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LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION PLANNING FOR
SOCIAL JUSTICE: EVALUATION OF HIGHER
EDUCATION LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
FOR WOMEN AND UNDERREPRESENTED
MINORITY FACULTY AND STAFF

SCRIBNER, SAMANTHA PAREDES & ET AL
INDIANA UNIVERSITY – PURDUE UNIVERSITY INDIANAPOLIS
SCHOOLS OF EDUCATION, LAW, LIBERAL ARTS
AND IUPUI OFFICE FOR WOMEN

Dr. Samantha Paredes Scribner
Shanna Stuckey, M.S.
School of Education
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

Dr. Karen Bravo
School of Law
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

Dr. Gina Gibau
School of Liberal Arts
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

Dr. Kathleen Grove
IUPUI Office of Women
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

**Leadership Succession Planning for Social Justice: Evaluation of Higher Education
Leadership Development for Women and Underrepresented Minority Faculty and Staff**

Synopsis:

This presentation highlights a unique university leadership development program at an urban university. The program targets women and underrepresented faculty and staff of color, and aims to diversify the mid level and upper administrative positions with particular attention to addressing equity and social justice issues across the university. The social justice agenda of this program is to redress staff and faculty rank inequities in the current administrative structure.

Leadership Succession Planning for Social Justice: Evaluation of Higher Education Leadership Development for Women and Underrepresented Minority Faculty and Staff

This presentation reports on an evaluation of a program designed to provide women and underrepresented minority faculty and staff with professional development in higher education leadership. This program aims to address the need for a more diverse pool of leadership talent at the host university in the ranks of mid-level and upper administration. In addition, the program provides opportunities for participant growth as professionals in their current roles, while attempting to diversify the experiences and perspectives within leadership positions across university units.

The Leadership Development Program (LDP) is unique in that it includes women and underrepresented minority individuals who hold positions as staff and faculty at the university. There is little literature related to creating professional development opportunities where faculty and staff are combined. Gambino (2013), in her dissertation, examined how several institutions of higher learner came together to plan a hybrid (online and in person) professional development that would have both faculty and staff work together to close “the loop” by “using evidence for assessment, planning, and decision making.” Additionally, Troller (2002) described the creation of a shared space crafted by DuPage University with the explicit goal of having faculty and staff learn about and then undergo professional development together. While these programs/spaces worked toward a professional development that included faculty and staff, neither consistently offered in person professional development with the express interest of diversifying the administrative ranks with a focus on equity and social justice in the same way as the LDP. The social justice agenda of the LDP is to redress staff and faculty rank inequities in the current administrative structure. The program was predicated on existing data which illustrated disparities in leadership among women and people of color specifically on this campus.

During the LDP participants engage with a ten-month curriculum focused on a variety of topics designed to enhance their leadership potential and professional acumen, including: the mission of urban institutions; planning and leading change; negotiating and managing conflict; budgets and finances; self-assessment; mentorship; individual and institutional diversity; and managing strategic resources, among others. A highlight of the program is the opportunity for participants to develop a capstone leadership project which links directly back to their current work or to the campus mission and strategic plan.

Overall, faculty and staff members participating in the LDP were satisfied with their experiences. Faculty and staff reported benefits of participation in the program including additional support, mentoring, opportunities for networking, and the development of leadership skills. However, there were challenges that emerged due to the composition of the group. Participants agreed that there was a benefit to understanding different role perspectives. However, the perceived relevance of specific topics, responsibilities, and potential areas of authority varied between the two groups. Many felt that addressing these might be more feasible if the groups were separated for some professional development sessions. Presenters will discuss measures program designers will take to address these perceptions.

Additionally, the explicit strengths of combining these groups will also be discussed. For example, from an organizational learning perspective, participants gain vital understandings from interactions with each other.

The fact that this type of professional development, which includes individuals that currently hold faculty and staff positions at the university, is rare allows for the program creators and researchers to share with other institutions of higher education the benefits of such a program, as well as the areas for improvement as the program continues.

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