Chapter 10

Multicultural Advising:
Creating Supportive Academic Advising Spaces for All Students

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ABSTRACT

Since the cultural landscape of most higher education institutions is changing, it is paramount that colleges and universities make a concerted effort to connect with students from various backgrounds. The academic advising department could be the catalyst for change for many institutions of higher learning when seeking to support a diverse student body. Despite an increase in enrollment of students from various backgrounds on many college campuses, various challenges remain when attempting to advise and mentor diverse student populations. This chapter will examine some of the demographical changes taking place on college campuses across the U.S., the importance of multicultural advising and core components of this approach. Finally, the ways in which multicultural advising can be implemented within higher education will be examined.

INTRODUCTION

The Changing Landscape

Over the past few years, there have been various demographic shifts taking place on college campuses throughout the U.S. (Baggerly, Tan, Pichotta, & Warner, 2017; Sanchez, Deflorio, Wiest, & Olkonomidoy, 2018). As a result, the community is going toward an inclusive group of learners that seek educational opportunities without limits. According to Sanchez, Deflorio, Wiest, and Olkonomidoy, 45% of college students are a mixed multicultural group of individuals (2018). The demographics consist of students who represent male and females from a diverse population of Asians, Blacks, Latinas, and Whites (Bag-DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-2177-9.ch010
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gerly et al., 2017). In addition to different ethnic backgrounds, gender is another critical component. Sanchez et al. (2018) reported that 20% of the student populations are male students, and the remaining 80% are women. Yet, the faculty population continues to struggle with ensuring the faculty population represents the student population (Baggerly, et al., 2017). Although diversity continues to be a topic of concern, the rate of enrollment increases (Flores, Park, & Baker, 2017).

Enrollment consists of men and women from different ethnic backgrounds that seek degrees to advance their career as well as salaries in the global marketplace (McFarland, Hussar, Wang, Zhang, Wang, Rathbun, 2018). Although the objectives of students are to accomplish these goals, Dorimé (2018) reported that minority students do not graduate. Instead, cultural differences of college student populations create challenges (Dorimé, 2018). Therefore, Baggerly, et al., (2017) suggested that faculty and staff representation of the student body is necessary to overcome these challenges. Therefore, scholars note the importance of examining culture, race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religion and English language learners as it relates to diversity and inclusion within the higher education community (Baggerly, et al., 2018; McFarland, et al., 2018; Greenhouse et al., 2018; Rockenbach et al., 2014; Owens, Doyle and Matz, 2018).

BACKGROUND

Race and Ethnicity

Race is considered an issue of concern because of student outcomes and challenges that exist in the higher education community. The issues derive from educator’s assessment of students, social connections, and cultural norms (Dorimé, 2018). According to Dorimé (2018), students believe that faculty assessments are based on their race verses their comprehension. In other words, students enter the higher education environment with the thoughts of faculty and staff perceiving them different because of their ethnic background. In some cases, students struggle to determine a feasible method to fit in and connect with faculty and staff when the population is not ethnically represented. In a study conducted with medical students, the population discussed the reaction and their inability to connect because the university role model pool was ethnically deficient (Leyerzapf & Abma, 2017). Upon students entering a university campus studies, suggested that they desire the representation of faculty and staff that emulates their cultural, ethnicity, gender identity, and social economic background (Baggerly, Tan, Pichotta, & Warner; Leyerzapf & Abma, 2017).

In the shortage of inclusiveness, students begin to disconnect and sense the staff neglects to support their success (Dorimé, 2018; Leyerzapf, & Abma, 2017). According to Dorimé (2018) cultural diversity among faculty and staff is a mechanism that will improve student’s social connection and their scholastic success as a college student. Therefore, considering diversity in academics begins the discussion of the influence on assessments and course structure.

Assessment bias is argued as a reason for racial bias. Baggerly and colleagues (2018) and McFarland (2018) argues that culture plays a critical role in the outcome of student assessments. In a study conducted by Sanchez et al., (2018), there were many advantages and disadvantages colleges and universities faced when seeking to help their racially diverse student population. According to Sanchez and colleagues (2018), the need to address issues with faculty curriculums, instructional methodologies, and communication problems are all paramount importance. In particular, students reported that the curriculums were not