Teaching and Learning for a Just Society

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Key Value Questions for Teaching and Learning

• Are students becoming more materialistic?
• Are students becoming more apathetic?
• Is racial diversity a less salient issue for students today?

If so, how do we counter prevailing norms in higher education? How do we train students for a complex society that requires ethical decision-making?
Trends: Students’ Personal Goals Rated Essential of Very Important

- Raising a Family: 76% Highest in 40 years
- Helping Others in Difficulty: 67% Highest in 20 years
- Influencing social values: 46% Also high point in 1992
- Improving my understanding of other countries or cultures: 49% First monitored after 9/11, risen steadily since then
- Integrating spirituality into my life: 41% Slight decline since 2000
- Becoming a community leader: 35% Highest in ten years (over half at HBCUs)
Materialism or Financial Concerns?

73% rate “becoming very well-off financially” as important or essential (87.5% at HBCUs)

64% of students indicate they have some or a major concern about their ability to pay for college—higher for students from lower incomes

44% expect to get a job during college to help pay for expenses--highest in 30 years
Racial/ethnic Experience and Tolerance

9 out of 10 White students grew up in a mostly white neighborhood, whereas over half of Black students grew up in mostly non-white neighborhoods.

19% believe that racial discrimination is no longer a problem in America.

35% seek to promote racial understanding.

Yet, 65% expect to socialize with someone from another racial/ethnic group in college.
Percentage of First Year Students Reporting How Frequently They Fell Asleep in Class (N=41,054)
Essential Theoretical Components of Educating for a Just Society

- Moving students from their own embedded worldviews—disequilibrium in transition
- Individualism vs group commitments, advancing the notion of self in an interconnected world
- Human action creates new social structures, or reinforces existing structures—human agency in daily practice
Role of Diversity As Central to Teaching and Learning

• Diversity creates these opportunities for disequilibrium, balance of group or individual considerations, and enhances knowledge about different perspectives/backgrounds
  – Diverse curriculum (enlightenment)
  – Interaction (contact)
  – Representation (inclusive of perspectives and people)
Key Outcome Examples

Complex thinking—capacity to think about behaviors as socially and historically linked

Perspective-Taking—ability to see the world from someone else’s perspective

Pluralistic Orientation—ability to function in multicultural groups, willingness to have own views challenged, ability to negotiate differences
Undergraduate Experiences, Independent Effect on Outcomes

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<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Posit. Informal Interaction</th>
<th>Diversity Course</th>
<th>Intergroup Dialogue</th>
<th>Service Learning</th>
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<td>Analytical Problem-Solving Skills</td>
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<td>Complex Thinking</td>
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<td>Importance of Making a Civic Contribution</td>
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<td>Cultural Awareness</td>
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<td>Concern for the Public Good</td>
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University Classroom Study
Moral Development

- Pre-test DIT2
- Post-test DIT2

Diversity Course:
- 26.88
- 34.01

Management Course:
- 31.25
- 27.99
Predispositions, Diversity Content, and Pedagogy Effects On Moral Reasoning

Race (Minority) → -.15*
Gender (Female) → NS → Moral Reasoning (Time 1) → .19**
Previous Diversity Courses → .19**
Moral Reasoning (Time 1) → .15*
Diversity Course → .39***
Active Learning Environment → .11*
Critical Thinking Disposition → .18** → .21***
Moral Reasoning (Time 2) → .57***
Linking Social Responsibility and Critical Thinking

• Students who had a strong desire to influence society scored highest on the critical thinking disposition test, complex thinking scale, and open-mindedness subscale

• Interaction with students of color was associated with open-mindedness and inquisitiveness scales on CTDI
Implications

• Students are entering with key dispositions, enhancing their development is our task

• Taking a social justice lens to the work we do is essential if we wish to produce leaders willing to close social gaps in society

• Intentional educators do not take learning or interactions with diversity for granted
Resources

• Higher Education Research Institute
  www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri

• The Black Undergraduate (Allen, et al, 2005)

• Upcoming reports: The First in My Family, First generation report in spring

• 40 Year Trends on April 2nd

• Linda Sax, book on gender differences Jossey-Bass