

Forum Proceedings

The State of Workforce Diversity 2013

Overview

On April 23, 2013, the Office of Diversity Studies of the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey convened a workforce diversity forum. One hundred and twenty-five participants, including chief diversity officers; corporate executives; representatives from higher education, Federal Reserve Banks of New York and Philadelphia, and national and state governments; policymakers; employers; consultants; labor unions; graduate students; and other interested parties, gathered to discuss current diversity research findings, as well as the current and future state of diversity in both the workforce and in society.

Presentations were given on a variety of topics, including leading workforce diversity change through executive leadership; racial inequality without racism; and current diversity trends and best practices. There was also an expert panel discussion about the essential elements for an effective change strategy to prepare organizations for diversity and inclusion planning.

Speakers in order of appearance:

- **Dr. Carl Van Horn**, Professor and Director, Heldrich Center;
- **Robert L. Lattimer**, Senior Fellow, Diversity Studies, Heldrich Center;
- **Dr. Hazel O'Leary**, most recent President, Fisk University and former Secretary, U.S. Department of Energy;
- **Dr. Nancy DiTomaso**, Professor, Rutgers Business School-Newark-New Brunswick;
- **Toni Riccardi**, Senior Vice President for Human Resources and Chief Diversity Officer, The Conference Board, Inc.;

- **Patricia David**, Managing Director and Global Head of Diversity, JPMorgan Chase & Co.; and
- **Reggie Clark**, Director of Diversity and Inclusion, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital.

Welcome and Opening Comments

Dr. Carl Van Horn presented the Heldrich Center's history of conducting research and developing workforce solutions. He also discussed the Heldrich Center's focus on diversity in the workplace, and commented that this forum was the fifth in a series on workforce diversity, with both a local and global perspective.

Van Horn extended his thanks to Steven Jones, President/CEO of Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital for the organization's financial support of the forum. He then thanked all for their attendance, and turned the program over to Robert L. Lattimer.

Program Context, Objectives, and Introduction of Speakers

Robert L. Lattimer began his presentation by commenting that in 2007, Van Horn convened the first workforce diversity forum at the Heldrich Center. Diversity thought leaders, policymakers, researchers, corporate executives, and representatives from higher education came from as far away as the Republic of South Africa to participate in the first forum. Lattimer stated that the forum addressed such issues as:

- How to establish diversity policy within the modern global society;
- How to manage the complexities of diversity within the modern workforce;
- How to help organizations realize the benefits of diversity within the workforce; and
- How diversity affects national economies.

Subsequently, Van Horn established the Office of Diversity Studies at the Heldrich Center. Over the past five years, the Office of Diversity Studies has helped to shape public policy, conducted applied research, contributed to the existing research literature, advised senior executive leadership, and presented on the issue in countries such as the Republic of South Africa, Ireland, India, and Sri Lanka, as well as at conferences within the United States.

Diversity Forum Objectives

Lattimer stated the following objectives for this diversity forum:

- To convene diversity thought leaders in an interactive forum so that the latest content on the topic of diversity in society and in the workforce could be shared and exchanged.
- To present the current research that is having an impact on policy within organizations and that advances the topic.
- To present the newest trends and best practices affecting organizations, laws, public policy, and the economy.
- To present current realities and trends from the perspective of the diversity practitioner.
- To continue to ensure that the Heldrich Center is a cutting-edge resource for workforce and diversity issues.

Lattimer then asked, “What is the current fundamental question regarding the state of workforce diversity in 2013?” He commented that based on his work, diversity and inclusion is more than just a concept, more than setting social policy, and more than an operating framework. Diversity and inclusion is about leadership and individual behaviors; vision and individual integrity; collaboration; unleashing greater levels of creativity, productivity, and innovation; and the creation of a sustainable society, as opposed to a zero sum game. Lattimer further commented that in his ongoing discussions with some of America’s most respected leaders, many have stated with great conviction that the effective performance of organizations in the 21st century requires committed and visionary leaders who set the strategic direction of the organization by setting the culture for superior performance and by creating a climate of competitive change.

Keynote Address — Leading Workforce Diversity Change through Executive Leadership — Hazel O’Leary

Lattimer then introduced Dr. Hazel O’Leary, who was most recently President of Fisk University, a 147-year-old historically black university. Previously, O’Leary served as the first female and first African American U.S. Secretary of Energy during the presidency of Bill Clinton.

O'Leary provided a warm, inspiring, engaging, and interactive keynote address, pertaining to visionary diversity leadership, how to lead diversity change, and the importance of diversity leaders to manage careers. Highlights of her comments include:

- O'Leary explained that leaders look for individuals who are smarter than they are and that they seek employees whose values complement their own.
- She mentioned that as the U.S. Secretary of Energy, she wanted to add a very capable and talented woman to her team of scientists, but faced opposition because the woman was a lesbian. She explained that as a leader you have to have the guts and the moral imperatives to lead. O'Leary further stated that a leader must be prepared to take the heat and be willing to not be loved by others.
- O'Leary shared additional anecdotes about her work on the selection panel for the Harry S. Truman Foundation and her campaign to select engineers as opposed to the usual public policy candidates. She was successful in that endeavor and said that leaders and aspiring leaders must understand where a group/organization needs to head and make a leap of faith in that direction.
- She answered questions from the audience. One question, from an attorney, asked when does a person know when to take the next step in his/her career. O'Leary responded by quoting her father: "When you start to walk to work backwards, you need to get another job."
- O'Leary commented that it is often effective to give a good idea to another individual with influence and have that person advance the issue, because there are times when personality may be a barrier to attaining a goal.

Other issues that O'Leary addressed during the question-and-answer session included having a measurement system for diversity progress, navigating the federal civil service selection process, and achieving diversity in a political environment.

Featured Address — The American Non-Dilemma: Racial Inequality without Racism — Nancy DiTomaso

Lattimer introduced Dr. Nancy DiTomaso, Vice Dean for Faculty and Research, and Professor of Management and Global Business at the Rutgers Business School-Newark and New Brunswick. Additionally, DiTomaso is the author of the recently published book, *The American Non-Dilemma: Racial Inequality Without Racism*.

- DiTomaso stated that her book is the result of 20 years of research centered on the puzzle that exists in racial conversations. Her work specifically addressed racial inequality.

- In conducting her research, DiTomaso noticed that in her interactions and surveys of white individuals, the vast majority were against discrimination, support civil rights, and did not harbor prejudicial feelings. However, how is it possible that racial inequality can exist without racists?
- She suggested that if racial discussions are viewed through a different lens, the focus is then on white people doing good things for other white people instead of doing bad things to black people. DiTomaso explained that the title of her book is based on a study by Gunnar Myrdal in which he expressed that America would solve its racial problems because of the incompatibility of racial discrimination and the nation's values of freedom and equality. Myrdal predicted that the nation would face a "moral dilemma."
- DiTomaso explained that she interviewed white people about their job histories and found that 99% of them got 70% of their jobs because someone helped them, such as providing them with information, using influence, or offering a position. In fact, this is the reality for the higher-paying, upper-level positions. However, despite this reality, these individuals attributed their successes to their own efforts, claiming that they were hired because of their work ethic and intelligence.
- She explained that the overwhelming number of whites do not support affirmative action, diversity programming, and the use of racial quotas, because they perceive it as providing minorities with an unfair advantage. Therefore, she asserts that there is a principle and policy gap in which they support the principle of equality, but not the policies that would create equality in the workplace or in the broader society.
- DiTomaso suggested that since whites do not think of themselves as racists or as bad people, they avoid the moral dilemma that Myrdal predicted in his research. She also suggested that it is important to reframe racial inequality in this way because discrimination is illegal, while favoritism is not. As long as this structure remains in place unacknowledged and uncorrected, racial inequality will continue to be reproduced.
- She commented that because whites believe that they found employment without help, then it is because of blacks' own lack of effort, responsibility, and hope that they are unable to secure employment and find success.

During the question-and-answer period, DiTomaso was asked about what options are available for people without networks. She suggested that not having a network can be balanced by effective public policies. She also suggested correcting this inequality by holding companies accountable, establishing workforce policies that have specific critical criteria, measuring progress, and understanding the responsibility to make workplaces diverse.

Panel Discussion — Diversity Best Practices and Organizational Leadership of the Chief Diversity Officer

Lattimer served as the moderator for the panel discussion, which was comprised of Toni Riccardi, Patricia David, Reggie Clark, and Dr. Nancy DiTomaso.

Lattimer posed the first questions to Toni Riccardi, asking her what's current in terms of diversity and inclusion trends, what are some of the current best practices in diversity and inclusion, and what are some of the current best practices in industry.

- Riccardi commented that previously there had been a focus on underrepresented groups, but now there is a shift to look at overrepresented groups, similar to what DiTomaso mentioned earlier in her research. Riccardi suggested that the trend is to understand white men, how to involve them in the diversity process of establishing diverse environments, and how to make them sponsors. Other trends include exploring culture-conscious biases and cross-cultural communication.
- She commented that employee resource groups now support underrepresented groups as opposed to previous practices of helping these groups adapt. Riccardi also said that the emphasis on women remains, but there is a new focus on sponsorship to elevate women to higher levels of management.
- Riccardi said that the focus on metrics remains, with a need to measure progress other than diversity activity, and that of the traditional returns on investment. Riccardi also added that disability regulations are about to change and that there is a mini-trend in which three major U.S. companies are going under the umbrella of Corporate Social Responsibility.

Lattimer then posed questions to Patricia David, including asking her to describe an effective diversity change process within large financial organizations and how to establish effective collaborative working relationships with human resources and the diversity group given that each group may have different viewpoints and competing resources needs.

- David commented that she establishes relationships in the workplace and said that it is important to be at the table when decisions are made. She further commented that diversity leaders must institutionalize good behavior and practices to ensure that managers, directors, and vice presidents appreciate the diversity leaders' understanding of their needs.

- She commented that recruiting managers need to be provided with the appropriate tools to more effectively do their jobs, which is essential to creating a diverse workplace.
- David commented that financial institutions have altered their thinking and devoted more attention to identifying high-potential employees, thus spending more resources to ensure their success. She further commented that human resources can and should provide the managers with the information that is important to this process.

Next, Lattimer posed questions to Reggie Clark, including what are the essential elements that prepare an organization for an effective diversity and inclusion strategy, and what is the essential business case for driving effective diversity and inclusion planning within nonprofit organizations.

- Clark commented that there are many essential elements, including data gathering and issue sensing to understand the current needs and opportunities as well as to identify recruitment issues, creating a dialogue with stakeholders and determining their expectations with regard to diversity and inclusion, and creating and solidifying a concrete definition of what diversity means to the organization. He added that it is critical to have a strategy that focuses on how the process will be implemented, and that features accountability, measurement, and monitoring. Clark added that this stage asks if recruitment efforts are successful, if there is significant sponsorship of individuals, and whether those individuals are being provided opportunities.
- He commented that he is a believer that diversity already exists in organizations and that the issue is whether diverse populations are being provided with opportunities.
- Clark said that the business case in his organization includes creating an inclusive environment, establishing links with efforts to improve employee engagement, and ensuring that patients feel cared for, respected, and receive proper treatment.
- DiTomaso contributed that the issue of the business case is as simple as “if we fail, we won’t survive.” She added that in the near future, the key diversity issue will be focused on diversity of thought.

At this point, Lattimer opened the forum to receive additional questions from attendees.

- A question was asked about how the viewpoint of diversity is reflected in the research and science community. DiTomaso commented that her study of diversity among scientists and engineers explores the risk of groups homogenizing. She said that in performance appraisals, white men have higher results even when rated by

minorities, suggesting that there is a tendency in the science community to view white men as being more competent. Clark added that it is important to make diversity less of a risk and more of an asset, and DiTomaso added that although diverse groups are higher performing, diverse staffs don't enjoy the work environment as much.

- Riccardi was asked about best practices for inclusion and about retaining women. She commented that when employees take a leave of absence, such as women taking maternity leave, they are often reluctant to return because they don't want to have to prove themselves again. She highlighted a practice in which employees were guaranteed the same performance rating that they had at their departure and that such a practice increased retention by about 35%. David relayed her experience working with the head of talent and how they plan to find the top talent for their company. They have an operating committee that meets monthly and emphasized that diversity has to be a part of the process in their hiring and recruiting efforts.
- Riccardi responded to a question regarding sponsorship by commenting that sponsorship is risky for the sponsor, which is why individuals may be reluctant to sponsor, thereby presenting challenges with finding human capital and managing talent.
- DiTomaso was asked how to achieve diversity in a climate of relaxed affirmative action and employment programs. She commented that solutions and changes should be made in the political process through social movements and political organizing. Also critical is creating pathways to raise the issue beyond the individual level for society's well being.
- DiTomaso was asked if her research identified people's views by ethnicity, religion, and generational difference. She replied that it was not feasible for her work but that there are other studies that do explore those areas.

Lattimer then brought the question-and-answer session to a close. He thanked all attendees and speakers for their attendance, and turned the program over to Van Horn.

Final Remarks

Van Horn thanked the attendees for their participation. He shared his experience working for Governor Florio, who is currently a Senior Policy Fellow at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University. Van Horn commented that Governor Florio wanted a diverse staff and told Van Horn to not tell him how difficult it would be to have such, but rather to show him how to do so. Van Horn added that the Governor held him and his colleagues accountable for the results.

Van Horn concluded by thanking Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital for its financial sponsorship of the diversity forum, the speakers and presenters, and Lattimer for the design and development of the forum.

About the Heldrich Center

The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, based at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University, is a dynamic research and policy center devoted to strengthening the nation's workforce. It is one of the nation's leading university-based centers dedicated to helping America's workers and employers respond to a rapidly changing 21st Century economy.

The Center's motto — "Solutions at Work" — reflects its commitment to offering practical solutions, based on independent research, that benefit employers, workers, and job seekers. The Center's policy recommendations and programs serve a wide range of Americans at all skill levels.

Learn more about the Heldrich Center at <http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu>.

