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The Strategies and Struggles of Graduate Diversity Officers in the Recruitment of Doctoral Students of Color

Kimberly A. Griffin
The Pennsylvania State University

Marcela M. Muñiz
Stanford University

The growing heterogeneity of American society is increasingly reflected in the undergraduate student population, yet there has been less change within graduate education. As graduate education is the pipeline to the professoriate, we must have a better understanding of how to promote institutional change toward greater graduate diversity. This qualitative study of 14 graduate diversity officers (GDOs) across 11 research universities provides insight into efforts universities can make to increase graduate diversity and foster institutional change. Findings suggest promising practices, including integrated recruitment efforts that reflect a strong commitment to diversity at both the institutional and departmental level. Faculty play a significant role in the change process, yet could also be a limiting factor due to inconsistent commitments to diversity and institutional change.

Doctoral education is the training ground for the professoriate, and homogeneity in this population calls our ability to meet the needs of our increasingly diverse student body into question (Tierney, Campbell, & Sanchez, 2004). Shifts in the diversity of the undergraduate community that are unaccompanied by similar changes at the graduate level will result in a professoriate that looks increasingly unlike their students (Aspray & Bernat, 2000). In addition to providing students of color with much needed role models and evidence that success in the academic arena is a realistic possibility (Antonio, 2002; Mickelson & Oliver, 1991; Washington & Harvey, 1989), faculty of color have been shown to positively impact student learning and exposure to diverse ideas (Milem, 1999; Smith, 1989; Umbach, 2006) and affect conceptions of knowledge because of their often unique epistemological perspectives (Collins, 1986; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Scheurich & Young, 1997). Homogeneity in graduate education both limits the access that students will have to these educational experiences and the range of perspectives brought to teaching and research (Aspray & Bernat, 2000). The inclusion of Asian Americans, Native Americans, African Americans, and Latinos into the academic discourse will allow new communities to contribute to the creation of knowledge, presenting innovative ideas and alternatives to research and problem solving (Pruitt & Isaac, 1985; Smith, 2009).

Address correspondence to Kimberly A. Griffin, The Pennsylvania State University, The Center for the Study of Higher Education, 400 Rackley Building, University Park, PA 16802-3203. E-mail: Kimberly.griffin@psu.edu

While the diversification of the United States is increasingly visible within the undergraduate communities on college campuses (Carnevale & Fry, 2000; Ryu, 2008), these societal trends have not fully translated to change within graduate schools. In 2005, 23% of bachelor's degree recipients were people of color (Asian Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans), yet only 14% of doctoral degree recipients were people of color (Ryu, 2008). Despite an increase of over 50% in students of color earning doctoral degrees between 1995 and 2005, progress in terms of proportional representation has been difficult. Increases in the number of students of color in doctoral education have been congruent with general increases in the number of students across all groups completing doctoral degrees. Therefore, while the number of students of color receiving doctoral degrees grew in the last decade, the percentage of students of color among doctoral degree recipients grew only slightly during the same time period, from 12% to 14% (Ryu, 2008).

For these reasons and others, scholars have increasingly identified graduate diversity as an issue of great importance (Aspray & Bernat, 2000; Smith, 2009; Tapia, Lanius, & Alexander, 2003; Tierney et al., 2004; Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, 2005), urging colleges and universities to develop strategies to recruit a more diverse student body to graduate education. Awareness of graduate diversity recruitment and retention issues at major research universities first emerged in scholarly publications and institutional self-studies during the 1980s (e.g., Olson, 1988; Pruitt & Isaac, 1985; University Committee on Minority Issues, 1989). Since then, a small group of reports have been issued on the importance of fostering diversity in graduate education, particularly in the sciences (Aspray & Bernat, 2000; Tapia et al., 2003; Tierney et al., 2004; Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, 2005). While this research can be credited for raising awareness and providing recommendations to increase diversity, it is largely based on singular personal accounts or consultations with colleagues. Our extensive review of the literature was unable to identify any model for increasing graduate diversity based on empirical research.

The recent emergence of Graduate Diversity Officers (GDOs) at universities nationwide highlights a relatively new institutional effort to increase ethnic and racial diversity within the graduate student population. GDOs are institutional agents—typically full-time administrators with advanced degrees—who are specifically charged with the recruitment and retention of graduate students from underrepresented backgrounds. Very little is known about GDOs and the nature of their work. Specifically, there is a lack of understanding of how GDOs operate within large and complex institutions and develop recruitment strategies. Further, little is known about the institutional and external factors that impact GDOs' effectiveness in reaching diversity goals. This study addresses these issues through an examination of the current work being done to foster diversity in graduate education by GDOs, as well as the organizational and external challenges they face as they aim to change their institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

While there is an extensive literature that broadly addresses organizational change in higher education (see Kezar, 2001, for a review), this study focuses specifically on efforts to foster diversity and the factors, including organizational behavior, that influence the ability of GDOs to do so. Kezar's review integrates work from three literatures used to frame our study. First, we examine the limited, practitioner-oriented literature on the specific efforts recommended to increase diversity in graduate education. Second, we examine the key principles associated with

organizational change for diversity in higher education, highlighting the common ideological challenges in creating more heterogeneous campus communities. Finally, we address literature from the body of work on organizational theory, examining reasons why colleges and universities are resistant to change. We focus specifically on Weick's (1976, 1991) theory of how institutions function as loosely coupled systems and the potential implications of this form of organizational behavior on efforts to make institutional change.

Graduate Student Recruitment Strategies

Awareness of graduate diversity recruitment issues first emerged during the 1980s (Olson, 1988; Pruitt & Isaac, 1985), and this literature is largely based on institutional self-studies and scholarly reflections on successful recruitment strategies. The extant literature tends to fall into two categories: factors generally shaping student enrollment decisions regardless of racial/ethnic background and best practices in graduate diversity recruitment. Studies focusing on graduate student choice, which are limited in number, illustrate the key factors in an applicant's decision to enroll in a particular graduate program. In one of the few studies exploring graduate students' institutional choice process, Kallio (1995) found that graduate students tend to be older and are more likely to be married, and these traits can distinctively weigh into their choice of graduate school. In addition to institutional quality, graduate students expressed considering social factors, such as quality of life, social and cultural opportunities, and sensitivity to individuals from underrepresented groups. Poock (1999), who focused on students of color, finds academic reputation and faculty friendliness to be key factors in choice of a graduate program. The availability and amount of financial aid also factors heavily into graduate program choice for students, generally (Kallio, 1995), and for students of color, specifically (Astone & Nunez-Wormack, 1990; Pruitt & Isaac, 1985). Muñoz-Dunbar and Stanton's (1999) study of graduate admission directors further substantiates the importance of financial aid, revealing that the ability to offer grants and fellowships positively influenced study participants' successful recruitment of underrepresented students. Muñoz-Dunbar and Stanton also identify community characteristics, such as geographical location and existing minority student representation on campus as additional factors affecting underrepresented student recruitment and students' decisions to matriculate at a specific campus.

Financial aid is also included in practitioner-oriented reports on graduate diversity documenting "best practices" for increasing diversity (Aspray & Bernat, 2000; Olson, 1988; Tierney, Campbell, & Sanchez, 2004). Recounting the recruitment strategies implemented at Oklahoma State University, Olson (1988) notes that in addition to financial aid opportunities, all recruitment efforts should include early identification programs and direct outreach to students of color. Aspray and Bernat (2000), Pruitt and Isaac (1985), and Tierney and colleagues (2004) also suggest multipronged recruitment strategies to increase the presence of underrepresented communities, including proactive outreach to students of color, pre-doctoral training of potential students through summer research opportunities, forming partnerships with minority serving institutions, and a re-consideration of admissions criteria.

Institutional Commitment and Increasing Campus Diversity

While these strategies have been suggested and identified as having the potential to increase diversity in graduate education, the slow and limited change in the representation of students

of color in graduate education and the professoriate (Ryu, 2008; Smith, 2009) suggests that these strategies have not been completely successful. This could be due partly to inconsistent implementation of diversity recruitment strategies. However, it can also be attributed to the challenges faced by those who seek to implement policies and facilitate organizational change that increase campus diversity and improve the racial climate (Chang, 2000, 2002; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999). Any form of enduring change that fundamentally alters an institution does not happen by accident or happenstance; deeply altering colleges and universities requires a comprehensive plan implemented over time (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). For example, in their study of six institutions, Kezar and Eckel highlight the importance of collaborative leadership and a vision with robust design in successfully implementing and fostering change at colleges and universities.

While our study investigates change in graduate education and specific academic departments and programs rather than change throughout the whole institution, the importance of a comprehensive plan that is widely endorsed by institutional agents is also important when implementing strategies to increase diversity in graduate education. Literature that focuses on efforts to foster diversity in higher education suggests the first, and perhaps the most important, step is a broad and pervasive institutional commitment (Chang, 2000, 2002; Hurtado et al., 1999; Kezar & Eckel, 2002). The importance of institutional commitment is frequently highlighted in the graduate diversity literature, as well. The university community as a whole, including the faculty, students, administrators, and staff, must embrace graduate diversity as an important goal to truly instigate change (Aspray & Bernat, 2000; Tapia et al., 2003).

Whether discussing institutional change, generally, or changes specific to diversity, scholars repeatedly call for university leaders to indicate their commitment not only through their rhetoric but through visible support and financial resources that identify the diversification of graduate education as a priority (Aspray & Bernat, 2000; Astone & Nunez-Wormack, 1990; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Tierney et al., 2004). It is particularly important to note that organizational change for diversity requires support, action, and funding from institutional leaders, faculty, staff, and students to be successful (Chang, 2002; Hurtado et al., 1999). Despite this recommendation, diversity scholars suggest that including multiple constituencies (e.g., professors, graduate students, institutional leaders) in campus diversification efforts can be challenging because participation can be perceived as unrelated to their interests (Chang, 2000; Tapia et al., 2003). This can be particularly challenging when working with faculty. Professors are bound by a reward structure that bases promotion on scholarship and productivity, not on service and efforts to promote diversity (Tapia et al., 2003; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Furthermore, some faculty assume increasing access and campus diversity requires a reduction in academic standards (Chang, 2000). These ideological issues, coupled with the traditional faculty reward structure, may create challenges for GDOs who aim to engage faculty and others who perceive diversity as distraction or outside of their areas of work.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: INSTITUTIONS AS LOOSELY COUPLED SYSTEMS

In addition to exploring the literature on fostering organizational change for diversity, theory on organizational behavior also can facilitate understanding the challenges associated with increasing

diversity in graduate education. Similar to observations made about strategies to increase diversity in higher education, institutional change is generally acknowledged as difficult (Boyce, 2003; Hearn, 1996). While educational institutions can make superficial changes to be responsive to external pressures relatively easily, creating pervasive change that fundamentally alters the organization is extremely challenging (Kezar, 2001; Weick, 1976, 1991).

Change can be difficult partly because of how colleges and universities function. Kezar's (2001) work offers an inventory of characteristics of higher education institutions that present challenges as institutions attempt to foster change. In addition to noting the problems presented by shared governance, the tendency for institutions to engage in irrational decision-making processes that rarely consider the full range of options, and competing institutional values, Kezar notes that the loosely coupled nature of institutions limits efforts to make change. Weick (1976, 1991) suggests that while academic programs, administrative offices, and student services function in direct response to one another, they are only connected through weak, loose ties. As loosely coupled organizations, departments and programs within colleges and universities "are responsive, *but* each event also preserves its own identity and some evidence of its physical or logical separateness" (Weick, 1976, p. 3). For example, an institution may choose to adopt a commitment to increasing diversity in the graduate student community. While the administrative offices of the Graduate School may articulate this policy and expect departments to implement diversification strategies, each department functions independently. One department could have an extensive recruitment and outreach plan while another department demonstrates little effort; however, the actions of one department does not necessarily hinder or enhance the work of another. In other words, while tied together as part of the same institution and under the umbrella of graduate school policy, the departments can make choices on how to implement centralized policies.

Both Weick (1976, 1991) and Kezar (2001) inform the assumptions that can be made about how institutions function and respond to change if we assume that they are loosely coupled systems. As highly decentralized organizations with differentiated components and employees who have highly specialized skill sets, problems and pressures are often dealt with in inconsistent ways. Loose coupling lowers the probability that multiple organizations and structures within an institution will respond in a coordinated way to organizational issues, pressures, and problems. Constituencies within an institution can all acknowledge a problem but choose to respond differently. Based on these characteristics, large scale change is hard to achieve, and elaborate plans to make changes across institutions are less likely to succeed.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

While both the student choice and practitioner-oriented literature provide insight into commonly utilized and recommended diversity recruitment strategies, little is known about the role graduate diversity officers (GDO) play in increasing graduate diversity and developing recruitment efforts in organizations that may be resistant to change ideologically (value placed on diversity) and structurally (status as a loosely coupled organization). The recent emergence of GDOs, a population of institutional agents charged with fostering graduate diversity, presents a unique opportunity to learn about how these individuals engage in their work, the challenges they face,

and the strategies they utilize in efforts to increase graduate student diversity on their respective campuses. Specifically, the research questions guiding this study are:

- What strategies do GDOs utilize in their efforts to increase diversity in graduate education?
- Which strategies do GDOs perceive as having the most and least potential to increase graduate student diversity?
- How do GDOs describe the organizational and external forces that influence their ability to increase diversity in the graduate student population?

METHODOLOGY

We employ a qualitative multi-case study approach (Merriam, 1998) to pursue these questions, which enables us to compare and contrast the experiences of GDOs at various universities. The comparison of data from multiple cases—in this study, graduate diversity officers—enables us to gain greater analytical insight into several key concepts tied to the research problem as well as enhance the external validity of the study's findings (Merriam, 1998).

Study Participants

The sample consists of 14 graduate diversity officers, employed at 11 different research universities. Each institution identified for this study is a Comprehensive Doctoral with Medical/Veterinary or Comprehensive Doctoral (no medical/veterinary) as defined by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2008). More detailed information on the characteristics of these universities can be found in Table 1.

Eleven study participants are women and 3 are men; hence, women represented 79% of the sample. In terms of racial and ethnic diversity, 11 participants self-identify as African American,

TABLE 1
Demographics of Institutional Sites

Institution Pseudonym	Region	Control	Total Enrollment*	Graduate Enrollment**
Agriculture University	Midwest	Public	>35,000	11,000
Baron University	West	Private	<35,000	11,000
Colony University	South	Public	<35,000	9,000
Crest University	East	Private	<35,000	16,000
Flagship University	Midwest	Public	>35,000	15,000
Green University	West	Public	>35,000	10,000
Land Grant University	Midwest	Public	>35,000	8,000
Mid State University	East	Public	>35,000	6,000
Riverdale University	East	Public	<35,000	3,000
Seaside University	West	Public	>35,000	12,000
Tech University	East	Private	<35,000	6,000

*To protect participants' identities, institutions are characterized as having total enrollments that are either more or less than 35,000 students.

**To protect participants' identities, the graduate enrollment numbers are rounded to the nearest thousand.

1 as Latino/Hispanic, and 2 as non-Hispanic white. Many hold advanced degrees: 5 of the study participants report having earned Master's degrees, and 7 have earned Ph.D.s. Participant pseudonyms and detailed background information can be found in Table 2.

While all participants self-identify as GDOs (albeit each with different job titles), some are responsible for a particular school or division of their university ($n = 5$), whereas others are responsible for graduate diversity recruitment and/or retention across the entire university ($n = 9$). Study participants reflect a range of experience working in diversity outreach and with graduate students. The average amount of time that each participant has worked in diversity recruitment and retention is 10.4 years ($SD = 7.3$). All participants identify themselves as being charged with both graduate diversity recruitment and retention; however, eight of the participants say that their jobs lean more toward recruitment, while five participants say that their jobs lean more toward retention. One participant notes her work incorporates graduate recruitment and retention activities equally. In addition, two participants have an academic appointment at their university.

Procedures

Participants were identified using two sampling methods. First, the three principal investigators employed a purposeful sampling method based on the assumption that discovering, understanding, and gaining insight requires selection of a sample from which the most can be learned (Merriam, 1998). A balance of geographical and institutional measures, including both public and private universities, as well as universities from the West, the Midwest, the South, and East coast, were also considered in selecting potential participants. A small initial group of GDOs were identified by the researchers based on past professional experiences with these individuals and knowledge of their professional roles at institutions that met our institutional selection criteria (a Comprehensive Doctoral institution that employs at least one individual who is responsible for graduate diversity recruitment). These individuals were invited to participate in the study via e-mail. Then, the principal investigators identified other institutions that had at least one individual responsible for graduate diversity recruitment through our preliminary research of existing graduate diversity programs. These individuals also were contacted via e-mail and were invited to participate in the study. The second sampling technique used was snowball sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Those who agreed to participate were asked to recommend other potential respondents who were then contacted by the researchers and invited to participate.

Data collection took place during the autumn of 2008 and winter of 2009. All of the GDOs who agreed to participate met individually with a member of the research team, either in person or over the telephone. Each study participant first completed a brief questionnaire that included questions about their demographic characteristics, professional experiences (e.g., years working with graduate students and years working in diversity/recruitment and retention), and current engagement in recruitment and retention activities.

Participants then took part in a semi-structured interview, which allowed for both uniform inquiry regarding the key questions guiding this study and opportunities for open flow of conversation (Hammer & Wildavsky, 1993; Merriam, 1998). Interviews lasted approximately 60 to

TABLE 2
Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

Pseudonym	Institution	Sex	Race/Ethnicity	Highest Degree	Years in Diversity Work	Years at Institution	Years working with Graduate Students
Alex Zapata	Green University	M	Latino/Hispanic	Doctorate	2	18	18
Allison Boyd	Riverdale University	F	African American/Black	Doctorate	5	5	7
Amie Folsom	Agriculture University	F	White	Doctorate	21	9	4
Craig Smith	Tech University	M	African American/Black	Masters	5	5	5
Deborah Hardwick	Seaside University	F	African American/Black	Doctorate	1	2	1
Denise Miller	Colony University	F	African American/Black	Masters	16	3	30
Dustin Chase	Land Grant University	M	African American/Black	Masters	23	30	23
Elizabeth Stevens	Crest University	F	African American/Black	Bachelors	15	25	25
Jessica Hayman	Flagship University	F	African American/Black	Bachelors	6	7	6
Joann Samuelsson	Mid State University	F	African American/Black	Masters	19	9	9
Lindsay Danon	Mid State University	F	African American/Black	Doctorate	7	7	1
Malia Lucas	Baron University	F	African American/Black	Masters	11	4	4
Monique Malone	Baron University	F	African American/Black	Doctorate	4	4	11
Sam Bailey	Flagship University	F	White	Doctorate	10	15	15

75 minutes, were audiotaped, and transcribed verbatim. Participants were assigned pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. The interview protocol addressed a variety of issues relating to how GDOs carry out their professional responsibilities, including, but not limited to the strategies they employ to recruit underrepresented students, the sources of support—both internal and external to the university—that GDOs draw from; the most important things they keep in mind when recruiting students of color; the factors internal and external to the institution that play a role in their ability to recruit students; and the challenges and pressures they face in their work. All participants were given a $25 gift card to thank them for their time and study participation.

Analyses

The primary sources of data for this study are the interview transcripts. Each member of the research team reviewed interview transcripts to identify recurring patterns and phenomena described by our participants in accordance with a grounded theory approach, which allows for the emergence of themes directly from the interview data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Each member of the research team read the interviews, separately, writing memos about their observations of key phenomena emerging from the data. The team then met to discuss these observations, aggregating specific individual observations into a comprehensive list, as well as identifying a series of general themes emerging from the data. A coding scheme was developed based on our identification of these specific phenomena, and conceptually similar codes were clustered together into larger categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The codes were then used to organize data collected from the interview transcripts. ATLAS.ti software was used to apply the codes to specific quotations and passages from participants' narratives. Once codes were applied, the ATLAS.ti software was useful in aggregating quotations categorized within the same code. Data connected to individual codes and groups of coded data within the same thematic cluster were re-read and discussed collectively by members of the research team to confirm and challenge our early perceptions of the themes identified in the preliminary stages of data analysis.

FINDINGS

GDOs participating in this study shared the activities in which they engage to increase graduate student diversity on their respective campuses. Analyses revealed that most activities focus on increasing the number of students of color who apply to and ultimately matriculate at their respective institutions. We clustered these specific activities into broader strategies, which centered upon efforts to form and maintain relationships with potential applicants as well as with institutions that are known for educating large populations of students of color. In this section, we present both the specific activities and more general strategies GDOs employ to increase the diversity in the graduate student communities on their respective campuses, highlighting each activity's perceived effectiveness. We then discuss the internal and external forces that influence the ability of GDOs to implement the activities and strategies they deem most useful to increase graduate student diversity.

Forming Relationships with Potential Applicants

Graduate School Fairs and Conferences

In their effort to connect directly with students, many GDOs travel to graduate school fairs, setting up tables and talking to students about opportunities at their institutions. GDOs also travel to conferences, and efforts are made to identify organizations and national meetings that draw high achieving students of color and/or those with research experience. Popular conferences include: the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS), National Society for Black Engineers (NSBE) national meeting, the Society for the Advancement of Chicano and Native American Scholars (SACNAS) national conference, and regional McNair Scholars conferences. Dustin's comments capture the importance of having GDOs at these events, describing fairs as opportunities for students of color to connect with someone who can put them at ease about the campus environment. In his words,

> When you have a minority person that does represent the university . . . they [prospective students] say, "Oh, okay, well at least they're trying to have someone represent," and there's maybe questions that they'll ask me that they wouldn't feel comfortable asking a majority person.

While not the case with all GDOs in our sample, many were members of groups underrepresented in higher education. In this case, Dustin highlights that when GDOs are from underrepresented communities, they may be able to uniquely address issues that may be of concern for graduate students of color. Thus, in addition to providing academic information, GDOs' attendance at these events can be an important way to gain access to culturally relevant information.

In addition to attending these meetings themselves, several GDOs cite the importance of encouraging graduate students and faculty to serve as institutional ambassadors. While graduate students are described as useful recruiters, faculty participation in these events is especially desired and valuable. For example, Sam elaborated on how a department increased its representation of students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds to 25% through faculty engagement in recruitment at conferences:

> When [the faculty] go to a conference or when they give a paper somewhere, they're always looking for that extra opportunity. They all recruit . . . and they work with students in the process of application . . . and then they invite them here, and it's really impressive.

Thus, encouraging faculty to specifically invite students to apply to their institutions at conferences may be a way to strengthen connections with students and encourage increases in graduate student diversity.

While offering opportunities to meet students personally and to collect student information for future contact and use, graduate fairs and large conferences also are described by some as a less effective way to increase diversity. Graduate fairs certainly expose GDOs to a large number of students; however, some study participants noted that these students rarely matriculate at their institutions. Graduate fairs are perceived as providing limited opportunities to engage and inform students about graduate school; rather, students often circulate and gather information without thinking critically about graduate education or opportunities at specific institutions. Thus, while GDOs may meet a large number of students and share information at these meetings, the GDOs in our study report that attending large conferences and graduate school fairs rarely results in

the recruitment of serious applicants to their graduate programs. Considering the expense of traveling to these conferences and fairs, GDOs described these recruitment efforts as limited in terms of their efficiency and cost effectiveness. Alex's comments specifically capture the disconnect between the financial expense of graduate fairs and the return on investment in terms of increases in the number of graduate students of color matriculating at his institution:

> You have a few hundred students walking around . . . And you come home and you have, you know, 40, 50, 80 forms that students filled out . . . When the air clears, maybe two or three of those students apply, and maybe one of them gets accepted . . . You're paying $700 for the registration fee. You're flying one or two people and spending a lot of money to have them there. And you know that bang for the buck is miniscule.

Thus, in the mind of Alex and others, these fairs may not be worth the financial investment if they yield a small number of students and offer limited opportunities for change in graduate student diversity at his institution.

Summer Research Programs

An additional way to form direct relationships with students is through summer research programs, where undergraduates from institutions across the country are invited to campus for the summer months to conduct research with a faculty mentor. Lindsay noted that these programs should not just be "a feel good activity;" rather, she stressed the importance of bringing in academically competitive students and seeing summer research opportunities as recruitment tools. Craig also highlighted the importance of these programs for recruitment at his institution, sharing that approximately 90% of students who attend their summer program and are admitted ultimately decide to attend Tech University.

In addition to allowing GDOs to build direct relationships with students, summer research programs facilitate relationships between prospective students and professors. Jessica coordinates meetings for summer research program participants at Flagship University, providing them with admissions information and facilitating networking opportunities with her program's faculty and graduate students. These connections allow visiting students to gain more information while simultaneously exposing faculty to prospective applicants. Deborah's comments captured the sentiments of several GDOs, who stressed the importance of these programs as opportunities for students to connect to the institution and enlighten faculty to their talents and abilities. She hopes faculty will "see students of color who are competitive, who are engaged in research . . . who are from schools that they wouldn't have thought about as being competitive." Therefore, these programs serve multiple functions, allowing GDOs to encourage students of color to apply while also exposing faculty to talented students from less selective or esteemed institutions that they may have been less likely to notice in the admissions process.

Campus Visitation Programs

Additionally, GDOs plan visitation weekends, allowing prospective students from underrepresented backgrounds to visit campus and learn about the campus community and academic

programs. Dustin described his visitation weekend as his primary recruitment event, bringing students from historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs) to campus each year. Visiting students are strongly encouraged to apply to his institution, leaving the weekend with an application in hand.

While this programming is popular among GDOs overall, there are some differences in the timing of these events. Some schedule visitation weekends prior to application, while others invite students to visit campus after offers of admission are made. Regardless of when the weekend is scheduled, the goals are similar: to help students connect with the campus through meetings with current students, faculty, and one another. Jessica described her pre-application visitation weekend as a useful strategy to increase applications and yield, sharing that students meet with faculty in departments and with student organizations "so they can get to know student life here, whether it be hanging out or going to dinner." Denise also reinforced the importance of giving students opportunities to connect with faculty and one another. She shared her excitement about Colony University's first visitation weekend, noting that it provided a sense of "critical mass" among applicants of color, which is absent when departments schedule visits individually. Elizabeth and Monique also speak of the importance of creating opportunities for students of color to meet with one another across departments during these programs, suggesting that these programs serve multiple functions. In addition to exposing prospective students to the academic opportunities at a given campus, they provide early opportunities to build community across campus.

Building Relationships with Faculty at Undergraduate Minority-Serving Institutions

To supplement their efforts to build relationships with students directly, several GDOs identify "feeder schools," or institutions with larger populations of students of color, with whom to partner. Building relationships with faculty and staff at these institutions offers GDOs access to a consistently diverse student body with potential interest in their programs. For example, four participants mention being part of an institutional consortium that travels yearly to HSIs and HBCUs to hold small information sessions. Deborah focused her recruitment efforts in this area. She sees the relationships she builds with faculty at HBCUs as useful in increasing the number of black students at Seaside University, explaining that the connections she makes with HBCU faculty are more influential than meeting with students individually at conferences or fairs:

> Because I make the trips to the HBCUs, I have relationships with the faculty. They know me, we're colleagues. And they send their students to me, because they trust that I will take care of their students and that I am looking out for their interests . . . Where if you do outreach at a conference, you don't get the institutional partnership aspect, you're just giving . . . paper out to students.

Thus, for Deborah, building these relationships is a more efficacious way to increase diversity in the graduate student population, allowing for continuous discussion and engagement rather than the more fleeting interactions that take place at conferences and graduate school fairs.

In addition to fostering their own relationships, some GDOs openly expressed their desire for their faculty to build relationships with other faculty at "feeder schools," cultivating a pipeline of prospective students to their institution. Ideally, these connections would be built around research relationships so that undergraduates at partner institutions would become familiar with

the recruiting university's faculty and research. These relationships have the potential to be "very helpful in efforts to recruit underrepresented students," according to Amie. Similar to comments made by Deborah, she elaborated that "those relationships are based on trust—faculty trust in sending the student to Agriculture University because they have the relationship with a professor there and know their students will be taken care of."

Forces Influencing GDOs' Efforts to Increase Diversity

While GDOs described various recruitment strategies they implemented to increase diversity in graduate education, they also described other forces outside of their own efforts that had an influence on their ability to facilitate organizational change for diversity. Consistent with the research literature (e.g., Chang, 2002; Hurtado et al., 1999; Tapia, Lanius, & Alexander, 2003), GDOs identified the importance of a consistent commitment to diversity articulated by members of the community, most notably, the faculty. Further, they addressed how the loosely coupled nature of colleges and universities (Weick, 1976, 1991), and particularly how this loose coupling manifests within the graduate admissions process, can be a challenging hurdle to overcome in efforts to promote graduate student diversity.

Institutional Commitment to Diversity

For many GDOs, an articulated commitment to enhancing diversity, particularly among the faculty, is perceived as critical to their work and efforts to increase campus diversity. At Colony University, Denise noted that a key challenge is "trying to win over the old guard" by convincing faculty that diversity is important. Malia also feels dissatisfied with the lack of a shared commitment to and responsibility for graduate diversity on her campus.

> This is a faculty-driven institution. We have one African American faculty member [in the program I work for] . . . one, and he's not tenured yet . . . So there's only so much he can do. . . . if it's just left to those faculty, then nothing will happen . . . There's so much more we can do as a collective unit.

Malia is aware that the work of graduate diversity recruitment cannot simply fall on the shoulders of underrepresented minority faculty and GDOs, yet shared commitment to graduate diversity on the part of her university's faculty has yet to be fully realized.

This lack of commitment to diversity appears to manifest for many GDOs through inconsistent faculty engagement in recruitment efforts. While it is important to acknowledge the ambassador work of enrolled graduate students in diversity recruitment, GDOs repeatedly speak to their efforts to build relationships with faculty and their desire to engage them in the recruitment process. Many GDOs stated that faculty are in a position to serve as university representatives in ways that a graduate diversity officer cannot because of their important role in the admissions process and the training of graduate students. Sam asserts that faculty at her university have the greatest potential to help diversify the graduate student population, elaborating on the power and importance of faculty members directly telling students, "I think you're the best. I want you to come and work in my lab."

In light of the importance of faculty engagement, GDOs often express frustration with the lack of faculty participation in recruitment efforts. While acknowledging that faculty are busy, several GDOs reinforced the important impact a minimal faculty commitment to recruitment could have on graduate student diversity. Deborah shared, "They're busy, which, you know, in some sense I understand that, you know, it's a time commitment. But once a year, you know, a couple days out of a year. That's pretty much what we're asking for." Malia shared her frustration with getting faculty to participate in recruitment efforts, noting that it often takes mass emails followed by multiple personal emails to get faculty to respond to her requests. She elaborated, "You know there's a lot of talk about being committed to diversity, but I feel like. . . we're looking for people to really be involved and play an active role."

The Graduate Admissions Process

GDOs also express concerns about the graduate admissions process, noting that limited consideration of diversity and increased attention to quantitative measures like the GRE challenge their diversity recruitment initiatives. Admissions decisions are not made centrally; rather, they are left to faculty within departmental committees. There is a clear understanding among GDOs that without appreciation of diversity and its importance within admissions committees, there will be little change. For example, Denise described her work recruiting students as "meaningless" unless faculty see diversity as important and consider what students of color will add to the learning environment at the institution.

> You know, you can bring in all the applications you want, but until they really look at the total application and understand how important diversity is to the overall university, then, you know, I am just working for myself. (Denise)

In other words, increased application rates of students of color must translate to increased rates of admission to see increases in the diversity of the graduate student population.

Rather than attending to diversity, several GDOs spoke to what they saw as an overreliance on GREs and faculty perceptions of institutional prestige in the admissions process. Joann echoed the comments of others when she spoke of the unnamed "elitism of who ought to be a graduate student," noting the tendency to determine admissions based on GRE scores. Additionally, there is a sense among GDOs that a lack of familiarity with many minority serving institutions leads faculty to assume that students graduating from these institutions are less prepared. This pattern was acknowledged by Craig, who explained that rather than informing themselves about the institutions potential students attended, faculty are more likely to think "I've never heard of that school before, so I can't vouch for it, so I'm going to throw that application out."

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In many cases, the GDOs in our study are creating programs and outreach strategies consistent with those recommended in the institutional self-studies and scholarly reflections mentioned above (Aspray & Bernat, 2000; Olson, 1988; Pruitt & Isaac, 1985; Tierney et al., 2004). For

example, Aspray and Bernat (2000) and Olson (1988) highlight the importance of informing students of color about graduate school opportunities. This advice is congruent with the efforts many GDOs make not only to increase students' interest in their institution, but in graduate education generally. While information is shared through participation in graduate school fairs and conferences, some GDOs incorporate targeted institutional visits often at minority-serving institutions into their recruitment plans. These strategies are perceived as more effective at identifying diverse prospective students than graduate fairs and conferences alone and are consistent with recommendations to form partnerships with institutions known for educating students of color (Aspray & Bernat, 2000; Pruitt & Issac, 1985). GDOs strive to create clearer paths between minority-serving institutions and their own campuses, and our study suggests that these partnerships work because they are based on trust between colleagues and the assurance that students will be well supported by staff and faculty as they pursue their doctoral education.

In addition to activities that require GDOs to travel, several GDOs highlight the importance of bringing students to their own campuses. Aspray and Bernat (2000) note the importance of identifying and inviting talented students to universities during the summer to build their capacity as researchers and provide opportunities to connect with graduate students and faculty. Similar themes emerge from our findings, with GDOs highlighting the importance of bringing talented students of color to campus not only for summer research but also on a short-term basis through visitation programs. This study suggests that these programs are successful due to their ability to help students become connected with current graduate students, faculty, and available resources on campus. It is also important to note that exposure to potential applicants was cited as helpful to increasing faculty knowledge about the talent pool at institutions with which they may be less familiar and increase their interest in specific students. The high potential that institutional visits hold for promoting applicants' understanding of the campus environment while exposing faculty to talented students from underrepresented backgrounds and less familiar institutions suggests that institutions should consider ways to create opportunities for students of color to learn more about graduate opportunities on campus.

Beyond offering specific recommendations and assessments of the success of various recruitment strategies, our study perhaps more importantly highlights the ways in which GDOs engage their work and aim to foster lasting changes in diversity within the graduate student population. First, our findings suggest that the work of GDOs goes beyond haphazardly engaging in a collection of activities in the hopes that one of their many efforts will result in increases in the representation of graduate students of color on their campuses. Consistent with theory and literature addressing organizational change for diversity (Chang 2002; Hurtado et al., 1999; Kezar & Eckel, 2002) and recommendations from diversity scholars (Olson, 1988; Pruitt & Isaac, 1985; Tierney et al., 2004), GDOs acknowledge the importance of and strive to develop coordinated, integrated strategies and attempt to engage key constituents campus-wide in their recruitment efforts.

While coordinated strategies and communication are important in any effort to influence organizational change, it is particularly relevant to improve diversity at the graduate level. To see increases in diversity, GDOs must consider the multiple decision points in the graduate recruitment process, which is strongly influenced and controlled by faculty. Although university leadership can play a critical role in stating a commitment to and providing financial support for graduate diversity, our findings suggest this top-down commitment alone is insufficient. GDOs repeatedly highlight the importance of department-level faculty commitment to any effort to

improve graduate diversity given faculty domain over the admission process and their vital role in the training and support of graduate students.

Given the perceived importance of faculty engagement in efforts to increase graduate student diversity, it is not surprising that individual efforts to connect with students through graduate fairs, conferences, and institutional mailings are perceived by GDOs as producing limited results. According to our study participants, few students recruited through these means actually enroll in programs at GDOs' respective campuses. We do not suggest that these events are unimportant. They may enable students to efficiently gain a greater understanding of their full range of options and opportunities at a larger group of campuses. However, without demonstrated faculty interest those students may never apply, and without attention to the importance of diversity or willingness to consider a students' potential as their applications are reviewed they may not be admitted. Indeed, diversity in graduate education will not increase simply because campus community members say it is important (Aspray & Bernat, 2000; Astone & Nunez-Wormack, 1990; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Tierney et al., 2004); rather, they must truly commit and offer support in word and action.

While we strongly recommend that institutions that are serious about increasing graduate student diversity find ways to integrate faculty in recruitment activities, we acknowledge that faculty engagement and support are difficult to secure. The challenges GDOs describe in obtaining a consistent commitment to diversity from faculty can be informed by Chang's (2000) discussion of enduring ideological conflicts that can hinder efforts to make diversity-related change, particularly when thinking about their role in the admissions process. Conflict around the promotion of access versus excellence appears to be salient in the experiences of GDOs. Colleges and universities have visibly debated the merits of providing wide access to higher (or in this case graduate) education for those who have been traditionally excluded in opposition to the desire to populate their institutions with only the most talented and academically able students. Latent in this conflict is the assumption that students of color are less academically inclined or intelligent than their white counterparts and that increasing access and campus diversity requires a relaxation in academic standards that ultimately hurt the institution (Chang, 2000). Research by Tapia, Lanius, and Alexander (2003) highlights this conflict, finding that despite voicing an understanding of their university's commitment to diversity and sometimes even a personal desire to see more students of color in their graduate programs, faculty often lament a lack of "qualified" minority applicants as a barrier to increasing graduate student diversity. Thus, we again see an articulated commitment to diversity without changes in action, limiting the potential change in graduate student diversity.

GDOs fear faculty admissions committees are ill prepared to engage in an admissions process less reliant on GRE scores or the undergraduate institutions students attended, and instead more fully consider the potential contribution of students of color. Unfortunately, many committees are reluctant to take advice or guidance from non-professors, although the wealth of experience possessed by GDOs could likely provide useful insights. These challenges are exacerbated by the highly decentralized nature of graduate education, generally (Lovitts, 2001), and graduate admissions, specifically. This decentralization is consistent with the tendency for colleges and universities to function as loosely-coupled systems, and GDOs are particularly challenged by the loose coupling within the admissions process. GDOs note that there is no centrally identified set of standards, and that while each department must engage in some form of admissions process, how that process functions, the criteria upon which admissions decisions are based, and the value

placed on recruiting and admitting a diverse class of graduate students varies from department to department. Thus, while institutional leaders like presidents and provosts can choose to articulate a commitment to diversity and want more attention focused on diversity in recruitment and admissions, GDOs' narratives highlight that these intentions are challenging to translate into concrete policies because departments function independently and manage their own admissions processes.

Weick (1976) suggests that the "question of what is available for coupling and decoupling within an organization is an eminently practical question for anyone wishing to have some leverage on a system" (p. 5). Thus, we recommend campus administrators seek ways to more tightly couple the work of GDOs and faculty admissions committees. It is important to find formalized ways for GDOs to provide their insights and professional experience in an advisory capacity during the graduate admissions process as a means of making a positive step toward fostering greater diversity in graduate education. This could occur through a variety of strategies. Institutional leaders can require members of departmental admissions committees to attend workshops presented by GDOs, informing faculty committee members about common indicators of high potential among students from underserved communities, the predictive power of the GRE (or lack thereof), and less well known institutions with a reputation for training talented undergraduates of color. GDOs could also be appointed to admissions committees either in a voting or advisory capacity, available to offer insight and highlight the unique perspectives various student applicants from underrepresented communities can bring to their academic fields. Institutional leaders can and should hold academic departments accountable if they do not make progress toward institutional goals of increasing graduate student diversity. Requiring strategic plans that clearly articulate how individual departments plan to increase graduate student diversity and engage GDOs in that process, generally, and the admissions process, specifically would allow departments to maintain their autonomy, but strongly encourage utilizing the expertise of GDOs in the admissions process.

Finally, we concur with Tapia and colleagues (2003) who suggest that to gain faculty support in efforts to increase diversity in graduate education, this objective must be woven into the faculty reward structure to encourage consistent participation. Universities cannot rely on GDOs and minority faculty to carry the entire responsibility for graduate diversity recruitment. Fostering faculty commitment can be difficult in light of their many priorities and limited institutional resources, but we suggest that it must be pursued through various strategies, funding mechanisms, and faculty reward incentives (such as those counting toward promotion and tenure) to have any chance at generating significant improvement within the graduate diversity landscape.

CONCLUSION

Whereas much emphasis in recent years has been placed on undergraduate diversity, an increased commitment to graduate diversity, particularly on the part of faculty, is absolutely essential. The stakes for this work are more important than ever in light of our nation's need to educate an increasingly diverse population of students. The faculty pipeline is directly fueled by the doctoral student population, and the implications of graduate diversity efforts are critical to our ability to cultivate a diverse faculty that will provide unique educational benefits for all.

This study highlights the loosely-coupled nature of colleges and universities, particularly in graduate education, and the tendency of entities within the institution to make decisions

independent of one another (Weick, 1976, 1991). The decentralization and complexity of relationships within most colleges and universities makes it difficult to gain the universal support that is needed to implement new policies and programs (Hearn, 1996). Similarly, our findings suggest that GDOs can utilize their position to enhance the diversity of students in an applicant pool, but cannot fully transform graduate education on their own due to their separation from the admissions process and the potential independence of admissions committees from centralized institutional goals and values. In other words, GDOs are unable to directly influence admission decisions due to the decentralized nature of and faculty domain over the graduate admission process, which is critical to increasing the diversity within graduate education.

Consistent with principles of organizational change for diversity, true change requires that each component within a loosely-coupled system (in this case, each department within a graduate school) endorse and embrace a commitment to diversity, rather than rely on work done by one individual or office (Chang, 2000; Hurtado et al., 1999). Indeed, as individual change agents within the larger university setting, GDOs strive to cultivate active buy-in from administrators, faculty, and students at their respective universities to foster meaningful change around graduate diversity. Thus, while GDOs can be part of the impetus for change, universities cannot expect their GDOs to take sole responsibility for graduate diversity recruitment within the decentralized university setting and see dramatic improvement. Rather, institutions must seriously consider not only how GDOs can increase campus diversity through recruitment but also how to more fully integrate GDOs into the admissions process as trusted, knowledgeable consultants and advisors. Diversity, generally, and GDOs, specifically, must move from being an "add on" outside of the essential functioning of a college, department, or program, to becoming embedded and central to how academic organizations function and make decisions to produce significant increases in graduate diversity.

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Kimberly A. Griffin is an assistant professor of Education at The Pennsylvania State University. Her research interests include the study of black professors and their engagement in student interaction, the experiences and motivation patterns of high achieving African American students, increasing diversity in graduate education and the professoriate, mentoring and student-faculty interaction, and the influence of campus racial climate.

Marcela M. Muñiz is a doctoral candidate in Higher Education at Stanford University. Her research interests include faculty and student diversity, institutional change, and affirmative action in American higher education.