

Excerpts from Nine themes in Campus Racial Climates and  
**Implications for Institutional Transformation**  
(Harper and Hurtado, 2007, pp.19-21)

“Consistent with Kezar and Eckel’s recommendation (2002a), we suggest that administrators, faculty, and institutional researchers proactively audit their campus climates and cultures to determine the need for change. As indicated in many of the nine themes, racial realities remained undisclosed and unaddressed in systematic ways on college campuses. As long as administrators espouse commitments to diversity and multiculturalism without engaging in examinations of campus climates, racial/ethnic minorities will continue to feel dissatisfied, all students will remain deprived of the full range of educational benefits accrued through cross-racial engagement, and certain institutions will sustain longstanding reputations for being racially toxic environments.

Eckel and Kezar (2003) defined *transformation* as the type of change that affects the institutional culture, is deep and pervasive, is intentional, and occurs over time. Accordingly, deep change reflects a shift in values (for example, from espoused to enacted) and assumptions that underlie daily operations (for example, the flawed expectation that cross-racial interactions will magically occur on their own). Pervasiveness indicates that change is felt across the institution in the assumptions and daily work of faculty, staff, and administrators. For example, the Black culture center on a campus cannot improve an institution’s external reputation if professors routinely perpetuate racist stereotypes in classrooms. Also, racial/ethnic minority students will continue to feel like “guests in someone else’s house” if student activities offices fail to sponsor programs that reflect the diverse cultures represented on a campus. Intentionality in constructing culturally affirming environments and experiences that facilitate the cultivation of racially diverse friendship groups must substitute passivity and negligence. As previous research has established, these racial climate issues have consequences for student outcomes (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen, 1998). For example, attention to diversity in the curriculum and cocurriculum, particularly in the first two years of college, results in student development along many dimensions of complex thinking and social cognitive growth (Hurtado, 2005).

Eckel and Kezar (2003) also distinguished transformation from other types of change, including adjustments that continually happen in academia that are neither pervasive nor deep, such as showing a one-hour video on respecting diversity at new student orientation; isolated change that may be deep but limited to one unit or program area, as when an ethnic studies department offers a cluster of elective courses on race; or far-reaching change that affects many across the institution but lacks depth, as with a policy regarding the symbolic inclusion of an equal opportunity statement on letterhead and all hiring materials. Moreover, Kezar and Eckel (2002b) found that senior administrative support, collaboration, and visible action are among the core

elements requisite for transformational change in higher education. While administrative leadership on its own is insufficient, our findings make clear that entry- and midlevel professionals, especially racial/ethnic minorities, often feel silenced and powerless to transform campus racial climates.

In their 2005 study, Kezar and Eckel interviewed thirty college presidents who had been engaged in organizational change with a significant emphasis on the success of racial/ethnic minority students. The presidents used a strategy of dialogue and discussion in the appraisal of their own and their institutions' commitments to diversity, while holding various stakeholders accountable for aligning efforts with stated institutional values and priorities. If this is to occur on other campuses, race cannot remain an avoidable topic. For instance, if accountability for student learning is a high priority, dialogue and strategic efforts must be directed toward addressing undercurrents of racial segregation that inhibit the rich learning that occurs in cross-racial engagement. Likewise, faculty and staff in academic affairs, student affairs, multicultural affairs, and other units on campus should be challenged to consider their roles as accomplices in the cyclical reproduction of racism and institutional negligence.

Despite fifteen years of racial climate research on multiple campuses, the themes of exclusion, institutional rhetoric rather than action, and marginality continue to emerge from student voices. Conducting a climate study can be symbolic of institutional action, only to be filed away on a shelf. We advocate that data gathered through the ongoing assessment of campus racial climates guide conversations and reflective examinations to overcome discomfort with race, plan for deep levels of institutional transformation, and achieve excellence in fostering racially inclusive learning environments.”

**SOURCE:** Harper, S. R., & Hurtado, S. (2007). Nine themes in campus racial climates and implications for institutional transformation. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2007(120), 7-24.