

**2007 REGIONAL ENTRY LEVEL INSTITUTE  
RECOGNIZING THE NEEDS OF DIVERSE STUDENTS**

*Acknowledging and working with the needs of students  
who come from a wide variety of social identities and lived experiences.*

*All of our experiences are seen through our own personal lens. Our lens is shaped by our experiences, and how we show up in the world including the various dimensions of our identities that make us who we are.*

**Participant Outcomes**

1. Self-explore and develop an awareness of one's multiple dimensions of identity through personal sharing, reflection, and dialogue
2. Understand that students come to college with differences and commonalities
3. Understand some of the needs of students who come from under-represented groups
4. Learn to develop a comfort working with students who are different from themselves
5. Learn strategies to help diverse students feel welcomed and appreciated when they may be from an under-represented group

**Key Things You Must Know and Understand**

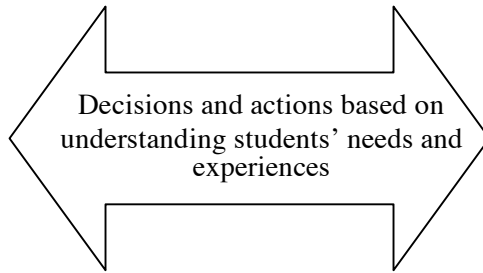
1. As an Assistant Director, you are responsible for fostering an environment that is welcoming for all students, and helping staff to develop a relationship with all members of the community.
2. How your own experiences can influence your degree of comfort and ability to interact with and serve students from backgrounds and identities different from your own.
3. How to build rapport with someone you do not know and whose social identities are different than your own.
4. How students' needs may differ based on their social identities, and considerations for meeting those needs.
5. You have to teach your staff how to develop relationships with people different from themselves.
6. You need to help staff realize how their own various social identities influence the ways in which they perceive and interact with the world as well as how others perceive and interact with them.
7. The needs of international students of color are often very different than the needs of domestic students of color.
8. The difference between race and ethnicity, and being careful not to use ethnicity as a proxy for race, and vice versa.
9. As human beings, we show up with all of our various social identities, and not just one of them. We are an intersection of multiple dimensions of identity.
10. Subordinated identities are often more salient than dominate identities.
11. Meeting the needs of diverse students is much more than giving attention to under-represented students.
12. Food, fun, facts, and festival are not a substitution for meeting the needs of diverse students.
13. What is the IT we are trying to get when it comes to diversity?
14. What role does history and past events play in meeting the needs of under-represented populations, particularly within the sociohistorical context of the United States.

## Highlights from the Literature – How do you explain the following?

1. As colleges and universities became more diverse, educational researchers began noting how White students and students of color experienced the same predominately white institutions differently (Fleming, 1984).
2. Although the period between 1983 and 2003 witnessed a significant increase in campus diversity, students continue to have little interaction with individuals different than themselves before coming to college (Broido, 2004). In fact, incoming college students are coming from more segregated school systems now than 10 to 15 years ago (Orfield & Kurlaender, 2001).
3. Diversity work in the 1980s and 1990s can be characterized as an effort to provide equal educational opportunities for student success, and remediation for past discrimination. The challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be leveraging the potential for learning and meaningful cross cultural interaction that is possible when diverse groups come together.
4. Cross-cultural interaction benefits include interpersonal and cognitive gains that occur when students engage with other students whose race is different than their own. This effect is realized for both individuals and groups of students (Chang, 2006).
5. Diverse interactions prepare students to become active and contributing citizens in their communities after they graduate from college, and challenge students to reexamine biases they may have about people different from themselves (Zúñiga, Williams, Berger, 2005).
6. Simply having diverse numbers of students does not guarantee that these students will interact. In fact, higher levels of compositional diversity without intentional efforts to effectively facilitate cross-cultural relations *can be a detriment* to students (Chang, 1999).
7. Whitt et al. (2001) and Pascarella et al. (1996) found that peers were the second greatest predictor of openness to diversity, and was second only to the precollege characteristics of gender, race, and age. In their research, being a woman, a student of color, and an older student, in that order, was most predictive of a student's openness to diversity. Within the context of higher education, these groups also represent subordinated identity groups with their dominant binaries being men, White students, and traditional age (18-24 years old) college students.
8. Students who engage in dialogue and form relationships with people different than themselves are more likely to achieve positive outcomes related to diversity. This includes a willingness to challenge personally held biases about people different from themselves, and engaging in behavior that promotes positive democratic outcomes that are highly desired in residential communities (Zúñiga & Sevig, 1997; Zúñiga, Williams, Berger, 2005).

**Dimensions of Student Diversity**

1. Ability
2. Gender (beyond binary)
3. Sexual Orientation
4. Citizenship
5. Country of Origin
6. Religion
7. Socioeconomic Class
8. Ethnicity
9. Race
10. Family of Origin
11. Community of Origin
12. Language



**Dimensions of Student Services**

1. Housing
2. Learning
3. Community
4. Policies
5. Behavior
6. Programming
7. Relationships
8. Staffing
9. Communications
10. Facilities
11. Recognition
12. Staff Training

**Answer the following questions as an Assistant Director of Residential Living at RELI College**

1. How does your department address \_\_\_\_\_ concerns during staff selection and placement?
2. How does \_\_\_\_\_ issues come up in regards to supervision and accountability?
3. How does your department address \_\_\_\_\_ during staff training?
4. How does your department address \_\_\_\_\_ when developing policies?
5. What kind of challenges can you forecast around \_\_\_\_\_ in regards to managing crisis that may arise?
6. How can campus politics play into navigating issues related to meeting the needs of \_\_\_\_\_ population?
7. In what ways will you prepare yourself and your staff for serving the needs of a particular population, particularly around \_\_\_\_\_ dimension of diversity?
8. How do you balance addressing \_\_\_\_\_ along with all the other multiple priorities you have to balance in a given day or week?
9. How has meeting the needs of \_\_\_\_\_ population changed over the past 10 years?
10. In what ways can you enrich your professional development around concerns related to \_\_\_\_\_ population?

### **Action Steps**

1. Challenge your own perceptions by reading both scholarly and popular literature that provides insights about your own and others' lived experiences.
2. Choose to be an advocate for all students, especially those students whose voices are less heard than others.
3. Clarify departmental practices to make sure they systemically represent the needs and interests of all students.
4. Collaborate with colleagues and students to increase staffing competencies around diversity and improve student services.
5. Consider students' lived experiences before they arrived at your institution and how their experiences on your campus make them feel validated or not. Do residents see people like themselves among the staff? Are their interests represented in hall programs?
6. Contemplate how your policies support various dimensions of student diversity, and propose adjustments for those areas that are lacking.
7. Continue to seek inconsistent consistency around practices and policies so that your actions accurately serve the needs of your students.
8. Courageously take action and do not worry about making mistakes because you will, but what matters most is how you respond to the mistakes you make.
9. Create opportunities for walks along the Four Paths of Diversity: Awareness, Appreciation, Acceptance and Advocacy that include yourself, your staff and your colleagues.
10. Cultivate your own understanding of yours and others' social identities and lived experiences.

### **Departmental Considerations**

1. How do we engage staff and colleagues in meaningful dialogue that promotes a more sophisticated understanding of these issues?
2. Do we regularly and systematically assess our departmental practices to make sure those practices are meeting the needs of all students? If not, how do we begin?
3. How do we quickly adapt to meet unanticipated student needs?
4. How do we set limits that appropriately balance the challenge and support our students' need for successful development?
5. How might we be uniquely positioned (i.e. what are our assets and opportunities) to help promote the success of diverse students?

## Sources and Recommended Readings

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