A Framework for Integrating Cultural Competency Into the Curriculum of Public Administration Programs

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ABSTRACT
As the United States increasingly becomes more globalized, diverse, and socially complex, public administration professionals will need to be prepared to lead and manage to meet the changing demands. In order to meet these needs, academic programs responsible for training public service professionals, will need to adopt curricula to promote cultural competency. While other fields have made progress toward promoting cultural competency in curricula, public administration programs have been slow to respond. A multifaceted approach is needed to guide public administration programs toward understanding the purpose of cultural competency education and developing curricula that are responsive to the needs of diverse populations. Drawing from models in health-related academic programs, this article introduces the diversity and inclusiveness framework (DIF), with six interdependent components: addressing the program’s mission, identifying core competencies, developing diversity and inclusiveness plans, requiring faculty and staff training, implementing curricular and co-curricular components, and assessing students’ perception of diversity.

KEYWORDS
Cultural competency, NASPAA standards, NASPAA accreditation, diversity

Why has cultural competency remained a difficult concept for public administration programs to embrace? While other fields have made tremendous strides to incorporate diversity themes in their academic programs, public administration programs have been slow to respond. Recent changes in the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) standards have forced many graduate programs to consider diversity in the hiring of faculty and staff, in selection of students, and in development of coursework. However, we argue that more is needed to ensure that future public administration professionals have acquired the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse citizenry. Although most practitioners recognize the importance of diversity in the workplace, most public administration academic programs have not fully integrated cultural competency or themes related to diversity into their curricula.

In public administration literature, the terms cultural competency, diversity, and social equity are often linked and are occasionally used interchangeably. Although each term is distinct and important in its own right, the relationship
between them is interdependent. Cultural competency and social equity are considered central elements in diversity and service delivery (Norman-Major & Gooden, 2012). Cultural competency is operationalized to imply that an individual appreciates or respects people from other cultures and is capable of applying effective behaviors and considerations in cross-cultural situations (Borrego & Johnson, 2012; Rice, 2010). Diversity is more broadly defined as cultural and demographic differences and how they are structured within a given society or institution (Norman-Major & Gooden, 2012).

Social equity—the fourth pillar of public administration—focuses on fairness, justice, and equity in the formation of public policy, public management, and public service delivery. Cultural competency is regarded as an essential component of promoting social equity in public service delivery and is the manner in which issues of diversity are responded to and addressed in the public sector.

Cultural competency is a critical component for any academic program seeking to develop the next cadre of public administration professionals. Academic programs with this goal must respond to changing demographics, an increasing number of social justice concerns, and changes in immigration policies and same-sex marriage rights, as well as changing attitudes toward affirmative action. A holistic approach to cultural competency is required to ensure that students in public administration programs gain the ability to lead and manage in public governance. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate the demand for a comprehensive approach to cultural competency, provide a strategic model for ensuring cultural competency, and offer a structure for supporting issues of diversity in public administration programs.

First, we discuss the necessity of offering cultural competency education in public administration program curricula. Analyzing scholarship in the field and drawing from the NASPAA competencies, a premise is presented that supports cultural competency as a necessary part of civic engagement, policy development, and service delivery. Next, we highlight the use of cultural competency in health-related programs, using practical examples from medical education, nursing, and psychology. These exemplars demonstrate strategic approaches to promoting cultural competency and serve as the foundation for the diversity and inclusiveness framework (DIF). Lastly, the DIF is introduced as a broad framework to assist programs in developing comprehensive approaches to cultural competency.

**WHY CULTURAL COMPETENCY?**

Discussions of cultural competency and social equity have remained relevant since they were first introduced to the field of public administration during the 1968 Minnowbrook conference at Syracuse University (Marini, 1971). At that time, millions of Americans were protesting to ensure equal rights for all citizens regardless of race, religion, gender, or sexuality. Although Latino, Asian, and Native American populations are widespread and growing in the United States, the primary focus of cultural competency in American society has remained within the perspective of the Black-White binary.

According to the United States Census Bureau (2014), by 2060, the United States will be a plurality nation with no majority population but with non-Latino whites as the largest single group. In 2010, people of color made up 37% of the U.S. population; by 2060, people of color are expected to represent 57% of the population. The number of Latinos, the largest nonwhite population, is expected to more than double, from 53.3 million in 2012 to 128.8 million by 2043. The Asian population is expected to increase from 5% to 8% of the U.S. population. With the exception of the Black population, which is expected to grow from 41.2 million to 61.8 million, all other minority groups are expected to double or more than double in size. In contrast, population growth for non-Latino whites is expected to peak near 2024 and slowly begin to decline. The United States Census Bureau reports that by 2060, there will be six times the number of adults 65 and (13.1 million to 90 million), while the number of those 85 and older will more than
Demographic changes are not the only areas where critical shifts affect the future of public administration education. The recent Supreme Court decision extending federal marriage benefits to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) couples is an important indicator of changing societal views on same-sex marriage. Similarly, the impending immigration status of millions of undocumented residents represents a significant unknown in a country with a large Latino population. Such population diversity stimulates fierce debates about how worth, access, and power both shape public opinions and inform policy decisions.

Issues of institutionalized racism and discrimination remain an undercurrent in many systems in the United States. Recent polling about the levels of trust between minority groups and government reflect a divide down racial lines as well as an increasingly distrustful minority population (Pew Research Center, 2014). The 2013 Supreme Court decision to delay a decision in the affirmative action case Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin et al. (2013) adds further uncertainty to the future of diversity in higher education. The next generation of public administration professionals will need to recognize and validate the history and experiences of historically marginalized groups in ways that have been previously unacknowledged. Therefore, the ability to contextualize and discuss alternative experiences represents an opportunity to learn and understand beyond the traditional anecdotes of white middle-class affluence. Within this context, integrating public service values that promote “community governance, such as accountability, responsibility, justice, transparency, and improving welfare” are integral for professional effectiveness within the realm of a democratic society (Raffel, Maser, & McFarland, 2007, p. 2).

In response to the myriad changes occurring in the United States, cultural competency cannot be achieved in a vacuum: it should be considered a critical element in a comprehensive education curriculum that considers race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and more. In this respect, universities represent fertile ground to achieve cultural competency, particularly because academic institutions often times introduce heterogeneity into the lives of students who have previously lived, worked, and played in relatively homogenous environments. At colleges and universities across the country, students interact with faculty, staff, and students who come from varied economic backgrounds (e.g., low-income, working-class, upper-middle-class), have different religious experiences, and fall along a vast sexual identity continuum. By advancing cultural competency, public service programs increase their capacity to not only understand but to meaningfully “address the incomplete and often times inaccurate public services and public programs provided to minority populations” (Rice, 2007, p. 627). Given that the NASPAA accreditation process emphasizes the role of public service values, a focus on cultural competency reinforces ideas like “respect, equity, and fairness in dealings with citizens and fellow public servants” (Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation, 2009, p. 2).

Cultural Competency in Public Administration Programs

Rice (2010, p. 191) states that “competence is the capacity to function within the context of culturally integrated patterns of human behavior and effectively applying them in appropriate settings” and defines cultural competency as “the development of adequate professional skills to provide services to ethnic, racial, and cultural groups” (Rice, 2010, p. 192). The role of public administration programs is to prepare students for leadership roles in public service. These students’ success depends on their ability to understand the perspectives of a diverse and changing population. Public service professionals who demonstrate cultural competency are capable of responding to the needs of a diverse citizenry through education, engagement, and participation.

In some programs, issues related to diversity and cultural competency receive minimal
attention. A lack of diversity among faculty and staff has been cited as the rationale for limited integration; other rationales purport a lack of interest or a lack of resources (Gooden & Wooldridge, 2011). One of the biggest challenges to integrating cultural competency in educational programs is overcoming the belief that adding a topic to a discussion or incorporating a few concepts into an existing course can accomplish it. This assimilationist approach to addressing different cultural perspectives falls short of giving the topic the level of importance it deserves.

The Journal of Public Affairs Education (JPAE) has frequently sponsored symposia and supported scholarship to address multifaceted perspectives related to cultural competency, diversity, and social equity. These symposia typically offer justification for the inclusion of multiple perspectives in public administration curricula beyond the white, male, heteronormative hegemony so partial to orthodox public administration scholarship and practice. Although JPAE demonstrates a commitment to contribute to scholarship in the field, there is an inconsistency between the scholarship and the practical utility for how such ideas are implemented in the classroom. Issues of diversity and social equity should be part of the mainstream dialogue instead of isolated, special topics. Furthermore, the “comparative weakness in the development of such measures [as social equity] suggests that scholarship and practitioners have not made equity central to the way they think about public administration and to how the performance of public agencies is measured” (Svara & Brunet, 2004, p. 100). Thus, to be culturally competent is to recognize the relationship each of these ideas have to one another in both a qualitative and quantitative sense, in academic and practical environments.

Promoting cultural competency in public organizations and in classrooms is a useful strategy to emphasize the importance of social equity (Rice, 2004). This duality reflects the idea that students who are exposed to concepts like diversity, cultural competency, and social equity throughout their public administration education will be better equipped to transform public organizations into more culturally responsive entities. The fragmented cultural competency strategies employed in public administration programs create a facade of importance. To ensure that equity truly becomes the fourth pillar of public administration, as argued by Frederickson (2010), public administration programs will need to address diversity, cultural competency, and social equity.

Cultural Competency and NASPAA
The role of NASPAA in ensuring cultural competency is obvious, in that the organization is the accrediting body for graduate public administration education that works “to ensure excellence in education and training for graduate public service and to promote the ideal of public service” (Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation, 2014). The original NASPAA standards focused on program inputs and how resources were utilized to offer students a high-quality education. Subsequent adaptations strengthened previous efforts as well as created frameworks for the assessment of accreditation processes. The latest iteration of the standards continues to build upon previous models but also focuses on a values-driven, mission-based accreditation process in support of the public service foundation of the field (Raffel, Maser, & McFarland, 2007). The prominence of public service values in the 2009 standards reflects NASPAA’s concern for democratic, professional, ethical, and human values (Molina & McKeown, 2012). These values are considered in addition to the beliefs, ideas, and principles consistently proposed by NASPAA.

Consequently, NASPAA’s operationalization of public values is expressed through a promotion of inclusiveness through recruitment, retention, and support services for faculty and students. These standards recognize the value of diversity at the front of the classroom as just as important as diversity among the student population. Such representational diversity is assumed to create safe spaces for students of color, while fostering opportunities to develop mentoring relationships that facilitate student success. Furthermore, five universal competencies broadly
operationalize student skill sets, while Standard 5.1 represents the culmination of the respective knowledge, skills, and abilities students should have upon graduating from public administration programs. The NASPAA standards that address issues of diversity and cultural competency are listed in Box 1.

Changes to the NASPAA competencies represent shifts in the purview of traditional public administration programs, which are often criticized as unresponsive to variations in politics, culture, and the experiences of nonwhite populations. While positivism (e.g., objectivity and neutrality) has been customarily praised for its scientific prowess, it is limited within an applied field where context matters and empirical data represents only one aspect of consideration. The inclusion of diversity and cultural competency seeks to ensure that graduates have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to balance the dictates of orthodox public administration programs (i.e., effectiveness, efficiency, and economy) with effective democratic engagement and citizen participation with all groups (i.e., equity).

Although people working in the field of public administration are often responsible for the lives and livelihoods of the public, cultural competency is not a typical requirement for service delivery. The opposite is true in health-related fields, where numerous federal directives exist. In the following section, we discuss parallels between public administration and health-related programs, explore federal cultural competency mandates in health care, and present cultural competency models used in different fields of study.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY IN HEALTH CARE CURRICULA

Cultural competency plays an important role in work to eliminate health disparities and improve the level and quality of health care received. The field of health care has been responsible for producing the vast majority of the scholarship on cultural competency as well as for developing and implementing cultural competency standards and best practices. As a framework, cultural competency is a useful approach to enabling systems and agencies to understand and meet the needs of a diverse and changing citizenry. Because different elements (e.g., language, customs, beliefs, perspectives, behaviors) can influence health communication, cultural competency is critical in all aspects of the health care delivery system. In 2000, the

BOX 1.
NASPAA Accreditation Standards Related to Diversity

| Standard 3.2 – Faculty Diversity: The program will promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment and retention of faculty members. |
| Standard 4.4 – Student Diversity: The program will promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment, admissions practices, and student support services. |
| Standard 5.1 – Universal Required Competencies: As the basis for its curriculum, the program will adopt a set of required competencies related to its mission and public service values. The required competencies will include five domains: the ability • to lead and manage in public governance; • to participate in and contribute to the policy process; • to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions; • to articulate and apply a public service perspective; • to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry. |

Source: Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation (2009).
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Minority Health published the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care (National CLAS Standards) to enhance the delivery of health care services through the establishment of cultural and linguistic activities to improve the services delivered to racial and ethnic minorities (Office of Minority Health, 2013). The 14 National CLAS Standards are federal mandates and are required for any health care organization receiving federal funds. The standards address cultural competency and language access services and serve as guidelines for the integration of cultural competency into programs (Office of Minority Health, 2013).

The correlation between academic programs in health care and public administration is important, as both disciplines recognize the value of an inter-sectoral approach to addressing public issues. Whether the issue relates to public health or public administration professions, the two sectors find value in collaborating around central areas to improve health and societal outcomes. As such, cultural competency education is paramount to both and can be used to develop personnel who are capable of developing and delivering services to meet the needs of various populations (Rice, 2010).

In health care professions, the goal of cultural competency education is to improve the ability of health care providers to deliver services to individuals whose culture, behaviors, or needs may differ from that of the provider (Smedley, Stith, & Nelson, 2003). Medical education programs have strategically integrated cultural competency into required curricula using a variety of pedagogical approaches (Kitzes et al., 2007). Some of these efforts include independent courses, community-based training programs, health disparities tracks, and diversity training across the curriculum. With an overarching goal of improving the clinical encounter, these training programs prepare students to deliver services to diverse populations. Although many medical training programs have developed comprehensive programs to promote understanding of cultural factors throughout their curricula, some medical school programs have identified diversity and cultural competency as cross-cutting curriculum components that are taught or reinforced throughout the entirety of medical school training (Kitzes et al., 2007). Cross-cutting curriculum approaches are often broader than traditional classroom-based approaches in that they are taught by local experts and span a broader section of the curriculum.

The majority of associations affiliated with professional health education programs support comprehensive integration efforts. The American Association of Colleges of Nurses (AACN) supports a cultural competency–based curriculum in support of social justice. AACN advocates for the integration of cultural competency in all academic nursing curricula in support of patient-centered care that acts “in accordance with fair treatment regardless of economic status, race, ethnicity, age, citizenship, disability, or sexual orientation” (American Association of Colleges of Nurses, 2008, p. 29). The National Association for Social Workers (NASW) has a broad approach to cultural competency in that they (a) are committed to social justice; (b) have a strong antidiscrimination and prejudice policy; (c) support three national committees on equity issues; (d) operate a strong affirmative action program among leadership and staff both nationally and in chapters; and (e) have well-developed cultural competencies (National Association of Social Workers, 2014). The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) endorses cultural competency efforts by asserting that cultural competency is an integral part of the curriculum along with professionalism and ethics (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2005).

The University of Central Florida’s (UCF) College of Medicine’s M.D. program offers an innovative, high-tech physician training curriculum. The curriculum includes an integrated approach to the basic and clinical sciences throughout the course of study. During the second year, in addition to studying other aspects of medicine, students receive training in

562  Journal of Public Affairs Education
cultural differences and communication skills. As enrichment to the curriculum, students engage in Longitudinal Curricular Themes (LCT) that emphasize critical aspects of medicine and medical care; Culture, Health, and Society is one of the six LCTs (University of Central Florida, 2013). The curriculum requires that students receive academic training that assures they are capable of delivering culturally competent care during the clinical encounter with an ultimate goal of improving health outcomes (University of Central Florida, 2013).

At Johns Hopkins School of Nursing—one of the top nursing schools in the United States, as ranked by U.S. News & World Report—diversity is identified as a central tenet in the mission statement as well as a core value with specified strategic planning goals. The mission statement denotes that the school is working “to improve the health of individuals and diverse communities locally and globally” with a specific aim of cultivating “an environment that embodies the School of Nursing values of excellence, respect, diversity, integrity, and accountability” (Johns Hopkins School of Nursing, 2014a). Key curricular components include faculty and student participation in the university-wide Diversity and Cultural Competency Committee, the periodic publication of a Diversity Report assessing and monitoring curriculum and courses for cultural competency components, and development of a Diversity and Inclusion Statement (Johns Hopkins School of Nursing, 2014b). Notably, the nursing curriculum includes a course addressing health disparities that affect LGBT populations. The addition of this course resulted from a student-led initiative to increase the number of health care providers prepared to work with diverse populations (Johns Hopkins School of Nursing, 2014b).

Since 1995, the American Psychological Association has included cultural competency in its accreditation standards. The standards call for “actions that indicate respect for and understanding of cultural differences and individual diversity” (American Psychological Association, 1995, p. 57). One of the highest ranked psychology programs in the United States, according to U.S. News & World Report, is the Department of Psychology at the University of California, Los Angeles. The department has a Minority Mental Health Training Program, which incorporates minority mental health issues into the core curriculum and develops practicum experiences targeting multicultural experiences. In addition, the department also created a subspecialty in minority mental health and participates in the Diversity Science Initiative to “advance theoretical and research perspectives on underrepresented minority groups in the behavioral sciences” (University of California, Los Angeles, 2012). Over 28% of the department’s faculty conducts research related to diversity issues, with specialty areas that include racial profiling, racial prejudice in voting, stereotyping threats and forms, the role of culture in anxiety and the treatment of anxiety, health disparities in eating and obesity, and coping with discrimination (University of California, Los Angeles, 2012).

Another key area of comparison between health-related and public administration programs relates to core competencies. Competencies are often program specific and are reflective of a program’s values and areas of interest. Core competencies yield from a contextual analysis of internal and external environments along with programmatic goals and objectives (Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice, 2014). Building from the universal competencies established by the Public Health Faculty/Agency Forum in 1991, the core competencies presented by the Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice identified eight skill areas, including cultural competency, that cut across all public health disciplines. The cultural competency components include cognitive, affective, and skill domains.

As a whole, these competencies incorporate strategies for communicating and interacting with diverse populations as well as recognizing the roles of behavioral, cultural, and social fac-
tors in relation to the accessibility, availability, and delivery of public health. Skill sets within each domain are divided into three tiers: entry-level professional, program managers and supervisors, and senior management and executives (Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice, 2014). Competencies can be used to assess workforce knowledge and skills, identify training needs, develop workforce development and training plans, create job descriptions, and conduct performance evaluations. As such, competencies are a key element in the DIF presented in the following section.

FIGURE 1.
Diversity and Inclusiveness Framework

THE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS FRAMEWORK
In contrast to health-related models, many of the frameworks presented in public administration journals provide little, if any, guidance for academic programs seeking to improve their ability to incorporate cultural competency into their curriculum. The DIF is specific to the unique needs of public administration programs, even more so than university-wide models such as the one developed by the Tilford Group at Kansas State University and Pittsburg State University (Borrego & Johnson, 2012). Al-
though the Tilford model is useful, components such as site visitations and retreats with deans make it impractical for implementing it at the program level.

Carrizales (2010) presents a knowledge-based, attitude-based, skills-based, and community-based framework as curriculum components. However, the framework is limited in scope and fails to include critical elements to support the incorporation of cultural competency throughout an academic program. These models and approaches are useful, but the DIF presents individual components that program

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>NASPAA</th>
<th>DIF</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission, values, and diversity statement</td>
<td>Stresses the administrative capacity and faculty governance of public service programs as key issues to be considered</td>
<td>Explicitly articulates the importance of diversity in meeting student and programmatic needs for quality education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Emphasizes a commitment to public values in the mission, governance, and curriculum for existing public services programs</td>
<td>Calls for the inclusion of diversity in the mission statement and as a core value</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Calls for the development of a diversity statement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diversity and inclusiveness plan</td>
<td>Focuses on the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty</td>
<td>Empowers public service programs to be more intentional in how cultural competency is integrated into existing programs (e.g., identification of courses, distinguishing skill sets, types of assessments)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Promotes diversity and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment, admission processes, and support services for students</td>
<td>Provides strategies for the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty and student populations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Core competencies</td>
<td>Identifies five universal competencies for student learning (Box 1)</td>
<td>Identifies desirable skills for professionals engaging in practice, education, and research in public service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty training</td>
<td>No specific requirement for faculty/staff training related to cultural competency</td>
<td>Concentrates on providing training (e.g., professional development) opportunities for faculty and staff to ensure they are capable of facilitating discussions, creating assignments, and fostering a learning environment supportive of cultural competency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity/cultural competency-related courses, course content, and cocurricular components</td>
<td>Not required</td>
<td>Purposeful integration of knowledge, skills, and abilities to ensure students are prepared to work with and engage with diverse populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student perception of diversity issues</td>
<td>Not required</td>
<td>Offers a mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of implementing a comprehensive approach to cultural competency</td>
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Notes: NASPAA = Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration. DIF = diversity and inclusiveness framework.
managers can consider in implementing cultural competency at all levels in an academic program. Even further, the DIF encourages meaningful engagement with program stakeholders (e.g., staff, faculty, administrators, students) and provides practical implementation strategies to promote cultural competency.

Although NASPAA provides some guidance on approaches to diversity and inclusiveness, a framework for cultural competency integration does not exist. In the absence of such a framework, the DIF provides programs with implementation strategies (as described below) to consider adopting to promote cultural competency in the curriculum. An infusion model—adapted from scholars in the field of psychology—provides a comprehensive model for academic programs seeking to broaden culturally responsive practices at the program level. Important components in the infusion model include a statement of commitment to diversity; an active recruitment process for diverse faculty and students; an academic element that posits knowledge, skills, and attitudes for diverse populations; a mechanism to ensure that issues related to diversity are included throughout the curriculum; and an assessment of student perception of diversity issues (Fouad & Arredondo, 2006; Winterowd, Adams, Miville, & Mintz, 2009).

As shown in Figure 1, the DIF represents a multifaceted approach to integrating cultural competency into public administration curricula. Recognizing the uniqueness of all public administration programs, the DIF offers a strategic approach to integrating cultural competency that moves beyond the superficial recognition of diversity toward a more comprehensive approach to ensure that faculty and students are prepared for an inclusive cultural experience. The elements of the framework include (a) the inclusion of diversity in the mission statement, as a core value, and in a separate diversity statement; (b) the identification of core cultural competencies; (c) the development of a comprehensive diversity and inclusiveness plan with recruitment and retention components; (d) requisite faculty and staff training in cultural competency; (e) the development of courses, course content, and cocurricular activities around issues related to cultural competency and diversity; and (f) the assessment of student perceptions of issues of diversity.

Although with similar components to the NASPAA standards, the DIF offers a framework specifically targeting the integration of diversity and cultural competency into public administration programs. NASPAA standards offer guidelines and reporting requirements, while the DIF provides six strategies to meet the NASPAA standards. The framework is designed to holistically ensure that students who graduate from public administration programs have been introduced to and taught about topics related to the various types of diversity represented in society. NASPAA, on the other hand, focuses on four broader areas: program eligibility, public service values, primary focus, and course of study (Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation, 2009). These preconditions allude to the utility and inclusion of public service values like respect, equity, and fairness, but there is significant latitude for how or to what extent such values are integrated into public administration programs. Table 1 highlights the differences between NASPAA and DIF objectives in addressing cultural competency in public administration programs.

1. Mission, Values, and Diversity Statements

Mission statements and values are critical for any organization. In academia, mission statements are represented at various levels and are important in that they affect everything that unit does by providing “opportunity, direction, significance, and achievement” (Kotler & Murphy, 1981, p. 479). In much the same way, values form the basis of how programs govern themselves while bolstering those ideals to guide and influence the program. Together, the mission and values reflect the characteristics and goals a program deems most important. Mission statements and values are often considered by program reviewers looking to see if the program is providing culturally appropriate or culturally responsive services (Rice, 2004). Including diversity in the mission
statement is often the first and most obvious step programs take. However, if diversity rises to a level of importance where it is included in the mission, logically it should be identified as a core value. To move beyond the basic level, programs must ensure buy-in from program leaders and develop strategies for implementing, evaluating, and reporting.

A statement of diversity—directly linked to the mission statement—places a special emphasis on the program’s commitment to diversity. A diversity statement indicates how a program will go about achieving the diversity component of its mission as well as demonstrate the values related to diversity. A good diversity statement has three important parts: it explicitly defines diversity, describes the importance of diversity to the program, and makes a perspicuous commitment to diversity. Programs should ensure, when possible, that faculty and staff are involved in the development of the statement and that there is commitment and accountability built into the development and evaluation process.

2. Diversity and Inclusiveness Plans

Diversity and inclusiveness plans provide evidence of a program’s planning for and integration and evaluation of diversity and inclusiveness. According to NASPAA, diversity and inclusiveness plans report, at a minimum, on faculty diversity, faculty development, student diversity, and curricular and programmatic enrichment (Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation, 2009).

NASPAA provides guidance on specific diversity-related factors, but programs can initiate and implement specific elements based on individual program needs. Some programs have developed comprehensive plans while others have very minimal plans. However, a shift toward more impactful plans is warranted. At a minimum, diversity and inclusiveness plans should represent a dedicated strategy of encouraging and supporting diversity and inclusiveness. Programs may consider the elements listed in Box 2 as part of a well-conceived plan:

A well-developed diversity and inclusiveness plan can be used as a resource to support the recruitment of faculty and students from diverse backgrounds. As acknowledged in the NASPAA standards, the recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty is extremely important. Winkle-Wagner and Locks (2014) suggest that education through diversity can be fostered when there are opportunities for students to engage with people who are not like them. In this regard, the diversity at the front of the classroom is just as instructive for students as the context offered in their courses. For all students, but particularly those of color, the campus climate—the collective actions of administrators, faculty, and peers—makes all the difference toward successful matriculation (Winkle-Wagner & Locks, 2014).

Most programs report on diversity among faculty and students as well as on strategies for increasing diversity; however, more attention needs
to be paid to retention efforts. Once faculty and students from diverse backgrounds are a part of the campus community, systems should be in place to ensure that they are supported and do not feel ostracized. Suggestions to improve the experience for faculty from diverse populations are offered in Box 3.

As with any plan, it is as important to identify individuals who will develop the plan as to identify senior personnel who will provide resources and hold managers accountable for the plan’s implementation. Programs may need to identify someone to champion the plan and ensure that everyone buys in to what the program is attempting to accomplish. In the future, greater emphasis is likely to be placed on plans that are comprehensive, which include performance measures, program-specific competencies, and evaluation components.

3. Core Competencies

“Competencies encompass results; specifically, they indicate the effort necessary for a task or activity to be performed successfully” (Daley, 2012, p. 123). In other words, competencies represent the minimum skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to perform a particular task (Daley, 2012). NASPAA competencies link public administration programs’ core curricula with student learning. But, programs should also consider requiring specific competencies related to issues of cultural competency.

Programs have the flexibility to develop competencies that are relevant and aspirational to their program’s mission. The inclusion of cultural competencies in a program’s overall assessment will ensure that graduating students have achieved a minimal level of cultural competency in their ability to meet the universal required NASPAA competencies. To ensure students have achieved a basic level of cultural competency, the management-level competencies for public health professionals can be adapted for public administration programs; these competencies are listed in Box 4.

**BOX 3.**
Strategies to Support Diverse Faculty Members

- Identify diverse tenured faculty to mentor junior faculty of the same race or ethnicity
- Invite diverse faculty members from other departments to events and activities
- Provide faculty members with an opportunity to talk about their experiences and discuss issues or opportunities
- Host workshops on issues related to cultural competency, diversity, and social equity
- Support conference participation, scholarship, and research in areas related to cultural competency, diversity, and social equity
- Share information on a variety of cultural topics
- Create a social equity track (e.g., professional development opportunities, trainings, outreach)

**BOX 4.**
Cultural Competency Skills for Public Service Professionals

- Describes the concept of diversity as it relates to individuals and populations
- Describes the diversity of individuals and populations in a community or network
- Incorporates strategies for interacting with persons from diverse backgrounds
- Recognizes the ways diversity influences policies, programs, and services
- Supports diverse perspectives in developing, implementing, and evaluating policies, programs, and services that affect the health of a community
- Ensures diversity of individuals and populations is addressed in policies, programs, and services
- Conveys data and information to professionals and the public using a variety of approaches (e.g., reports, presentations, email, letters, and press releases)
- Facilitates communication among individuals, groups, and organizations
- Develops new and/or evaluates existing social equity indicators, tools, and measurements

4. Cultural Competency Training for Faculty
Public administration programs must promote cultural competency among faculty and staff as a precursor to requiring cultural competency for students. Developing cultural competency among faculty members is not without its challenges. First, requiring tenured or tenure-earning professors to modify their course content to meet programmatic objectives may be met with objections. Some may even argue that cultural competency and issues of diversity have been blended into their current courses. Second, cultural competency trainings are rarely limited to one session. A greater commitment is needed to provide the knowledge and skills to implement cultural competency in the classroom. Third, finding resources to dedicate to diversity training can be next to impossible or impractical given budget constraints. Last, faculty members may not be prepared to address, or have a desire to address, the myriad concepts, issues, and attitudes that arise in cultural competency education.

BOX 5. Strategies for Programs Providing Requisite Faculty Training in Cultural Competency

- Develop a mechanism for faculty members to participate in the diversity and inclusiveness planning process
- Host diversity workshops around topics of diversity and cultural competency to emphasize the importance of cultural competency training and to provide strategies for infusing cultural competency into current courses
- Sponsor annual diversity trainings to support the development of multicultural approaches to existing courses
- Create a database of diverse groups to support faculty members in the classroom (e.g., guest speakers, community partners, and advisory board members)
- Partner with other programs or submit funding proposals to cover the costs of diversity and cultural competency trainings

BOX 6. Strategies for Faculty Overcoming Challenges to Cultural Competency Integration

- Understand and articulate the rationale for cultural competency
- Get buy-in from senior administrators and faculty
- Participate in efforts to incorporate cultural competency into the curriculum
- Contribute to research and scholarly efforts to raise the awareness of cultural competency as a true science
- Teach practical skills and interactive methods (e.g., role playing and reflective journaling)
- Discuss cultural competency throughout the curriculum
- Promote cultural competency among students and with faculty and staff
- Participate in cultural competency/diversity courses
- Advocate for the development of specialized courses in diversity, cultural competency, and social equity

The training of faculty members is important for any integration effort. Faculty must be capable of applying observations and empirical and analytical skills to monitor, evaluate, and modify teaching styles and content. Faculty members need to be well trained and comfortable enough teaching lessons on diversity and cultural competency to ensure the maximum synergy between awareness, education, and learning. More specifically, faculty members must demonstrate a capacity to address stereotyping bias, prejudice, and discrimination, and a capacity to work toward social equity (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989). Multiple and varied approaches are needed that extend beyond the traditional academic environment. The strategies identified in Box 5 are practical steps to requiring cultural competency among faculty.

For faculty members seeking to promote diversity and cultural competency, Box 6 presents practical approaches. These approaches are also important to overcoming the challenges identified above.
5. Course Content and Cocurricular Components

A multifaceted approach is required to provide students with a well-developed curriculum. Basic curricular components may include the presence of a diversity statement on course syllabi, courses dedicated to diversity and cultural competency, specialized social equity tracks, and faculty with specialized skills and research interest on diversity issues. Ultimately, developing an environment conducive to all-inclusive cultural education provides support for faculty teaching in the program, which in turns creates an open environment that welcomes the free exchange of ideas.

Diversity and cultural competency should be central tenets in the development of curricula and cocurricular activities. The classroom is a training ground for learning, understanding, exploring, and mastering cultural content. There is an inextricable link between classroom learning and societal integration. Hence, the exposure to rudimentary, philosophical, and practical applications of diversity concepts is essential. Curriculum mapping strategies provide a framework for determining how well cultural competencies are embedded within existing courses.

According to Rapp (2006), integrating cultural competency into academic programs includes development of learning objectives, exposure to cultural themes, formalized assessments, and related cocurricular activities. First, learning objectives can include introducing students to fundamental terms and concepts. At the basic level, definitions and concepts create the basis for awareness and understanding. As students progress through the curriculum, programs can expose students to cultural themes of increasing complexity. Next, formalized assessment plans capture students’ abilities to demonstrate their knowledge and skill attainment. Then, programs should consider a wide range of opportunities for student immersion into a culturally competent curriculum. Internships are valuable because they provide public administration students with different experiences and exposures, including diversity. Box 7 provides a short list of the types of activities possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOX 7. Examples of Cultural Immersion Activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Provide opportunities for targeted internships, which expose students to diverse organizations and the mentorship of leaders from diverse backgrounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Explore the feasibility of developing individual courses or themes around issues related to diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Explore study abroad or exchange programs with academic programs from around the country and world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create diverse feeder programs to allow students exposure to a broad range of cultures and backgrounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Develop internal programs focusing on diversity issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Support research and training around diversity themes</td>
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6. Assessment of Student Perception of Diversity

Assessment of students’ perception of diversity is important in determining the effectiveness of integration efforts. Curriculum development committees can explore establishing institutional effectiveness measures or adding pertinent questions to student evaluations. These assessments can identify areas of weakness and strength to further improve the program’s effectiveness.

Groups such as the AAMC and the Liaison Committee on Medical Education have developed standards that require students to “demonstrate an understanding of the manner in which people of diverse cultures and belief systems perceive health and illness and respond to various symptoms, diseases, and treatments” (Rapp, 2006, pg. 705). In public administration, students should be capable of “demonstrating an understanding of the manner in which people of diverse cultures and belief systems perceive and respond to a variety of social issues, public policies and service delivery systems. Based on their understanding of what they should be capable of demonstrating, students are able to decide whether the program has delivered a curriculum that ensures cultural competency and promotes diversity.
DISCUSSION
This paper introduces the DIF as a guide to integrate cultural competency into the curriculum of public administration programs. We view the DIF as complementary to the NASPAA standards because it reinforces the public service values so critical for accreditation. Each component of the DIF seeks to actively engage program constituents (faculty, students, staff, and administrators) in a reciprocal and cyclical process that focuses on varying degrees of learning and the evaluation of cultural competency within their respective spheres.

For example, faculty, staff, and administrators identify objectives, develop strategies, and measure performance at various levels of the program (e.g., mission statement, core competencies, curriculum, course assessments) to demonstrate an alignment between program objectives and outcomes. NASPAA Standard 7 focuses on matching communication with mission; it emphasizes engagement with students, faculty and staff, employers, administrators, and alumni (Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation, 2009). In this capacity, using the DIF to support NASPAA’s accreditation standards empowers programs to purposefully consult stakeholders to identify the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes that graduates of public administration programs need to meaningfully engage with constituents.

Students then matriculate through a curriculum that not only values cultural competency, but is also intentional in its presentation of readings, assignments, and activities that underscore the student’s overall experience in the program. Unlike other models, the DIF does not solely focus on faculty or students, but recognizes that learning is iterative, reciprocal, and encompassing. The DIF explicitly outlines components of a diversity and inclusiveness plan, outlines strategies to support diverse faculty members, identifies cultural competency skills for professionals, advocates for cultural competency training for faculty, suggests content or cocurricular components for courses, and uses student assessments to refine program components and course content. With the DIF, all stakeholder groups are developing the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities, while subsequently evaluating their progression toward program and course-related objectives. Therefore, the DIF can be used to enhance the NASPAA accreditation process through the identification of explicit steps and strategies that will embed cultural competency training and development into the everyday practice of public administration education and engagement.

We would be remiss to not acknowledge the important role of program administrators, faculty, and staff in developing, implementing, and evaluating a culturally competent curriculum. In this context, the DIF has the potential to produce effective results, but only if the process is valued. In other words, if program personnel do not see a value in cultural competency as a means to teach and prepare future public administration professionals, then the DIF—like any other model—will fail. This preparation is bidirectional: cultural competency is not something that is solely imparted onto the students, but skill sets that must be developed among administrators, faculty, and staff equally.

This call for action is specifically important for white professors who are overrepresented at the front of the classroom. NASPAA Standard 3.2 recognizes that the recruitment and retention of faculty of color are not at parity with their white counterparts and that a concerted effort must be made to reverse that trend. Until this happens, the development of a culturally competent public administration curriculum cannot rest on the shoulders of faculty of color because it is “their” issue—it must become everyone’s issue. Only in this capacity will all faculty, regardless of race, be responsible for “moving beyond the appeasement of superficial representation and modest behavioral changes toward an understanding of diversity as necessary to advance democratic opportunity for all” (Blessett, 2014, p. 217).
CONCLUSION
As the United States shifts toward a plurality nation, the demand for cultural competency and diversity in public administration education will continue to grow. Future public administration leaders must be prepared to address a bevy of social, economic, political, and cultural changes. Public administration programs that support cultural competency in research, scholarship, and practice will become more desirable. Cultural competency in public administration curricula should not be optional but must be viewed as essential to effective, responsive academic preparation. The DIF provides an integrated approach to promoting cultural competency and diversity education in public administration programs.

REFERENCES


Integrating Cultural Competency Into Curriculum


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