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## Do As I Say - Not As I Do: American Colleges Preach to Corporate America About Diversity

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# **DO AS I SAY- NOT AS I DO: AMERICAN COLLEGES PREACH TO CORPORATE AMERICA ABOUT DIVERSITY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Dramatic demographic changes are occurring in our society as our students and workforce becomes more diverse. The literature cites the benefits of having a diverse workforce for innovation, problem-solving, and competitive advantage. Institutions of higher education chastise business for not being inclusive in their senior management positions. However, a study of Masters I institutions revealed that their presidents are predominantly Caucasian (87%), married (79%), male (77%), first time presidents (71%), between 50-59 years of age (49%), with an earned doctorate (90%) and reached the presidency via Academic Affairs (47%)

The presidents of Masters I institutions are not representative of the general population and in most cases; are not representative of their student populations. This may become a problem as both the general and student population continues to transform and the necessity of working collaboratively with people of different backgrounds, skills and values becomes more pronounced.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The United States has often been called a melting pot as people from every corner of the world risk lives and property for the hope of a better life. Their individual abilities, customs, and values have blended into a stew of diversity and opportunity. These collective differences make the country stronger and provide a competitive edge for addressing future challenges.

Institutions of higher education are an integral component of America's economic engines. They serve as bell-ringers for change and use their bully pulpit to preach to the political, commercial, social, legal and technological elite. They are complex organizations with diversity in their structure, governance, and mission. Within their realms, challenges and opportunities abound, and solutions to problems are rarely simplistic.

However, despite their cries for greater multicultural diversity in business, government, and secular institutions, it is questionable if institutions of higher education follow their own advice. Thus, the purpose of this study is to determine if a segment of the higher education monolith does indeed practice what it preaches.

## INSTITUTIONAL PROFILES

There are 3,913 institutions of higher education in the United States; 41.7% are publicly controlled, 42.7% are privately controlled, and 15.6% are operated as for profit institutions (Carnegie Foundation, 2001). The 496 Masters I institutions account for 12.7% of the total institutions of higher education and produce one-fourth of the total degrees. Masters I institutions are almost equally comprised of public controlled and privately controlled institutions. Only one for-profit institution exists (Carnegie Foundation, 2001). Jeffrey Selingo (2000), writing in *Chronicle of Higher Education*, dubbed these institutions as the “Middle Child of Public Higher Education.” They are situated between the major universities and the community colleges, and offer associates, bachelors, masters, and selected doctoral degrees. Although they are classified as Masters I, nearly 70% of the degrees they award are bachelors (Carnegie Foundation, 2002). **Table 1** illustrates the percentage of degrees earned by students at all the institutions.

**Table 1**  
**Degrees Earned at Higher Education Institutions 2001\***

Degree	Total number Earned at All Institutions	Percentage of Degrees	Number Earned at Masters I Institutions	Percentage of Degrees	Masters I Percentage of Degrees
Associates	578,865	23.9%	16,532	2.8%	2.9%
Bachelors	1,244,171	51.4%	404,970	68.9%	32.5%
Masters	473,000	19.5%	156,791	26.7%	33.1%
Doctoral	79,707	3.3%	998	.2%	1.3%
1st Professional	44,904	1.9%	8,307	1.4%	18.5%
Total	2,420,647	100.0%	587,598	100.0%	24.3%

\* Data obtain from the National Center for Education Statistics

The Masters I classification consists of institutions that award at least 40 master’s degrees across at least three disciplines. However, there are a number of institutions that far exceed these minimal criteria! For example, the average institution awarded 285 master’s degrees in 1997-1998 across twelve disciplines. However, 3,667 master’s degrees in 28 fields were produced at the largest institution, and another institution, though smaller in terms of degree production, provided 1,274 degrees across 57 disciplines (Carnegie Foundation, 2001). Thus, central tendencies for this sector may be especially misleading since Masters I institutions encompass both those institutions that barely qualify by definition and gigantic degree granting institutions.

The institutions range in size from Goddard College in Vermont with an enrollment of just over 600 students to California State University- Long Beach with over 33,000 students (Carnegie, 2001). The number of institutions was almost perfectly split between public (50.2%) and private institutions (49.6%) Also, there was a reasonable distribution of institutions. Institutions with enrollments less than 2000 represented 13.6% of the respondents, while institutions with enrollments greater than 2000 but less 4000 represented the largest sample (25.9%), while the three remaining enrollment categories of 4000-6,000 (21.3%), 6,000-10,000(22.8%) and over 10,000 (16.4%) were surveyed.

The American Council on Education conducts a bi-annual survey of all institutions to determine their demographic composition. However, in their survey both Masters I and Masters II institutions are grouped together. Therefore, this study surveyed Masters I institutions to ascertain their composition.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Diversity, as defined by the University of Maryland at College Park (1995,) is the otherness or differences from our own and apart from the groups which we belong, yet are present in other individuals and groups. These attributes include such factors as gender, race, age, ethnicity, physical abilities, sexual orientation, educational background, income, religious beliefs and work experiences. In other words, the characteristics that make people unique.

This uniqueness, which can spur innovation, can also lead to conflict as more and more primary differences enter the workplace. The new variables make it incumbent on management to coach and educate their employees to work together. J.T. Childs Jr., Vice-President, Global Workforce Diversity, IBM stated “No matter who you are, you will have to work with co-workers and customers who are different from you--black, white, brown, red or yellow, young or old, gay or straight, male or female, able-bodied or physically challenged” (Mayo, 1999). Further, Turner (1998) stated, “Our economy and our society are weakened if we exclude people from employment opportunities simply on the grounds of arbitrary and unfair stereotypes and assumptions -- whether these are based on age, sex, race, disability or anything else”.

Business often espouses the belief that people are an organization’s greatest resource. Their effort through collaboration yields innovation and creates social capital that Larson (2002) defined “as the quality and depth of relationships among people in any community, a school or an office, a factory or a laboratory”. However, many businesses have not yet learned how to utilize the varied skills of their employees. Business must seek to harness the power in diversity and exploit its potential for superior decision-making (Simons & Pelled, 1999). The inherent barriers due to different values and identities must be demolished so that people can work together in collaboration which can lead to multiple and diverse cognitive resources and extraordinary social capital. (Mayo, 1999). Jock Noble, CEO of [Diversity@work](#) passionately asserts; “Every

competitive advantage begins with people; people are different, differences create opportunity. That's diversity" <http://www.work.asn.au/businesscase>.

This belief has taken root at Canadian Occidental Petroleum Ltd. as President and CEO Bernard F. Isautier contends diversity is a source of competitive advantage that provides both value to the company and enhances the quality of decision-making. "If a company is to be successful in today's business environment, it must develop policies and practices in step with an increasingly diverse workforce" (Benimadhu, 1995).

In higher education Gurin (1999) found that a diverse student body benefits all students, enhances deep thinking and learning, and better prepares students to coexist in a pluralistic society.

Since the literature speaks adamantly about the advantages from diversity for students and business, shouldn't the senior university administration be expected to follow suit? Paradoxically, the opposite is true.

Shawver (1985) compiled a portrait of the 65 presidents who were members of the American Association of State Colleges, and likewise found the majority of presidents held doctorates, were white, male, and married. Reece (1997) profiled female presidents in the Southeast and found the president had a Ph.D. and had been in office five years or less. Further, the demographic portrait of presidents has been remarkably stable.

So, do higher education institutions have the moral acuity to judge other organizations shortfalls? By any measure, business does an abysmal job of promoting females and minorities since only 1.6% of the Fortune 500 CEO's are female and less than 4% are African American (Fortune, 2004). Prima facie, institutions of higher education are much more diverse than business. However, when comparing the gender and ethnicity of higher education institutions with the population in general and specifically, their student populations, the disparity is egregious.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A mail survey was simultaneously sent to all 494 Masters I presidents. If less than 50% of the surveys were returned after three weeks, a reminder notification was sent to participants who had not responded. After another three weeks if returns were below 50%, a final reminder was sent. After three mailings, a total of 254 valid responses (51.4%) were returned. Institutional and personal demographic questions asked included enrollment, location, gender, age, ethnicity, degree, academic expertise, and last position held.

## **RESULTS**

The data obtained paints a rich portrait of the men and women who run these extraordinary institutions. Nearly 77% of the respondent population was male. In

addition, the majority (86.6%) of presidents were Caucasian, and the majority (79.1%) were married. In addition, approximately half of the presidents were under the age of 60 (52.3%).

Nearly all (95.7%) of the respondents were permanent presidents. A doctoral degree had been earned by 90% of the respondents with nearly one-third of the presidents' academic expertise in education (31.1%) followed by the social sciences (27.6%). First-time presidents accounted for 70.5% of the respondents. The largest group of respondents had been presidents between one and five years (29.5%). In addition, a prior position in academic affairs appeared with the greatest frequency (46.9%) followed by a previous presidency at another institution (26.0). Presidents of public institutions represented 52.4% of the respondents and presidents of private institutions accounted for 47.6% of the population. Institutions with enrollments between 2,001 and 4,000 were the largest represented group (27.6%) followed closely by institutions with enrollments between 6,001 and 10,000 (26.4%). The Southeast contained the largest number of respondent institutions (25.2%), and mid-size cities possessed the greatest concentration of institutions (32.3%).

## DISCUSSION

This study found most (86.6%) presidents were Caucasian. Nearly 77% of the respondents were male, and the majority (79.1%) was married. An earned doctoral degree was most prevalent (89.7%) among the respondents. Nearly one-third of the presidents' academic expertise was in education. In addition, almost half (49.2%) of the presidents were between the ages of 50 and 60 years of age. First time presidents accounted for 70.5% of the respondents. The largest single group of respondents (47.2%) indicated academic affairs as their last position. This study's demographic findings are congruent with Corrigan's survey (2002) of the presidents of Associate institutions. Corrigan's respondents were similarly permanent presidents (96.3%), first presidencies (70.1%) and previous position President (24.5%) and Academic VP (41.2%)

There were a few interesting differences between Corrigan's Associates level leaders and this study's findings. Presidents of Associate institutions with less than 5 years in the position accounted for 52.8% while Masters I presidents accounted for 32.8%. Conversely, Masters I presidents serving over 15 years represented (25.3%) of the respondents while only 10.4% of the Associates presidents had served over 15 years.

An astounding 75% of Associate presidents were under the age of 60 while 47.2% of Masters I presidents were over 60 years of age. Only 41.9% of Associate presidents had a doctorate versus 89.7% of Masters I presidents. In addition 73% of Associate presidents had a background in education while only 31.6% of Masters I presidents had this area of academic expertise.

Nearly 5% more of Associate presidents were married. In relation to gender 26.8% were female as opposed to 23.2% of Master I presidents. Finally, non-Caucasians represented 13.9% of Associate presidents as compared with 13.4% of Masters I

presidents. Nevertheless, despite these variances, no statistically significant relationships emerged.

However, 76.8 % of presidents of Masters I institutions were male, and even in Associate institutions, males comprised 73.2 % of the presidencies. This inequality is further exacerbated when examining ethnicity. Caucasians inhabit the presidency 17% more than the Caucasian population as a whole. Conversely, Blacks were underrepresented by over 5%, Hispanics between 7-9%, and Asians over 2% as compared to their respective populations (see **Table 2**).

**Table 2**  
*Comparison of Ethnicity of Presidents with Census and Variance*

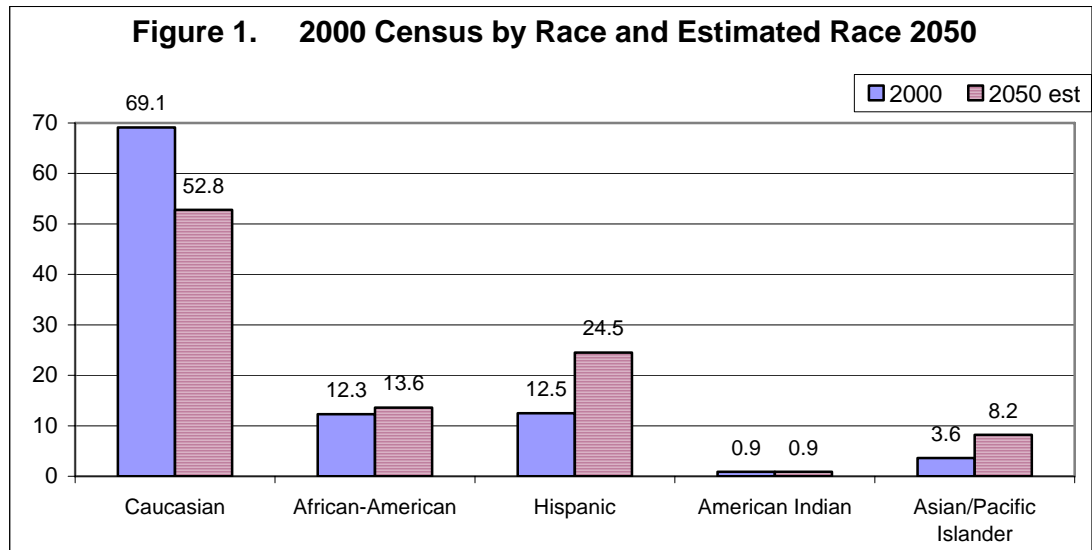
Race	Masters	Associates	2000 Census	Variance to	
				Masters	Associates
Caucasian	86.6	86.1	69.1	17.5	17.0
African-American	7.1	6.5	12.3	-5.2	-5.8
Hispanic	3.9	5.1	12.5	-8.6	-7.4
American Indian	0.8	nm	0.9	-0.1	-0.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.2	0.9	3.6	-2.4	-2.7
Other	0.4	1.4	1.6	-1.2	-0.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	0	0

An even greater lack of parity exists between the presidents of these institutions and their students. Caucasian presidents are over represented between 14 – 22 % over their student populations while Black presidents were underrepresented by 6-7%, Hispanics by 4- 10% and Asian 4-6% (see **Table 3**).

**Table 3**  
*Comparison between Fall 2002 students with 2003 Presidents \* Latest available data*

	2002	2003	Variance	2002	2003	Variance
	Masters Students	Masters President		Associate Students	Associate Presidents	
Caucasian	72.7	86.6	13.9	63.6	86.1	22.5
Black	13.1	7.1	-6.0	13.4	6.5	- 6.9
Hispanic	8.2	3.9	-4.3	14.9	5.1	- 9.8
Asian	5.2	1.2	-4.0	6.9	0.9	- 6.0
American Indian	0.9	0.8	- .1	1.3	nm	
Total	100.0	100.0	0	100.0	100.0	

According to the United States Census, Caucasians accounted for 69% of the U.S. population in 2000 and Hispanics, the fastest growing group, has replaced African-Americans as the country's largest minority. In fact, many believe that soon after 2050, the United States may not have any ethnic majority. **Figure 1** illustrates the Census findings of 2000 and projects the ethnicity percentage at 2050.



Economic growth for minorities is crucial to society as a whole, however, the disparity between Whites and Hispanics and Black Americans has widened (Blank, 2001). As our information economy continues to transform work process and business models, there will be an increased need for internet access so that the digital divide by income and race does not hinder their personal and professional progress (Van Dusen, 2000).

This tremendous increase in minority populations will have profound effects on society and education. As the 21<sup>st</sup> century develops there will be an accelerated need for education and training to maintain a reasonable standard of living in the global economy. Hispanic educational achievement lags Caucasians. Camarillo and Bonilla found that “In 1997 about 33 percent of Whites had completed college, compared with about 11 percent for Hispanics and 14 percent for Blacks (p.116).

The gender and race of presidents is remarkably homogeneous. Even though women and non-Caucasians are making strides in higher education, they only account for less than one-fourth, and one-eighth of Masters I presidents respectively. Programs targeted to develop women and non-Caucasians, as candidates for presidencies are essential since women constitute the majority student population. As the ethnic composition of the United States changes, so to should future presidents and faculty should be representative of the students they serve. But where will new presidents come from? The ethnic composition of faculty in 2003 was overwhelmingly male (63.9%) and



Caucasian (78.5%) (See **Table 4**). This fact indicates that future presidents will not vary much than current presidents.

**Table 4**  
**Total Higher Education Faculty by Race and Gender 2003**

Race	Male	Female
Caucasian	78.5	78.7
Black	5.6	4.6
Hispanic	3.4	3.3
Asian	5.1	5.7
American Indian	0.5	0.2
Non Resident Alien	2.4	2.9
Unknown	4.5	4.4

Likewise, when comparing the ethnicity of the faculty to the student populations' similar disparate ratios are found. **Table 5** compared the 2002 student population with the Faculty of 2003 and again revealed the faculty composition is very similar to that of presidents, and far removed from their students.

**Table 5**  
**Comparison to Student 2002 and Faculty 2003 Latest Available Data**

	Total Students	Masters Students	Associates Students	Total Faculty	Var Fac to total Student	Var Fac to Masters Stud	Var Fac to Assoc Stude
Caucasian	67.1	72.7	63.6	78.6	11.5	5.9	15.0
Black	11.9	13.1	13.4	5.3	-6.6	-7.8	-8.1
Hispanic	10.0	8.2	14.9	3.4	-6.6	-4.8	-11.5
Asian	6.5	6.3	6.9	5.3	1.2	-1.0	-1.6
American Indian	1.0	1.1	1.3	0.5	-0.5	-0.6	-0.8
Non Resident Alien	3.6			2.6	-1.0		
	100.0	100	100.1	99.6			

While nearly 64% of males held faculty positions in 2003, less than 43% of their students were males. Conversely, females accounted for only 36% of faculty positions yet the students accounted for 57% of the students (**Table 6**).

**Table 6**  
**Gender Comparison to Student 2003 and Faculty 2003**

	Students	Faculty	Variance
Male	42.9	63.9	21
Female	57.1	36.1	-21
Totals	100	100	0

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Remarkable changes will continue to occur as our society ages, incorporates an ever-increasing number of immigrants, and competes in the global economy. It is incumbent on institutions of higher education to prepare students to think and work collaboratively with others different from themselves. Fincher (1991) prophesized that higher education must deal with unexpected shifts in cultural pluralism, declining basic learning skills; and diverse learning habits, motives, and values. Tatum (2000) recommends that higher education institutions must continue to deepen its commitment to campus diversity since research and experience confirm the success of inclusion for students. Further, there should be more emphasis on diverse work teams for enhanced performance and innovation.

Institutions of higher education have made progress towards addressing diversity, as evidenced by the University of Maryland web resource [www.Diversityweb.org](http://www.Diversityweb.org). Similar sites are available at sister institutions such as the University of Michigan. However, it appears that higher education's efforts haven't been totally effective as an array of public and private firms have rushed to the marketplace to address this new dynamic. These firms includes The Federal Executive Institute & Management Development Center (<http://www.leadership.opm.gov/content.cfm?CAT=SDABN> ).

In addition, there is a plethora of websites designed to help business and constituents with diversity issues. A small sampling includes [www.diversityinc.com](http://www.diversityinc.com), [www.blackissues.com](http://www.blackissues.com), [www.hispanicissues.com](http://www.hispanicissues.com), [www.disabilityworld.com](http://www.disabilityworld.com), [www.workingmother.com](http://www.workingmother.com) [www.diversityandbusiness.com](http://www.diversityandbusiness.com), [www.diversitydtg.com](http://www.diversitydtg.com), [www.diversityinc.com](http://www.diversityinc.com), and [www.work.asn.au/businesscase](http://www.work.asn.au/businesscase).

Mauricio Velásquez, President of The Diversity Training Group asserts that business is not looking at diversity training because it is the right thing to do. Rather it is due to the demand of your employees and customers. "Corporate diversity efforts are about money, business, and the bottom-line" ([www.diversitydtg.com/articles/buscase.html](http://www.diversitydtg.com/articles/buscase.html))

Institutions of higher education are acting properly by sounding the bell and encouraging diversity, however, they must be leaders and practice what they preach. Perhaps the Center for Diversity and Business best encapsulates the advantage of a diverse workforce "Leveraging sustainable performance from the changing talents, cultures and values of the existing and future workforce, customers and suppliers" ([www.diversityandbusiness.com](http://www.diversityandbusiness.com)) Fully using the varied skills from all of your workers will lead to greater employee satisfaction, productivity, innovation, decision-making, and greater profits!

This paper has focused on the gap in diversity representation in the presidency of Masters I institutions. Further research could focus on the upcoming faculty and promote programs for females and minority, especially Hispanic scholars to join the Academy. Higher education institutions do provide a service by being a diversity watchdog,

however, they must make greater efforts to put their own house in order before they throw stones at others.

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