

INNOVATION IN DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION:
ADVANCING THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
COMMITMENT TO ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

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Preface

Helen Cannaday, M.A.Ed.

We know intuitively that diversity matters, today more than ever, because we live in a deeply connected and global world. However, when the phrase “diversity and inclusion” was first introduced to our societal lexicon more than four decades ago, it was almost universally regarded as an imposed-upon mandate for colleges and universities to admit greater numbers of underrepresented minorities to their campuses. Since that time, universities and colleges have been challenged to (a) define a diversity and inclusion agenda, (b) build a culture and community that reflects society’s diverse populations, and (c) demonstrate tangible, measurable results.

Fortunately, our thinking about diversity and inclusion has evolved. We understand now that it is a concept that involves much more than ensuring access, or meeting numeric goals imposed by court orders or public opinions, or offering sensitivity training courses. While these metrics remain important, we recognize the educational value of a diverse and inclusive learning environment to *all* students. We recognize, also, that a diverse and welcomed community is paramount to a university’s mission in today’s global system that is increasingly driven by technical knowledge, massive amounts of information, and innovative ideas.

The George Washington University, nestled in the heart of our Nation’s capital, opened its doors in 1821, as the Columbian College in the District of Columbia. It grew out of President George Washington’s desire to create an institution that would serve as an intellectual hub for the country. As envisioned by President Washington, GW’s academic success is built on the philosophy that learning should not end at the edge of campus. Our unique location allows our students unparalleled opportunities to study and work alongside leaders and practitioners in

every discipline. We encourage our students to take part in the world beyond the classroom—in Washington, DC and beyond.

In keeping with this belief, we at GW affirm a vision of the college campus as the doorway to the world. On this view, students come to college not only to gain skills, but also to learn how to navigate the world in which they will live and work. College graduates in the 21st century must be prepared to live and work in an increasingly interconnected world, interacting with people from many different cultures and backgrounds. What better “training ground” than a campus with classmates and faculty of varying backgrounds themselves? When students interact with people who are different from them, the experience increases their knowledge base and expands their capacity for viewing issues and solving problems from multiple perspectives.

Universities exist to unlock and harness new knowledge, to create environments that promote dialogue and discourse, and to facilitate diverse ideas and creative thinking. The more ideas and perspectives brought to a discussion, the better the chance of developing innovative new theories and visionary thinking. We know that one’s race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, religion, and even military experience all have a deep impact on the way that one constructs and assesses knowledge.

It is the belief of GW’s Office of Diversity & Inclusion (ODI) that diversity and academic excellence go hand-in-hand. ODI is the result of a collaborative effort spearheaded by President Steven Knapp. In 2010, President Knapp launched the diversity and inclusion initiative, the key components of which included the establishment of the President’s Council on Diversity and Inclusion (PCDI) and the creation of the Vice Provost for Diversity & Inclusion position. The PCDI created a framework in which members of the GW community and the broader DC metropolitan area could engage in thoughtful discourse and also propose, as charged

by President Knapp (2010), “best practices that benefit all members of the GW community, enhance the experience of traditionally underrepresented populations, and cultivate a more inclusive climate for students, staff, faculty and the broader community of which George Washington is an integral part” (“GW Office of Diversity & Inclusion: President’s Council,” n.d., para. 1).¹

The process of bringing together members of the GW community with members of the greater DC community was arduous, and rightly so. Meetings were held twice a month from October 2010 to May 2011. Public forums were held, and working groups conducted fact-finding activities and reviewed diversity initiatives at other colleges and universities. In addition, a website was created so that the public could follow along and submit recommendations. The result of this work was the creation of a report, *Diversity: A Key to Academic Excellence* (with almost 100 recommendations), the creation of ODI, and a more robust portfolio for the Vice Provost for Diversity & Inclusion. Our mission is to be a resource for diversity expertise and to help GW become renowned the world over for inclusive excellence.

As part of this mission, ODI has advanced many initiatives. One such initiative is the Innovation in Diversity and Inclusion (IDI) Grants Program. This internal grant program—the first of its kind at GW—allows students, faculty, staff, and units to apply for funding to support innovative ideas that advance GW’s commitment to diversity and inclusion. Since the program’s inception in 2012, ODI has received 73 applications and has funded 29 grant projects, for a total of almost \$165,000. The projects have addressed myriad issues and have supported research and mentoring opportunities. Some of the projects implemented include studies and programs focused in the following areas: (a) GW’s capacity to employ individuals with disabilities, (b)

¹ The George Washington University, Office of Diversity & Inclusion: *The President’s Council on Diversity and Inclusion*, at <https://diversity.gwu.edu/pcdi>

GW's efforts to support its military veteran students, (c) funding for research fellowships to "uncover" the rich story of diversity at GW, and (d) funding for mentoring workshops for female economists.

This publication highlights a sampling of IDI grant-funded projects. We are proud of our colleagues and the work that is being done to create a truly diverse and inclusive community. It is our hope that by sharing information about these projects, we will highlight the creative and innovative work of our GW students, faculty, staff, and of ODI. We also hope to inspire members of the GW community to think about ways in which they might contribute to our efforts to create an environment that is inclusive, supportive, and rich in diversity.

Global Identities:

Exploring Study Abroad Student Narratives through Digital Storytelling

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The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.

- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Introduction

The ritual of sharing insights about life through storytelling can be immensely valuable to those who tell and to those who listen. Digital storytelling is a modern take on the tradition of oral storytelling that portrays a lived experience by combining spoken words, images, film, and music in an innovative form. This process allows storytellers to reflect on a personal experience while sharing their insights with a larger audience. These personal experiences and insights, told through stories, are powerful forces that give meaning and shape to our lives. The Office for Study Abroad (OSA) at The George Washington University (GW) saw the power in this art form and sought to find ways to harness stories into creative outlets for change. OSA recognized that the experience of living and learning outside of a student's home community presents a unique opportunity for the student to reflect on aspects of identity. Outside the confines of their homes, students have the opportunity to reflect on such aspects of individual identity as religion, social groups, academic groups, family roles, and places of origin.

The students at GW represent a wide array of diverse and rich identity backgrounds. However, in light of a 2013 report by the Institute of International Education (IIE), OSA noticed that their student participation numbers (i.e., study abroad experiences) echoed national study abroad trends in that GW students from minority backgrounds participated in study abroad experiences at lower rates than their peers. OSA recognized the opportunity to give voice to underrepresented students studying abroad through the Innovation in Diversity and Inclusion (IDI) grants program. OSA also partnered with the Office of International Programs to include

the stories of international students on campus in the DC area. Consequently, OSA applied for a grant to fund a student scholarship program and staff member training to develop a digital storytelling program called Global Identities. Specifically, Global Identities provides a forum for underrepresented and international students to share their experiences abroad through digital storytelling. As a result of the digital storytelling project, the office has been able to leverage the unique international experiences of their students to further the university's goal of *engaging in rigorous critical analysis of cultural, ethnic, racial, and other related differences*.¹ This project also strives to work towards the university's goal of globalization by allowing student *self-examination to gain perspective on how knowledge, culture, and language shape national identity*.² By equipping students with the tools to understand themselves, they become better prepared to effectively navigate in an interconnected world.

Designed for Success

When people give voice to their stories, it inspires. Whether funny, sad, happy, or mysterious, each story builds confidence that individuals can tackle challenges, that small events matter a great deal sometimes, that large events have a human face, and that we all have a story worth hearing. Our stories educate, and by educating they encourage a strong sense of self. When we are strong in our identities, reaching out to others becomes natural, growth becomes inevitable, and that state of justice and mutual concern we call inclusion becomes a shared achievement. I'm grateful to our students who have shared their stories and to all those who have listened and enjoyed them.

- Associate Provost for International Programs Donna Scarborough, on the value of Global

¹ The George Washington University Statement on Diversity and Inclusion, at https://diversity.gwu.edu/sites/diversity.gwu.edu/files/downloads/gw_statement_on_diversity_and_inclusion.pdf

² The George Washington University, Office of the Provost: Strategic Plan, at <https://provost.gwu.edu/files/downloads/Strategic%2520Plan.pdf>

In order to implement the project, OSA requested funds from the Office of the Vice Provost for Diversity and Inclusion (OVPDI) to support the use of digital storytelling as a medium through which students would reflect profoundly on perceptions of identity in the United States and in their host countries. With funding secured and the project underway, participating students' stories have been, and continue to be, shared with a larger audience to encourage dialogue about student identity development while abroad. Additionally, scholarship funds have helped OSA work toward a larger mission of increasing access to study abroad for students from underrepresented populations.

Through the Global Identities project, OSA was able to meet the goals as introduced by the IDI grant. Designed by the OVPDI, the program fosters diversity and inclusion across the GW community by equipping and encouraging members to integrate these principles and values into their work. Furthermore, the project promotes OSA's commitment to diversity and recognizes the value in learning from diverse experiences. With these goals in mind, the three main outcomes for this project were:

1. Further OSA's mission of increased self-awareness and intercultural competency through the use of the digital storytelling medium.
2. Promote inclusion and diversity by highlighting a broad range of student perspectives through the digital storytelling outreach efforts.
3. Increase the inclusion of exchange and international students into the larger GW community through outreach efforts.

Digital Storytelling Training

To achieve the goals of the IDI grant project, staff members needed to first obtain skills in facilitating the communication of these stories and implementing the technologies needed to

create the digital storytelling projects. The IDI grant also funded staff training in the digital storytelling methodology, with training sessions led by a Center for Digital Storytelling trainer and GW alumni, Stefani Sese. Five staff members completed a 3-day training workshop wherein they wrote their own stories, received training in Final Cut Pro software to execute the technical portion of adding audio and visual elements to their stories, and then produced a final digital version for each of the stories. Throughout the training process, staff members became familiar with Lambert's (2010) "Seven Steps of Digital Storytelling," an approach comprised of the following parts: (a) owning your insights, (b) owning your emotions, (c) finding the moment, (d) seeing your story, (e) hearing your story, (f) assembling your story, and (g) sharing your story.

Through participation in a story circle in which staff members came together to share drafts of their stories and received non-biased feedback, they learned first-hand how to generate meaningful ideas and how to edit content to best fit the digital storytelling model. They learned that the story circle is crucial to understanding the Center for Digital Storytelling's technique of owning your insights. This stage of the process involved starting the story from a particular moment of honesty and revelation. Using this model, staff members learned that although these moments were sometimes difficult to find, they allowed storytellers to reveal their unique perceptions of the world. Staff members also learned how to use facilitation techniques to help storytellers own their emotions in order to uncover such moments and edit out unnecessary details. In some cases, stories that participants thought they were going to tell evolved into completely different stories by the end of the facilitation process. The story circle also taught staff members that story listeners are crucial to the overall experience. Through dedicated listening, the story circle audience was witness to the experience that was being shared and came away with their own interpretations of the story, thereby completing the storytelling process.

These story circle training methods provided participating staff members with the tools needed to effectively help students get in touch with their own insights and emotions when crafting and telling their individual stories. Therefore, staff members' facilitation techniques were especially critical in guiding students through the storytelling process because they released participants from the need to summarize their whole international experience in one superficial story and, instead, allowed them to speak deeply about one specific moment that was meaningful to them during their time abroad.

Finally, as part of the training, staff members viewed a variety of past digital storytelling projects to review different techniques that affected the style and tone of the stories. Staff members observed which images, pacing speeds, and sounds were most effective in accompanying the narratives. Through learning the technical components of the project, staff members were able to see, hear, and assemble their own stories. By becoming familiar with the Final Cut Pro software, staff members also learned how to gauge the amount of time and effort students would need to dedicate to the production of their stories.

Implementing Digital Storytelling

Following the training, the five trained staff members developed application criteria and a recruitment strategy for future participants, a curriculum with an emphasis on self-reflection and identity evolution, and facilitation techniques specific to the digital storytelling formation of the Global Identities scholarship program. Ultimately, the program provided training to twelve students total, six of whom were awarded a scholarship. The awarded students took part in pre-departure self-reflection, guided blogging while abroad, and in-person digital storytelling facilitation upon their return to campus.

Application Development and Recruitment for Digital Storytelling

In fall 2013, staff members developed the application for the Global Identities scholarship. The application included an essay question to be selected from one of the two following topics:

1. Define your identity in your own words, and describe an experience that helped you become aware of your identity.
2. Define your identity in your own words, and find a news article focused on identity from the country where you wish to study. Describe how its implications could impact your study abroad experience.

These essay questions were crafted to gauge the extent to which students were already thinking about their identities at home. The staff members also screened the students for university group affiliations and concentrations of study to ensure that students were drawn from varying backgrounds and identities. Host country destinations also played a role in the final selection process to ensure that both traditional and non-traditional destinations were represented. When selecting participants during later application cycles, the staff members tried to include students whose affiliations and destinations were not previously represented in order to further the diversity of stories told by program participants.

In addition, trained staff members educated study abroad advisors about the goals of the Global Identities project so that advisors could recruit and identify potential scholarship applicants. Information about the project was included in scholarship materials provided by OSA and was incorporated in pre-departure orientations for outgoing study abroad students. In this way, the goals of diversity and inclusion were further embedded into the culture of OSA.

Developing a Digital Storytelling Curriculum

Following the development of the application and recruitment strategy, a curriculum for the Global Identities scholarship was developed to guide these students in their learning abroad experiences. The curriculum first incorporated pre-departure activities focusing on identity. Students were given tools to understand the concept of identity before sharing important aspects of their own identities. While abroad, students maintained blogs in which they responded to targeted questions provided by OSA staff. These questions helped students reflect on their changing perceptions of identity, encouraging them to analyze their international experiences in more meaningful ways. One strategic blog question required the students to take five photos of the people, places, or things that made up their communities abroad. This required the students to examine how they related to their new communities and to also consider which aspects of their former communities affected their earlier identity formation processes. By engaging with people from other cultures and reflecting upon their experiences of identity formation from the past to the present moment, the students developed intercultural competence while enhancing their ability to navigate across their own evolving identities. Moreover, by asking the students to synthesize and articulate their reflections, this exercise furthered the university's strategic goal of fostering strong communication skills necessary to translate learning into effective action.

Facilitating and Sharing Digital Stories

The final stage of the Global Identities project included facilitating, creating, and sharing the digital story process with the students. This stage of the project took place during the semester when students returned to campus from their study abroad locations. The first step in this process required students to attend an orientation that described digital storytelling and provided a space for students to meet the other storytellers. During this orientation, students were

also asked to participate in a story circle. Students were asked to bring in initial stories containing approximately 300 words, and these stories were shared among the story circle group. In turn, other students and staff in the circle asked questions to help the storyteller find clarity. From there, each student was assigned to work with two staff members who met with the student throughout the following month to finalize the story. Many students went through multiple drafts during the facilitation process. After the stories were finalized, students identified photos and music for their stories that they then mapped out on storyboards. With all of these elements properly coordinated, students recorded their stories and uploaded all of the documents into Final Cut Pro. They spent the next month editing the digital stories. Once the final products were complete, students shared their stories during a digital storytelling showcase for the GW community and the larger Washington area, international education community.

When facilitating students' efforts to tell their stories, staff members found that students struggled with summarizing their dynamic study abroad experiences in 300 words. Students also discovered that it was challenging to "let go" of the expectations of the listener and tell the story completely from their individual perspectives. However, by emphasizing the core digital storytelling steps of owning your insights and owning your emotions, staff members were eventually able to assist students in finding the moment of truth as a starting point for recounting their honest stories. Students also found it helpful to have fresh, unbiased listeners who allowed them to speak, uninterrupted and unprompted, about their unique experiences.

Finally, the digital storytelling showcase provided students with a platform not previously available to them, a platform from which they could share their experiences as underrepresented students in the GW population and abroad. Among their many insights, students shared that learning in a setting outside their home country affected how they studied, obtained information,

and interacted with the people around them. They reflected on how their immersion in a different culture informed their personal and academic goals, as well as their lives inside and outside the classroom. By leaving the context of their home country, students stated that they also left behind ideas that supported and constrained their identities. As a result, students came away with new perceptions of themselves and the world around them.

The learning process for these students continued as they witnessed—personally experienced—the audience members take in and react to their stories. During question and answer sessions following the showcases, students expressed their gratification for being able to convey honest representations of their experiences. Feedback from audience members indicated that the stories were especially meaningful in terms of representing the students’ unique perspectives and honest natures. Overall, the discussions generated during the showcase suggest that an ongoing conversation about diverse student perspectives is a topic of interest that needs to be shared with the greater GW community. Finally, as an additional student-related outcome of the Global Identities project, these students continue to use their digital stories as a tool with which to communicate their experiences to friends and family—some have even posted their digital stories to personal blogs.

Future of Global Identities

The success of the IDI grant project strengthened OSA’s commitment to increasing access to study abroad opportunities and to celebrating the voices of GW’s diverse student population. Moving forward, plans to incorporate the efforts of Global Identities into OSA’s work will continue through a variety of formats and initiatives. For example, the project was incorporated into the student experiences section of the OSA website to showcase participating students’ stories. In addition, these stories have been linked to the web pages addressing

international exchange students and the Office of International Programs. Scholarship recipients were also asked to promote their stories and the digital storytelling project to other campus organizations, an initiative that has proven to be successful as indicated by the increased number of applicants to the program during the most recent scholarship application cycle. Furthermore, work for the Global Identities project has been formally incorporated into the job functions of recently hired OSA staff members while, at the same time, OSA continues to train additional staff members on the digital storytelling process. These staff members are now active participants in key aspects of the scholarship and digital storytelling program. Finally, in pledging its full support for the scholarship, OSA will provide \$3,000-\$5,000 per semester for study abroad participants.

Looking to the future, this grant inspires OSA to continue outreach efforts and expand the Global Identities project further. In order to give more students the opportunity to create digital stories, the project will be expanded to the Focus on Fall Abroad Community (FOFAC) to utilize their peer leaders and existing reentry programming to encourage students to engage in the process of self-reflection and identity development. Sending students abroad is only one part of the equation, and reentry programming is often not fully integrated into the student experience. Therefore, as educators viewing student learning experiences through a broad lens, OSA staff members are committed to helping students process their experiences and determine how new skills and attitudes can be applied to future opportunities both personally and professionally. As an example, through the digital storytelling project, students were trained to communicate using a combination of critical thinking skills, communication skills, and technical skills. This combination of skills can be utilized by students in future endeavors, even including the creation of digital media as a hard skill that can be utilized in future work. Thus, in a larger sense, the

Global Identities programming that allows study abroad alumni a unique platform for reflection and showcasing their voices can be viewed as a continuing source of empowerment for these students going forward.

The OSA team hopes to continue the promotion of the scholarship and digital storytelling program by collaborating with OSA's marketing and outreach efforts. Ideally, this will lead not only to an increase in applicants, but also to increased awareness across the GW community of diversity and inclusion within international education. Lastly, without the support of the OVPDI and the IDI grant program, the Global Identities project would not exist. The funding enabled OSA to leverage new technologies in an effort to highlight and diversify student stories from abroad. The entire OSA staff is grateful for this opportunity to expand their role in the university's diversity and inclusion efforts. To view our collection of digital stories, please visit our website: <http://studyabroad.gwu.edu/digital-storytelling>.

Note

We are appreciative of the support received from Christina Hyde, Shawna Bruell, Jared Kahan, and Sharlene Juste in the development of the IDI grant proposal.

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Counternarratives of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Graduate Students:

Talking about Diversity in the Classroom

Rick C. Jakeman, Ed.D.

Introduction

The national political movement concerning individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) has changed from a minority issue to a majority right, leading with the historic fight for marriage equality. During the course of this study and the writing of this chapter, LGB issues were prominent in mainstream media, legislative bodies, and political arenas. Landmark Supreme Court decisions ushered marriage equality—the legal, financial, and immigration rights that accompany marriage—to 32 states and the District of Columbia (Human Rights Campaign, 2014). Public opinion has swung from less than 30% of the public supporting LGB marriage equality during the latter half of the 1990s to 55% supporting LGB marriage equality in 2014 (McCarthy, 2014). Never before has there been comparable political and legal support for issues facing LGB individuals in the United States.

Within the context of this national movement, less than 10% of higher education institutions had evolved their nondiscrimination policies to include protection for sexual orientation as of the year 2003 (Rankin, 2003). At The George Washington University (GW), the site of this research, protection for sexual orientation is included in the university's nondiscrimination statement and in its broad definition of diversity.¹ The GW Statement on Diversity and Inclusion emphasizes both the stakeholders and the methods with which an educational community should engage in doing the continuous work of diversity and inclusion, drawing special attention to how challenging this work is within a culture of learning, teaching, research, and active discussions involving multiple experiences and points of view.² The significance of displaying and upholding a nondiscrimination policy that reflects the GW mission

¹ The George Washington University Statement on Diversity and Inclusion, at <https://diversity.gwu.edu/diversity-and-inclusion-defined>

² The George Washington University Statement on Diversity and Inclusion, at https://diversity.gwu.edu/sites/diversity.gwu.edu/files/downloads/gw_statement_on_diversity_and_inclusion.pdf

and values has implications about how members of the community seek membership and interact with one another (Rankin, 2003). The hope is that symbols of culture that reflect safe and inclusive environments foster the educational benefits of diversity.

Despite the national changes and specific, university-based examples of excellence in addressing diversity and inclusion around the U.S., LGB students still face unwelcoming college and university campus climates that affect their educational experiences and threaten the educational benefits of diversity (Rankin, Blumenfeld, Weber, & Frazer, 2010; Sanlo, 2004). Evidence of an unwelcoming campus climate includes: (a) harassment that was reported by 23% of LGB students (Rankin et al., 2010); (b) fear, as reported by 13% of LGB students fearing for their physical safety while on campus (Rankin et al., 2010); and (c) homophobia, as reported by 43% of LGB students considering their campus climate to be homophobic (Rankin, 2003). In addition, Rankin et al. (2010) found that 33% of all LGB students have seriously considered leaving their institutions due to sexuality-related problems. Despite the documented educational benefits of diversity, LGB students are still subject to isolation and marginalization in terms of their identification as diverse members of the institution's student body; as such, concerns persist about the quality of life for LGB students (Hubbard, 2010; Sanlo, 2004).

Universities have responded to threats to diversity by increasing student diversity enrollment and by offering opportunities for diversity and civic engagement in curricular and co-curricular settings (Case, 2007; Chang, 2002). In order to maximize the educational benefits of diversity, Hurtado (2007) advocates that diverse student bodies benefit from campus inclusion efforts, diversity-related education, and informal student interactions organized around diversity-oriented topics both inside and outside of the classroom. While the educational benefits of diversity for majority students are clear in terms of promoting acceptance and respect for human

differences, it is important to ask, “What are the educational experiences of LGB graduate students as topics of diversity are discussed in the classroom?” In fact, since graduate students are typically employed, have family roles, and spend significant time off-campus, the graduate classroom experience is especially important for LGB students because it serves as a primary academic involvement and retention space (Tinto, 2007). Thus, the purpose of this constructivist qualitative study was to investigate the ways in which LGB graduate students experienced discussions of diversity in classroom contexts. Central to this research was the aim to understand how diverse members of the student body experienced types of diversity (i.e., other underrepresented or historically-marginalized students, diversity-related curriculum, and peer interactions in class) that are thought to yield educational benefits associated with a proactive stance on diversity (Hurtado, 2007). A queer theory perspective, acknowledging structures of oppression and heterosexism, undergirded the researcher’s exploration and interpretations of student experiences with marginalization as described through their counternarratives.

Literature Review

To understand how students engage with diversity involves recognition of multiple types of diversity, including structural diversity, curriculum diversity, and informal interactional diversity (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002). While structural diversity simply signifies that levels of racial and ethnic diversity are present within a student body, curriculum diversity can be intentionally designed to support learning about diverse people and experiences in the classroom (Gurin et al., 2002). Sitting at the center of these types of diversity is informal interactional diversity, or the frequency and quality of intergroup interaction of students from various racial and ethnic groups (Gurin et al., 2002). The quality of student interactions gained from informal interactional diversity is thought to be educationally meaningful, contributing to students’

understandings of race and culture, their openness to diversity, and their support for individual rights (Hu & Kuh, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

The literature describing how LGB students interact with topics of diversity in the classroom is less developed than that of racial minority student populations (Sanlo, 2004). More typically, LGB research addresses identity development (D'Augelli, 1994), campus climate issues (D'Augelli, 1992; Rankin, 2003), spirituality (Love, Bock, Jannarone, & Richardson, 2005), and leadership development (Renn & Bilodeau, 2005). The Longerbeam, Inkelas, Johnson, and Lee (2007) study is one of the few studies that investigates collegiate experiences and educational outcomes of LGB students. Longerbeam et al. (2007) found that LGB students had similar levels of appreciation for diversity, higher levels of engagement in socio-cultural conversations (dialogue about social issues, political views, multiculturalism) with peers, and were more likely to interact and be mentored by faculty. While these signs of informal interactional diversity were positive, Littleford (2013) and Ocampo et al. (2003) found few publications on cultural diversity specific to LGB issues in the undergraduate curriculum.

Further, the literature reveals significant challenges to diversity policies that include acts of microaggression and the dangers of disclosing one's sexual orientation (Frale, Platt, & Steve, 1998; Shelton & Delgado-Romero, 2011). First, as students decide to self-disclose (or not) their sexual orientation identity on campus, concerns persist that hiding one's identity creates difficulties for identity management (Fassinger, 1998). On this point, Fassinger (1998) found that concurrently holding heterosexual and gay identities was prohibitive for identity development of students, including the formation of mature interpersonal relationships. In turn, issues of self-disclosure can affect LGB students' emotional behaviors. In addition, Frale et al. (1998) found that students with concealable stigmas, meaning those students who are not forced to

immediately self-disclose their identities (lesbian, gay, or low-income students), felt “less good” about themselves and were more anxious than those with conspicuous or physically visible identities (African American, overweight, or physically unattractive students).

Finally, LGB students face microaggressions of heterosexism that work as marginalizing agents within diverse educational settings. Shelton and Delgado-Romero (2011) reported that lesbian and gay students experienced verbal, nonverbal, and behavioral/sexual orientation acts of microaggression based on their marginalized identities. Furthermore, as LGB students participate in the academic community, they also encounter heteronormative assumptions. Together, the acts of microaggression and heteronormative assumptions affect both the academic experiences of LGB students and the diversity-focused missions of institutions of higher education.

Theoretical Perspective

For this study, researchers utilized queer theory as an interpretive lens through which to examine LGB graduate students’ descriptions of their classroom environments. This approach places marginalized populations (i.e., LGB students), along with the societal structures that promulgate marginalization, at the center of the investigation. Queer theory seeks to deconstruct socially constructed meanings around forms of gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation (Sullivan, 2003). On this view, queer theory asserts itself as a framework for discourse analysis, or the way in which we speak about and place meaning on the labels of LGB, and challenges the heteronormative assumptions within these meanings (Sullivan, 2003).

Using the tenets of heteronormativity and performativity, researchers sought to understand the experiences of LGB graduate students as counternarratives. Therefore, as evidenced in this study, researchers’ theoretical frameworks were grounded in this “counter” perspective as they investigated the ways in which students described various definitions of

diversity, explained their views regarding the need for diverse interactions on campus, discussed their levels of interaction in the classroom, and revealed their direct experiences with inappropriate language and microaggressions as marginalized, LGB individuals.

Methods

To investigate the experiences of LGB students in the graduate education classroom, six self-identified LGB students in a higher education administration graduate program were interviewed. Among the four male and two female students, four were pursuing a master's degree and two students were pursuing a doctoral degree. Students of this graduate degree program were generally entry or mid-level managers in higher education administration in both community and four-year colleges. The curriculum of the graduate education program focused on strengthening students' understandings of critical issues in the field of higher education while building their research skills in order to serve as future scholar-practitioners in higher education settings. The program's curriculum also emphasized concepts of diversity and inclusion within institutions of higher education, encompassing student, institutional, and system and policy levels of analysis related to diversity and inclusion issues.

Data was collected during the spring 2013 semester using one-time, audiotaped, semi-structured interviews. Interviews followed an interview protocol that was developed based on the literature and pilot testing. The semi-structured interview protocol consisted of 20 questions, and interviews lasted from 40-60 minutes. Following are sample interview questions:

1. What is your definition of diversity? Inclusion?
2. How would you describe the climate, in regard to diversity and inclusion, in your classroom experiences?
3. Have you ever been in a class where the topic of sexual orientation came up? How did

you feel during that discussion?

The interviews were transcribed, verbatim, for data analysis using Saldana's (2009) first and second cycle coding method. This process allowed for the development of open codes to identify and trace ideas and constructs, as well as theoretical codes to track and link constructs found in the data (Saldana, 2009). Two cycles of coding allowed for patterns in the data to be recognized, reflected upon, and re-integrated as a part of the data analysis process. In order to add context and robustness to the study, researchers' findings incorporated long, in-depth quotes from the participants as a method of descriptive counternarrative.

Findings

The six participants in the study openly shared their conceptualizations of the meaning of diversity and described their actual experiences within classroom discussions of diversity. Students spoke freely about their own thoughts and understandings, providing a broad perspective of diversity's significance to each individual; for some, how validation of diversity gives voice to individuals in educational and political settings while, for others, diversity is often singularly discussed in terms of race. As students articulated complex and often changing understandings of diversity, a salient narrative emerged within individual student counternarratives. The findings presented in this chapter focus on three participants' experiences—Lynn, Sarah, and Brandon—as they recounted anxiety-producing moments when talking about diversity in the classroom. Their vivid descriptions escalated from individual moments of not knowing exactly the right language to use when topics of diversity were introduced to times during which something was said that infringed on the safe space of the classroom environment. The findings suggest that these LGB graduate students routinely navigated risky conversations in which they felt they had to disclose their identities to their peers, confront the ill-informed ideas

of peers, and cope with varying levels of faculty comfort and expertise in facilitating diversity-related discussions. Findings also revealed that the students contributed less to classroom discussions, consequently suggesting a threat to the educational benefits of diversity as envisioned in the university classroom setting.

From Anxiety to Stress: Engaging in High Risk Conversations

As students recounted their instances of engagement in risky classroom conversations related to diversity, they described their experiences with terms like “anxiety-producing,” “panic,” “uncomfortable,” and “stressful.” Students felt that it was hard to know what to say, how to say it, how to respond to ill-constructed ideas or language of their peers, and how to respond to the climate set by faculty members’ facilitation of such topics. Beyond moments of anxiety, stress, and panic, classroom discussions around diversity were also considered risky conversations for LGB students. For example, as acts of microaggression further marginalized groups, students reported that challenging the ideas of peers and witnessing difficult conversations made them feel more uncomfortable.

Study participant Brandon related what he referred to as, “minor issues of maybe cultural competence more so than a lack of tolerance or acceptance,” as he described his reaction to a classroom experience in which diversity was introduced. With regard to Brandon’s reference to cultural competence—signifying the capacity of individuals to interact and work respectfully across cultural differences (including identity)—the inference is that he perceived a lack of cultural competence in the classroom environment, as opposed to intentional attitudes of intolerance expressed towards him as an LGB individual. He stated,

I think as a non-heterosexual student, I always tend to be cautious when I’m approaching a new professor or a new classroom environment. I think that’s probably the product of

my own growing up in a very different environment. At the beginning of the semester, I think I'm always feeling things out; and it's just a habit of mine, but in every experience that I can think of ... have been really positive. The only issues I have encountered, I feel like, have been minor issues of maybe cultural competence more so than a lack of tolerance or acceptance. You'll have somebody—be it a student or a professor—use a term that may be considered by some to be offensive, but in a good-natured way where it's coming from a place that's not deemed familiar with the unaccepted or more inclusive terms, certainly not from a place of being mean-spirited. My experiences have been, I think, really positive. I've had a fellow student use terms like “transvestite” to describe transgender individuals or something of that nature where the intent was clearly not to marginalize someone, but a lack of familiarity with the term. I think that was one that stuck out to me. I do recall having one experience in a classroom where also students were using the phrase “homosexual” instead of “gay” to just refer to not a group of people, but a specific individual from a reading; and in that instance, again, it's certainly not—I don't know that there's a correct, accepted way of doing things—but I prefer not to refer to an individual as a homosexual just because of a history of [using terminology] in a way that was meant to marginalize and pathologize people. I prefer to use people's self-identified terms. I think in both of those instances, they were students coming from a place of trying to be inclusive and trying to use the right terms. I think the cultural competence is a long learning process for a lot of people, so it wasn't a way that I think negatively impacted my experience with the classroom environment; but I think, again, that's also filtered through coming from a place that was much more oppressive to the point where, for me, misuse or inversion of terms, I think, is something that's much more

palatable than folks who were outright trying to marginalize or oppress a group or an individual.

Elaborating on a particular discussion of appropriate/inappropriate use of terminology and its potential impact on both LBG students and non-LBG students in the classroom, Brandon continued,

With the first example – “transvestite” – actually, another student in the class corrected the student which is, and I think we had a discussion leading to it from there about terminology and about inclusion. I think that’s always a really delicate area, because for me personally as someone who is LGBT-identified, I’m always even wary of correcting someone’s terminology for fear of that person perhaps being in a place where they wanted to learn or wanted to be more inclusive, if corrected in front of a large group like that, might recoil or be embarrassed or back off in a way where they’re no longer learning from the experience, but maybe then having a negative experience as a result of that. I think the discussion we had, within a small enough group and in a group that had been close enough through our cohort, that it was positive. I think the individual who brought it up did so in a way that, again, was not confrontational, and I think it was easier for the student to process and digest as a learning experience. That’s the only instance I can think of where something like that was outright discussed in a classroom.

A second study participant, Lynn, described emotions of panic and frustration when discussing diversity-related topics. She questioned the intentions of peers when they offered inappropriate language in classroom conversations. She stated,

Sort of vague panic, slightly—I have a number of friends who are really serious, like race scholars. From years of listening to them, it makes me nervous when a group of people

... talk about it, generally, because semi-racist things are said often. In the classroom, it's not intentional. It just has to do with people not being as aware, I think. Not generally just because it's something that is—it's something that I feel really strongly about and especially in regards to—like I said, because so often, when we're talking about diversity, it means race. It seems it's something that I feel really strongly about, and other people often have not thought about it as much and are just not aware of the kind of the background and how it permeates American society. I tend to stay out of it because it makes me really stressed. I find that sometimes, when I am really stressed, it's difficult for me to articulate the ways in which how I feel and the studies that had been done—and things that back up my thoughts about this. I'd never in the classroom and I, I haven't been in the program all that long, only almost a year at this point. So I haven't had a ton of classes. No one has ever said anything that's overtly racist or really hardly stereotypical. It's more that people are just clueless, I think.

Referencing a prior classroom experience in which she pointed to a general lack of student awareness around diversity issues on campus, Lynn continued,

In one of my classes last semester, we were talking about the climate for diversity on campuses. Our professor asked us if we felt like our undergraduate institution had a good climate for diversity. I mean every single person in the class but me and one other person raised their hand, and there is just no way. I know where some of these people went to college, and those are places that have historically had problems with diversity, especially racial diversity, and still have problems with those things. So I think it's just that people aren't really aware. It's not that they're hostile or anything like that. They just, I think, have no idea. They just assume that, "Well, I never saw anything that I felt like was super

racist to happen. I would never identify myself as a racist. So thus, where I went to college is like a great place, and we live in a post-racial world,” or whatever it is that they think.

Intrigued by Lynn’s description of her experience, the interviewer probed more deeply by asking the following question, “So in class, when sexual orientation comes up, do you equally panic, or do you participate in those discussions, or what do you do? Lynn responded with further descriptions of discomfort with classroom discussions of diversity,

No, I definitely equally panic. Yes. Partially, I think that that has to do with my background. My parents were not super supportive of me coming out. Then, like I said, I went to this very conservative college. So I am used to when people are discussing sexual orientation or LGBT people, like, there being an element that’s saying that that’s wrong; and that people, like, there is something wrong with people who are like that, and we shouldn’t accommodate them, that kind of thing. It’s never happened ... at [this institution]. It’s also not something that has happened to me in many years. I think what has happened in the past has led me to feel that panic. Also, I think that a number of the people in my classes know that I am gay. I guess I want to try to avoid a situation where they feel like I am speaking for all gay people ever. There is, also, just like an element of fear that someone’s going to say something that is really offensive and hurtful. Even though when they start—no one ever has—outside of those people who have said homosexuals. Again, like I said, I don’t feel like they were trying to be—they weren’t demeaning me. They just had no idea what they were saying. So this is a situation where I wished I had said something; but it was in the middle of class, and it was my first semester, and it was early in the semester, and I just wasn’t ... I think now, I would be

like, “Let’s use a different word, please,” or something like that. At the time, I just sat there like frozen, and I can’t believe that this is happening. It’s 2012, and I’m in like an allegedly liberal East Coast city. What’s going on? It’s something that definitely bothers me that I didn’t say anything, but ... I felt like if I said something that I would somehow be like disrupting the flow of the class. I guess on some level, I wished that our professor had been like, “Hey, that’s an outdated term.” I can’t expect other people to stand up to things that are uncomfortable for you. I have had experiences in the past where someone had said something that was, and was offensive. I’ve said, “That’s really offensive. Please don’t speak like that in front of me.”

Sarah, the third study participant cited in the findings, offered a similar viewpoint on her experience of diversity-related conversations in class, but emphasized the role of language and knowing how to express viewpoints around diversity. She described how others, both peers and faculty, negotiated high-risk conversations. Sarah stated,

I’ve seen faculty shy away from the topic [of diversity] as well as other students at the same time, I guess you could say. You can see the topic of various race or ethnicity being brought up, and then they dance around it. I’ve also seen it confronted while the students were kind of shying away. I participated in all the discussions, especially my [one particular] class. It feels like a safer environment because, usually, the disclosure at the beginning of the conversation or even the course is like, “We’re all not here to be racist or anything like that.” So usually, the topics that have been brought up in diversity classes is we’re all going to make mistakes, or we’re not going to make mistakes, we need to challenge each other and talk about these things. So I feel like those are safer environments to kind of make bolder statements.

On being white and participating in dialogues about race, Sarah added, I think just being white—and we talked about this a lot—being white, talking about race in a more confident standpoint is a little bit difficult because nobody wants to be seen as a racist. So, there's like this subtle form of racism that you don't really understand that you're doing, or that you're speaking to until it's kind of confronted. So really pushing and being safe in that sort of environment is important. Being important in informal sort of topics is a little bit, I guess, it's a little bit timid for the conversation because you don't want to offend, but you also don't want to be wrong. I think that sort of falls in for me. It's like, I don't believe I'm a racist at all, and I believe that you can like confront all of that dialogue. It's more of you don't want to be wrong, or at least I don't want to be wrong. In the informal conversations, I've been more of an observer, especially in the higher education department. I'm a big person that watches how people communicate and who they communicate to. I think most of my interactions with that have been on the observation level.

Summary of the Findings

As illustrated in the counternarratives provided by Brandon, Lynn, and Sarah, LGB students described uncomfortable classroom environments when discussing diversity. Students struggled to disclose their identities, experienced inappropriate language, and felt pressured to represent LGB interests in contributing to classroom discussions. Peer-to-peer acts of microaggression—enacted through offensive language choices—hindered LBG students' interactions in the classroom, a central concept of educational diversity on a college campus. Overall, students felt stressed when self-disclosing their identities in classroom discussions, felt pressured by high expectations to contribute to the class, and had to carefully choose their words

when presenting a particular perspective in diversity-related discussions. These findings provide a greater understanding of how LGB students' experiences form habits around and shape campus climates. Further, the emotional burden of vocalizing personal viewpoints and using appropriate language in classroom discussions created fearful instances and moments of frustration for students, thus limiting the educational benefits of diversity. Ultimately, learning environments in the graduate education classroom, as experienced by the study participants, were shaped by student behaviors and faculty members' approaches to facilitation of classroom discussions. These findings support the notion that diversity is a complex and often controversial educational topic that intersects across academic, personal, and social identities.

Recommendations for Pedagogical Practice

The findings are significant in that LGB students described stressful classroom discussions that shaped their participation in the learning environment. LGB students were paralyzed in academic conversations, reducing the likelihood of continued peer interactions on topics of diversity outside of the classroom environment—a wider space of interaction considered critical to achieving the educational benefits of diversity as argued by Hurtado (2007). The findings of this study further indicate that efforts to advance diversity-focused education through well-developed curriculum fell short as students limited their participation in active discussions. Thus, faculty members' ability to facilitate the conversations around diversity emerged as a critical factor at the graduate level, where students are expected to engage in topics of diversity rigorously. The following recommendations for practice are derived from these findings.

Language has Power

The choice of words and the ways in which students discussed diversity in the classroom held significant meaning for LGB students. As others introduced marginalizing terms during classroom discussions, students noted their immediate power and negative effects—characterized by LGB students as anxiety, frustration, and being frozen. At times, such language was corrected by a student or an instructor, thereby informing the offender that language of this nature was not appropriate for the classroom and held sensitive meanings for others in the class. Regardless, the damage was done as the language had been introduced. Symptomatic of the oppressive power within marginalizing environments, Brandon and Lynn rationalized this behavior as part of the learning process for others. Brandon, especially, thought that inappropriate language was acceptable as a catalyst for advancing teachable moments as he placed greater value on educating others and continuing the practice of diversity-related conversations. At the same time, he also noted that confronting a peer in a public setting could cause them to “recoil” and remove themselves from the learning process.

A second area in which language held great power was reflected in LGB students’ own desires to use the correct terminology in classroom discussions. Just as peers were unknowingly introducing harmful language in discussions, LGB students did not want to repeat those same mistakes with other protected social and cultural groups. Recognized as a complex topic of discussion, the language required for quality discussions of diversity remains a challenge for faculty members. The silencing effect of language inadequacy or misuse, as experienced by students who are not equipped with the confidence of having the right language or the communication skills to describe their thoughts, threatens the educational benefits of diversity-related discussions in classroom settings. Consequently, a key recommendation for pedagogical

practice would be to engage faculty in diversity and language workshops, seminars, etc. that directly address best practices for facilitating appropriate use of language in classroom conversations aimed at affirming diversity and inclusion for all students.

Faculty Role in Facilitating Diversity-Related Content within Courses

Building on qualitative interview data (diversity and inclusion research) presented at national conferences on higher education administration and higher education pedagogy (Jakeman & Swayze, 2014; Swayze & Jakeman, 2014a; Swayze & Jakeman, 2014b), it is apparent that the faculty's role in facilitating diversity-related content within courses is central to the outcome of such educational moments (Timpson, Canetto, Borrayo, & Yang, 2003). The challenge to faculty members is three-fold. First, faculty members must be able to effectively create a classroom environment in which students can safely navigate risks with a safety net for those who cannot. Second, faculty should equip students with the proper language, definitions of terms, and rationale for the usage of these terms. Finally, faculty members have the ultimate task of actively facilitating diversity-related discussions and intervening when inappropriate language is introduced. These challenges place a tremendous responsibility on the faculty member leading the class. Recommended steps to improve pedagogical practice in these areas include: (a) significant investment in training, (b) exposure to diversity readings, and (c) practice in facilitation of language use and appropriate intervention strategies in order to effectively guide classroom discussions.

Such efforts to improve teaching and learning are central to the university's mission, further supported by institutional nondiscrimination statements, practices, and policies. Connecting classroom context to GW's mission is crucial to framing diversity-related conversations and should be augmented by classroom-specific policies and practices. Therefore,

a safe classroom statement, co-developed by the students and faculty in which they narrowly address the needs inherent to the discipline (i.e., demographics and populations, domestic and international contexts, and advocacy), would benefit all members of the educational community. And, while these efforts are required for undergraduate student learners (Timpson et al., 2003), the findings point to the need to develop and reinforce these practices within graduate education.

The literature describing how LGB students interact with topics of diversity in the classroom lacks clarity, especially when compared to race-related diversity. The effort to publish counternarratives of LGB students is intended to add to the limited understanding of how heteronormative environments affect educational experiences for LGB students; further, to stand as testimonies central to the missions of institutions of higher education trying to increase diversity. Relative to this study, recommendations for pedagogical practice stem from students' accounts of their experiences around marginalizing language in the classroom, stressful moments that led to high risk conversations, and the secondary consequences of faculty members' varying abilities to facilitate such conversations.

These counternarratives confirm the persistence of heterosexism and climates of marginalization for LGB graduate students. Participants' comments indicate that efforts to expand the educational benefits derived from diversity are often negated when students limit their participation or, in some instances, silence their own voices during classroom discussions of diversity. The findings of this research question the advancement of educational benefits of diversity given the current challenges faced by minority students in the classroom.

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The Ribbon Project:
Engaging Military Students and Raising the Campus Community's Awareness
of Military Culture and Military Students

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Introduction

The Ribbon Project's video prologue featuring a military student's narrative describing the transition from military culture to academic culture likens the transition to combat. Images of George Washington University (GW) military students – some on deployment in uniform and others going to class in jeans and a t-shirt – fill the screen. A bellowing voice tells of the joys, horrors, and humor woven through military experiences. The narrator then recounts the struggles that many military students face when acclimating to academic culture, especially the frustration they feel when interacting with civilians in academia. It is a type of culture clash that many military students feel unprepared to manage, and it is a cultural struggle that the majority of students, faculty, and staff members do not understand – less than 7% of the U.S. population today has had military experience (United States Census Bureau, 2014).

Military students bring diverse experiences onto campus and into the classroom, but merely attracting and enrolling this particular population of students is not enough. The rarity of cross-cultural exchanges between service members and civilians exacerbates differences in worldviews, and the rift between military and academic culture in particular leads many military students to describe higher education campuses as combat zones. The strength of this language alone serves as a reminder and a warning that diversity is not an end unto itself. Many institutions strive to attract students, faculty, and staff with differing perspectives, backgrounds, and talents to enrich their campuses with a multitude of perspectives and opinions. Yet, institutions must also actively cultivate the type of inclusive community in which these diverse individuals can engage with others in a way that respects and validates difference instead of leading to feelings of defensiveness or isolation.

That GW military students considered higher education a “combat zone” highlighted the need for institutional action that would intentionally develop a more inclusive campus community for this student population. Therefore, in order to address the cultural gap between academia and the military; engage military students in campus life; and provide much-needed training for GW faculty, staff, and students about military culture and military student issues. GW’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion’s Innovation in Diversity and Inclusion grant funded the creation and inaugural cycle of The Ribbon Project (TRP).¹ Designed and led by military students since its inception in summer 2013, TRP is a training program for the GW campus community on military culture and how to support military students in higher education. For the purposes of this chapter, GW broadly defines “military students,” or synonymously “VALOR students” (“GW Today,” 2013a, para. 1), to include individuals who are veterans, military dependents, active duty individuals, National Guard and Reservists, and Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) members.

TRP’s overall goal is to “move faculty and staff from the civilian sector through the many phases of military culture and then back into the civilian sector within an institution of higher education” (“The Ribbon Project,” n.d.-c, para. 2). This journey is an immersive cultural experience during which civilian participants listen to military students talk about their distinct cultural and lived experiences as non-civilians. The space where the training takes place serves as a safe environment for military students to share their stories, in their own words and on their own terms, while the GW community—as a whole—contributes to and supports this space. Through participation in TRP training, the GW community acts intentionally to increase each individual’s personal understanding of a culture outside one’s own, as well as foster an inclusive

¹ The George Washington University, Office of Military and Veteran Student Services/Operation GW Valor: The Ribbon Project, at <https://services.military.gwu.edu/ribbon-project>

environment for diversity broadly defined. In this way, TRP advances GW's institutional commitment to diversity and inclusion.

As of September 2014, over 250 members of the GW community have completed TRP training. TRP has drawn praise for creating a memorable immersion experience for participants that provides a window into the military "life cycle" and the transition from the military to the classroom (Ingeno, 2013). Additionally, in the interest of promoting TRP awareness beyond GW, the training was presented to student affairs practitioners at the NASPA (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators) Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education Conference in Baltimore in spring 2014. This chapter will discuss the creation and implementation of TRP, along with its innovative format and content, to better inform military student transition training and support at GW and other higher education institutions.

Military Students and Higher Education Research and Practice

With the implementation of the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill in August 2009, the number of military students on college campuses increased across the country. However, misconceptions abound concerning effective practices with which to interact and engage military students (Ackerman & DiRamio, 2009). Scholars and practitioners have observed that student affairs professionals have been applying conventional models devised in the Vietnam era when interacting with military students today (Card, 1983; Holloway, 2009; Lifton, 1973). These models are often ineffectual in addressing the needs of current military students as they transition from military service to the classroom (Danish & Antonides, 2009; The Associated Press, 2010). Furthermore, military students have only recently been included in empirical studies on student engagement among diverse populations in higher education, demonstrating a still-developing

understanding about military students and their unique experiences among higher education professionals (Quaye & Harper, 2014).

In the past five years, several new models have been posited to address military students' needs in their transition to academia (Ackerman & DiRamio, 2009; Ackerman, DiRamio, & Garza Mitchell, 2009; Hamrick & Rumann, 2013). In addition, various organizations have published numerous reports to assist higher education professionals learn more about practices supporting military students' academic success (American Council on Education, n.d.-a, n.d.-b; Cook, Kim, & Associates, 2009). These resources, however, are only the start of a dialogue among higher education professionals. Many student and academic affairs practitioners still need structured, guided training on how to best facilitate military students' holistic development within the academic community.

Importance of Faculty and Staff Training

Nearly 71% of institutions that participated in the American Council on Education's *From Solider to Student II* survey (2012) included the goal of serving military students in their strategic plans, demonstrating how this underserved population is growing in visibility among higher education professionals. At the same time, however, only 47% of participating institutions provided faculty and staff training to facilitate understanding about the experiences and needs of this population (American Council on Education, 2012). The survey did show optimistic projections for the next five years, with 70% of institutions intending to provide training for staff and 63% planning to do so for faculty. Yet, there has been an historical disconnect between agenda setting and the actual execution of new programs and support for this population. While 89% of institutions have increased their emphasis on military students since September 11, 2001 (American Council on Education, 2012), actual implementation continues to lag behind.

Qualitative studies and interviews with military students further demonstrate that, while many colleges and universities are interested in helping these populations succeed, a gap still exists between expressing interest and designing systems necessary to carry out actual goals. Under these circumstances, when both first-time and returning military students have questions about academic and campus-related matters, they are often referred to several offices within large or decentralized institutions (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008; Vance & Miller, 2009). In this scenario, military students frequently experience confusion and frustration in their attempts to navigate multiple referrals dispersed across multiple areas of the institution. Part of the confusion and subsequent “run-around” could be attributed to a lack of staff training about how to handle common military student issues. With the proper training of both faculty and staff, increased familiarity with regulations, procedures, and policies would lead to greater confidence among higher education professionals, empowering them to answer questions and provide resources rather than directing students to another department.

GW’s Ties with Military Culture and History

Historically, GW has maintained strong ties to military culture and military students going back to its namesake, George Washington. In fact, GW alumnus Don Balfour was the first military veteran student in the nation to be enrolled under the GI Bill in 1944 (“GW Today: Valuing Veterans,” 2010, para. 1). This legacy has continued to evolve in the half-century since with other notable GW military alumni, including Colin Powell, Thad Allen, Tammy Duckworth, and Billy Mitchell (“GW Alumni: Prominent Alumni by Field, Military,” n.d.-b).

In fall 2013, 1,319 military students, or about 4% of the total student population, were enrolled at GW. This figure reflects an increase of over 250% in military student enrollment compared to four years prior. Part of this growth can be attributed to the establishment of GW’s

Yellow Ribbon Program in 2008 and the launch of Operation GW VALOR in May 2013.

Through these programs, GW has offered educational opportunities to eligible undergraduate and graduate military students and their dependent family members at little or no cost. In short, due to initiatives such as these, military students' presence in the classroom and throughout the campus community has indelibly changed the GW identity and continues to shape the institution.

GW VALOR: University Strategic Initiative

On May 18, 2013, Armed Forces Day, GW launched a comprehensive effort among key stakeholders to address the needs of GW student military members and their families: Veterans Accelerate Learning Opportunities & Rewards (Operation GW VALOR). The inspiration to “accelerate learning opportunities” for GW military students stemmed from the acknowledgement that many of today’s military students initially deferred completion of their postsecondary degrees to first serve in America’s military. GW VALOR seeks, “To maximize the success of VALOR students via excellence in learning and service, achieving the highest graduation rates nationally, and enhancing the careers of George Washington University student military members, veterans, and their families” (“GW Office of Military and Veterans Affairs: Mission and History,” n.d.-e, para. 1). These initiatives leverage the prior training and education these students received during their period of military service so as to consider their entry into the GW academic environment at a more advanced stage (relative to traditional first year students), while also supporting accelerated academic progress and contributing to their career success.

The GW VALOR inspiration for rewarding the “brave and deserving” came from George Washington himself. In an address to the Officers of the Virginia Regiment on January 8, 1756, the 24-year-old Army Colonel said, “I shall make it the most agreeable part of my duty to study

merit, and reward the brave and deserving” (Crackel, 2008). It seemed fitting to GW VALOR’s mission that the institution’s namesake would make such a commitment while simultaneously representing the age of many of the military students who enter GW today. GW’s commitment to support VALOR students was re-affirmed by the GW Board of Trustees and GW senior leadership. Although GW had already been identified as a “Military Friendly University” and a “Best for Vets” university for the past several years, GW’s senior leadership agreed to pursue a path to become a “university of choice” for military members.

Led by Melvin G. Williams, Jr., Vice Admiral (retired) and Associate Provost for Military and Veteran Affairs, GW VALOR has unified activities pertaining to Military and Veterans Affairs across the entire university. Admiral Williams has aligned GW VALOR activities with key GW Strategic Plan themes: (a) innovation through cross-disciplinary collaboration, (b) globalization of educational and research programs, (c) expansion of programs that focus on governance and policy in public and private sectors, and (d) an emphasis on infusing the ideas of citizenship and leadership into all activities (“Office of the Provost: Themes of the Strategic Plan,” n.d-f). Operation GW VALOR initiatives also affirm each of GW’s nine core values, specifically incorporating diversity—GW’s fourth core value—and highlighting GW core values of learning, service, and excellence (“GW University Human Resources: Values,” n.d.-h). The Ribbon Project is a key component of Operation GW VALOR in manifesting GW’s strategic plan, core values, and mission.

GW Military Student Demographics

It is fitting that TRP received its initial funds from GW’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion’s Innovation grant, as GW military students reflect a diverse student population comprised of many racial, ethnic, and gender identities intersecting with multi-faceted military

experiences across several generations. In spring 2014, GW had 1,319 military students (about 4% of the total student population), with approximately 25% undergraduates and 75% graduate students (“Operation GW VALOR – First year summary,” n.d.-g, VALOR Students section). In terms of gender, 67% of GW military students identified as male, and 33% identified as female. Demographically, 58% of all GW military students identified as white, 15% as African-American, 7% as Latino, 4% as Asian-American/Pacific Islander, 3% as two or more races, 1% as American Indian, and 11% as unknown. As a group, GW military students were comprised of about 50% veterans, 35% military in uniform (active duty, reservists, and National Guard), and 15% military family members (“Operation GW VALOR – First year summary,” n.d.-g, VALOR Students section). Over 67% of military students were 30 years and older, and 33% were less than 30 years of age. The average age for undergraduates was 25 years, while the average for graduate students was 35 years. Thus, GW’s military student population, including individuals with multiple and intersecting identities, represents a population more diverse than the overall student enrollment at many private research universities.

The Ribbon Project

Rationale, Grant Application, and Timeline

In December 2012, three GW Student Affairs office staff members, including a nine-year Army veteran, proposed a military student training module in response to a call for grant proposals from the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Three main institutional needs drove the proposal’s creation. First, the number of students certified for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) education benefits almost tripled between 2008 and 2012, yet military students remained an under-studied, misunderstood population at GW. Second, the Office of Veteran Services had received several requests to present trainings on military culture, student success, and student

transitional issues, yet no training module addressed all of these items. Finally, there were a few military student training modules in existence, such as those created by California State University in Long Beach and George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, but those modules neither addressed the unique needs of the GW community nor reflected GW military student demographics (primarily, the majority being graduate students among the military student population at GW).

The number of requests from staff, faculty, and students for training on military culture and military student issues demonstrates the enthusiasm and commitment of GW, as a whole, toward promoting a diverse and inclusive institutional environment. These actions reflect the spirit of GW's Statement on Diversity and Inclusion (n.d.-a), which calls for all members of the GW community to "advance the institution's commitment to diversity and inclusion as a strategic priority" (para. 2).² The GW community recognized the unique perspectives and experiences military students contribute to campus, but they also realized that they needed help in trying to understand and bridge the cultural divide that existed between civilian and military student populations. Because they saw how military students fit into GW's commitment to diversity and inclusion, the three Student Affairs staff members who initiated the proposal sought to create a training program such that the campus community could find the institutional support needed to better include the diversity of military student identities within the community and, thus, support the success of all GW students.

The team created a training program, "GW Supports Veterans," that would provide faculty and staff with greater understanding of military students' experiences prior to

² The George Washington University Statement on Diversity and Inclusion, at https://diversity.gwu.edu/sites/diversity.gwu.edu/files/downloads/gw_statement_on_diversity_and_inclusion.pdf

matriculation; in this way, promoting awareness and training faculty and staff to respond more effectively when addressing the needs of these students. The training program featured four modules: (a) an overview or introduction to military student demographics; (b) policies and procedures, including military student benefits; (c) military and post-military culture and transition to higher education; and (d) personal identity and developmental issues relating to military students.

TRP: Development

Between February 2013 and August 2014, during the development phase of the project, there were three turning points that influenced the training's content and format and ultimately altered the original grant proposal. Each of these turning points enhanced the program and contributed to TRP's uniqueness.

During the first turning point, the project leadership invited two military students to join the team to ensure that the student voice shaped the training modules. The two students, both members of the GW military student organization, along with the Associate Director of Veteran Services, were instrumental in planning TRP. All three individuals advocated for military students to lead the program as trainers. The three also had extensive training and presentation experience as non-commissioned officers, and they argued that the most authentic voices for the training would be military students themselves. This decision, to have the military students take a lead in presentation and training, gave the program an authenticity that was lacking in the grant proposal and in other universities' military student training models.

The second turning point occurred in April 2013, when the project team, consisting of the Student Affairs staff member and military students, decided that the training session should feature experiential learning through an immersion format. The training would guide participants

through a series of experiences that mirrored the military life cycle: (a) recruitment, (b) the first 30 days of basic training, (c) duty stations, (d) combat environments, (e) returning from combat/deployment, (f) deciding to leave active duty service, (g) transitioning to civilian life, (h) deciding to attend a higher education institution, (i) transitioning to college life, and (j) graduating.

The immersion aspect dictated that presentation modes would echo the environments and cultures service members experience. For instance, the first part of the training, led by an unquestioned expert, features a structured environment that replicates features of basic training. Later, during the transition to academic life, the module duplicates the semi-structured format of many classrooms when students are deeply engaged in discussion. Throughout the training, there are open-ended questions that provide presenters the opportunity to share experiences on their own terms and in their own voices. This novel approach to format and content would be among the most significant innovations of the project.

The third turning point came when the planning team renamed the training program “The Ribbon Project.” The rebranding represented an initiative that more fully encapsulated military history and culture, while it also recognized GW’s history and culture within that larger narrative. Further, the use of the word “ribbon” in the new name drew from the original image of the yellow ribbon as a symbol that dates back to the popular 1970s song, “Tie a Yellow Ribbon.” The song’s lyrics call for a ribbon to be tied on a tree to remember a loved one who is away (Parsons, 1991). Over time, yellow ribbons and yellow ribbon pins became a popular way to signal support for military missions/events, such as the American hostage crisis in Iran in 1979; service members deployed during the Persian Gulf conflict of the 1980s; or, more recently, service members deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan. Currently, ribbon stickers are often affixed to

automobile bumpers to signify support for the military or other causes. At GW, the image of the ribbon also symbolizes the continuing institutional commitment to the Yellow Ribbon Program.³ Thus, the three turning points that occurred during TRP's development set the stage for the training's innovative format and content.

TRP: Mission, Objectives, and Training Modules

TRP's mission, as presented at the beginning of each training session, seeks to raise awareness, teach, and engage; as such, "to bridge the gap in the communication between faculty and staff with our Military Personnel and Student Veterans" ("GW Office of Military and Veteran Student Services: The Ribbon Project," n.d.-c, para. 1). TRP's objectives include: (a) understanding the unique challenges that military students face within the higher education environment; (b) understanding the difficulties of re-establishing an identity within the civilian sector; (c) dispelling myths about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and other learning disabilities; (d) building and refining academic success tactics; (e) building rapport with military students to foster a solid academic environment; and (f) developing strategies for faculty and staff members to better communicate with military personnel and student veterans.

In order to achieve its objectives, the TRP training program has three parts or modules: prologue (5 minutes), military culture (75-90 minutes), and academic culture (75-90 minutes). The prologue provides a narrative on the military student lifecycle from the perspective of a GW military student. This is followed by the military culture module, which offers information about the branches of the United States military and their individual sub-cultures, addresses the common military culture shared by all of the branches, and includes content that replicates the

³ The George Washington University Office of Military and Veteran Student Services: Yellow Ribbon Program Procedures, at <http://services.military.gwu.edu/yellow-ribbon-program-procedures>

military experience from the decision to enter the military to the decision to leave the military. Finally, the academic culture module tracks a military student's journey from prospective applicant to graduation and alumni standing. It also features a series of videos representing military students' perspectives on the transition to university life, student/academic success, and personal challenges and triumphs. The training concludes with a dialogue among all program participants in which they address questions about military culture and the military student experience.

TRP modules: Prologue and military culture. TRP prologue begins with, "I am not a civilian," a statement that symbolizes how serving in the military changes a person indelibly. Individuals are forever veterans once they leave active duty service and rejoin the civilian world. During the training, individual identities are also stripped from participants; they are treated as a unit. All participants are responsible for one another. If one individual fails, the whole unit fails. If one individual must use the rest room, the whole unit takes a break. The immersion element of training dictates that participants stand in formation: in orderly, identical rows with a canteen of water placed on the ground to the left of each participant. The participant cannot have water until instructed to do so, but the command to "Drink water" occurs frequently enough to establish a rhythm that punctuates the structured experience within military culture. Within this environment, TRP continues its education with a definition of military culture, "an encompassing society within the greater American culture." Some of the attributes of this encompassing society include (a) putting the team before oneself, (b) adopting a "warrior ethos," (c) living with military values on a 24-hour basis, and (d) adherence to an ethic of behavior whereby "you are told what to wear, how to talk, who you can talk with, and who you can socialize with."

The military culture training module also provides a glimpse into military life by allowing participants to be privy to the sights, sounds, and experiences from the service members' perspective. As the training progresses, training instructors and military students, themselves, unveil stories of their experiences in uniform. Through a series of slides and first-hand accounts, participants learn about military students' reasons for joining the military and hear about other experiences, including their first duty stations, life in a combat zone, leaving combat to return home, or saying goodbye to the uniform. The stories are extremely personal, ranging from gun battles to fallen soldiers to ways they handled seeing their families again after deployment. One of the most touching stories told during training was from a Marine who recounted the conversation he had with the family of a friend who had been killed in action. Overall, the immersion training transports civilian participants from the realities of everyday civilian life to boot camp, to combat, and back to civilian life within 75-90 minutes.

TRP module: Academic culture. The symbolic transition from military culture to academic culture occurs over lunch. From a narrow space containing rows of participants facing the instructors during the military culture module, the training shifts to a series of circular tables, each of which has a military student seated with participants. The shifting format alone symbolizes the nature of academic culture, a less rigidly defined hierarchy compared to military culture. The casual arrangement also denotes the focus on flexibility and lack of parameters that characterizes academic culture as compared to military culture. Moreover, the second half of the training is a dialogue rather than the structured, one-way conversation that occurs in the first two modules.

In the military student trainers' words, the academic culture module focuses on the military student's transition from the military way of life to academic life. The objectives for this

module include: (a) comprehending the difficulties military students face in “reestablishing their identities in the civilian sector,” (b) recognizing the unique challenges of military students in higher education, (c) dispelling the myths of PTSD and TBI, (d) building rapport between military students and the greater campus community, and (e) understanding/implementing strategies to better communicate with military students.

There are five main sections that comprise the academic session. The first part portrays the shift from military life to the civilian sector as “The Transition to Nowhere,” to symbolize the fact that this change in military students’ lives can be quite difficult. Common questions include: How am I going to make a living? Do I go back to school? What is my next step in life? Facilitators answer questions about their personal experiences, covering such topics as the most difficult part of leaving the uniform, describing what their personal transition experiences were like, and offering advice for individuals undertaking this transition.

The second part is entitled the “Combat College Environment,” designed to delineate the clash between military and academic cultures. This module narrates the major differences between military and traditional students, especially the age differences. For example, GW’s undergraduate military students average 25 years of age versus other undergraduates who are usually in the 17-22 year range. This age gap is often accompanied by a maturity gap, which can be attributed to the divergent experiences – training, deployment, and possibly combat experience – of military students. The main discussion questions that punctuate this part of the module include: Why did the military students choose GW? What was it like to attend college and take courses again? What is it like to take classes with younger classmates? How did the first 30 days of college differ from the first 30 days in the U.S. Armed Forces? What can higher education professionals do to help military students with this transition?

The third part of the academic culture module, “Maintaining a Sector of Fire,” defines and addresses PTSD and TBI. Facilitators are asked to share experiences that they or their peers may have had with PTSD or TBI and discuss how higher education institutions can support these students. The fourth part, entitled from “Rucksacks to Backpacks,” covers GW military student demographics, the benefits military students bring to the classroom setting, and the VA and Department of Defense educational benefits that are available for eligible students. The fifth and final section, “Communication Tactics,” provides a dialogue for participants on how to best communicate with and engage military students. At the conclusion of TRP training, each participant receives a diploma and a flash drive. This flash drive contains a copy of the presentation as well as key military student support resources that can be referenced at a later date when working with military students.

TRP: Program Sustainability through Implementation and Enhancements

The implementation of TRP incorporated three main parts that contributed to the sustainability of the program: trainer recruitment, program enhancements, and participant recruitment. TRP’s trainers were all GW military students who participated in TRP as volunteers. All of the trainers were affiliated with and recruited through GW’s military student organization, “GW Veterans,” and many also worked in the Office of Military and Veteran Student Services. As regular components of their preparation process, trainers must participate in a TRP briefing session, review the training materials, and participate in a regular TRP session themselves. At each training session, a professional staff member is present to ensure quality control.

From implementation of the TRP pilot in August 2013 through the monthly sessions held since that date, several enhancements have been made to the program. First, the training program

was shortened from six to four hours in length. Second, the afternoon session's discussion on academic culture was supplemented by video footage of military students speaking about their transitional and academic experiences. Third, TRP devised multiple strategies to attract participants, including the use of personalized invitations, websites, and social media to publicize the training program to members of the GW community. The August 2013 pilot program targeted faculty and staff members from GW's Human Resources unit, Division of Student Affairs, and Columbian College of Arts and Sciences. Participants for subsequent sessions were also invited through targeted messages to deans, department heads, and other administrators. In September 2013, TRP's website went live to provide information about the training program and offer a means for community members to sign up for future sessions. The TRP website is also supplemented by the office's Facebook page. An October 2013 *GW Today* story (Ingeno, 2013) publicized the training program to members of the GW community at large. Finally, in spring 2014, GW students affiliated with campus Greek organizations participated in TRP, expanding the outreach of the program to students (Lee, 2014). With over 250 members of the GW community having completed TRP, the training program has succeeded in fostering a more engaged military student population and a more inclusive campus community for military students.

Summary: TRP and Innovation

TRP responds to GW's commitment to serving military students and to the need for training the campus community about the experiences of military students and military culture in general. Yet, while the original proposal spoke to better preparing and equipping all community members to "incorporate a broad range of experiences and perspectives" (GW Innovation in

Diversity and Inclusion Grants Application: Mission Statement,” 2014, para. 1), TRP actually became much more.

The military student is not often thought of when issues of diversity and inclusion are raised. Instead, race, ethnicity, and even gender receive the most emphasis. However, experiential diversity should not be discounted as military students have lived through situations that the majority of Americans are spared, and it is this unique perspective that adds to GW’s diversity. As the veteran presence on campus continues to increase, it is imperative that GW faculty and staff be aware not only of what these students add to the campus conversations, but also, of what they have experienced.

Typical military student training programs give participants foundational knowledge and tools with which they can help military students better succeed on campus. TRP, by comparison, immerses faculty, staff, and students in a distinct cultural experience. Through the training’s content, structure, and student narratives, GW community members become active participants in military students’ psychological, social, cultural, and financial paths. Participants are not mere observers, passively absorbing content from PowerPoint slides. Rather, they are witness to real stories that demonstrate the complexities, multidimensionality, and diversity within the military population’s experiences and conflicts (Hawn, 2011). This tangible, interactive quality cultivates each individual’s narrative imagination, or the ability for someone to recognize the perspectives of others (Walker, 2010). It is this awareness of military students as individuals, yet also as products of a distinct military culture, that civilians are challenged to understand in order to make the critical shift from simply recognizing diversity to actively and intentionally seeking ways to include that diversity in all aspects of the campus environment.

The other unique facet of TRP's design is the central role that military students played in creating and implementing the training sessions. The fact that they actively led the training activities speaks to the direct contributions military students can make in promoting diversity and inclusion within the campus community. Yet, while the research on military students is growing, reflecting an emerging priority among higher education professionals to recognize the experiential diversity military students contribute to campus, there is still an overarching theme in which scholars interview and survey military students to inform institutional best practices. The tendency for those within the cultural hegemony to advocate for and on behalf of marginalized groups often comes from a genuine desire to remedy patterns of exclusion in traditional scholarship and on college campuses. Yet, to echo critical race theory, the hegemonic culture can never truly understand what it means to be on the margins. Civilians often explain, after exposure to military culture, that while their personal knowledge has increased, they also recognize that it is more difficult for most civilians to understand military students' experiences (Hawn, 2011; Ropers-Huilman & Taliaferro, 2003).

TRP is so powerful to its participants, in large part, because of its authenticity. Unlike previous training programs established at other universities that relied primarily on static PowerPoint presentations to pass along best practices from one civilian to another, TRP provided a space for military students to connect with one another, validate each other's experiences, and share their experiences with the campus community. The creation of TRP provided a platform for military students to affect campus culture, promoting greater awareness and understanding in a supportive and safe environment. In perfect alignment with the university's strategic GW VALOR initiative, changing student demographics, and the needs of the campus community, TRP undeniably provides its participants real engagement with a diverse set of experiences

representative of a diverse population of GW military students. Essentially, the critical work of TRP at GW is so effective because it is done actively, intentionally, and, above all, in a uniquely GW way: through the creation of something outstandingly innovative.

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Facilitating Discussions of Diversity in the Classroom Environment

Susan Swayze, Ph.D.

Introduction

Race in schools has been the subject of legal battles, empirical research, and countless commentaries. Race in schools is ubiquitous—it is rare to read an educational journal where race is not discussed in one or more articles. In fact, there are publishers who have dedicated entire journals to the topic. The pervasiveness of the issue is underscored by the fact that more than 60 years ago, the United States government put a legal end to racial segregation in schools. Yet and still, racial inequities, racial disparities, and racial discrimination are terms often discussed within the context of the American education system.

While educators and policy makers continue to examine and discuss race in education, enrollments continue to diversify. Specifically, colleges and universities are experiencing the greatest enrollment growth among students of color—typically described as African American and Latino students. The Chronicle of Higher Education’s Almanac of Higher Education (2010) referred to these racial groups as Black and Hispanic and reported a 63% growth in enrollment for Black students and an 81% growth in enrollment for Hispanic students. For both racial groups, the largest percentage of growth was in enrollment at private 4-year institutions—127% for Black students and 124% for Hispanic students (The Chronicle of Higher Education, “Almanac of Higher Education,” 2010). These statistics suggest increased numerical representation of students of color on college campuses.

The enrollment of students of color in academic institutions is one element of the “race in higher education” discussion. Additional elements include diversity in the college curriculum and the experiences of students of color on college campuses. Numerous research studies suggest that diverse learning environments lead to positive outcomes for students, including increased cognitive skills, critical thinking skills, academic development, and problem solving abilities

(Antonio, 2001; Bowman, 2012a, 2012b, 2013; Chang, Denson, Saenz, & Misa, 2006; Denson, 2009; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Pascarella, 2001; Pascarella, Palmer, Moye, & Pierson, 2001; Terenzini, Cabrera, Colbeck, Bjorklund, & Parente, 2001), as well as increased cultural awareness and racial understanding (AAUP, 2000; Chang, 2002). These findings led Pitt & Packard (2012) to conclude, “when diversity is actively attended to, a diverse campus will lead to increased educational and social outcomes for all students” (p. 295).

Universities such as The George Washington University believe that increased enrollment of diverse students results in increased educational outcomes for all students and increased academic excellence for the institution (“The George Washington University Statement on Diversity and Inclusion,” n.d.-a). Researchers (Hu & Kuh, 2003; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999) have suggested that the existence of diverse students on campus is not enough to guarantee positive outcomes. Opportunities for racial exchange in both curricular and co-curricular settings, as well as a campus climate of cultural inclusiveness, importantly contribute to the positive outcomes associated with diversity as stated here, “... it is not axiomatic that because more people from different backgrounds are in classrooms their experiences will be educationally sound and result in desired outcomes” (Hu & Kuh, 2003, p. 320).

Three Types of Diversity

Gurin et al. (2002) described three types of diversity on college campuses: structural diversity, curriculum diversity, and informal interaction diversity. Structural diversity, represented numerically, indicates racial and ethnic diversity within the college student population. While structural diversity increases the opportunity for positive diversity outcomes, it alone is not enough to guarantee meaningful interactions among students or the desired

outcomes of increased cultural awareness and reduced prejudice (Hu & Kuh, 2003; Pitt & Packard, 2012; Terenzini et al., 2001). Curriculum diversity—formal learning about diversity through curricular experiences such as course materials, lessons, and discussions—is also needed to facilitate discussions about diversity. The third type of diversity, informal interactional diversity, refers to co-curricular learning about diversity through interaction among students from differing racial groups. Hu and Kuh (2003) found that interactions among students of different backgrounds (political, economic, racial, ethnic, and religious) had a positive relationship to students' openness to diversity and critical thinking skills. In his discussion of the individual benefits derived from the presence of diversity on campus, Milem (2003) merged curriculum and informal interactional diversity into one construct, "interactions that students have with difference" (p. 4) and suggested that "students are influenced by the interactions that they have with diverse ideas and information as well as by the interactions that they have with diverse people" (p. 4). Together, these three types of diversity—structural, curriculum, and informal interactional diversity (whether in the classroom or outside of class)—contribute to the formation of an inclusive campus environment.

Historically, college and university efforts regarding diversity have been largely structural in nature (Hu & Kuh, 2003; Hurtado et al., 1999), with university efforts aimed at recruiting and retaining students of color. Additional efforts have been made toward curriculum diversification by offering specific workshops or courses focused on race, diversity, and cultural awareness (Chang, 2002; Kernahan & Davis, 2007; Springer, Palmer, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). For example, Hogan and Mallott (2005) examined students' attitudes toward sexual orientation and race after taking a diversity course and found that participants reported lower levels of prejudice than their counterparts who did not take part in the course. A community

college study conducted by Swayze (1994) found that the likelihood of ethnic studies course offerings varied by the percentage of students of color enrolled at a particular community college; thus, suggesting a relationship between structural diversity and curriculum diversity. While structural and curriculum diversity are necessary for inclusive learning environments, they may not be fully beneficial unless meaningful interactions between diverse students occur (Pitt & Packard, 2012; Tienda, 2013). In other words, structural diversity may increase the curriculum diversity and informal interactional diversity, but it does not guarantee high quality and educationally meaningful interactions among students (Hu & Kuh, 2003; Terenzini et al., 2001). Moreover, curriculum diversity may not be sufficient to achieve diversity and inclusion goals. Students with an overt interest in race and diversity are more likely to enroll in such courses, while students without such an interest are not. True curricular inclusion can only be achieved by infusing race and diversity into a wide variety of courses, ensuring that every student has multiple opportunities to develop and enhance the essential skill of effectively discussing race and diversity.

When reflecting on Gurin et al.'s (2002) framework, it is clear that the classroom lies at the nexus of diversity and inclusion in higher education—a representation of students of color in the classroom, culturally reflective academic learning, and interaction among students. Specifically, course curricula and classroom discussions that advance inter-cultural communication and understanding are key to a university's progress from structural diversity to full inclusion. Thus, the classroom is a dynamic space in which the traditionally academic environment and the social campus environment intersect and provide opportunities for progress toward full inclusion. With a focus on the classroom comes a focus on the faculty role in the creation of a climate for diversity:

College faculty play an important role in introducing the scientific knowledge and the multiple cultural legacies that make up a democratic and global society, including important values, skills, and knowledge that ensure graduates will be successful in diverse work environments. Their own values and approach to teaching influence students, as the research demonstrates, but they must also recognize that students might be learning a great deal more from their peers than they are from instructors in the classroom. This realization may be difficult to accept initially, but many faculty are beginning to recognize the potential of the college peer group and harness that influence to create more powerful learning environments in classrooms for all students. They play a key role in implementing all aspects of diversity in the classroom through the curriculum and through the pedagogy that engages students with each other and goes a long way toward improving the overall climate for diversity. The success of these initiatives, however, also depends on campus leaders who have a vision about what they would like to accomplish on campus. (Hurtado et al., 1999)

However, few faculty members are taught how to shape this dynamic space to capitalize on structural diversity and maximize the progression from classroom discussions to cultural understanding. Since meaningful interactions among students and faculty are key to the realization of diversity goals, it is imperative that faculty are skilled at facilitating discussions regarding diversity that serve to increase communication among diverse students and foster increased intercultural awareness and understanding. Hurtado et al. (1999) suggested, “structured interaction is important for improving racial attitudes, including students’ engaging in intensive forms of contact” (p. 35). The classroom is one environment where structured interactions can

occur—these interactions, if successful, can fuel out-of-class discussions that can further intercultural understanding.

Based on the literature on students of color and diversity in the classroom, years of classroom teaching in higher education, and findings from interviews with graduate students of color, I find that the role of faculty in facilitating discussions of diversity in the classroom is undeniable. In order to fulfill the university’s intellectual mission, classrooms should be transformed into inclusive learning environments where diverse experiences, opinions, and perspectives can be shared and built upon for deeper engagement, greater learning, and “rigorous critical analysis of cultural, ethnic, racial, and other related differences” (“The George Washington University Statement on Diversity and Inclusion,” n.d.-a, para. 8).¹ Thus, faculty members should structure courses and lessons with intentionality to create a “diverse and inclusive community that enables everyone to flourish” (“The George Washington University Statement on Diversity and Inclusion,” n.d.-a, para. 2).² Building on the three strands of information, I offer the following four-step process to facilitate discussions of diversity in the classroom.

Four-Step Process to Facilitating Discussions of Diversity in the Classroom

1. Set the tone.

The syllabus is an ideal place to set the stage for safe classroom discussions. The following example of a safe classroom statement can be used as presented or enhanced to fit a particular course:

This university is proud to be a diverse community made up of students, faculty, staff, and

¹ The George Washington University Statement on Diversity and Inclusion, at https://diversity.gwu.edu/sites/diversity.gwu.edu/files/downloads/gw_statement_on_diversity_and_inclusion.pdf

² The George Washington University Statement on Diversity and Inclusion, at https://diversity.gwu.edu/sites/diversity.gwu.edu/files/downloads/gw_statement_on_diversity_and_inclusion.pdf

administrators who represent a large variety of communities. As such, discussions of diversity and difference are likely to occur in and out of the classroom. In the classroom, it is important that all students feel comfortable while participating in conversations on the topics of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexuality. To that end, we suggest the following guiding principles:

- Be a patient listener; remain professional, respectful, and courteous in discussions.
- Take comments to be well meaning—we all come from different places and have had different experiences.
- If you have a strong differing opinion, be gracious with your comments while expecting others to be gracious in return.
- Appeal to the faculty member when you feel uncomfortable with a discussion.

In sum, treat your classroom colleagues like you would want to be treated so that we can have fruitful discussions that broaden our thinking and enrich our educational experience.

2. Contextualize diversity and inclusion.

In a recent study, Swayze and Jakeman (2013) found that students held differing definitions of diversity and inclusion that may shape their classroom discussions on the topic. Thus, it is important to define and use shared definitions of the terms so that students have common reference points for their discussions. The George Washington University definitions of diversity and inclusion are comprehensive and can be used as classroom definitions:

Diversity: The term diversity is used to describe individual differences (e.g., life experiences, learning and working styles, personality types) and group/social differences (e.g., race, socio-economic status, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin,

ability, intellectual traditions and perspectives, as well as cultural, political, religious, and other affiliations) that can be engaged to achieve excellence in teaching, learning, research, scholarship, and administrative and support services. (“Office of Diversity & Inclusion: Diversity and Inclusion Defined,” n.d.-b, para. 2)³

Inclusion: The term inclusion is used to describe the active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity—in people, in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities (e.g., intellectual, social, cultural, geographic) with which individuals might connect. (“Office of Diversity & Inclusion: Diversity and Inclusion Defined,” para. 3)⁴

Alternatively, students can co-construct definitions. It is important to stay open to altering the classroom definitions of diversity and inclusion as students become more comfortable discussing the nuanced language associated with these terms.

3. Model effective communication.

The role of faculty is critical to successful classroom discussions. Students look to faculty as guides and indicators of appropriate behaviors. Thus, faculty members should model appropriate discussion techniques and inclusive classroom behavior for students. Faculty members can begin a classroom discussion with a conversation about their own perceptions and then ask students to do the same using a prompt such as, “How might your background and experiences shape your perceptions?” By stating initial perceptions, both faculty and students provide a foundation on which to begin a fruitful classroom discussion.

4. Facilitate student discussions.

There is a benefit to facilitating discussions of diversity in small groups before having a

³ The George Washington University Office of Diversity & Inclusion, at <http://diversity.gwu.edu/diversity-and-inclusion-defined>

⁴ The George Washington University Office of Diversity & Inclusion, at <http://diversity.gwu.edu/diversity-and-inclusion-defined>

discussion in the larger classroom environment. Small groups are less intimidating, and students can build both skill and confidence in these small group discussions. It is advisable to allow students to self-select into their groups, even if that results in a homogenous grouping. In preparation for future group discussions, be intentional and shape the groups in a more heterogeneous fashion. At the conclusion of the small group sessions, each group can inform the larger classroom about what the group discussed and share key takeaways from the discussion. These steps will enable students to gear up for a classroom discussion on diversity that is built upon prior small group successes.

This chapter was inspired, in part, by Pitt and Packard's (2012) statement, "Understanding if, and ultimately how, diversity manifests itself in the classroom becomes a necessary step in fully making sense of the link between diversity and learning on college campuses" (p. 296). The classroom is the link—the nexus between diversity and learning on university campuses. As Gurin et al. (2002) stated, "As a society we have provided no template for interaction across racial/ethnic groups and such interaction cannot be taken for granted in the college environment" (p. 362). The four-step process is such a template and can be a springboard for faculty to facilitate meaningful discussions of race and diversity in their classrooms. Widespread discussions of this sort will further university efforts toward an inclusive campus environment, thereby fulfilling the university's effort to move from diversity to inclusion.

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Mentored Experience To Expand Opportunities in Research:

The METEOR Program

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First of all, I knew that I was really uncomfortable with research, so it was definitely important for me to get into a program that would help me relieve my anxieties of research and keep the doors open for the future in terms of if I want to be in an academic hospital; or if I want to maybe gear my practice [towards research], or as a physician, to understanding issues that I see from day-to-day. And the second reason is, of course, it's great to have a mentor and to be in an environment where I can expose myself to a lot of critical thinking, be able to get ahead of classmates in terms of things they haven't seen, and also have that one-on-one relationship with an individual who can help me in the future or help me throughout my schooling. So that was definitely [my motivation for joining METEOR]. (Student from Cohort 1 of the METEOR Program)

Introduction

The Mentored Experience To Enhance Opportunities in Research (METEOR) Program was launched in summer 2012, to increase the participation and likelihood of successful matriculation of underrepresented minority (URM) medical student trainees in clinical and translational research (CTR) through a long-term mentored experience. The METEOR Program is sponsored by the Clinical and Translational Science Institute at Children's National (CTSI-CN),¹ a collaboration between Children's National Health System (CNHS) and The George Washington University and its School of Medicine and Health Sciences (SMHS). The CTSI-CN is one of 60 institutions within the National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) Consortium.² One of the five primary strategic goals is to support the training and career development of clinical and translational scientists. Particular emphasis is placed on attracting individuals from underrepresented backgrounds (URM),

¹ Clinical and Translational Science Institute at Children's National, at <http://www.ctsicn.org/>

² Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) Consortium, at <https://ctsacentral.org/>

including racial minorities and those with disabilities, to encourage them to consider careers as clinical and translational researchers.

Numerous institutions within the CTSA Consortium have addressed this goal by establishing short-term, mentored summer research experiences. Participants are recruited primarily from historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and undergraduate institutions with a large number of URM students. The METEOR program differs in its approach. We focus on the recruitment and development of URM students committed to becoming members of the GW community; thus, positioned to benefit from a mentored experience that continues throughout the duration of their educational experiences at GW and, hopefully, throughout their careers. The METEOR program is intended to be more than a summer research opportunity, but rather the beginning of what is hoped to be a lifelong career and mentoring relationship for each student and to also encourage URM peer mentoring among METEOR participants.

In June 2013, the METEOR Program received an Innovation in Diversity and Inclusion (IDI) award to expand and evaluate the program. Herein, we describe the METEOR Program and illustrate how, with support from the IDI award, the program has impacted not only the biomedical research community, but also the university as a whole by enhancing diversity and inclusion.

Increasing Diversity of the Biomedical Research Workforce

The National Institutes of Health (NIH), Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), and other organizations have published white papers and reports which recognize a need to increase diversity to improve the physician-scientist pipeline (Addams, Bletzing, Sondheimer, White, & Johnson, 2010; Coleman, Lipper, Taylor, & Palmer, 2014; National

Academy of Science, National Academy of Engineering, and Institute of Medicine, 2011; National Institutes of Health, 2012; Tabak, n.d.). All speak to the incongruence between the diversity within biomedicine and the U.S. population, as well as the need for a diverse biomedical research workforce to provide the varying skills and perspectives needed to address the most complex health concerns of our time. In addition, a more diverse biomedical workforce expands the scope of research questions, particularly in areas that have been understudied to date, such as health disparities.

Tekian (1997) conducted a systematic review of the literature, from 1981-1995, on underrepresented minorities (URMs) in medicine. He found that the literature supported a lack of adequate preparation for medical school among URMs and suggested that medical schools identify and prepare these students prior to entry. He noted that increasing admission of URMs to medical school would be insufficient to expand diversity within the biomedical workforce if support programs, both before and after medical school admission, were not concurrently in place. Tekian (1997) also stressed the need for medical schools and physicians to offer support and role modeling in the form of mentorship in order to increase the representation of minorities in medical school and the medical profession.

Shields (1994) conducted a survey of 120 U.S. medical schools regarding their academic support programs, particularly for URMs. Forty-one of the 83 schools (50%) that responded offered pre-matriculation programs to freshman, but most (28 of 41) included only basic science coursework. Of the 83 schools, 43 (50%) offered additional support to those students who matriculated, including tutoring, counseling, and advising. Mentorship was not specifically mentioned.

Terrell and Beaudreau (2003) commented on the AAMC's national campaign, Project

3000 by 2000, which was launched in 1991 and intended to increase URM enrollment in U.S. medical schools by focusing on educational pipelines to medical school. They identified four key elements to increasing diversity among health professional schools, including: (a) enhancing the cultural competency of all students; (b) addressing health disparities; (c) accelerating and expanding biomedical research, particularly in understudied areas; and (d) improving performance within the healthcare industry. Barriers to increasing diversity among health professional schools, including medical schools, centered on inadequate academic preparation, less financial resources, and less education of parents among minority students. In addition, conscious and unconscious biases were found to be factors that can result in reduced expectations for both teachers and minority students themselves due to stereotypes (Terrell & Beaudreau, 2003).

Butts et al. (2012) described the role of institutional climate as both a driver and barrier to enhancing diversity in the biomedical workforce. They noted that while gains have been made nationally to increase URM representation in baccalaureate and master degree programs, a significant number of graduates fail to obtain the M.D. or Ph.D. degree. The disparity continues into post-doctoral and academic faculty positions, as well as into funding granted to URM researchers. In fact, Ginther et al. (2011) compared the self-identified race or ethnicity of the applicant with the likelihood of receiving NIH funding and found that Black applications were 10% less likely than Whites to receive NIH awards when controlling for other factors such as educational background and previous funding. In response to these findings, Tabak and Collins (2011) suggested unconscious bias and a lack of mentorship as factors potentially having the most impact on lower grant funding among URM researchers and promised further action by the NIH to study and remedy the disparity.

The Importance of Mentorship

Mentoring is a personal and reciprocal relationship in which a more experienced (usually older) faculty member acts as a guide, role model, teacher, and sponsor of a less experienced (usually younger) student or faculty member. A mentor provides the protégé with knowledge, advice, counsel, challenge, and support in the protégé's pursuit of becoming a full member of a particular profession. (Johnson, 2007)

Mentoring has been found to be one of the most significant contributing factors to career development and success (Johnson, 2007). Successful mentoring relationships can result in improved academic performance and persistence (Campbell & Campbell, 1997). Graduate students who received mentoring in research were more likely to conduct research through their professional careers (Dohm & Cummings, 2002, 2003). Professional skill and identity development, networking opportunities, and overall greater satisfaction with one's program and institution are also among the benefits to the mentee of being in a mentoring relationship (Johnson, 2007). Furthermore, mentorship is a reciprocal relationship, and the mentor and the institution reap benefits as well (Bland, Taylor, Shollen, Weber-Main, & Mulcahy, 2009). Mentors frequently experience personal satisfaction and fulfillment, and institutions are recognizing mentorship for faculty promotion and tenure (Bland et al., 2009). Increased satisfaction, productivity, and retention are found among those who mentor and those who are mentored (Bland, Center, Finstad, Risbey, & Staples, 2005).

Mentoring relationships may form organically or be part of a formalized mentoring program in which mentees are matched with a particular mentor. In the latter case, an agreement, sometimes in the form of a contract, is made outlining goals and expectations (Johnson, 2007; Zerzan, Hess, Schur, Phillips, & Rigotti, 2009). Although formalized mentoring was developed

in the United States in the late 1970s within the corporate sector, the 1990s saw the introduction of mentoring programs into various medical professions, including medical education (Frei, Stamm, & Buddeberg-Fischer, 2010). However, medical students often reported not having a mentor (Rose, Rukstalis, & Schuckit, 2005).

Peterson and Carson (1992) and Cregler (1993) described enrichment programs aimed at matriculated medical students from underrepresented backgrounds. In both programs, mentors were identified as critical, particularly in socialization to the medical profession. In other research, Tekian, Jalovecky, and Hruska (2001) conducted a pilot study of 89 URM medical students who had been identified as being at risk for experiencing academic difficulty. Interviews were conducted with those who successfully completed medical school and the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Step 1 and those who did not. The researchers found that students who had physicians as mentors were less likely to have academic difficulty. Therefore, in line with these studies, opportunities for mentorship may increase the recruitment, retention, and academic performance of medical students, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds.

Frei et al. (2010) conducted a PubMed literature review, from 2000-2008, of formal mentoring programs for medical students. They found only 25 papers that met the criteria of a formal mentoring program, although the programs varied in structure—from one-on-one mentoring relationships to group mentorships. They noted that increases in research productivity and improved medical school performance were included among the benefits of these programs for mentored medical students.

Enhancing Diversity in Medicine at GW: The METEOR Program

The METEOR Program serves as an incentive for highly qualified URM students who are interested in an academic research career in the field of medicine to enroll and successfully matriculate at GW. Applicants to the METEOR Program are recruited through the Admissions Office of GW's School of Medicine and Health Sciences. It is promoted as a competitive fellowship opportunity to URM students who have been admitted to GW's medical program.

Interested students must submit a resume and a letter of interest outlining their previous research experience and scholarly focus. A review committee—including the GW School of Medicine and Health Sciences Assistant Dean of Admissions; the Associate Dean for Diversity, Inclusion, and Student Affairs; and the Director and Associate Director for Research Education, Training and Career Development (RETCD) of the CTSI-CN-review all applicants, who are then ranked based on their qualifications (e.g., past research experience, coursework). Up to four students are invited to participate in the program each year. Students are notified of their acceptance into the METEOR Program or placement on a waiting list. Nationally, all medical students have until April 30 to make their decisions regarding which school they wish to attend, and students on the waiting list are offered admission to METEOR if higher ranked students withdraw. Upon entry into the program, and based on the student's past research experience and expressed interest, each student is linked with a faculty member at GW or CNHS who serves as a mentor throughout the duration of the medical school experience and beyond. This relationship is a significant commitment for both the student and mentor. Matches are coordinated primarily by the Associate Director of the Research Education, Training and Career Development (RETCD) branch of CTSI-CN, and METEOR students and their mentors are encouraged to communicate by email and phone (or in person, if possible) prior to the beginning of the program.

In the summer prior to matriculation to GW's Medical School program (*Summer 1*), METEOR students participate in a 6-week (40 hours per week) program beginning the first Monday in June, under the mentorship of a GW or CNHS faculty member. Faculty mentors volunteer their time and laboratory resources, if applicable; and students are expected to participate in all elements of the mentor's research operation, including proposal and manuscript writing, clinical and/or laboratory rounds, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval process, if applicable. Students must complete training in responsible conduct of research, protection of health information (CITI and HIPAA), and other relevant bio-safety policies and procedures in both human and animal-focused research laboratories based on their areas of research. In addition, METEOR students attend a weekly education series on clinical and translational research currently offered to high school, college, and medical students working in the CNHS Children's Research Institute (CRI). This education series is augmented by field trips to institutions critical to biomedical research and uniquely situated in the DC area, including the NIH Clinical Center, National Library of Medicine, and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). An orientation session and "end of summer" dinner is held with program leaders, the students, and their mentors.

In their first and second years of medical school (*Academic Year 1 and 2*), METEOR students enter the Research track to augment their medical school curriculum, which is aligned with the national CTSA Consortium core competencies for clinical and translational research (CTR). The METEOR students are invited and encouraged to attend additional clinical research-oriented lectures and seminars, CTSI-CN activities (such as a Community Advisory Board meeting), departmental/division Grand Rounds, and other lectures of interest held at both GW and CNHS throughout the duration of the program. Throughout the program, informal lunch or

dinner “get togethers” are scheduled to maintain engagement of the students with their mentors and program faculty. The students continue their research during a second 8-week (40 hours per week) program (*Summer 2*). In their fourth and final year of medical school (*Academic Year 4*), students complete a 4-6 week elective related to their research areas of study. All students are required to present their work at research forums organized for both GW and CNHS Research Day events held each spring, and they are encouraged to present both their abstracts and peer-reviewed publications with their mentors.

Finally, but perhaps most significantly, current METEOR students assist in program recruitment by participating in GW’s Second Look event, an opportunity for those admitted to GW’s Medical School program to visit the campus as they decide where they plan to matriculate. They also make themselves available to speak by phone or email with students considering GW and joining the METEOR Program. Current students serve as peer mentors to the incoming METEOR program cohort, welcoming them to the GW community.

Mentoring the Diverse Trainee Workshop

Like most medical schools nationally, GW’s School of Medicine & Health Sciences (SMHS) has few URM faculty; and some non-URM faculty may feel less equipped and, therefore, less comfortable serving as mentors to URM mentees (Abernathy, 1999). Specifically referencing cultural empathy as this concept contributes to the university’s diversity and inclusion goals, GW’s Strategic Plan (n.d.-b) emphasizes,

Intercultural understanding and the ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds are essential to future citizens and leaders. This cultural empathy helps people see and

solve problems from multiple perspectives. At the same time it enables people to move deftly among cultures and to navigate across their own diverse identities. (p. 25)³

With support from the Innovation in Diversity and Inclusion (IDI) grant, the CTSI-CN, and the SMHS, a half-day workshop entitled “Mentoring the Diverse Trainee” was held on Tuesday, March 18, 2014, on the GW main campus in Washington, DC. The workshop incorporated the following learning objectives:

1. Describe concepts related to cross-cultural (ethnic, racial, gender, LBGT, and generational) mentorship for both the mentor and mentee.
2. Discuss the issues, consequences, and research related to unintentional bias.
3. Identify funding and fellowship opportunities for individuals from underrepresented backgrounds.

The conference was promoted with the assistance of the GW Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) and the office of the Provost throughout GW and CNHS, including postings on various websites and information listed in the monthly events e-newsletter of the CTSI-CN. The conference was approved for both continuing medical education (CME) credit and validation of Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training through The George Washington University.

The half-day workshop included a keynote address from Dr. Lynne Holden, a nationally-renowned expert in mentoring, particularly focused on URM students interested in health professional careers. In addition, an interactive session on unconscious bias was provided by an education and development specialist from Cook Ross, Inc.,⁴ an area consulting firm that addresses organizational leadership and development, including diversity and inclusion issues.

³ The George Washington University, Office of the Provost: Strategic Plan, at <https://provost.gwu.edu/strategic-plan>

⁴ Cook Ross, Inc., at <http://cookross.com/about-us/>

Presentations on fellowships and other funding opportunities available to URM students, as well as recommendations regarding how to encourage students to avail themselves of these opportunities, were provided. A current student in GW's Milken Institute School of Public Health and recipient of the prestigious GW Presidential Fellowship offered a student perspective. The workshop concluded with a panel of experts from GW's Office of Undergraduate Research and Fellowships, the SMHS Office of Diversity, and the National Institutes of Health.

Thirty-one faculty, staff, and students representing CNHS, SMHS and other schools at GW, including the Graduate School of Education and Human Development, were in attendance. Nine attendees (29%) completed a final program evaluation. Overall, the feedback was positive (agree or strongly agree) regarding the attainment of all learning objectives and with regard to the ratings of speakers' effectiveness in furthering mentor/mentee development. Finally, this half-day "Mentoring the Diverse Trainee" workshop served as a resource for the GW community beyond its initial presentation. For example, the workshop was professionally videotaped and archived on the CTSI-CN website for those who could not physically attend. Further, a program director from GW's Department of Sociology has utilized recorded portions of the unconscious bias lecture in her course. It is also hoped that video segments can be used to develop an online tutorial on mentoring for URM trainees and made available to the entire university community.

Impact of the METEOR Program: Student Interviews

While the METEOR Program has only been in existence for three years, impact of the program on the students, mentors, and the institution has already been realized. With support from the IDI award, qualitative interviews were conducted with the three members of Cohort 1 at the end of their second summer experience and, again, at the end of the fall and spring semesters of their second year in medical school. Based on its nature and design, the study was deemed

exempt by the GW Institutional Review Board (IRB). Interviews were conducted by the Associate Director for RETCD of the CTSI-CN, audiotaped, and later transcribed.

The purpose behind conducting these qualitative interviews was to garner student feedback that would speak to the METEOR program's diversity and inclusion efforts and to the particular benefits it provides to current URM students. As such, and in support of GW's mission to enhance the diversity of its student body, another benefit of the METEOR Program is to encourage highly qualified URM applicants to matriculate to GW's medical school. As noted earlier, the initiative incorporates a research experience into GW's M.D. program in support of the pipeline approach to increase clinical researchers, as recommended by Moskowitz and Thompson (2001). Anecdotally, all of the METEOR students expressed that the program was a significant part of their decision to matriculate to GW's M.D. Program, as each student often had multiple medical school acceptances. All members of the first METEOR cohort were asked what motivated them to join the METEOR Program.

Student 1:

Well, I think the biggest thing for me was being able to have a mentor throughout the end of school and to see exactly what they do; and how they went through medical school and then, how they applied their skills that they acquired throughout their undergraduate as well as post-graduate/post baccalaureate to pursuing a research career. And that was my biggest motivation because I wondered what did they do, and how can I do something similar in order to get the same outcome? So that was my biggest drive and motivation for wanting to pursue the METEOR program.

Students also expressed the benefit of arriving on campus during the summer prior to medical school orientation. In this way, they felt more prepared at the time of medical school

orientation activities since they had had several weeks to explore the city, master the city's public transportation system, and learn of the resources available to them at both GW and CNHS. All students reported that their visits to the NIH Clinical Center and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) during the pre-matriculation summer had increased their understanding of clinical research and the critical roles played by these institutions. When asked about students' experiences in both the first and second summers of the METEOR Program, another student explained,

Student 2:

My experience this summer was actually fascinating because I got to see the different dynamics of how you go about using the information that you learn in first year [of medical school] and applying it to situations you are in. I was able to see how all the different roles come into effect, like the importance of a doctor being able to work in a clinic as well as maintain his lab or the research aspect of his position. So I think second year was a little bit more beneficial than first year in the sense that I just was able to see how everything came together, and then also apply my own knowledge and take a little bit more of a leadership role rather than sitting back and looking at it from the outside and thinking, "Ok, how does that work? What's going on here?" This time, I know how the IRB works. I know what questions I can ask. I know if they are looking at a good improvement to the study or whatever research project I'm doing.

The students were often able to shadow their mentors or other research team members in the clinical setting, and they described this opportunity as being particularly helpful.

Student 1:

I got to see the clinic aspect of [the research] and go through, from start to finish, the day

in clinic and how asthma impacts the everyday lives of the patients . . . I actually had the opportunity to go and sit with patients and gather information about their roles in our research study, and determine whether or not what we were doing was going to be beneficial for them. And that part, that is what I did every day. So I went in and talked with patients who came in that were suffering from an asthma exacerbation and gauge ok, these are the questions that I have for them. . . I was actually in the study and meeting with the families and that part was really beneficial because I got to see the other end.

The mentoring relationship is an integral part of the METEOR program. So too, it was a focus in the interviews. Students were asked about their relationships with their mentors, and all noted issues of mentor approachability and availability as being paramount. In addition, students acknowledged that the mentor's ability to illustrate work-life balance, while incorporating research into a clinical practice, was critical.

Student 2:

I thought it was a really good relationship. He was the type of doctor who would go out of his way to take care of what I needed and be really open to either changing or doing more for me, just depending on what I wanted to do. He helped me understand what I was doing and how to do it as well. So that is really important to have as well in a mentor relationship where they can give you all this feedback and constructive criticism and expect me to deal with it. And that is what he did a lot of: establishing a good structure and helping me modify my skills. I wanted to learn how to communicate with doctors better, so he helped me do that as well. When it was time for medicine, he talked about medicine. And when it was time to be a mentor and to be an individual there for me, it

made things a lot easier to bring up how to be professional, or to ask him things that I wouldn't ask just any professor. And so I think just being a personable individual makes things easy as well. And he has a family, and he understands there is more to life than just work, and he is also a very hard worker. So I think the balance of his life also made it easy for me to see that there is more to this mentor beyond just the academic setting.

Finally, students were asked how participation in the METEOR program impacted their interest to pursue a career in clinical research. Three of the students interviewed responded as follows:

Student 1:

I think the METEOR program allows an avenue for you to be exposed to different types of experiences, but seeing that allowed me to really pursue and formulate how I want [my career] to flow and what kind of research I want to pursue. It gives me the skills and tools that I need to actually do it. Because I can go back and ask my mentor, "How did you do this?" . . . And it wasn't just the sense of being able to do it; it was being able to do it effectively. Because a lot of times you will see people, and they will just go all the way back to doing research, and they never peek their head up and apply it to the clinical aspect of it. So then the research benefits the lab, but at the same time it never crosses over to the patients. So I think that not only seeing that someone else is able to do it, but seeing that it is benefiting both aspects of science, that is the part that attracted me to this particular career . . . So participating in the METEOR program, it just helped me get a better idea of what I want to do. It has definitely reinforced my decision to go into research in some sort of . . . even if I'm able to still see my patients and then participate

in research. I just think that I wouldn't have come to this decision if I hadn't participated in METEOR.

Student 2:

In terms of translational research, before coming into it, it was my goal to be comfortable with research, and that's about it. I didn't like really want to do it, so I'd be happy with what I picked up. But after [the METEOR Program], I realized that it is such a crucial part of practice, especially when it's clinical research; there's always the option of treatment, or two or three options of treatment, and sometimes there's no gold standard to it. So all the doctors are really watching your choices and trying to hear it in one way or the other in terms of the different treatments, I think, when you have a research component to it. For instance, when you're looking at these hundred plus images every Monday on all these diseases, they see what ended up happening to the patient, what the treatment does, then you can see the things that worked. Or in real life, what's out there in the research, the literature, or the decision, they can see their decision was based on what the researcher is doing in the present time without really publishing any data, just kind of an internal feeling, in my opinion. To me that's important. That was the thing I loved the most, and why I think in the future I definitely want to have some component of research in my practice. In terms of being a physician, I think that answer comes from the relationship I have with my mentor, specifically. I think he's a very down to earth, very gracious. He's a great person, and I admire him, and I want to be like that. The relationship has inspired me, as well, to be a better physician; one who cares and does the right thing regardless of some of the rules out there, or what society may or not tell us.

Student 3:

Probably the biggest influence is the confidence that it has given me. I mean, I did some research in undergrad, but definitely METEOR has given me access to some people I would not have had access to otherwise, and I feel a lot more comfortable with research in general . . . I don't think I would have been able to get onto [my mentor's] research team [without the METEOR program], and I feel what I've seen there and a certain number of publications that have come out, how organized they were. I feel it has given me a much better idea of what it takes to do well in research, and I feel a lot more confident going forward.

In sum, members of the first cohort of the METEOR Program expressed the various benefits from a mentoring relationship as identified in the literature, including: (a) improved professional skills, particularly in research; (b) a sense of identity within the medical school community and profession; and (c) networking opportunities. As another outcome of the program, METEOR students also gained mentoring skills themselves, serving as peer mentors to each other and to members of incoming METEOR Program cohorts.

Conclusion

The George Washington University Statement on Diversity and Inclusion (n.d.-a) confirms, “The university is committed to recruiting, admitting and enrolling undergraduate and graduate students drawn from varying backgrounds or identities throughout all schools and departments” (“Students” section, para. 1).⁵ In support of this commitment, the METEOR Program is intended to recruit highly qualified URM students to enroll in GW’s M.D. Program, assist them to successfully matriculate through medical school, and encourage them to consider

⁵ The George Washington University Statement on Diversity and Inclusion, at https://diversity.gwu.edu/sites/diversity.gwu.edu/files/downloads/gw_statement_on_diversity_and_inclusion.pdf

long-term careers as clinician-scientists. Although only launched in 2012, the METEOR Program has positively impacted the program's students, mentors, and the institution. Moreover, the METEOR Program can serve as a model for other student/faculty mentorship programs throughout GW, as well as other institutions nationally.

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Conclusion:

Toward the Incorporation of Inclusive Actions into Incremental Culture Change

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It is difficult to map the progress of incremental change, especially when the change is a culture change that alters institutional actions and individual experiences. But this book aims to do just that – map the progress of incremental culture change at The George Washington University. If we view culture as constantly changing, we can also view each Innovation in Diversity and Inclusion grant project as a unique “catalyst for change agent” within the institution—each project serving to initiate authentic conversations and actions that continue to propel GW’s mission of inclusion forward.

One might ask, “How do we know when the university has achieved meaningful, optimal inclusion?” There are numerous indicators of progress toward the establishment of an optimal climate of inclusion, including: (a) substantiation of the university’s commitment to inclusion in public statements such as the university’s mission and strategic plan; (b) dedicated administrators and staff who uphold and elevate the mission of inclusion; (c) faculty and staff who serve as committed advocates for inclusion; and (d) opportunities for all members of the university community to advocate/advance practices of inclusion at GW. The ultimate indicator of an optimal campus climate of inclusion is evidence of inclusive actions and attitudes permeating throughout the university.

This book highlights selected inclusive actions that were funded by GW’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion. From personal narratives of study abroad participants; to statements from LGB graduate students regarding their classroom conversations/experiences around the topic of diversity; to recommended strategies for facilitating discussions of diversity in the classroom; to training GW students, faculty, and staff about military culture and the challenges faced by military students in the academic environment; to mentoring underrepresented minority students in GW’s School of Medicine, this book gives testament to inclusive actions occurring

on a daily basis at The George Washington University. These highlighted inclusion projects/studies provide examples of funded efforts that occur alongside of volunteer actions at GW. Combined, these efforts and actions demonstrate that inclusion is becoming part of the fabric of The George Washington University and further suggest that GW fosters a climate of inclusion.