

The International
JOURNAL
of **DIVERSITY**
in ORGANISATIONS,
COMMUNITIES
& NATIONS

Volume 9, Number 4

Embedding Diversity in the University: A Case
Study

Patrick J. Ashton

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF DIVERSITY IN ORGANISATIONS,
COMMUNITIES AND NATIONS
<http://www.Diversity-Journal.com>

First published in 2009 in Champaign, Illinois, USA by Common Ground Publishing LLC
www.CommonGroundPublishing.com.

© 2009 (individual papers), the author(s)
© 2009 (selection and editorial matter) Common Ground

Authors are responsible for the accuracy of citations, quotations, diagrams, tables and maps.

All rights reserved. Apart from fair use for the purposes of study, research, criticism or review as permitted under the Copyright Act (Australia), no part of this work may be reproduced without written permission from the publisher. For permissions and other inquiries, please contact
<cg-support@commongroundpublishing.com>.

ISSN: 1447-9532
Publisher Site: <http://www.Diversity-Journal.com>

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF DIVERSITY IN ORGANISATIONS,
COMMUNITIES AND NATIONS is peer-reviewed, supported by rigorous processes of criterion-referenced article ranking and qualitative commentary, ensuring that only intellectual work of the greatest substance and highest significance is published.

Typeset in Common Ground Markup Language using CGCreator multichannel typesetting system
<http://www.commongroundpublishing.com/software/>

Embedding Diversity in the University: A Case Study

Patrick J. Ashton, Indiana University Purdue University Fort Wayne,
USA

Abstract: As student bodies become more diverse, the challenge for many universities is how to create an environment that is welcoming and promotes their success in terms of retention and ultimate graduation. As universities have adapted to these new conditions, they have implemented a variety of changes. However, these changes are often ad hoc or dependent upon the leadership and commitment of particular staff members. The challenge is to embed these changes in the organizational structure of the university. Using the experience of a mid-size Midwestern United States public university, this paper uses the concepts of knowledge management and organizational culture to develop criteria for assessing success in embedding diversity into the organizational structure of the university. Recommendations for further changes are then developed.

Keywords: Diversity, Organizational Change, Universities, Knowledge Management, Organizational Culture

Introduction: Diversity Comes to Campus

THE LAST HALF of the Twentieth century witnessed enormous changes in higher education in the United States. The first such change was demographic. The G.I. Bill made it possible for thousands of middle- and working-class military veterans to go to college. The civil rights and women's movements encouraged more blacks and women to get a college education. Globalization increased the number of foreign students coming to U.S. universities, while the changing demographics of immigration – for the past 30 years over 70 percent of immigrants have been from Latin America and Asia – dramatically altered the pool of potential college-goers. The result is that by 1990, white women and people of color made up 60 percent of undergraduate and masters degree recipients in the United States (Musil 1995:8).

In the face of these changes, many colleges and universities developed affirmative action programs to recruit students and staff from these new demographics. At the same time, reflecting broader movements in the society, many students and faculty demanded alterations in the curriculum and change in the campus climate to make it more welcoming to women, people of color, gays and lesbians, and nontraditional students. There were heated debates over various disciplinary canons, and women's studies, ethnic studies, queer studies, disability studies, and life course studies programs were created within the university. Inevitably, there was a backlash in which affirmative action and multiculturalism were challenged, both in the legal courts and the court of public opinion (Musil 1995:9-12).

Fueled by this ferment and supported by highly visible initiatives like that of the Ford Foundation (Musil 1995), university faculty and administrators began to look beyond piecemeal and ad hoc initiatives and to turn their attention to the university as an organization.

In pioneering work that articulated the connection between increased diversity and positive learning outcomes, Sylvia Hurtado and her colleagues concluded that

Much of this work suggests that providing opportunities for quality interaction and an overall climate of support results not only in a better racial climate but also in important learning outcomes for students. In many ways, racial/ethnic diversity is linked with institutional goals for teaching and learning (Hurtado et al. 1999:3)

However, they warned that “improving the climate may require some fundamental institutional changes. Most basic is a conceptual shift in thinking about how diversity is central to the institution’s overall priorities for teaching and learning” (Hurtado et al. 1999:3). Similarly, Gurin and her colleagues, charged with assembling and supporting the argument for the positive impact of diversity on learning, contend that “the impact of racial/ethnic diversity on educational outcomes comes primarily from engagement with diverse peers in the informal campus environment and in college classrooms. Structural diversity [i.e., numerical representation alone] is a necessary but insufficient condition for maximal educational benefits” (Gurin et al. 2002:3-4). Thus at the beginning of the 21st Century there has been an important shift in the analysis, to the level of the organization.

Knowledge Management in the Learning Organization

Peter Senge (1990) codified and popularized the idea of the learning organization. His vision was of “organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together” (Senge 1990:3). In articulating this vision, Senge and his associates employ a constructivist epistemology in which humans collectively create their societies and institutions, which in turn create or limit the possibilities for human development in a dialectical feedback loop. Because human organizations are emergent, complex, and interdependent, they can only be studied interpretively. Sociologist Max Weber, extending the methodology of hermeneutics, called the interpretive method *verstehen*, or an attempt to develop sympathetic understanding of intersubjective meanings (Ritzer 2000:111-113). Within this framework, there is no place for the usual mechanistic metaphors, as Barry Sugarman, a former research associate at Senge’s MIT center, notes:

For well over a century mechanistic metaphors, images, and models have dominated most people’s thinking about organizations of all kinds. Metaphorically, the learning based approach sees the process of managing organizational change as more like that of raising healthy plants or children, as opposed to the mechanistic metaphor which sees it as more like adding a turbocharger to the automobile that does not move fast enough or making some other change to a helpless machine on a workbench. Learning-based approaches to organizational change, however, see organizations as living systems with people in essential roles. People can think for themselves and often resist those who try to change them. We will never reach the goal of building a learning organization if we continue to use mechanistic ideas of change management (Sugarman 2001:4).

Senge suggested that learning organizations encompass five essential disciplines: personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, team learning, and systems thinking (Senge 1990:5-11). “People with a high level of personal mastery live in a continual learning mode....[They] are acutely aware of their ignorance, their incompetence, their growth areas. And they are deeply self-confident” (Senge 1990:142). Intentionally or not, this discipline parallels the characteristics Abraham Maslow attributed to self-actualizing people. People working to realize their fullest potentials, he said, are open to experience, accepting of self and others, authentic, connected to others, creative, growth-motivated, and possessed of a democratic character structure (Maslow 1973).

Mental models are open and fluid in a learning organization, which Senge acknowledges is challenging and even disorienting. “It can be frightening as we confront cherished beliefs and assumptions. It cannot be done alone. It can only occur within a community of learners” (Senge 1990:xv). This connects to the next two disciplines, building shared vision and team learning. “The practice of shared vision involves the skills of unearthing shared ‘pictures of the future’ that foster genuine commitment and enrollment rather than compliance” (Senge 1990:9). Team learning involves dialogue in which learners engage in “thinking together.”

Systems thinking is the Fifth Discipline and Senge’s primary focus. “In effect, the art of systems thinking lies in seeing *through* complexity to the underlying structures generating change. Systems thinking does not mean ignoring complexity. Rather, it means organizing complexity into a coherent story that illuminates the causes of problems and how they can be remedied in enduring ways” (Senge 1990:128). “The bottom line of systems thinking,” Senge says, “is leverage – seeing where actions and changes in structures can lead to significant, enduring improvements. Often, leverage follows the principle of economy of means: where the best results come not from large-scale efforts but from small well-focused actions” (Senge 1990:114). Interestingly, Senge’s point parallels Marx’s sociological analysis of the difference between growth, which is a linear, quantitative process, and development, which is qualitative and subject to sudden leaps and transformations (Lefebvre 1968:29). The key in (dialectical) systems thinking is finding those points in the growth process where qualitative developmental leaps can be made.

Central to all of the disciplines of the learning organization is knowledge management (KM). According to Lehaney et al. (2004:3), knowledge management refers to efforts to “facilitate explicitly and specifically the creation, retention, sharing, identification, acquisition, utilization, and measurement of information and new ideas, in order to achieve strategic aims.” Milam (2005:3) emphasizes, however, that knowledge management is much more than information management: “Where IM [information management] is focused on storing and retrieving information, KM is more concerned with organizational outcomes. KM strategies move beyond disseminating knowledge to sharing and using it.” Table 1 compares information management, knowledge transfer, and knowledge management strategies.

Table 1: Comparison of Knowledge Strategies

	Information Management	Knowledge Transfer	Knowledge Management
Primary focus	Storing and retrieving information	Communicating and distributing knowledge	Changing organizational outcomes through systemic learning
Vehicle	Technical systems	Experts; established knowledge banks	Reciprocal human relationships; creation of new knowledge through dialogue, storytelling
Metaphor	Fine-tuning a machine	Replicating a complex structure	Nurturing a living system
Logic	Linear	Multilinear	Fuzzy
Primary type of knowledge	Explicit	Explicit	Implicit, tacit
Model	Hierarchical, based on technical expertise	Hierarchical, based on didactic expertise	Web-based networks based on collaboration and reciprocity
Treatment of mistakes	Exclusion of mistakes	Avoidance of mistakes	Sharing and learning from mistakes

Though we may refer to this era as the Information Age, in fact what is needed more is knowledge and knowledge management. In their critique of our current “obsessive focus on information,” Brown and Duguid reflect Senge’s idea of systems thinking:

Some of the people driving us all hard into the future on the back of new technologies appear to assume that if we all focus hard enough on information, then we will get where we want to go most directly. This central focus inevitably pushes aside all the fuzzy stuff that lies around the edges – context, background, history, common knowledge, social resources. But this stuff around the edges is not as irrelevant as it may seem. It provides valuable balance and perspective. It holds alternatives, offers breadth of vision, and indicates choices. It helps clarify purpose and support meaning. Indeed, ultimately it is only with the help of what lies beyond it that any sense can be made of the information that absorbs so much attention (Brown and Duguid 2000:1-2).

Thus the necessity to employ what has been termed “fuzzy logic.” “Fuzzy systems,” says Bart Kosko (1993:165), “let us guess at the nonlinear world and yet do not make us write down a math model of the world. . . . The technical term for it is model-free estimation or approximation. You do it every time you back up your car or catch a fastball or look at a TV image and see something in your brain.”

One aspect of this fuzziness is the relationship between organizational and individually accumulated knowledge. Lehaney and his colleagues observe that

The idea that organizations have knowledge is appropriate, assuming that individuals remain with the organization. However, when a member of staff leaves, they take with them tacit knowledge and in some cases explicit knowledge if it has not been codified effectively. Tacit knowledge is difficult if not impossible to replace, because the individual's contribution to the success of the organization could have been unique to that person... The foregoing puts to question the view that no one is indispensable; for example, levels of dispensability may be different according to the amount of expertise and knowledge an individual has (Lehaney et al. 2004:22-3).

Conversation among the members of an organization is key to sharing this tacit knowledge. "If we had the means to measure the total time spent in dialogue in a given workplace, that might be a good assessment of the intensity of organizational learning found there" observes Sugarman (2001:24). One of the most effective forms of dialogue for knowledge sharing, experts agree, is through storytelling (Lehaney et al. 2004:32; Milam 2005:12-13; Reamy 2002a, 2002b).

Another important form of knowledge management is the sharing of mistakes. "For every success story," says Senge, "there is at least one 'disappointment story'" (Senge 1990:xvii). "True proactiveness," he says, "comes from seeing how we contribute to our own problems" (Senge 1990:21). "Many organizations," says diversity strategist Celia Young, "say they encourage experimentation and innovation yet don't make enough room for people to fail.... In this culture, why would anyone be willing to experiment?" (Young 2007:29). Rather than excluding or avoiding mistakes, the learning organization recognizes that mistakes are inevitable, and we can learn from them. But the imperative to share knowledge of failure and error requires a sea change in organizational culture. Sugarman observes that

While successful *results* are very important to learning organizations – typically they set very high standards – they recognize that often success is only achieved after initial *mistakes*, and what people learn from those early mistakes is often the key to eventual success. And people must learn from everyone's mistakes, not just their own. It is too costly to have people repeating mistakes that have already been made by others.... When employees can trust that their bosses will not penalize them for revealing mistakes or for seeking help with a difficult problem then there will be more organizational learning and better solutions to be shared (Sugarman 2001:2-3).

There is one final component to our knowledge management model. This is sociotechnical design, which Lehaney et al. (2004, p. 64) designate as a philosophy of organizational change based on the interaction of human and technical systems and principles. "Knowledge," they say, "can also be seen as the capacity of an organization and its employees to act effectively, thus designing an organization for effective knowledge management is also designing an organization sociotechnically" (Lehaney et al. 2004:66). There are ten major principles of sociotechnical design, according to Cherns (1976, 1987).

1. Compatibility: a design has to satisfy an array of objectives and should therefore be arrived at by consensus.
2. Minimal critical specification: minimal pre-specification allows innovation to flourish.
3. Variance control: variances should be controlled as near to the point of origin as possible.
4. Boundary location: boundaries should not be drawn in ways that impede the flow of information; multi-function teams easily cross boundaries.
5. Information flow: information is not withheld or monopolized.
6. Power and authority: people must command the necessary resources to perform their work.
7. The multifunctional principle: There is both an external and an internal environment; organizational work needs to take account of and adapt to changes in both.
8. Support congruence: reward people for what they know and are willing to learn.
9. Transitional organization: it is more complex than either the old organization it was or the new organization it is becoming.
10. Incompletion: all periods of stability are only temporary periods of transition between one state and another. Redesign is a continuous process by self-regulating teams.

These principles and the associated characteristics of a knowledge-management-oriented learning organization will now be used to examine the diversity initiatives at one university.

Doing Diversity at One University

Background: The University

Indiana University Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW) is a campus of nearly 12,000 students located in the city of Fort Wayne in northeastern Indiana, USA. IPFW is a joint campus of Indiana and Purdue, two major research universities. IPFW has over 180 degree and certificate programs and is designated a comprehensive Masters I university by the Carnegie Commission. IPFW is the third-largest campus in the Indiana University eight-campus system. It is the second-largest in the five-campus Purdue system. By joint agreement the campus is administered by Purdue University, although about half of the faculty, students, degree programs, and credit hours are associated with each parent university. The Chief Executive of IPFW is the Chancellor.

As the only public university in northeastern Indiana, IPFW is charged with serving the region. In terms of diversity, Blacks and Hispanics are the largest minority groups in the campus' geographic region and over time IPFW has made special efforts at recruiting and retaining students from these backgrounds. According to the 2000 Census, the city of Fort Wayne is about 17 percent Black and just under 6 percent Hispanic. About 60 percent of IPFW students come from Allen County, where IPFW and Fort Wayne are located. Blacks make up 11 percent of the county population and Hispanics 4.2 percent. In IPFW's eleven-county service area in northeastern Indiana Blacks are 5.7 percent of the population and Hispanics 3.2 percent (IPFW Diversity Council 2004).

Table 2 portrays the changing demographics of student enrollment at IPFW over the ten-year period 1995-2004. It is apparent that while IPFW's student population currently mirrors

the larger region's demographics, the student body is not now, nor has it ever been, representative of the racial and ethnic composition of the local city and county. However, the figures do indicate that during this ten-year period the student body became somewhat more diverse, with a 30 percent increase in the number of Black students (21 percent increase in their representation in the student body) and a 62 percent increase in the number of Hispanic students (56 percent increase in their representation in the student body).

Table 2: Composition of IPFW Enrollment 1995-2004

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Total enrollment	11,011	10,749	10,669	10,653	10,556	10,532	11,129	11,757	11,806	11,810
Black	472	495	499	554	516	489	551	614	610	612
% Black	4.3	4.6	4.7	5.2	4.9	4.6	5.0	5.2	5.2	5.2
Hispanic	180	200	209	237	238	237	241	249	268	292
% Hispanic	1.6	1.9	2.0	2.2	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.3	2.5
Asian	171	198	213	241	254	280	206	220	239	233
% Asian	1.6	1.8	2.0	2.3	2.4	2.7	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.0
Foreign	291	300	318	332	329	318	299	323	288	237
% Foreign	2.7	2.8	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.0	2.7	2.8	2.4	2.0
% White	90.1	89.6	89.2	88.0	88.1	88.3	87.6	87.2	86.7	86.5
% Female	56.5	56.6	56.4	55.7	56.2	57.1	57.2	58.1	58.3	57.9
% Married	30.1	28.5	26.7	24.1	21.4	17.8	14.5	13.2	13.0	12.6

Source: IPFW Office of Institutional Research and Analysis, various years. Available at: <http://www.ipfw.edu/ir/> (Accessed December 8, 2005).

While the number of Asian students increased slowly, the rate of increase mirrored the university as a whole, such that the Asian population held steady at about 2 percent of the overall campus population in this ten-year period. Reflecting a modest growth in diversity, the White student population declined about 4 percent during this period, to 86.5 percent of the campus population. The percentage of female students remained relatively constant, at 56-58 percent of the campus population. There was both an absolute and a relative decline in the population of foreign students. Even more dramatic was the 58 percent decline in married students. This undoubtedly was a product of the enrollment of a significantly higher percentage of traditional-age students, as well as secular trends in the divorce rate.

University Diversity Initiatives

In 1994 a new Chancellor was appointed at IPFW. Chancellor Wartell immediately put into place two initiatives which would directly impact diversity. First of all, he reconfigured the former Council on Minority Recruitment and Retention into the Diversity Council, which was charged with organizing activities and initiatives in support of the IPFW diversity mission.

By design, the Council was composed of stakeholders from throughout the university. *Ex officio* members included the Vice Chancellors for Academic, Student, and Financial Affairs, the university Affirmative Action Officer, the directors of Multicultural Services and Services for Students with Disabilities, and the president of the student body. There were also representatives chosen by the administrative and clerical employee councils and the Faculty Senate, as well as at-large faculty and student representatives.

Secondly, Chancellor Wartell launched a strategic planning process. Various plans for the university had come and gone over the years – basically every time the leadership changed – and members of the university community were fairly cynical about the possibilities of any real or lasting change from a new plan. This time, however, it was different. The Chancellor created a year-long process of dialogue among all stakeholders. An external consultant was brought in to identify key issues for discussion in a kickoff workshop. Three successive drafts were widely circulated on campus, and a number of public hearings were held. The resulting plan (IPFW Strategic Plan 1997) included, for the first time, short-, mid-, and long-term strategic initiatives. Just as importantly, a process was put into place to regularly report on progress and make revisions.

One of three target areas in the new Strategic Plan was “Improving Student Access and Success,” and one way it was to be accomplished, the Plan said, was “through a focus on diversity and a respect for individuals.” A short-term priority for achieving this was to “maintain a campus climate which recognizes and values all forms of diversity, seeks to increase the diversity of the campus community, and encourages student involvement with the university through enhanced offerings of cultural, academic, and recreational activities” (IPFW Strategic Plan 1997).

By default, responsibility for providing leadership on these initiatives fell largely to the Diversity Council. The Council was not formally charged with implementing the Strategic Plan initiatives, but on the other hand there was no other group working on diversity. The Diversity Council had begun its organizational life by crafting a statement of principles. This statement, reprinted below, became IPFW’s official policy on diversity, and currently on the web it is linked directly off the university homepage.

Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne is committed to creating an environment that enhances learning by recognizing the inherent worth of all individuals at the university. Diversity stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life. The term diversity encompasses differences of culture, background and experience among individuals and groups. Such differences include, but are not necessarily limited to, differences of race, ethnicity, color, gender, sexual orientation, class, age, and disabilities, as well as political and religious affiliation, and socioeconomic status (IPFW Statement on Diversity).

The activities of the Diversity Council in the late 1990s are recounted and evaluated in a document prepared by several administrators in 2005.

For several years, a Diversity Week was held each spring. Mini-grants were offered as incentives to departments and programs to organize events or invite speakers to be scheduled during that week. A few years later, in response to feedback from faculty, students, and staff, the Diversity Week approach was abandoned in favor of making

the mini-grants available throughout the academic year. The Council also surveyed faculty, students and staff about their priorities for diversity projects and events. In 1997-98, the Council developed and published a strategic plan for diversity. However these activities were not united around a vision of institutional transformation (Clausen et al. 2005).

Two things came together in 2000 to promote transformation in how the institution dealt with diversity. First, IPFW began campus-wide discussions aimed at creating a new Strategic Plan to replace the expiring five-year-old plan. The process was driven by Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Susan Hannah who is deeply supportive of diversity and keenly interested in developing metrics and timelines for the measurement of progress toward meeting strategic goals. The new Strategic Plan, codified in 2001, had as one of its major goals to “create an exceptional campus environment for a diverse community of learners” (IPFW Strategic Plan 2001:3). The plan was also a leap forward in that diversity was incorporated throughout, rather than having its own separate section, and there were more specific metrics and measurable targets for each goal.

Second, beginning in the Summer of 2000, Indiana University initiated a statewide Leadership Institute that provided vision and resources for institutional transformation. Teams of faculty and administrators from each Indiana University campus came together over a week to study diversity and to develop, with the help of on-site consultants, plans for organizational transformation around diversity. IPFW’s team, consisting of four faculty members (two of whom were on Diversity Council; the other two were recognized advocates of diversity) and an administrator from Academic Affairs, developed a strategic plan for transformation of the curriculum at IPFW to make it more diversity friendly.

The IPFW Diversity Leadership Team, as it came to be known, conducted focus groups with faculty on campus in the Fall of 2000 to learn both what changes faculty wanted to see and what type of changes in their teaching and the curriculum they would be likely to support. A report on what the focus groups said was distributed widely on campus. The next step was to organize, in the Spring of 2001, a day-long workshop entitled “Diversity Matters” at which the keynote speaker emphasized the educational benefits of diversity and the breakout sessions allowed participants to explore the practical aspects of transforming curriculum and pedagogies. The workshop was co-sponsored by the Diversity Leadership Team, the Diversity Council, the campus teaching center, the Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, and the Deans of the various schools.

The next year, Indiana University awarded a grant of \$5,000 for diversity transformation to the campus, contingent upon a match from the Chancellor. The Leadership Team, augmented by additional faculty who had attended the 2001 Leadership Institute, decided to use the money to competitively award summer grants to faculty for course transformation. In order to apply, however, a faculty member had to attend a two-day training workshop on diversity transformation of the curriculum (sponsored by the Diversity Leadership Team and Diversity Council, among others). Over 30 faculty attended, nine proposals were received and five were funded.

In the Fall of 2002, faculty who had transformed their courses over the summer were invited to tell their stories at an Indiana University conference entitled “Enhancing Minority Attainment,” held each November at Indiana University Kokomo. IPFW’s Diversity Leadership Team, expanded by a third cohort from the Indiana Leadership Institute held the previous

summer, met together at the Kokomo conference and, at Vice Chancellor Hannah's behest, began planning a diversity institute. The institute, held in June 2003, took its title from the previously-mentioned goal of IPFW's strategic plan: "Creating an exceptional campus environment for a diverse community of learners." There was a keynote address from a nationally-renowned speaker on diversity, theater games, panels, and breakout sessions. Once again, faculty had to attend this event in order to apply for a transformation grant. Over 200 faculty, staff, and students attended the event, and 20 proposals were received. Twelve proposals were funded, of which 4 were for course transformation. The other two-thirds of the proposals were aimed at diversity transformations of entire curricula or programs.

Meanwhile, the North Central Association, which accredits schools in a 19-state region that includes Indiana, had completed its regular accreditation review of IPFW in the Spring of 2001. One of their recommendations was that each student's general education experience at IPFW include a diversity component. The Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs requested that the Diversity Leadership Team study the issue and make a recommendation (IPFW Office of Academic Affairs 2003). The proposal submitted to the Faculty Senate General Education Subcommittee in February 2002 required all students, as part of their general education requirements, to complete at least one course dealing with diversity themes. The Leadership Team suggested that incentives be created for faculty to modify existing general education courses to meet the requirement so that no additional credit hours would be required of students. This proposal was tied to the upcoming Diversity Institute and the opportunity for faculty to submit course transformation proposals.

The Diversity Leadership Team and Diversity Council organized focus groups and hearings on the proposal for faculty in each of the four general education areas. Over 70 faculty participated. In addition, a representative met with Chairs and Deans of each School within the university and issued a call for syllabi of courses that incorporated substantial diversity content. The general education diversity requirement proposal was passed, with minor revisions, by the General Education Subcommittee and submitted to the Educational Policy Committee of the IPFW Faculty Senate in October 2003 (IPFW Office of Academic Affairs 2003).

When the Educational Policy Committee solicited comment on the proposed diversity requirement, the issue achieved a public visibility within the university that it had not had before. The proposal was attacked by some as doing too much and criticized by others for doing too little for diversity education. Some social science departments argued, for instance, that they already taught diversity and an additional requirement was superfluous. Others suggested that diversity should not be confined to a single course, but rather should permeate a student's entire education. Ultimately, the proposal forwarded to the Faculty Senate by the Educational Policy Committee differed substantially from the version they started with. The new version made each baccalaureate program responsible for incorporating diversity into the education of their majors in ways appropriate to their respective disciplines, and for measuring student learning outcomes related to diversity as part of their regular degree assessment plan. In 2004, action on a specific diversity requirement was postponed while the Faculty Senate revisited the overall Goals and Objectives for an IPFW Baccalaureate Degree.

Analysis: Knowledge Management of Diversity in a Learning Organization

To what extent has IPFW created a learning organization around diversity? How effective has its knowledge management strategy been with regard to diversity? Based on his study of multiple change initiatives, Sugarman (2001) notes that a new initiative must “reside” somewhere in the organization. “The ‘home’ metaphor implies a starting place where it will have shelter and facilities from which to learn and to build up its capabilities. This home may include caregivers or guardians, who accept responsibility for the new ‘child’” (Sugarman 2001:20). IPFW’s diversity activities over the past five years have been centered in two core groups: Diversity Council (DC) and the Diversity Leadership Team (DLT). It is fair to say, in line with Sugarman’s metaphor of raising healthy living things, that these groups have been nurtured by key university leadership, particularly the Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, and the Associate Vice Chancellor for Faculty Affairs. Funding was provided for projects, but, more importantly, organizational space was created in order that “new and expansive patterns of thinking” could be developed.

Senge’s vision of an organization “where people are continually learning how to learn together” seems clearly characteristic of Diversity Council and the Diversity Leadership Team. The members met regularly and engaged in free-ranging conversation about how the institution could better “do diversity.” Members received training in leadership, change management, diversity, and curriculum transformation through the various institutes and conferences they attended under university sponsorship. Nearly all of the members participated in Study Circles to deepen their personal awareness of diversity issues. Additionally, the Leadership Team developed diversity training for faculty and piloted it on themselves – a particularly good example of the discipline of team learning.

The DC and the DLT practiced the other disciplines of a learning organization as well. Increasingly sophisticated mental models of diversity transformation took shape in an evolving process through dialogue, discussion, and reflection. Not only did the core groups engage in developing personal mastery themselves, they fostered it among faculty colleagues through the course and curriculum transformation grants. Shared vision and team learning were promoted, among the DC and the DLT and also among the faculty and staff through sponsorship and participation in Study Circles and the development of book discussions. For the book discussions, the DLT and the DC chose provocative books with diversity themes (e.g., hooks 1994, Tatum 1997, Berlak and Moyenda 2001, Rose 1989, Dews and Law 1995, LaDuke 2002, Simpson 2003). Diversity Council bought the books; faculty could request a free copy if they promised to read it and attend at least one discussion session. A dozen discussions were held; nearly 300 books were requested, and over 200 faculty and staff attended. The voluntary nature and supportive atmosphere of these discussions was crucial to the development of “shared pictures of the future” and for fostering “genuine commitment and enrollment” (Senge). As Sugarman (2001, p. 18) observes, “increased trust and respect in a work group enable colleagues to talk more effectively about difficult subjects and hence enable better problem solving to occur. This organizational learning (learning on behalf of one’s organization) is the key to improvement, innovation, and greater competitiveness.”

This dialogue is part of the strategy Senge suggests for surfacing the tacit knowledge of people in an organization as well as encouraging buy-in and shared commitment. This discipline has been practiced extensively in the development of IPFW’s diversity learning or-

ganization: through the focus groups developed by the DLT around the initial diversity transformation plan, the focus groups and the public hearings held by DC and the DLT around the diversity requirement, and the extensive public comment sessions and discussions for both the 1996 and 2001 IPFW Strategic Plans.

Systems thinking – Senge’s Fifth Discipline – involves “organizing complexity into a coherent story.” Diversity Council illustrates this in their evolving attempt to create a diverse campus environment. As mentioned, in the mid-1990s, DC funded Diversity Week activities. After several years, this approach was abandoned in favor of funding activities throughout the academic year. After the creation of the Diversity Leadership Team in 2000, DC’s funding moved more to grants and strategic support for course and curriculum transformation. Two workshops, an institute, and a dozen book discussions were held. With the support of DC grants, 10 courses were transformed, 4 departments worked on auditing and systematically transforming their curricula for diversity, one program created a faculty learning community to implement diversity, one program worked to increase enrollment diversity, and one program was made more accessible to people with disabilities.

The next step in embedding the learning from this initiative within the organization was the creation, by the DC and DLT, of a Diversity Showcase in Spring 2005. The goals of the showcase were “to inform the IPFW community of exemplary diversity initiatives on campus, to identify best practices, and plan for the future” (IPFW Diversity Council 2005, p. 6). As part of this effort, DC specified, for the first time, differential operational definitions of diversity, depending on whether the context was recruitment, retention, curriculum, campus climate, or outreach activities. This allowed for more systematic evaluation.

At the Showcase, there were 45 displays representing diversity initiatives from 18 academic units and 5 student affairs departments; also several collaborations and one staff initiative. A cadre of faculty, staff and students were recruited and trained as reviewers. Each was assigned 10-12 displays to examine, evaluate, and make further recommendations. This strategy was designed in part to promote a deeper engagement of the reviewers with diversity themes. Thirty-seven of these reviews, and 70 evaluations from general attendees were received. Responses indicated that attendees were very positive about the range and quality of the displays. Most important, though, was the clear sentiment that attendees had become aware – often for the first time – of the depth and extent of diversity initiatives at IPFW. Many indicated that they were inspired to implement some of the ideas on their own. This clearly indicates that the course and curriculum transformation initiative was having systemic impact.

Turning to Cherns’ principles of sociotechnical design, we see that most of the efforts to date conform nicely to Cherns’ principles. His Compatibility principle says that the design has to satisfy an array of objectives and should be arrived at by consensus. This has been accomplished through the embedding of diversity in the consensually-arrived-at 2001 Strategic Plan and the charge to the Diversity Council in 2003 to coordinate and report on all diversity activities intended to meet strategic plan goals (IPFW Diversity Council 2004:1).

The principles of Minimal Critical Specification and Variance Control were followed in that the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs allowed the Diversity Leadership Team almost total leeway in developing plans for course and curriculum transformation and the various supporting activities. Moreover, accountability for diversity goals has been pushed downward in the organization by making Deans responsible for generating diversity goals appropriate to their respective schools and reporting on them annually.

The principle of Boundary Location, in which boundaries are not drawn in ways that impede the flow of information, was implemented in several ways. The Diversity Council was deliberately composed of all representatives of all stakeholders. Members of the DLT were deliberately selected from several different schools within the university, and transformation proposals were solicited from a variety of areas – especially, for instance, from science and math. The principle of Information Flow has been implemented in the regular reports of the Diversity Council, the hearings and focus groups and the publicizing of draft plans for diversity transformation and the diversity general education requirement as well as those for the university strategic plans. The principle of Power and Authority, in which people command the necessary resources to do their work, has generally been followed. The DC received funding from the Vice Chancellors of Academic, Student, and Financial Affairs as well as the Chancellor. The DC paid for the workshops and institutes and well as travel and educational expenses of the DLT.

The Multifunction Principle, in which organizations take account of both the external and internal environment, was implemented in part through the use of nationally-known consultants on diversity and curriculum transformation as well as experts from within the Indiana and Purdue university systems. At the same time, a conscious effort was made to “enlarge the repertoire” and enhance the skills of local campus people through recruitment, training and self-study of the Diversity Leadership Team and the workshops and institutes it sponsored.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The foregoing analysis indicates that IPFW has made great strides to create a learning organization with a coherent knowledge management strategy. However, further progress depends upon meeting the challenges that model presents. A look at Cherns’ final principles points to some of those challenges.

Cherns’ principle of Support Congruence, in which people are rewarded for what they know and are willing to learn, for instance, has a mixed assessment. Grants for course and curriculum transformation were rewards to faculty and staff, as was the creation of the annual Diversity Council Award for Integrating Diversity Goals into the Curriculum. Members of the Diversity Council and the Diversity Leadership Team were rewarded with university-sponsored learning opportunities. However, in terms of the common currency of the university – merit pay increases, tenure, and promotion – there is very little congruence between efforts and rewards. This is an area that will require attention if the learning initiative is to expand.

Cherns’ final principles of Incompletion and the Transitional Organization represent well where we are at now. The complexity of process, for instance, has increased with the necessity of obtaining Faculty Senate approval for the diversity general education requirement. As noted, that initiative is temporarily stalled while a campus-wide review of the goals and objectives of the baccalaureate at IPFW is conducted. While the specific diversity proposal remains in limbo, the general review offers the opportunity to embed diversity throughout the baccalaureate goals, much as was done with the second Strategic Plan.

The final challenge is to ensure that the overall process of diversity transformation is embedded in the organization. Two activities are crucial here. One is to acknowledge mistakes and failures, to tell the “disappointment stories,” as Senge calls them, as a prelude to improvement. One such issue is the lack of structural diversity at IPFW. As Table 1 illustrates, while minority percentages of the student population have grown, they are far from representative

of the immediate area in which the university is located. Moreover, the retention and six-year graduation rate for Blacks and Hispanics are significantly lower than those for White students and far below established targets. Targeted plans in these areas are required (IPFW Diversity Council 2004). A recent knowledge management initiative in this area is promising. In Fall 2005, the Chancellor created the position of Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity and assigned that individual to an Enrollment Management team that includes two other associate vice chancellors.

One additional issue concerns the tacit knowledge of key individuals within the organization. As Lehaney and his colleagues have noted, "tacit knowledge is difficult if not impossible to replace." At IPFW, the Associate Vice Chancellor for Faculty Affairs is retiring this year. This person was a member of the original Council on Minority Recruitment and Retention, the leader of the Diversity Council, and a key player in the Diversity Leadership Team. It is important that this staff member's knowledge is codified effectively so that successors can build on what has been done. Furthermore, the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, a key supporter of diversity, will retire in a few years; it is imperative that her commitment and initiatives are embedded in the organization.

In conclusion, it is apparent that the success IPFW has had in infusing diversity into the campus and the curriculum have been due – whether intentional and systematic or not – to a knowledge management strategy that reflects the principles of a learning organization. The challenge for the institution is to proceed more self-consciously from here, incorporating strategic knowledge management into diversity management.

Can IPFW's experience with diversity management be generalized to other institutions in other contexts and other countries? First of all, this analysis shows that an effective knowledge management strategy works. So while specific details of a strategy will inevitably differ in other contexts, the dynamic characteristics of a learning organization based upon knowledge management and sociotechnical design have been shown to be effective. Ultimately, then, this paper represents the kind of storytelling that is fundamental to building a culture of knowledge management.

References

- Berlak, A. & Moyenda, S. 2001. *Taking it personally: racism in the classroom from kindergarten to college*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Brown, J.S., & Duguid, P. 2000. *The social life of information*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Cherns, A. 1976. The principles of sociotechnical design. *Human Relations*, 29(8):783-792. [Online] <<http://hum.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/29/8/783>> (Accessed November 29, 2005).
- Cherns, A. 1987. Principles of sociotechnical design revisited. *Human Relations*, 40(3):153-161. [Online] <<http://hum.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/40/3/153>> (Accessed November 29, 2005).
- Clausen, J., Nelms, C. & Sciame-Giesecke, S. 2005. Working the system: a multi-year diversity transformation program for the campuses of Indiana University. Indiana University Purdue University Fort Wayne.
- Dews, C. & Law, C. 1995. *This fine place so far from home: voices of academics from the working class*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Gurin, P., Dey, E.L., Hurtado, S., & Gurin, G. 2002. Diversity and higher education: theory and impact on educational outcomes. *Harvard Educational Review*, 72(3). [Online] <<http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~hepg/gurin.pdf>> (Accessed December 12, 2005).
- hooks, b. 1994. *Teaching to transgress: education as the practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge.

- Hurtado, S., Milem, J., Clayton-Pedersen, A., Allen, W. 1999. *Enacting diverse learning environments: improving the climate for racial/ethnic diversity in higher education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. ERIC Digest. [Online] <<http://www.ericdigests.org/2000-1/diverse.html>> (Accessed December 12, 2005).
- IPFW Diversity Council. 2004. Strategic goals for diversity at IPFW: report and recommendations. Indiana University Purdue University Fort Wayne (June).
- IPFW Office of Academic Affairs. 2003. Proposal for a diversity requirement in general education: chronology of events. Indiana University Purdue University Fort Wayne. December 1.
- IPFW Statement on Diversity. n.d. [Online] <<http://www.ipfw.edu/about/diversity/>> (Accessed November 16, 2005).
- IPFW Strategic Plan and First-Year Report. 1997. Indiana University Purdue University Fort Wayne, November.
- IPFW Strategic Plan. 2001. Strategies for excellence: the strategic plan 2001-2006. Indiana University Purdue University Fort Wayne (November). [Online] <<http://www.ipfw.edu/about/excellence/IPFW-strategic-plan.pdf>> (Accessed November 12, 2005).
- Kosko, B. 1993. *Fuzzy thinking: the new science of fuzzy logic*. New York: Hyperion.
- LaDuke, W. 2002. *The Winona LaDuke reader*. Stillwater, MN: Voyageur Press.
- Lefebvre, H. 1968. *The sociology of Marx*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lehaney, B., Clarke, S., Cokes, E. & Jack, G. 2004. *Beyond knowledge management*. Hershey, PA: Idea Group Publishing.
- Maslow, A.H. 1973. Self-actualizing people: a study of psychological health. in *Dominance, self-esteem, self-actualization: germinal papers of A.H. Maslow*, edited by R.L. Lowry. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing:177-201.
- Milam, J. 2001. Knowledge management for higher education. ERIC Digest. ED464520. Washington, D.C.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education. [Online] <<http://www.highered.org/docs/milam-ericdigest-km.PDF>> (Accessed December 2, 2005).
- Milam, J. 2005. Chapter 5 – Organizational learning through knowledge workers and infomediaries. [Online] <<http://www.highered.org/docs/milam-chapter5.pdf>> (Accessed December 2, 2005).
- Musil, C. M., with García, M., Moses, Y. T. & Smith, D. G. 1995. Diversity in higher education: a work in progress. Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges and Universities.
- Oliver, G. R., Handzic, M. & Van Toorn, C. 2003. Towards understanding KM practices in the academic environment: the shoemaker's paradox. *EJKM: Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management* 1(2) Paper 13. [Online] <<http://www.ejkm.com/volume-1/volume1-issue-2/issue2-art13.htm>> (Accessed December 2, 2005).
- Reamy, T. 2002a. Imparting knowledge through storytelling, part 1. *KMWorld*. Posted June 1, 2002. [Online] <<http://www.kmworld.com/Articles/PrintArticle.aspx?ArticleID=9358>> (Accessed December 2, 2005).
- Reamy, T. 2002b. Imparting knowledge through storytelling, part 2. *KMWorld*. Posted July 1, 2002. [Online] <<http://www.kmworld.com/Articles/PrintArticle.aspx?ArticleID=9374>> (Accessed December 2, 2005).
- Ritzer, G. 2000. *Sociological theory, 5 th ed.* New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Rose, M. 1989. *Lives on the boundary*. New York: Penguin.
- Senge, P. M. 1990. *The fifth discipline: the art & practice of the learning organization*. New York: Doubleday.
- Simpson, J. 2003. *I have been waiting: race and U.S. higher education*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Sugarman, B. 2001. A learning-based approach to organizational change: five case studies of guided change initiatives. Society for Organizational Learning. [Online] <http://solonline.org/repository/item?item_id=360596> (Accessed December 10, 2005).
- Tatum, B.D. 1997. *Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria? and other conversations about race*. New York: Basic Books.

Young, Celia. 2007. "Organization Culture Change: The Bottom Line of Diversity." *The Diversity Factor* 15:1 Winter.

About the Author

Dr. Patrick J. Ashton

For over 30 years I have been involved in diversity efforts within the university. I have taught diversity-related courses, participated in recruitment and faculty development efforts, and served on various campus and systemwide task forces. I have received a number of diversity-related teaching awards, and have published several articles in this area.

EDITORS

Mary Kalantzis, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, USA.

Paul James, RMIT University, Australia

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Ien Ang, University of Western Sydney, Sydney, Australia.

Joanna van Antwerpen, Research and Statistics, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Samuel Aroni, University of California, Los Angeles, USA.

Susan Bridges, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong.

Duane Champagne, University of California, Los Angeles, USA.

Guosheng Y. Chen, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.

Jock Collins, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia.

Bill Cope, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, USA.

Heather Marion D'Cruz, Deakin University, Geelong, Australia.

James Early, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., USA.

Denise Egéa-Kuehne, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, USA.

Amaeswar Galla, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.

Grethe van Geffen, Seba Cultuurmanagement, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Barry Gills, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK.

Jackie Huggins, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.

Andrew Jakubowicz, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia.

Ha Jingxiong, Central University of Nationalities, Beijing, China.

Jack Levin, Northeastern University, Boston, USA.

Cristina Poyatos Matas, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia.

Peter McLaren, University of California, Los Angeles, USA.

Joe Melcher, Xavier University of Louisiana, New Orleans, USA.

Greg Meyjes, Solidaris Intercultural Services, Falls Church, USA.

Walter Mignolo, Duke University, Durham, USA.

Brendan O'Leary, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, USA.

Aihwa Ong, University of California, Berkeley, USA.

Peter Phipps, Globalism Institute, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.

Ronald Prins, Bos en Lommer Neighbourhood Council, Amsterdam-West,
The Netherlands.

Peter Sellars, University of California, Los Angeles, USA.

Michael Shapiro, University of Hawai'i, Manoa, USA.

David S. Silverman, Maryville University, St. Louis, USA.

Martijn F.E. Stegge, Diversity Platform, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Geoff Stokes, Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University,
Melbourne, Australia.

Terry Threadgold, Cardiff University, Wales, UK.

Mililani Trask, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues for the
Economic Council of the UN Assembly, Hawai'i, USA.

Marij Urlings, Inholland University, Amsterdam-Diemen, The Netherlands.

Rob Walker, Keele University, Keele, UK.

Ning Wang, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China.

Owens Wiwa, African Environmental and Human Development Agency, Toronto, Canada.

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS JOURNALS



Creates a space for dialogue on innovative theories and practices in the arts, and their inter-relationships with society.

ISSN: 1833-1866

<http://www.Arts-Journal.com>



Examines the meaning and purpose of 'design' while also speaking in grounded ways about the task of design and the use of designed artefacts and processes.

ISSN: 1833-1874

<http://www.Design-Journal.com>



Maps and interprets new trends and patterns in globalisation.

ISSN 1835-4432

<http://www.GlobalStudiesJournal.com>



Sets out to foster inquiry, invite dialogue and build a body of knowledge on the nature and future of learning.

ISSN: 1447-9540

<http://www.Learning-Journal.com>



Addresses the key question: How can the institution of the museum become more inclusive?

ISSN 1835-2014

<http://www.Museum-Journal.com>



Draws from the various fields and perspectives through which we can address fundamental questions of sustainability.

ISSN: 1832-2077

<http://www.Sustainability-Journal.com>



Investigates the affordances for learning in the digital media, in school and throughout everyday life.

ISSN 1835-2030

<http://www.UlJournal.com>



Explores the past, present and future of books, publishing, libraries, information, literacy and learning in the information society.

ISSN: 1447-9567

<http://www.Book-Journal.com>



Provides a forum for discussion and builds a body of knowledge on the forms and dynamics of difference and diversity.

ISSN: 1447-9583

<http://www.Diversity-Journal.com>



Discusses the role of the humanities in contemplating the future and the human, in an era otherwise dominated by scientific, technical and economic rationalisms.

ISSN: 1447-9559

<http://www.Humanities-Journal.com>



Creates a space for discussion of the nature and future of organisations, in all their forms and manifestations.

ISSN: 1447-9575

<http://www.Management-Journal.com>



Discusses disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge creation within and across the various social sciences and between the social, natural and applied sciences.

ISSN: 1833-1882

<http://www.Socialsciences-Journal.com>



Focuses on a range of critically important themes in the various fields that address the complex and subtle relationships between technology, knowledge and society.

ISSN: 1832-3669

<http://www.Technology-Journal.com>



Explores the meaning and purpose of the academy in times of striking social transformation.

ISSN 1835-2030

<http://www.Universities-Journal.com>

FOR SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

subscriptions@commonground.com.au