Race-Conscious Educational Practices

Strategies for Effectively Engaging Students of Color
Outcomes and benefits of engagement

Cognitive and intellectual skill development
(Anaya, 1996; Baxter Magolda, 1992)

College adjustment
(Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Kuh, Palmer, & Kish, 2003)

Moral and ethical development
(Evans, 1987; Rest 1993)

Practical competence and skills transferability
(Kuh, 1993, 1995)

Psychosocial development, racial and gender identity formation, and positive images of self
(Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Torres, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2003)

Higher grade point averages
(Tross, Harper, Osher, & Kneidinger, 2002)
Black male-specific gains and outcomes

Resolve masculine identity conflicts (Harper, 2004)

Acquire social capital and access to resources, politically wealthy persons and exclusive networks (Harper, 2008)

Negotiate peer support for achievement (Harper 2006a)

Craft productive responses to racist stereotypes (Harper, 2009)

Develop political acumen for survival in professional settings in which they are racially underrepresented (Harper, 2006b)

Overcome previous educational and socioeconomic disadvantage (Harper, 2007)

Develop strong Black identities that incite productive activism on predominantly white campuses (Harper & Quaye, 2007)
Enriching educational experiences
from the National Survey of Student Engagement

Having serious conversations with peers from different ethnic backgrounds, religious faiths, and political orientations

Actively participating in student organizations and out-of-class activities

Using the Internet, instant messaging, and other electronic resources to work collaboratively on class assignments

Participating in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students enroll together in two or more common classes

Taking foreign language courses

Completing an independent study or self-designed major under the supervision of a faculty member
High-impact educational experiences
from Kuh (2008)

- Study abroad programs
- Service learning opportunities
- Undergraduate research programs
- Summer internships
- Senior year capstone projects
Racial differences in high-impact experiences from the National Survey of Student Engagement

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What explains these racial differences in student engagement, and how do they play themselves out on at the University of Baltimore?
“The impact of college is largely determined by individual effort and involvement in the academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings on a campus”

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005, p. 602)
Shifting the onus for engagement

STUDENTS
ACCIDENTAL and SELF-INITIATED

FACULTY & ADMINISTRATORS
INTENTIONAL and OUTCOMES-PRODUCTIVE

LOW INSTITUTIONAL EXPECTATION

HIGH INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY
Julian is an African American college student. All of his professors, and the overwhelming majority of his classmates, are white. In fact, as he approaches the end of his senior year, Julian has not had a single instructor who was not white. He and his same-race peers often meet at the black culture center on campus to decompress and reflect on instances of marginality that repeatedly arise in their predominantly white classroom environments. Their frustration at the cultural negligence with which their professors approach teaching and learning is among the usual topics of conversation. Having somehow survived almost four years at a university that remained unresponsive to his cultural needs and interests, Julian has emerged as a mentor and self-appointed peer with the limited opportunities to learn about their cultural selves and diverse others in the classroom, Julian discusses his approach to “filling in the gaps” in his own educational experience. He supplements assigned course readings with culturally relevant books and essays written by black authors and other scholars of color. Despite having asked several of his white professors for help, Julian has had to search for this body of knowledge on his own. Also, he spent the spring semester of his junior year studying in West Africa. Julian pursued this opportunity not because a professor encouraged him to do so, but because he realized on his own that this would likely be his only formal opportunity in college to learn about the history and origins of his people. He often shares photos and details from the trip and encourages other African American stu-
why is there likely to be resistance to shifting the onus for engagement from students to educators, and why do so many faculty ignore the evidence concerning culturally inclusive pedagogies and student engagement in high-impact out-of-class experiences?
Race-conscious educators

Seven Attributes and Actions

1. Treat engagement as a verb (instead of a noun) and attribute the presence of engagement inequities to institutional dysfunction.

2. Recognize the distinction between equality (treating all students the same) and equity (giving students what they need to accrue the same outcomes as others in a particular context).

3. Proactively foster collaborative relationships with and on behalf of students who are likely to be harmed or distracted by racism, routine racial microaggressions and stereotyping, and constant reminders of their underrepresentation.
4. Understand that colorblindness denies the unique experiential realities of racial minority students in predominantly white contexts. Instead, these educators engage in qualitative question-asking as a form of assessment.

5. Are self-reflective and ask questions like, “how do I contribute to the cyclical production of engagement disparities that disadvantage racial minority students?”

6. Do not tokenize students of color and aren’t self-congratulating.

7. Replace confessions of inadequacy with committed efforts to remediate personal and professional shortcomings.
What is your present role at the university, and how differently might your work be if you were to employ the seven attributes and actions associated with race-conscious educational practice?
What might be some perceivably negative consequences associated with employing race-conscious educational practices?
Engagement as a converging interest

“We cannot ignore and should learn from and try to recognize situations when there is a convergence of interests” (Bell, 2000, p. 9).

Interest convergence typically compels whites to advocate for the advancement of people of color (Delgado, 1995).

CRT scholars posit that those in the majority who enact social, political, and economic change on behalf of minorities rarely do so without first identifying the personal costs and gains associated with such actions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Attempts to eradicate racial differences in social, educational, and economic outcomes have produced minimal results due to insufficient interest convergence.
why would someone (especially a white educator) employ these race-conscious engagement practices – what is in it for them?
Beyond individual faculty and administrators, how might engaging students of color in enriching educational experiences benefit the University? How might you help your colleagues recognize and develop appreciation for these potential benefits?
Weak institutions are those that expect students to engage themselves... A clear signal of institutional deficiency is when there are few ramifications for those who either bluntly refuse or unintentionally neglect to enact the practices known to produce rich and equitable outcomes for students” (p. 6).
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