Numbers

Only 24.3 percent of African-American adults and 17.2 percent of Hispanic adults in the United States have bachelor's degrees, compared with 38.1 percent of white adults (Seltzer).

"Though students of all races enter STEM majors at roughly equal rates, black and Latino students leave the major at nearly twice the rate of white students, finds a study published in the journal *Education Researcher*" (EAB).

"One in five teens and young adults live with a mental-health condition, and three-quarters develop it by age 24, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness" (Patel).

Insights

"Research is accumulating tactics that universities and their faculty can use to build trust across identity differences. For example, inviting students in a class to tell you and others a little about themselves . . . helps assure them that they are seen as more than a stereotype. Testimonies from other students who face similar identity pressures (thus helping to normalize the experience) but found gratifying, life-shaping experiences in college, have been shown to lastingly improve minority-student achievement." (Steele).

"Most impressive is the fact that URI has managed to cut its racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps significantly, even as the campus has grown more diverse. In 2012, Pell recipients were 13 percentage points less likely to graduate in six years than their peers without Pell grants; today, they're only 9 percentage points less likely. The gap between white students and students of color has shrunk even more, from 19 percentage points to 7" (Chronicle).

Laura Rendon's research on Latinx students shows that the "most important factor" in their success "was having someone who *validated* them" (Ross).

Introduction

Regional institutions make college possible for millions of Americans who otherwise—because of constraints on time, location, or finances—could not earn college degrees. We must do more than simply exist, though. We also must work strategically to deliver education in formats (traditional, online, and hybrid) that suit these students' special circumstances while also providing High-Impact Practices (internships, collaborative projects, undergraduate research, etc.) at little or no additional cost to students.

Our goals should be a transformative educational experience and a highly inclusive environment for a diverse body of students, including first-generation students, traditional and adult learners, and people of all races, ethnicities, orientations, beliefs, and backgrounds. Supporting all of these students is both the right thing and the smart thing to do. We owe it to students of all backgrounds to support their academic pursuits, but we also must realize that we all stand the best chance of progress when we leverage the strengths and perspectives of everyone.

We still have a lot of work to do to realize these noble aspirations. A recent *Inside Higher Ed* special report, *Squeezed from All Sides*, notes that only 24.3 percent of African-American adults and 17.2 percent of Hispanic adults in the United States have bachelor's degrees, compared with 38.1 percent of white adults. Meanwhile, microaggressions and more serious acts of violence and discrimination are too common on college campuses, threatening and undermining the cultures of diversity and inclusion that many of us work hard to cultivate. Success is possible, but we must increase our efforts to address intolerance and hate, promote diversity and inclusion, build institutional structures that preclude stereotype threat, and cultivate caring communities. Below are some strategies and initiatives that can increase our chances of success.

Initiatives and Strategies

Investments in Promoting Success for All: As Claude Steele has noted, intentional strategies can reduce the negative impact of stereotype threat. Institutions and individual faculty members must learn these strategies and implement them. Professional development exposing faculty and staff to stereotype threat and communication mismatch theory can help, as can workshops on specific classroom inclusion strategies, such as the "Breakthrough Strategies" that Kathleen Ross has described. Furthermore, as the experience of the University of Rhode Island has shown, investing in student success (through micro-grants, experiential learning, and more) can help close achievement gaps. IU Kokomo's KEY program provides free opportunities for all students to engage in experiential learning, build relationships (and thus a sense of belonging), and explore career opportunities.

Faculty Diversity Liaison: At IU Kokomo, one of our professors with a special interest in diversity serves as the Faculty Diversity Liaison. As a

member of our Academic Affairs team, she regularly attends our staff meetings, as well as meetings of our Deans Council. Thanks to this arrangement, the priorities of diversity and inclusion have a regular voice at the highest levels of Academic Affairs.

Climate Survey: This Faculty Diversity Liaison conducted a climate survey, which helped us to gauge the level at which our students, staff, and faculty felt welcome on campus. The results were generally positive, but the survey provided insights that could inform our future efforts. The Faculty Diversity Liaison discussed the results of the survey with every academic unit on campus.

"Community of Care": IU Kokomo strives to cultivate a "Community of Care" in which all students, staff, and faculty feel included and valued. In my role as chief academic officer, I take care to interact personally with faculty, especially when I learn of concerns or circumstances that might leave members of our community feeling anxious or unsupported.

Faculty Recruitment: IU Kokomo regularly sends the Faculty Diversity Liaison to the Institute for Teaching and Mentoring, the "largest gathering of underrepresented minority Ph.D. scholars in the country," to help attract more diverse candidates to our open positions.

Resource Navigator: Recognizing that many of the challenges threatening college success are not academic, but personal, IU Kokomo has hired a "Resource Navigator." A social worker by training, she helps connect students with food or housing insecurity, illness, anxiety, etc. with appropriate resources on and off campus.

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