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What Actually Works?

The One-to-One Approach

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In the 1970s we tried hundreds of wonderful ideas to integrate academe. We tried to bring in minorities and women and permit them to thrive as well as do Anglo men (or, if possible, to permit them to do better, since many Anglo men do not thrive in academe either). All these ideas will not be discussed, though we tried hard with them.

This chapter is about five ideas that actually seem to work, especially when undertaken together. Each is necessary, but not sufficient, for women and minorities to thrive. Each depends on people and dealing with people, so the method is called the "one-to-one" method of progress. These five ideas are:

- commitment and action by the top administration;
- one-to-one recruitment of minorities and women;
- one-to-one mentoring;
- individual responsibility for networks; and
- a complaint system that works for individuals.

An extraordinary aspect of this set of ideas is that implementation requires no net financial cost to the institution.

COMMITMENT AND ACTION

If an institution is going to change, with respect to minorities and women, it will first be because of direct involvement in leadership on this issue by top administration. Of course, this *alone* is not enough. Even if the leadership truly wants involvement of women and minorities throughout the system, but nothing else is done, there will be only tokenism. A few women and minorities will appear, but basically the institution will not become fully hospitable to women and minorities. If, however, leadership is exerted, *and* the other four elements described here are in place, real change will take place. If the top administration does not lead, the other four elements will not succeed on their own in changing the institution. The other four elements may, over time, succeed in changing the top administration, either in the sense of changing minds or in the sense of a changeover in people. But committed top leadership is *essential*—necessary, although not sufficient—to the full and equitable participation of women and minorities in the life of a college or university.

What does a committed administration do? They talk and write about minorities and women, about diversity, about the excellent work of individual women and the honoring of an individual Black. They get to know professional women personally, at dinner, on planes, at squash, asking the questions that men have always wondered about: "Can women really be as good at math? Can men really care as well for babies?" They discuss with minority men and women the real and symbolic issues of importance to minorities and get to know these colleagues on a personal basis. Effective top administrators will listen and talk about issues of equal opportunity, in public, with ease, grace, and commitment. These activities and attitudes contribute to a public understanding that the senior administration is at ease with women and minorities, that they place the special issues of the participation of women and minorities high among issues of critical importance to the institution, and that they will hold all those who report to them accountable for affirmative action and equal opportunity.

Commitment from the leadership means that they will personally recruit and bring in an Hispanic male physician, a black female scientist, a top white female colleague in administration. They will personally serve as mentors, and will insist on mentoring and serious performance evaluation by their staffs. These senior administrators will support and encourage internal networks of women and minori-

ties and will stay in touch with those networks. And they will establish and stand behind safe, fair, and accessible complaint systems.

The hallmark of the successful top administrator is joint "problem-solving" *with* minority women and men and majority women. The hallmark of the successful affirmative action activist is the same: joint problem-solving with the senior administration. "Us Against Them" is a terrible model, if progress is to occur and endure.

ONE-TO-ONE RECRUITMENT

All of the ordinary paraphernalia of affirmative action can only set a floor beneath abuse (below which the institution cannot sink). Genuine *progress* is most likely to occur when Anglo males and others decide that they personally will make a difference. What is required, in fact, is that people decide they personally will do at least one thing each year to make a difference. My ordinary request of anyone who "offers to help" is this: make sure that at least once a year you personally recruit one minority student, or one woman post-doctoral student, invite one Hispanic person to give a speech, or add one Asian woman to a committee, or recruit one Black and/or White woman faculty member. . . .

Almost everyone can "make a difference" each year. Administrators and faculty have the potential to make a difference within their own areas. Support staff can also be very effective recruiters of minority and female staff and students. Every academic institution can apply this recruitment plan: develop a plan to convince a set of people *personally* to recruit one woman, one minority man, in some way, every year. It is the sum of these "small" acts (one more White woman recruited to an athletic team, one minority male support person promoted, one Black woman guest lecturer brought to campus) that ultimately will change an institution.

Whether or not the institution is a top-ranked, elitist one or a lesser-known, the same process will work. The key is the building of a recruiting network and an ongoing search process. For example, each recruiter (faculty, staff, or administrator) should get to know *every* minority and female professional, of the appropriate type, that he or she meets while traveling and/or attending professional meetings. Each scientist should introduce herself/himself to women and minority men at professional conferences, on campus or industry visits, and in other similar situations. On visits away from home, each

historian or English professor should make it a point to meet minority and women colleagues in the same field. These colleagues then become part of a personal recruiting network when a job opens up. These are the people one calls, one-to-one, when looking for candidates . . . and now this group includes women and minority men. . . .

One-to-one, steady-state recruitment has always been the mode for recruiting superstars. A department may "court" a top-ranked professional for several years. Exactly the same method works for minorities and women: "visiting" and guest invitations back and forth, meetings at conferences, discussions while serving together on national committees. It is this kind of contact that builds trust and convinces the desirable Hispanic or Asian or Black and/or woman to consider moving—even to an isolated college—or to consider recommending some other appropriate person. And it is this kind of continuous contact that persuades the host institutions (at low risk) that Ms. X or Mr. Y is the right person.

MENTORING

Good recruiters make good mentors. This is especially true when top administrators reward and compliment successful recruiting and mentoring, and especially true when the recruiters' pride is engaged in the success of their recruits.

For a mentoring system to succeed, it must apply to everyone in the institution, minority and nonminority, men and women, at every level. It should be integrated, if possible, with performance evaluation. It must be legitimated by top administrators or there will be tension about senior men mentoring junior women. There should, if possible, be choices for both mentors and mentees, in case individuals do not like each other or appreciate one another's work.

Many minorities and women prefer and need same-sex, same-race or ethnic mentors. Others prefer mentors of the gender and ethnic background who run the institution—typically Anglo males. An institution can provide both a same-sex, same-race "host" when the recruit first comes, and later a person of mutual choosing, whether the "host" or other.

I believe in highly individualized mentorships, with several mentors typically better than one. Black and white female professionals appear historically to have thrived with multiple mentors. This is especially helpful if one is in an isolated college, if one dislikes senior

colleagues in one's department and the feeling is mutual, or if one is in a world-class institution and depends on worldwide referees for promotion. In short, a mentorship system should encourage multiple mentors—individually chosen and individually pursued.

The successful mentorship system depends on two elements: the expectation of senior colleagues that they will guide, coach and sponsor, and the expectation of junior people that they will personally expend whatever effort is necessary to find the guidance, coaching, and sponsorship they need. This system naturally works best when appropriate senior administrators thoughtfully and individually encourage both seniors and juniors to collaborate. This system can be implemented most effectively through personal encouragement, judicious matchmaking, and, especially, *by teaching each person that the responsibility is individually hers or his to make the mentoring work.*

NETWORKS

Networks are mentoring systems writ large. Minority and women's networks *will* exist wherever nontraditional people are in an institution. The question is whether they will be effective. Some are extremely effective.

Will the internal networks be positive and useful to its members, and to the institution? The answers depend on the degree to which individual senior administrators foster and stay in touch with the networks, and the degree to which individual network members take responsibility for forming, expanding, and maintaining both intragroup and external relationships. A networking system is, in short, like a mentoring system: it will work to the extent that individuals take personal responsibility for the painstaking, sometimes tedious, one-to-one relationships that make the structures effective.

It is particularly difficult to keep minority and women's networks healthy and effective because turnover is high, and because "all Blacks" and "all women" do not necessarily share anything beyond a skin color or a second X chromosome.

One effective mode is for administrators to foster connections between small groups of minorities and/or women who happen to share a common specific interest. For example, the women (and men) interested in day care, the secretaries worried about safety in Building X, the minorities interested in curriculum change—these are

groups that have a substantial interest in getting together and doing what amounts to an enormous amount of free work for themselves and their institutions.

Self-formed or institution-facilitated, responsible interest groups can be supported in two ways. Some administrator (perhaps an ombudsperson) should take responsibility for being sure each group is working in a problem-solving mode with the line administrators appropriate to their interests. Each small interest group can be asked to nominate a representative to an institution-wide Women's Advisory Board or Minority Interest Committee that meets regularly with senior administrators. In one model, each self-formed, specific interest group nominates one member who is then appointed by the President to a Presidential Advisory Committee.

This model builds on the real interests motivating women and minorities, guarantees that the networks surface genuine issues continuously, and provides upward feedback to the President, as well as collegial support among the network members. No one will be "left out" because an infinite number of responsible networks can self-form as new ethnic and other groups appear.

COMPLAINT SYSTEMS

Women and minorities (and other people) face problems within institutions: overt discrimination, subtle discrimination, red tape, plain human meanness. If nontraditional people, especially, are to survive, there *must* be individualized responses to individual needs and complaints. If institutions are to change, there must be upward feedback in addition to that which can be provided by mentoring and network systems.

A complaint system must be just that: a *system* of complaint-handling functions, both informal and formal. Most people just think of formal grievance procedures; this is not enough. However, there is a paradox here. Unless an institution has a fair, accessible, formal complaint-and-appeal structure for grievances, the rest of a complaint system (the informal part) will not work. But if the whole complaint system works well, with both informal and formal channels and functions, then the formal channel(s) will be used very rarely, and most problems will be solved in an informal mode.

The following functions must be present in a complaint system, especially if it is to work well for women and minorities:

DEALING WITH FEELINGS. Dealing with traditional, white, male institutions brings rage, grief, and bewilderment on occasion to everyone, and especially to minorities and women. Having a problem often engenders such strong emotions that an individual cannot think through any responsible and effective response. A good complaint system must have people highly skilled at dealing with feelings.

Sometimes this is in fact all that is needed. Every experienced complaint handler has the odd experience of having someone blow up and/or weep for hours in the office, only to report back on the next day that "everything now seems much better."

At other times, it is critical to help someone with a problem express feelings (for days or weeks or months) before a proper plan of action can be undertaken. Since this appears especially to be true for sexual and racial harassment, it is vital to the progress of equal opportunity that there be complaint handlers to support peoples' feelings and understand the pressures of bringing complaints.

GIVING AND RECEIVING DATA ON A ONE-TO-ONE BASIS. Frequently people do not even know the name of their college president, much less how the college determines salary equity, promotions, transfers, or benefits. It is therefore very important that complaint handlers give out information and make referrals on a one-to-one basis, at the time and in the fashion needed by a complainant. This may, again, be all that is needed to help someone understand that a specific troubling or puzzling event actually follows a customary rule or practice that is in fact not discriminatory. Or that the complainant can easily learn how to deal with the appropriate administrator directly.

At other times, learning how the system is supposed to work illuminates that the individual *was* improperly treated. Or the complaint handler may learn how a good rule is being wrongly applied in a way that should be changed. Or the complaint handler may discover that no relevant policy exists, though it should, as for example, was common before the days of sexual harassment policies.

COUNSELING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING, TO HELP THE COMPLAINANT HELP HERSELF OR HIMSELF. Some complaint handlers are either too eager to take over someone else's complaint or are eager to forget or ignore it. The skilled counselor will help a visitor develop, explore, and role-play options, then support her/him in choosing an option, and then will follow up to see it worked. Most women and minorities as well as Anglo males prefer to "own" their complaints and deal on

their own with their difficulties, if effective options to do so can be developed and pursued. It is essential, therefore, that a complaint system have counselors who are effective at helping people help themselves.

These first three functions must be available on a confidential basis and should be available from impartial persons. Usually this will mean the availability of a college or university ombudsperson in addition to student, employee and medical counselors. It also will help enormously if there are women and minorities available as counselors and ombudspersons, since the credibility of a complaint system is its chief asset.

Shuttle Diplomacy. Sometimes a complainant will ask for a go-between. This is especially true if one or more parties need to save face or deal with emotions before a good solution can be found.

Mediation. Sometimes a complainant will choose the option of meeting with the other side together with a third party complaint-handler. Like shuttle diplomacy, this usually happens on an informal basis. However, the settlements of shuttle diplomacy and mediation may be made formal.

Investigation. Investigation of a complaint can be formal or informal, with or without recommendations to an adjudicator—for example, to a disciplinary committee or line administrator. All four of these investigatory options should be available within a complaint system.

Adjudication—Formal Complaint-and-Appeal Grievance Procedures. Sometimes a complainant will ask to bring a formal complaint for formal review and decision-making. This process must be perceived as accessible and fair, for minorities and women as well as for white men. (There are a number of useful publications available on this topic.)

Upward Feedback. Possibly the most important function of a complaint system is that it be able to receive information that will foster timely change in the institution. Are policies unintelligible or outdated? Have new problems arisen? A healthy institution is constantly changing in response to new needs and data—and in response to new diversity in its population.

These last five functions require impartial or at least fair complaint handlers. Except for formal adjudication, which is almost never the province of an ombudsperson, it may help to provide ombudspeople or "internal mediators" in addition to other staff and line administrators. In a college that is too small for a full-time ombudsperson, impartial third parties may be provided by designating certain college personnel as available mediators. If this plan is followed, the "internal mediators" should be given a common charge and common training.

The one-to-one method of progress is built on the idea that institutional progress is the sum of the individual successes of individual people. Goals and timetables are only numbers. Women and minority are individuals. No two are alike and each must thrive in his or her own unique terms in order to thrive at all; each needs personal attention and each will have her or his own voice.

This point of view gives hope to the individual woman, minority or majority, who wishes herself to make a difference. She need not wait for others to initiate change or for the institution to change. One woman can seek to make contact with the college president. One woman can start a network. One woman can herself recruit minorities and women, and seek to encourage others to do the same. It takes just one to start talking about mentoring, to mentor, and to seek mentors. It takes only one woman to analyze her institutional complaint system and to ask for improvements if needed. One woman as an ombudsperson, operating formally or informally, can help individual people as well as the system to change. (She is moreover likely to save much more money than she costs.)

Successful diversity benefits everyone. The successful change agent will exemplify this point of view, problem-solving *with* her male and female colleagues, rather than taking issue against them. This is perhaps most easily done by an ombudsperson. But it can be done by anyone. And this particular set of ideas requires no net financial cost to the institution.