

Thank you very much for attending the round table session on ethnicity and race during the First Symposium on Diversity held on October 11<sup>th</sup> at SUNY Global. We hope that your valuable time was well spent. We certainly enjoyed having you in our session. Great ideas and insights emerged from the small group discussions.


Forty-five minutes was not nearly enough to cover the depth and breadth of this fascinating topic. With that in mind, we have summarized your ideas, insights and questions in this report and we hope to continue this discussion in the future. To do so, all you have to do is add your comments to this document.

## **Main findings:**

- How to prepare and educate international students and scholars, as well as American students, faculty and staff to appreciate, embrace, and deal with issues related to race & ethnicity is a major concern for all participants.
  - o Bias, prejudices, and stereotypes need to be addressed at all levels
  - o Students (domestic and international), faculty and staff should be encouraged to embrace intercultural competency. Some groups (e.g., administrators, faculty), or individuals within groups, may not acknowledge the importance of diversity as an organizational priority, hampering initiatives designed to increase diversity/cross-cultural awareness.
- Lack of resources, particularly financial resources, is one the most important challenges in addressing issues of diversity. Financial resources are either not available or are not allocated due to lack of perceived priority.
- “Silo mentality” takes place not only within ethnic groups, but also between departments on campus. Minority groups tend to stick together, while departments that don’t have at the core of their mission to serve international students see diversity as “someone else’s problem.”
- Topics related to race, ethnicity and culture can be highly sensitive and stir considerable emotional responses. Creating safe environments for blunt, sincere conversations is at the heart of the educational process.
- Although well-intentioned programs and activities with the goal of engaging and integrating various student populations are available, students sometimes do not know about them, or do not attend for other reasons (e.g., language?)

# Solutions to issues presented above:

(These ideas were generated during our group discussions)

Idea	Comments (feel free to add comments + ideas)
<p>Creation of Ambassador programs, in which more experienced, seasoned international students serve as mentors to their less experienced counterparts.</p>	
<p>Clubs and associations</p>	<p>When I was an international student, I, like most of my international student friends, sought comfort and certainty in an uncertain and anxiety producing new environment on those who were like me, my compatriots.</p> <p>Classes were not the best way to meet American students or to make new friends, since I met a different group of people in each class. In addition, those whom I met in class, besides the class itself, I had little or nothing in common with them.</p> <p>Now that I look back, I met the American friends whom I am still in contact today through clubs and organizations such as Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) and Toastmasters.</p> <p>It would be great to create a menu of interests that students may have and which clubs and organizations fulfill those interests. This would give students the ability to pursue their passions and interests, which would naturally connect them to students beyond their ethnic /cultural ‘bubble’</p>
<p>T-shirts worn by students who have studied abroad</p>	
<p>Training (cultural sensitivity for faculty/staff) /Involving students in the process</p>	<p>Training is essential and, according to the group discussions, lacking. The overall assumption behind the cry for training is that it's assumed it will cause change in behavior. However, that is often not true. Change in behavior must also be supported by policies, rewards systems, institutional mission, etc.</p>

	Involving students in the process of training is a great idea as it's an opportunity to bring different groups together for a meaningful conversation.
COIL – Have students interact with /communicate early with SKYPE – volunteers are always available	
Encourage students to break out of the bubble	It's important to remind students, as they reach our campuses, that they will naturally seek comfort in those who are similar to them, and that they should “break out of the bubble” whenever possible by embracing different cultures, being involved, reaching out, seeking new experiences. Sometimes a small nudge goes a long way.
Use your power on campus as an expert (get on committees)/Open dialogues with higher level people/ International committee with other offices (NYU) making sure everyone is on one page	<p>This is a great idea. It's by using our power (based on our expertise) that we can influence others to embrace our cause.</p> <p>This is a great example of how the University of Illinois (U of I) created a short- and mid-term strategic plan to achieve diversity goals (see pages 12-15):  <a href="http://www.oc.illinois.edu/visioning/reports/SocialEqualityandCulturalUnderstandingVFE.pdf">http://www.oc.illinois.edu/visioning/reports/SocialEqualityandCulturalUnderstandingVFE.pdf</a></p> <p>U of I has a comprehensive approach to integration and diversity. For more info, visit:  <a href="http://oiir.illinois.edu/sites/prod/files/docs/LENS_Manual_2013-2014.pdf">http://oiir.illinois.edu/sites/prod/files/docs/LENS_Manual_2013-2014.pdf</a>  <a href="http://oiir.illinois.edu">http://oiir.illinois.edu</a></p>
Integration and Diversity fee	Institute a fee (e.g., \$10) paid by all students designated to integration, diversity, intercultural issues. The fee could be embedded in the students' tuition.

Below are the raw responses from our two sessions.

Question 1. What are common challenges in dealing with international students and scholars?

- Some students, first time being a minority
- Misperceptions about being a minority
- Going outside comfort zone/staying within comfort zone
- Building trust with students/Establishing trust

- Racial issues for Americans studying abroad
- US students misperceptions of international students
- Politically correct mindfield that international students walk into
- History of minorities/blacks in America and how other (international) students can learn and appreciate them
- How to prepare and educate international students and scholars for race & ethnicity issues in America; for example, bi-racial dating
- Students from homogeneous societies; their attitudes is uniformed; i.e., Chinese students living in the Bronx have stereotypes of black people in America, stick to their ingroups
- When is a problem related to race and ethnicity or due to individual personalities? Students who are too demanding and want everything now – is this a cultural issue or a personality issue? How to differentiate them?
- Some students/scholars, because of cultural programming, may think that is your role, as an administrator, to serve them.
- Work with counseling centers to promote events about race, interracial relations, and ethnicity
- Language barriers
- Faculty/staff bias (and administration)
  - Need workshops
- On-campus needs
- Lack of voice allowance
- Peer ignorance
  - Unwillingness to learn and share
- Excluded from American conversation
  - Pop culture
- Managing expectations
- Service communication (communicating services that are available; services are available but not many students use them)
- Rumor mill discrepancies (my friend told me...)
- Coming in with stereotypes already
  - Goes both ways (Intl→Amer, Amer→Intl)
- Need to address cultural differences
- Difficulty with cultural difference, understanding
- Diversity within population (or lack there of)
- ESL issues vs simple context issues – “perceived ESL issues”
- Integration: Current issues with large Chinese student population

Question 2. What are the challenges to addressing issues of diversity and inclusiveness with international students?

- Resources – don't have the money
- Not acknowledging issues of diversity as a valid issue
- Faculty/staff not understanding international students – not acknowledging – need to train administrators
- Clarification: part of a broader definition

- Within offices: intercultural competency training; campus wide training as well
  - o We as Americans need to understand race and ethnicity ourselves to better serve others
- International community is under represented in terms of being invited to large events aimed at entire university community. They feel out of place.
- One to World and Volunteer (some international students do not grasp the concept of volunteering or being involved in our campus events)
- Finances → priorities for programming
- Tip-toeing around and trying not to offend
  - o Scared to have blunt conversations
  - o Being mindful, unexpected turns in candid conversations → mindful moderator
- Getting other offices to participate /support
  - o Holidays off
  - o Meal plans
  - o Not enough outside office support
  - o Not their priority
- Grouped together
  - o Reluctant/resistant campus to integrate
  - o Housed together
- Lack of communication with diversity offices/centers
- Offices primarily for just IC
  - o Creates a lack of home base
  - o Lack of cultural programming
- Language barriers discourage attendance of events (contributes to feeling isolated)
- Resources: budget for programming, training and appropriate staffing
- Large number of students from one country – not integrated: a silo
- Oversimplified categories of people and related politics
- Tensions between students from same country: North/South India
- Faculty and staff issues – lack of intercultural skills, preparedness

Question 3. What are best practices, at your institution, or elsewhere, in dealing with diverse/minority groups?

- Ambassador programs to foster relationships. Build one on one relationships
- Incorporate domestic students in intl student events
- Inclusive of international students in mentor program
  - o PPA, once they get there
- International committee with other offices (NYU) making sure everyone is on one page
  - o Connecting resources → university wide, better at assisting
- Collaborate with as many other offices as possible
- Involving students in the process (training)/ train staff on cross-cultural issues together with students
- Open dialogues with higher level people (i.e., Deans, etc) (generate campus discussion)

- Reach out to academic departments to make connections (ISS)
- Use your power on campus as an expert (get on committees)
- Conversation partners, mentor programs
- Open discussions on this issues during international student orientation
- Encourage them to break our of the bubble
- Training (cultural sensitivity for faculty/staff)
- Using international students who are seasoned to serve as mentors
- Social media/blog to encourage them to share their experience
- COIL – Have them interact with/communication early with SKYPE – volunteers are always available
- Trying to create welcoming/personal environment
- Clubs and activities (sometimes served as welcoming committee)

Questions you wanted answers to (index cards) with comments

1. How would you approach the controversial issue of, for example, white privilege in a predominantly white campus?
  - a. Discussion: Address history of privilege (European domination of technologies and modes of production, expansion overseas); try not to frame privilege as a negative, something people should be ashamed of. Try to put a positive spin on it, that is, if a person is privileged, for whatever reason, he/she should channel that position of power to create meaningful change and empower others). University of Illinois has a similar model.
2. With the influx of int'l students from China, has anyone experiences ethnically Chinese community members reaching out to this student population?
3. How do you convey the need for cultural sensitivity with a student who has never had experience with ethnic diversity?
  - a. Explain why diversity is such an important aspect of American culture focusing on the fact that the many successes of this country are due to its tolerance for diversity; use International Student Orientation and other program to bring the message home
4. When bringing both domestic and international students together for discussion on race, ethnicity and related themes, what topics do you think work or don't work well?
  - a. Discussion: Hard to tell, it really depends on the group and on the ability of the facilitator to generate discussion around difficult topics. Hofstede's cultural dimensions are always helpful in explaining value systems and behaviors across cultures.
5. What are successful strategies for integration on campuses that are very diverse?
  - a. Discussion: See U of I example
6. What are successful strategies to change perceptions among groups and international students?

7. Navigating discussions around race and ethnicity with international students for whom it is a very new concept. How to approach and help them appreciate difference?
8. How do you stress the value of empathy to an age of students who are egocentric and feel self-entitled?
  - a. Discussion: When it comes to being empathic to students from different value systems (cultures), one of the ways to build empathy is by understanding how cultural values shape behavior. This understanding is a different type of understanding -- deep understanding. It goes beyond 'detached mastery', in which you may know about concepts of intercultural relationships but you keep on acting without adapting behavior to accommodate differences. When that mastery is accomplished, empathy is possible.
9. How do questions of race and ethnicity overlap with questions of internationalization?
10. How can we make sense of all the increasingly layers of race and ethnicity? In a constant changing America, what does this mean for the future?
  - a. Discussion: This question is a great example of why we, as educators, must become experts in this field to better address what will probably be a growing challenge. If we choose the route of tolerance, multiculturalism, the future is great. On the other hand, if we let bigotry, prejudice, and extremism brew, it will be a less desirable future.
11. How can ethnicity be defined?
  - a. Discussion: This is one of the best definitions I have found:

	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Race</b>
<b>Definition:</b>	An ethnic group or ethnicity is a population of human beings whose members identify with each other, on the basis of a real or a presumed common genealogy or ancestry.	The term race refers to the concept of dividing people into populations or groups on the basis of various sets of physical characteristics which result from genetic ancestry.
<b>Significance:</b>	Ethnicity connotes shared cultural traits and a shared group history. Some ethnic groups also share linguistic or religious traits, while others share a common group history but not a common language or religion.	Race presumes shared biological or genetic traits, whether actual or asserted. In the early 19th century, racial differences were ascribed significance in areas of intelligence, health, and personality. There is no evidence validating these ideas.
<b>Genealogy:</b>	Ethnicity is defined in terms of shared genealogy, whether actual or presumed. Typically, if people believe they descend	Racial categories result from a shared genealogy due to geographical isolation. In the modern world this isolation has

	from a particular group, and they want to be associated with that group, then they are in fact members of that group.	been broken down and racial groups have mixed.
<b>Distinguishing Factors:</b>	Ethnic groups distinguish themselves differently from one time period to another. They typically seek to define themselves but also are defined by the stereotypes of dominant groups.	Races are assumed to be distinguished by skin color, facial type, etc. However, the scientific basis of racial distinctions is very weak. Scientific studies show that racial genetic differences are weak except in skin color.
<b>Nationalism:</b>	In 19th century, there was development of the political ideology of ethnic nationalism - - creating nations based on a presumed shared ethnic origins (e.g. Germany, Italy, Sweden...)	In 19th century, the concept of nationalism was often used to justify the domination of one race over another within a specific nation.
<b>Legal System:</b>	In the last decades of the 20th century, in the U.S. and in most nations, the legal system as well as the official ideology prohibited ethnic-based discrimination.	In the last decades of the 20th century, the legal system as well as the official ideology emphasized racial equality.
<b>Conflicts:</b>	Often brutal conflicts between ethnic groups have existed throughout history and across the world. But most ethnic groups in fact get along peacefully within one another in most nations most of the time.	Racial prejudice remains a continuing problem throughout the world. However, there are fewer race-based conflicts in the 21st century than in the past.
<b>Examples of conflict:</b>	Conflict between Tamil and Sinhalese populations in Sri Lanka.	Conflict between white and African-American people in the U.S., especially during the civil rights movement.

12. There is always the questions... where are you from? WHAT are you?