Increasing Diversity among Students in Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Studies Curricula: A Case Study

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Abstract:
Much has been written about increasing the cultural competence of students in recreation, parks, and leisure studies curricula. Little has been written, however: about how these programs can increase the actual number of individuals from underrepresented groups. This article discusses the reasons for problems in recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups in higher education. Data -specific to recreation, parks and leisure studies curricula are also presented. Additionally, the paper outlines the conceptual background and actual components of a case example that successfully increased the number of African American students in a therapeutic recreation program by 23% over four years. Finally, this article will offer specific recommendations and strategies gleaned from the case example as well as from the literature for ways to improve the contextual conditions of a department or institution in order to not only recruit but also retain students from underrepresented populations.
Keywords: diversity. underrepresented students. students of color. Mentors

Article:

Introduction

Much has been written recently about increasing the cultural competence of students in recreation, parks, and leisure studies curricula. For example, within the last decade, studies and articles have addressed the course content and effective teaching strategies to increase awareness and cultural knowledge of diverse groups in recreation and leisure studies curricula *(e.g.*. Aguilar, & Washington. 1990: Blazey & James. 1994; Glancy, Henderson, & Love, 1999; Henderson, 1995: Holland. 1997: Sheldon & Datillo, 1997; Valerius, Keller, Doyle, & Collins, 1998; Ward. 1994; Washington. 1996). Little has been written, however, about how to increase the number of individuals from underrepresented populations in recreation, parks, and leisure studies curricula.

The purpose of this article is to identify the dire problem that exists regarding the presence of underrepresented groups in recreation, parks and leisure studies curricula. and to discuss strategies for increasing the number of underrepresented students. To accomplish this purpose, this paper will present the problems with recruitment and retention of underrepresented populations in higher education in general and then specifically in recreation parks, and leisure studies. Additionally, it will provide a description of a case example that successfully increased the number of African American students in therapeutic recreation by 23% over four years. Finally, this article will offer several specific recommendations and strategies for improving the contextual conditions of a department or institution in order to recruit and retain students from underrepresented populations.

Diversity in Higher Education

Cultural diversity is a reality in American society. In higher education, diversity is less evident, however. The 1997 Digest of Education Statistics (The National Center for Education Statistics, 1997) documented that, nationwide, "minority" students constituted only 25.8% of undergraduate enrollment. Additionally, according to a 1998 report from the Southern Education Foundation, public higher-education systems are still largely segregated. Many non-white students are enrolled in junior and community colleges rather than four-year institutions. Most African American students continue to enroll in historically black institutions (HBIs) while most white students attend traditionally white institutions (TWIs) (Love, 1993). Love (1993) also suggested that

a more significant issue might be that retention and graduation rates of underrepresented students (e.g., students of color) at TWIs lag far behind their European American counterparts. This pattern is not true for students of color enrolled in HBIs. Love (1993) stated, "Black students in Black colleges persist and graduate at about the same rate as their White counterparts in White institutions. Disproportionately high drop-out rates occur only among Black students in White institutions" (p.33)Therefore, these facts strongly indicate that environmental factors could play a major role in retention of underrepresented students in higher education.

Institutions of higher education are usually marketed based on their programmatic opportunities, geographic characteristics, and prestige of faculty members. Several studies suggest, however, that these variables are not the most important factors in determining student learning or retention. Kuh (1993) stated that "… an institution's contextual conditions are more important to student learning and personal development than faculty productivity, library holdings, organizational structures, or specific academic or student life programs" (p. 32). By contextual conditions, Kuh is referring to things such as the institution's mission and philosophy, faculty and student subcultures, and the experience of the institutional environment. Thus, current literature reflects that the problem of retention of underrepresented groups seems not to be about academic ability or desire to succeed, rather issues such as institutionalized racism, faculty-student interaction, academic and social interactions among students. and finances (Love, 1993; Malaney & Shively, 1995; Pascarclla & Terenzini, 1991).

Status of Diversity in Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Studies Curricula
Diversity in race and ethnicity is also lacking in recreation, parks, and leisure studies departments specifically. In a report of a survey conducted in 1996, Bialeschki and Dorward (1998) noted that only 40% of the 174 colleges and universities that responded noted that they currently had faculty of color. Although, this is a 19% increase over a 1986 study (Bialeschki. 1990), the reality is that 60% of the responding colleges and universities had no faculty of color. Beckman (1988) noted that faculty-student interaction was a significant variable in student success and that black students have reported poor communication with white faculty. The absence of diverse faculty in recreation, parks, and leisure studies curricula is a significant concern in that it denies underrepresented students mentors and role models. Increasing the numbers of minority faculty should begin by increasing the number of college graduates and doctoral students (Southern Education Foundation, 1995).

While slight increases exist in faculty of color, disappointingly little change has been noted among the presence of students of color in recreation, parks. and leisure studies curricula. Bialeschki and Dorward (1998) noted that. "Percentages of people of color were still quite low in all degree [level] areas..." (p. 4). According to a comparison of data from the 1988 and 1998 reports, students of color in recreation, parks, and leisure studies curricula grew slightly from 11% to 14% on the baccalaureate level, from 4% to 11% on the master's level, hut showed no growth on the doctoral level at 4% each. Although some improvement is evident, the percentage of students of color are not equivalent to the percentage of individuals of color in the general population. According to the Population Profile of the United States 1995, non-white individuals (i.e., African Americans, Latin Americans, Asian and Pacific Islanders. American Indians, Eskimos. and Aleuts) make up 25.6% of the total United States population (US Census Bureau, 1999). These data reflect the need for innovative strategies to recruit and retain underrepresented faculty and students in recreation. parks. and leisure studies curricula.

Case Example
Conceptual Background
We believe that many recreation and leisure programs genuinely value the diversity that underrepresented students bring in relation to exposing peers and faculty to alternative viewpoints and values. We cannot assume, however, that efforts to recruit and retain underrepresented students will be successful without examining philosophical and environmental factors that attract these student into our programs. We also need to examine methods that have been used to increase the numbers of underrepresented students in recreation, parks, and leisure studies.

Schlossberg (1989) indicated that building a supportive campus environment where students feel welcomed and respected has been cited by many researchers as a necessary condition to facilitate student development.

Making students feel valued and respected is important for every college and university, and according to Gossett, Cuyjet, and Cockriel (1996), "is a particular challenge to large, predominantly white institutions" (p. 37). These institutions face the challenge in their efforts to recruit and retain African American students and other underrepresented groups.

At historically black institutions (HBIs), African American students feel welcomed and comfortable in that environment and this perception is conducive for learning. Love (1993) noted that after classes, groups of black students can be seen hanging out in familiar gathering places, walking across campus, or even gathering around a professor on the steps in front of a building, discussing an issue addressed in class. These scenarios, according to Love, provide a comfort level that "is achieved by HBIs that puts Black students at ease" (p. 28).

On the other hand, the experience for black students at traditionally white institutions (TWIs) is more often than not far from comfortable. Love (1993) stated, "commonly, they find themselves ignored in classroom discussions, shut out of the campus social life, ignored or harassed by the police" (p. 28). Often the result of this discomfort is that students fail to graduate.

It would be naïve not to acknowledge the sizable number of underrepresented students who are successful at TWIs. Many enter TWIs with high academic credentials and do well while enrolled, going on to achieve distinction in their chosen profession (Allen, 1988). Why are these students successful and others are not? What methods have been utilized to enhance academic achievement and retention with underrepresented students in recreation, parks, and leisure studies and others areas of study. Love (1993) reviewed the literature and found that high use of campus facilities, holding a job on campus, and having informal contact with faculty and students outside of the classroom has had a positive effect on black students' achievement and retention.

In addition, Glover (1991) listed the following as recruitment and retention strategies of students of color to recreation and leisure studies: use of personnel of color in appropriate literature and/or video materials; development of unique programs for students of color; and provision of financial assistance. To retain these students, she suggested remedial classes, tutoring and counseling, a peer network, faculty support, relevant curriculum, and a positive social climate.

Lynch and Hanson (1992) stated that to encourage the entrance of persons from diverse backgrounds into the human services requires mentoring and support for students to stay in school. According to Frater, Howe, and Murray (1997), "the value of academic and professional role models cannot be overestimated for today's college and university students of all races" (pg. 221). They go on to offer a strong argument to support the positive impact of role models from the same racial and ethnic group as the protege. They stated that mentors should, "exhibit traits that proteges should proudly emulate" (p. 224).

Description of Case Example
The following case example will outline and describe a federal grant initiative designed to increase the number of African American students in the field of therapeutic recreation. This project was a cooperative effort between the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) and the Recreation Administration program at North Carolina Agriculture and Technical State University (an HBI) between the years 1994 and 1999. In addition to funding for the individual student trainee stipends to study in the area of therapeutic recreation, several techniques were employed to facilitate their learning, interactions with professionals and the profession, as well as facilitate social involvement, and provide appropriate skills to become certified and employed in the field of therapeutic recreation.

Specifically, the case example was an effort to recruit and train more people of color to work with children and youth with disabilities in therapeutic recreation settings in North Carolina and the surrounding southeastern region of the United States. Nationally, a significant portion of individuals with disabilities are from underrepresented ethnic and racial populations and have demonstrated a particular need for recreation services. The 18th Annual Report to Congress of the U.S. Department of Education (1996) stated, "The percentage of

African American children and youth enrolled in special education is generally high relative to their representation in the general student population." Additionally, African Americans with chronic health conditions are more likely to experience activity restrictions than their European American counterparts. More African American children and youth with disabilities (7.2%) experienced limitations due to a disability than of European American children and youth with disabilities (6%). These findings clearly demonstrate the need for recreation services to individuals with disabilities, particularly African Americans.

Turnbull and Turnbull (1997) noted that cultural factors impact every aspect of People's lives and emphasized the importance of service providers being aware of the Impacts of their own culture as well as others. Although cultural diversity training can accomplish this goal, we believed that Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists (CTRSs) who are also persons of color may be better able to serve as mentors and role models because youth of color with disabilities may feel more of a cultural affiliation. We believe this to be true based on studies such as Beckman, 1988; Love, 1993: Gossett et al., 1996; Giles-Gee, 1989; and the Southern Education Foundation. 1995. 1998. among others. Considering the anticipated growth in therapeutic recreation jobs (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. 1998) and the fact that youth and children with disabilities are disproportionately African American. stronger pre-service training is needed to prepare more undergraduate African Americans to become therapists prepared specifically to work with children and youth with disabilities.

As noted earlier, at the time this project was proposed in 1993, college students of color studying in recreation, parks, and leisure studies curricula comprised about 11% of all bachelor's level. Bialeschki and Dorward (1998) stated, "The schools represented in this sample continue to be challenged with the low representation of people of color in their curricula and the need to develop recruitment strategies that will appeal to these students and faculty" (p. 5). More specifically, the number of people of color practicing in the field of therapeutic recreation was appallingly low. The National Council on Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC) estimated that as of 1993, only 5.1% of the 12,000 practicing CTRSs were African American, Latin American, Asian American, and Native American (NCTRC, 1993).

Components of the Case Example

Five primary components were employed to facilitate the success of the student trainees in this case example. These were gathered from literature and other program examples. They consisted of financial assistance, meetings, a tutor, the minority task force, and a mentor program.

Financial assistance. Each student who met the admission criteria of being African American and maintaining a 2.0 GPA was given a non-work stipend that covered tuition, fees, books, and funding to attend at least one therapeutic recreation conference per year. Funding was continued as long as students maintained 2.0 GPA overall and in each course required by the project.

Meetings. Meetings were held at least twice a semester with mentors, student trainees, and project faculty and staff. Each student was expected to attend. The first meeting was an orientation, during which trainees met each other, the project staff, and the tutor. Each student was given an orientation manual which included the names and contact information of the project trainees, the project staff, and the mentors. Additionally, the manual included an outline of curricular and other expectations of the trainees, information on university resources (writing lab and career placement center), a schedule of conferences, professional certification information, and membership information and forms for state and national organizations.

Tutor. The tutor was a graduate student in a related field with expertise in therapeutic recreation. She was African American and had experience ting undergraduate students. Her responsibilities included teaching medical terminology, tutoring students in all four of the therapeutic recreation courses as needed, serving as a liaison between student trainees and project staff, and facilitating the mentor program. Students related to her and consistently utilized her services.

Minority Task Force. The Minority Task Force was a group of professionals and educators in the field of therapeutic recreation from all over the country who either were African American or worked in HBIs. They were asked to consult on curriculum content, changes, and development. For example, the Task Force reviewed and evaluated all syllabi for the therapeutic recreation courses required for the grant trainees. The Task Force was also consulted on recruitment and retention strategies. Although they did not interact directly with the trainees, their input proved useful to designing a competent program of study and retention. This component was difficult to manage over time because of the distance and was less useful in the last few years of the project.

Mentors. The Mentor Program was a critical component of the project. Mentors were African American professionals in the field of therapeutic recreation or a related area of recreation who lived within a 90-mile radius and were willing to meet with students and project staff several times each year. Additionally, the project staff tried to find mentors who had similar professional interests and personal qualities as the student trainees. The matching process also took into account the gender and ethnic backgrounds of the individuals concerned. As Sachdeva (1996) stated, "mentors of the same gender or ethnicity can serve as very effective role models and provide unique insight based on their own experiences in various situations and environments" (p. 134).

At least three times each year, the project staff organized a meeting during which mentors would meet with student trainees to discuss issues of job search, resume writing, conference attendance, and specific issues of what it is like to be African American in a predominantly European American field. This last topic was especially important because African American practitioners in therapeutic recreation often face prejudice and discrimination in their work environments. For example, one African American mentor discussed a strategy she and a European American co-worker used to provide services to their clients who were uncomfortable with them based on their race. They reassigned clients to one another in a cooperative manner when faced with clients who preferred working with therapists of their own racial background. This strategy enabled both therapists to provide more effective services to a diverse group of clients. Outside of the meetings, the mentors made themselves available to the student trainees for advice and direction. Often students would interact with mentors at professional conferences whereby the mentor was able to introduce the students to other professionals in the field. Finally, mentors assisted project staff in the placement of students in therapeutic recreation field-work and employment positions.

Results of the Case Study

The Therapeutic Recreation concentration in the UNCG Department of Recreation Parks, and Tourism saw an increase of 23% in African American students enrolled during the 5-year period of the grant project. It is assumed that increase can be attributed (at least partially) to the effects of the federal project designed to increase the number of African Americans in the field of therapeutic recreation.

Additionally, data from before and during this project demonstrated a significant increase in the number of students of color who graduated from the program. For example, in the 5-year period between 1989 and 1993 (prior to the grant award in 1994), only 10% of students with a concentration in therapeutic recreation who graduated from UNCG were African American. In contrast, data from the two most recent graduation years, 1997 and 1998, showed that 23% of the Therapeutic Recreation concentration graduates from the UNCG Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism were African American. This is a 13% increase of African American graduates in the therapeutic recreation curriculum. Only about half of these students were funded by the grant. These results suggest that some African American students enrolled in the therapeutic recreation program based on reputation without the incentive of funding. Therefore, the presence of African American students who were enrolled as a result of the grant funding seemed to have provided an attractive and welcoming environment that encouraged other students of color to the major.

Evaluation of Case Example

A total of 19 students have graduated from the training project. Only three (21%) of the students are not in the field of therapeutic recreation and one is unknown. Of the remaining 15 students, one received a graduate

degree in recreation from Temple University. The remaining 14 students are working in the field of therapeutic recreation, 10 of whom are working specifically with children and/or youth with disabilities.

As part of a follow-up survey, project staff conducted telephone interviews with graduates of the grant project to assess how their experiences and participation in the project contributed to their success in attaining jobs within the field for which they were trained. The participants identified the following as being crucial to their successful completion of their degree: (a) financial assistance, (b) faculty /staff support and encouragement, (c) presence of other African Americans in the classrooms, (d) course content, and (e) mentors and tutor assistance.

Financial assistance was mentioned by several trainees as one of the two most important components of the successful completion of their degree programs. One trainee stated, "I knew I wanted to be in therapeutic recreation before I knew about the grant. Being in the grant was tremendous help because at the time I was experiencing financial problems" (personal communication, 1999). Another person stated. "Not having the burden of worrying about payment of tuition, books, etc., allowed me to be able to utilize the structured guidance that was available" (personal communication, 1999). These comments illustrated how financial assistance alleviated worry which allowed the students to focus on their studies. In fact, two individuals identified that there had been a point at which, without the financial assistance of the grant, they would have had to quit school.

Another component of the grant project that was identified as extremely important by the past trainees was the faculty/staff support and encouragement they received. Many individuals spoke to the individual attention, guidance, challenge, and encouragement as being as important as the financial assistance component of the project. One individual stated:

> I have a lot of knowledge because of opportunities presented to me by [project director and advisor] as being part of the grant. She encouraged me to go to conferences and meet other professionals, was there to listen to me when I needed to talk, and stressed the importance of volunteer experience in a variety of settings (personal communication, 1999).

Similar to Giles-Gee's (1989) study about advisors following the progress of the students, this comment emphasizes the importance of constant support and encouragement by faculty and staff.

Gossett, Cuyjet, and Cockriel (1996) suggested that the presence of several people of African American decent in a classroom reduces the feeling of tokenism. They stated that a substantial presence of people of color helps negate "...the feeling that these students 'speak for their entire race'" (p. 40) as well as feelings of marginality and isolation. In accordance, several former trainees emphasized the importance of the presence of other African Americans in the classroom. One individual identified this as being the thing that was most helpful to him while he was pursuing his degree. He stated, "Just spending time with people socially and studying together, feeling a part of the group versus alienated was very important...most important actually" (personal communication, 1999). Several trainees talked about the importance of traveling together to therapeutic recreation conferences and having people with whom they could socialize and study. While these interactions were possible with non African American students, trainees felt more camaraderie with other African American students. One person said that "...networking with people who were in the grant at the same time helped me to feel more comfortable" (personal communication, 1999).

The tutor, as well as the mentor program, provided professional support and guidance. One student explained the importance of a particular mentor for her success. "She was helpful in that I got real day-to-day information about the field and was able to ask questions in a laid back atmosphere" (personal communication, 1999). Another graduate touted the mentors and the tutor stating, "I had someone to go to if I needed help or I had concerns about something" (personal communication, 1999). There were, however, some difficulties implementing the mentor program. It was difficult and sometimes not possible to schedule meetings and workshops at times that all mentors could attend. Some mentors found the program more time consuming than

they had anticipated and discontinued their participation in the project. The lack of one consistent graduate assistant across the entire span of the project proved to be a problem. At the time of the initiation of the project, no qualified graduate eligible for a full-time assistantship was available for hire. As a result, over the five years of the project, three different assistants had to he trained and oriented to the procedures and goals of the project.

Finally, the Minority Task Force contributed to the project's success indirectly. Although it was never identified by trainees as having been an important aspect of their participation in the grant, several graduates commented on the helpfulness of the overall course content and certain courses specifically. Given that the members of the Minority Task Force gave initial and ongoing recommendations about course content, it seems that this component was also successful in facilitating success.

Strategies for Increasing Diversity in Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Studies Curricula

The case example described provides important foundational information for what worked and what did not in terms of increasing and retaining students of color in the Department. It is important to note, however, that although the case example dealt with race, we believe the strategies below encompass all areas of diversity. Many students who feel different because of their race, sex, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, age, religion or other demographic, can experience the same disenfranchisement noted in the students above. It is important that faculty in recreation, parks. and leisure studies curricula attempt to consider all types of diversity and not rely only on those differences we can see.

Regarding developing programs similar to the case example, it is clear that designing a project based on federal funding is not a feasible strategy for most curricula in recreation, parks, and leisure studies. Therefore, through the experiences outlined in the case example as well as the suggestions from other programs and studies in the related literature, the following are strategies that recreation, parks, and leisure studies curricula might use to increase and retain underrepresented groups in their programs.

Develop Mentor Programs

Perhaps the most significant reason to use mentors is the retention of underrepresented students. Two types of mentor programs have been successful in this effort. First, mentors from outside of the university, as described in the case study, have proven successful in providing guidance, encouragement, and security to students who might feel alienated, or uncomfortable in an unfamiliar setting. Especially, with conference attendance, students were able to connect with and subsequently be introduced to other p make the practitioners whom then became contacts for the students. Additionally, having mentors make themselves available for questions was helpful to the students. Often students see their academic advisors and instructors as only course related. Therefore, having Practitioners who understood not only the field of study, but also the cultural and situational experiences of the students facilitated their ability to interact with the needs of diverse populations.

A second type of mentor program could come from within a university or program. For example, Giles-Gee (1989) described the effects of what they termed "faculty intervention⁻ on academic performance and retention of African American students. According to Giles-Gee, to address the alienation that African American students who attended TWIs felt, they instituted a program whereby faculty were nominated and oriented to serve as student advisors. Selected faculty were to "(a) assist students who were being advised in early academic self-assessment, (b) to help students use services, (c) to serve as role models, (d) to assist with student's comfort with faculty interactions, and (e) to complete a monthly form to aid in the tracking of individual student participation" (p. 197).

Of particular note, advisors were assigned a limited number of students, were directed to contact them by mail and telephone, and advisors and student advisees attended workshops to discuss the African American students' level of satisfaction with the program. These workshops facilitated small group and large group interaction among students and faculty. Advisors also met in small groups to discuss issues with the vice-president of student services and the assistant vice-president of minority affairs. Retention rates improved over time, although not in the initial year after the inception of the program. However, academic achievement improved

for the study group significantly over the control students. Sixty percent of the African American students in the project received grades over 2.0 or more compared to 44% of African American students not in the project. Again, this type of internal mentoring could work for any underrepresented student.

For both of these types of mentor programs, one element seemed consistent: the attention of the project staff and faculty. In the case example, former student grant trainees referred to the relationship with the project staff and the attention and interest that was evident. In the article by Giles-Gee (1989), which addressed advising mentors within the university, similar reactions by the students were noted. Through the relationship with the student advisees, students with marginal grades were able to meet academic standards to remain with the university whereas others similar to them were not able to make the same progress. Similarly, in many universities, faculty are encouraged (using door labels) to indicate their ability and willingness to work with disenfranchised students who are not immediately obvious (e.g., gay and lesbian, non-mainstream religions). Knowing that they have someone to talk to could make the difference for retention and drop-outs.

Provide or Facilitate Funding for Students
Preparing, submitting, and being awarded a federal grant to provide stipend funding for underrepresented groups might be prohibitive for many departments. However, many funding sources exist for students of color and for students with disabilities that could facilitate retention in the university system. By being knowledgeable of these sources, faculty in recreation, parks, and leisure studies curricula can facilitate and encourage students to apply. For example, the Gates Foundation has a minority fellowship for both undergraduate and graduate students. Similarly, the Minority Graduate Education (MGE) Program is sponsored by the National Science Foundation, Directorate for Education and Human Resources (EHR) and the Division of Human Resource Development (HRD). Also, many universities and colleges have Minority Presence Grants as well as Incentive Scholarship Programs for students from underrepresented groups.

In addition to these specific sources, the Internet provides access to a number of free scholarship databases and search engines. One site that is particularly relevant for students of color or who are members of underrepresented groups is MOLIS Scholarships and Fellowships. This searchable database is found at www.fie.com/molis/scholar.htm (November, 1999). It allows students to search for individually appropriate scholarships and fellowships by entering their sex, race, heritage, course of study, state of legal residence, and grade point average.

Connect Students to Role Models
It is important for students to feel welcome and not alienated in the classroom as well in the social environments within the university. Positive role models can exist in more ways than just mentors. Securing people that represent various backgrounds and cultures as tutors, teaching assistants, part-time faculty, or lecturers within one's program can provide the diversity and role models needed to help underrepresented students feel comfortable.

Additionally, another strategy would be to develop a system whereby students can meet other professionals of similar cultural and racial backgrounds at venues outside of the university. For example, some state organizations have diversity committees, or kindred groups from underrepresented populations. Facilitating students' attendance at conferences, workshops, or professional meetings can provide with opportunities to meet and interact with individuals with whom they can relate.

Provide a Welcoming Classroom
Blazey and James (1994) outlined significant suggestions for making the class- room more inclusive for all underrepresented individuals. For example, they encouraged the use of inclusive language in all settings at all times. Additionally, they suggested that faculty consider diversity in inviting guest lecturers and speakers to include different backgrounds. Finally, they noted the importance of inclusive content in handouts and readings should seek to address a variety of cultural arenas such as ability, age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and others. Glancy, Henderson, and Love (1999) concluded that the learning environment should

include cultural and personal diversity. They noted. "Students become teachers by taking the place or perspective of another. All perspectives counted and students learned to examine many ideas" (p. 102).

Facilitate Social Involvement

It is clear from the literature and case example described herein, that a feeling of belonging and social connectedness is necessary if retention of individuals from underrepresented groups is to be successful. Given that students from underrepresented populations are a minority at TWIs, they must rely predominately on white students and professors in making their adjustment to college life. These social relationships can be facilitated by faculty and staff in a number of ways.

One way that faculty and staff can encourage social involvement is to assign group projects as a part of a class requirement. Since students involved in group projects spend time together outside of the classroom, these projects may become a starting point for additional social interactions.

Another potential avenue is through student organizations within and outside of the department curriculum. For example, recreation, parks, and leisure studies programs have student major associations and clubs. Faculty and staff can encourage individuals from underrepresented groups to become members of these organizations and then facilitate their involvement within them. Often student associations within and outside of recreation, parks, and leisure studies program sponsor activities such as food drives, cook outs, and professional workshops. These types of activities can promote interactions between students and faculty, thereby facilitating social involvement.

A third example of facilitating social involvement is for faculty and staff to encourage groups of students to attend professional conferences together. Beyond verbal encouragement, faculty/staff can make individuals aware of conference scholarships or university funding that may be available to them. Additionally, faculty taking responsibility to network with students at the actual conferences can facilitate interactions among and between both parties.

Conclusion

This article has described a case example of a project that successfully increased the number of African American students in a therapeutic recreation program. Additionally, a number of specific strategies have been outlined that can be implemented by other recreation and leisure studies departments. As stated elsewhere in this paper, although the case example described herein dealt specifically with the issue of race. we believe that the recommended strategies can be successful at addressing other issues as well (e.g., disability, sexual orientation). Our society has and will continue to become more diverse with regard to a variety of demographic categories. One of our roles as educators is to prepare individuals and professionals who have the skills, experience, and willingness to interact with people from diverse backgrounds; whether it be as colleagues or providers of service. One way to facilitate this is to have a diverse student population in our departments and universities.

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