

Chief Diversity Officer and the Diversity Office

Sabine Cherenfant^a and Dr. Rex Crawley^a

Six universities and colleges were analyzed in this research to assist Robert Morris University in finding a structure for its chief diversity officer and diversity office. Those universities and colleges were chosen because of their already established diversity-related departments. Among other observations, title XI was explored in regards to who is responsible for its coordination. After thoroughly examining those institutions, the RMU potential CDO job description was shared and recommendations were offered.

Keywords: Chief Diversity Officer, Diversity Office, Higher Education Institutions

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore a structure for the proposed position, Vice President for Equity and Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) and a structure for the proposed office of Institutional Diversity and Equity (OIDE). The CDO task force is in the process of developing a proposal to assist in the position creation process at Robert Morris University. The proposed OIDE will oversee diversity and equity management for the university. Research from this paper will assist the task force in determining the most effective structure for both the position and the office.

The research will include universities and colleges that have already established structures that Robert Morris University could examine for incorporation. All of the universities and colleges that will be part of this research contain an established office of diversity and a chief diversity officer managing it.

Literature

Organizational structure, described as “the process by which individuals within an organization interact with one another and with individuals outside the organization,” is carefully considered in this research (Organizational structure, 2004, para. 1). The structure of the organization is eminent to understanding the means of implementing a chief diversity officer and a diversity office. As noted by Kim Jungyoon (2011), organizational structure plays a key role in altering an organization (p. 419). Likely, the structure of the diversity office will determine the success of the division.

Two specific areas of organizational structure are applicable to this research. Specialization refers to “the diversity of operations within an organization as well as the number of departments

and positions within departments in an organization,” and work teams imply “the groups of employees that work to complete a specific task within the organization” (Organizational structure, 2004, para. 9-10). Within the diversity office, tasks specialization needs to be established. David Schmidtchen construed specialization as the motor of a creatively, generatively and dynamically boosting workplace (2007, p. 84). Specialization allows the workplace to run smoothly.

Overall, communication is the key to applying diversity in an institution. This is a concept well explained by James Strenski in his article, “Stress diversity in employee communications” (1994, p. 32). Furthermore, as it will also be observed in the structure of all of the diversity offices, a group of workers is emplaced to promote diversity and deal with all of the formalities and potential issues. Even though there might be specialized divisions within the diversity offices, those departments work to accomplish the same goal: to bring diversity to any given institution. Therefore, the group depends on effective communication to work adequately.

Methodology

Six aspirational universities and colleges were purposefully selected partly based on a review of the literature that identified a useful article that outlined higher-education institutions with established departments for diversity-related project and policies. In the article “What is a chief diversity officer?” (Dr. D. A. Williams and Dr. K. C. Wade-Golden), universities and colleges were identified to provide a baseline for understanding diversity management structures. Content analysis of all of the CDO job descriptions from each respective university or college was conducted. There was also a thorough analysis of the diversity office structures of each of the institutions. Recurring themes/elements in the job descriptions of the CDO positions and the structures of the diversity offices were explored.

Aspirational Universities and Colleges

1. University of Connecticut
2. University of Northern Iowa
3. University of Wisconsin
4. Community College of Allegheny County- Pennsylvania
5. University of Virginia
6. Xavier University

Acknowledgements

This research study would not have been possible without the support of the Robert Morris University Assistant Dean of the School of Communication and Information System (SCIS) and Chairperson of the Council of Institutional Equity, Dr. Rex Crawley. He also served as the advisor for this research. In addition, the tireless help of the Robert Morris University librarians and the SCIS administrative assistants made it possible to complete this project.

Analysis of CDO Job Descriptions

There are many titles related to the job of a Chief Diversity Officer. "Vice provost, vice chancellor, associate provost, vice president, assistant provost, dean or special assistant to the president for multicultural affairs, international, equity, diversity and inclusion" are just a few examples of titles for chief diversity officers that Williams and Wade-Golden pointed out in their research (n. d., p. 1). The RMU chief diversity officer task force decided to propose Vice President for Institutional Equity and Chief Diversity Officer as the primary title for this proposed position.

Critical to the success of the CDO is the decision about who the CDO should report to. In her article, Chilpa Banerji listed three types of reporting structure for chief diversity officers. They may report to the president or provost, "everybody above the deans," and "all senior-level administrators" (2005, p. 38). It has been proposed by the task force that the Vice President for Institutional Equity and Chief Diversity Officer at Robert Morris University report directly to the president and serve on the President's Cabinet. By recognizing the chief diversity officer as a senior officer and by having him/her serve on the President's Cabinet, the position will have the visibility and control that Williams (2005), refers to in his most recent work (p. 53).

Williams (2005) uses universities with established senior-level diversity officers because of the impact that they are able to make on the institution (p. 53). The university is able to demonstrate a higher commitment to diversity by positioning the diversity specialist as one of the top policy makers at the institution. All of the respective universities and colleges seem to link their chief diversity officer directly to the president of the university except for the Community College of Allegheny County.

For instance, Elizabeth Conklin of the University of Connecticut is serving as the Associate Vice President in the Office Of Diversity and Equity in the institution, and Leah Gutknecht of the University of Northern Iowa serves as the Assistant to the President in the Office of Compliance and Equity Management in this institution while Sumana Misra-Zets of the Community College of Allegheny County serves as the Director of College and Community Diversity Initiatives in the Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion (Office of diversity and equity, n. d., para. 1) (Office of compliance and equity management, 2011, para. 1) (Office of institutional diversity and inclusion, n. d., para. 1). In regard to the Community College of Allegheny College, the structure of its diversity office is utterly different from the other respective universities and colleges.

An additional title used by one of the universities and colleges is Assistant Vice-Provost for Workforce Equity and Diversity at the University of Wisconsin- Madison (Office for equity and diversity, 2011, para. 1). In general, the responsibility of all chief diversity officers is to oversee the institution's advancement in terms of diversity efforts. "Chief diversity officers have responsibility for guiding efforts to conceptualize, define, assess, nurture and cultivate diversity as an institutional and educational resource" (Williams & Wade-Golden, n. d., p. 2). The chief diversity officers are the primary foremen and forewomen dealing with the issue of diversity in the workforce and on campus.

In the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the chief diversity officer, Luis Piñero (Assistant Vice President for Workforce Equity and Diversity), "provides oversight and strategic direction to ten staff members [in the university's Office for Equity and Diversity (OED)] and collaborate[s] with academic leaders, employing units, governance bodies and labor organizations to promote workforce diversity, nurture human resources, and attain campus strategic priorities" (Office for equity and diversity, 2011, para 1). His job functions are defined as:

- OED staffing and professional development- *He is responsible for the management of the OED staff and office.*
- Enhancing Affirmative Actions and Equal Employment Opportunity Compliance
- Technical assistance and development opportunities in support of Equity and Diversity committees and the Divisional Disability Representatives' network- *responsible for providing accommodation for students, faculty and staff with disability.*
- Campus-wide learning communities
- The sexual harassment information project- *A series of sessions prone to educate all employees and limited appointees of the university about sexual harassment and how to manage it.*
- Collaboration with the OED Advisory committee
- Collaboration with WISELI- *the Women in Science and Engineering Leadership Institute, which is a program lead by the College of Engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The OED office help in administering the program and coordinating the "Searching for Excellence and Diversity" sessions held throughout campus.*
- Collaboration with the Theatre for Cultural and Social Awareness- *a program described as an "interdisciplinary service-learning and outreach effort" that is led by both the Department of Theatre and Drama and Dr. Luis Piñero.*
- Collaboration with the Office of the Vice Provost for Diversity and Climate- *which oversees the Office for Equity and Diversity and other units inclined to make the university more diverse, responsive and inclusive.*
- OED Web resources enhancements- *making sure that all information on the website is updated.*
- Supporting and enhancing campus-wide, climate initiatives.

In summary, Piñero is responsible for initiating partnership and outreach programs, educating the campus, overseeing the OED staff and committee and complying and enforcing equity policies. He also partners with organizations within the institution and basically manages all areas of the school that deals with diversity one way or another. Although other chief diversity officers may not be dealing with the exact same initiatives as Piñero, his job description reflects the role of all chief diversity officers.

It is also important to note that the chief diversity officer also deals with legal matters, including Equal Employment Opportunity policies. In the University of Connecticut, Conklin is responsible for "overseeing search compliance,

case management, campus-wide training, and diversity and harassment prevention initiatives” (Elizabeth Conklin, n. d., para 2). As previously mentioned the chief diversity officer tends to be positioned at the senior staff level. According to Scott Jaschik, in a research survey done on chief diversity officers, people filling this position tend to have a salary between \$100, 000 and \$200, 000 (2011, para. 9). Nevertheless, the salary of the chief diversity officer may vary based the institution’s budget and the average salary paid to senior officer in that given institution.

Analysis of diversity office structure

In all of the aspirational universities and colleges used in this research, there is a minimum of two people working in the diversity office. Most of these institutions have a more inclusive number of staff members with a variety of different tasks directly linked to diversity. University of Connecticut provides one of the most detailed diversity staff member descriptions in its office. The staff members are arranged by teams. There are three sections or teams within the Office of Diversity and Equity at the University of Connecticut- The Office of the Associate Vice President, The Discrimination Case Management Team and The Recruitment and Search Process Support and Compliance Team (Office of diversity and equity, n. d., para. 1-3).

The Office of the Associate Vice President includes the chief diversity officer (Associate Vice President in that case), the Executive Assistant, the Program Assistant and the budget specialist. The program assistant only deals with programs and training sessions for the employees of the university. The Discrimination Case Management Team includes three case managers, an investigator and EEO specialist, and a paralegal and legal administrator. Lastly, the Recruitment and Search Process Support and Compliance Team includes two search compliance coordinators, who deal with the federal and state compliance record files and hiring efforts (Office of diversity and equity, n. d., para. 1-3) (Peggy Hollister, n. d., para. 1) (Recruitment & search process unit, n. d., para. 2).

The University of Wisconsin-Madison has a diversity office structure similar to the Office of Diversity and Equity at the University of Connecticut. The Office for Equity and Diversity at the University of Wisconsin-Madison includes an assistant vice provost for workforce equity and diversity (Chief Diversity Officer), an associate director (who helps with all areas of Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunities), a complaint investigator, a diversity education coordinator, a compliance specialist, an equal opportunity program specialist, a learning communities assessment and program development specialist and an university services program associate (also serves as a budget specialist) (Office for equity and diversity, n. d., para. 1-18).

This diversity office as a whole deals with compliance matters, EEO and AA requirements, diversity student affairs, discrimination complaints investigation and trainings, workshops and other diversity-related programs. Unlike the University of Connecticut, the diversity office in the University of Wisconsin-Madison takes charge of diversity programming for students aside from employees. The Office for Diversity and Equity at the University of Virginia also deals with student initiatives. Their office structure is much smaller than the two aforementioned universities. It only has a

vice president and chief officer for diversity and equity, a director for development and programming, a program director for the Virginia/North Carolina Alliance for Minority Participation, an administrative assistant, an office manager and grant administrator and an assistant to the vice president and chief officer for diversity and equity for programs and projects (Vice president & chief officer for diversity and equity, n. d., para. 1-6).

Whereas the University of Virginia leads its efforts with a programming-based approach, the University of Northern Iowa leans toward compliance and equal opportunity management. Their Office of Compliance and Equity Management includes an assistant to the president, an associate director, an equal opportunity specialist, a clerk and a student assistant (Office of compliance and equity management, 2011, para. 1). The Community College of Allegheny County has a very different office structure. Theoretically, the office is only composed of Sumana Misra-Zets, the director of inclusion, diversity and equal opportunity, and Bev Fury, the senior secretary. Instead of having a detailed office, four campus diversity officers for each campus report to the Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion (Office of institutional diversity and inclusion, n. d., para. 1).

The institutions tend to have many partnerships within the university or college. For example, the Office of Diversity and Equity at the University of Wisconsin-Madison collaborates with different programs within the institution, including the Women in Science and Engineering Leadership Institute (Office for equity and diversity, n. d., para. 1-18). Xavier University takes a different approach to collaborative efforts. As explained by their chief diversity officer, Cheryl Nunez, the collaboration of their diversity office focuses mainly in sharing information to make sure that the strategic planning of the institution is right on track (Office of Diversity and Equity, n.d.. para.1).

Title IX Coordinator

One of the tasks that the chief diversity officer at Robert Morris University will be responsible for taking the lead on is Title IX compliance. He or she will need to coordinate with the athletic director on Title IX issues. The compliance of Title IX is something that is actually overseen by several of diversity offices at the aspirational universities and colleges. The Office for Equity and Diversity at the University of Wisconsin-Madison houses the Title IX coordinator. Stephen Apell, the special assistant-complaint investigator, also serves as the coordinator for Title IX athletic issues. Moreover, Piñero, the assistant vice provost for workforce equity and diversity, also serves as a Title IX coordinator (Office for equity and diversity, n. d., para. 1-18).

Conklin, the associate vice president of ODE at the University of Connecticut, also serves as the Title IX coordinator (Elizabeth Conklin, n. d., para 2). Gutknecht, the assistant to the president at the office of Compliance and Equity Management at the University of Northern Iowa, serves as the Title IX officer and collaborates with the dean of students (3.15 student sexual misconduct policy, 2011, para. 30-35). Some of the other universities have designated the chief diversity officer as the Title IX coordinator for the

institution. At the University of Northern Iowa, the dean of students is also involved in coordinating Title IX issues.

The Title IX coordinator at the University of Virginia is not housed under the Office for Diversity and Equity rather, Darlene Scott-Scurry, the director of the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs is the Title IX coordinator. She works in collaboration with Allen W. Groves, the dean of students, who serves as the deputy of Title IX (Title IX at the University of Virginia, n.d., para3). Xavier University chose to have Kathy Riga, the assistant vice president for human resources serve as the title IX coordinator (2011-2012 Student Handbook, 2011, p.12). In that case, the Title IX coordinator is not coordinated by any office affiliated with diversity and equity management. Moreover, Riga also deals with student complaints aside from employees.

CDO job description at Robert Morris University

As previously mentioned, a task force was created to develop the job description of the proposed position of Vice President for Institutional Equity & Chief Diversity Officer (CDO). The primary duties for the CDO position are:

Major Duties and Responsibilities

1. Coordinating, in consultation with Admissions and Financial Aid, those areas that are relevant to increasing student diversity on campus.
2. Consults with faculty to enhance their capacity for addressing diversity issues in the classroom.
3. Coordinates diversity activities across the University by collaborating directly with key functional areas. (Note: Removed programming)
4. Review and certify the University's contracts and compliance programs for vendors/contractors to assure that their EEO/Diversity plans meet regulations.
5. Ensures ADA and EEO coordination; coordinates with the athletic director on Title IX issues.
6. Engages matters of diversity as a matter of first priority.
7. Provides leadership for the Robert Morris Council on Institutional Equity and its diversity management efforts.
8. Produces an annual report, highlighting the activities and outcomes in support of faculty, staff and student diversity.
9. Collaborates with appropriate offices and departments, including PR, to review materials to promote diversity goals across the campus.
10. Contributes to programs, services and initiatives designed to enhance the recruitment and successful retention of students and/or faculty and staff from diverse and under-represented population groups.
11. Serves on the President's cabinet and keeps its members apprised of how the University is doing in terms of recruiting, retaining and promotion tracking data.
12. Refine and develop systematic structures to recruit, and promote diverse students, faculty and staff.
13. Act as a liaison between the University and community organizations, business and agency leaders; creates connections and partnerships between external clients and University resources.
14. Collaborates with stakeholders to develop and implement strategies, programs and services to support institutional

diversity and inclusion initiatives, including but not limited to: increasing diverse faculty and professional staff through recruitment and hiring processes; researching, identifying and scheduling effective training programs; providing staff support for committees dealing with diversity; supporting initiatives to highlight diverse cultures and traditions.

The position creation process was a tedious process that involved a task force made up of faculty, staff and students. Many issues were addressed and responded to in the deliberations engaged in by the task force. The task force had to balance the needs of the entire university and the needs of the existing programs and structures. Specifically, the university already has in place an Office of Multicultural Programs that is responsible for the student affairs programming associated with diversity management. The task force was careful not to overlap roles and responsibilities with this more programming function of the university.

The task force stressed the need for having a CDO who can function as a policy maker and help make diversity a priority for the university even in the face of challenges. The need for a strong CDO was emphasized and included in the job description.

Recommendations and Conclusions

The size of the budget available for this position will impact the structure of the office of Institutional Diversity and Equity. If Robert Morris University is able to provide this new office with an effective team of employees, several of the major duties could be delegated to those employees creating a specialized unit. The University of Connecticut and the University of Wisconsin-Madison provide ideal structures that Robert Morris University should consider in its development. If Robert Morris University is unable to dedicate the necessary resources towards hiring a full staff, the diversity office structure of the University of Northern Iowa would be a perfect structure to follow.

Aside from having a clerk, the office also has a student assistant. Many departments at Robert Morris University use student workers (work-study) in their office. The Career Center is a good example. The Office of Institutional Diversity and Equity will also be working closely with a diversity committee (the Council on Institutional Equity in that case), which will help the office identify and manage the diversity challenges of the institution. Many of the diversity offices at the aspirational universities and colleges researched also worked closely with some type of advising. The University of Wisconsin-Madison, which had a detailed office, was also supported by a committee. The committee will be essential to understand the need of the institution's community. It will need to review the diversity management efforts and create proposals for the diversity officer to consider.

This office should be able to collaborate with departments within the university. The chief diversity officer must work closely with the admissions office, the student life office, the academic departments, the human resources office, the international affairs office and the financial aid office. Collaborating with external clients would help this office establish external partnerships for the wellness of the

community but also to advance its diversity mission. An ideal office would include an Equal Employment Opportunity specialist, a budget specialist, a discrimination case manager/investigator, an administrator, a program and training coordinator and a recruitment and retention specialist.

The university is already making a lot of progress in terms of diversity. By creating this office, the university is ensuring the retention of those efforts. Robert Morris University remains a predominantly white institution and this is unlikely to change. Therefore, this institution must do all that it can to ensure that those minorities associated with the institution feel a sense of empowerment. A systematic approach to diversity management is essential to the continued growth of the university and a strategic plan needs to be developed to recruit and retain underrepresented groups in all levels of the university, including senior positions. That is one of the challenges that the chief diversity officer will have to address.

Robert Morris University is a very dynamic institution that values its community's input on how to modify the institution as a whole. Despite being a small private institution, underrepresented faculty, students and staff are able to find a safe haven and tend to feel a part of the community. Therefore, this proposed approach to diversity management will be building on the already existing strengths.

Those research findings help reinforce the importance of organizational structure in a given institution, more specifically in a higher-education institution. Organizational structure is also crucial to implementing diversity in a higher-education institution. As observed in the aspirational universities and colleges, regardless of the size of the staff, each staff member have specialize tasks, and the staff works toward one goal: manage the institutional diversity. Given the findings of this study, more research can be conducted to understand the role of organizational structure in ensuring the efficiency of a diversity office and diversity officer. The two conceptual apparatus, specialization and team work serve as guides to putting together a diversity office.

References

- 2011-2012 Student Handbook. (n.d.). Retrieved January 26, 2012 from the Xavier University Web site: <http://www.xavier.edu/deanofstudents/documetns/studenhandbook.pdf>
- Student sexual misconduct policy. (n.d.). Retrieved January 26, 2012 from the University of Northern Iowa Web site: <http://www.uni.edu/policies/315>
- Banerji, C. (2005). Diversity officers- coming to a campus near you? *Diversity Issues in Higher Education*, 22 (20), p. 38. Retrieved January 26, 2012, from ProQuest database.
- Elizabeth Conklin: Interim associate vice president and title IX coordinator. (n.d.). Retrieved January 26, 2012 from the University of Connecticut Web site: <http://www.ode.uconn.edu/about/staff/elizabeth.html>
- Jaschik, S. (2011, August 12). Change for chief diversity officers. Retrieved January 26, 2012, from the Inside Higher Ed Web site: http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/08/12/survey_provides_data_on_chief_diversity_officers
- Jungyoon, K. (2011). Organizational structure and change processes in long-term care: A configurational approach. *Journal of Healthcare Management*, 56(6), p. 419. Retrieved June 23, 2012, from ProQuest database.
- Office for equity and diversity. (2011, April 15). Retrieved January 26, 2012, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Web site: <http://www.oed.wisc.edu/staff.html>
- Office of compliance and equity management. (2011, May 11). Retrieved January 26, 2012, from the University of Northern Iowa Web site: <http://www.uni.edu/equity/staff.shtml>
- Office of diversity and equity. (2012). Retrieved January 26, 2012, from the Xavier University Web site: <http://www.xavier.edu/diversity/>
- Office of diversity and equity. (n. d.). Retrieved January 26, 2012, from the University of Connecticut Web site: <http://www.ode.uconn.edu/about/staff.html>
- Office of institutional diversity and inclusion (OIDI). (n. d.). Retrieved January 26, 2012, from the Community College of Allegheny County Web site: <http://www.ccac.edu/default.aspx?id=152140>
- Organizational structure. (2004). *Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology*. Retrieved June 23, 2012, from Credo reference Web site: https://reddog.rmu.edu/login?qurl=http%3A%2Fwww.credoreference.com/entry/estappliedpsyc/organizational_structure
- Peggy Hollister: Program Specialist. (n.d.). Retrieved January 26, 2012 from the University of Connecticut Web site: <http://www.ode.uconn.edu/about/staff/hollister.html>
- Recruitment and search process unit. (n..d.). Retrieved January 26, 2012 from the University of Connecticut Web site: <http://www.ode.uconn.edu/about/units/search.html>
- Schmidtchen, D. (2007). The pros and cons of workforce specialization. *Australian Defense force Journal* 172, p. 83-94. Retrieved June 23, 2012, from ProQest database.
- Strenski, J. B. (1994). Stress diversity in employee communications. *The Public Relations Journal*, 50(7), p. 32. Retrieved August 26, 2012 from ProQuest database.
- Title IX of the University of Virginia. (n.d.). Retrieved January 26, 2012 from the University of Virginia Web site: <http://www.virginia.edu/eop/titleix.html>
- Vice president & chief diversity officer for diversity and equity. (2012, February 6). Retrieved January 26, 2012, from the University of Virginia Web site: <http://www.virginia.edu/vpdiversity/staff.html>
- Williams, D. (2005). Seven recommendations for highly effective senior diversity officers. *Diversity Issues in Higher Education*, 22 (7), p. 53. Retrieved January 26, 2012, from ProQuest database.
- Williams, D., & Wade-Golden, K. C. (n. d.) What is a chief diversity officer? Retrieved January 26, 2012, from the University of Cincinnati Web site: http://www.uc.edu/content/dam/uc/diversity/docs/What_is_a_Chief_Diversity_Officer.pdf