



Education  
Advisory  
Board

Student Affairs Forum

# Measuring and Promoting Diversity on Campus

Assessment Methods and Program Organization



Custom Research Brief

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# Student Affairs Forum

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# 1) Executive Overview

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## Key Observations

**Most diversity measurement occurs at the departmental level, where department leaders collect demographic data and climate information.** Campus-wide climate surveys and demographics from the application and hiring processes give central administrators a cross-section of institutional diversity, but cooperation and information-sharing between departments and central diversity offices generates larger and more useful data sets. Central offices focus data collection on protected legal categories (e.g., race, gender, national origin, sexual orientation), but departments concentrate on local issues and challenges.

**Complaint records from university departments, police logs on graffiti and hate activity, and institutional bias response team reports generate discrimination data.** Central diversity office staff collect data from across campus units, generate annual reports on discrimination activity, and use reports to inform training for campus groups. Informal data on discrimination comes from student advising, faculty members that serve as equity advisors within departments, and attention to student media outlets and social media sites.

**Institution-wide data councils collect departmental, institutional, and system-wide data on diversity for comprehensive reports and customized data briefs for inclusive programs.** An institutional imperative at **Institution B** to attach metrics to all strategic goals has led to cooperation among academic and administrative departments in the collection and organization of data. Led by the Chief Budget Officer and including constituents from across the University, the data council creates online data dashboards, customized data reports, and runs post-facto experiments on student success that merge academic and program participation data to identify the most impactful campus initiatives.

**Departments and community organizations fund and organize the vast majority of inclusive programming to address local problems.** Central diversity offices provide administrative support, help organize grants and donations to programs, and offer data reports to improve services and build capacity. Contacts agree that a ‘bottom-up’ model for inclusive programming addresses departmental problems and gain more buy-in than a ‘top-down’ initiative, but suggest central oversight and administrative support to maximize program effectiveness and share best practices among departments.

**Central diversity office staff help university departments design goals and success metrics, collect and analyze relevant information, and build diversity reports that serve inclusive programs and the entire campus.** While those programs with federal or state funding may perform required assessments, most inclusive groups do not create goals or metrics. Contacts argue that the high turnover rate among student groups (i.e., most leave within four years) leads to little long-term thinking; central diversity offices can provide the institutional knowledge and broad vision to give diversity initiatives staying power.

## 2) Measuring Diversity and Discrimination

### Diversity Data Collection

#### *Most Data Collected at Departmental Level*

Few universities collect and analyze diversity or discrimination data at the central level; instead, departments and colleges measure conditions and serve unit constituents separately. Central administrators fund an administrative structure to support departmental collection efforts. Contacts agree that collecting existing departmental data should supersede new metrics; effective use of departmental information combined with broad institutional demographics is the first step to a university-wide understanding of diversity.

#### Considerations for Identifying Diversity Data among Campus Constituencies

##### Students

- **Admissions and housing demographics** provide the most frequent and concrete data set for undergraduate students, but contacts warn that high-level demographic data (e.g., gender, ethnicity) do not provide enough information to guide policy. Students may not feel represented within broad demographic categories (e.g., national versus ethnic versus geographic identity), and provide feedback to diversity office staff through informal advising and meeting channels.
- **Academic data** merged with programmatic and demographic data offers central administrators and departments the ability to understand diversity initiatives in the context of student success.
- **Advising services** within the central diversity office at **Institution B** for low income and first generation students help administrators understand current issues affecting a vulnerable group, and facilitate access and services before problems impact the larger student body.

##### Faculty

- **Human resources information systems** measure department demographics, and can help central diversity offices understand broad trends in faculty demographics as well as department-specific opportunities or challenges.
- **Faculty members** at Institution B serve on a voluntary network of equity advisors, meeting officially twice per year for training and providing constant updates on department diversity.

##### Staff

- **Constituency committees** provide informal information on gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and general climate among staff to diversity administrators.
- **Diversity climate surveys** offer detailed and concrete demographic data on staff diversity, but require budgetary and organizational support across campus.

## Discrimination Measures

### *Police Department and Bias Response Teams Provide Data*

Data on discrimination come from a variety of sources, but contacts admit that most current data collection reacts to events rather than proactively addresses potential problems. Contacts strive for accessibility across campus through standalone counseling programs for at-risk student populations (e.g., first generation, low income or Pell Grant recipients) and committees for faculty and staff.



#### Passive Data Not Enough

“We do what we can to collect this information, but prevention has to be more proactive than that; if you just wait for problems to come up it’s already too late to make that difference.”

-Forum Interview

### Sources of Data on Campus Discrimination

Diversity office staff members also informally track student language in the campus newspaper or on social media sites like *Facebook* and *Twitter* to understand the campus climate.



#### Department Complaints

### *Human Resources and Employee Constituent Committees*

The central diversity office in all profiled schools collects and analyzes incidents reported through human resources systems. In addition, members of constituent groups (e.g., ethnic faculty and staff groups, LGBT groups, the Women’s Center, veterans) at **Institution A** sit on a diversity advisory committee that meets monthly and provides an informal portrait of diversity and discrimination across campus.



#### Police Reports

### *Discriminatory Activity Measured through Proxies*

Across profiled institutions, hate crimes and high-profile discrimination events are rare; contacts examine proxy incidents to understand the broader incidence of discrimination. Contacts at **Institution B** condense reports of graffiti, sexual misconduct, and violence for a yearly report on discrimination that is distributed campus-wide.



#### Bias Response Teams

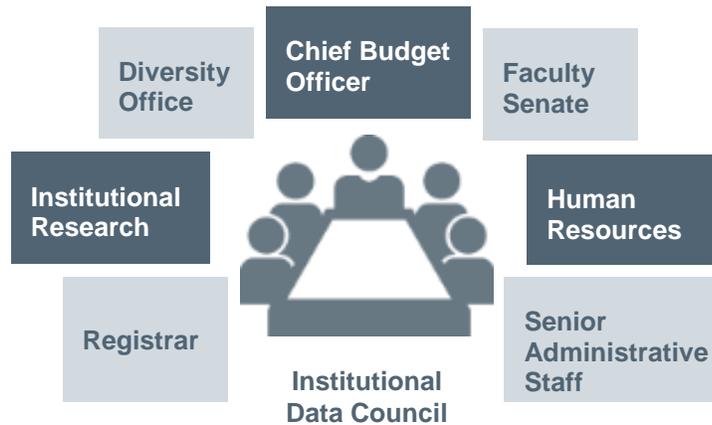
### *Teams Report Incident Data Trends*

Profiled institutions maintain specialized bias response teams that field incident reports from students, faculty, and staff on situations that do not require a police presence. Although bias teams at **Institution C** do not report directly to the central diversity office, contacts use bias response team reports to understand trends (e.g., frequency of incidents among certain fraternities).

## ***Institution-Wide Committee Merges Data Sources***

At **Institution B**, a university-wide committee identifies key data, consolidates information across departments, and makes reports accessible to the broader university community. The committee is chaired by the Chief Budget Officer and composed of senior staff in human resources, the faculty senate, the registrar, the diversity office, and other offices. The group meets throughout the year to demonstrate new reporting capability, approve institution-wide data reports, and resolve which data can be public and which must remain confidential.

### **Institutional Data Council at *Institution B***



Data Council members query departments for information on students, faculty, and staff that is available but currently not used in university reports. In addition, members explore for new data sources that could improve existing reports. Administrators work with departments to articulate goals, define success, and decide which measurements will most effectively gauge progress.



Institutional research staff collect information and data from Data Council members and campus offices, and work internally to consolidate disparate data sets. A member of the diversity office works inside the institutional research office, monitoring data and producing reports on university climate. The Data Council reviews new information and reporting tools.



Some data sources (e.g., reports that draw on student records, criminal activity, or sensitive information) require additional security and confidentiality before distribution across campus. Once the council agrees on legal questions and confidentiality, the institutional research office makes reports available through portals accessible to the entire state system. Constituents build data reports on conditions in their department or college, and diversity office staff create annual campus-wide reports on inclusiveness and discrimination.

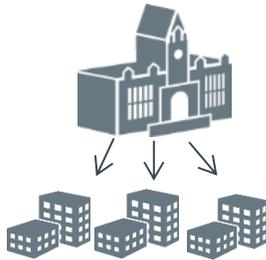
# 3) Organization and Assessment of Inclusive Programming

## Organizational Models

### **Traditional Models Fail to Promote Cross-Campus Change**

Creation and support of inclusive programming present complex organizational challenges. Without a structure encouraging collaboration between central diversity administrators and departments, initiatives respond to pressure and problems rather than proactively engaging with constituents.

### **Traditional Organizational Models**

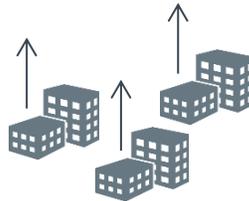


#### **Central Initiatives May Not Reach Constituents**

When a senior administrator (e.g., chief diversity officer, diversity director, vice president or provost for diversity) launches a new institution-wide diversity initiative, the plan can leverage institutional funding and visibility to reach a broad, cross-campus audience. However, a top-down plan may not match departmental strengths and problems, and will have trouble gaining support of dispersed groups with pressing local issues.

*“At the individual and unit levels, the lack of communication contributes to the strengthening of silos and the sense of disengagement from the University’s broader goals”*

- “Implementing Inclusion”, page 11<sup>1</sup>



#### **Local Initiatives for Local Problems**

#### **Dispersed Authority Misses Opportunities**

Departments maintain independent records on diversity and inclusion in a decentralized model, with minimal sharing of knowledge or practices between departments and colleges. The central diversity office plays a minimal oversight and advisory role. While department staff can better tailor initiatives to local problems and strengths, knowledge and practices that could benefit the larger institution stay separate.



### **Ineffective Organization Creates Reactive Diversity Policy**

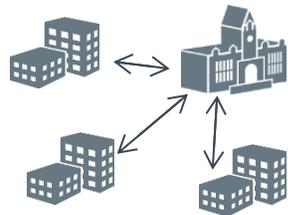
In a top-down or department-led diversity system, important data trends do not reach key stakeholders in time for effective policy changes. When senior administrators craft campus-wide policy based on broad demographic data or in response to discriminatory events, the opportunity for proactive change has already passed. Meanwhile, problems and solutions that could impact the whole campus stay locked within departments, and administrators can only respond when an issue becomes a crisis.

1) Iyer, Nitya and Nakata, Shirley, “Implementing Inclusion: A Consultation on Organizational Change to Support UBC’s Commitments to Equity and Diversity,” page 11. Submitted April, 2013. <http://equity.ubc.ca/files/2010/06/Implementing-Inclusion-Equity-Diversity-Consultation-Report-April-2013.pdf>.

## ***Cooperation among Departments and Diversity Office Fosters Proactive, Progressive Policy***

Diversity administrators at all profiled institutions argue that the most effective organizational model for diversity initiatives would rely on collaboration among departments and central administrators. Dissatisfaction among constituent groups at the **University of British Columbia** recently led to an external consultation on diversity organization. As a result, the University will adopt a more collaborative model with an Associate Vice President that will work directly with departments and senior administrators to unite cross-campus policy.<sup>2</sup>

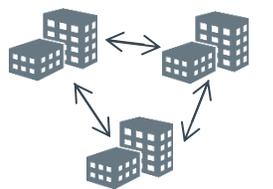
### **Key Benefits of a Cooperative Model**



**Institution-Wide Viewpoint on Local Problems**

#### ***Collaboration Empowers Departments and Unifies Institutional Diversity Policy***

Diversity office staff work directly with departments to define and promote diversity within the unit, tailoring policy to department climate and personnel. Central administrators provide data and support in identifying both challenges and opportunities related to diversity without intruding in department life. Department measurements and programs to promote diversity directly reflect unit conditions, and departments can act quickly to address problems without seeking broad campus support or central funding. Central diversity office and institutional research staff at **Institution B** recently compared outcomes for participants and non-participants in Graduate Diversity Day, and identified the impact of program components. Organizers reconfigured the program, and today better serve a larger group with half the funds.



**Departmental Knowledge-Sharing**

#### ***Solutions Serve the Broader Campus***

When central diversity staff identify best practices for diversity measurement or programming, that knowledge serves all other departments through diversity office engagements across campus. Similarly, issues that affect broader constituencies (e.g., socioeconomic status, sexual orientation) can be identified and acted on before more serious problems develop. At **Institution A**, students expressed dissatisfaction with campus procedures for sexual assault charges to department leaders, who passed on concerns to the diversity office. The diversity office convened a committee that included responders, police, residence life, legal counsel, the women's center, and medical personnel to revamp procedures. After meeting weekly for three months, the group established new guidelines to better serve victims of sexual assault.

2) See "[Implementing Inclusion](http://equity.ubc.ca/response-to-the-implementing-inclusion-report/)" and the University's official response to the report at <http://equity.ubc.ca/response-to-the-implementing-inclusion-report/> for additional information.

## Assessment and Modification

### *Work with Departments to Define Diversity Goals and Metrics*

Rather than define strict diversity goals and metrics at the central level, diversity offices work directly with department and program staff to build assessments that reflect constituent conditions and goals. At **Institution C**, department faculty and staff more often respond and participate in diversity initiatives when the process happens inside the unit. Although best practices and useful measurements may translate across departments, contacts argue employee perception of a top-down program may detract from buy-in and initiative success. Contacts at **Institution B** additionally suggest that assessment can act as functional exercises for inclusive programs, helping groups define goals and mission while generating data to improve services and diversity climate.

### Functional Assessments at *Institution B*



#### Department and Diversity Office

Central diversity office staff ask program leaders to provide a mission statement, then help groups define and articulate long-term goals.



#### Customized Metrics

Diversity office staff suggest metrics and data collection methods to measure progress against goals.



#### Data Collection and Analysis

The central office helps programs design data collection tools and generates custom reports for programs to understand progress and challenges.



#### Collect Student Identification Numbers at Program Level

At **Institution B**, the central diversity office asks student-facing diversity programs to record student identification numbers during activities and outreach. A diversity staff member that works within the institutional research office merges student academic data with membership and participation in diversity initiatives, and builds post-facto experiment reports for programs that demonstrate the efficacy of programming on retention and other factors.

## 4) Research Methodology

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### Project Challenge

Leadership at a member institution approached the Forum with the following questions:

- **Measuring Diversity, Discrimination and Inclusiveness**
  - How do contacts measure diversity in the student body? Who is responsible for data collection and analysis?
  - What factors do contacts measure, and where are measurements collected (e.g., application, registration)? What are the advantages and disadvantages of different diversity measures and collection methods?
  - How do contacts determine the level of discrimination by students, faculty and staff as well as inclusivity on campus? How is data on discrimination collected?
- **Inclusive Programming**
  - What programming exists to foster inclusivity and equity among students of diverse backgrounds? What diversity and discrimination factors are addressed by programming?
  - How are programs funded, and which administrators are responsible for content? How do contacts promote diversity programming among students, faculty, and staff?
  - How do diversity initiatives address and mitigate discrimination?
  - How do contacts assess diversity programming? What modifications have contacts made to diversity programs based on past assessment?

### Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- Education Advisory Board's internal and online research libraries ([www.eab.com](http://www.eab.com))
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (<http://nces.ed.gov/>)
- Iyer, Nitya and Nakata, Shirley, "Implementing Inclusion: A Consultation on Organizational Change to Support UBC's Commitments to Equity and Diversity," Submitted April, 2013. <http://equity.ubc.ca/files/2010/06/Implementing-Inclusion-Equity-Diversity-Consultation-Report-April-2013.pdf>.
- "Response to the Implementing Inclusion Report," University of British Columbia, <http://equity.ubc.ca/response-to-the-implementing-inclusion-report/>.
- Institutional websites
  - "Equity and Inclusion Office," University of British Columbia, <http://equity.ubc.ca/>. Accessed June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

## Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed administrators with responsibility over diversity assessment and programming at urban research institutions.

### A Guide to Institutions Profiled in this Brief

| Institution                     | Location                     | Sector  | Approximate Institutional Enrollment (Undergraduate/Total) | Classification                                      |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|---------|--|---|
| Institution A                   | Northeast<br>Small City      | Private | 10,000 / 15,000  | Research Universities (high research activity)      |
| University of British Columbia* | Western<br>Canada            | Public  | 37,000 / 10,000  | Medical Doctoral                                    |
| Institution B                   | Pacific West<br>Midsize City | Public  | 26,000 / 36,000  | Research Universities (very high research activity) |
| Institution C                   | Midwest<br>Large City        | Private | 5,500 / 15,000   | Research Universities (very high research activity) |

\*Information about this institution obtained through publicly available sources

Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)