arcadia navigates the high cost of offering the program, disappointing persistence trends among participants and conflicts in administrative authority and responsibility, it must determine appropriate courses of action which will leave a powerful program in tact and still allow the University to gain its benefits. This paper explores the unintended outcomes of Arcadia's innovative first-year study abroad program as well as possible resolutions to some of the negative institutional consequences.

“Indian” Identity In College Admissions:
Is Heritage Verification Necessary?

Abstract

The topic of Native American admissions has been a passion of mine ever since I entered higher education. This paper specifically addresses the concern over how some students may self-identify as American Indian/Alaska Native simply to gain an advantage in admissions, and whether colleges and universities should be in the business of verifying “Indian” status.

In my research for this topic, I offer current and historical demographic information to provide context to this debate. I also spoke with admissions professionals, directors of Native American programs, reviewed many articles, websites, and books, and even attended a recent panel on Indian identity at Harvard. In my information search, it became very clear that defining Indian identity is very personal, and something that colleges should be careful doing.

Ultimately, I do support the idea of asking for additional information of any applicant who self-identifies as American Indian/Alaska Native in the admissions process, especially given the history of this group. But I also feel strongly, through my research and from my own personal experiences, that this process should not be seen as verification—this is not the business of admission professionals. Hopefully, though, this paper will offer ideas on how to ask, and utilize such information when reading applications from Native American students.

The Kaleidoscope Project:
A Case Study of Tufts' Admissions Pilot Program

Abstract

The Office at Admissions at Tufts University, in collaboration with its new Dean of Arts and Sciences, Robert J. Sternberg, has implemented the Kaleidoscope Project as a test pilot for their application process this year. The Kaleidoscope Project is based on Sternberg's theory of successful intelligence and aims to improve predictions of college success and establish greater equity in the admissions process. Sternberg headed a study by the name of the Rainbow Project which found that expanding the range of skills beyond analytical skills to include practical and creative skills served as a better predictor of college performance *and* reduced differences among ethnic groups. By allowing applicants the opportunity to complete an optional essay of their choice, Tufts hopes to identify these often overlooked skills and students and in the process admit a more diverse freshmen class.

This paper provides a background on the Rainbow Project and its findings. It then analyzes how Tufts has implemented the Kaleidoscope Project into their admissions process and includes perspectives from the Admissions Officers, college counselors and students regarding the same. Lastly, the paper provides suggestions for improvements on how the pilot has been put into practice, analysis and predictions on the potential success of the Kaleidoscope Project at Tufts.