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Linking Diversity and Civic-Minded Practices with Student Outcomes: New Evidence from National Surveys

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The conversation in higher education has shifted, moving from a focus on what students know to a focus on whether they know how to think and, more importantly, toward the goal of providing skills needed for living and working in the twenty-first century (AAC&U 2007). Educational practices and diverse learning environments should provide students with skills that will serve them throughout their lives. Equally important, however, are practices that prepare students for the society we aspire to become, practices that empower them to create a world that is more equitable, just, democratic, and sustainable. Therefore, we should not only develop critical thinking skills among our students, but also equip them as citizens with the drive, values, capacity to question, and ability to develop solutions in order to advance social progress. This is best accomplished through intentional educational practices that are integrative in nature, provide experiences that challenge students' own embedded worldviews, and encourage application of knowledge to contemporary problems. These are characteristics of many forms of diversity and civic-minded educational practices in curricular and cocurricular contexts.

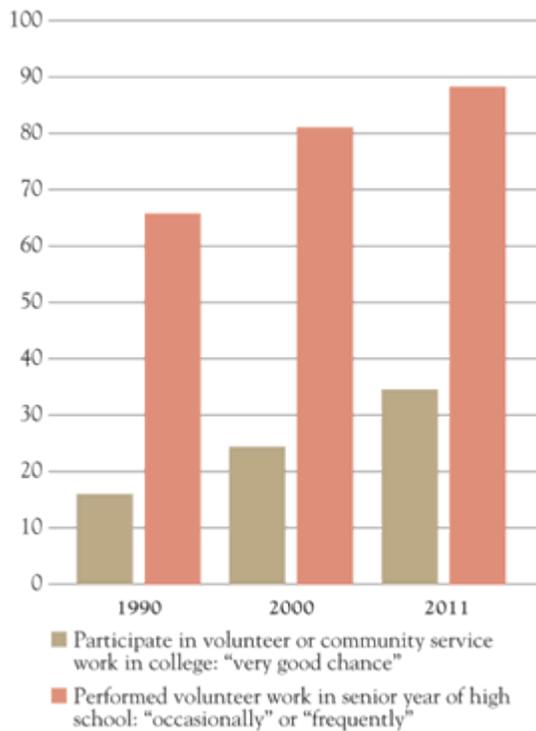
The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), the American Democracy project of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, Campus Compact, and others have been engaged in initiatives to advance these practices and increase our understanding of how they are linked with student learning and civic outcomes. Many campus leaders, faculty, and program directors are also motivated to understand and demonstrate how they are making a difference in the education of undergraduates through programs and practices that result in informed and engaged citizens for a better world.

Much of this valuable work has been conducted at the level of program evaluation on individual campuses. Here, we present national evidence regarding the impact of intentional diversity and civic-related practices on specific educational outcomes for students. We summarize results across a series of studies conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California—Los Angeles, basing results on surveys administered as part of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP). CIRP surveys contain a rich set of measures that capture not only students' civic and diversity-related experiences, but also outcomes that can be linked with educationally purposeful activities coordinated by faculty and staff. We also integrate findings from the national HERI faculty survey that show how the behaviors, values, and characteristics of faculty engaged in civic-minded practice relate to parallel observations made regarding student participation in initiatives and subsequent outcomes.

Studying the impact of civic-related and diversity practices

In order to understand what works, given the plethora of initiatives in the area of diversity and civic learning across many types of institutions, we used four national databases to examine student change on key outcomes associated with the personal and social responsibility dimensions of the Essential Learning Outcomes articulated by AAC&U (2007). Students never arrive as blank slates, nor are they randomly distributed across institutions, so it is essential to understand their experiences and skills before assessing their change and development in higher education. Students participate in The Freshmen Survey (TFS) at college entry, allowing campuses to assess student background characteristics and predispositions on outcomes before any impact of the college experience can be detected. For example, figure 1 shows national data on over a quarter of a million entering college students at four-year colleges (which vary by type and selectivity) over the last two decades. In 1990, nearly 70 percent of entering freshmen indicated they had some experience participating in volunteer work during their senior year of high school, but by fall of 2011 that percentage had increased to 88 percent. Also, expectations for participation in volunteer or community service work in college increased from 17 percent to 34 percent during this period. Thus, increasing numbers of students enter college with some volunteer experiences and expect to be involved in some community service activity during their time in college. According to these students' predispositions, the data show we have a good starting point to build upon in order to expand their interest, knowledge, and skills in college.

Figure 1.
High school service and expectations for college



SOURCE: National data from the CIRP Freshmen Survey, Higher Education Research Institute, University of California-Los Angeles.

Selecting aspects of their precollegiate experiences that include background and predispositions from the freshman survey, we next merge information from a survey taken at

the end of the first year of college, using the Your First College Year (YFCY) survey. This enables us to examine the impact of intentional educational practices in the first year of college. We present results from two different longitudinal YFCY datasets (including students who took TFS at college entry and YFCY at the end of the first year).¹ We chose two outcomes to examine: (1) students' habits of mind, a measure of the behaviors and traits associated with academic success in the first year, and skills that are foundational for lifelong learning (Conley 2005; Pryor et al. 2007; Sharkness, DeAngelo, and Pryor 2010), and (2) pluralistic orientation, a scale developed from employer surveys and developmental studies that identify traits and skills necessary for negotiating a diverse workforce (Engberg and Hurtado 2011; Sharkness, DeAngelo, and Pryor 2010). We also use the 2009 College Senior Survey (CSS), another longitudinal dataset that is linked with student responses to the 2005 TFS.² We present results from two outcomes at the end of four years of college: self-reported growth during college in (1) civic awareness and (2) complex thinking skills for a diverse democracy.

Finally, we also report related 2007 findings from the triennial HERI Faculty Survey in order to examine the characteristics of faculty engaged in civic-minded practices in relation to pedagogy and values. This additional information from 23,728 faculty respondents provides insight into unexplained relationships between practices and outcomes. That is, although faculty and staff are often the key conduits for student development in college, we do not always explore this connection when focused on student outcomes. Because these extensive analyses represent distinct studies conducted for papers or presentations for specific audiences, we summarize findings across these studies to show evidence regarding the link between diversity and civic-minded practice, on the one hand, and student educational outcomes, on the other. The specific set of survey items that comprise each outcome, validated through the use of item response theory, can be found in the CIRP Constructs Technical Report (<http://www.heri.ucla.edu/researchersTools.php>). Information regarding statistical results can be obtained directly from the authors.

Habits of mind for lifelong learning

We identified a set of informal and campus-facilitated college experiences that are associated with changes in students' habits of mind, or academic activities associated with success by the end of the first year of college (DeAngelo and Hurtado 2009). Table 1 summarizes the significant effects of these first-year experiences after controlling for student predispositions, background characteristics, and especially for students' habits of mind at college entry. Results show that the peer environment is a powerful, yet underutilized, tool for learning in college. Informal college experiences verify this, in that students who report discussing course content with peers outside of class demonstrate more change in habits of mind activities than students who do not. Having had intellectual discussions or meaningful and honest discussions about race or ethnic relations outside of class with students of a different race or ethnicity also contributes to the development of strong habits of mind. In addition, students who frequently studied with other students make gains on this outcome. These informal college experiences with peers can also be integrated into formal educational programming for students.

Table 1
Experiences that foster habits of mind for learning in the first year of college (N=25,602)

Variable	Significance Level
Campus-facilitated educational experiences	
Student-faculty interaction (CIRP construct)	+++
Worked on a professor's research project (occasionally vs. not at all)	---
Worked on a professor's research project (frequently vs. not at all)	+++
Community service as part of class (occasionally vs. not at all)	ns
Community service as part of class (frequently vs. not at all)	+++
Part of a formal learning community	ns
First-year seminar on college adjustment	ns
Informal educational experiences	
Discussed course content with students outside of the classroom (occasionally vs. not at all)	+++
Discussed course content with students outside of the classroom (frequently vs. not at all)	+++
Studied with other students (occasionally vs. not at all)	ns
Studied with other students (frequently vs. not at all)	++
Had meaningful and honest discussions about race/ethnic relations with students of different race/ethnicity outside of the classroom (frequency)	+++
Had intellectual discussions with students of different race/ethnicity outside of the classroom (frequency)	+++
First-year college GPA	+++

NOTE: +/– designates significance at $p < 0.05$; +/+– – at $p < 0.01$; +++/– – – at $p < 0.001$. Results are reported from the final step of multivariate regression analyses after controls for student background characteristics, a measure of habits of mind at college entry, and institution type. CIRP constructs scored using item response theory.

There are several practices and campus initiatives fostered by institutional agents that have an impact during the first year of college. Specifically, the amount and quality of faculty contact is a strong predictor of change in students' habits of mind, as is working on a professor's research project in the first year. However, those students who frequently participated benefited, while those who reported they occasionally participated in a professor's research project actually scored lower on the outcome. This may well be a proxy for the quality of students' involvement and experiences with faculty. In addition, students who frequently participated in community service as part of a class in the first year of college were also more likely to see gains in their habits of mind. Although students with high first-year grade point averages were more likely to report higher scores on the habits of mind index, it is important to note that these campus practices were significant in changing students' academic behaviors regardless of grades or prior abilities.

Faculty engaged in civic-minded practice

What is the mechanism by which this change in academic habits occurs, particularly in relation to community service that is structured as part of a class? Data are beginning to show that it has much to do with the faculty leading such classes. Table 2 shows results from analyses of the characteristics of faculty who report engagement in civic-minded practice in their research, teaching, and service (Hurtado and Milem 2010). Faculty engaged in civic-minded practice also typically engage in student-centered practices. They are more likely to report that they taught a seminar for first-year students, engaged undergraduates on their research projects, and used student-centered pedagogy in the classroom often. They are also more likely to encourage activities that foster the specific skills associated with students' habits of mind. They report participating in professional development, including workshops focused on teaching in the classroom, and were supported through paid workshop opportunities outside of the institution. It is not surprising, given these results, that faculty

engaged in civic-minded practice are also more likely than their colleagues to report receiving teaching awards.

Table 2
Characteristics of faculty engaged in civic-minded practice (N=23,728)

Variable	Significance Level
Teaching practices	
Taught a seminar for first-year students	+++
Engaged undergraduates on their research project	+++
Foster students' habits of mind for learning (factor scale)	+++
Use of student-centered pedagogy (CIRP construct)	+++
Professional development	
Participated in workshops that focused on teaching in the classroom	+++
Participated in paid workshops outside the institution that focused on teaching	+++
Received an award for outstanding teaching	+++
Faculty values	
Goal for undergraduate education: students' personal development (CIRP construct)	+++
Goal for undergraduate education: students' intellectual skill development (factor scale)	---
Value of diversity in education (factor scale)	+
Experience close alignment between work and personal values	+++
Work distribution	
Hours per week in actual time spent teaching (not credit hours)	+++
Hours per week in time spent on research and scholarly writing	++

NOTE: +/- designates significance at $p < 0.05$; +/- - at $p < 0.01$; +++/- - - at $p < 0.001$. Results are reported from the final step of multivariate regression analyses after controls for faculty gender, race/ethnicity, disciplinary affiliation, and institution type. CIRP constructs scored using item response theory.

Although faculty engaged in civic-minded practice report spending more time on a weekly basis on teaching and research/scholarly writing, they are significantly more likely than other faculty to value the undergraduate educational goal of improving students' personal development. They are less likely, however, than their colleagues to state that promoting students' intellectual skill development is the primary goal of undergraduate education, a goal rated by the majority of faculty as the most important in the national survey (DeAngelo et al. 2009). It may well be that value development is a prime driver for these faculty in their work with students. In fact, civic-minded faculty are more likely than other faculty to express the value of diversity as central in the learning process and to report experiencing close alignment between their work and personal values.

Pluralistic orientation: Preparation for a diverse workplace

A thread interwoven within these findings on student behaviors is the value of diversity in the learning environment. How do diversity experiences and student engagement in service relate to improving preparation for a diverse workforce? Table 3 reveals the significant predictors associated with change in students' pluralistic orientation skills from college entry until the end of the first year (Hurtado, DeAngelo, and Ruiz 2011). This measure of pluralistic orientation skills includes the ability to work cooperatively with diverse people, discuss and negotiate controversial issues, and engage in perspective taking, as well as traits associated with cognitive development that include tolerance of different beliefs and openness to having one's own views challenged. Results show that positive experiences with cross-racial interactions and socializing with someone from another race in college are associated with changes in

pluralistic orientation. Students who reported exposure to diverse opinions, cultures, and values also tended to score higher on the scale. In contrast, students who reported negative cross-racial interactions and even perceptions of racial tension on campus scored significantly lower. The campus climate for diversity, therefore, affects students' assessment of their own skills and abilities for a diverse workforce.

Table 3
Experiences that foster pluralistic orientation in the first year of college (N=21,122)

Variable	Significance Level
Racial/ethnic interaction	
Positive cross-racial interaction (CIRP construct)	+++
Negative cross-racial interaction (CIRP construct)	---
There is a lot of racial tension on campus (degree of agreement)	--
College experience has exposed me to diverse opinions, cultures, & values (degree of agreement)	+++
Student activities	
Participated in demonstrations (frequency)	+++
Performed volunteer work (frequency)	+++
Participated in leadership training	+
Performed community service as part of class (frequency)	++

NOTE: +/- designates significance at $p < 0.05$; +/+/- at $p < 0.01$; +++/+/- at $p < 0.001$. Results are reported from the final step of multivariate regression analyses after controls for student background characteristics, precollege experiences with diversity, and institution type. CIRP constructs scored using item response theory.

When students are placed in contact with real-world problems and more diverse people, they also show gains. Students who performed volunteer work and who demonstrated for a cause showed changes in self-reports that place them above their average peers on the pluralistic orientation outcome. Two campus-facilitated activities were also significantly associated with students' pluralistic orientation: students who performed community service as part of class and students who participated in leadership training activities report higher self-ratings in pluralistic orientation than their peers who did not participate in these activities in the first year. It is important to note that these practices positively affect students who enter college with varying skills, predispositions, background, and self-confidence.

Civic awareness and complex thinking for a diverse democracy

After examining changes in students during their first year of college, we turned to another assessment about specific campus-facilitated activities that have an impact on students after the four years of college. We studied students' self-reported understanding of global, national, and local issues and problems, which we term "civic awareness," and also a scale that measures students' complex thinking for a diverse democracy,³ which focuses on knowledge and abilities. We report both outcomes here as two different measures to study student assessment of their own abilities and understanding of contemporary problems (Hurtado 2009). Table 4 shows that results are similar across the two different outcomes, with one exception: students' negative cross-racial interaction experiences on campus are significantly associated with lower civic awareness, but are not associated with complex thinking for a diverse democracy.

Table 4
Experiences during college that foster civic awareness and skills needed for a diverse democracy
(N=13,157)

Variable	Significance level	
	Civic Awareness Construct	Skills for Diverse Democracy
Racial/ethnic interaction		
Positive cross-racial interaction (CIRP construct)	+++	+++
Negative cross-racial interaction (CIRP construct)	--	
Attended a racial/cultural awareness workshop	+++	+++
Curricular activities		
Took an ethnic studies course	+++	+++
Took a women's studies course	+++	++
Performed community service as part of a class (frequency)	+++	+++
Participated in study abroad	+++	+++
Civic activities		
Performed volunteer work (frequency)	+++	+++
Voted in student election (frequency)	+++	+++
Demonstrated for/against war (frequency)	+++	+++

NOTE: +/- designates significance at $p < 0.05$; +/+/- at $p < 0.01$; +++/+/- at $p < 0.001$. Results are reported from the final step of multivariate regression analyses after controls for student background characteristics, predispositions, and institution type. CIRP constructs scored using item response theory.

In contrast, both positive cross-racial interaction and participation in campus-facilitated curricular and cocurricular diversity activities have an important impact on both outcomes. Students who reported that they attended racial/cultural awareness workshops, took an ethnic studies course, or took a women's studies course rated themselves higher on civic awareness and on knowledge and abilities associated with complex thinking for a diverse democracy. Students who performed community service as part of a class and/or studied abroad were also more likely to rate themselves higher on both outcomes after four years. As we might expect, student participation in a range of civic-related activities during college also contributes to self-reported growth. Students who reported that they performed volunteer work, voted in a student election, or demonstrated either for or against war tended to rate themselves higher on civic awareness and complex thinking for a diverse democracy. Thus, informal and formally structured activities during college appear to build students' self-confidence in their abilities to function in a diverse, global, and interconnected society.

Implications for advancing practice

We examined college experiences in relation to a range of student outcomes that capture several dimensions of personal and social responsibility, one area of the Essential Learning Outcomes articulated by AAC&U (2007). Results from these surveys enable us to conclude that both diversity and civic-related practices foster knowledge, skills, and values that are widely viewed as necessary in the twenty-first century. Although previous work has focused on informal college educational experiences, this recent research contributes to an accumulation of evidence in the last decade regarding the impact that intentional educational practices associated with both diversity and service for the public good have on civic-related outcomes (Pascarella and Terenzini 2005; Bowman 2011). These results also establish that practices such as service learning contribute to students' habits of mind for lifelong learning, and that the mechanism for this link lies in student contact with faculty who are themselves engaged in civic-minded practice and who value diversity in the learning environment. Many individuals, however, share the responsibility for advancing students' personal and social responsibility through their roles on campus. The student and faculty data strongly suggest,

respectively, that student affairs work with the cocurricular peer environment and faculty development coordinators who support faculty engaged in civic-minded practice play a role in advancing practices that prepare students for engagement in a diverse democracy.

Campuses have incorporated diversity and community service in many aspects of the curriculum, from first-year seminars to senior capstone projects, and in the cocurriculum, from new student orientation to leadership training and internships. While all are important, the timing of when to encourage student participation in initiatives may be key to advancing students' skills and dispositions. For example, freshmen often decline on scale scores regarding habits of mind behaviors (e.g., asking questions in class) and pluralistic orientation during the first year, as they transition between high school and college environments. Contradicting such change, frequent participation in community service as part of class has positive effects on first-year students' behaviors related to habits of mind as well as their pluralistic orientation skills. John Gardner (2008, 2) states that "the first year of college provides the opportunity to introduce students to the kinds of thinking and experiences that the institution values—including, importantly, civic engagement. It also provides an important baseline for assessing how effective higher education initiatives are in instilling the values institutions espouse." Therefore, the earlier students become engaged in activities that build their knowledge, skills, and confidence, the more likely it is that they will find subsequent curricular and cocurricular opportunities that will reinforce their engagement as complex thinkers and responsible citizens.

We mirrored students and faculty responses on their respective surveys and identified that those faculty who are most committed to civic-minded activities in their own research, teaching, and service tend to encourage students to engage in the very learning behaviors that will help them become successful in the first year and beyond. Students who experience quality engagement with faculty research in the first year also tend to benefit in terms of changes in their academic habits. Both service and research projects enable students to advance their knowledge and help them apply concepts from the classroom toward solving real-world problems, with faculty as guides in authentic learning experiences. Not all students have these opportunities in the first year of college, but those who do stand to benefit. Institutional support, recognition, and rewards for faculty are essential if we hope to make these types of learning activities more available to students at various stages of their college careers. Outside of structured and coordinated programs for service or undergraduate research, individual faculty may find support through faculty development centers in the form of workshops, small grants, and off-campus learning opportunities.

Curricular-based initiatives—including ethnic and women's studies, study abroad, and community service as part of a class—are associated with higher scores in civic awareness and complex thinking skills for a diverse democracy. In the past, these initiatives have not been tied together, because they have different historical origins and are even coordinated in different campus units that often do not communicate with each other (Hurtado 2007). The examination of student outcomes, however, helps us begin to identify that not only do different initiatives on campus produce similarly desirable outcomes among college students, but they also share important elements that expose students to diverse perspectives and ways of life and that challenge students to set aside their own embedded worldviews to consider those of another. The cocurricular components associated with these academic activities engage students with differences on a more personal level through "immersion" or face-to-face contact with distinct communities. Some campuses have begun to link these distinct activities by design. For example, one Midwestern university has redesigned study abroad to include service activities in third-world countries, led by diverse faculty and inclusive of diverse students. A campus in the northeast has a study abroad requirement that students use scientific skills to devise sustainable solutions to improve the welfare of underdeveloped

communities. These new designs of previously separate campus educational programs suggest a high level of intentionality to ensure that students emerge as complex thinkers for a global society.

Although faculty and staff continue to play critical roles as “institutional agents” and guides in developing student skills and dispositions for a diverse democracy, much informal learning occurs in the peer environment. The quality of students’ interactions with peers from different racial or ethnic groups is associated with students’ pluralistic orientation skills, civic awareness, and complex thinking skills for a diverse democracy, as well as the development of the habits of mind for academic success. Moreover, a hostile climate, characterized by negative cross-racial interactions and perceptions of racial tension, tends to contribute to students’ low assessment of their competencies to manage living in a diverse world (Hurtado et al. 2009). The CIRP surveys have helped campuses assess the links between student outcomes, the climate, and campus practices. Neglect in any of these areas has real consequences for student development. The nature of the climate, opportunities for learning about diversity, and civic-minded practices among faculty and staff are key features of inclusive learning environments that result in developing informed and engaged citizens. There is evidence to support institutions that make a commitment to articulate the outcomes of personal and social responsibility and integrative learning, as well as invest in intentional practices that achieve these goals.

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Notes

1. To study habits of mind, we used the 2008 longitudinal YFCY dataset (including students who took the 2007 TFS at college entry and the 2008 YFCY at the end of the first year). This dataset includes responses for 25,602 students attending 476 institutions across the country. To study pluralistic orientation, we used a combined 2009–10 longitudinal YFCY dataset (including students who took either the 2008 or 2009 TFS at college entry and the 2009 or 2010 YFCY, respectively, at the end of the first year). This dataset includes 21,122 students attending 84 institutions balanced to match the mix of institutions nationally by selectivity, type, and control.

2. This analysis included 13,157 students attending 179 institutions across the country.

3. Complex thinking for a diverse democracy is a five-time scale from the CSS: (1) understanding of problems facing your community, (2) knowledge of people from different races/cultures, (3) ability to get along with people of different races/cultures, (4) understanding of national issues, and (5) ability to think critically; Cronbach's alpha=0.809.

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