Why does diversity alone not guarantee equity?

Diversity, although concerned with giving minoritized students and faculty a place in higher education, creates an institutional culture that does not lead to equity. Diversity itself, rather than achieving equitable success across all levels—student outcomes, faculty compensation, and so on—is seen as the solution. Based on a rigorous empirical study, Sarah Ahmed in *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* demonstrates how the appealing nature of diversity can conceal and reinforce a racist status quo.

In Language of Appeasement, Dafina-Lazarus Stewart argues that "diversity and inclusion rhetoric asks fundamentally different questions and is concerned with fundamentally different issues than efforts seeking equity and justice:"

- Diversity asks, "Who's in the room?" Equity responds: "Who is trying to get in the room but can't? Whose presence in the room is under constant threat of erasure?"

- Diversity asks, "How many more of [pick any minoritized identity] group do we have this year than last?" Equity responds, "What conditions have we created that maintain certain groups as the perpetual majority here?"

- Inclusion celebrates awards for initiatives and credits itself for having a diverse candidate pool. Justice celebrates getting rid of practices and policies that were having disparate impacts on minoritized groups.

Resources

Re-envisioning Diversity in Higher Education: From Raising Awareness to Building Critical Consciousness Among Faculty

As Dana M. Stachowiak reminds us in her National Education Association article, programs have no doubt provided supports and raised awareness on issues of diversity. However, "raising awareness is not enough; we must also raise critical consciousness, not only to diversity, but to issues of equity, power, and privilege and oppression."

Closing the Achievement Gap in Higher Education: An Organizational Learning Perspective

Estela Mara Bensimon, a leader in equity-minded competence, explains how shifting from diversity and deficit to an equity cognitive frame produces different results. Although both are engaged in increasing the presence of minoritized students, a diversity approach takes note of racial achievement patterns but sees them as a problem of the individuals' cultural, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds. An equity-minded cognitive frame focuses on educational success outcomes and the role of the institution in achieving them.