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Looking forward: Strategies for inclusivity

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This final chapter draws together the ways in which intersectionality occurs for a range of stakeholders regarding constructions of gender in community colleges and provides tactics for increasing equity.

Looking Forward—Strategies for Inclusivity

Pamela L. Eddy

In some respects, we can point to a number of ways in which women's advancement has occurred over the past 2 decades since Townsend's (1995) *New Directions for Community Colleges* (NDCC) on gender. Yes, there are more women in presidencies. Yes, faculty numbers represent parity between men and women in entry ranks. Yes, women have held steady in attendance at, and graduation from, community colleges. But inequities remain. Community colleges still lack leaders and faculty of color, despite enrolling the largest numbers of students of color (Snyder & Dillow, 2013). Narrow ideals of gender based on a binary are just starting to receive wider attention, and challenges exist in even the small advances made by trans* populations as witnessed by the legal battles in North Carolina regarding gender-neutral bathrooms (Blythe, 2016). So, yes, we've come a long way, but the road to equity remains long.

The pressing issues identified in the second NDCC volume dedicated to gender perspectives in community colleges included two main areas: affirmative action and expansion of gender construction (Eddy & Lester, 2008). In the decade since that publication, how gender is constructed is still central but has now moved beyond viewing gender construction based on subgroups, e.g., Black men, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ). Today, constructions of gender need to focus more on intersectionality (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). These topics and others are addressed in the following section, including the review of current gender issues in community colleges and suggestions for areas of future research. Finally, strategies are provided for various stakeholders to push for change to create more inclusive institutions, in which students, educators, and leaders all feel safe, welcome, and valued.

Current Gender Issues

The 2016 election year was marked with hope that the glass ceiling would be shattered and the first woman president would be elected. Instead, a backlash occurred in which women's rights and those of marginalized populations such as immigrants, citizens of color, and LGBTQ populations are at risk. To counter the challenges facing these historically marginalized groups, the public rhetoric instead highlights "progress." For example, a recent report by Equilar ("Boards Will Reach," 2017), a corporate research firm, has been widely published in newspapers across the nation touting women's progress in business. Presently, women make up 15.1% of all directors seats at publicly traded U.S. companies, which represents an increase to be sure, but equity will not be reached until 2055 at the current pace. As in other arenas, community colleges show more headway in terms of inclusivity as women comprise nearly 34% of 2-year colleges boards of trustees (Moltz, 2009), which is the highest in postsecondary education. However, despite the fact that one in three board members are women, a full 82% of board members are White. Diversity is elusive on boards, as it is in leadership and faculty ranks in community colleges. Though progress can be lauded in the community college sector, even here equity is absent.

It is against this national backdrop that emerging gender issues facing community colleges occur. Because of the fast pace of change by the new president in the first days of 2017, the extent to which legislative actions may move against women and minorities remains unknown. Early actions, however, signal concern with the reinstatement by Executive Order of the Global Gag Rule that limits information sharing on reproductive options (Girard, 2017) and the rescinding of rules for transgender bathrooms (Peters, Becker, & Davis, 2017). Despite the future uncertainty of federal activity, several salient issues have emerged that require attention. First, the overall neoliberal and corporate approaches to education affect the foci of community colleges, including areas of access, performance, and strategic planning. Second, Title IX is under continued attack, which creates uncertainty in the ways in which this act will continue to shape gender policies on campus. Progress on policies regarding sexual assault on campus is tenuous given the change in U.S. cabinet positions to a cabinet that now consists of mostly White men (Lee, 2017). Pointedly, newly installed Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos signaled "the likelihood of a significant shift in federal policy on sexual assault in college" (Anderson, 2017, para. 1) during her confirmation hearings. Third, the use of intersectionality helps to expand constructions of gender and campus programs supporting students and professionals with multiple identities have shown progress. Finally, the persistence of the glass ceiling underscores the need for deep cultural change to occur for equity and inclusiveness to become ubiquitous. On a positive

note, the tipping point for change is beginning to occur on some campuses and these examples can serve as a model for others.

Neoliberal Influence.   In a study of community college mission statements, Ayers (2005) found that a neoliberal discourse had taken hold in the sector. These orientations give preference to corporate values over academic norms and reward economic outcomes over those supporting the public good. As a result, tensions emerge when accountability demands counter the open access mission of community colleges and when decisions are made to increase completion rates at the expense of inclusivity (Bragg & Durham, 2012). Because community colleges enroll the largest percentage of minority students (Snyder & Dillow, 2013), a focus on the end goal of completion can threaten these enrollments. For example, research highlights greater academic risks for minorities relative to their White counterparts in college, including entering college less prepared academically, facing institutional barriers and cultures in which microaggressions are common, and juggling financial challenges and family responsibilities (Greene, Marti, & McClenney, 2008; Wood, 2012). What is often missing with a change in focus to completion are programs to help support minority men, thus the program benefits outlined by Dawn Person and colleagues in Chapter 6 are particularly important in today's community colleges. Critical theory provides an alternative means to counter the pervasive rhetoric of neoliberalism and points out the need to continue resisting a deficit model in thinking about minorities in education (Patton, 2016).

A focus on the bottom line and completion rates can lead to a time of crisis for community colleges. Paradoxically, when colleges are in crisis it is more likely that women are chosen to lead the institution versus men. Haslam and Ryan (2008) coined the term *glass cliff* to describe this phenomenon. In times of crisis, more women are selected as leaders as there is a greater risk of failure for the institution. When women accept positions to help community colleges in jeopardy, they have an opportunity to showcase their talents, but they are often hobbled by the context, just as some of the presidents highlighted in Chapter 3 discussed.

To combat the negative effects of the omnipresent nature of neoliberalism in community colleges, it is important to challenge the norms that dictate behavior. Ayers (2005) advocated the creation of a counterhegemonic discourse to take place in community colleges. In this case, individuals can work to create discourse that challenges the acceptance of neoliberalism but also instigates discourse to challenge narrow views of gender as merely men or women. Instead, the challenging discourse that needs to occur must focus on pointing out faulty assumptions of seeing gender as a binary and of anticipating certain roles for individuals based on their gender.

Social Construction of Gender.   The social construction of gender occurs through ongoing social interactions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In this case, gender can be constructed in a variety of ways, including individually based ideals of gender. But, the sex categories presented at birth

are reinforced in different ways over the lifespan. Expanded constructions of gender help to move beyond binary views of gender. But a move in this fashion requires changes in the ways individuals interact to reinforce wider definitions of gender.

Transgender students' concerns are one issue in the forefront on college campuses as these individuals demand a place in community colleges. Not only are gender-neutral bathrooms an issue (Brown, 2005) but also safe spaces on campus. Student affairs practitioners play a large role in advocating for trans* students. Marine (2017) argued that "trickle up social justice work requires a willingness to take an active stance on behalf of trans* students: To seek out their perspectives, to collect and analyze data rigorously and regularly, and to investigate the origins of current practices, including the myths that may circulate underneath and around them" (p. 253). As Zamani-Gallaher pointed out in Chapter 8, several community colleges have made progress in creating LGBTQ-friendly practices and policies.

Critical to the social construction of gender is acknowledgement of intersectionality of identities. Crenshaw (1991) first coined the construct of intersectionality. Since then, other scholars have explored this concept in college settings. Robbins and McGowan (2016) pointed out three key tenets of intersectionality as they argued for new approaches to student development theories:

1. Rejection of an additive approach to social inequality, a postpositivist assumption. Instead, identity is produced based on "the convergence of ability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, sexual orientation, and other social identities." (p. 76).
2. A holistic approach versus an individual orientation; thus there may be "multiple systems of oppression (for example, racism, genderism, and sexism)." (p. 76).
3. Systems of oppression are not neutral, for instance, "intersectionality foregrounds activism, advocacy, and social movements." (p. 77)

Moving toward creating inclusive environments on community college campuses requires attention to the ways in which student affairs practitioners, campus leaders, educators, and students are addressing intersectionality. Complicating constructions of gender involves rejecting the traditional concept of viewing gender as a binary and provides new ways to think about gender.

Title IX.   In 1972, Title IX was passed into federal law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded education program or activity. The historical importance of the law focused on providing women access to higher education and opportunities to participate in athletics. For current millennial students, the importance of this type of access seems like ancient history, but for those of us who lived through the era of implementation of Title IX, the legislation was groundbreaking. Community colleges

provided critical access to higher education for women in these early days of the law. This type of access remains important to vast majorities to this day.

More recently, attention to Title IX has focused on campus sexual assault policies. As Lee reviewed in Chapter 5, the Clery Act requires reporting of information on campus crime statistics. The Campus Sexual Violence Elimination (SaVE) Act amended the Clery Act in 2013 to provide transparency on campus about incidents of sexual violence, guarantees victims enhanced rights, sets standards for disciplinary proceedings, and requires campus-wide prevention education programs. Community colleges are not exempt from these requirements, but given their resources and size, meeting these requirements often stretches them. Exemplars help navigate compliance with the law.

Community colleges often provide resources to students and staff that they do not have in their private lives. Creating safe learning environment is indeed incumbent on each of us, especially when these policies are under attack and the future is unknown.

Persistent Glass Ceilings. Hymowitz and Schellhardt (1986) first coined the term glass ceiling to refer to the invisible barrier for women trying to get to the top rungs of leadership. In part, this barrier is a result of women being judged by male-based ideal worker norms (Williams, 2000). The existence of ideal worker norms sets up a false sense of equity in the workplace. On the one hand, women are advised that if they only worked harder (i.e., like men do) and "lean in" (Sandberg, 2013), they will have a place at the table. On the other hand, entrenched masculinized ideal worker norms persist even when workplace accommodations are made to counter these expectations and provide more flexible work environments (Kelly, Ammons, Chermack, & Moen, 2015). The expectation that work takes precedence over family or other life responsibilities continues to assume that employees can focus solely on work because someone else is fulfilling work on the home front (Acker, 1990; Williams, 2000).

Here, ideal worker norms present a restricted depiction of acceptable behavior for women faculty and leaders (Williams, 2000). Pointedly, the women faculty in Ward and Wolf-Wendel's (Chapter 4) longitudinal study picked the community college setting for the flexibility they perceived in being able to work and have a family and more balanced life. Yet, these same women do not sense that community colleges remain "good places to work" when advancing in leadership ranks.

Breaking the glass ceiling can occur when a tipping point is reached, however, which requires building a critical mass. Once a critical mass is reached, typically marked by at least 30% or more representation, change occurs (Burkinsaw, 2015). Martin and O'Meara (2017) reviewed changes in Maryland, which boosts women as presidents in 56% of the state's community colleges—almost double the national average of 33% women presidents in the 2-year sector (American Council on Education [ACE], 2012). This

tipping point occurred in Maryland because of targeted leadership development and mentoring opportunities for women leaders, training for trustees, and a robust labor market for presidential spouses. These outcomes are encouraging as they show how positive change can occur through concerted efforts. If the other 49 states instituted similar programs, the glass ceiling would finally break.

Strategies for Changing Practice

Change is the word of the day. This section provides strategies that various stakeholders can employ to help begin, support, and institutionalize change in practice. Change theory underscores the need to establish urgency for change and to obtain buy-in for larger scale changes (Kezar, 2014; Kotter, 2014). How change occurs may differ by stakeholder group, but it is critical to understand the intersectionality of groups, issues, and strategies. The final portion of this section underscores how policy changes can occur to support stakeholders and address organizational issues.

Students. Gender construction is particularly salient for traditionally aged college students as they enter important identity development stages during their college years (Evans, Forney, Guiddo, Patton, & Renn, 2010). Moving conversations about identity development from singular views of gender and instead envisioning gender construction as a matrix (Baca Zinn, Hondagneu-Sotelo, & Messner, 2010) provides a more complex perspective of gender identity that allows for intersections. Some community college campuses have diversity offices or women's centers, but they are few in number. As a result, students require a forum or space in which to learn about gender identity and to discuss questions they may have both personally and about how to support friends. The increased availability of resources online provides a wider net of assistance for students, yet trusted allies on campus are also needed. Individually, students can learn more about gender and identity via these resources and in discussion with campus support offices.

In their advocacy for expanded conceptualization of student development theory, Robbins and McGowan (2016) provided a range of ways that students and campuses could become more inclusive. Students can create spaces in which they can discuss and explore identity, particularly identity conflicts. The use of inclusive language that remains gender neutral can provide recognition of the full spectrum of gender identities on campus. Not only can marginalized students advocate for support, they can enlist allies in their efforts. Often, a part of this advocacy is educating others on the issues. As Zamani-Gallaher reviewed in Chapter 8, it is important for those with cisprivilege to recognize the advantages they have and how LGBTQ students do not experience college in the same ways.

Different classroom experiences also emerge based on gender. A key area for students is selection of major or program. In spite of decades of effort, women are still underrepresented in traditional male-dominated

professions like science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and vocational trades such as construction or welding. The National Science Foundation's (NSF) *Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering Report* (2017) found that a gap persists in STEM educational attainment between underrepresented minorities and Whites and Asians. Even though White men make up only one third of the nation's population, they hold half of science and engineering jobs. Despite NSF funding for a range of programs to help increase the STEM pipeline, in particular for women and minorities, real progress has been elusive. Establishing interest in these majors, however, needs to occur prior to enrollment at the community college. In this case, links with teachers and students in elementary and secondary schools help increase the pipeline and interest in pursuing STEM majors and careers.

Issues of safety on campus are important for all students, but in particular for women and LGBTQ students. Students must know reporting requirements for sexual assault on campus and where to seek help. Peer counseling helps those who have been victims of sexual assault, which in community colleges may occur both on and off campus. Student affairs offices can aid in supporting and instilling individual agency for students to help prevent assaults and to know their rights. Blatant attacks on individuals represent only one safety concern, as microaggressions, racial profiling, and implicit bias are insidious and often harder for students to identify and to know how to deal with the outcomes.

Faculty.   Despite the equity evident in initial hires in faculty ranks, differences exist based on full-time versus part-time status. Increasingly, the diminishing numbers of full-time faculty on campus place a heavy load on full-time faculty. Institutions need to study the composition of campus committees to confirm equity in representation and to ensure that some groups are not being overworked whereas others have power advantage. On the one hand, community colleges are perceived as good places to work. On the other hand, little information exists regarding how gender nonconforming faculty perceive 2-year colleges. We know that White women enjoy the flexibility afforded by working in community colleges, but what can encourage others to pursue careers in the sector?

A persistent faculty issue is the lack of diversity in faculty ranks. A paradox is evident in that community colleges enroll large numbers of minorities, but these students have few faculty role models who look like them. Current faculty can plant a seed with students about career options as future faculty to help broaden representation in faculty ranks. Diversity here can occur both in terms of increasing the number of faculty of color and also in increasing the number of women in traditional male disciplines. Hosting panels of alumni who have pursued these types of careers and faculty telling their story of how they arrived in their roles can help. Illustrating the pathway to faculty roles can provide a critical step to broadening diversity in faculty ranks.

Midlevel leadership, including faculty leadership, should receive more attention on campus. The flattening of organizational hierarchies requires increased roles for all employees. The push for networked leadership (Eddy, Sydow, Alfred, & Garza Mitchell, 2015) assumes that faculty members provide a critical linchpin in organizational leadership and change. If women are opting out of seeking top-level positions, it is important to provide more support and development opportunities. Perhaps most important, it is necessary to reshape what it means to be a faculty leader and to question organizational architecture that gives preference to only one form of leading. Absent from many conversations of faculty roles is how to leverage the involvement of part-time faculty beyond thinking of them as low-cost alternatives to instruction that help the bottom line of the budget.

Leadership.   Current leaders can help change inclusivity in institutions. As evident in the example about the case in Maryland (Martin & O'Meara, 2017), change is possible when policies and supports are in place to broaden the leadership pipeline. Change requires leadership on multiple fronts, including boards of trustees who serve as gatekeepers to presidential hiring, current leaders who provide leadership development opportunities to potential future leaders, and midlevel leaders who support and promote inclusivity. Merely telling women or minorities to just try harder blames the individual. Instead, institutions need to investigate what unexamined barriers exist that prevent individuals from seeking advancement. Often, second-generation bias is in operation.

Second-generation bias differs from first-generation bias that involves overt discrimination. Instead, second-generation bias emerges in subtle forms that involve "patterns of interaction, informal norms, networking, mentoring, and evaluation" (Sturm, 2001, p. 458) that create norms and expectations of what leaders look like and how they act—which is based on White male norms. Combating these invisible biases is difficult. It is important to educate potential leaders about these forms of second generation bias so they can first be aware of their existence and second so they can combat and address these biases. Creating spaces for women and underrepresented individuals to test leading and developing leadership skills becomes important to achieving inclusivity in top positions. This type of preparation helps in the transition to larger roles within the college (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013). Recognizing that women desire a sense of purpose in leading and collaborating begins to change the way leadership is conceived and normed.

Higher education has done a poor job in thinking about leadership succession planning. True, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) has developed a set of competencies deemed important to lead in the 2-year sector and has offered leadership institutes to prepare emerging leaders (AACC, 2013). But this is not enough. It is important in moving forward to rethink leadership and how we picture leaders. By opening up the pipeline and preparing a broad range of individuals for leading, more

diverse thinking can emerge. Succession planning in college settings differs from the corporate world as individuals are not groomed to take over within the college. However, thinking about succession planning as a sector issue can change how we prepare tomorrow's leaders. Training and developing individuals to take on more responsibility in house can hone leadership skills and aptitude for seeing the bigger picture of college operations. About one third of college presidents are promoted from within (ACE, 2012), so investment in this type of development can pay off. Critically, the majority of presidents must move to take over new positions, but they must be prepared along the way. Thus, investing internally in talent development may not ensure a successor at the institution delivering the training, but it still benefits the sector as a whole.

Another forum for developing leaders is in graduate programs. It has long been recognized that the doctorate is viewed as a requirement for top-level positions (Townsend & Bassoppo-Moyo, 1997) and is increasingly becoming desirable in midlevel leader searches too. More than providing a credential, graduate programs can prepare curriculum and programs to better support future leaders (Eddy, 2009). It is important that we reach a tipping point in which it is not unusual to have women or underrepresented individuals leading community colleges.

Policy.   Institutions need to conduct a self-study of current policies to determine hidden barriers that prevent inclusivity on campus. Changes to policy can remove hurdles for faculty, administrators, and students. Over-arching policies that are family friendly alleviate the need for individuals to negotiate on their own and help assure equity in the process. These policies need to be structured in a way that is gender neutral to accommodate the intersections of gender and identity in the workplace. Family-friendly policies can address childcare centers and diversity offices that provide support and safe spaces for campus members.

Other areas for policy improvement can focus on hiring practices, leave policies, and gender policies for reporting assault or acts of discriminations. Signaling support for expanded conceptions of gender by supporting minority men programs, developing processes to broaden the leadership pipeline, and taking quick action against acts of violence on campus begin to change the campus culture. Setting out models of good practice can begin to have influence beyond the campus as well.

Although fiscal pressures are a reality for campuses, not all programs of support need to be offered solely at the college. Instead, colleges can leverage programing with community partners and other educational institutions to provide needed services at a lower cost. Out of these arrangements can grow other types of connections for the college that help fulfill their broad mission. It is important to acknowledge the influence of the colleges within the state and to have community colleges advocate state and federal policies that allow full protection and support of underrepresented populations.

Conclusion

Taking a look back in time on changes regarding gender in community colleges shows some progress, but pointedly, nagging issues remain and new challenges have emerged. Community colleges provide a unique context for hope as long-standing institutions of second chances. It is important that they remain at the forefront as welcoming sites for a wide range of people representing an array of gender intersections and help in upholding the rights of women, LGBTQ populations, persons of color, and immigrants looking for ways to improve their lives. Moving forward, intersectionality provides new ways to consider the construction of gender, and therefore new ways to support campus members. Simply thinking that a few programs or policies will resolve campus problems is not enough; instead, more active engagement is required by all campus members to make community colleges more inclusive.

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