

Paying it Forward - Driving Mission Home

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Abstract:

A diverse workforce in higher education for the 21st century, is not only a necessity, but a major challenge. While underserved/underrepresented groups have made gains in education attainment across the board; these gains have in-part been a response to increase in population, and not major proportional improvements in educational attainment for minorities. Education is becoming second nature, and access continues to improve; but we are still far from reducing these educational and workforce gaps. This, in part, is a result of first-generation lack of know-how; and currently, barriers in increasing college and university workforce to reflect the composition of the communities served. Often, individuals that have achieved a certain level of success, will attribute this to the personalized attention of those that served in a key teaching or mentoring capacity. The challenge remains, teaching and mentoring is more realistic, during the latter years of education, and not where it most counts. Reflecting back, you probably recognize that small actions during your freshman and sophomore year had a big impact in defining your path; and that later, a little work and momentum got you here today.

Everyone aspires. It is important to recognize that paying it forward is not only nice, but for our kind, it's a need. You reflect the communities we need to impact. Your faces and your stories represent the relatedness that our future needs to hear, so that they not only see that success is possible, but that they relate to you, as we related to our mentors. You could be a hero to many, but few would know unless you made yourself available to them.

This session will focus on national data and trends on representation in higher education; and the qualitative impact that exists in allowing others to think of us as heroes. We each have a mission; maybe you have thought about yours; and missions can change. Reflect on this: if your support mechanisms weren't there, would you be here today? Now think of the majority of individuals that don't have that support mechanism? How can I make all the stars align for another individual?

At this end of this session, you should consider the impact of reframing your personal and professional missions to paying-it forward. The future of my children depends on this.

Notes: