The Need for Intercultural Competency Development in Classrooms

Knowing that students and society could ultimately benefit from new approaches to cross-cultural learning, but failing to take the necessary steps to intentionally create enabling conditions [in and] outside the classroom is downright irresponsible.

[Harper and Antonio, 2008, p. 12]

Effectively engaging diversity is one of the highest priorities for higher education today, and we are not doing an adequate job. Current demographic, social, and economic contexts underscore the need for colleges and universities to comprehensively utilize diversity in ways that foster excellence and inclusion on behalf of students’ intellectual and social development. In light of the pressing need to effectively support educational outcomes for an increasingly heterogeneous population, and to prepare graduates for the cognitive and intercultural complexity of the twenty-first century, higher education practitioners and scholars need a deeper understanding of how to effectively engage diversity.

The impetus for this monograph comes from our own experience, both in the classroom and in our research. In the past ten years, we have observed our institution’s student population become increasingly diverse in terms of racial and ethnic demographics. Historically, generalized categories of racial and ethnic identity have become more diffuse and complex. We are also more mindful of the often less visible forms of difference that are present in any learning environment, such as socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religion, disability, and many others. Among our students, there is a growing chasm when
it comes to socioeconomic status, with an increase in representation of students from both ends of the income spectrum and thus the likelihood of significant disparity and diversity in both educational and lived experiences. For many students, whether they are from urban contexts or remote, rural areas, college is the first time they experience daily and direct encounters with individuals they define as “different.” This isn’t surprising given the segregation in U.S. neighborhoods and schools with regard to income, race, and culture (Saenz, 2010). Our students bring multiple dimensions of human difference and diverse social identities, and they also share some common aspirations: to graduate from college; to have choices about their career; to cultivate what they need to succeed; to provide for their parents and families; and to contribute positively to their neighborhoods and world. Many of them also express a commitment to addressing injustices and inequities in education and economic realities.

The students who attend our colleges and universities increasingly reflect the broad array of national and global diversity. They come to campus with different cultural backgrounds, languages, lived histories, geopolitical orientations, faiths, and educational experiences. When the four of us imagine our students after college, we know many of them will find themselves working together, living in proximity, impacted by common issues in the community, and sharing public spaces such as schools and parks. Yet when we look out at our classrooms, we often notice that students tend to segregate themselves physically, interacting with students who share visible identity characteristics. What students do not typically bring with them to college is a level of intercultural competence required to effectively interact across difference. Intercultural competence is broadly defined as the “ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations, to shift frames of reference appropriately and adapt behavior to cultural context” (Deardorff, 2006, p. 249). Considerable research has documented that students enter college with a lack of cultural awareness and understanding of what it takes to effectively engage diversity (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005).

The Call for Intercultural Skills
In recent decades, intercultural competence has been increasingly recognized as a priority in educational outcomes of higher education. A significant
amount of evidence highlights the benefits of diversity to student learning and development when that diversity is represented and actively valued and engaged. Studies identified cognitive, affective, and social outcomes associated with engaging diversity, in particular, increased cognitive sophistication and complexity (Antonio, 2004; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin 2002; Yershova, DeJeaghere, and Mestenhauser, 2000), critical thinking skills (Hu and Kuh, 2003; Milem, 2003), academic skill development (Denson and Chang, 2009), reducing prejudice, and increasing racial and cultural appreciation (Allport, 1954; Bowman, 2010b; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006) and the development of leadership skills (Antonio, 2000). Repeated, deliberate engagement with diversity also contributes to the growth of higher-order cognitive skills, such as cooperative intergroup behavior, and openness to considering alternative views (Gottfredson and others, 2008; Hurtado, 2001; Saenz, Ngai, and Hurtado, 2007).

Policymakers and researchers have called for undergraduate education to systematically support the development of these skills and knowledge in order to enable graduates to successfully navigate a complex, diverse, and increasingly interconnected world (Association of American Colleges and Universities [AAC&U], 2007; Arkoudis and others, 2010; Deardorff, 2009a). A report published in 2007 by the AAC&U, “College Learning for a New Global Century,” identifies intercultural learning as “one of the new basics in a contemporary liberal education,” one that is “essential for work, civil society, and social life” (p. 15). Similarly, disciplinary associations across higher education in fields as diverse as engineering, business, medicine, agriculture, and education have noted the increasing need for attention to supporting the development of interculturally competent graduates (Grandin and Hedderich, 2009; Kumagai and Lypson, 2009; Moran, Youngdahl, and Moran, 2009; Sargent, Sedlak, and Martsolf, 2005).

Many employers have also called for higher education to better support graduates’ development of the capacities to work productively and positively within professional environments of diverse cultures, views, and opinions (AAC&U, 2002, 2010; Dey and others, 2010). An employer-based rationale for diversity initiatives is important for faculty to note despite the frequent and warranted critiques that it focuses on the needs of already privileged populations.
who “need” diversity skill credentials, and thus does not support equity-related goals. It is important to question how various logics may produce programming that perpetuates differential benefits for student populations and ignore existing cultural capital that some students have developed. Yet in order to compel institutions to invest more resources and place strategic priority on the capacity to engage diversity effectively, a range of calls for change is necessary. This monograph proposes that a mindful approach is needed that foregrounds the objective of serving and benefiting all students.

The diverse voices calling for intercultural skills contrast sharply with evidence suggesting that, to date, students are still not being adequately prepared to participate and thrive in diverse workplaces and personal contexts. Findings of a recent national study based on the Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI) led the authors to conclude that “while higher education places high value on engaging diverse perspectives, [institutions] need to do much more to ensure that . . . students actually develop these capacities across several years in college” (Dey and others, 2010, p. ix). Employers have likewise found intercultural skills to be in short supply among college graduates, highlighting their specific deficiencies in the areas of applying skills effectively in new contexts and adaptability to different cultural perspectives (Milem, 2003). There is also evidence of uneven results that tend to fall along disciplinary boundaries. Upon graduation, students majoring in business, science, nursing, and engineering report the least growth in relation to cultural competence (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005). While organizations continue to look to higher education to provide individuals with the needed competence, the perception among employers remains that higher education is not adequately responding (Smith, 2010).

Engaging Diversity for Intercultural Outcomes
From Allport’s (1954) classic contact theory to more recent studies on the relationship between intergroup contact and diversity-related learning and development outcomes (Denson and Chang, 2009; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin, 2002; Hu and Kuh, 2003), it is clear that both the frequency and quality of interactions with diversity are significant factors in realizing the benefits
of learning in a diverse environment. In a meta-analysis of research on diversity experiences and cognitive development, Bowman (2010a) found that a diverse student body yielded educational benefits only to the extent that students had meaningful interactions with one another.

Across various fields of research, similar conclusions have emerged regarding the benefits associated with a diverse student population and multicultural course content. These benefits do not accrue passively or automatically (Alger and others, 2000; Denson and Chang, 2009; Gesche and Makeham, 2008; Marin, 2000; Otten, 2003). Rather, diversity must be actively engaged (Williams, Berger, and McClendon, 2005; Wong, 2006). These findings are important in that they suggest the importance of intentionally designed and actively facilitated intercultural interactions. Neither the institutional culture nor its participants and representatives (faculty, staff, administrators, students) are automatically willing or inherently competent to engage diversity effectively. It is also important to note that several studies have concluded that it is important to provide sustained and coordinated efforts across and throughout the undergraduate experience in order to maximize the benefits of diversity on student development and learning (Gottfredson and others, 2008; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin, 2002).

From engineers to educators, we all have an equal stake in and opportunity to support students’ preparation for positive and effective participation in an increasingly interconnected, global society. While there is research to support the importance of the presence of structural diversity, it is inadequate to assume that its presence alone will result in an institutional culture that supports a robust exchange of ideas and perspectives (Alger and others, 2000). Simply enclosing a diverse group of people within the same four walls for four hours each week does not support students’ development of diversity-related skills. It is not even sufficient to have diverse students discussing shared content and working on collaborative projects. While potentially valuable, these strategies do not in and of themselves compel substantive intergroup interaction or deepen students’ competence and confidence in communicating in diverse contexts. What is needed is a “comprehensive model of transformational change that puts diversity at the center of the educational mission” (Krutky, 2008, p. 3)—a theoretically informed practice for designing and facilitating
our classrooms in ways that engage diversity as an integral part of intellectual rigor and academic and professional excellence.

Foundational Assumptions

In this monograph, we integrate multiple streams of literature that support the claim that how diversity is engaged in classrooms has a profound impact on the development of students’ intercultural competence. The concept of engaging diversity arises out of the theoretical framework of inclusive excellence (AAC&U, 2005) and is grounded in contemporary research on diversity and equity in higher education. The foundational premise of inclusive excellence is that educational quality and diversity need to be fundamentally and systematically integrated in institutional structures, curricula, and policies. This framework revises the traditional model wherein diversity is approached as a target or an outcome—as a “thing” that can be definitively achieved or counted, and that remains in the margins of institutional life. In an inclusive excellence framework, diversity is understood to be a complex and essential thread that must be intentionally woven into the fabric of the institution at all levels: policy, leadership, institutional culture, student life, and last but not least, the classroom (Clayton-Pedersen, O’Neill, and Musil, 2009; Milem, Chang, and Antonio, 2005; Williams, Berger, and McClendon, 2005). The fundamental structural revisioning described in this framework is demanding because it challenges the often deeply embedded and unacknowledged dominant discourses and practices in each of the institutional levels.

Accordingly, engaging diversity in the classroom is defined in this monograph as the “active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with differences—in people, in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities in ways that increase one’s awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions” (Clayton-Pedersen, O’Neill, and Musil, 2009, p. 6). Engaging diversity in the classroom refers, therefore, to intentional, comprehensive efforts to develop and implement pedagogy that leverages the diversity resources of a campus for the benefit of students’ learning and development.

There are two important components to note in our construction of the concept of engaging diversity. We define diversity broadly so as to be inclusive
of the visible and invisible forms of human difference that impact identity development as well as interpersonal interactions (Harper and Quaye, 2009). This definition therefore includes individual differences (for example, personal history, life experience, educational background, learning style) as well as group or social differences (for example, race, ethnicity, religion, language spoken, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, country of origin; Clayton-Pedersen, O’Neill, and Musil, 2009). Assuming this definition, all students are understood to bring diversity resources to the institution. While we tend to focus on the visible differences present in our classroom, there are always invisible differences that inform and can enrich or complicate the classroom experience for students and faculty alike. Recognizing and engaging all forms of difference may not be possible, but bringing multiple forms of difference into the center of the classroom space may facilitate awareness of how certain aspects of identity and lived experience are positioned by dominant discourses and their influence on concepts and beliefs about what is “normal” whether in relation to knowledge, communication, or interactions.

We are likewise mindful of the proliferation of uses of the term engagement and therefore of the importance of defining it within the scope of this monograph. In the literature on student engagement, the term refers to intent, capacity, and behaviors displayed by students, faculty, and other institutional actors. In reference to student behaviors, engagement refers to the amount and quality of time spent on educationally purposeful activities; in referring to the institution, engagement describes the resources and structures that facilitate students’ participation in activities that support the desired outcomes (Harper and Quaye, 2009; Kuh and others, 2007). In using the term engagement in this monograph, we are signaling the importance of ensuring that the presence of difference in student demographics or course content is a starting point that subsequently facilitates the act and process of incorporating those differences in an intentional, purposeful manner. In other words, exposing students to diverse ideas, experiences, and perspectives is a necessary but not sufficient condition to foster the development of cognitive and affective diversity outcomes (Gottfredson and others, 2008; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin, 2002; Saenz, Ngai, and Hurtado, 2007; Umbach and Wawrzynski, 2005).
The Promise and Challenge of Diverse Classrooms

The classroom environment is an especially important space for diversity to thrive, and can potentially affect all dimensions of campus climate. Research has demonstrated the positive impact that a classroom engaged with diversity has on student outcomes, particularly when faculty, course content, and pedagogy are considered in conjunction with the compositional diversity of the students [Milem, Chang, and Antonio, 2005, p. 24].

Because students from varied backgrounds and social groups are drawn to common courses, the classroom is a unique space where patterns of segregation and poor communication found on the outside can be powerfully interrupted. Classrooms are natural environments where students gain knowledge about diversity, but they are also arenas of practice where students can develop, apply, reflect on, and refine the skills that are necessary for respectful and purposeful collaborations across difference. Classes in the early college years offer a particularly significant opportunity for cognitive growth relevant to diversity (Bowman, 2010b). As students enter college with established habits of mind and social interaction, experience with novel ideas, unfamiliar contexts, and diverse social groups can prompt the discontinuity or cognitive disequilibrium seen as critical to supporting cognitive and affective development (Hurtado, 2005; Milem, Chang, and Antonio, 2005). These are intercultural skills and behaviors that can be supported and developed across the curriculum. As noted earlier, we present the need to fully embed and integrate diversity across the curriculum as a mandate that fulfills the institutional mission to educate all students to its fullest capacity so as to prepare them to be effective citizens, community members, and employees.

As previously noted, however, engaging diversity in the classroom is not a natural or inevitable process, and does not result merely from the presence of diverse social identity groups or course content. In the same way that we cannot assume that intercultural competency skills will naturally develop as the result of a structurally diverse environment, it is problematic to assume that faculty have the awareness, skills, or knowledge necessary to engage diversity in their courses. In a multi-institutional survey conducted by Maruyama,
Marenò, Gudeman, and Marin (2000) of more than 500 faculty from Carnegie Research-1 institutions,¹ only one-third of faculty responded that they had adjusted their pedagogy as a result of increased structural diversity in their classrooms, for instance, by factoring diversity into the creation of student groups. Research and our own experience cause us to reject the notion that the poor record at engaging diversity stems from a fundamental resistance on the part of faculty to embed opportunities for intercultural interaction within their courses. Instead, we imagine an audience of faculty who, as Khaja and others (2011) suggest, are impeded by barriers of time, energy, and knowledge that translate into a lack of developed capacity for this work. In fact, research in higher education indicates that faculty report a willingness and openness to interculturalism and diversity in their courses, but also a struggle or lack of understanding regarding how to incorporate this into their teaching (Johnson and Inoue, 2003; Mayhew and Grunwald, 2006; Pope and Mueller, 2005; Rothwell, 2005; Schuerholz-Lehr, 2007).

Goals of the Monograph

The goal that guided the writing of this monograph was to apply existing research on diversity and intercultural competence to the question of how we as faculty can use the time we have in our classrooms and the resources our students bring to help support their ability to engage in a diverse society. The application of existing research leads us to contend that by intentionally engaging the diversity present in higher education classrooms, faculty across all disciplines can help students develop the intercultural competences that our students need to thrive as employees, citizens, and human beings in our increasingly interconnected world.

We contend that each classroom has the potential to foster the skill of problem solving in new contexts, the attitude of being open to multiple perspectives, or the practice of trying multiple approaches to tackle a complex question. This requires recognizing opportunities and creating an inclusive classroom climate that enacts the belief that there is intellectual value in a range of diverse perspectives and approaches to knowledge. Actively integrating diversity in courses across the curriculum is likely to pose different challenges,
some of which will be specific to our field or disciplinary conventions regarding epistemology, pedagogy, and rigor. This may require instructors to unlearn “mindless” pedagogy, where mindlessness refers to “heavy reliance on familiar frames of reference, old routinized designs, or categories and customary ways of doing things” (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 226). Rendón (2005) describes how mindlessness—which she terms *agreements* and defines as assumptions and beliefs that we absorb and adopt uncritically through assimilation into our disciplines, fields, and academic contexts—can support the perpetuation of habits of mind and of teaching practices that do not facilitate multiple points of view, tolerance of ambiguity, or other cognitive and communication skills associated with both intercultural competence and equity pedagogy theories.

We have found that, to date, comparatively little has been written about the conditions that foster inclusive engagement of diversity in higher education classrooms, particularly in classrooms that do not explicitly serve a diversity requirement. Yet we believe that such a focus is important and necessary in professional development of faculty if intercultural competence is to be supported in our classrooms. This monograph attempts to bring insights of diverse branches of educational theory to bear on the practical question of how faculty can leverage the diversity students bring to class in ways that support their intercultural learning outcomes. We aim to demonstrate the breadth of research establishing a supportive relationship between the presence of diversity and various student development outcomes, and propose one way of approaching intentional design for such outcomes to be achieved.

This monograph assists faculty in identifying the opportunities available in our classrooms, reflecting on established norms that can inhibit or diminish our capacity to effectively engage diversity, and designing an intentional classroom environment that structures interactions between students in ways that value the existing diversity and enhance the learning outcomes. Presuming that frequent and longitudinal opportunities to engage diversity will support the development of the necessary levels of cognitive and affective development, it is important to provide these opportunities across the curriculum and over the course of students’ undergraduate education. We contend that there is no classroom that cannot support the development of intercultural competence, no classroom so encumbered with disciplinary
knowledge or content requirements that there is no opportunity for this work, no classroom whose educational goals will not be enhanced through deliberate, thoughtful, and well-designed integration of diversity into its pedagogy.

Lessons of the Past

John Dewey (1915) wrote that “there is all the difference in the world between having to say something, and having something to say” (p. 35). In the history of the treatment of diversity in U.S. higher education, many chapters have been tinged with what “we had to do” and not necessarily with a collective perception that we had something valuable to do.

Piecemeal Approach

Higher education institutions have long struggled with how to systemically transform campus climates so as to engage with and integrate diversity and develop intercultural competence (Harper and Hurtado, 2007; Kezar, Glenn, Lester, and Nakamoto, 2008). There has been a tendency to produce “islands of innovation” (AAC&U, 2005) where the cumulative effect is a piecemeal approach that targets diversity but does not embed it in a foundational way across institutional contexts (Danowitz and Tuitt, 2011; Krutky, 2008).

One example of this approach is incorporating a “diversity requirement.” Certainly, diversity courses have value; the expanding research on these courses and our own experience teaching required diversity courses at three universities point to the complex and substantive potential of these classrooms to engage students in transformative intellectual work (Eisenchlas and Trevaskes, 2007; Hurtado, 2001; Mestenhauser, 1998). Nonetheless, the model of associating diversity-related goals or intercultural competency development with singular or isolated courses whose intent is to supply what some students are lacking or to provide a tangible affirmative space for students who have historically been underrepresented in institutional contexts suggests an early response to diversity that was informed by the goal of coping with diversity rather than embedding it in the fabric of the institution and at the heart of student learning. As one scholar suggests, at present, “the question is not whether or not we want diversity or whether we should accommodate diversity because

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diversity is clearly our present and our future . . . the real question is how do we build diversity into the center of higher education where it can serve as a powerful facilitator of institutional mission and societal purpose” (Smith, 2010, p. 3).

**Need for Transformative, Integrated Approach**

In spite of increasing conviction and evidence regarding the importance of developing intercultural competence, its “manifestations . . . in the higher education community, while sincerely conceived, are often unclearly rationalized” (Olson, Evans, and Shoenberg, 2007, p. vii) because it is not comprehensive or embedded across the curriculum. Past experience has shown that it is not adequate to assume that diversity-related learning and intercultural development outcomes will be “covered” in a required diversity course, an intercultural training, or workshops offered by multicultural affairs offices. As Chang, Chang, and Ledesma (2005) have argued, the benefits of diversity do not accrue by magic, and magical thinking “provides no guidance for campuses in assembling appropriate means to create environments conducive to the realization of the benefits of diversity or on employing methods necessary to facilitate the educational processes to achieve those benefits” (pp. 10–11).

Smith (2010) provides a useful comparison between higher education’s ability to develop the institutional capacity to prioritize, embed, and interact with technology and its apparent inability to do the same in relation to diversity. It is commonplace that institutions have transformed practice, policy, and infrastructure in order to integrate technology. Once campuses identified technology as a strategic opportunity and a powerful resource to improve educational and institutional outcomes, they moved to create the needed infrastructure, capacity, and systems to engage and embed technology at every level of institutional life. Yet, as far as integrating diversity, Smith and others point out that institutions tend to opt for a “retrofit” approach. When institutions invest in the necessary infrastructure, including professional development, and comprehensive integration, the diffuse and positive impacts are quick to follow.

There is increasing evidence that institutions cannot continue to function well without integrating diversity through systemic transformation. The necessity to
engage diversity is made paramount by projected demographics for college-age populations in the context of historical failure of primarily white institutions to effectively support diverse student populations; increasing research suggests that active learning and inclusive environments promote achievement for particular student populations. It is difficult to ignore the evidence that diversity is a strategic opportunity, a powerful resource, and a critical imperative for higher education and that it is necessary to transform how we conceptualize, value, and enact diversity.

Achieving an Integrated Approach: Writing Across the Curriculum as a Model

An example of a successful effort to overcome a piecemeal approach to the development of specific competencies in higher education comes from the field of composition studies. Much like intercultural competence development, composition scholars and practitioners faced increasing evidence that a single term of focused instruction was inadequate to produce desired writing competencies. It became clear that students were traversing a wide range of rhetorical contexts even at a single institution; what constituted effective research writing in a chemistry course did not hold true in a philosophy course. Definitions and associations even with the seemingly simple concept of “academic writing” vary widely across disciplines and even from instructor to instructor (Herrington and Curtis, 2000). There was an increasing understanding that context mattered, so rather than focus on assuming or teaching a universal set of norms or conventions for effective writing, teachers needed to support students’ capacity to tune into the specific rhetorical context at play. In short, it became evident that no single course could teach students “good” writing. What emerged as a result were “Writing Across the Curriculum” models that sought to support students’ writing development and competency through implementing longitudinal, integrated opportunities across the undergraduate experience and the adoption of writing-intensive curricula.

Developing intercultural competency, similar to developing competency in written communication, rests on knowledge acquisition in conjunction with building the capacity to implement that knowledge across diverse contexts; both of these competencies require knowing about and knowing how to do. Like
good writing, intercultural competence cannot be transmitted through exposure in the form of content, lectures, or a single class (Mayhew and DeLuca Fernández, 2007). Developing students’ intercultural competence requires a process approach wherein students are provided with regular opportunities across the curriculum to engage in intercultural interactions that are intellectually relevant to the course and purposeful to students’ future capacity to live and work in diverse settings. Effective communication and collaboration across perspectives, life experiences, and identity also requires the ability to recognize and manage the anxiety and uncertainty that typically accompany communication or collaboration in new or unfamiliar contexts and with others whom we perceive as “different” (Gudykunst, 2005). These arguments speak in favor of incorporating intercultural development in higher education in a similar way as writing development—across the curriculum and across all disciplines.

**Lessons on Faculty Development**

One particularly significant feature of the Writing Across the Curriculum precedent is that its first principle stated that *faculty* needed training in order to build the capacity to *teach* and not only to *evaluate* writing if students were going to develop. This principle is transferrable to this monograph: it is essential to build faculty capacity to design and facilitate pedagogies that support of students’ development of intercultural competence. Smith (2010) suggests that a lack of faculty capacity to support effective diversity interactions (our review of research suggests there is also a failure to recognize these opportunities) leads to unrealized potential for supporting diversity outcomes in our classrooms. Therefore, we define capacity as developing the resources and expertise, but also the recognition of the need and value to enact this through pedagogical practices.

Just as research indicates that intercultural competency skills do not “naturally” develop as the result of structurally diverse environment, faculty do not “naturally” develop the awareness, skills, or knowledge to effectively support students’ capacity to engage diversity. This would exemplify the “magical thinking” rationale by Chang, Chang, and Ledesma (2005) referred to earlier. Instead, faculty need occasions of “cognitive disequilibrium” that facilitate developing awareness and skill to support diversity and diversity-related consciousness in
their classrooms. This requires adopting a reflective and critical stance on entrenched concepts, such as what constitutes intellectual rigor, and practices, such as the privileging of “rationale” and objective knowing over situated and positional knowing. The following chapters of this monograph focus on building faculty capacity to engage diversity in the classroom by developing knowledge about the process of intercultural competence development, establishing a framework for pedagogy that engages diversity, and reflecting on practices of design and facilitation that provide an effective environment for engaging diversity.

**Tensions and Misconceptions**

Before moving forward, it must be noted that several tensions inhibit our capacity to effectively support intercultural competence in our classrooms. For instance, faculty often identify a tension between adequately covering core content and the pressure to incorporate new skills and outcomes into a course. Scholars have also noted the historical tendency to deposit so-called skills courses in the general education curriculum. This has the effect of preventing depth as students are not provided with a coherent or longitudinal opportunity to cultivate, refine, and apply the skills.

We discussed earlier the tendency for diversity-related initiatives on campus to be piecemeal or “add-ons” rather than structurally and comprehensively embedded in institutional mission, curriculum and pedagogy, and policies (Green and Shoenberg, 2006; Mestenhauser, 1998; Milem, Chang, and Antonio, 2005; Otten, 2003; Smith, 2010). This lack of a transformative approach can result in conflicts and tensions between identifying what is core or fundamental and what is supplemental or additional to course content and outcomes. Without a shift in how we perceive the core objectives of teaching and learning at the university level, we will continue to produce an either-or competition mind-set. This shift would be based on research that concludes that learning does not happen from mere contact but requires guided, purposeful opportunities for intercultural interaction, reflection, and refinement (Banks and McGee, 1995; Kumagai and Lypson, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Olson, Evans, and Shoenberg, 2007). Faculty, students, and employers can
encounter mixed messaging within institutional curricula when important skill-based intercultural development is emphasized or explicitly valued in some places within an institution and not in others.

There is extensive research on the conditions that support a culture of diversity in institutions and the role of institutional leadership providing the infrastructure to engage diversity as a resource. However, there is not a lot of clarity or guidance for faculty regarding how they can develop confidence and skills to structure their courses so as to intentionally engage diversity (Dey and others, 2010; Eisenchlas and Trevaskes, 2007; Gurin and Nagda, 2006). Most college environment studies focus on overall institutional environment or campus climate, not college classroom environment. Furthermore, the qualitative elements of interaction are less understood and represented in the research given a historical emphasis on employing quantitative-oriented research on diversity (Marin, 2000). In our extensive research for this monograph, we found it challenging to locate scholarship that focused on diversity or intercultural competence within the context of higher education classrooms and with the aim of directly supporting practice or teaching.

Some multicultural education scholars argue that there is not only a lack of available research, but also misinformation about existing scholarship, which may influence faculty perceptions about engaging diversity and developing intercultural skills. Geneva Gay (2002) observed that, while strong opinions about the importance or value of such education are held, “Many teachers are hard-pressed to have an informed conversation about leading multicultural education scholars and their major premises, principles, and proposals. What they think they know about the field is often based on superficial or distorted information” (Gay, 2002, p. 107).

Meanwhile, engaging diversity in college courses requires thinking carefully and mindfully about pedagogical approaches and resources that are culturally inclusive and view students as assets with valuable and diverse strengths and experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Rendón, 1994). It helps to create places of belonging where dialogue about human difference and diversity can occur (Williams, Berger, and McClendon, 2005). Pedagogical resources that engage diversity enable students to be empowered academically and faculty to be the facilitators of student intellectual and social development (Antonio,
The specific instructional priorities we will develop in the latter half of this monograph focus on the intersections between inclusive excellence and intercultural competence.

The Challenge of and Need for Integration

Throughout this monograph, we have intentionally sought to draw from a diverse range of existing scholarship related to intercultural competence development, multicultural education, learning psychology, and culturally relevant pedagogy. Synthesizing core concepts and practices from such a range of theoretical frameworks is an inevitably risky endeavor. The effort to put them into dialogue so as to develop an integrative framework risks simplifying them and necessitates omitting substantive dimensions of each tradition. We recognize and caution the reader that each body of scholarship included in this monograph defines its central purpose in a different way, and each has historically valued particular methodologies and epistemologies over others. For instance, intercultural competence theory has focused on understanding and supporting the processes by which individuals develop capacity to effectively communicate across cultures, while multicultural education aims to support equity of access and attainment in educational systems by explicitly exposing and challenging racism and other forms of discrimination. Critical pedagogies provide powerful tools for deepening our understanding of traditional models of teaching and learning, problematizing the assumption that pedagogy or teaching can be neutral, and probing the ideologies and discourses that are embedded within and perpetuated by them.

Each tradition we draw on also poses significant critiques of the others. Critical race theory and critical pedagogy have critiqued multicultural education for being liberal rather than liberatory. Intercultural competence theory, however, has been critiqued by multicultural education scholars for not attending to the dynamics of power, oppression, and privilege that structure relations across cultural identity groups in and out of the classroom. Critical pedagogy is often critiqued for not being responsive to implementation at the level of individual or local sites of practice. In spite of the inevitable limitations and tensions inherent in integrating these diverse bodies of scholarship,
we believe they provide complementary insight into the kinds of principles and classroom practices that can help us lead our students toward an enhanced ability to communicate and work with others who are not like them.

There is great potential in encouraging interplay across traditions of research that have concerned themselves with investigating diversity in educational settings from a range of focal points. This potential is evident in the recent increase in arguments for intentional synthesis from the increase in arguments for synthesis (Equality Challenge Unit, 2010, 2011; Hoffman, 2004; Krutky, 2008; Olson, Evans, and Shoenberg, 2007; Otten, 2003; Wong, 2006). In some ways, the theoretical dimension of our endeavor in the pages of this monograph resembles the hard but rewarding engagement with difference that we call for in college classrooms. Like the cultures represented by our students, the bodies of literature we draw on sometimes clash with each other in jarring and affective ways. Yet the occasional tension or disjuncture they produce is fully worth the richness of the pedagogical framework that is born out of the conversation. The inclusion of different research traditions enables a breadth of focus that spans both individual and social dynamics, both the visible and the unseen.

To extend the analogy further, just as the process of intercultural development begins with an increased awareness of one’s own culture, we also find it essential to inform the reader of the disciplinary culture from which we depart. The cornerstone of this monograph rests squarely on the foundation of intercultural competence theory, which serves as the main framework for understanding the developmental process of the individual. Multicultural and critical voices enter the conversation to bring into focus the structural and systemic factors that condition interactions and shape classroom contexts, and to illuminate what classroom practices can support student competence at engaging with difference. As we will argue in the following chapters, pedagogy is a dynamic art that requires multiple concepts and theories as its inspiration.

Student Voices: Reflections on Engaging Diversity in Different Disciplines

Throughout much of this monograph, we present postsecondary students’ voices on the experience of engaging diversity in the classroom. We do so in
order to honor the belief, central to many of the theories included in this book, that in order to understand what is happening or can happen in the classroom, it is essential to listen and attend to multiple participants’ perspectives. Students’ reflections are invaluable tools for teachers who seek to engage diversity in the classroom and regular use of such formative feedback can help us attune more carefully to the complex dynamics of learning in our courses.

We do not offer student excerpts as “evidence” per se. Rather, our purpose is to include student voices and to illustrate a range of perspectives regarding the components of the learning environment that facilitated their ability to engage diversity on behalf of their learning, development, and communications. There is little qualitative documentation of college students’ perspectives regarding the experience of engaging diversity in courses, particularly courses that are not explicitly about diversity or fulfilling a diversity requirement. We provide these excerpts to augment the extensive quantitative research documenting the impact of interactions in fostering intercultural awareness, knowledge, and behavioral competencies (Bowman, 2010a; Denson, 2009; Milem, 2003).

The student reflections used in later chapters were collected in first-year courses across a range of disciplines, as well as interdisciplinary courses. Lower-division college students have been described as a particularly important target population for engaging diversity because, while entering students come to college with established habits of mind and social interaction, providing them with direct experience with novel ideas, unfamiliar contexts, and diverse social groups can prompt the cognitive disequilibrium critical to supporting cognitive and affective development (Hurtado, 2001; Milem, Chang, and Antonio, 2005; Pettigrew, 2008). A majority of the courses in which the reflective learning journals were collected do not meet an institutional diversity requirement, and the faculty members who teach the courses represent a range of disciplinary affiliations range from biology to psychology to humanities, history, and mathematics education.

Next Steps

Although noble aspirations and expectations surround notions of diversity within higher education, it is not clear from much of the existing literature as to how
faculty within the classroom can intentionally engage diversity to create excellence through inclusive student interactions and use of instructional resources (Dey and others, 2010; Gurin and Nagda, 2006). In this introductory chapter, we argued that engaging diversity for intercultural competence development is one promising theoretical model that conceptualizes diversity as a complex and essential thread that must be intentionally woven into the fabric of the institution at all levels. The remainder of the monograph expands on the foundational concept of “engaging diversity” by operationalizing it in the context of classroom—a critical site for implementing diversity-related goals.

The next chapter provides an overview on key theories of intercultural competence development for faculty who seek to design and implement classes that support both discipline-based and intercultural learning outcomes. Preparing graduates for the cognitive and intercultural complexity of the twenty-first century requires higher education practitioners to have an understanding of both process, or what facilitates students’ intercultural learning and development, and the outcomes of intercultural learning. Without this knowledge, we cannot work mindfully across our instructional sites to support students’ development over time. This chapter presents research regarding the core skills, attitudes, and behaviors that are identified as requisite to effective and ethical intercultural interactions and communications. It concludes with a focused discussion of the management of anxiety and its impact on supporting or precluding effective intercultural communication.

The third chapter develops a pedagogical framework for faculty who seek to maximize the potential for a course to support students’ development of the capacity to effectively engage diversity. Before one can implement specific instructional practices that support intercultural communication, one needs a pedagogical framework that reflects what is known on the nature of learning, particularly in regard to diversity. Many graduate students and faculty do not receive extensive pedagogical training, and while many opt to attend teaching workshops, those do not always have the time to provide a depth of focus on the theoretical concepts rather than on the “best practices” or “innovations.” The third chapter draws from pedagogical models that support intercultural and diversity-related learning to provide a synthesis of key attributes of a pedagogy that supports intercultural communication and collaboration.
The fourth and fifth chapters draw on the pedagogical framework developed in the third chapter, and move into classroom practice. They imagine the reality of a faculty member entering a classroom at the beginning of a semester and meeting a highly diverse group of students with vastly different life experiences, places of origin, primary languages, belief systems, economic backgrounds, and cultural identities. The fourth chapter focuses on the stage of course design and preparation, and the fifth chapter shifts to the stage of facilitation and implementation with students. Throughout these chapters on pedagogy practice that supports engaging diversity, we emphasize the importance of alignment between pedagogy components as well as of reflective practice. In the fourth and fifth chapters, we offer practical examples of classroom practice to demonstrate that development of intercultural competence can occur in any classroom when faculty are knowledgeable about and committed to intercultural outcomes. However, we acknowledge that it is easier to imagine and describe how to connect development of intercultural competence with disciplinary content when using examples from the humanities and social sciences as compared to physical sciences and engineering. As our own graduate training took place within the humanities and social sciences, we used those frames in developing many of the examples that follow in later chapters.