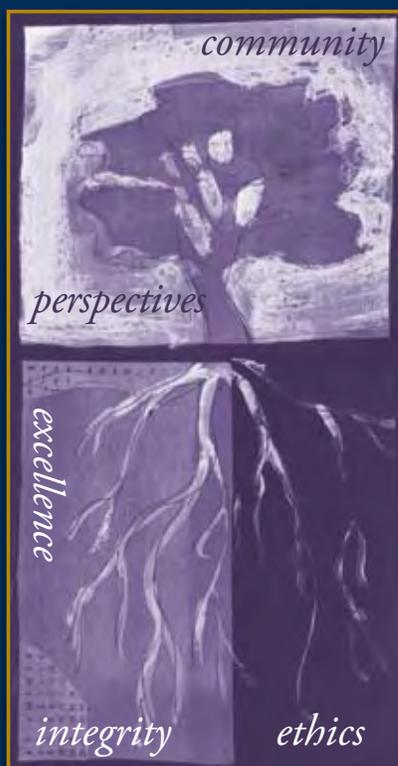


ENGAGING DIVERSE VIEWPOINTS: *What Is the Campus Climate for Perspective-Taking?*



Eric L. Dey and Associates
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Core Commitments:
Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility

An initiative of



Association
of American
Colleges and
Universities

ENGAGING DIVERSE VIEWPOINTS:

*What Is the Campus Climate for
Perspective-Taking?*



Eric L. Dey, Molly C. Ott, Mary Antonaros,
Cassie L. Barnhardt, Matthew A. Holsapple
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Core Commitments:
Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility

An initiative of





*Association
of American
Colleges and
Universities*

1818 R Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009

Copyright © 2010 by the Association of American Colleges and Universities.
All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-0-911696-20-2

Published with the generous support of the John Templeton Foundation.



Contents

About Core Commitments: Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility.....	v
Acknowledgments.....	vi
Introduction to the Series.....	vii
Foreword.....	ix
Introduction.....	1
I. Engaging Diverse Perspectives—The Perceived Campus Climate.....	4
II. Engaging Diverse Perspectives—Student Attitudes and Behavior.....	6
III. Demographic Differences within Groups.....	8
IV. Who Advocates Perspective-Taking?.....	10
V. Enhancing Activities for Perspective Taking.....	12
VI. Institutional Differences.....	14
VII. Qualitative Insights—Students.....	17
VIII: Qualitative Insights—Campus Professionals.....	19
IX: Conclusion—Engaging Difference, a Foundation for Action.....	21
References.....	22
APPENDIX A. Essential Learning Outcomes for the Twenty-first Century.....	23
APPENDIX B. About the Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI).....	25
About the Authors.....	27



In Memoriam

Eric L. Dey

(1962-2009)

Scholar, Educator, Champion of Equal Opportunity, Humorist
A life cut short but a life well lived.

Eric L. Dey was director of research for AAC&U's initiative, Core Commitments: Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility, former professor at the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education at the University of Michigan, and recently appointed professor and associate director of the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning.



About Core Commitments: Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility

Core Commitments, a signature initiative of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), aims to reclaim and revitalize the academy’s role in fostering students’ development of personal and social responsibility. The initiative is designed to help campuses create learning environments in which all students reach for excellence in the use of their talents, take responsibility for the integrity and quality of their work, and engage in meaningful practices, including taking seriously the perspectives of others, that prepare them to fulfill their obligations as students in an academic community and as responsible global and local citizens.

Core Commitments focuses national attention on the importance of students exploring questions about ethical responsibility to self and others. Core Commitments was developed in concert with AAC&U’s Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative, which champions a set of learning outcomes—including personal and social responsibility—that are essential for all college students’ achievement in the twenty-first century.

Through a series of interrelated projects, Core Commitments provides national visibility and leadership for these student learning outcomes, assists campuses as they articulate clear expectations for students’ personal and social responsibility, and supports intentional efforts to advance and assess students’ progress over time. These projects include a national leadership consortium; research and assessment, including the development of a new campus climate instrument; a presidential call to action; outreach activities at national conferences; and a growing set of Web-based resources. For more information about this initiative, visit www.aacu.org/Core_Commitments.

The Core Commitments Leadership Consortium

Allegheny College	Middlesex Community College	United States Military Academy
Babson College	Oakland Community College	The University of Alabama
Bowling Green State University	Portland State University	at Birmingham
California State University, Northridge	Rollins College	University of Central Florida
Concordia College	Sacred Heart University	University of the Pacific
Elizabethtown College	Saint Anselm College	Wagner College
Miami University	Saint Mary’s College of California	Winthrop University
Michigan State University	St. Lawrence University	
	United States Air Force Academy	

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to offer special thanks to the following individuals for making this report possible. First, we wish to acknowledge the alumni of the University of Michigan Core Commitments team, including Chris Jensen, Karen Moronski, Ryan Smerek, and Veronica Vergoth, for their assistance in the early stages of the project. Next, we would like to express our thanks to the Core Commitments Leadership Consortium teams and other campus leaders at those institutions, whose feedback throughout the project enhanced the quality of this work, and for the thousands of respondents who volunteered their time and offered their insights through completing the Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory. Our colleagues on the AAC&U staff deserve special mention, especially Caryn McTighe Musil, Nancy O’Neill, and Michèle Leaman, who offered wonderful editorial suggestions and generally made the whole enterprise run, and L. Lee Knefelkamp, whose intellectual leadership throughout the project was invaluable. Finally, we most gratefully acknowledge the John Templeton Foundation, for providing both the leadership and the resources that were so critical to the success of this project.

Advisory Board

Larry A. Braskamp, Senior Fellow, AAC&U, and Distinguished Alumni Professor, Central College

Mitchell J. Chang, Professor of Higher Education and Organizational Change, University of California-Los Angeles, Graduate School of Education and Information Studies

Anne Colby, Senior Scholar, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

Thomas Ehrlich, Senior Scholar, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

Walter Earl Fluker, Coca-Cola Professor of Leadership Studies, and Executive Director, The Leadership Center at Morehouse College

Patricia Y. Gurin, Nancy Cantor Distinguished University Professor Emerita of Psychology and Women’s Studies, University of Michigan

Patricia M. King, Professor of Higher Education, University of Michigan

Donald L. McCabe, Professor of Management and Global Business, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Marcia Mentkowski, Professor of Psychology and Director of Educational Research and Evaluation, Alverno College

Laura I. Rendón, Professor and Department Chair, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, College of Human Sciences, Iowa State University

Sidney A. Ribeau, President, Howard University

John Saltmarsh, Director of the New England Resource Center for Higher Education, Graduate College of Education, University of Massachusetts-Boston

Carol Geary Schneider, President, AAC&U

Patrick T. Terenzini, Distinguished Professor of Education, Higher Education Program, and Senior Scientist, Center for the Study of Higher Education, Pennsylvania State University

Carol Trosset, Director of Institutional Research, Hampshire College

Introduction to the Series

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) is pleased to present *Engaging Diverse Viewpoints: What Is the Campus Climate for Perspective-Taking?* This report is part of Core Commitments: Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility, an AAC&U initiative supported in its first phase by a generous grant from the John Templeton Foundation. We would like to thank in particular Arthur J. Schwartz, former executive vice president, whose commitment to the importance of these issues in college helped launch Core Commitments, and Kent Hill, vice president for character development, whose thoughtful engagement and intellectual investment as our program officer enriched our work.

In this report, the third of three Core Commitments research studies, the late Eric L. Dey and his associates from the University of Michigan Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education offer revealing findings. They present data on the perceptions of four campus groups—students, academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals—regarding the availability of learning opportunities that enhance college students’ capacities to take seriously the viewpoints of others, capacities that are essential for life, work, and effective participation in our democracy.

Engaging Diverse Viewpoints: What Is the Campus Climate for Perspective-Taking? focuses on whether—and which—educational environments promote students’ abilities to understand and be informed by perspectives that differ from their own. Exploring data that illuminate similar questions about enabling environments, the first report, *Civic Responsibility: What Is the Campus Climate for Learning?* was released in October 2009, and the second report, *Developing a Moral Compass: What Is the Campus Climate for Ethics and Academic Integrity?* was released in January 2010.

This report looks at trends across the 24,000 students and 9,000 campus professionals (academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals) who completed the Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI) as part of the Core Commitments initiative. Probing an important dimension of education for personal and social responsibility, *Engaging Diverse Viewpoints* examines whether college students have ample opportunities to recognize and act on the obligation to inform one’s own judgment and engage diverse and competing perspectives as a resource for learning, citizenship, and work.

Dey and associates show that across all four groups surveyed, respondents *strongly agree* that engaging difference *should be* an essential—not optional—outcome of college. This is news worth celebrating, and we believe this strong endorsement reflects the academy’s commitment to educate students to become citizens and leaders who attend to different perspectives and worldviews as they actively participate in our richly diverse society.

When asked if their institutions currently make perspective-taking a major focus, however, far fewer respondents—across all four groups—strongly agree. There is a troubling gap on campuses between aspiration and reality. These findings indicate that work remains to be done to make robust opportunities for students to understand, reflect upon, and engage with different perspectives *pervasive* across the curriculum and cocurriculum and available to *all* students. The report takes readers through some of the nuances of this gap for the colleges and universities that were part of the study—the nature of it, the extent of it, where it exists, and for whom. Exploring the nuances of this gap is an important step institutions should take as part of their ongoing work to strengthen their educational programs, across the curriculum and cocurriculum. The crucial next step is then to identify strategies to close the gap, and to monitor progress in doing so.

The Core Commitments research grows out of AAC&U’s broader framing of key outcomes for a twenty-first-century college education, taken up most recently through the Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative. LEAP is organized around the essential learning outcomes that college graduates need to thrive as responsible workers and citizens (see appendix A). The LEAP outcomes include: (1) knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, (2) intellectual and practical skills, (3) personal and social responsibility, and (4) integrative and applied learning.

Core Commitments is designed to bring attention to the personal and social responsibility outcomes, which AAC&U often refers to as the “orphan” outcome category. While many nod assent to its importance, few take the initiative to ensure that all students are actually educated for personal and social responsibility.

AAC&U affirms that *all* students must have multiple opportunities over time to practice excellence, integrity, and responsibility to self and others as part of their basic responsibilities as learners. And we argue that if students are to become accountable for developing these capacities, we—academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals—must become much more intentional about articulating these expectations to students, creating ongoing opportunities for students to acquire these capacities, assessing how well students are progressing, and learning from our collective efforts.

To illustrate this point, the data in this report indicate that while roughly three-fifths of students in the sample of 24,000 strongly agreed that they *came* to college having respect for diverse perspectives, approximately half felt as strongly that their understanding of difference expanded *while* in college. Also, less than one-third of students surveyed strongly agreed that their campus peers are respectful of one another when discussing controversial issues or perspectives, while just over one-third strongly agreed that it is safe for students to hold unpopular positions.

The good news is that many students feel prepared to recognize diverse perspectives when entering college and also believe that engaging difference should be an essential outcome of their college education. Yet much more must be done during those years to help students take seriously the perspectives of others, even—or perhaps especially—in the face of complex and controversial topics. Moreover, as research suggests, excellence derives from a capacity to consider multiple perspectives and vantage points (Gurin, et al. 2002; Milem, Chang, and Antonio 2005; Hurtado 2006). Colleges must therefore be attentive to how campus climates foster or suppress curiosity about learning through differences. In such engagements, it is particularly important to ensure that those holding unpopular viewpoints are able to safely interact with others on campus.

We hope the report will be useful to campuses interested in making personal and social responsibility an essential outcome of their educational programs. We will measure the success of Core Commitments in part by whether more institutions begin to collect data on the campus climate for personal and social responsibility and devise strategies to close the gap between aspiration and actuality. The Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory used in this research is currently being refined and will be available to the broader higher education community in the future. For resources that can assist campuses in strengthening education for personal and social responsibility right now, be sure to visit AAC&U’s Core Commitments Web page, www.aacu.org/Core_Commitments.

Caryn McTighe Musil

Senior Vice President, Office of Diversity, Equity, and Global Initiatives and Director,
Core Commitments

Nancy O’Neill

Director of Programs, Office of Education and Institutional Renewal and Assistant Director,
Core Commitments

Foreword

Engaging Diverse Viewpoints: What Is the Campus Climate for Perspective-Taking?, the third research monograph from AAC&U's Core Commitments initiative, offers evidence about a fundamental dimension of liberal education—a widely valued dimension that continues to be essential in the twenty-first century.

Perspective-taking—the ability to engage and learn from perspectives and experiences different from one's own—is a crucial catalyst for intellectual and moral growth. Enhancing one's knowledge by attending seriously to differing perspectives and developing respect and empathy for others' views even in the face of disagreement must, therefore, remain a bedrock element of any college education. Indeed, one might argue that perspective-taking, with all it implies for educational practice, is one of the foundational distinctions between a horizon-expanding education—a *liberal* education—and narrow training. The first involves opening the mind so that the learner can form his or her own grounded positions; the second requires that the mind follows expected patterns and procedures.

Engaging difficult difference is, in fact, even more important today as we redefine what high-quality college learning means in the twenty-first century. Respectful engagement with alternative views is a job skill in today's economy, and employers are the first to say that students should bring this frame of mind with them to the workplace. But even more fundamentally, the capacities that enable perspective-taking are absolutely essential in a diverse democracy. Democracy depends on citizens' willingness and capacity to work together—across differences—to tackle difficult challenges and create solutions.

The data we report in this monograph show plainly that, while higher education places high value on engaging diverse perspectives, we need to do much more to ensure that our students actually develop these capacities across the several years of college.

We hope that our readers will use the findings reported in this monograph—and in the others produced through the Core Commitments initiative—to add their own voices to the needed discussion about “college access and success” for today's diverse students.

Policy and philanthropic leaders have clearly signaled a new determination to provide postsecondary education to many more Americans than ever before. Today, about one in three Americans has completed a two- or four-year college degree; the new goal is to take that number to six out of ten Americans. This priority reflects a widespread understanding that the global economy places a premium on advanced skills and offers dramatically fewer opportunities for those who lack them.

Nevertheless, the new policy emphasis on “access and completion” is strikingly devoid of discussion about what today's students actually need to learn in college. To date, the discussion has focused on jobs and job training; even the call for “higher-level skills” is vague and underdeveloped. The time is right, then, for higher education itself to advance a compelling public vision of the learning that matters most in college, moving beyond issues of time to degree and credit hours to focus on the capabilities Americans will need to face the unprecedented challenges of our turbulent national and global environments.

As this Core Commitments study and AAC&U's related work make clear, the academy is ready, both to provide this public vision and to affirm that educating students for personal and social responsibility needs to be an integral part of every institution's mission and each student's course of study. Collectively, colleges and universities across the country have reached a strong consensus that the ability to take seriously the perspectives of others *ought* to be a significant goal for undergraduate learning.

Of the twenty-three widely diverse college campuses that contributed to this study, 93 percent of students and 97 percent of academic administrators, faculty, and student life professionals agreed either “strongly” or “somewhat” that preparing students to take seriously the perspectives of others should be an *essential* goal of a college education. With some 33,000 respondents contributing to the overall study, this is a very significant finding.

The important point, however, is that the institutions included in this study stand in the vanguard of a much larger and rapidly growing national movement. Their explicit commitment to prepare all their students for deep engagement with divergent perspectives is, we now know, representative rather than unusual.

Last year, AAC&U surveyed its member colleges and universities to find out how many had already defined learning outcomes that applied to all their students. With nearly half of campuses surveyed responding, 78 percent had indeed set such goals. Significantly, the themes addressed in this report and in the larger Core Commitments initiative turn out to be high priorities for hundreds of colleges and universities of all kinds: public, private, two year, and four year.

Among the 78 percent of AAC&U member institutions that have already defined learning outcomes applicable to all students, 75 percent have listed ethical reasoning among their expected outcomes (Hart Research Associates 2009). Sixty-eight percent include civic engagement and 79 percent view intercultural learning as an essential outcome. To help students make progress across all three of these outcomes, students must have opportunities to investigate multiple perspectives in serious and sustained ways.

These personal and social responsibility outcomes—civic learning, ethical learning, and intercultural learning—are best understood as woven strands in a larger tapestry. As the founders of the U.S. republic understood very well, the sustainability of a democracy depends on its citizens' possession of knowledge, integrity, discretion, and willingness to engage with other citizens—who, in this country, have always come from highly diverse cultural, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Engagement with diverse cultures, experiences, and perspectives is a necessary strand in this array of civic virtues, because espoused values not only gain real meaning when they are matched by conscientious actions but also when they are understood within their cultural contexts. Values are standards for action, and in a democracy, continuing engagement with the meaning, scope, and application of one's responsibilities to self and others is a crucial foundation for community, for justice, and for democracy.

Until the late twentieth century, of course, very few citizens actually went to college. Universities certainly contributed needed expertise to the wider community, but, of necessity, the primary responsibility for civic education was traditionally assigned to public schools. Now, however, with a majority of Americans being guided toward higher education, we have an unparalleled opportunity to take education for mindful citizenship to a much higher level of purpose, scope, and demonstrated accomplishment. As mentioned above, both this Core Commitments study and the AAC&U membership study demonstrate that higher education is poised to seize this opportunity.

To succeed, however, higher education leaders and educators will need to work vigorously on two intersecting priorities. The first is to challenge and reframe, once and for all, a public discourse about learning that, since the 1970s, has seen education at all levels as primarily about economic needs and individual or private benefits. Many college leaders and faculty have already challenged this framing on campus. But now we need to speak out in unison about democracy's stake in empowering forms of civic learning and responsibility—with an emphasis on bridging differences and examining our own judgments and values in light of the views of others. We owe our society a deep and dynamic conversation about the many aims of college, not just the fulfillment of economic aspirations alone. Of course, the inclusion and the consideration of multiple perspectives are essential for such a discussion to be truly productive.

The second priority for vigorous action is to match explicit aspirations with educational programs that live up to these worthy goals.

As this report makes plain, higher education is at best only halfway there. The Core Commitments study, and other national surveys such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), persuasively demonstrate that campus priorities and graduation requirements notwithstanding, many graduating students do not believe that college significantly influenced their capacity to take seriously the perspectives of others.

How and where—even on highly committed campuses—are we falling short? The students themselves offer some intriguing insights in both the quantitative and qualitative findings from the Core



Commitments study. One finding to ponder is the steady decline across four years in students' perceptions that perspective-taking is actually a high priority for their institution.

Another finding worth extensive discussion is students' perceptions about who advocates perspective-taking. Only 28 percent of students said that senior campus administrators *frequently* advocate the need for students to respect perspectives different from their own. What kind of campus climate is being fostered from the top? While 39 percent of students said that faculty members *frequently* advocate such aims for students, should we settle for only two-fifths of students perceiving that faculty regularly exercise this kind of educational leadership?

Engaging Diverse Viewpoints does offer data indicating some kinds of activities that are associated with students' beliefs that college experiences promote awareness of different perspectives. Echoing other AAC&U research (*Civic Responsibility*, Dey and Associates 2009), students who participate in community service are more likely to *strongly agree* that they have increased their ability to understand the perspectives of others, compared to students who do not. Likewise, students who interact with faculty outside of class are more likely to report that classes *frequently* encourage them to explore controversial issues using evidence-based claims, and that out-of-class activities *frequently* encourage them to explore diverse perspectives, world views, and cultures, compared to students who do not.

Through its decade-long LEAP initiative, in which the Core Commitments project is an integral strand, AAC&U has already pledged to work with higher education to move personal and social responsibility outcomes from the margin to the center of public debates about higher education and campus action to improve student learning. Our goal is to graduate students who are both prepared and inspired to take lasting responsibility for the civility, integrity, and vitality of the world's most diverse and powerful democracy. We thank the John Templeton Foundation and the scholars and practitioners who made it possible for us to create this illuminating picture of what is working and what is not as we strive to reach this goal. And we encourage every one of our campuses to probe beneath the surface of their own work to foster perspective-taking across the curriculum and cocurriculum.

Carol Geary Schneider

President, Association of American Colleges and Universities

Introduction

“Being in this college with many new perspectives is very eye- and mind-opening because there is much diversity here, much more so than in high school, and everyone is much more open and mature about the way they feel and their beliefs and values.”

■ First-year student, Core Commitments Leadership Consortium campus

Core Commitments: Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility, a signature initiative of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), aims to reclaim and revitalize the academy’s role in fostering students’ personal and social responsibility. The project is designed to help campuses create learning environments in which all students reach for excellence in the use of their talents, take responsibility for the integrity and quality of their work, and engage in meaningful practices that prepare them to fulfill their obligations as students in an academic community and as responsible global and local citizens.

In fall 2007, on behalf of AAC&U, researchers at the University of Michigan’s Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education surveyed four constituent groups—students, academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals—at twenty-three Core Commitments Leadership Consortium colleges and universities selected from a national pool of applicants (see p. v). Each institution in the consortium agreed to administer a newly developed AAC&U campus climate survey called the *Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI): An Institutional Climate Measure*. This survey assesses perceptions across these four constituent groups regarding opportunities for education for personal and social responsibility along five specific dimensions, including taking seriously the perspectives of others (see fig. 1). The latter entails recognizing and acting on the obligation to inform one’s own judgment by weighing multiple viewpoints, having respect for self and for others, being open-minded and inquisitive, engaging diverse and competing perspectives, and using all of these capacities as a resource for learning, citizenship, and work.

FIGURE 1. The five dimensions of personal and social responsibility

AAC&U has identified five key dimensions of personal and social responsibility that form the crux of the Core Commitments initiative:	
1	Striving for excellence: developing a strong work ethic and consciously doing one’s very best in all aspects of college
2	Cultivating personal and academic integrity: recognizing and acting on a sense of honor, ranging from honesty in relationships to principled engagement with a formal academic honor code
3	Contributing to a larger community: recognizing and acting on one’s responsibility to the educational community and the wider society, locally, nationally, and globally
4	Taking seriously the perspectives of others: recognizing and acting on the obligation to inform one’s own judgment; engaging diverse and competing perspectives as a resource for learning, citizenship, and work
5	Developing competence in ethical and moral reasoning and action: developing ethical and moral reasoning in ways that incorporate the other four responsibilities; using such reasoning in learning and in life

While these five dimensions do not encompass all aspects of ethical responsibility to self and others, they offer a compelling claim as an initial focus for a widespread reengagement with issues of personal and social responsibility.

Twenty-four thousand undergraduate students and 9,000 campus professionals (academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals combined) completed the PSRI, which includes quantitative items plus open-ended items to capture the experiences of individual respondents (see appendix B for more detail). The PSRI responses that relate to the goal of taking seriously the perspectives of others form the basis of this report.

Context

Scholars, policymakers, and educators engaged in the ongoing dialogue regarding the purpose of college frequently note the important role that higher education can and must play in encouraging graduates to consider and embrace diverse perspectives in order to become informed, responsible thinkers and citizens (AAC&U 2002; Colby et al. 2003; Meacham and Gaff 2006). In their review of the literature about the effects of college, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) identified a spectrum of outcomes associated with attending and completing college. Among these are attitudes and values that directly connect to the dimension described in this monograph:

- respect for differing viewpoints
- the ability to thoroughly gather evidence to support ideas
- the capacity to consider diverse perspectives
- the potential to reconsider one's own perspective
- the ability to explore diverse perspectives, cultures, and world views

A large body of conceptual and empirical scholarship exists that addresses the multidimensional ways by which college graduates develop these capacities.

In *Our Underachieving Colleges* (2006), Derek Bok asserts that students are underperforming in areas related to public purposes of college such as respecting diverse perspectives and engaging in cultural and global activities that increase their capacity to consider varying perspectives. Bok suggests that our society must give new priority to a set of educational outcomes that all students need from higher learning—outcomes that are associated with the realities of our complex and volatile world. In a similar vein, the National Leadership Council for AAC&U's Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative recommends that our society give new priority to a set of educational outcomes that all students need from college to be prepared for life and work in the twenty-first century. Students must possess wide-ranging and cross-disciplinary knowledge, a commitment to excellence, an active sense of personal and social responsibility—including engaging diverse perspectives—and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge to real-world problems (AAC&U 2007). AAC&U's work shows further that there is an increasing consensus among accreditation agencies, employers, higher education administrators, and faculty that the desired learning outcomes of undergraduate education include cultural sensitivity and respect for diverse perspectives (AAC&U 2004).

America's future depends on an unprecedented investment in developing human talent as broadly and fully as possible. In an era when higher levels of learning are critical for participation in work and in society, all students will need the scope and level of learning that will enable them to understand and navigate the dramatic forces—including intercultural ones—that directly affect the quality, character, and viability of the world. Further, in a globally engaged democracy, all students need to have knowledge and respect for diverse perspectives; nothing less will renew our fractured and diminished commons. Nussbaum (2000) contends that matters of social justice should take priority in our society, and this can occur by leveraging higher education to foster relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities. Daryl G. Smith (2009) argues that a new



framing for diversity is required at this juncture, one that examines “how the institution’s mission and goals can be improved through the lens of different groups.” She calls for the affirmation of both inclusiveness and differentiation.

Engaging Diverse Viewpoints explores what aspects of the college experience promote engaging difference and appreciation for multiple perspectives. Section I of the report discusses the gap between perceptions about what participating campuses professed as their desired learning for students and what those campuses actually offered educationally. Section II highlights views about student attitudes and behavior related to respecting diverse viewpoints, while section III reports on demographic differences regarding perspective-taking among students and campus professionals. Section IV examines sources of support followed by an investigation, in section V, of which activities enhance this capacity. Section VI discusses institutional differences that surfaced in the data, while sections VII and VIII examine insights from the qualitative data, first from students and then from campus professionals. Section IX offers concluding thoughts about what matters in college to foster perspective-taking across educational contexts.

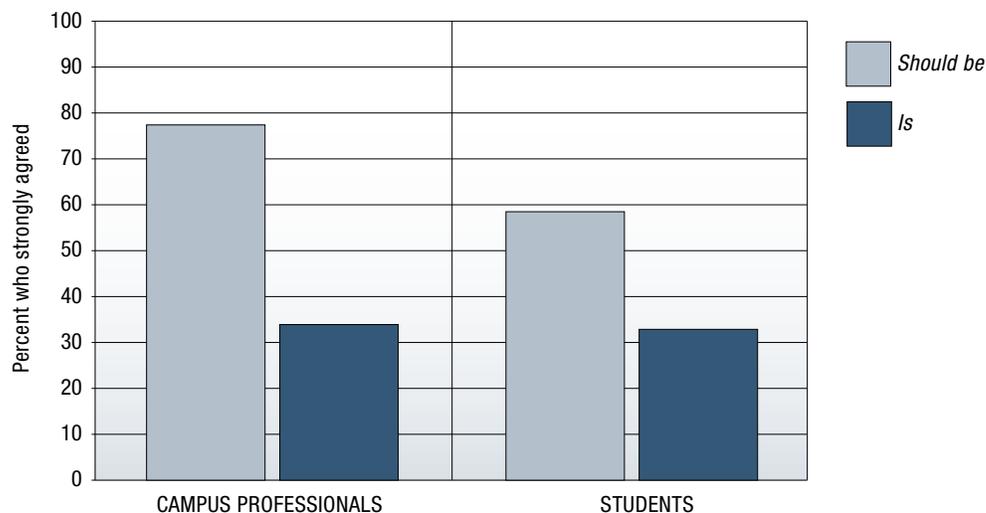
I. Engaging Diverse Perspectives—The Perceived Campus Climate

The PSRI first asks respondents if they believe the goal of helping students to take seriously the perspectives of others is important enough to be a major focus of the campus. The survey then asks a series of questions regarding the degree to which the campus emphasizes this goal. The PSRI is comprised of attitudinal and behavioral items, open-ended questions, and demographic questions. The attitudinal items prompt respondents to indicate their level of agreement with a statement along a four-point continuum (choosing from “strongly agree,” “agree somewhat,” “disagree somewhat,” or “strongly disagree”). The behavioral items prompt respondents to indicate how often a particular activity occurred along a three-point continuum (choosing from “frequently,” “occasionally,” or “never”). In both cases, respondents may also choose “no basis for judgment.” This monograph primarily highlights the percentages of respondents choosing “strongly agree” and “frequently” but in some cases reports on combined percentages (e.g., “strongly agree” + “agree somewhat”) to provide additional context.

Finding 1: A gap exists between the aspiration and the actuality of the goal of helping students to take seriously the perspectives of others on campus.

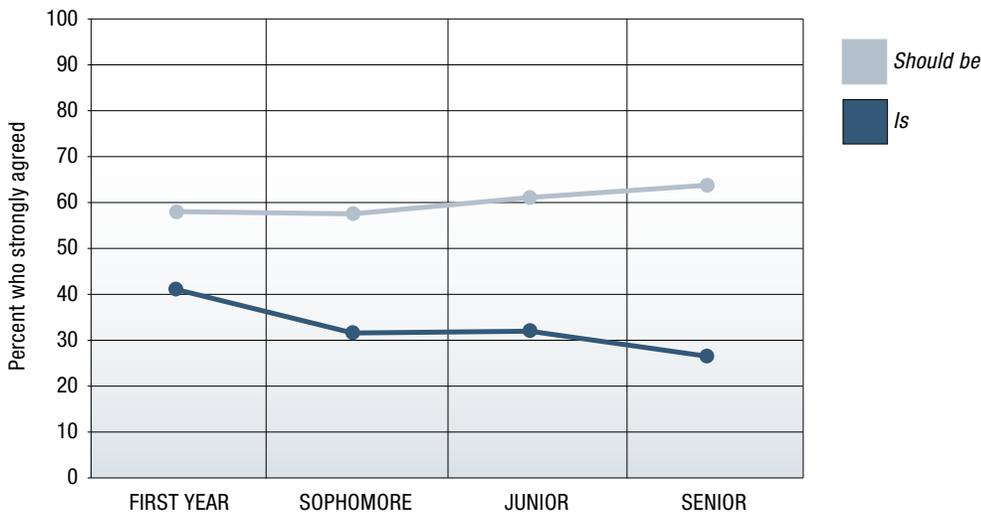
- A gap exists between aspirations—what respondents believed that their campuses *should be* doing, and actuality—what respondents believed that their campuses *are* doing. Across all dimensions, including perspective-taking, the majority of students and professionals strongly agreed that their campuses should be focusing on personal social responsibility, while far fewer strongly agreed that their campuses actually are making these outcomes a major focus.
- Nearly three-fifths of students (58.4 percent) and more than three-fourths of campus professionals (77.3 percent) strongly agreed that helping students recognize the importance of taking seriously the perspectives of others should be a major focus of their campuses (see fig. 2).
- However, only about one-third of students (32.5 percent) and a similar proportion of professionals (33.0 percent) strongly agreed that their institutions currently made perspective-taking a major focus (see fig. 2).

FIGURE 2. Institutional focus on on taking seriously the perspectives of others



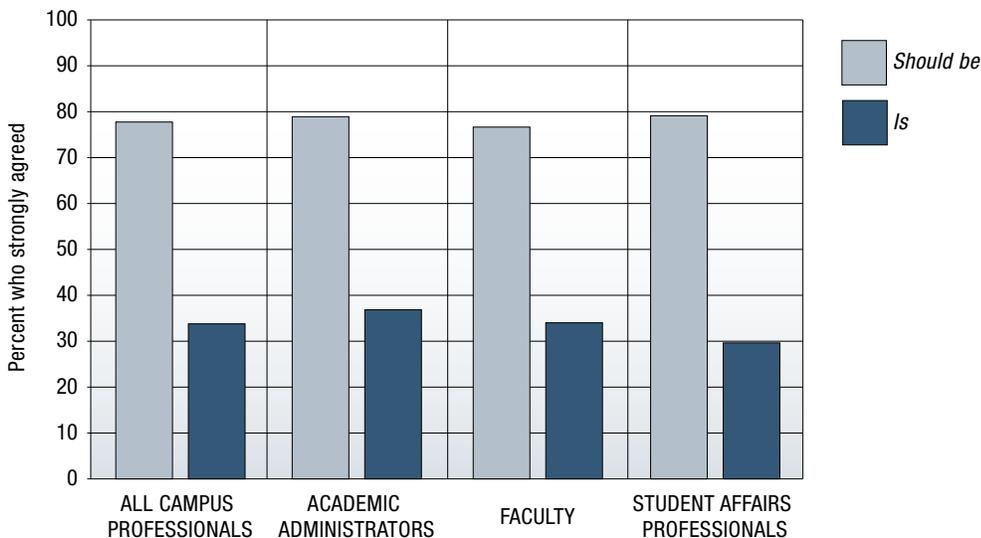
- A higher percentage of seniors (63.9 percent) strongly agreed that campuses should make perspective-taking a major focus of college, compared to first-year students (58.1 percent). However, far fewer seniors (26.3 percent) strongly agreed that campuses were doing this, compared to first-year students (41.0 percent). In fact, the gap between “should” and “is” increases every year as students progress through college (see fig. 3).

FIGURE 3. Student responses regarding institutional emphasis on taking seriously the perspectives of others, by year in school



- Little variation was observed among the campus professionals as to whether helping students recognize the importance of taking seriously the perspectives of others *should be* occurring at their institutions. However, fewer student affairs professionals (29.6 percent) strongly agreed that their institutions actually are helping students to recognize the importance of taking others’ perspectives seriously, as compared to academic administrators (36.0 percent) and faculty (33.2 percent) (see fig. 4).

FIGURE 4. Campus professional responses regarding institutional emphasis on perspective-taking, by role



II. Engaging Diverse Perspectives—Student Attitudes and Behavior

The PSRI asks respondents questions about students’ general attitudes, such as their respect for different viewpoints when entering and during college, as well as specific observations, such as whether it is safe to hold unpopular positions on campus.

Finding 2: Professionals and students differ in their perceptions about students’ respect for diverse perspectives.

- Overall, very few campus professionals (7.0 percent) strongly agreed that students are respectful of diverse perspectives when they enter college. This stands in stark contrast to students, for whom nearly two-thirds (63.1 percent) strongly agreed that they entered college having respect for different views (see table 1).
- In terms of students’ development during college in regard to learning from different views, a notable, though smaller, gap between campus professionals and students remained. Collectively, two-fifths of campus professionals and just over one-half of students strongly agreed that students developed in this area during college (see table 1).

TABLE 1. Student and campus professional perceptions of student development regarding perspective-taking

PSRI STUDENT SURVEY ITEM	PERCENT WHO STRONGLY AGREED
	STUDENTS
I respected perspectives different from my own when I first came to college	63.1
I have developed an increased ability to learn from diverse perspectives during the time I have been in college	52.6

PSRI CAMPUS PROFESSIONAL SURVEY ITEM	PERCENT WHO STRONGLY AGREED		
	ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS	FACULTY	STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS
Students are respectful of diverse perspectives when they first come to college	7.2	7.3	6.0
Students usually have an increased capacity to learn from diverse perspectives at graduation than they had at the beginning of college	45.2	40.4	35.9

- A large percentage of students generally agreed that students are respectful of peers when discussing controversial issues, with 82.1 percent either strongly agreeing or agreeing somewhat with this item. Within this, however, less than one-third of students (30.9 percent) *strongly agreed* that students are respectful of peers when discussing controversial issues (see table 2).
- Fewer campus professionals strongly agreed that students are respectful of peers when discussing controversial issues, with students affairs professionals (15.3 percent) markedly lower than faculty (26.9 percent) or administrators (24.0 percent) (see table 2).



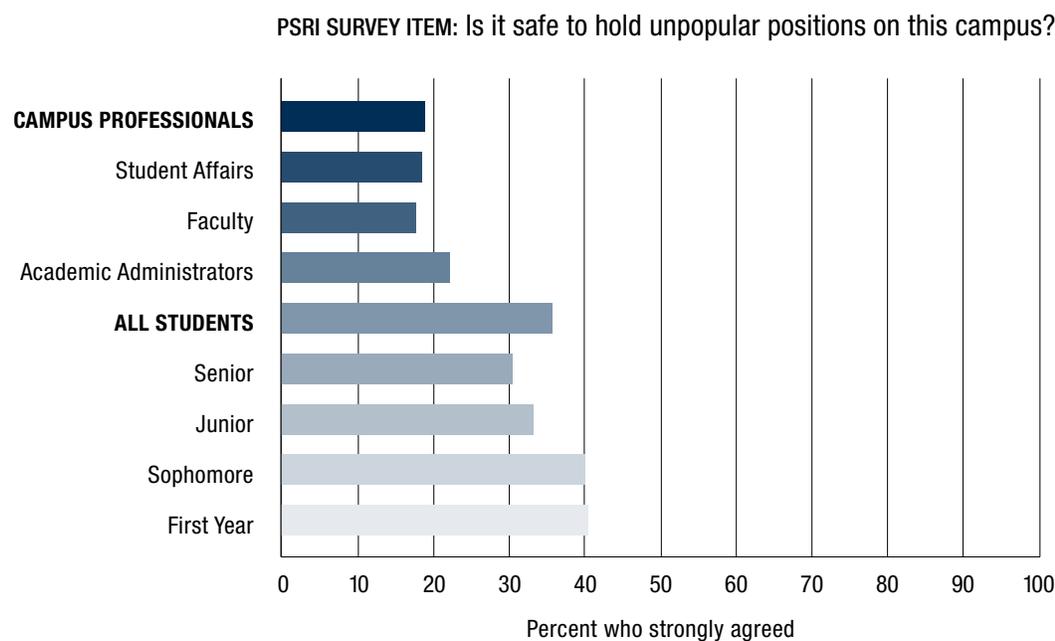
TABLE 2. Perceptions of student attitudes and behaviors toward engaging different perspectives, by role

PSRI SURVEY ITEM	PERCENT WHO STRONGLY AGREED			
	STUDENTS	ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS	FACULTY	STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS
Students are respectful of one another when discussing controversial issues or perspectives	30.9	24.0	26.9	15.3
Students try to persuade others of their opinion quickly when discussing controversial issues or perspectives	24.6	19.0	15.3	17.1

Finding 3: Relatively few respondents feel it is safe to hold unpopular opinions on campus.

- A large percentage of students generally agreed that it is safe to hold unpopular positions on campus, with 80.6 percent either strongly agreeing or agreeing somewhat with this item. Within this, however, only slightly more than one-third of students (35.6 percent) *strongly agreed* that it is safe to hold unpopular positions (see fig. 5).
- Among students, fewer seniors (30.3 percent) strongly agreed that it is safe to hold unpopular positions on campus, compared to first-year students (40.3 percent) (see fig. 5).
- Twice the number of students (35.6 percent) as campus professionals (18.8 percent) strongly agreed that it is safe to hold unpopular positions on campus (see fig. 5).

FIGURE 5. Perceived safety of the campus environment for holding unpopular views, by role and class year



III. Demographic Differences within Groups

PSRI data can also be disaggregated by a variety of demographic factors, including gender, race, and year in school, which allows institutions to gauge whether perceptions and experiences vary across specific constituencies.

Finding 4: Student demographic differences exist with respect to attitudes and perceptions.

- Male students and female students differed regarding whether they personally respected differing perspectives when they entered college. A greater percentage of women (65.9 percent) strongly agreed that they respected perspectives different from their own when they first came to college, compared to men (59.8 percent) (see table 3).
- On each of the items that asked if students believed they had developed during their time in college, more women than men strongly agreed that this was the case. The most dramatic difference was found in regard to developing an increased ability to learn from diverse perspectives, with a difference of nine percentage points between women (56.6 percent) and men (48.1 percent) (see table 3).

TABLE 3. Contrast in students' personal sense of engaging diverse perspectives, by gender

PSRI SURVEY ITEM	PERCENT WHO STRONGLY AGREED		
	ALL STUDENTS	MEN	WOMEN
I respected perspectives different from my own when I first came to college	63.1	59.8	65.9
I have developed an increased ability to learn from diverse perspectives during the time I have been in college	52.6	48.1	56.6
I have developed an increased ability to gather and thoughtfully use evidence to support my own ideas during the time I have been in college	56.1	54.0	58.0
I have developed an increased ability during college to understand the evidence, analysis, and perspectives of others, even when I disagree with them	56.1	54.3	57.8

- Compared to white students (30.9 percent), more students of color (36.6 percent) strongly agreed that their campus made helping students recognize the importance of taking seriously the perspectives of others a major focus, with a difference of almost six percentage points.
- Likewise, more students of color (69.5 percent) strongly agreed that they came to college respecting diverse perspectives, compared to white students (59.8 percent).
- As students advanced in college, more of them strongly agreed that they had developed their *own* abilities to engage difference. Seniors were consistently the most likely to strongly agree that they had developed abilities to understand others' perspectives, while first-year students rated themselves lower (see table 4).



TABLE 4. Differences in students' personal sense of engaging difference, by class year

PSRI SURVEY ITEM	PERCENT WHO STRONGLY AGREED			
	FIRST YEAR	SOPHOMORE	JUNIOR	SENIOR
I have developed an increased ability to learn from diverse perspectives during the time I have been in college	51.2	47.4	53.8	56.9
I have developed an increased ability to gather and thoughtfully use evidence to support my own ideas during the time I have been in college	45.4	55.2	58.3	64.3
I have developed an increased ability during college to understand the evidence, analysis, and perspectives of others, even when I disagree with them	46.5	54	60.6	62.4

Finding 5: Campus professional demographic differences affect attitudes and perceptions.

- Slightly more campus professionals of color (22.0 percent) strongly agreed that it is safe to hold unpopular opinions on campus, compared to white professionals (17.9 percent). Also, a greater number of professionals of color (27.1 percent) strongly agreed that students are respectful of one another when discussing controversial issues or perspectives, compared to their white professional colleagues (23.5 percent).

IV. Who Advocates Perspective-Taking?

The PSRI asks respondents about sources of support for learning about and considering diverse perspectives, which offers a picture of who on campus is perceived to foster educational opportunities for perspective-taking.

Finding 6: A gap exists between students' views of the advocacy role of campus professionals and how professionals perceive themselves.

- A greater percentage of campus professionals saw themselves frequently advocating publicly the need for students to respect perspectives different from their own, while fewer students perceived campus professionals as frequent public advocates (see table 5).
- Interestingly, more than one-half of academic administrators perceived faculty and student affairs professionals as frequent public advocates for students to respect different perspectives, while only two-fifths of student affairs professionals and faculty perceived senior campus administrators to be frequent public advocates for this (see table 5).

Finding 7: More students cite faculty as frequently advocating the need to respect different perspectives, compared to other campus professionals and students.

- Nearly two-fifths of students (39.0 percent) said that faculty frequently publicly promote the importance of respecting different perspectives. Slightly fewer (36.0 percent) said that their peers frequently advocate for perspective-taking, and similar numbers (36.1 percent) said that student affairs professionals frequently advocate for perspective-taking. Fewer students (28.6 percent) said that senior campus administrators frequently advocate for perspective-taking (see table 5).

TABLE 5. Perceptions of advocacy for respecting diverse perspectives

PSRI SURVEY ITEM	PERCENT WHO REPORTED FREQUENTLY			
	STUDENTS	ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS	FACULTY	STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS
Senior campus administrators publicly advocate the need for students to respect perspectives different from their own	28.6	51.3	41.6	43.3
Faculty publicly advocate the need for students to respect perspectives different from their own	39.0	55.1	53.9	42.0
Student affairs staff members publicly advocate the need for students to respect perspectives different from their own	36.1	57.7	49.5	61.3
Students here publicly advocate the need for other students to respect perspectives different from their own	36.0	34.2	27.1	29.4



- Nearly all students generally believed that classes on campus encourage them to research ideas and explore controversial issues using evidence-based claims, with 93.3 percent of students reporting that this happened frequently or occasionally. Within this, however, less than one-half of students reported that classes *frequently* encourage this activity (see table 6).
- Students’ beliefs about the role of faculty in facilitating perspective-taking declined slightly by class year (see table 6).

TABLE 6. Students’ perceptions of the role of faculty and courses in promoting perspective-taking, by class year

PSRI SURVEY ITEM	PERCENT WHO STRONGLY AGREED OR REPORTED FREQUENTLY			
	FIRST YEAR	SOPHOMORE	JUNIOR	SENIOR
Faculty teach about the importance of considering diverse intellectual viewpoints (strongly agree)	41.2	39.4	39.2	37.1
Faculty help students think through new and challenging ideas or perspectives (strongly agree)	42.1	41.0	40.8	39.3
Classes on this campus encourage me to research ideas and explore controversial issues with various perspectives using evidence-based claims (frequently)	46.6	43.5	45.0	43.0

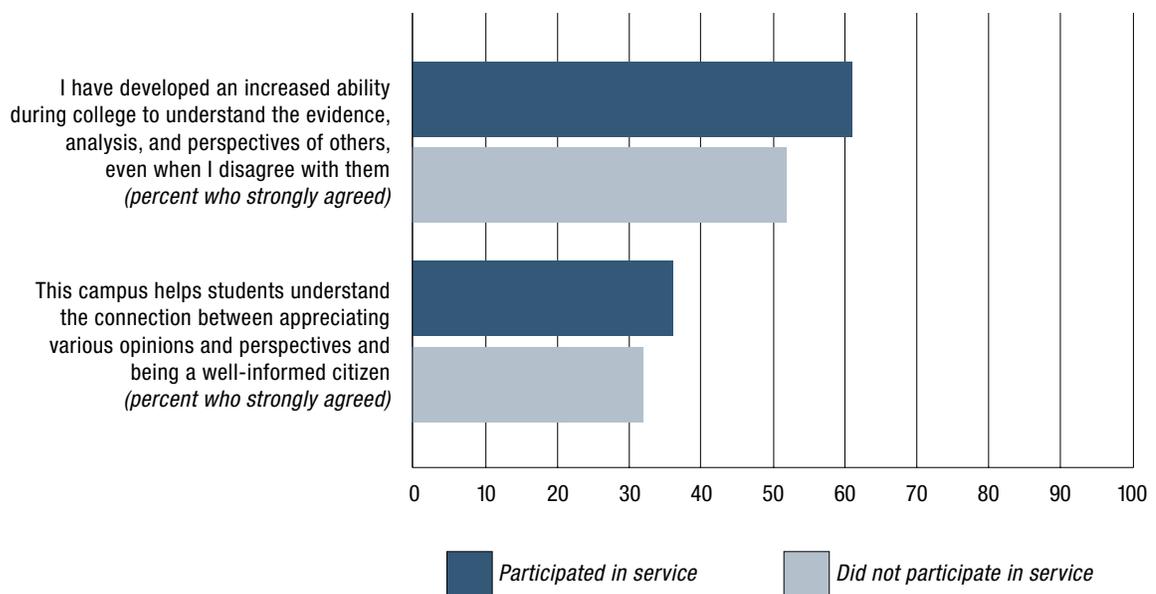
V. Enhancing Activities for Perspective-Taking

The PSRI asks students about the type and level of involvement in a variety of cocurricular activities, and students' views about engaging difference can be examined in relation to these activities.

Finding 8: Participation in community service, interacting with faculty outside of class, and spending more than six hours per week studying are each associated with students' beliefs that the college experience promotes awareness of different perspectives.

- Greater numbers of students who participated in community service strongly agreed that they had developed an enhanced ability to understand the perspectives of others and that their campuses promoted the connection between appreciating diverse perspectives and being a well-informed citizen, as compared to their peers who did not participate in community service (see fig. 6).

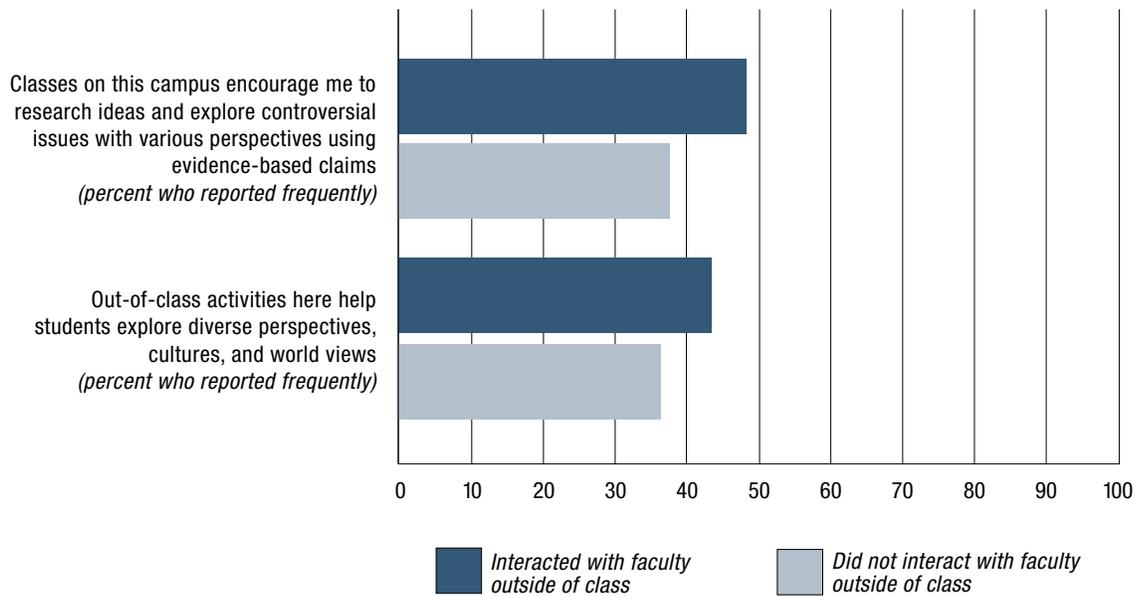
FIGURE 6. Differences in students' perceived development, by participation in community service activities



- Students who interacted with faculty members outside of class were more likely to report that courses *frequently* encouraged them to explore controversial issues using evidence-based claims, and that out-of-class activities *frequently* encouraged them to explore diverse perspectives, world views, and cultures, compared to students who did not (see fig. 7).



FIGURE 7. Differences in students' perceptions of classes and out-of-class activities, by faculty interaction outside of class



- Comparing students' views of engaging difference with the amount of time that they spent studying suggests that those students who studied fewer hours failed to see the presence of this dimension in contrast to students who studied more frequently. For instance, approximately one-fourth of students who studied less than six hours per week (25.9 percent) strongly agreed that helping students to recognize the importance of taking seriously the perspectives of others is a major focus of the campus, compared to the slightly more than one-third of students (35.0 percent) who studied between six and fifteen hours per week.

VI. Institutional Differences

PSRI data can also be disaggregated by a variety of institutional factors, including institutional type, public versus private control, and religious/secular affiliation.

Finding 9: Students' and campus professionals' perceptions regarding engaging difference vary by type of institution.

- Modest variation exists as to whether students believed that taking seriously the perspectives of others is—or should be—a major focus of their campuses (see table 8). Among the more notable differences, students attending secular institutions were more likely to strongly agree on both counts (36.4 percent for “is” and 62.7 percent for “should”) than those who attended religiously affiliated institutions (34.2 percent for “is” and 58.9 percent for “should”) (see table 7).
- A greater number of students attending community colleges strongly agreed that it is safe to hold unpopular positions on their campuses, with a difference of ten percentage points compared to their peers at four-year institutions. Also, community college students were the most likely to strongly agree that their campus has high expectations for students in terms of their ability to take seriously the perspectives of others, especially those with whom they disagree. They were also more likely to believe that their campus helped students understand the connection between appreciating various opinions and perspectives and being a well-informed citizen (see table 7).
- However, when reflecting on whether helping students take seriously the perspectives of other *should be* a focus of their institutions, community college students were the least likely to strongly agree (50.9 percent compared to 58.5 percent of students at four-year institutions) (see table 7).
- Comparatively high numbers of liberal arts college students (45.2 percent) also strongly agreed that their institutions had high expectations for students in terms of their ability to take seriously the perspectives of others, especially those with whom they disagree (see table 7).

TABLE 7. Student perceptions of the institution's role in engaging difference, by type of institution

PSRI SURVEY ITEM	PERCENT WHO STRONGLY AGREED								
	ALL CAMPUSES (N=23)	INSTITUTIONAL CONTROL		PRIVATES		INSTITUTIONAL TYPE			
		PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS (N=12)	PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS (N=11)	SECULAR INSTITUTIONS (N=8)	RELIGIOUSLY AFFILIATED INSTITUTIONS (N=4)	RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS (N=6)	COMMUNITY COLLEGES (N=2)	MASTER'S INSTITUTIONS (N=6)	LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES (N=7)
Helping students recognize the importance of taking seriously the perspectives of others <i>is</i> a major focus of this campus	32.5	35.4	32.3	36.4	34.2	33.1	33.7	29.8	36.3
Helping students recognize the importance of taking seriously the perspectives of others <i>should be</i> a major focus of this campus	58.4	61.0	58.2	62.7	58.9	58.2	50.9	59.0	59.1
This campus helps students understand the connection between appreciating various opinions and perspectives and being a well-informed citizen	33.9	38.1	33.5	38.8	37.3	34.4	37.2	31.3	38.1
It is safe to hold unpopular positions on this campus	35.6	36.5	35.5	37.3	35.5	36.8	46.4	32.5	35.2
This campus has high expectations for students in terms of their ability to take seriously the perspectives of others, especially those with whom they disagree	39.6	44.5	38.1	45.7	43.1	38.2	49.2	37.4	45.2

- As was the case with students, a greater number of campus professionals at community colleges strongly agreed that it is safe to hold unpopular positions on their campuses, compared to their colleagues at four-year institutions (27.2 percent compared to 17.7 percent) (see table 8).
- In contrast to community college students, fewer community college campus professionals strongly agreed that their institutions had high expectations for students in terms of their ability to take seriously the perspectives of others, especially those with whom they disagree. Likewise, fewer strongly agreed that their institutions help students understand the connection between appreciating various opinions and perspectives and being a well-informed citizen (see table 8).

- Campus professionals employed at liberal arts colleges (44.6 percent) were most likely to strongly agree that their institutions had high expectations for students in terms of their ability to take seriously the perspectives of others, especially those with whom they disagree. As was the case with liberal arts college students, more professionals from these campuses strongly agreed that helping students recognize the importance of taking seriously the perspectives of others is a major focus of the campus (37.2 percent), compared to other types of institutions (see table 8).

TABLE 8. Campus professional perceptions of the institution’s role in engaging difference, by type of institution

PSRI SURVEY ITEM	PERCENT WHO STRONGLY AGREED								
	ALL CAMPUSES (N=23)	INSTITUTIONAL CONTROL		PRIVATES		INSTITUTIONAL TYPE			
		PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS (N=12)	PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS (N=11)	SECULAR INSTITUTIONS (N=8)	RELIGIOUSLY AFFILIATED INSTITUTIONS (N=4)	RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS (N=6)	COMMUNITY COLLEGES (N=2)	MASTER'S INSTITUTIONS (N=6)	LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES (N=7)
Helping students recognize the importance of taking seriously the perspectives of others <i>is</i> a major focus of this campus	33.9	35.7	32.8	35.8	35.7	33.1	33.7	29.8	37.2
Helping students recognize the importance of taking seriously the perspectives of others <i>should be</i> a major focus of this campus	76.3	80.6	73.7	79.0	82.6	74.3	74.2	78.5	76.3
This campus helps students understand the connection between appreciating various opinions and perspectives and being a well-informed citizen	32.9	35.4	31.3	35.4	35.4	27.0	33.3	29.6	36.9
It is safe to hold unpopular positions on this campus	18.5	18.1	18.7	18.6	17.4	20.8	27.2	17.4	16.7
This campus has high expectations for students in terms of their ability to take seriously the perspectives of others, especially those with whom they disagree	38.6	41.1	38.6	42.5	39.3	32.4	38.9	35.4	44.6



VII. Qualitative Insights—Students

In addition to providing rich data by responding to standard survey questions, students provided detailed comments that offered a deeper understanding about experiences that have helped them to strengthen their sense of respect for and consideration of differing perspectives. Students cited overall campus climate and the diversity of the student population, class discussions, campus activities, and informal discussions with their peers as contributing to their appreciation of others' perspectives.

The Overall Campus Experience and the Diversity of the Student Body Are Important Factors in Exposing Students to New Perspectives

One theme to emerge from the qualitative data reflected how the overall campus climate and the diversity of the student body, in particular, introduced students to a wide range of experiences and views. Such exposure shifted students' understandings and attitudes. One student elaborated on this: "The fact that there is a very diverse population of students on campus [encourages me to appreciate the perspectives of others]. The everyday interaction with them teaches you [about] different perspectives and views and how to value and respect what others have to say." Another student concurred. "[G]oing to a college that has an ethnically and culturally diverse student body [helps me] to appreciate what other people go through in their lives and ... see their beliefs for what they are, and not something only seen on television or the Internet."

Similarly, another student discussed the institutional climate and how it related to his ability to appreciate differing perspectives: "[My institution] is full of diversity and coming from a small, private school I had never been exposed to such diversity. It has helped me open up and make friends with people I thought of as 'different' and it has showed me that everyone respects me and my beliefs so therefore, I respect other people's beliefs."

In-Class and Out-of-Class Activities Offer Valuable Forums for Perspective-Taking

Students contended that controversial and provocative classroom discussions encouraged them to gain respect for differing perspectives. These discussions included, but were not limited to, issues regarding race, ethnicity, religion, spirituality, political perspectives, gender, and sexual orientation. One student stated simply, "Certain class discussions really help encourage me to appreciate other perspectives. People have [a range of] ideas and each one helps me to grow as a person."

Such discussions challenged students' viewpoints and encouraged them to not only respect differing perspectives but also to thoughtfully formulate their own comments and acknowledge when a valid point was raised. One student explained, "In my Freshman Seminar 101 course, we often discuss controversial issues. There are many different political and personal views [raised] during these discussions and I have learned that I need to listen to others before I come back with my own thoughts."

Other classroom strategies promoted interaction and listening among students. One popular strategy among respondents was described this way: "Two of the classes that I take have deep, discussion-based ideas.... Many times the class sits in a circle and a student shares a viewpoint about an article or book we had to read. After the viewpoint is shared, we have a full-out discussion with the teacher being the mediator." Students especially valued the type of open class discussion in which they felt safe to voice their opinions

and free to debate with their peers. Another student noted, “I appreciate this forum for discussion because it gives me an opportunity to learn and discuss viewpoints that I never would have encountered otherwise.”

Campus activities and efforts to educate students and foster discussions on sensitive topics also had an impact on students and expanded their understanding of others’ viewpoints. One senior noted that “there are always activities and events based on people’s various beliefs and perspectives, such as political protests/rallies and informational tables in the campus center handing out their information.” Another student explained, “Attending lectures that discuss a variety of topics [cultures, religions, professions, etc.] has introduced me to different lifestyles and definitions of success in modern society.”

Informal and Unstructured Peer Interactions Matter as Well

Many students participated in discussions of important topics outside of classroom and formal campus activities. One student summarized this as follows: “Just talking with friends and embracing different opinions have shown me [the] importance [of this].” Living in campus residence halls was particularly effective in encouraging students to discuss and debate controversial topics with respect and open minds. One student commented on the value of “mixing perspectives inside dorms. Just walking around helps me recognize other ways of life.” Another student noted about the residence hall, “We all have our different views and I find it interesting to listen to their perspectives. I have not necessarily changed my beliefs, but now I am aware of different ways to look at a situation.”

Several students specifically talked about connecting across political differences. One student said, “One of my hallmates is very liberal, whereas I am more conservative. In high school, I probably wouldn’t have given someone so liberal the time of day, but I talk to my hallmate all the time about a wide variety of topics.” Another student described a similar experience: “I am a liberal living in a hall corridor that has many conservative students living in it. We often discuss political and social issues with each other and we do it with respect for one another. I think that living in such close proximity exposes people to different viewpoints.”

Overall, it was apparent that college campuses played a major role helping students develop their ability to appreciate the perspectives of others. The overall campus climate and the diversity of the student body, class discussions, campus programs, and informal discussions with peers all contributed to inspiring students to respectfully interact with one another across differences. As one student noted, “Even just being in this college with many new perspectives is very eye- and mind-opening because there is much diversity here, much more so than in high school, and everyone is much more open and mature about the way they feel and their beliefs and values.”



VIII: Qualitative Insights—Campus Professionals

In addition to responses on standard survey questions, more than 9,000 campus professionals (academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals) also provided insights about campus efforts to educate students to value diverse perspectives. Comments focused on opportunities provided by coursework and cocurricular programming and efforts to encourage students to understand all sides of issues. Some professionals worried that only certain types of perspectives were valued and that not enough emphasis and resources were directed to campus efforts in this area.

Coursework and Cocurricular Programming, Including Those Representing “Less Popular” Viewpoints, Help Students to Engage Difference

As with other dimensions of personal and social responsibility, professionals pointed to both curricular and cocurricular programs as a means to help students appreciate different perspectives. The latter included initiatives run by international affairs offices, multicultural student groups, GLBT student programs, campus speakers, diversity-themed housing initiatives, and many other specific programs.

One faculty member explained, “All the diverse programming...visiting scientists concerned with nuclear proliferation, and arts activities—is very effective, I think, for presenting viewpoints and alternative experiences.” A student affairs professional echoed that sentiment, saying, “There are many cultural events that take place on this campus, and I believe they are all beneficial in helping students experience other cultures.”

An academic administrator pointed specifically to service-learning programs as valuable in this regard, saying, “Community service learning helps students who have little understanding of certain populations to develop relationships with those populations, thus making it possible for students to learn new points of view.”

Another campus professional discussed how organizations that represent less popular perspectives can be particularly effective. This academic administrator said, “We have several organizations on campus that are not necessarily the most popular. Members are given the opportunity to hold rallies, set up tables in the student center to help others understand/consider their point of view. These are peaceful, informational events with no stress to gain membership or change others’ points of view.”

Campus professionals also pointed to the presences of opportunities to learn about diverse perspectives within courses and core curricula. One academic administrator described required courses in which students learn to see issues from different perspectives: “All students are required to take a four-semester core requirement in the humanities, the central element of which is the seminar in which students are expected to advocate their own and evaluate with respect the opinions of others on moral and political issues that arise during the consideration of key texts in the Western tradition.”

Another administrator said, “Students are required to take a ‘values’ class that is expected to help students examine ‘others’ and reexamine their own view of the world.” One faculty member discussed a required course and the challenges students face: “Required courses [in first and senior years] teach these skills. It is a challenging course for many freshmen who have been affected by the ‘teach to the test’ practices in high school and who are only now being challenged to think through problems on their own.”

One administrator stressed the combination of such efforts: “There are many varied speakers brought to campus. When these talks are paired with lessons/discussion/readings in the classroom they become very powerful.”

Professionals Do Worry That Certain Points of View—Conservative Views in Some Cases, Liberal Views in Other Cases—Are Marginalized on Campus

Not all professionals believed that campuses truly encourage the valuing of diverse viewpoints.

Some expressed concerns that only more progressive, liberal, or “politically correct” viewpoints were valued, while conservative, religious, and similar perspectives were mocked or silenced. For example, one faculty member said, “This campus is as PC [politically correct] as any other campus in America. The students recognize the necessity of being PC and go along with the campus line.” Another faculty member expressed a similar concern, saying, “Many on this campus cannot tolerate any opinion other than the liberal viewpoint. I have even heard faculty members state that faculty members have no influence on how students think. So their liberal bias supposedly has no effect.”

Such concerns weren’t one-sided. Other campus professionals worried that only more conservative values and perspectives were valued and encouraged on campus. One student affairs professional said:

I believe that some speakers are brought in sometimes about controversial issues, but that is it. I think that a lot of the administrators, staff, and faculty create a rather conservative atmosphere and [allow] programs that are only within their comfort zones and stay away from anything that could possibly stir up students. Doing this, I believe, hurts the student community’s ability to develop a more fully well-rounded outlook.

Some Professionals Believe That More Work Is Needed to Carry Out This Commitment on Campus

Other campus professionals had concerns that their institutions were not putting enough emphasis or resources toward educating students about the value of investigating diverse perspectives. One academic administrator, for example, was concerned that faculty members were not following up in their classes with the institutional aims of promoting an appreciation for diverse viewpoints. The administrator said:

I find that my interactions with faculty and my experiences as a guest lecturer in their classes leave me with the conclusion that in most instances faculty teach and influence their classes from a particular political view point. Diversity of opinion is a ‘value’ but not a ‘practice’ employed by faculty.

Another administrator pointed to the lack of emphasis on certain types of diversity, saying:

Diversity and inclusiveness are part of the ethic of this place. One area in which we need to grow is our treatment of GLBT individuals; while we now recognize a substantial nonhetero[sexual] student body exists, we still refuse to program to their issues and the issues of our heterosexist campus.

Some campus professionals pointed to the importance of planning and good facilitation within these efforts. One noted, “It is best, however, when [debates and forums] are fielded by thoughtful, non-polarizing individuals. Otherwise, learning doesn’t happen.”



IX: Conclusion—Engaging Difference, a Foundation for Action

Today's college graduates must be prepared to work and live in a global context where being well-informed about and open to the perspectives of others is critical. *Engaging Diverse Viewpoints* underscores the significance of this dimension. Students and campus professionals alike strongly agreed that their campuses should emphasize the importance of engaging differing perspectives.

This is good news, but support of this goal does not necessarily mean that the climate, attitudes, and behaviors on all campuses are conducive to engaging differing viewpoints. The findings also indicated that far fewer respondents strongly agreed that the campus climate currently supports perspective-taking or that student behaviors reflect the ability to consider and learn from diverse perspectives. Fortunately, PSRI findings also indicate a number of clear suggestions for campuses interested in fostering a more pervasive culture of inquisitiveness, open-mindedness, and respect for self and for others.

Certainly all members of the campus community must take responsibility for educating students about the importance of respecting diverse perspectives. However, while the majority of faculty, student affairs professionals, and academic administrators believed that they frequently advocated the need for students to respect perspectives different from their own, only about one-third of students believed that each group frequently advocated for this goal. This finding suggests that campus professionals must be clear, straightforward, and explicit when communicating with students about the importance of engaging differences. Ensuring that students understand the full range of what is meant by “diverse perspectives” as well as specific instances where this might apply in “the real world” is also critical.

A recurring theme across the quantitative and qualitative data was that involvement in curricular and cocurricular activities was associated with students' exposure to, and better understanding of, diverse perspectives. For example, more students who interacted with faculty outside of class or spent more than six hours per week studying had strong agreement about the importance of engaging difference. Students involved in activities such as service learning were also more likely to have strong agreement that the campus helped them to appreciate different perspectives.

The findings from this third Core Commitments research report illuminate how students, academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals believe their campuses promote the importance of taking seriously the perspectives of others. Just as important, *Engaging Diverse Viewpoints* offers directions for how campuses might develop more wide-ranging opportunities for this learning both in and out of class, within and beyond the campus boundaries. By investing pervasively and intentionally in building campus environments where students routinely engage diverse and competing perspectives, colleges and universities can provide students an invaluable resource for learning, citizenship, and work.

References

- Association of American Colleges and Universities. 2007. *College learning for the new global century: A report from the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.
- . 2002. *Greater expectations: A new vision for learning as a nation goes to college*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.
- . 2004. *Taking responsibility for the quality of the baccalaureate*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.
- Bok, D. 2006. *Our underachieving colleges: A candid look at how much students learn and why they should be learning more*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Colby, A., T. Ehrlich, E. Beaumont, and J. Stephens. 2003. *Educating citizens: Preparing America's undergraduates for lives of moral and civic responsibility*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Dey, E. L. and Associates. 2009. *Civic responsibility: What is the campus climate for learning?* Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.
- Gurin, P., E. L. Dey, S. Hurtado, S. and G. Gurin. 2002. Diversity and higher education: Theory and impact on educational outcomes. *Harvard Educational Review* 72: 330-366.
- Hart Research Associates. 2009. *Trends and emerging practices in general education*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities. www.aacu.org/membership/membersurvey.cfm.
- Hurtado, S. 2006. Linking diversity with the educational and civic mission of higher education. *Review of Higher Education* 30 (2): 185-196.
- Meacham, J., and J. Gaff. 2006. Learning goals in mission statements: Implications for educational leadership. *Liberal Education* 92 (1): 6-13.
- Milem, J. F., M. J. Chang, and A. L. Antonio. 2005. *Making diversity work on campus: A research-based perspective*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.
- Nussbaum, M. 2000. *Women and human development: The capacities approach*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Pascarella, E., and P. Terenzini. 2005. *How college affects students: A third decade of research, volume 2*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Smith, D. G. 2009. *Diversity's promise for higher education: Making it work*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

APPENDIX A. Essential Learning Outcomes for the Twenty-first Century

AAC&U's LEAP campaign is organized around a robust set of essential learning outcomes, which are best developed through a contemporary liberal education. These essential outcomes provide a new framework to guide students' cumulative progress beginning in school and continuing at successively higher levels across their college studies. Key groups—the higher education community, accreditors, employers, and civic leaders—agree that students should prepare for twenty-first-century challenges by developing:

Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World

- Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts

Focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring

Intellectual and Practical Skills, including

- Inquiry and analysis
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving

Practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance

Personal and Social Responsibility, including

- Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

Anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges

Integrative and Applied Learning, including

- Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies

Demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems



APPENDIX B. About the Personal and Social Responsibility Institutional Inventory (PSRI)

The PSRI is a campus climate survey developed as part of the Core Commitments initiative. It is designed to gauge participants' perceptions about the opportunities for learning and engagement with issues of personal and social responsibility across an institution. The inventory consists of three types of questions about the five dimensions, tailored for students and campus professionals:

- **Attitudinal items:** participants choose the degree to which they agree with a statement about the institution (choosing from Strongly Agree, Agree Somewhat, Disagree Somewhat, Strongly Disagree, No Basis for Judgment)
- **Behavioral items:** participants choose the degree to which they experience a particular phenomenon at the institution (choosing from Frequently, Occasionally, Never, No Basis for Judgment)
- **Open-ended items:** participants provide text related to experiences, programs, and practices at the institution that help students to develop personal and social responsibility.

PSRI Development and Administration

Supported by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation, the initial inventory was developed in 2006 under the direction of L. Lee Knepfelkamp and Richard Hersh with research assistance from Lauren Ruff. The survey items were carefully designed to measure aspects of a campus climate that are related to each of the five dimensions. This work began with a thorough review of the psychology and developmental literatures to clarify the definitions, identify the character traits, and record the relevant behavioral manifestations of each of the dimensions. Building upon the established definitions, the authors then examined the climate and congruence/dissonance literatures to identify reasonable markers for each dimension, with the goal of establishing ten markers of campus climate. The authors devised a multifaceted sampling strategy to survey four different constituents: students, academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs staff. This approach would provide comprehensive data regarding how well institutions are embedding education for civic and moral responsibility.

The initial inventory was then refined in cooperation with Eric L. Dey and his associates at the University of Michigan's Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education and the instrument was piloted on three campuses in spring 2007. In fall 2007, data were gathered from the twenty-three institutions comprising the Core Commitments Leadership Consortium. The responses were of sufficient size and variety to be representative of the four populations on participating campuses. The overall survey response rates were 28 percent for students and 47 percent for campus professionals, and were statistically adjusted to account for bias in response patterns. However, since the project design did not randomly select institutions to participate in Core Commitments, the *overall* sample is *not* representative of the populations nationally.

Instrumentation

The inventory that was used in 2007 is comprised of two surveys, one for students and the other for campus professionals. These forms are parallel in their structure, with a total of 137 items in each of the two forms that capture respondents' impressions of the extent to which their campus is educating students for personal and social responsibility. These items are comprised of Likert-type scales, where respondents are asked to rate either their level of agreement with a statement ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly

disagree) or their impression of how often something occurred on campus, ranging from 1 (frequently) to 3 (never)¹. Additional survey items are included that prompt respondents to provide basic demographic and background information.

In total, 23,950 students and 8,825 professionals from across the twenty-three institutions completed the PSRI in fall 2007. There was considerable variability in the campus response rates, especially with respect to the student responses. On campuses where there was a statistical bias, the research team made statistical corrections to eliminate this discrepancy. Expected response rates were determined based on the campuses' student body gender, race, and class year breakdown. Weightings were then added to each student's scores based on the difference between the campuses actual response and the responses expected as a percentage of the general student population. (For example, if a campus is comprised of 50 percent men and 50 percent women, but its respondents were 25 percent men and 75 percent women, each man's response would be weighted times two and each woman's response would be weighted by half.) The individual weights were then combined to give each student one weight to more accurately reflect a random sample of the student bodies. Chi-square tests on the weighted campus samples showed them to be statistically indistinguishable from each institution's general population.

A Note about the Data

Campus climate data are self-reported data that focuses on participants' perceptions of the campus environment. They did not capture what an institution is actually doing with regard to the phenomena under investigation. The PSRI results may point to: (a) a lack of awareness about existing programs and practices related to personal and social responsibility, (b) a lack of impact of these programs and practices on the overall institutional culture, or (c) actual gaps in programs and practices. The Leadership Consortium institutions continue to use their own data to probe the situation on their individual campuses.

Because campuses differ dramatically in terms of mission, culture, size and population, this report does not compare data across individual institutions. Hence, the data are reported *in the aggregate* across the twenty-three schools. The data are disaggregated where relevant by factors such as students' year in school, for example, or by professional category (academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals). To better highlight comparisons with student responses, several graphs combine academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals into a single professional category (campus professionals) where such group differences were found to be inconsequential.

In some instances, the students and campus professionals were further disaggregated into relevant categories such as by gender and race. In terms of the institutions, data were disaggregated according to institutional type and public versus private. Further distinctions were also examined, as we considered the difference between research institutions, community colleges, and denominationally affiliated private institutions.

¹ For each of the 137 items, respondents also had the option of choosing the response "No basis for judgment."



About the Authors

ERIC L. DEY had just begun as a professor at the Curry School of Education and Director of Higher Education Programs and Associate Director of CASTL (Center for the Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning) at the University of Virginia and was director of research and assessment for Core Commitments before his untimely death in November 2009. He was formerly affiliated with the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education at the University of Michigan where the PSRI data were collected and analyzed for Core Commitments. Dey earned his PhD in higher education from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), and held master of education and bachelor of general studies degrees from Wichita State University. He also directed the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) as an associate director of the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). Dey's research focused on the ways that colleges and universities shape the experiences and lives of students and faculty. He was a member of the team of social scientists that provided research on the educational effects of diverse student bodies, which was foundational to the Supreme Court's decision supporting the continuing use of affirmative action in college admissions. In 1998, Dey was selected as one of forty "Young Leaders of the Academy" by *Change* magazine and received the Early Career Achievement Award from the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE). More recently, ASHE also honored his work on the University of Michigan's Affirmative Action Legal Defense team with a Special Merit Award in 2003.

MOLLY C. OTT is a doctoral candidate in the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education at the University of Michigan. Her research interests include the impact of college on students, especially how and why higher education influences social and economic outcomes.

MARY ANTONAROS is a doctoral candidate in the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education at the University of Michigan. Her research interests include organizational leadership and behavior in higher education. She is currently researching gender differences in leadership styles and its influence on leader effectiveness for college presidents.

CASSIE L. BARNHARDT is a doctoral candidate at the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education at the University of Michigan. Her scholarly interests include organizational theory, social movements in higher education, civic engagement, and liberal education.

MATT A. HOLSAPPLE is a doctoral student in higher education, specializing in academic affairs and student development, at the University of Michigan. His research interests include citizenship education, student development theory, outcomes assessment, and the application of quasi-experimental research design to higher education.

ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (AAC&U)

AAC&U is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915, AAC&U now comprises 1,200 member institutions—including accredited public and private colleges and universities of every type and size.

Through its publications, meetings, public advocacy, and programs, AAC&U provides a powerful voice for liberal education. AAC&U works to reinforce the commitment to liberal education at both the national and the local level and to help individual colleges and universities keep the quality of student learning at the core of their work as they evolve to meet new economic and social challenges. With a ninety-year history and national stature, AAC&U is an influential catalyst for educational improvement and reform. For more information, visit www.aacu.org.



*Association
of American
Colleges and
Universities*

1818 R Street NW, Washington DC, 20009

www.aacu.org