



Scholarship of Multicultural Teaching and Learning

Matthew Kaplan and A. T. Miller, eds.; Jossey-Bass, 2007.

Reviewed by Dr. Frances S. Johnson, Director, Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning and Associate Professor, Department of Writing Arts, Rowan University

This brief book “examine[s] a multitude of examples from across the curriculum using highly varied strategies to deliver multicultural content and investigate its impact,” says co-editors Matthew Kaplan and A. T. Miller. The text consists of twelve chapters, well grounded in theory, illustrated by practice, and supported by assessments. The chapters that make up this volume were begun as scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) projects, stemming from the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) and the former American Association of Higher Education. CASTL sponsored an initiative and invited universities to participate by forming clusters of interest to enhance diversity and multicultural awareness. The University of Michigan led one of the clusters. This cluster consisted of Penn and Ohio State, and the Universities of Iowa, Missouri, and Minnesota. Participants investigated an area related to diversity and created an action research project based in their respective universities. The volume reports their work and like any other SoTL projects, they are sharing their findings and making their research public. Each chapter is well organized and discusses what the project entailed, reviews the pertinent research, describes and analyzes the projects’ findings, and makes overall conclusions for future action. The short chapters are very quick reads with ample description and lengthy bibliographies for further study.

The opening chapter reviews the impact of the decline of affirmative action and serves as an excellent backdrop for the volume. The affect on university enrollments at flagship universities has led to “significant decreases in graduate and professional school enrollments of underrepresented students,” writes Susan Kaufmann. She goes on to point out that “students of all races who experience the benefits and challenges of living and learning among diverse peers develop the capacity for more original and critical thinking . . . and she goes on to tell us that “students educated in highly diverse educational settings” are more valued by their employers. So the question becomes, how do we as educators and faculty developers reinvigorate our courses and instill a sense of multicultural awareness on campuses that are growing less and less diverse. The remainder of the text gives us suggestions for addressing these issues.

As one might also expect, a decline in minority enrollments has also produced a corresponding decline in the number of minority faculty. Teaching and researching in institutions where minority enrollments are falling is taking a toll on faculty as well. Consequently, minority faculty find themselves increasingly dealing with many institutional and professional challenges in less diverse environments. Chapter 2, “Faculty Members Social Identities and Classroom Authority” reports that “younger female faculty, younger faculty of color, especially younger female faculty of color consistently report more challenges to substantive expertise and more pain and discomfort (sometimes anger as well) in dealing with those challenges.” Furthermore, the challenges that these faculty reported in the series of interviews show that challenges are not often “aggressive or pernicious,” implying they are less explicit. Moreover, many of them come from students: “There remains the issue of what it means for professors to appear in front of a classroom in possession of bodies that do not match the image that many students associate with the professoriate.” This chapter ends with a series of steps and suggestions for action that are timely and thoughtful.

The remaining chapters go on to discuss individual research projects, and they present training framework that can be implemented on any campus. If you have an interest in adding a more global perspective to your course, using service learning as a means to teach diversity, or training TAs through a series of readings, this text explains the “how to.” For instance, the chapter on “Diversity and Retention in Engineering,” a perennial issue for anyone teaching in the sciences as well, suggests a three-step agenda to increasing retention. The chapter on “Singing Down the Barriers,” discusses the results of a doctoral seminar that included the performance of African America spirituals as part of the curriculum. A variety of methods of engagement are suggested—including readings, case studies, and role-plays—and all of these suggestions are placed in a variety of course levels—introductory, general education, graduate studies. In addition, each project is situated in a distinct discipline: American studies, political science, mathematics, and instructional technology, to name a few. The volume offers a number of curricular reforms and provides concrete plans for focus groups, reflective writing, measurements of skills and attitudes that can be put into practice. The models also can provide an example of how one conducts this type of research and begins multicultural-based research projects, but also how to craft SoTL projects that lead to publication. Finally, the approach of the book speaks well to the busy professional who is looking for a blend of theory and practice to provide insights, spur dialogue, and encourage a respect for difference in what seems to be an increasingly intolerant and less diverse society.



[Table of Contents](#) | [Issues](#) | [Credits](#) |
[NTLF.com Home](#)

© Copyright 1996-2008. Published by *James Rhem & Associates, Inc.*
(ISSN 1057-2880) All rights reserved worldwide.