BY REGINALD WILSON

EDUCATING for diversity

A noted scholar explains why achieving cultural diversity

on campus requires nothing less than a complete transformation of our

institutions of higher learning. This means reinventing everything,

from the canon to the classroom and beyond.

there can be no doubt that in the traditions of the United States, racism and fear of 'different' people have been shameful stains. Americans living today can recall a time when mob violence, beatings, even the lynching of black citizens were part of American life.

When black Americans raise the specter of racism, therefore, they stand on very solid ground. It played itself out in business, in higher education, in athletics, in entertainment, and in civil liberties.

The legal basis for discrimination is now largely a thing of the past. But its institutional effects remain. Despite the national effort to root out racism, much of American culture assumes a white, in fact a European, view of the world, and many minorities have been left stranded outside the mainstream of our national and economic life.

—FROM A REPORT BY THE BUSINESS–HIGHER EDUCATION
FORUM OF THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION

THESE words are not the rantings of some soft-headed liberal or complaining minority; they are from a report published in 1990 by the Business–Higher Education Forum of the American Council on Education. The report, entitled *Three Realities: Minority Life in the United States,* bears the signatures of such hard-headed realists as John J. Phelan, chairman and CEO of the New York Stock Exchange; C. R. Weaver, chairman and CEO of the Clorox Company; Winston R. Hindle, Jr., senior vice president of Digital Equipment Corporation; the Reverend Edward A. Malloy, president of the University of Notre Dame; and thirteen other CEOs and heads of Fortune 500 corporations.

What compelled these powerful American leaders to speak so clearly and forcefully about the devastating consequences of racism in American society? The answer is equally clear and forceful: they have recognized that the blight of racism is not a problem only for the country's minorities—it is everyone's problem. They warn that unless we resolve the problem of racism, our economy, and its corporations, universities, school systems, communities, and families will pay the price of continued failure. Continued economic success and a rising standard of living depend on making the best use of all the young people in our society. These corporate leaders are, quite candidly, looking at the bottom line: if the United States is to remain a leading nation, it cannot do so if a third of its citizens are undereducated and underemployed due to the effects of institutionalized racism.

The German philosopher Hegel pointed out in 1820 that philosophy is of little use in interpreting events until the forces that created those events have

We gave women the vote in 1920, and we were nearly the last Western nation to do that. We integrated the armed forces in 1948, but we were the only Western nation that had segregated them in the first place. Often, we as a nation have not acted until a crisis is well upon us. We have such a crisis now, but we have neither raised the perception of a crisis among the white majority nor mobilized public policy to address it.

RECOGNIZING RACIAL AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

A REPORT in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* documented that many white college students are disturbingly complacent about racism in American society. Many believe that racism no longer exists in the United States, that it was their parents' generation's problem. Some feel that black students use racism as a crutch. One student commented that he was not responsible for his ancestors' mistakes. He added that blacks are now equal, anyway, and that there aren't any racial problems anymore. Such opinions flow not from maliciousness or ill will but from ignorance. Nevertheless, they allow racism to flourish, and true diversity cannot occur while they remain.

And the problem is not limited to college students. As poll after poll has demonstrated, white Americans' perception of racial inequality in our society is discouragingly minimal. When asked in a Gallup poll if the U.S. criminal justice system treats blacks and whites the same, 60 percent of whites said yes; only 28 percent of blacks thought so. Yet research by the Urban

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almost run their full course. Hegel believed that wisdom enters the human condition only when it is almost dark. This helps explain why it takes so long for people, including those who make public policy, to respond to changing conditions.

For instance, it is true that the nation abolished slavery in 1863; however, we were the last Western nation to do so, and it took a civil war to bring it about.

Institute has documented that blacks are arrested more often than whites who have committed the same crimes, they receive longer jail terms, and they receive the death penalty more frequently.

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In a *Washington Post*–ABC News poll, 80 percent of whites said there was no racial discrimination in housing in the United States. Yet a recent investigation by the *Washington Post* revealed that 75 percent of blacks seeking apartments in predominantly white areas were told that no vacancies were available, while white renters were immediately shown apartments. Real estate agents steered buyers to specific areas according to their race 90 percent of the time. The *Washington Post* report concluded that housing discrimination is worse today than it was eight years ago.

A survey conducted by Louis Harris for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company asked teachers to rate the quality of education in their schools. Ninety-two percent of teachers rated their schools excellent or good; this included teachers in schools with huge minority populations. Yet, 71 percent of these same teachers felt that the number of students lacking basic skills was a serious problem. In other words, "It ain't us, it's them. We provide an excellent education, but dumb students don't learn."

SIMILARLY, on college campuses a survey found that 66 percent of white students felt there were no racial problems on their campus, while 80 percent of minority students said there were. The National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence recorded over three hundred incidents of racial violence or harassment against blacks, Hispanics, and Asians on campuses as well as many incidents of anti-Semitism and sexual harassment. They also noted that the majority of incidents go unreported.

It is not just that one set of perceptions is different from the other; it is that one set of perceptions is wrong and the other is right. Minorities in American society are crying out against racism, inequality, and injustice, while majority citizens are saying "Hey, everything is fine! What's all the complaining about?" These erroneous perceptions and attitudes are the major impediment to achieving real cultural diversity in American society.

Majority faculty on university campuses are equally indifferent to the deteriorating situation for minorities. In a study on the quality of campus life, Ernest Boyer found that 71 percent of faculty were sat-

isfied with or had no opinion about the pace of affirmative action on their campus. Boyer found this attitude alarming. Noting that Hispanic faculty had plateaued at 2.1 percent in the past five years and black faculty had stagnated at 4.5 to 4.7 percent during the same period, one can understand Boyer's astonishment at this complacency. These attitudes were confirmed by a separate poll conducted by Gallup. When asked if hiring more minority faculty was important for providing role models and improving campus climate, only 33 percent of white faculty agreed.

WE cannot achieve true cultural diversity on our college and university campuses until we recognize that we have a serious social problem: racism and inequality permeate our institutions. Because racism is not manifested on college campuses with lynchings, cross burnings, and segregation does not make it any less real. It is systemic, and it is perpetuated by institutions that operate in the usual ways, ensuring continued exclusion despite the fact that those within espouse a commitment to inclusion. Yes, it is possible for people with goodwill to do bad things.

The attainment of cultural diversity by an institution means the transformation of that institution. It begins with the recognition that societal institutions in the United States were not developed to serve the culturally diverse population we are becoming. In the past it was felt that we simply needed to "fix" minority people to fit them into these evidently excellent institutions.

Our educational institutions were originally structured to affirm a population that is rapidly declining in its proportion of the whole; the population in ascendancy has very different characteristics, and our educational institutions, if they are to serve who is there, must transform themselves to be effective. We must "fix" the institutions to serve the people. Institutions now realize more fully that, as with most of society's problems, treating the symptoms does not cure the disease. Previous initiatives toward ensuring equal access (affirmative action, targeted scholarships, and the like) did not address the pervasiveness of racism. Armed with that recognition, universities have begun to seek solutions that are more profound.

Such solutions involve emphasizing and celebrating the importance of cultural diversity rather than hiding behind the myth of the "melting pot." They require breaking down many of the artificial divisions between the professional roles of teacher, counselor, and administrator that have impeded institutional change. And they involve transforming students as well, recognizing that our responsibilities involve passing on values as well as information.

REENVISIONING STUDENTS

ONE of our primary tasks in reinventing the university for the twenty-first century is to reenvision the academic potential of our minority students. Instead of viewing them as a mass of deficits, we must begin to view them as possessing a range of potentialities and possibilities for which we have high expectations. This is directly contrary to our usual view, but it opens up vast stores of previously untapped achievement.

Many volumes have been written in the past twenty years lamenting the condition of the poor in America and recommending grandiose policies for social transformation that are unlikely to be realized. Others have proposed small, experimental, costly programs for enhancing the education of disadvantaged youth; while some of these have been successful, they are unlikely to be replicated to any significant degree. In addition, educational theorists have developed elaborate explanations of the cognitive and motivational barriers to minority and disadvantaged students' achieving academic success, but they have seldom evolved into programmatic initiatives.

The excellent study, *Challenging the Potential* by S. Oden and others, is several levels above such efforts in that it combines a solid theoretical grounding with comprehensive program offerings and a systematic method for evaluating outcomes. The formula it offers has considerable potential for helping large numbers of minority and disadvantaged students. The study's major premise is very clear and pragmatic: America's future depends on our having a highly educated and skilled work force, and to accomplish this, we must exploit previously untapped

potential. In other words, our system of education must reconsider students previously regarded as unlikely to pursue postsecondary or technical education. The authors summarize the theoretical and research literature describing the typical barriers to the educational achievement of disadvantaged youth: parental poverty, inadequate school counseling, unchallenging curricular offerings, and uninspired pedagogy. The presumption that these barriers are intractable has resulted in a self-fulfilling prophecy of school failure. Therefore, the authors identify personal attributes and strengths that have helped minority and disadvantaged students to successfully surmount environmental barriers to academic achievement: a positive self-image, an emphasis on continued studying after the school day ends, and parental stress on school achievement. Moreover, the authors describe an educational intervention program that not only identifies and recruits talented but underachieving minority and disadvantaged students but also utilizes a panoply of strategies that contribute to significantly increasing their academic success, both in high school and beyond. This is the study's most important contribution, and the results are both dramatic and impressive.

Some of the outcomes are as follows. Seventy-three percent of program participants go on to college, compared with 55 percent of nonparticipants; only 2 percent of participants drop out of school. Sixty-five percent of participants who did not perform well academically in high school went on to postsecondary education. Indeed, over 60 percent of participants who were very dissatisfied with high school, even those whose parents had low academic expectations of them, subsequently went on to college.

Such stunning achievements were not the result of a one-time, spectacular program. The program studied—High-Scope Institute for IDEAS—was nationally representative, geographically distributed, and ethnically and socioeconomically inclusive. It not only looked at quantitative achievement measures but also did qualitative analyses based on site visits (to twelve regional programs) and in-depth interviews with students and staff. Follow-up studies were conducted on program participants at age twenty-one.

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Based on the above comprehensive, longitudinal program analysis, the study identified from actual practice (rather than by theoretical speculation) the elements of intervention programs that were particularly successful with promising minority and disadvantaged youth: high academic standards; responsiveness to cultural differences and learning styles; earlier intervention, to prevent dropouts; summer bridge classes; positive role models; and an emphasis on academic mastery and expanded aspirations. The program concentrated on improving students' knowledge and communication, improving their problem-solving skills, and improving their motivation.

There were two particularly significant outcomes of the High Scope study: (1) contrary to conventional expectations, some of the most significant results were achieved with students who were not recognized for academic achievement in high school and whose parents held low academic expectations for them; (2) program participants were found to have equal numbers of friends of other races as of their own race. The academic and social significance of these findings cannot be overstated. They radically transform our belief in the academic capabilities of many students for whom we have the least expectations of success. And they demonstrate the possibility of positive social relationships across racial lines, which have tremendous potential for alleviating the often troubled race relations on many of our college campuses today.

The authors end their study with solid, pragmatic policy recommendations that are not grandiose but can be implemented immediately in many school systems and colleges. The most difficult barriers to the adoption of these recommendations are the attitudes and beliefs of most school administrators and teachers regarding the academic capabilities of minority and disadvantaged students. The authors stress that we must change our view of the potential of these students and that high expectations will stimulate greater achievement.

REENVISIONING THE CURRICULUM

ACHIEVING a truly democratic community on campus will require nothing less than a wholesale transformation of the curriculum, including not only *what* is taught but *how* it is taught. Indeed, despite the perception that interest in multicultural curricula is of recent origin, insightful scholars have been aware of the necessity for multicultural education for a long time. In the 1920s, that quintessentially American philosopher John Dewey observed that the key to democracy is the participation of every citizen in the formation of the society's values and that all those who are affected by its institutions must have the opportunity to share in creating and managing them.

For many years a number of female and ethnic scholars have been developing that knowledge through gender- and race-based critiques. One thinks, for example, of W.E.B. Du Bois's masterful Harvard doctoral thesis, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade,* and Sir Eric Williams's economic study of slavery, which first substantiated the central contribution of the profits of slavery to the acceleration of the industrial revolution in the United States. But such seminal scholarship existed primarily on the periphery of mainstream knowledge production. The urgency of the current interest in multiculturalism is to move such scholarship to the core and to transform the conventional wisdom.

Peggy McIntosh of Wellesley College has developed a useful five-phase model that illustrates transitions from a monocultural, all-male curriculum to a multicultural curriculum. In phase 1, the institution adheres to the "exclusive curriculum": classical Western thought excluding the works and perspectives of non-Western cultures and of women. This exclusionary canon is purported to represent universal "great works" that transcend time, place, gender, and culture. This phase typifies the pre-1960s curriculum and is still common in many college courses.

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In phase 2, a few "exceptional outsiders" are allowed into the canon, but on the canon's terms. The addition of these exceptional Others does not disturb the assumptions of the mainstream. Women and men who can be seen as "not like their kind" can now be added to the curriculum.

In phase 3, the institution seeks to understand the "issues" of the outsiders. They become a focus of learning. Such works as Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* and Vine Deloria's *Custer Died for Your Sins* present a view of reality from the perspective of the outsider. Much women's studies and ethnic studies scholarship is done in this phase.

In phase 4, scholarship focuses on plural narratives of experience instead of the "issues" just described. One thinks, for example, of Paula Giddings' original study, *When and Where I Enter,* which is an examination of the impact of black women on race and sex in America, or Richard Rodriguez's *Hunger of Memory,* an exploration of the contradictions of the Hispanic experience in American society, or Geneva Smitherman's studies of dual language production in the black community. Phase 4 assumes that knowledge is contextual and comes in many versions. It is attentive to new ideas and perspectives. It is still rare in university courses.

McIntosh posits that phase 5 will be one hundred years in the making and will transform knowledge and knowledge production. Meanwhile, phase 4 has several promising and important elements:

1. *It incorporates new knowledge and new scholarship.* That is, it is not simply additive; it devises new ways to organize and arrange knowledge. It works toward an answer to the questions, "How does my discipline need to change to reflect the experiences of other cultures?" and "How can my discipline reflect women as half the world's population and as having half the world's lived experience?"

2. *It respects new authorities.* For example, the conventional wisdom in history courses was that there is no meaningful way to get at the slave's own experience of slavery. Slave narratives were considered unreliable; more reliable, presumably, were slaveowners' records and documents. For instance, Fogel and Engerman's study *Time*

on the Cross relied entirely on such records and presented a view of the slave experience that was somewhat more benign than many had assumed. John Blassingame's book *The Slave Community* was not only a genuinely original contribution but made historians seriously revisit the question of the validity of the slaves' perception of their own experience. It regarded slaves as historical actors, not just faceless subjects who were acted upon. Using slave narratives and the oral histories of the Federal Writers Project from the 1930s, when some former slaves were still alive, Blassingame's study has caused some black and white historians to revise their conceptions of slavery.

Such methodological transformation has encouraged the faculties of ethnic studies and women's studies to confront, however uncomfortably, the tensions between their programs. At the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, the black studies and women's studies faculty are working on joint curricular projects and combined course syllabi. At Southern Illinois University, the black studies and women's studies programs agreed to collaborate by focusing specifically on black women. Educators are much encouraged by these exciting developments. However, the tensions remind us that the path to a truly inclusive and transformed phase 5 curriculum will not be easy, and many of us will carry the baggage of our old animosities into the struggle to achieve a new vision.

3. *It forces us to reexamine fundamental epistemological questions.* Specifically, phase 4 prompts us to ask, "How do we know what we know?" "What are the assumptions that underlie what we presumed to be objective knowledge?" "How will new sources of information lead us to new theories and paradigms?"

4. *It incorporates new ways of teaching and learning.* So much of our present pedagogy (such as phases 1 and 2) is premised on the assumption that our students are passive vessels into which we pour our wisdom. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Paulo Freire demonstrated that, when teaching illiterate peasants to read, their learning was accelerated by connecting it to their personal experience. When we see, as Freire teaches us, that students

are active participants in the creation of their own knowledge, we will acknowledge that learning is a communal activity, dependent on a lively exchange of ideas and conflict that creates new understandings. Parker Palmer tells us that learning combines both objectivity and personal identification with the subject matter. We do not need to choose between these methods of apprehending data; both are valid.

Many American institutions of higher learning are at phase 1; a few are at phase 2; and women's studies and ethnic studies frequently get stuck in a focus on "issues" that marks phase 3, without realizing the transforming methods and insights of phase 4. There is still much work to do.

REINVENTING THE UNIVERSITY

WE must see ourselves in our various roles— teachers, counselors, administrators—as one multidimensional team dealing collectively with all the complexities of student development. The time has come to transform the curriculum to reflect the actual world of which we are a part, a world that is not exclusively Eurocentric or patriarchal. True cultural diversity does not just mean inclusion; it means challenging the conceptual paradigms of education, the fundamental base from which students gain knowledge. We must set high and challenging goals and expectations for *all* students and provide them with the inspiration, pedagogical structure, and critical capacity necessary to attain them.

All of our institution's programs—academic, social, cultural, and staff development—should reflect the multicultural richness and complexity of the world we live in. Therefore we must develop a truly comprehensive approach to institutional change, an approach that involves all constituencies of the university, from the governing board to the students to the support staff and the community. A necessary step in developing this approach is to define cultural diversity not merely in terms of tolerance but also in terms of enrichment.

That means aggressively recruiting a critical mass of minority students and faculty and providing the resources and programs to accomplish these goals. For example, in 1987, following some unpleasant racial incidents, the University of Michigan established a program to diversify its Ann Arbor campus called the "Michigan Mandate." Since that time it has added seventy-seven new minority professors, forty of them black, and it has increased black student enrollment by 23 percent and overall minority student enrollment by 26 percent. These creative and major accomplishments have not come

about without resistance and some hostility. The Michigan faculty defeated by a narrow vote a mandatory course on race and ethnicity for all college students. And some white alumni have questioned whether Michigan was ceasing to be "their university," according to President James Duderstadt (who recently stepped down). But as Dr. Duderstadt himself noted, the challenge is more profound. It is the challenge of coming to terms with what it means to be a pluralistic society . . . and the role of university in that society. Indeed, we are now reinventing the university for the twenty-first century.

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