Policy Statement 96

This We Believe About Diversity in Business Education

Diversity represents differences including, but not limited to, racial and ethnic background; gender; socioeconomic status (SES); individuals with disabilities; English language learners (ELLs); and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) individuals. Some aspects of diversity are readily visible; others are not as obvious. The world is a mosaic of differences, all of which provide value and significance to the greater good. Regardless of the ability to classify different levels of diverseness, the concept of diversity plays a critical role in today's global society.

Diversity has been traditionally perceived as individuals categorized according to one of the aforementioned differences. The interconnectedness of people living multiple and layered identities is known as *intersectionality*; individuals are members of more than one category or social group and can experience advantages and disadvantages related to those classifications.

The following sections describe selected aspects of diversity, identify related issues, and empower business educators to transform their pedagogical practices within an ever-changing, global society.

Race/Ethnicity

Race is an ambiguous construct that implies a taxonomy or species when, in fact, all people belong to the same human race (i.e., *Homo sapiens*). By contrast, ethnicity is a social category that groups people by ancestry. Ethnicities can be represented by national, religious, or cultural traditions. Differences in racial and ethnic backgrounds have historically led to stereotypical assumptions based on generalizations and ethnocentric thinking.

Gender

Inequities still exist among genders in the workforce; many traditional occupations are still gender dominated. For example, females tend to be overrepresented in lower-paying occupations and, on average, are still paid lower than males—even in comparable jobs.

Socioeconomic Status (SES)

SES is influenced by a combination of factors such as geographical location, vocation, income, and education. On average, students with low SES struggle with language, reading, writing, and math skills as well as access to technology.

Individuals with Disabilities

Disabilities can include behavioral, cognitive, emotional, mental, physical, sensory, verbal, and social challenges. Students with disabilities transitioning from high school to the workforce and/or

further education face considerable challenges in their pursuits of economic, employment, and personal success as well as independence. Students with disabilities are often underemployed or unemployed.

English Language Learners (ELLs)

ELLs enter the classroom using a language other than English as their primary mode of communication and often do not speak English at home. The percentage of public school students who are ELLs has steadily increased. These students are tasked with learning course content while learning a second language, which may result in lower academic performance.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex (LGBTQI)

LGBTQI students navigate societal stigmatization about their identities while often coping with victimization and harassment. As such, LGBTQI students are at increased risk of experiencing negative psychosocial welfare, health complications, and adverse academic outcomes.

WE BELIEVE business educators should:

. . . reflect, recognize, and become accountable for their own personal biases;

. . . complete diagnostic tools such as self-assessment inventories about pre-dispositions;

. . . engage in conversations with individuals who have different characteristics and perspectives than their own;

. . . participate in professional development opportunities (i.e., professional conferences and webinars) to stay current regarding terminology and diversity issues;

. . . encourage students to engage in self-exploration to understand how intersecting identities impact interactions with others;

. . . celebrate diversity as a strength by enabling students to share their individual experiences and challenges;

. . . highlight perspectives from students' rich and diverse cultural backgrounds including international experiences, trips, and guest presentations, possibly through the use of technologies;

. . . facilitate students' awareness and respect for other cultures using collaboration;

. . . learn about students' backgrounds and use this information to reach and teach all students;

. . . use technology as a tool for students to showcase their individual backgrounds;

. . . recognize their diverse and unique experiences to enrich the learning environment;

. . . assist students in developing individualized career plans focusing on their strengths and interests;

. . . identify resources and connect students with tutoring, mental health counseling, physical wellness, and other support services;

. . . implement culturally relevant pedagogy which encourages students to experience academic success, respect their cultural beliefs, and develop a critical consciousness to challenge the status quo; .

. . . facilitate discussions on intersectionality, social justice, and equality;

. . . place students strategically within teams and other collaborative opportunities that prepares them for success in the classroom and the diverse, global workforce;

. . . accommodate students' needs using a variety of differentiated instructional methodologies and utilizing inclusive examples in course materials;

. . . provide a wide array of work-based learning opportunities from job shadowing to internships to enable students to see diversity in professional settings and help develop their negotiating skills in relation to salaries and promotions;

. . . form partnerships with business and educational stakeholders and develop a placement process for employers to understand the diverse needs of potential employees as well as establish follow-up and tracking mechanisms for ensuring the success of all students;

. . . recruit guest speakers and mentors to encourage students to explore professions related to their strengths and interests;

. . . establish a respectful environment that includes anti-harassment and bullying policies, an inclusive curriculum, and any necessary interventions to combat negative interactions based on individual differences.

THEREFORE, WE BELIEVE business educators serve as professional role models who promote a supportive and safe environment that fosters the positive development of all students and enables the expression of their individual differences that is critical for student success in the classroom, workforce, and life.