

What Institutional Websites Reveal About Diversity-Related Partnerships Between Academic and Student Affairs

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Abstract Little is understood about how campus educators within Academic Affairs and Student Affairs use institutional websites to articulate what their institutional commitments to diversity, inclusion, and social justice are and how they are enacted. Through an exploratory content analysis using LePeau's (2015) framework on pathways to partnership (i.e., complementary, coordinated, and pervasive) to address diversity, inclusion, and social justice aims, we examined 23 institutional websites to determine what types of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs partnerships institutions employed. Findings revealed predominantly complementary

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partnerships, which means maintaining the distinct cultures of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs in diversity, inclusion, and social justice efforts.

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Preparing students for active engagement in an increasingly diverse society is commonly cited as a goal of higher education (American College Personnel Association & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 2004; Association of American Colleges and Universities, 1995; Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, & Arellano, 2012; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). In order to achieve this goal, institutions need to create inclusive environments and intentionally promote curricular and co-curricular opportunities so as to encourage students to learn about persons from different backgrounds (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Hurtado et al., 2012; Milem et al., 2005). Institutions of higher education have implemented structures to enhance the learning environment for diversity by developing strategic plans to advance diversity, inclusion, and social justice (Iverson, 2010) and by creating additional senior-level positions such as chief diversity officers and president's or provost's leadership teams (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013).

By diversity, we specifically mean working across and valuing differences in social identities including but not limited to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, ability, gender, religion, and sexual orientation. Diversity work also means recognizing that these differences are embedded in multiple structural inequities such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, and ableism. Inclusion means creating welcoming campus environments for students, faculty, and staff from different backgrounds. When referring to social justice, we mean action steps taken to transform inequitable organizational systems and structures in higher education to promote student, faculty, and staff success. We believe that institutions should view the creation of more equitable institutions for students, faculty, and staff as the goal of these aims; but the institutions in this study may define these terms in different ways.

However, higher education researchers have criticized institutions for reproducing inequity (Harper & Patton, 2007; Hurtado et al., 2012; Patton, 2016). For example, in response to student concerns about racism and free speech, national media outlets have challenged senior college and university administrators to clarify whether and how institutions are advancing diversity and inclusion (Kendall-Ball, 2016; Manne & Stanley, 2015) rather than perpetuating inequities that hinder the success of diverse faculty and staff members and students (Hurtado et al., 2012; Museus & Jayakumar, 2012). One way to work toward accomplishing diversity, inclusion, and social justice goals is through the use of effective partnerships between faculty members and practitioners working in Academic Affairs (AA) and Student Affairs (SA; LePeau, 2015). Although previous research provides insight into the value of this type of collaboration, little research exists in reference to the effectiveness of specific diversity partnerships. In a constructivist grounded theory study, LePeau (2015) conducted in-depth interviews with 22 participants (i.e., AA and SA administrators and faculty) and analyzed archival documents at four institutions, thereby discovering three types of AA and SA partnerships — complementary, coordinated, and pervasive — employed to advance diversity, inclusion, and social justice aims. This study enhanced our understanding of the ways institutions construct diversity, inclusion, and social justice partnerships, yet a need remains to examine how these partnerships are enacted more broadly.

Using content analysis, the study we report here builds on LePeau's (2015) research by examining institutional websites to determine ways AA and SA units across 23 higher education institutions communicated the use of AA and SA partnerships in an effort to achieve their diversity, inclusion, and social justice aims. We believe that the findings can be used to generate a broader understanding of the nature and types of partnerships employed (or not employed) in higher education settings across the United States. Therefore, the following research questions guided this study:

- What types of diversity, inclusion, and social justice goals are articulated on institutional websites?
- What partnership types for diversity, inclusion, and social justice are portrayed on institutional websites?
- How does this exploratory study inform partnership types as defined by LePeau (2015)?

Background and Relevant Literature

Across the United States, and beyond, higher education institutions articulate the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion (Hurtado et al., 2012). However, Kuh and Whitt (1988) wrote, "What people say (espoused values) and what they do (enacted values) are not always congruent" (p. 111). Experiences with diversity both in and outside of the classroom have been validated as an important aspect of student learning and development, including being positively associated with student retention and academic degree attainment and students' development of competencies for successfully working in a multicultural world (Denson & Chang, 2009; Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado et al., 2012). These benefits are not only associated with increased compositional diversity in institutions of higher education, but also with participation in courses, workshops, and organizations (Denson & Chang, 2009; Nelson Laird, 2005). Given that diversity is an integral piece of the learning experience, it is important that institutions identify the most effective ways to foster inclusive and equitable educational environments. We now provide a review of literature on how institutions articulate their diversity goals via institutional websites and how they use AA and SA partnerships to foster diverse learning environments.

The institutional website is an important medium for creating and delivering messages that communicate institutional values about diversity (Wilson, Meyer, & McNeal, 2012). Examining institutional websites, therefore, can enable researchers to determine how an institution purports to advance diversity, inclusion, and social justice and whether or not these values reflect a genuine commitment or are merely espoused. As internal and external constituents (e.g., prospective and current students, parents, faculty, staff, alumni, state policymakers) seek to understand how institutions respond to the demands of increasingly diverse campus environments, institutional websites serve as an important tool to communicate these efforts (Anctil, 2008; Hartley & Morphew, 2008; Saichaie, 2011; Wilson & Meyer, 2009). However, researchers also suggest that some institutions present the compositional diversity of the faculty, staff, and student body in ways that do not accurately reflect institutional realities (Pippert, Essenburg, & Matchett, 2013; Wilson & Meyer, 2009). While demands for accountability to advance diversity and social justice are on the rise (Jayakumar, 2008), Kellogg (1999)

underscored the benefits associated with AA and SA partnerships to accomplish objectives that are too complex for a single subunit.

Partnerships to Promote Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice

Because campus educators specialize in their roles in AA and SA, researchers and student affairs practitioners have called for AA and SA partnerships to bridge the divide between units (Blimling, Whitt, & Associates, 1999; Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; LePeau, 2015). Researchers have identified common principles for AA and SA partnerships including promoting partnerships through the institutional mission, supportive senior administrators, and a culture that fosters and values these partnerships (Kuh, 1996; Whitt et al., 2008). Researchers have increasingly argued for AA and SA partnerships as a way to foster a more seamless learning environment, which is associated with increased levels of engagement among students (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005). By working in partnerships, campus educators have the potential to “better fulfill the institution’s mission, improve retention, and improve the total college experience for students” (Kellogg, 1999, p. 3).

With regard to promoting institutional environments that support diversity, inclusion, and social justice researchers call for the initiatives to be deeply rooted in the role and responsibilities of educators and *all* stakeholders including faculty members, student affairs practitioners, administrators, and students (Hurtado et al., 2012; Milem et al., 2005; Museus & Jayakumar, 2012). For example, in the multi-dimensional model of diverse learning environments, a theoretical framework for creating equitable and inclusive learning communities in higher education, AA and SA are depicted as having parallel responsibilities for promoting holistic student learning (Hurtado et al., 2012). More specifically, Hurtado et al. (2012) named shared responsibility as a method for improving the campus climate for diversity, which further supports the need for effective AA and SA partnerships. However, this environmental model does not include *how* to enact shared responsibility, but applying partnerships from LePeau (2015) is one way higher education might conceptualize this process within the multi-dimensional model of diverse learning environments.

Conceptual Framework

Expanding on the literature about effective practices related to AA and SA partnerships, LePeau (2015) characterized three pathways to partnerships for diversity and inclusion that emerged from a grounded theory study: (a) complementary, (b) coordinated, and (c) pervasive. The *complementary* pathway is described as AA and SA staff working on curricular and co-curricular diversity initiatives within their own units. Both AA and SA contribute to overall institutional goals related to diversity by complementing each other’s efforts. The *coordinated* pathway is characterized as a more integrated approach toward meeting diversity goals. In this pathway, AA and SA share a vision, communicate across entities, and utilize hybrid professional roles. However, they operate with cultural contradictions between AA and SA, especially the idea that AA possesses more power in decision making on campus. The *pervasive* pathway situates AA and SA as educators with equal decision-making power, challenges cultural contradictions about power, and blurs the lines between AA and SA. In the pervasive

pathway both curricula and co-curricula are intentionally integrated, and partnerships are seen as the standard. Institutions may reach more diversity goals through all partnership types, but transformative changes are more likely accomplished through pervasive partnerships. Campus educators who employ pervasive partnerships explain how unequal power, privilege, and oppression shapes how faculty, staff, and students with privileged and marginalized identities experience campus environments and work collectively to disrupt inequitable policies and practices (LePeau, 2015).

Several additional properties and dimensions of each pathway to partnership emerged from LePeau's (2015) grounded theory study. The way an institution enacts each dimension relates to the particular pathway to partnership. These dimensions are (a) the nature of the cultural divide between AA and SA, (b) discussion of goals for student learning about diversity, (c) approach to committees, (d) implementation of programs and projects, (e) individuals in hybrid AA/SA roles, (f) organizational support for partnerships, (g) relational support, and (h) blurring AA/SA programs; see Table 1 for more information about each institutional dimension. The extent to which each of these dimensions incorporates collaboration between AA and SA determines an institution's pathways. By outlining three pathways to partnership and specific dimensions influencing each pathway, LePeau (2015) provided a useful framework for investigating AA and SA partnerships. Through the lens of these pathways and their dimensions, we are able to interpret how institutions approach and articulate diversity and social justice efforts on campus by analyzing institutional websites.

The Study

Methodology

We used an interpretivist, epistemological perspective (Creswell, 2013) to make sense of the content presented in institutional websites. We used this perspective because we believe there are multiple interpretations and meanings that institutions may construct about diversity, inclusion, and social justice initiatives on these websites (Creswell, 2013). This approach provided us with a lens to make meaning of our interpretations of content on websites because texts do not have one singular meaning to be "found." Rather, text includes a particular context where research questions can be examined (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 28). We employed content analysis as the systematic methodological approach because we made sense of content—both explicit and implicit—portrayed on institutional websites about AA and SA partnerships for diversity, inclusion, and social justice (Krippendorff, 2013).

Krippendorff (2013) described content analysis as a research technique to provide empirical grounding for examining "text, images, and symbolic matter" that is "exploratory in process, and predictive or inferential in intent" (p. 1). In this study we analyzed evidence to explore whether institutions operated in complementary, coordinated, pervasive pathways, or other approaches to AA and SA partnerships for diversity, inclusion, and social justice. Krippendorff (2013) explained the concept of outlining origins of words and concepts or "tracing" to identify the logic and design of content analysis. These components relate to making sense of distinctions and definitions in texts, sampling, reducing or concisely coding the data with designations (e.g., notes about the phenomena of interest), organizing records, and making inferences about the patterns or themes in the data (Krippendorff, 2013). We explain below how we incorporated these strategies in the design of this content analysis.

Table 1 Description of institutional dimensions within partnerships between Academic Affairs (AA) and Student Affairs (SA)

Institutional dimension	Description	Website evidence examined
Nature of cultural divide between AA/SA	<p>The extent AA and SA are responsible for separate realms on campus (curriculum and co-curriculum respectively). Pervasive partnerships actively challenge the divide in decision-making.</p>	<p>Mission/Vision statements, diversity plans, and Diversity course requirements</p>
Discussions of goals for student learning about diversity	<p>The articulation of diversity, inclusion, and social justice aims and how AA and SA collectively contribute. In complementary partnerships AA and SA contribute separately.</p>	<p>Mission/Vision statements, learning outcomes, statements from Presidents, strategic planning documents, and non-discrimination policies</p>
Approach to committees	<p>The way AA and SA collaborate and are represented on committees and task forces and to what ends. In coordinated and pervasive partnerships AA and SA are brought to the table.</p>	<p>Committee charges and goals, membership lists, meeting minutes, and progress reports</p>
Implementation of programs and projects	<p>This dimension includes the support, planning, and implementation of diversity programs and initiatives, if initiatives are diversity or SJ oriented and why. In complementary partnerships SA and AA work separately within their own realms.</p>	<p>Event calendars, program descriptions, program assessments, scholarship and grant funding rubrics</p>
Individuals in Hybrid AA/SA roles	<p>This dimensions describes individuals on campus whose responsibility spans across AA and SA. Institutions operating from pervasive pathways utilize hybrid roles most frequently.</p>	<p>Organizational charts, hiring announcements, AA and SA staff pages</p>
Organizational support for partnerships	<p>Organizational reporting lines of the institution vary between AA and SA with regard to diversity aims. In complementary partnerships structural support is separate between AA and SA.</p>	<p>Organizational charts, annual reports, policies (disrupting inequities or not), documents from Presidents, and professional development programs</p>
Relational support	<p>AA and SA support each other and take risks in designing new initiatives. Evidence of collaboration between AA an SA units is recorded.</p>	<p>Resource pages and professional development, press releases, and committee minutes to see who is described in AA and SA and why</p>
Blurring AA/SA programs	<p>Programs and initiatives span across AA and SA (e.g., diversity courses, conferences). Pervasive partnerships blur programs most frequently.</p>	<p>Course catalogs, mentoring programs, and diversity awards</p>

Sample

We used a combination of purposeful and maximum variation sampling to identify 23 institutional websites to examine. The final sample for this study was derived from two sources. The first source built on LePeau's (2015) grounded theory study in which the researcher examined 4 out of 11 nominated institutions involved in a national project led by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U, 1995). This study used the seven remaining institutions that were recipients of expert nominations for their AA and SA diversity related partnerships from the AAC&U project. The second source came from the *INSIGHT into Diversity* Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) 2013–2015 Award winners. The HEED Award nationally recognizes colleges and universities that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion, terms that are undefined on the website (*About the HEED award*, 2017). Our selection of institutions was purposeful (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2005) in that decisions by external entities suggested that these institutions exemplified some level of success with their diversity initiatives.

We first created a spreadsheet with information about all HEED recipients from 2013 to 2015, accounting for repeat award recipients. For instance, in 2015, there were 92 institutions recognized across the country. We strived to select an equal distribution of baccalaureate colleges and schools, master's colleges and universities, and doctoral research universities across both sources. We selected 16 institutions recognized as HEED institutions using maximum variation based on factors such as 2015 Carnegie Classification, geographic location, historical context of the institution, size, and student population (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2005). We created a grid to try to select a sample with equal distribution of institutions based on those factors. For instance, doctoral universities were over-represented in the HEED sample so we eliminated more institutions from this Basic Carnegie Classification. Our total sample included 23 institutions: three baccalaureate college/schools (a category underrepresented among HEED Award recipients and institutions in the AAC&U Project), 11 master's universities, and nine doctoral universities. Fifteen of the institutions are public colleges and universities. We garnered our final sample size in order to have a large enough sample to promote transferability of results while also keeping the sample size manageable for a thorough content analysis of each institutional website. For a full listing of the institutions in this sample, see Table 2.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection occurred over a ten-month period from July 2015 to May 2016. As a research team, we worked individually and debriefed together on a weekly basis. We used an iterative process to code the data (Krippendorff, 2013). Given that content analysis is an interpretive act and requires judgment based on data that may change with time, we followed several protocols designed to strengthen the reliability of our analysis (Creswell, 2013; Krippendorff, 2013). First, we used search terms such as *diversity*, *social justice*, *equity*, and *inclusion* to identify where institutions most often stored information about these constructs. We analyzed content based on our definitions of diversity, inclusion, and social justice, as previously explained. This process was used to collect and analyze data to address the first research question about what type of goals institutions articulate on institutional websites. In most cases, the term diversity yielded thousands of results (e.g., Union College-Schenectady: 4750 hits) As another example, Cornell

Table 2 Sample and distribution of institutions by type, control, and partnership classification

Institution	Control	Goal type	Partnership classification
Baccalaureate Colleges/Schools			
Juniata College	Private	Inclusion	Complementary
St. Lawrence University	Public	Composition/Inclusion	Complementary with Coordinated Pockets
Union College-Schenectady	Private	Inclusion/Competency	Complementary
Master's Universities			
Alcorn State University	Public	Inclusion	Complementary
Augsburg College	Private	Inclusion	Complementary
California State University-San Marcos	Public	Inclusion/Access/Social Justice	Complementary with Coordinated Pockets
Davenport University	Private	Inclusion/Access/Competency	Complementary
Elon University	Private	Inclusion/Global focus	Coordinated
Keene State College	Public	Inclusion/Composition	Coordinated
Metropolitan State University of Denver	Public	Inclusion/Access/Composition	Complementary with Coordinated Pockets
Nebraska Wesleyan University	Private	Inclusion	Complementary
Rowan University	Public	Composition/Social Justice	Complementary with Coordinated Pockets
SUNY Oneonta	Public	Inclusion/Composition	Complementary
University of Southern Maine	Public	Inclusion/Social Justice	Complementary
Doctoral Universities			
Cornell University	Private	Inclusion/Composition/Social Justice	Coordinated with Pervasive Pockets
DePaul University	Private	Inclusion/Competency/Social Justice	Coordinated
Oklahoma State University	Public	Composition/Inclusion	Coordinated with Pervasive Pockets
University of La Verne	Private	Inclusion/Composition	Coordinated
University of Massachusetts at Boston	Public	Inclusion/Composition	Complementary
University of Texas at Austin	Public	Inclusion/Composition/Research	Coordinated with Pervasive Pockets
University of Toledo	Public	Composition/Inclusion/ Competency	Coordinated
University of West Florida	Public	Composition/Inclusion/Competency	Complementary with Coordinated Pockets
Washington State University	Public	Inclusions/Global focus	Complementary

University had 242 hits when “social justice” was searched. We eliminated duplicate sources identified in the search results and broken links.

Second, we used the eight institutional dimensions described in the conceptual framework from LePeau (2015) as an a priori coding scheme to categorize evidence from the remaining sources in order to gauge information about each institution’s overall use of partnerships to address research questions two (i.e., what partnership types for diversity, inclusion, and social justice are portrayed on institutional websites?) and three (i.e., how does this exploratory study inform partnership types as defined by LePeau, 2015?). To weigh evidence for each institutional coding dimension we compiled both quantity (e.g., pages, meeting minutes) and quality (e.g., depth of explanation in multiple sources; see Table 1). Given the non-sequential nature of websites (Bergman & Meier, 2004), we each explored specific sections of websites to guide our initial analytical process. These webpages included the “About” page describing the institution, administration, titles indicative of diversity, student affairs, provosts office, and individual colleges and schools.

Third, to enhance trustworthiness we independently coded each institutional website using search terms, primary institutional webpages, and the conceptual framework from LePeau (2015) in relation to the eight dimensions about AA and SA partnerships as an a priori coding scheme. Fourth, we created an electronic database to save and file images, text, and attachments obtained directly from each institutional website and categorized those documents by the eight partnership dimensions. We used coding spreadsheets, organized by institutional dimension and partnership type, to make sense of each document individually and then collectively.

Finally, we drafted short memos to describe the overall nature of the partnership that occurred at each institution to address the second research question (i.e., What partnership types for diversity, inclusion, and social justice are portrayed on institutional websites?). If campus educators enacted a particular initiative differently than how we classified their overall use of partnerships based on the a priori scheme, we used data to illustrate why. We compared and contrasted our individual notes and interpretations about each institution to arrive at a shared understanding and to enhance trustworthiness (Krippendorff, 2013; Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002). When our interpretations varied, we returned to our individual coding documents and to particular institutional website pages to substantiate our claims (Krippendorff, 2013).

Limitations

We based this study on content that institutions shared on their public websites. Websites are living documents that convey information to external and internal stakeholders about the goals and objectives of the institution. Thus, they are regularly and unpredictably in flux; and some of the content on institutional websites changed during the course of our data analysis. Although the eleven-month period for the data collection process mitigates this concern, one limitation may be that new or different information could have emerged since that time. Additionally, not all institutions may be using websites as the primary method of information dissemination to the masses. Current technology enables institutional agents to utilize several forms of communication to advance diversity, inclusion, and social justice aims. Using content analysis of institutional websites, as one technological tool, is limiting to that end. Lastly, although we used a priori coding based on the conceptual framework from LePeau (2015), most of the data in that study arose from interviews with participants.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to understand how 23 different institutions communicate diversity, inclusion, and social justice aims and how AA and SA partnerships are developed and used to accomplish these aims (or not). We used LePeau's (2015) conceptual framework, taking into consideration existing or missing evidence on websites, to classify institutions in specific partnership pathways (i.e., complementary, coordinated, and pervasive), and found no evidence to disconfirm the a priori scheme. Each institution's primary partnership pathway (Table 2) was determined by reviewing the compilation of evidence across all eight of the institutional coding dimensions to address the second research question regarding partnership type.

Our content analysis revealed that the majority of institutions operated from primarily complementary partnerships. In total, the classification breakdown of the institutions in the

sample is as follows: 10 institutions operate predominantly from the complementary pathway, five institutions from complementary with coordinated pockets, five institutions from the coordinated pathway, and three institutions in coordinated with pervasive pockets (see Table 2). We use the term “pocket” to describe isolated examples of more robust partnerships, and this distinction adds nuance to LePeau’s (2015) conceptual framework. We determined that each partnership pathway should be understood as a spectrum, that is, having observable gradations in the strength of each pathway. Although multiple institutions may be categorized as having a specific partnership pathway (i.e., complementary), not all institutions may be operating in this pathway in the same ways. Some institutions utilized different partnerships for different purposes (e.g., living-learning communities, service-learning). In this section, we illustrate three important themes from the content analysis: (a) campus educators predominantly employed types of partnerships that related to the types of goals expressed, (b) campus educators incorporated isolated examples of more robust partnerships that deviated from the institution’s predominant type, and (c) pervasive partnerships are more aspirational than actualized.

Goals

Institutions defined their goals for diversity, inclusion, and social justice in different ways (see Table 2). We included key terms in the table to distinguish the ways educators defined terms about their goals as follows: (a) inclusion, respecting difference or talking across differences; (b) composition, increasing compositional diversity of underrepresented students; (c) access, “equal access for all” rather than increasing representation of underrepresented students; (d) competency, when educators focused on goals associated with faculty, staff, and students building cultural competency; (e) global, goals focusing on global diversity and awareness; (f) social justice, removing barriers or inequities to ensure success of all students; and (g) research, increasing innovative scholarship about diversity. We found that 10 of the 23 institutions operate in complementary pathways to partnerships, which means that they articulated diversity goals without attention to how AA and SA jointly work to alter inequitable practices or policies. Although these institutions are utilizing both AA and SA to accomplish the goals, this approach perpetuates the notion that AA and SA are responsible for different realms within the institution. For example, in Juniata College’s Commitment to Diversity, the President names a number of services (e.g., Unity House, Campus Ministry), which “provide infrastructure necessary to support Juniata’s growing diversity as well as educate the student body as a whole about their role as engaged citizens in a global society.” The President’s statement focuses on compositional diversity, and the initiatives named are positioned primarily within the co-curriculum without explicit mention of how the academic curriculum also contributes to the goals of the institution.

We classified five institutions as exemplifying coordinated pathways to partnerships because they appear to recognize the value of bringing AA and SA to the table together. These institutions provided clear evidence of AA and SA working together more equitably than institutions identified as complementary. They acknowledge the ongoing work in which faculty and staff must engage for continued growth in creating more inclusive environments. Evidence from their websites illustrated a shared vision between AA and SA, joint participation in committees, and blurring between AA and SA. For example, DePaul University focuses on inclusion, competency, and social justice goals and uses a President’s Council for Diversity, which includes both AA and SA members, to review policies and procedures, facilitate bias

incident response, and assess campus climate. The mission of this Council calls for it to “promote collaboration and communication by bringing together representatives from constituency groups to actualize DePaul’s diversity goals and objectives... advise the President regarding diversity issues, and serve the University’s diverse populations by recommending coordinated institutional procedures.” DePaul provides evidence of how AA and SA operate together on this Council through meeting minutes and annual reports regarding the progress in implementing its mission. By including representation from both AA and SA, the Council attempts to attend to all aspects of the campus experience, critically question those aspects, and work on subsequent improvement.

Elon University, which focuses on inclusion and global goals, publishes diversity plans for each college and department in recognition of the need to look across all units in the institution in coordination. Similarly, the University of Toledo publishes plans for each department in a centralized page on the institutional website. Additionally, coordinated institutions provided some evidence of identifying inequities in the environment (e.g., statements from presidents about addressing inequities in the campus environments, meeting minutes that show how social identities influenced the work of faculty members and administrators). Although the coordinated institutions are doing some thoughtful work, they have room for moving forward and enacting the goals expressed in mission statements and strategic plans.

Finally, Cornell University is one of three institutions classified as coordinated with pervasive pockets; and it has articulated social justice goals. Cornell specifically calls on all members of the campus community to be engaged actively in creating a positive environment that stimulates learning. The discussion of the goals for the student learning dimension also highlights the influence of their historical legacy in working to increase diversity and promote equity. Similar to DePaul, the President of Cornell oversees a council (the University Diversity Council) that brings together both AA and SA to work toward strategic goals. This Council is also charged with engaging the campus committee in diversity efforts, developing institutional policies that promote a more inclusive environment, and communicating progress on institutional diversity goals to the campus.

Examples of Robust Partnerships

Although this study validated the pathways to partnership in LePeau’s (2015) framework, data analysis revealed important nuances. In Table 3, we provide a breakdown of how institutions are categorized in each institutional dimension, which illustrates the possibility that institutions can operate differently in each individual dimension. Five of the institutions in this sample are identified as having complementary partnerships with coordinated pockets. These institutions (i.e., California State University San Marcos, St. Lawrence University, Metro State University of Denver, Rowan University, and University of West Florida) recognize the importance of both AA and SA contributing to diversity and social justice objectives. Each institution has examples of work that proceeds in a coordinated fashion, as evidenced through specific initiatives, organizational structure, or specific task forces that incorporate representation and joint planning of activities between AA and SA. Yet, these coordinated pockets did not provide enough evidence to suggest that the policies, structures, and practices of the institution supported coordinated pathways to partnerships for diversity and social justice goals.

For example, Metro State University Denver was found to be operating from primarily complementary pathways. However, they provided evidence of operating within a coordinated pocket, the dimension of approach to committees, for their Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI)

Table 3 Breakdown of partnership pathways by institutional dimension

Institution name	Institutional dimensions							
	Nature of cultural divide	Discussion of goals	Approach to committees	Implementation of programs and projects	Individuals in hybrid roles	Organizational support	Relational support	Blurring AA/SA programs
Alcorn State Univ.	CM	CM	CM	CR	CM	CM	CM	CM
Augsburg College	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM	CR
Cal. State Univ. San Marcos	CM	CR	CR	CR	CM	CM	CR	CM
Cornell Univ.	CR	P	P	CR	CM	CR	CM	CR
Davenport Univ.	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM
DePaul Univ.	CR	P	CR	CR	CR	CR	CR	CR
Elon Univ.	CR	CR	CR	CR	CM	CR	CR	CR
Juniata College	CM	CM	CR	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM
Keene State College	CR	CR	CR	CR	CM	CM	CM	CR
Metro. State Univ. Denver	CM	CR	CR	CM	CM	CR	CM	CM
Nebraska Wesleyan Univ.	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM
Oklahoma State Univ.	CR	CR	CR	CR	CM	P	P	CR
Rowan Univ.	CM	P	CR	CR	CM	CM	CM	CM
St. Lawrence Univ.	CM	CR	CM	CM	CM	CR	CM	CM
SUNY Oneonta	CM	CM	CR	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM
Union College-Schenectady	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM
Univ. of La Verne	CR	CR	CR	CR	CM	CR	CR	CR
Univ. of Mass. at Boston	CM	CR	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM
Univ. of Southern Maine	CM	P	CR	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM
Univ. of Texas at Austin	CR	CR	CR	P	P	CR	CR	CR
Univ. of Toledo	CM	CR	CR	CR	CM	CR	CR	CR
Univ. of West Florida	CM	CM	CR	CM	CM	CR	CM	CM
Washington State Univ.	CM	CM	CR	CM	CM	CM	CM	CM

CM Complementary, CR Coordinated, P Pervasive

Task Force. This task force has the goal of increasing the compositional diversity of students who identify as Latinx or Hispanic to 25% in order for the institution to reach the U.S. Department of Education's designation of a HSI. The membership, goals, and institutional objectives for this task force are clearly outlined and provide evidence of a coordinated partnership. The membership includes faculty and staff members from various departments and units across the institution, and it has several subcommittees (i.e., Assessment, Recruitment/Retention and Student Development, Public Relations, Campus Climate, Faculty and Staff Development, Grantsmanship, and Curriculum Development).

While the level of collaboration between AA and SA on the HSI task force is laudable and addresses changing demographics in the state, it is also important to point out that a pocket of coordinated partnerships within an institution that is largely complementary sends some implicit messages. External stakeholders may perceive that the motivation behind greater coordination between AA and SA was driven primarily by external forces. The U.S. Department of Education grants funding to institutions with the HSI designation; therefore, given demands for greater accountability with advancing diversity and social justice aims, individuals and groups driving those demands may be interested in motivations that come primarily from within rather than from external granting agencies.

Along the lines of conceptualizing the institutional partnership types as a spectrum with possible "pockets," we must note that not all coordinated institutions were coordinated to the same extent. Most coordinated institutions had institutional dimensions classified as complementary (see Table 3), which suggests that institutions may need to provide deeper evidence of their AA and SA partnerships (e.g., meeting minutes, syllabi, marketing information about courses) to offer more information about their collaboration. Otherwise, it is difficult to assess the extent to which partnerships are actually being implemented across all institutional dimensions.

Pervasive Pathways

In this sample, we did not classify any institutions as operating broadly from pervasive pathways, which is a partnership category that appears to be more aspirational than actual. However, we did find evidence of institutions implementing some dimensions in pervasive ways. Based on content provided on websites, Cornell University, the University of Texas at Austin, and Oklahoma State University were the most advanced institutions in our sample in bringing together AA and SA; and we classified them as coordinated with pervasive pockets. This classification means that these institutions were operating from primarily coordinated partnerships, but provided evidence of pervasive partnerships in some dimensions.

For the University of Texas at Austin, the dimensions of implementation of programs and projects and individuals in hybrid roles were pervasive. It provided evidence of AA and SA working closely together on a number of initiatives including multiple student success programs designed to support undergraduates from historically underrepresented backgrounds. They have a number of SA staff members who also hold faculty positions and fellow positions that connect faculty members to the outside-of-classroom experience. Many of these individuals are supported through the Thematic Faculty Initiative. The purpose of this initiative is threefold—prepare graduate students from diverse backgrounds for future careers as academicians; collaborate with units across campus to hire diverse faculty; and provide fellowships for faculty members who focus on diversity in their research, teaching, or service. Many of the faculty members who receive fellowships have "long affiliations with the [Division of

Diversity and Community Engagement] and manage initiatives that are housed within the division.” This program highlights the University’s support for faculty members to engage in diversity and social justice work outside of the AA realm.

The diversity page of Oklahoma State University provided another example of strong organizational support for pervasive partnerships. Its institutional website hosts a specific institutional diversity page that illustrates ways in which AA and SA partner and includes an organizational chart, a state of diversity report, diversity news, and diversity resources. Linked from the main institutional diversity page, the Diversity Highlights page provides information about progress on compositional diversity goals and links to diversity programming; diversity course requirements for all undergraduates; international dimensions course for all undergraduates; student government and faculty council support for diversity training for students, faculty, and staff; diversity-related campus organizations for students, faculty, and staff; and other important announcements related to the diversity goals of the institution. By hosting both AA and SA in a common page, the University shows how they are equally important to contributing to diversity and social justice in ways that further their land grant history and mission.

Therefore, pervasive partnerships should not be viewed as unattainable or debunked by this study. We found that four institutions articulated their diversity, inclusion, and social justice goals in a pervasive manner, meaning that they are reflecting on the benefits of promoting and implementing pervasive partnerships (See Table 3). For example, Rowan University presents diversity, inclusion, and social justice goals that cut across AA and SA and also specifically defines various terms such as social justice and inclusion; and it articulates how each plays a role in their goals. Despite recognizing the value of employing pervasive AA and SA partnerships as evidenced in their discussion of goals, institutions struggled to enact pervasive partnerships throughout the rest of the institutional dimensions.

Discussion

This study confirms LePeau’s (2015) conceptual framework because each institution employs a dominant pathway to partnership. However, the findings indicate that the three partnership types are not mutually exclusive. Most institutions, based on content presented on their websites, operate from some combination of the pathways in aspects of their work toward diversity, inclusion, and social justice goals. The idea of gradations of partnerships adds nuance to LePeau’s (2015) original findings and extends the credibility of this conceptual framework by examining 23 institutions through a different medium of review (i.e., content analysis of websites rather than a grounded theory).

The findings of this study show that the majority of institutions are operating from complementary pathways to partnerships and that campus educators predominantly articulate goals associated with diversity. Although there was some evidence of coordinated partnerships and pervasive pockets, this study reveals that pervasive partnerships are more aspirational than actualized based on content presented on institutional websites. Given that the majority of the institutions in this study have been recognized for their diversity initiatives in some fashion by AAC&U and *INSIGHT into Diversity*, these findings are substantial because our data make it clear that empirical investigations of award-winning diversity work across an array of institutions can provide alternative perspectives about their work.

LePeau’s (2015) framework focuses on what institutions may be doing to promote inclusive environments. This idea of partnership types relates to discussions about campus cultures.

Institutional leaders respond to environmental pressures in different ways in order to try to solve a problem or meet a need; and the institutional cultures related to diversity, inclusion, and social justice highly influence what institutional leaders see and miss and the interpretations they make (Bensimon, 2005; Birnbaum, 1988; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Museus & Jayakumar, 2012). Museus and Jayakumar (2012) outlined their typology of institutional cultural orientations on a continuum from Eurocentric to diversity-oriented and to equity-oriented. An institution operating in a diversity-oriented culture may both espouse and enact some values about diversity in the student body and decision-making. Yet, within this cultural orientation the institution may consign the ways the values are manifested to subcultures such as cultural centers and ethnic studies programs (Museus & Jayakumar, 2012). The findings of this study show evidence of this practice in the examination of the programs and policies dimension of this study. Museus and Jayakumar (2012) (connecting with ideas from Bensimon, 2005) discussed how an equity-oriented campus culture recognizes “the pervasiveness of persisting institutional racism, historical and current exclusionary institutional practices, and disparities in sense of belonging to the cultures of the campus and educational outcomes” (p. 16). This orientation is congruent with constructing pervasive AA and SA partnerships for social justice. However, educators at the institutions in this sample predominantly articulated goals for increasing compositional diversity.

In our opinion, it is not enough for institutions to bring AA and SA together in only a few compartmentalized aspects of their campus in the form of coordinated or pervasive pockets. Institutions need to focus on changing institutional structures, policies, and job descriptions by striving to promote pervasive AA and SA partnerships for diversity, inclusion, and social justice in order to disrupt inequities rather than reproduce them (LePeau, 2015; Patton, 2016). In turn, the efforts are viewed as mechanisms for achieving equitable outcomes and developing deep and pervasive, equity-oriented institutional cultures (Museus & Jayakumar, 2012).

Some scholars have argued that institutional type may create patterns in the ways that campus educators behave in particular environments (Manning, Kinzie, & Schuh, 2014). In this study institutional type was not a defining factor in attributing institutions to particular partnerships pathways. Large institutions are often considered to be loosely coupled and highly differentiated and decentralized (Birnbaum, 1988; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Weick, 1976). The findings from this study illustrate that large institutions do have the capacity to work in more pervasive ways in AA and SA partnerships. Additionally, the findings did not support partnership differences between public and private institutions. Although individual institutions may have barriers or institutional culture challenges in enacting partnerships (Blimling et al., 1999; Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh, 1996), neither type of institution was more likely to be coordinated or trending to pervasive in its pathway.

Implications for Research and Practice

We have explained that we selected our sample of institutions based in part on their national recognition or reward by either the AAC&U or the *INSIGHT into Diversity* HEED Award for their commitment to diversity and organizational change. It was telling that many institutions in this sample took pride in being named recipients of these awards. The HEED award logo was prominently displayed on multiple websites for these institutions. While the institutions tout themselves as recipients of these awards on their websites, internal and external

stakeholders are not always made aware of what these distinctions actually mean. The HEED coordinators, for example, collect self-reported survey data about *whether* institutions are engaged in practices designed to advance diversity and inclusion efforts. Some of these references include stakeholders completing checklists about whether or not institutions have resources such as cultural centers; LGBTQA student centers or resources; and student recruitment, retention, and completion rates (About the HEED award, 2017).

Thus, our data-collection approach was limited in that the institutions themselves apply for the award (Museus & Jayakumar, 2012). Although institutions are encouraged to use this application process to assess their efforts toward diversity and inclusion, we encourage institutions to assess the culture of the institution differently. How policies and practices are enacted is a primary indicator of the culture of the institution. To assess the campus climate, campus leaders often hire external consultants to conduct racial climate studies (Harper, 2015). Harper (2015) bemoaned that climate assessment at predominantly White institutions often shows “racial disparities in enrollment, academic performance, graduation rates, promotions and salaries, and a range of other metrics,” but then institutions do little to address these inequities. We reviewed multiple climate reports displayed on institutional websites.

Conclusion

The findings and model of this study provide institutions with a different diagnostic strategy to examine institutional commitments to diversity, inclusion, and social justice. An institution can look at what they are doing from this partnership frame to assess not only what they offer in terms of policies, practices, and services but how they enact these initiatives (Bensimon, 2005; LePeau, 2015). Future researchers may investigate whether non-awardees have similar or different types of AA/SA coordination. Each of the eight coding dimensions provides ways for institutions to take the feedback from climate studies and then use the evidence to continue working toward organizational and institutional change (LePeau, 2015). The strategy of looking at institutions through the partnership lens in conjunction with a resource lens is one plausible step in making progress toward more equity-oriented work at institutions of higher education.

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