



Why the Recruitment and Retention of AHANA Students Must Be an Institutional Priority

by Dr. Charles Taylor

I delivered this speech to Edgewood College's Faculty Association in 2001. As a result of this speech the Recruitment and Retention of Minority Students and Faculty became an institutional priority. 10-years later Edgewood has made considerable progress in terms of recruiting students of color but still has a ways to go in terms of faculty and staff hires.

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to make a 15-minute presentation. I want to share some of my reasons why I think the recruitment and retention of Minority students and faculty should be an institutional priority. I also want to explain why this priority should not be lumped with the global education initiative although I fully support that initiative as a separate priority. I have been told that this would be a tough sell, but I'm still new enough to be optimistic.

I have a picture circulating of two kids that could be in Edgewood College's class of 2011 that I will speak to later in my presentation. Those two kids bring me so much joy. One is my grandson and the other calls me her biggest best friend. One we serve pretty well today and one we must serve pretty well tomorrow. Anyway more about them later.

It won't come as a surprise to most of you that Edgewood College's survival is linked to the capturing of new markets because of our low endowment and overwhelming dependence on student tuition fees. Essentially there are three markets we can pursue:

- a) The traditional market of 18-24 year old white students that will soon peak and then forever decline.
- b) The adult market which we have largely abandoned to our competitors, and
- c) The AHANA market, which we have basically ignored.

AHANA stands for African, Hispanic, Asian and Native America. Many people object to the term minority. During my comments I'll use AHANA, Minority and people of color interchangeably. In that way you'll either be enlightened or totally confused.

Most of my remarks will focus on the AHANA market but I quickly want to take two minutes to speak about the adult market. At one time, Edgewood was the leading player in this market but today our competitors are in our own back yard. Our competitors have gotten very sophisticated in how they package and deliver their educational product to the adult market. I know because I was a regional Dean with Cardinal Stritch University for several years and we let the dogs out to go after that market very



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aggressively. Sam Barosko was recently telling Joe Schmiedicke and me about Stritch's classroom in a shopping mall up in Wausau. I laughed because I not only helped pick out that site but also held an Open House for the Wausau community at that site. It may seem a bit strange to have an adult program in such a place until you realize that adults from a 50-mile radius of Wausau come to that shopping mall to do their shopping. So every time they walk up and down that mall they are exposed to CSU. As a result Stritch has had full classes at that site nightly since it opened up.

Schools like Stritch, Upper Iowa and our other competitors expect schools like Edgewood to frown upon their accelerated adult degree programs. They want you to think these programs have low quality, watered-down curriculums and are unworthy of your serious attention. They are counting on you to spend years debating about the quality of such programs so they can continue to grow their market share. While our numbers continue to go down, they're recording record enrollments. In fact their accelerated adult programs have created a very large endowment for Stritch and literally is the financial engine for that institution.

What many people don't realize is that Stritch answered the quality issue several years ago, because it had to convince an extremely skeptical and traditional faculty that the accelerated programs would not cast dispersion on the other academic programs and that its traditional liberal arts focus would be protected. I would love to talk to you about the quality control program they established and how it is anchored through continuous assessment and evaluation but that's a topic for another day.

The only comment that I would make is that we've got to regain our foothold in this market and I hope we can do so quickly. In the last decade alone, over 100 small colleges have closed their doors. Anybody here remember Milton College? That's why it's important to support Peter Fabian's efforts in this area. We either have to be players or be prepared to say a lot of prayers. Having said that let me get back on point.

Among other things the 2000 Census tells us, is that:

- 1/3 of our nation is made up of people of color.
- Milwaukee's Black and Latino population now make up the majority in that city.
- Over 1/3 of Madison's elementary students are students of color.



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- Every rural county that we currently recruit from experienced an increase in its minority population during the last decade.
- In 20 years, 40% of the US population will be people of color.

Ray shared some additional stats with me last week that confirmed that every county in our Diocese also experienced an increase in its Minority population. As a result the minority population is on the rise, while the white population will soon be on the decline.

The major reason for this decline is the low-white birth rate. It takes at least two children per female for an ethnic group to replace itself. The white population is now well below its replacement level. That means there are more deaths than births. These low birth rates hold true for all the industrialized nations populated by whites. Unless cloning is done on a massive scale, whites will be the minority population in this country, in this century. So there is no way that Edgewood or any other college can continue recruiting the way that it always has, given this reality.

Now I could continue to cite you statistics all day long, but the real point I'm trying to make is, if we ignore these numbers then we put the future of our institution at risk. If we fail to respond aggressively to the AHANA market we not only limit our future enrollment, we in effect reduce it in the long run. I don't mean to just put a dollar figure on this, but the lack of a critical mass of minority students is costing schools like Edgewood hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. These are revenues that could be used for new programs, higher salaries and increased educational opportunities. If we do nothing we give our competitors a distinct advantage.

When you look past the dollars, if we do nothing, we forfeit our credibility and influence in minority communities and they will send their kids elsewhere to be educated. I want Edgewood to play a role in educating future Minority leaders. Perhaps of equal concern if we don't embrace diversity as an institution, is that we disadvantage our white students by not preparing them for the real world they will live and work in long after you and I are gone. I hope that won't be our legacy?

White students here have told me they are being shortchanged in a homogenous environment. Students in Nancy Nelson's class sent me some very thoughtful questions to help me prepare for a presentation that I gave in her class. Listen to some of their questions: "How can Edgewood do more to promote integration of groups? How do we go beyond classroom discussion to actual integration of people and ideas? How can we prepare ourselves for education and this issue in the classroom as teachers when we're not exposed to diversity?"



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The white students here aren't too different from the students I've worked with throughout my career. Many are ready to hold hands with students of color. I've found there is a tremendous educational hunger on the part of our white students. They want to be prepared for the new world they will face. They want to learn coping skills and be able to engage intellectually and socially with all types of people. But you got to have all kinds of people on campus to make that happen. They know when they graduate and enter the competitive world of work and even when both finalists for the position are white, the graduate who has had a multicultural learning experience and involvement with minority students is more likely to get the job.

Companies are tiring of spending millions of dollars annually on diversity training and are anxious for colleges to provide the education. So I won't be surprised in a couple of years to hear white students calling for more diversity on campus. That's one more reason why we must create a multicultural environment here. But of course that's easier said than done.

Based on past experience it is a challenge to convince people that by investing in multicultural initiatives to day will lead to substantial payoffs tomorrow. It means taking risks-going out on a limb, but as someone said, why not go out on a limb-isn't that where the fruit is. How do you convince people that something is coming when they can't quite see it yet or don't want to believe it.

How could one have convinced the US auto industry in the 70s that by the mid 80s the Japanese would own over 30% of their market share? Who would have thought that Native people would be key players in the state's economy? If you would have told white southern shrimp farmers 10 years ago, that the Vietnamese would control the shrimp market in several southern cities today, they would have run you out of town.

Even after documenting the changing demographics, there are still those who will argue that change is not needed and certainly not this type of change. They equate diversity goals with quotas or they assume that greater minority group representation would come at the expense of institutional quality.

Alverno College will tell you it's mainly a matter of will. They made a deliberate choice to attract a critical mass of minority students several years ago. Despite hearing every excuse in the book why it couldn't and shouldn't be done, their success has gained them national recognition. Here at Edgewood, we have to do a better job of convincing people that diversity benefits everyone.

I'm saying to anyone who'll listen, that if Edgewood does not take the recruitment and retention of minority students seriously, its future survival is at stake. Just a slight percentage dip in our traditional



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white student enrollments could cause us economic difficulty. A steady decline as the 2000 Census predicts could reap havoc. Will somebody please tell me where are we supposed to make up those numbers?

Even if you answer the adult market which I agree that we must also pursue, considering the white aging population, you still have to include minority adults in that mix. To the faculty who are like me, 50 and older if we don't get serious about this issue, a worse case scenario could have us job hunting in our late 50s and early 60s. Now that's a scary thought.

Things may appear to be rosy now but the future numbers don't lie. By 2011, 11% of our student base needs to be members of racial minority groups. By 2012-12%; 2013-13% and so on. As Bill Duddleston was telling us at the planning committee, perhaps our motto should be 11% by 2011. 11 by 11-Let's get use to thinking that.

Global Initiative

Let me speak briefly to the global initiative because I do think it's important that we educate our students into becoming world citizens. It may be OK for our students to arrive here with biased or parochial attitudes, but I don't think it's OK for them to graduate from here and not have those attitudes challenged. Only 17% of the world's 6 billion people are white. So when our students step out of the western world, they enter the world where the vast majority of human beings live and these human beings are black, brown, yellow and red.

They are increasingly arriving at our shores and impacting our social, political, cultural and economic institutions. When I managed the Bilingual and ESL programs in the Madison schools in the early 80s, we had over 50 different language groups in our public schools at that time. In order for our students to connect with these new immigrants they will need to know more about the various cultures in our world. But in my opinion they must learn about these cultures, in addition to the cultures of domestic racial minorities, not at their expense. Most people of color will tell you that global and domestic issues are profoundly different and it would be a major mistake to lump them together.

When you link minority group interests with foreign group interests, the perception, to many people of color, is that they're still viewed as "outsiders-foreigners." So no matter how worthy the global initiative is, racial minorities won't be convinced that we're serious about racial diversity here at Edgewood College if we don't address their issues independently.



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As an institution we demonstrate a high degree of social maturity and racial sensitivity when we address domestic minority issues straightforward and don't couch them in rhetoric or engage in a fruitless discussion of what diversity means. That's like trying to figure out what the meaning of is, is? Discussion is fine but not when it limits action.

Why Faculty Should Embrace This Issue

I want to speak personally to the faculty now. Based on my interaction with many of you here in this room I would not hesitate to recommend Edgewood to any student of color. Through your dedication and commitment you've made this place a gem of an institution. I say that sincerely.

I'd also like to pay tribute to the wonderful Sinsinawa sisters who have created a culture of compassion, service and caring that makes this a very special and comfortable place for students. Many students of color especially blacks and Latinos have a strong religious base and want to give back to their communities so the culture you've created is very compatible with these students' value system.

However I need you to do more. I need you to find value where you may have seldom found it before. Back in the late 60s when I was in school, my white colleagues used to tell me that when they got control of these institutions they were going to change things. Any of you remember those type of discussions? Well you're in control now and we're still waiting for that change.

You see collectively and individually faculty have more power to promote cultural diversity than any other group on campus. Faculty can make respect for diversity part of the cultural fabric of the campus through reading assignments, through class projects, through field trips, through the establishments of majors; you're in a position to teach pluralism across the curriculum. Students can research Hispanic literature; engage CEO's of Minority owned businesses over the Internet-Faculty are only limited by their imagination.

We can continue to send students out of here with only superficial knowledge of others or we can recognize that promoting multiculturalism is not simply feigning tolerance but is an essential key to our survival as a society in a "united" nation. Nobody wants to be just tolerated-we all need to be celebrated! Just imagine if we could have educated the guy I went to high school with-Rush Limbaugh in a multicultural setting. He could have used his considerable talents to unite us rather than polarize us.

One of the keys to creating faculty acceptance and support for a larger minority student presence is to make it clear to faculty early on that we are not asking you to sacrifice standards; that what we're



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talking about is doing a better job for all students. Faculty must understand that when the environment is improved for some students, it's improved for all students.

One of the things I like about Edgewood College is its accessibility for disabled students. Students in wheelchairs don't have to worry about opening doors-all they have to do is push a button. That means that any student who has his/her hands full, can push that same button. When you improve the environment for some students, you improve it for all. When they started tutoring programs for minorities on our campuses in the early days, tutoring was soon expanded to include all students. When they let black students in during the 60s in significant numbers, for the first time many working class white students were let in too. When you improve the environment for some students, you improve it for all students. Or as Jesse Jackson would say, "a rising tide lifts all boats."

Sensitive faculty recognize that there is genius and creativity in minority communities. Cindy Rollins, Tambura and many others in this room expect Latino doctors and women leaders; they know that this country is just an attitude away from electing its first black president and despite all that bell curve nonsense; As Rev. Tyrone Crider says, for every Albert Einstein, there is a George Washington Carver, for every Barbara Bush, there is a Coretta Scott King and for every Bob Hope, there is a Bill Cosby.

So we shouldn't be afraid to bring these kids to Edgewood and help them develop their full potential. Who knows what future scientist will walk through our doors if we make recruitment and retention of minority students an institutional priority.

Class of 2011

Before I sit down let me tell you about two potential members of the class of 2011. Kemet and Maureen. You've seen their faces circulating around the room. I've known both of these kids since they were in the womb. I've watched them grow and seen their unique personalities develop. For the past six years my wife Camilla, Kemet, Maureen and I have engaged in boo-koo activities.

We even survived the tunnel of terror at Vilas zoo this past Halloween. Kemet is my grandson. He's my little prince. I held him up the night he was born and whispered the first secret in his ear. Unfortunately last month my son moved his family to LA so I miss el brato very much. I want Kemet to have the same opportunities as Maureen.

Maureen claims she's a city girl living in the country. She lives right outside of Blanchardville and goes to Pecatonica Elementary School. Maureen's mother and I use to run a small publishing house. Maureen



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was born right at the time we were hosting a publishing conference and I needed her mother to return to work as soon as possible.

Because I was paying her what I would call an Edgewood salary she and her husband couldn't afford childcare so she wanted to bring Maureen to work. I had about a thousand reasons why that was a bad ideal until I saw the little one asleep in our make shift crib and my heart melted. Looking back, I guess it was a little extreme to force her mother Elizabeth to struggle with me each night to take Maureen home.

Since Maureen and Kemet have grown up together they long ago put race into perspective. They argue like typical kids and yes you did, no you didn't gets played out ad infinitum.

Why am I telling you this?

Because Edgewood has considered kids like Maureen (female and rural) its ideal student for years. I want us to see both Maureen and Kemet as our ideal students and welcome both of them. When you see Kemet as I do you'll know that he may someday wander at the beauty of the universe, or seek cures for uncommon diseases and dream of a world in which poverty has been conquered.

Why I'm Speaking Out On This Issue

Although I've only been on campus a short while I think it's very important that I weigh in on this issue not only to support minority students here who have spoken out so passionately in the past and not only to support the staff and faculty who have lent their voices to this effort. But also because of Kemet and Maureen-it's personal for me.

Thirty years ago when I was in college, I could have graduated from Edgewood and never have been taught by a black instructor. In fact there were no tenured black instructors back then. 10 years ago when my son was in college he could have gone all the way through Edgewood and never be taught by an instructor of color in most majors here. 10 years from now, my grandson will be ready for college and what we decide today and tomorrow will determine whether or not he goes through his college years and be taught by an African-American instructor.

It would be a tragedy not only for Kemet but also for Maureen as well, to come here and not be taught by a person of color or exposed to the world's cultures. Shakespeare is all right, but so are James Baldwin and Alex Haley. You see wisdom knows no skin color!



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In Closing

In closing, like many of you I want the doors of equal educational opportunity to always remain open and for us to look forward to a time when diversity is just taken for granted. I wanted to bring my appeal directly to you because I know the value of a good education and how it can transform lives and communities.

I know what caring teachers can do. My first grade teacher was over 90 years old when she died last year. In 1956 when I entered first grade my class was the first to integrate May Green elementary school in Cape Girardeau, MO. All my teachers were white and I didn't know how they would treat me. I had just lost my mother the year before and I felt like a lost little kid; but my first grade teacher showed me that she cared. She taught my twin sister Charlotte and me how to read and write. She could have said oh those kids can't learn and I'm not going to waste my time on them. But she expected us to learn and not only that, to excel.

Up until the time of her death, she wrote me a letter at least once a year. After her funeral, her daughter wrote to tell me how much I meant to her mother and I responded, "Hey"—you have that backwards—your mother meant so very much to me. I know many of you could have the same type of impact on students of color as my first grade teacher had on me. I hope you don't mind me talking to you in such a personal way but this whole issue of minority recruitment is extremely important to me because it speaks to our core values.

Not that I'm counting the days, but I get to visit my grandson Kemet in LA in 14 days, 7 hours, 33 minutes—alright I'm counting. Although he's still too young to understand, I want to be able to tell him that his Papa was given a chance to stand before the faculty who teach at Edgewood College and ask them to prepare a place for him and kids like him at the table in 2011. And when I asked, I want to be able to tell him you answered yes.

And like any typical 6-year old he'll probably say, "That's fine papa, but when do we eat?"

Thank you.

TRANSPARENCIES (Remember—this was before Power Point ☺)

1. HOW 5TH PRIORITY IS CURRENTLY WRITTEN VS. SUGGESTED LANGUAGE



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2. KEY EDUCATIONAL MARKETS

3. LOW BIRTH RATES

4. WHY THE GLOBAL EDUCATION INITIATIVE SHOULD STAND ON ITS OWN

5. IMMIGRATION TRANSPARENCY

6. WHY FACULTY SHOULD EMBRACE THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF MINORITY STUDENTS, STAFF AND FACULTY AS A KEY INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITY

7. HOW WHITE STUDENTS BENEFIT WHEN THERE IS A CRITICAL MASS OF MINORITY STUDENTS PRESENT

8. BARRIERS TO RECRUITING FACULTY OF COLOR

9. MEET TWO MEMBERS OF THE CLASS OF 2011

10. WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

11. WHY I'M SPEAKING OUT ON THIS ISSUE

12. CONCLUSION