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# Navigating Institutional Racism and Improving Campus Climate: Culturally Diverse Graduate Students Breaking the Mold

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# Navigating Institutional Racism and Improving Campus Climate: Culturally Diverse Graduate Students Breaking the Mold

Gabriela Lopez

## Program Abstract

The purpose of this symposium is to address limited access, poor attrition rates, and campus discrimination for culturally diverse students. Potential solutions to the problem of underrepresentation will be offered, with specific methods for those in administrative, faculty, and student positions.

## Abstract

The lack of diversity in academia has detrimental effects on campus climate, contributing to underrepresentation of multicultural voices in education, science, economics, and government. Institutional racist practices, such as standardized testing, promote widget-ness as an ideal. These negative consequences can be amended by increasing the presence of non-widget students, facilitating student/faculty alliances, and encouraging multicultural perspectives on campus. If administrators, faculty and students work together we can achieve these aims. Programs for minority students, student organization, and formal training in cultural awareness are methods for addressing the problem of excessive widget-making. The methods provided will be useful to those interested in developing educational and health institutions that are responsive to traditionally marginalized groups and promote originality over widget-ness.

Keywords: institutional racism, graduate students, diversity training

## 500 Word Abstract

Title:

Navigating Institutional Racism and Improving Campus Climate: Culturally Diverse Graduate Students Breaking the Mold

Format:

Workshop

Overview/Summary:

Institutions are widget factories. They have become the handmaiden of the status quo, cranking out clinicians and researchers who view the world through a universal lens. A universal perspective to the understanding of human health and education leads to the assumption that all humans are the same and fails to acknowledge human diversity. We know this practice to be harmful; institutions, researchers and healthcare providers have a history of discounting the importance of culture, race and ethnicity resulting in harm to students, patients and humankind. A diversity of perspectives promote ingenuity and scientific progress. We need to train diverse students, clinicians, and researchers who will engage in society with originality, passion, and responsiveness to traditionally marginalized groups.

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### Purpose:

A diverse workforce is critical to reducing social and health inequities. Additionally, successful racial minority role models are critical to engaging culturally diverse students in school. Yet, culturally diverse students and faculty remain underrepresented in higher educational academic settings. The purpose of this workshop is to address limited access, poor attrition rates, and campus discrimination for culturally diverse students. In addition, potential solutions to the problem of underrepresentation will be offered, with specific methods for those in administrative, faculty, and student positions.

### Methodology:

There are three aims of this workshop. First, to outline the problem of institutional racism (i.e. widget-making); how it has been experienced by each presenter, and how it is represented in scientific literature. Second, to offer methods for overcoming many of the challenges racial/ethnic minority students face. These methods will come from both the qualitative experience of the presenters as well as peer reviewed research. The final aim of this workshop is to provide ideas for instilling cultural awareness on campuses, for direct implementation by education administrators, instructors and students themselves. Ideas include, but aren't limited to, increasing faculty of color, offering cultural competence training, establishing student organizations, and facilitating ally-ship among students.

### Conclusions:

By creating a more culturally aware climate, promoting cultural competence and humility in all aspects of clinical and research training, our students avoid widget-ness and are role models for other students. The workshop will conclude in an open discussion with the presenters, the discussant, and the audience. The agenda for the discussion time will be to address any questions or ideas audience members may have about how to facilitate the development of person-centered educational and health institutions that are racially and culturally responsive.