Unraveling the Composition of Academic Leadership in Higher Education:
Exploring Administrative Diversity at 2-Year and 4-Year Institutions

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Introduction

Within the higher education system, racial and ethnic minority academic leaders, those individuals who hold faculty status whose principal activity is administration (e.g., deans, chairs, directors, etc.), tend to be underrepresented and more likely to serve in less prominent leadership positions than their White counterparts (Ball, 1995; Jackson, 2000, 2001a). In a study examining the number of African American males among the leadership ranks at colleges and universities, Jackson (2003) reported that White males, in 1998, occupied 90% of the academic administrative positions (e.g., chair, dean, and vice-president), which represented approximately a 1% increase since 1992. In contrast, Jackson also found that African American males occupied 5% of the academic administrative positions in 1998, a slight decrease from 1992.

Academic leaders perform a variety of functions at postsecondary institutions including, but not limited to, making recommendations regarding hiring decisions, evaluating faculty, providing faculty with the necessary resources they need to be successful, and managing financial resources (Coats, 2000; Creswell & England, 1994; Carroll & Gmelch, 1994; Hoppe, 2003; Stark, Briggs, & Rowland-Poplawski, 2002). Recently, in the research literature, scholarly writings have ex-

plored this topic and noted the value-added dimension of increasing the number and improving the quality of racial and ethnic minority academic leaders. For example, Konrad and Pfeffer (1991) argued institutions of higher education need to rethink, revamp, and adjust their current hiring and retention practices of persons of color in administrative areas if they intend to diversify the administration. In 2003, Page contended that diversifying the academic leadership ranks is essential due to the changing demographics. In 1996, Bowen and Muller edited a monograph entitled, *Achieving Administrative Diversity*, which focused on community colleges. It addressed the complexity, importance, and challenges involved with increasing the numbers of racial and ethnic minority academic leaders. The authors' work comprehensively suggested that appropriate strategies can be implemented under certain conditions that take into account institutional culture and historical factors to yield high-quality and effective racial and ethnic academic leaders. Jackson (2003) also acknowledged that increasing administrative diversity in higher education requires a long-term approach and strategy that centers on nurturing an interest in and competencies for academic leadership, as early as in high school.

Generally, increasing the presence of racial and ethnic minority academic leaders on campus is mitigated by several factors, including poor and failed job searches, as well as diminishing and erratic interest in diversifying the administrative ranks in higher education. Despite these and other impediments to realizing administrative diversity on college campuses, some progress has been made in terms of increasing the presence of persons of color in administrative positions at institutions of higher education (Jackson, 2003; Konrad, 1991; Konrad & Pfeffer, 1991; Wilson, 1989). However, national data still indicate that there is a critical shortage of people of color in academic leadership positions (Ball, 1995; Bridges, 1996; Jackson, 2001a, 2001b, 2003; Rusher, 1996). Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to provide data to describe the diversity among academic leaders on 2-year and 4-year college campuses at three points in time. Additionally, this study sought to provide practical recommendations for increasing administrative diversity in higher education and for conducting future research on this topic. For the purposes of this study, the terms racial and ethnic groups and unrepresented groups refer to African Americans, American Indians/Alaska Natives, Asians/Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics.

Conceptual Foundation

In light of the importance of diversity and its association with leadership in institutions of higher education (Aguirre & Martinez, 2002),

this study sought to describe the composition of academic leaders at postsecondary institutions. Accordingly, this study was informed by the concept of administrative diversity, which is based on the view that there is inherent value in increasing the number of racial and ethnic minority persons in leadership positions in higher education (Jackson, 2000, 2003). More specifically, according to Jackson (2001b), "[a]dministrative diversity consists of two levels: (1) the number of administrators from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups who occupy administrative positions at colleges or universities; and (2) the types of positions occupied by administrators from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups at colleges and universities" (p. 4). The point of view that suggests administrative diversity is needed for institutions of higher education to support diversity goals on college campuses has been expressed by a number of researchers examining community colleges, technical colleges, as well as 4-year institutions (Bowen & Muller, 1996; Farmer, 1997; Henry & Nixon, 1994; Knowles & Harleston, 1997; Page, 2003). Thus, the present study sought to explore the concept of administrative diversity by examining the percentage of underrepresented racial and ethnic groups who were academic leaders in 1992, 1998, and 2003. Thus, this study was primarily concerned with the first level of administrative diversity as expressed by Jackson (2001b).

Methodology

Data Sources

Data, from the 1993, 1999, and 2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF), were used in the present study, because the NSOPF contained a representative sample of part-time and full-time faculty in the United States (Abraham et al., 2002; Selfa et al., 1997). Given the weighting procedures used in the NSOPF, the sample approximated the number of college faculty employed in the fall of 1992, 1998, and 2003. Moreover, NSOPF included several postsecondary institutions representing a diverse array of institutional types including public research institutions, private not-for-profit research institutions, public doctoral institutions, private not-for-profit doctoral institutions, public comprehensive institutions, and private not-for-profit comprehensive institutions (Cataldi, Bradburn, & Fahimi, 2005; Heuer et al., 2005; Selfa et al., 1997; Zimbler, 2001). To produce the descriptive statistics (e.g., percentages and averages) for this study, the researchers utilized the Data Analysis System maintained by the National Center for Education Statistics. In this study, academic leaders were defined as full-time faculty who reported that their principal activity was administration.

In terms of the institutional types represented in NSOPF: 93, 2-year faculty and staff accounted for approximately 33% and 4-year faculty and staff accounted for 67% of the professoriate. In NSOPF: 99, 2-year faculty and staff comprised 29% of the professoriate, while 4-year institutions constituted approximately 71% of the professoriate. In NSOPF: 04, 2-year faculty and staff comprised 31% of the professoriate, while 4-year institutions constituted approximately 69% of the professoriate. In the NSOPF: 93, NSOPF: 99, and NSOPF: 04 the approximate racial breakdown for all faculty was the following: African American (5%), American Indian/Alaska Native (1%), Asian/Pacific Islander (5%), Hispanic (3%), and White (86%).

Results

This study sought to describe the racial composition of academic leaders in postsecondary institutions. Toward that end, this study employed descriptive data to examine the demographic characteristics of academic leaders at 2-year and 4-year institutions to explore the extent to which the level of administrative diversity among academic leaders had changed from 1992, 1998, and 2003. According to data from the 1993, 1999, and 2004 NSOPF, African Americans comprised 7% and 6% of all academic leaders at 2-year and 4-year institutions in 1992, respectively. Six years later, African Americans comprised approximately 9% of the academic leadership at 2-year institutions and 6% at 4-year institutions. In the fall of 2003, African American faculty constituted nearly 13% of all academic leaders at 2-year institutions and 6% at 4-year institutions. American Indian/Alaska Native faculty comprised less than 1% of academic leaders at 2-year and 4-year institutions in 1992 and 1998. In the fall of 2003, American Indian/Alaska Native faculty constituted approximately 3% of the academic leaders at 2-year institutions and 2% of the academic leaders at 4-year institutions.

In 1992, Asian/Pacific Islander faculty accounted for approximately 3% of all academic leaders at 2-year and 4-year institutions. In the fall of 1998, Asian/Pacific Islander faculty accounted for 7% of all academic leaders at 2-year institutions and 2% of all academic leaders at 4-year institutions. In 2003, Asian/Pacific Islander faculty accounted for approximately 2% of the academic leaders at 2-year institutions and 5% at 4-year institutions. In the fall of 1992 and 1998, Hispanic faculty constituted nearly 4% of all academic leaders at 2-year institutions and 2% at 4-year institutions. In the fall of 2003, Hispanic faculty constituted nearly 5% of all academic leaders at 2-year institutions and 2% at 4-year institutions. White faculty accounted for 85% and 89% of all academic

leaders in 1992 at 2-year and 4-year institutions, respectively. In addition, White faculty accounted for 78% and 89% of all academic leaders in the fall of 1998 at 2-year and 4-year institutions, respectively. In the fall of 2003, White faculty constituted approximately 77% of all academic leaders at 2-year institutions and 85% at 4-year institutions.

Discussion

In many postsecondary institutions, there are a limited number of racial and ethnic minority faculty members who occupy leadership positions (Moore & Herndon, 2003; Jackson, 2003). Diversifying the administration to account for the changing demographics in colleges and universities is consistent with current scholarly literature and theoretical orientations, regarding having an appropriate number of leaders to address issues relevant to diverse constituent groups (Flowers, 2003). In higher education, African Americans, as well as other racial

Table 1
Percentage Distribution of Full-Time Faculty Who Engage in Administrative Activities, by Race/Ethnicity and Institutional Type: Fall 1992, Fall 1998, and Fall 2003

Institutional Type	African American	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Hispanic	White
Part A: 1993 NSOPF					
2-Year	7.4	0.8	2.8	4.1	84.9
4-Year	6.3	0.4	2.8	1.9	88.6
Part B: 1999 NSOPF					
2-Year	9.5	0.6	7.4	4.1	78.4
4-Year	6.3	0.5	2.0	1.9	89.3
Part C: 2004 NSOPF					
2-Year	12.6	2.9	2.4	5.2	76.8
4-Year	5.7	1.8	5.4	1.9	85.2

Note. Data obtained from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF: 93); 1999 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF: 99); and 2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF: 04).

and ethnic minority faculty, are underrepresented at the administrative ranks. Also, they are less likely to hold tenure-track faculty positions than their White faculty counterparts (Alali, Ross, & Calhoun, 1990). In the research literature, there are a number of explanations given for the underrepresentation of persons of color at the tenure-track faculty ranks, such as the low number of ethnic minority graduate students, shortage of qualified ethnic minorities in the pool of faculty applicants, and the existence of discriminatory hiring practices and job advancement procedures (Alai et. al., 1990; Allen, Epps, Guillory, Suh, & Bonous-Hammarth, 2000; Flowers & Jones, 2003; Jackson, 2003). Therefore, it can be argued that these factors also contribute to the shortage of academic leaders. Accordingly, the most perplexing component of this issue concerns the fact that this particular issue is an "educational pipeline" (Jackson, 2003; Wilson, 1994) problem. Stated differently, in order to increase the number of underrepresented racial and ethnic academic leaders, institutions of higher learning need to increase the number of underrepresented racial and ethnic tenured faculty (Wilson, 1994). Until this issue is addressed, the number of racial and ethnic minority persons who obtain academic leadership positions in higher education is likely to increase slowly over time, as evidenced by the data reported in this study.

While it is widely known that racial and ethnic minority persons are not well-represented in upper-level administration positions in higher education (Ball, 1995; Bridges, 1996; Jackson, 2001a, 2001b, 2003; Rusher, 1996), this study sought to provide recent data on this issue. Toward that end, this study yielded several major findings. First, overall, the data suggested that the number of academic leaders who are members of underrepresented groups is increasing. While there was a slight decrease in the percentage of academic leaders from the fall of 1992 to 2003 for Asian/Pacific Islander faculty at 2-year institutions, every other racial and ethnic group had higher percentages of academic leaders across the 11-year period. Second, these results indicated that African Americans were more likely than other racial and ethnic groups to serve as academic leaders. Third, data also revealed that American Indian/Alaska Native faculty were least likely to serve as academic leaders. In the fall of 2003, African American and Hispanic faculty were more likely to serve as academic leaders at 2-year institutions than at 4-year institutions. Moreover, at each time period, as a group, racial and ethnic faculty were more likely to serve as academic leaders at 2-year institutions than at 4-year institutions.

Implications for Practice and Research

College and university administrators who seek to diversify their

administrative staff and senior leadership team should begin by identifying, at their institutions, underrepresented faculty who demonstrate leadership potential. Once identified, this group of faculty should have the opportunity to observe current academic leaders at their institution (and at other institutions) and participate in activities that prepare them to assume leadership roles in the future. Implementing an apprenticeship model, such as this, would enable the institution to demonstrate its commitment to diversifying the administrative ranks, while also helping to retain diverse faculty by acknowledging their leadership potential and other unique skills. Also, leadership training courses should be developed at colleges and universities to introduce diverse and underrepresented faculty members to the issues involved in serving in an administrative position as well as enable them to develop the requisite skill sets and knowledge bases that are required to serve as an effective administrator. Another strategy that may increase the number of racial and ethnic faculty members who serve as academic leaders is to invite these scholars to various senior leadership team meetings to give them the opportunity to provide their expertise to the senior leadership team on matters pertaining to their particular research and scholarship. This kind of practice will enable these faculty members to participate in the decision-making process of the institution and provide an introduction to the various types of issues and topics that administrators consider throughout the academic year. It is also recommended that senior-level administrators should recruit tenured underrepresented faculty members at their institutions to serve in special appointments (e.g., special assistant to the president, etc.) related to their research interests.

Diversifying the administration can also support the community-building process that has seemingly eluded institutions of higher education (Marcus, Mullins, Brackett, et al. 2003; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). However, in order to develop a diverse campus community, precursors to community are needed. In general, the antecedent environment—that is necessary for building a diverse campus community—requires a condition in which the various members within the organization (e.g., administrators, faculty, staff, and students) perceive and realize equal opportunities to study, work, and excel in the institutional environment. Moreover, college campuses need to move beyond passive diversity, which is based on the numerical outcomes associated with diversity, in order to retain underrepresented academic leaders and faculty (Mosher, 1982; Riccucci & Saidel, 1997). In this regard, this article sought to present data to provide policy makers and campus leaders with information about the numbers of racial and ethnic academic leaders on campus. Toward this end, it is recommended that

college administrators consult with institutional researchers to conduct similar analyses at their institution to determine the extent to which their campus environment is characterized as having a distributed balance of academic leaders from various racial and ethnic groups. Pursuing this activity can provide insight on the extent to which the campus focuses on active diversity rather than passive diversity. Active diversity refers to the extent to which members of diverse racial and ethnic groups are represented by members of diverse groups in the senior leadership at the institution (Mosher, 1982; Riccucci & Saidel, 1997).

In 1997, Knowles and Harleston suggested that academic administrators play critical roles in providing the necessary resources to recruit and retain racial and ethnic minorities in institutions of higher education. Aligned with this notion, it should also be advanced that academic administrators who are in a position to increase the numbers of racial and ethnic faculty members must also recognize that the goals of diversifying the academic leadership are enhanced when they select and hire academic leaders whose research interests and scholarly productivity include the following: (a) higher education administration, (b) organizational culture in higher education, (c) administrative behaviors in higher education, (d) leadership issues, (e) diversity issues, (f) campus climate, and (g) empirical studies concerning students' educational outcomes. Given that colleges and universities are complex organizations with many internal and external constituent groups, it seems reasonable to suggest that academic leaders who have devoted their academic careers to producing research and scholarship on understanding these and related topics would have an advantage in addressing the multitude of problems, challenges, opportunities, and nuances of typical American higher educational systems. This line of thinking is consistent with the way that many institutions of higher education hire faculty members in various departments. Accordingly, institutional administrators responsible for hiring and promoting academic leaders should also consider the candidates' advanced degrees, curriculum vitae, professional experiences, and their research foci when seeking to assemble a senior leadership team in general, as well as when they intend to diversify their senior leadership team.

Because research on racial and ethnic minority academic leaders is scant, there exists a great opportunity for researchers interested in this topic to continue this line of study. Thus, in this section, a list of research questions are presented that should be investigated by higher education researchers and other stakeholders (e.g., presidents, provosts, etc.). This line of research is important and has implications for diversity and equity in higher education. Specifically, additional research that focuses on racial and ethnic minority academic leaders may consider the following ques-

tions: (a) What are the effects of gender on job satisfaction for racial and ethnic minority academic leaders?; (b) What is the typical professional pathway (e.g., educational history, professional experiences, etc.) of a racial and ethnic minority academic leader?; (c) What are the effects of having a racial and ethnic minority academic leader on the retention rate of racial and ethnic minority faculty at a college or university?; (d) What are the effects of having a racial and ethnic minority academic leader on the retention rate of racial and ethnic minority students at a college or university?; and (e) What are the effects of race on job satisfaction, salary, and research productivity for academic leaders?

To be sure, academic leadership positions (e.g., department chairs, deans, vice-presidents, etc.) in higher education are prestigious and influential positions on university campuses. The absence of persons of color in these positions has major implications for issues centered on diversity and building an equitable campus community. It is also probable that the lack of administrators of color impacts the educational and social development of students in general and students of color in particular (Reid, 1993). This is another topic worthy of future research, particularly as institutions of higher education seek to enhance the campus community while also pursuing diversity goals.

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