

Developing an LGBTQ-friendly College of Business: A Roadmap for Change

Introduction. As the business world becomes more and more diverse, many colleges of business are challenged to keep up and adapt. This is because traditionally colleges of business have tended to have more conservative cultures where generally assumptions are made that people (faculty, students, businesses), tend to be similar. In terms of diversity from the LGBTQ perspective, the result is often people (faculty and students) from their community are missing or underrepresented.

Developing a more LGBTQ-friendly culture in colleges of business can offer many benefits, not only in terms of the need to adapt to the new, more diverse business world, but in other ways, such as attracting a more diverse faculty and student population, preparing students for working in a more diverse business world, developing a potential niche to expand the scopes of their programs and becoming connected to a very affluent and growing business community.

While the benefits of colleges of business becoming more LGBTQ-friendly are significant, the challenges are many, particularly when many LGBTQ individuals are still closeted as they risk stigmatization from family and friends.

Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications. The outline below references a substantial area of literature that supports such issues as the growth of diversity in the business community, the buying power of the LGBTQ community, the traditional conservative cultures of colleges of business, benefits, and challenges to the development of LGBTQ-friendly colleges of business.

Session Description. This session will discuss the challenges and benefits of creating an LGBTQ-friendly college of business. The panelists will bring their diverse perspectives to the discussion and will engage with the session participants in an effort to both inform the group about the challenges in undertaking this as well as the reasons that it is important. Ideally, creating this space can provide an inclusive and collaborative environment for LGBTQ faculty and staff, as well as creating a space where students can thrive and know that their diverse perspectives are both recognized and respected. The roundtable will go beyond this to discuss why this is important to colleges because it's important to the business community and because it is also becoming a key area of differentiation for schools seeking accreditation or re-accreditation with the AACSB. The session will start with brief introductions of the panelists and their perspectives, as well as some guiding information for the areas of discussion. These areas include the importance of diversity to business, the impact of the LGBTQ community on business success, the challenges that colleges of business face in undertaking more LGBTQ-friendly environments, and some paths to successful implementation of these concepts. This interactive session will focus on challenges and solutions not just of the panelists, but of all participants as they work collaboratively to understand the importance of this and the challenges that it creates.

AACSB and Diversity

An inherent aspect of success for business schools is to position themselves in the market as both capable and current. Schools also need to consider how their programs fit into a framework that will enhance not only their reputation and educational offerings, but also improve their successful application and renewal for AACSB accreditation. This is positioned as taking a leadership position in transforming education (AACSB 2108). It is also clear that the AACSB has a vision of constant improvement for itself and the schools it accredits. In 2017 the AACSB held its first *Diversity and Inclusion Summit*. It has grown in impact and attendance. There is a *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion* breakout section on the AACSB website under the category of "advocacy and awareness." Among the

items the AACSB breaks out in that section is this quote from the AACSB Standards – *"The values of diversity and inclusion foster the exploration of ... differences in a safe and supportive environment, where community members move beyond tolerance to seeking and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity and the contributions these differences make to innovative, engaged, and impactful business experiences"* (AACSB, 2020).

Literature Review (work in progress)

The last decade brought significant milestones for the LGBTQ community: same-sex marriage was legalized, openly gay and transgender politicians were elected, and "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was repealed. In terms of public opinion, almost half of Americans view gender as fluid (Sosin, 2020), 63% support same-sex marriage, and 75% are in favor of gay adoption rights (Gallup, 2019). Yet, despite the progress, many challenges persist, both the LGBTQ community itself and for the organizations that serve them. For example, there is still no civil rights legislation that protects LGBTQ people from workplace or marketplace discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation. Regardless of personal convictions, an increasingly diverse and inclusive population has required organizations to reassess their marketing efforts, managerial policies, and corporate cultures to meet the needs and demands of various stakeholder groups. To attract customers and retain top talent, companies are adapting to the changing marketplace and workforce, and research suggests this makes good business sense. The LGBTQ market possesses significant buying power that is estimated at \$917 billion (Witeck Communications, 2016), and LGBTQ consumers prefer supporting businesses that they believe are gay-friendly (need to cite). However, a commitment to diversity requires more than just inclusive marketing and advertising strategies; stakeholders want to see that the gay-friendly image projected externally is also being enacted internally. Although workplace policies have improved, close to half of LGBTQ employees who were polled by the HRC said they are still closeted at work and the most prevalent reason participants cited for not voicing concerns about discrimination to management is that they believed nothing would be done (HRC, ?).

Organizations are realizing that there are many benefits to fostering inclusive environments. For example, corporate diversity has been linked to enhanced financial performance (Nourafshan, 2017) and businesses with LGBT+ friendly human resource management (HRM) practices tend to have higher stock prices (Fletcher, 2019). In addition to bottom-line benefits, inclusive corporate practices can create happier, more productive employees; LGBT+ friendly HRM practices improve workplace climates toward diversity and reduce discrimination against LGBT+ employees (Fletcher, 2019). Corporate diversity can improve brand loyalty and LGBTQ employees can offer unique perspectives on how to appeal to LGBTQ customers in the marketplace (Nourafshan, 2017; Thomas, 1996).

However, to continue on this path of progress, individuals entering the workforce must be adequately trained to understand and embrace the diversity of the people they will be working with and managing, as well as the customers they will be serving. Businesses need managers who can effectively manage and support a diverse workforce (Robinson, 2017). As major corporations continue to dedicate resources to initiatives that support the hiring and retaining of LGBTQ employees, the question remains whether colleges of business are doing enough to instill values of diversity and inclusion in their students—the people who will eventually be the business leaders. Research suggests that LGBTQ biases in college tend to perpetuate in the workforce (Cech, 2018), with a particularly harmful impact on the

transgender workforce (Ellis, 2013). Thus, given the strong business case for creating inclusive business environments, it is imperative that business schools adapt to the way that world is changing.

There is a clear need for this evolution not only to adequately prepare our students for entering a diverse workforce, but also to ensure that we are attracting students, faculty, and business partners. Research indicates that anti-discrimination policies and domestic partner benefits attract diverse faculty, which can help schools meet their diversity goals (Cook, 2008).

Outline

The follow outline represents a preliminary literature review where some of the citations will still need to be verified, but it gives a good idea of the scope of topics for seminar as well as support from the literature.

Audience is Colleges of Businesses

General Business World is Diverse

- Business is more diverse employees, corporations are seeking diversity.
 - Related papers
 - ALR-2017-Nourafshan
 - Increased corporate diversity leads to positive financial performance
 - Improves decision informed by diversity of experience and perspective
 - Challenge the status quo and prevent group think
 - Employees and consumers demonstrate positive reactions to signaling that a company embraces diversity
 - Improves brand loyalty
 - LGBTQ employees represent the perspectives of customers
 - HBR-1996-Thomas
 - Offer unique perspectives on niche markets
- Tremendous business opportunities: \$billions buying-power of LGBTQ market. (see narrative)

Colleges of Business

- Traditionally College of Businesses are conservative.
 - Related papers
 - JEE-2018-Cech
 - LGBTQ biases in college perpetuate in the workforce
 - CNN-2013-Ellis
 - These biases have particularly impacted the transgender workforce.
- Smaller, more isolated CoBs might be able to take advantage of opportunities.
- Attracting Students and Businesses.

Benefits:

- Niche market for student and businesses.
- Related papers
 - JDHE-2008-Cook
 - Anti-discrimination policies and domestic partner benefits attract diverse faculty
 - BE-2017-Bisoux

- Employers are seeking out the diverse talents of LGBTQ members – increase employment rate for college

Challenges:

- Related papers
 - CJAS-2017-Baker
 - Just because an institution has policies and promotes diversity does not guarantee that the environment will feel safe for LGBTQ members.
 - BE-2017-Bisoux
 - The LGBTQ community faces bias especially because many people believe they don't need as much attention as other minorities since they can "cover" their differences.
 - HBR-1996-Thomas
 - It is not enough to simply diversify the population. Efforts must be made to create an inclusive environment.
 - JME-2010-King
 - In one study, attendees of diversity training engaged in more discriminatory behavior after the training than employees who had not attended.
- Students:
 - LGBTQ population tends to have challenges... suicide, depression, violence, etc. Business schools need to reach out and make their program inclusive and attractive. Students will benefit.
 - Non-LGBTQ students will be working in a diverse business world and need to be equipped to thrive in this new world.

Faculty:

- Fear of coming out
- Related papers
 - JDHE-2008-Cook
 - Anti-discrimination policies and domestic partner benefits attract diverse faculty (not only LGBTQ faculty but also gender and ethnic/racial diversity)
 - HBR-1996-Thomas
 - A diverse workforce will embody different perspectives and approaches to work. Leadership must value variety of opinion and insight.
 - The culture must create an expectation of high standards of performance from everyone. Everyone should be expected to contribute fully.

Design:

Students, Faculty, Curriculum

Examples:

Programs around the world.

- Related papers

- BE-2017-Bisoux
 - Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government faculty dded portraits of minority members.
 - Haub School of Business at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania faculty regularly ask how they have progressed in terms of diversity
 - Set goals for improvement. If a minority is 10% of the population this year aim for 15% next year

How to Model or Roadmap:

- Related papers
 - BE-2017-Bisoux
 - Invite observers to the classroom to gauge whether professors are treating students equitably.
 - Have professors video record lectures and review them to see if they are giving each student equal attention.
 - Offer scholarships for LGBTQ applicants
 - Stage workshops, conversations, and/or retreats to teach faculty about the language (i.e. preferred pronouns) and biases involving the LGBTQ community.
 - Incorporate diversity discussions into student and faculty orientations.
 - Ask students for feedback on the culture in the college of business.
 - Offer diversity workshops to students for college credit
 - AMLE-2017-Robinson
 - Incorporate language from LGBTQ community into teaching (i.e., cisgender, transgender, nonbinary, etc.)
 - Distinguish between sexual orientation (LGB) and gender orientation (T)
 - Gender-neutral bathrooms
 - How we “do” gender – created by our behaviors and how we perform
 - Bring speakers into the classroom
 - BJM-2014-Ozturk
 - Give faculty members the opportunity to present on LGBTQ research interests to other faculty members
 - AMAMP-2019-Fletcher
 - Organizations should develop a distinct set of LGBTQ friendly practices that that complement existing people management and HRM activities.
 - JME-2010-King
 - Give faculty members and students diversity surveys to gauge their feelings about diversity on campus
 - Incorporate case studies into training.
 - Top leadership support crucial.