

# Chapter 25

## Workforce Diversity Career Development: A Missing Piece of the Curriculum in Academia

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### ABSTRACT

*As workforce diversity careers in organizations continue to increase in the United States, less emphasis has been placed on preparing undergraduate and graduate students with specific workforce diversity competencies to pursue these career options once they graduate. The aim of this chapter is to: 1) highlight the issues, problems, and controversies associated with this effort, 2) provide examples of workforce diversity career positions and competencies that workforce diversity professionals possess today in a variety of fields, and 3) offer recommendations regarding how institutions of higher education can begin preparing students with specific workforce diversity competencies to enter the career field of workforce diversity before they graduate.*

### INTRODUCTION

A discussion on the topic of careers in workforce diversity is long overdue. This is because, at present, workforce diversity career opportunities are increasing in a variety of organizations and career fields in the United States. Yet, at the same time workforce diversity careers are expanding, less emphasis has been placed on preparing undergraduate and graduate students with the specific competencies needed to assume workforce diversity careers in organizations once they graduate.

As a result of the missing conversation on workforce diversity careers in the extant literature, this chapter is timely. For the first time, we introduce and explicate the term, *workforce diversity career*

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*development* and its promise when an emphasis on careers and career development is greatly needed. Workforce diversity career development is a new academic term and call to action strategy coined by Dr. Chaunda L. Scott (2013). The aim of this strategy is to:

1. Raise awareness of the need for academia to develop workforce diversity academic degree granting programs to prepare today's college students with the competencies needed to enter and further advance the growing career field of workforce diversity once they graduate;
2. Echo and respond with recommendations to the appeal of the business community (business leaders and practitioners) and the general public who have called on academia to prepare college learners with the competencies needed to thrive in a diverse workforce and society (Bowen, Kurweil, & Tobin, 2005), and
3. Encourage the development of collaborative scholarly and practitioner research on the topic of workforce diversity career development.

As the seminal contribution to the conversation on workforce diversity career development, this chapter will serve as a guide for understanding key issues, problems, and controversies associated with preparing students to thrive in the growing and exciting area of workforce diversity. Career development is an essential aspect of achieving longevity in any industry. After providing a background of workforce diversity history and sharing a preliminary review of the prevailing positions associated with a workforce diversity career, this chapter will explore needed competencies, and current curriculum demands that germinate from the growth currently being experienced in workforce diversity. The chapter concludes with recommendations and future research directions for workforce diversity career development.

## **BACKGROUND**

In order to best understand the present state of workforce diversity career development in the United States, it is necessary to become familiar with workforce diversity history as well as the numerous types of available positions in workforce diversity that organizations are seeking talented graduates to fill. For this task, we provide a brief history of workforce diversity with an emphasis on why the topic is important to 21<sup>st</sup> century organizations. Following this historical summary, we share the results of a preliminary interdisciplinary review of workforce diversity career titles.

### **Workforce Diversity: Its History and Importance to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Organizations**

As a result of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlaws acts of injustice and discrimination as it relates to “race, color religion and national origin” (Brunner, 2014, p. 1) in “voting, education, employment, public accommodations, and the receipt of federal funds” (Bennett-Alexander & Hartman, 2007, p. 70), minorities and women were able to pursue broader opportunities in society. For example, minorities and women were able to advance their knowledge, skills, and abilities by having more educational options, more opportunities leading to purchasing a home, or acquiring better living quarters in locations of their choice. They were also able to seek out better employment opportunities in organizations.

The term “race relations” emerged from the conversation on equality, injustice, and discrimination. The word “diversity” was introduced to the corporate language in an effort to find new, more respect-

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