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MULTICULTURAL ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT: BENCHMARKING
PROGRESS TOWARDS DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION (216 PP.)

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The purpose of this multi-method study was to identify the perceived importance and prevalence of practices being utilized in higher education to achieve institutional diversity goals. In fulfilling this purpose, a survey was sent to Chief Diversity Officers at 200 institutions recognized for their work in diversity. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sub-group of Chief Diversity Officers.

Based on the analysis of the data, thirty of the thirty-six practices were considered important or very important by more than 75% of respondents. In particular, grievance procedures, presidential leadership, and institutional mission were considered to be very important by the largest percentage of respondents. The findings from the interviews further emphasized the importance of presidential leadership, institutional mission, curriculum, resource allocation, and positive campus climate.

In contrast, only four of the thirty-six practices were reported as implementation underway or fully implemented by more than 70% of respondents. The only practice to be reported as fully implemented by more than 50% of respondents was the grievance process or complaint resolution process. The degree of implementation was further supported by the interviews in which practices had been fully implemented by only one of the seven campuses participating in the interviews.

Furthermore, a comparison of the mean difference between importance and prevalence of practices indicated a statistically significant difference. The average importance of diversity practices was significantly greater than the average prevalence of diversity practices. Thus, many of the practices perceived to be important have yet to be fully implemented.

Based on the results of this study, institutional leaders must turn their attention to narrowing the critical gaps between importance and prevalence of practices if progress is to be made towards diversity. A conceptual framework for assessing progress has been presented through the findings of this study. College and university leaders would be wise to utilize this framework to assess their progress regarding those practices perceived to be important and develop appropriate benchmarks that can help shape institutional policy for creating multicultural campus environments.