**Faculty Recruitment and DEI Initiatives: Case Exercises on What Can Be Learned in Business Programs and Higher Education for Management Practice**

**Abstract**

Over the past decade there has been an increasing need to understand how diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives can further advance the strategic aims of higher education and business degree programs. In this regard, a central challenge that the Chronicle of Education and also the AACSB highlight is how diversity aims can be further embedded not just in core curricula, but also in faculty recruitment and retention pipelines in business programs. While often considered two different foci, they are often intertwined through arguments of representativeness bias (i.e., whether and how can student and faculty can reflect the diversity considerations of the other). Although this perspective remains pertinent, we argue that there needs to be a deeper conversation regarding three perspectives on diversity, equity, and inclusion to address this concern in higher education and business programs - specifically that of legal-compliance, marketing, and the business case for diversity (see Thomas and Ely, 1996). As part of this roundtable discussion, we will both review this three-paradigm framework from Thomas and Ely through a hypothetical case and then institutional reflection, culminating in individual and institutional take-aways for participants.

Keywords: Faculty hiring and retention, diversity and inclusion, HR applications

**Introduction**

The past decade has seen increasing concern and attention given to diversity, equity, and inclusion (known as DEI) considerations in higher education and business degree programs. Critical to this concern are shifting demographics. For example, both the Chronicle of Higher Education and the AACSB project that higher education and business school programs will be increasingly dominated by the shift from male to female demographics and will need to address an increasingly multi-diverse population than was once the case in the past (See June, 2021 and Washington & Hoobles, 2021 for examples).

As a response to these shifts, current approaches in higher education and business programs seek to create better balance by focusing faculty and recruitment and retention pipelines to mirror these demographic shifts. One school of thought is how best to address representative bias – or how faculty should mirror or reflect existing and projected shifts in the student demographic profiles? (See Baez, 2003 for a more detailed discussion).

Current research indicates that student learning and retention can be affected by not just inherent and deep levels of diversification, but even by topographical representation (visual similarities or differences that affect levels of self-identification and self-affirmation in learning behavior) and which can be influenced by hiring practices of faculty (Collins & Kritsonis, 2006). However, this remains subject to further conversation. For example, where might we over or underestimate talent in this regard? How might such efforts be better informed by alternative approaches in DEI and HR practice? What might be management and institutional constraints?

As part of the approach for this year’s conference theme on diversity equity and inclusion, this proposal begins by looking at how Thomas and Ely’s (1996) work on “Making Differences Matter” can deepen the conversation for management faculty and administrators.

**Theoretical Frameworks and Traditions**

Specifically, Thomas and Ely (1996) provide three-paradigm arguments on diversity management and inclusion. They include 1) the legal perspective (what they refer to as the “discrimination-and-fairness” paradigm of homogenizing difference (i.e., the compliance approach); 2) the marketing perspective (what they refer to as the “access-and-legitimacy” paradigm of matching diversity attributes of employees to consumers and/or taking a “niche” perspective on diversity); and 3) the “learning-and-effectiveness” paradigm that argues for the business case for diversity as essential to redesigning work and institutions for innovation.

These three perspectives may not only help advance the conversation on how to frame and discuss DEI initiatives, but they may also address critical and sensitive issues when advancing DEI with respect to faculty retention and recruitment. For example, how can we move from a “deficit-based” approach (i.e., what we lack in diversity) toward an “asset-based” approach (i.e., what can we gain in diversity management and inclusion) in educational institutions? (See Georgiadou, Gonzalez-Perez, & Olivas-Luján, 2019; Rooney, 2018). Where and how can we move diversity beyond just pipeline practices toward one of mutual learning and social benefit? (See Washington & Hobbler, 2021). How might the above, and specifically the third perspective from Thomas and Ely (1996), help look at diversity as a dynamic capability, which can aid individuals and their institutions to recombine and advance talent, innovation, and organizational performance as an ongoing resource needed to improve organizational knowledge bases - not just organizational outcomes?

With the above in mind, we argue that to surface the three-paradigms from Thomas and Ely (1996) thus requires that higher education administrators and business program faculty recognize higher education institutions and programs as “diverse communicative infrastructures” (Nicotera, Clinkscales, & Walker, 2003, p. 20), which should encourage all stakeholders to examine whose voices are silenced and/or heard and how decisions and/or organizational structures are ultimately created and sustained by conscious and unconscious communication processes (See Nicotera, Clinkscales, & Walker, 2003). Since diversity is embedded in systems, culture, and structure, addressing 1) who is marginalized and 2) where and how to gain greater insights into how images, ideas, thoughts, and actions affect DEI are critical. We also consider where and how the above may be interrelated to newer trends in diversity management and inclusion and specific to the role of “cluster-hiring” – which we will define and provide more elaboration at our session.

**Learning Objectives**

With the above in mind, the learning outcomes associated with our roundtable will thus help faculty and administrators:

1. Understand the key issues when enacting DEI initiatives including in recruitment and retention through two sample exercises and as introduced via a hypothetical case
2. Review and apply Thomas and Ely’s three-paradigm framework to deepen the conversation on DEI and their contingencies with respect to the above
3. Develop an action plan for current and future DEI initiatives for participants’ individual business programs and institutions along with identification of any key DEI trends

As preparation points, we suggest that those who are less familiar with the literature on DEI in higher education and the Thomas and Ely’s three-paradigm framework, review their article. We also suggest that those in attendance also review the Chronicle of Higher Education’s article on “Building Diverse Campuses” as background readings.

* + https://hbr.org/1996/09/making-differences-matter-a-new-paradigm-for-managing-diversity
  + [Building Diverse Campuses (chronicle.com)](read://https_www.chronicle.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.chronicle.com%2Fchronicle-intelligence%2Freport%2Fbuilding-diverse-campuses-4-key-questions-and-4-case-studies)

# Session Description and Plan

To achieve our learning objectives, our session is thus planned as follows:

* **Time/Format** – 60-minute Roundtable
* **Description –** As part of our roundtable format, we will do the following in the following three parts:
  + **Part I - 10 – minutes** - Provide a general overview of the three-paradigm framework from Thomas and Ely (1996) seminal work on DEI – “Making Differences Matter”. We also review some of the most recent concerns highlighted by key higher education and AACSB outlets on diversity in recruitment and retention pipelines.
  + **Part II - 40 minutes** – Lead participants through two exercises, Exercise A and B, (roughly 20 minutes each) as briefly noted below.
  + **Exercise A** - In the first exercise, we will present a fictional case study of a university and a marketing department where the institution is looking to diversify its faculty through the recruitment pipeline of faculty. A synopsis of this case is provided below:
    - *At this institution and in this department, 90% of the faculty are white males. The department is considering hiring a Black woman to help diversify their faculty, as students, in which 55% of them identify as BIPOC, 45% identify as female, and 35% identify as female and BIPOC, have continuously expressed frustration at the lack of diverse faculty within the department. Moreover, the department recently lost two diverse faculty members; one gay male-Latino faculty member and one female-Vietnamese faculty member recently resigned from their position, where they disclosed in their exit interview that the Marketing department and the University has a hostile culture towards people of color.*
  + We will use then ask participants first in individual and then in small group discussions (roughly 3-4 people per group), how they will apply each of the Thomas and Ely perspectives to this case as well as identify their possible challenges and contingencies? Moderators of these small group discussions will also encourage attendees to think about how recruitment and retention of diverse faculty is an ongoing process, where resources will need to be devoted in order to achieving DEI goals.

**Exercise B** – Our second exercise will flow from the first exercise. In this exercise, participants will be asked to compare-and-contrast the case study to their own institutions and business programs. Participants will first reflect on their own institution and program, and then discuss in small groups (3-4 people) their reflections. This session will end with a large group discussion examining how institutions may develop a DEI paradigm to help recruit and retain diverse faculty. Moderators will encourage participants to end the session by discussing:

How do we examine/take action on DEI in the various contexts?

How could institutions/programs overcome constraints?

What DEI strategies may be useful to recruit and retain diverse faculty in the emerging paradigm?

Moderators will also provide perspectives on current and emergent practices in field including from the perspective of a Chief Diversity Officer from a mid-size institution.

* + **Part III – 10 minutes** – wrap-up and debrief. At the end of this sessions, individual participants will provide 1-2 key takeaways from this session.
* **Target Audience** – Our target audience are management faculty and higher education administrators looking to develop alternative practices to help them better leverage DEI practices for higher education and business program change. Alternatively, faculty may utilize the above exercise as sample case for advanced undergraduate or graduate HR students.
* **Materials Needed** – computer and notepads

# Application to Conference Theme and Unique Contribution to MOBTS

This session connects to the conference theme of DEI by examining how DEI is currently framed and practiced in higher education and within business programs. We then re-imagine how DEI efforts need to be reformed to address the current and future challenges and opportunities. The session is unique in that it frames DEI in a multifaceted and holistic approach that encourages participants to critically think about current barriers related to DEI and then develop potential three-paradigm strategies that can be implemented in their universities and business programs. The hope of this session is for faculty, staff, and administrators to strategically think through next action steps and specific to how we can build, create, and sustain an inclusive, and diverse learning and teaching community for all students, staff, and faculty. Additionally, the above case can be utilized with advanced HR students to address current issues and challenges in recruitment in an alternative setting.

# Acknowledgements of First-Time Submission of This Work

This is the first time this proposal has been presented to MOBTC and at a conference.

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