

# Research Brief

## Diversity at Pepperdine University, Part I: Structural Diversity

Lisa E. Bortman, EdD  
Lily Pang, MBA  
Jazmin I. Zane, PhD  
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### INTRODUCTION

*Diversity*—which for this brief is defined as attracting and serving a population of diverse racial and ethnic groups—is important to higher education, but is also a core value at faith-based institutions, whether it is implicit or stated explicitly in their mission. At Pepperdine University, diversity is one of the five goals of the University’s Strategic Plan, is found in the Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs), and was a theme of Pepperdine’s self-study for the WASC reaffirmation process (in 2012). Hence, supporting and growing the minority population at Pepperdine is clearly an important institutional initiative. However, it can be challenging to move beyond statements about diversity’s importance, to actual actions related specifically to diversity.

This research brief will be the first of a two-part series on diversity at Pepperdine University. This first brief (Part I) will explain the components of racial climate and structural diversity, and the second forthcoming brief (Part II) will discuss the psychological dimension of diversity. Both briefs will present Pepperdine diversity data.

The benefits of diversity to student learning and development in higher education have been well established in the literature (Antonio, Chang, Hakuta, Kenny, Levin & Milken, 2004; Hurtado, Griffin, Arellano, & Cuellar, 2008; Hurtado & Alvarado, 2013). The desire to move toward a more inclusive environment, with an increased understanding of diverse perspectives, has been in direct response to the changing demographics and globalization of society. The shift from exclusivity to open access has led to many changes in higher education and to an increasingly diverse student population. The student body has also become more international with the increase of foreign nationals choosing a U.S. education (Hu & Kuh, 2003). Structural diversity in the classroom brings the need for diversity in the curriculum. A curriculum that addresses multiple perspectives and views beyond those of the U.S. majority population has become a critical element of students’ education. Employers expect new graduates to be able to work with diverse populations, different cultures, and in global settings. Thus, it is essential to provide students with diverse experiences in all aspects of their education, including interactions with peers and faculty, in curriculum, and through co-curricular opportunities (Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008).

Structural and curricular diversity have contributed to positive student learning outcomes and improved student development. Diverse student learning

### KEY FINDINGS

- ⇒ Pepperdine University’s minority student population is steadily increasing with female minority students performing as well as, or often better than, the majority population.
- ⇒ Seaver College’s student population has experienced population growth in most ethnic groups, particularly among Latinos and Asians.
- ⇒ Ethnic proportions among faculty have remained stable, leading to a disparity between the student and faculty ethnic distributions.
- ⇒ Faculty ethnic and racial distributions are similar to national trends.

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environments increase students' ability to understand different perspectives and improve "intergroup relations" (Hu & Kuh, 2003). When students interact with diverse peers, they learn to become more open to diversity. Research demonstrates that white students gain more from working with diverse student groups than do minority students, which could be the result of white students' having fewer opportunities than students of color to interact with others from different backgrounds. Hu and Kuh (2003) report, "The results of this study suggest that efforts to bring together students from different backgrounds will likely yield benefits to all participants, particularly in developing students' capacity to understand human relations and work with different people in the academic settings, as well as in other domains" (p. 331).

At faith-based institutions, understanding and embracing diversity is a foundational value. A fundamental teaching of Christianity is to treat people fairly, justly, and lovingly. Jesus taught that the most important commandment is "to love the Lord God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind" and that the next-greatest command is to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-39; Luke 10:27). In his letter to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul writes, "So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. Together, we are his house," (Eph. 2:19-20, NLT).

## RACIAL CLIMATE AND DIVERSITY

Racial climate is defined as "part of the institutional context that includes community members' attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, and expectations around issues of race, ethnicity and diversity" (Hurtado et al., 2008, p. 205). Hurtado and colleagues describe four climate-related dimensions of colleges and universities: compositional or structural dimension, psychological dimension, behavioral dimension, and the institution's history and legacy of inclusion or exclusion. A brief summary of each element is discussed.

*Structural dimension.* The structural dimension, as defined by Hurtado et al., is "the physical presence of previously underrepresented groups at a particular institution" (p. 207). It is usually measured by looking at enrollment figures and the percentage of underrepresented students, faculty, or staff on a given campus. Structural diversity can also be measured by looking at underrepresented groups' access to programs and resources, retention and graduation rates, representation in organizations and groups, access to programs and resources, and in measures of student achievement such as graduate school, honor societies, competitive majors, and other forms of excellence (Hurtado et al., 2008). Structural diversity is often the most visible and the most common measure of diversity, but it is just one component. Thus, it is not enough to focus only on increasing the number of individuals from underrepresented populations among staff, faculty, or student body without also addressing the other components of diversity (Hurtado et al., 2008).

*Psychological dimension.* The psychological dimension refers to a community's perception of commitment to diversity and support for diverse groups, as well as the perception of discrimination and racial conflict. These perceptions can differ between different cultural groups and among different individuals (Hurtado et al., 2008). Hurtado and colleagues stress that students of color have more direct encounters with discrimination and have also observed more acts of discrimination than have their white peers, which will affect their environmental perception. Moreover, the perception of a hostile environment has been shown to negatively impact psychological well-being and academic achievement. When students perceive their campus as discriminatory, they have less academic integration, social integration, and institutional commitment. All of these factors have been demonstrated in the literature to have a direct effect on retention and academic success (Hurtado et al., 2008; Pascarella & Terrenzini, 2005).

*Behavioral dimension.* The behavioral dimension of a campus climate refers to participation and access and can be measured by examining the number and type of interactions among different groups of students, enrollment in diversity-related courses, and participation in diversity-related programs. These measurements are conducted in order to measure "levels of engagement with diversity" (Hurtado et al., 2008, p. 209).

*Institution's legacy of inclusion or exclusion.* The influence of an institution's legacy of inclusion or exclusion is largely unaddressed in campus racial climate survey research because it involves a more in-depth study of norms that may be embedded in campus culture, traditions, policies, and historical mission (Hurtado et al., 2008, p. 206).

## PEPPERDINE FACULTY DIVERSITY: STRUCTURAL DIMENSION

Turner et al. (2008) published a synthesis of 20 years of research publications entitled, "Faculty of Color in Academe: What 20 Years of Literature Tells Us," which contained a synthesis of 252 publications reporting on major findings in the literature. This synthesis supported the finding that diversity in the faculty improves academic success of diverse students. In addition, the value of diversity in the faculty helps institutional efforts in diversifying the student body.

Once you believe that every human being is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), then you have to grant the immense dignity and eternal worth of every human being.

-Darryl Tippens, Provost  
Pepperdine University

Hiring and retaining underrepresented faculty has been challenging for most universities. Turner et al. (2008) found that:

undervaluation of their [underrepresented faculty] research interests, approaches, and theoretical frameworks and challenges to their credentials and intellect in the classroom contribute to their dissatisfaction with their professional roles. In addition isolation, perceived biases in the hiring process, unrealistic expectations of doing their work and being representatives of their racial/ethnic group and accent discrimination are noted negatives described in the literature. (p.143)

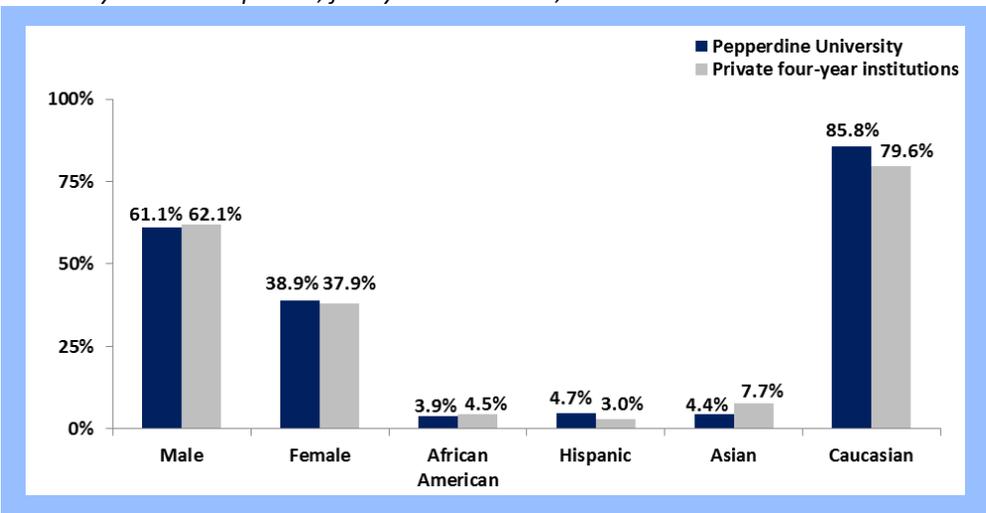
These factors contribute to difficulties in both recruiting and retaining underrepresented faculty. Turner et al. (2008) stressed the importance of mentoring faculty through the tenure process, in order to help successfully retain faculty.

## FACULTY DATA

When comparing 2011 Pepperdine University data to national data (i.e., IPEDS category of full-time institutional faculty at “private not-for-profit, degree granting baccalaureate or above institutions”), Pepperdine was higher than national data for white faculty (85.8% versus 79.6% nationally), and Latino faculty (4.7% versus 3.0% nationally). In regards to gender representation, 61.1% of Pepperdine faculty was male, and 38.9% was female, percentages which are similar to national trends (Figure 1). When examining data from 2009–2011, these trends remained relatively stable—that is, faculty members were predominantly white at Pepperdine during those years (Figure 2).

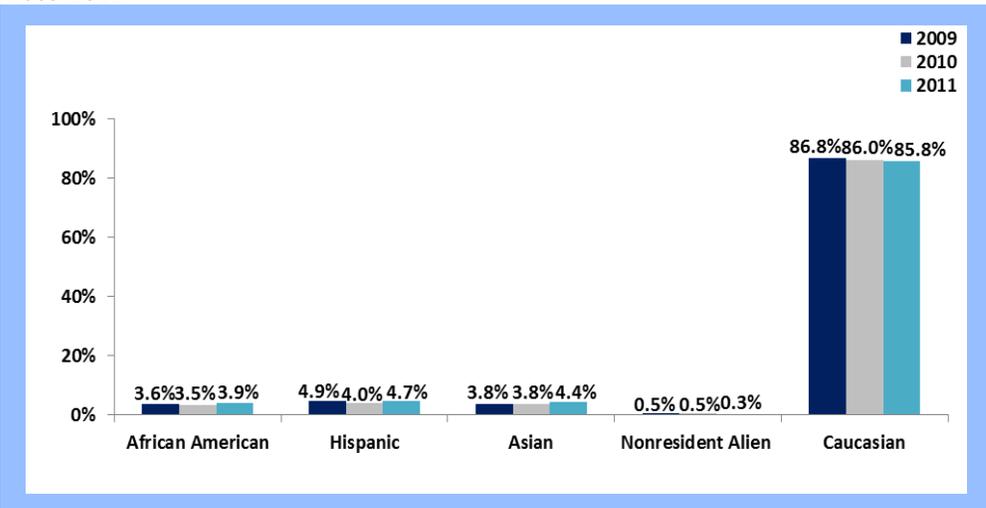
Overall, faculty diversity has changed little over the years as white males continue to make up the majority of the faculty, both at Pepperdine University and nationally.

Figure 1. Gender and ethnicity of full-time faculty (tenured and tenure track) at Pepperdine University and at U.S. private, four-year institutions, 2011



Pepperdine University  $n = 386$ .  
 Private four-year institutions  $n = 123,524$ .  
 Source: IPEDS Data Center, and PeopleSoft. Private four-year institutions refer to “private not-for-profit, degree-granting with primarily baccalaureate or above” institutions.

Figure 2. Ethnicity of Pepperdine University full-time faculty (tenured and tenure track), 2009-2011

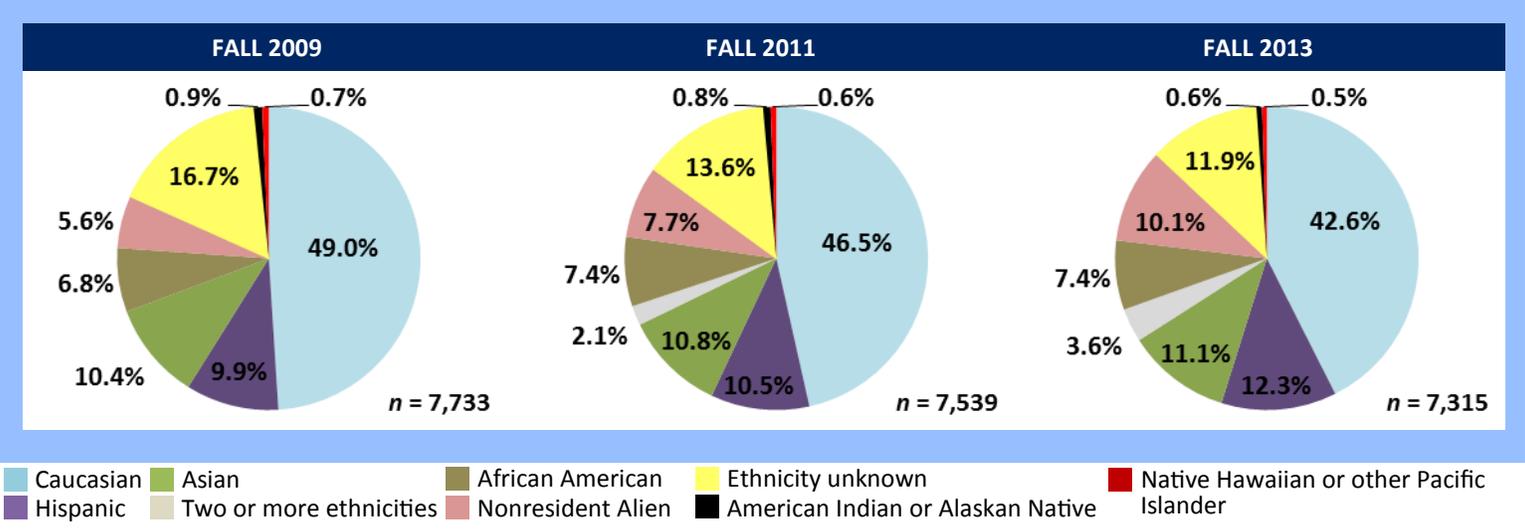


2009  $n = 365$ .  
 2010  $n = 372$ .  
 2011  $n = 386$ .  
 Source: PeopleSoft, 2009-2011.

## PEPPERDINE STUDENT DIVERSITY: STRUCTURAL DIMENSION

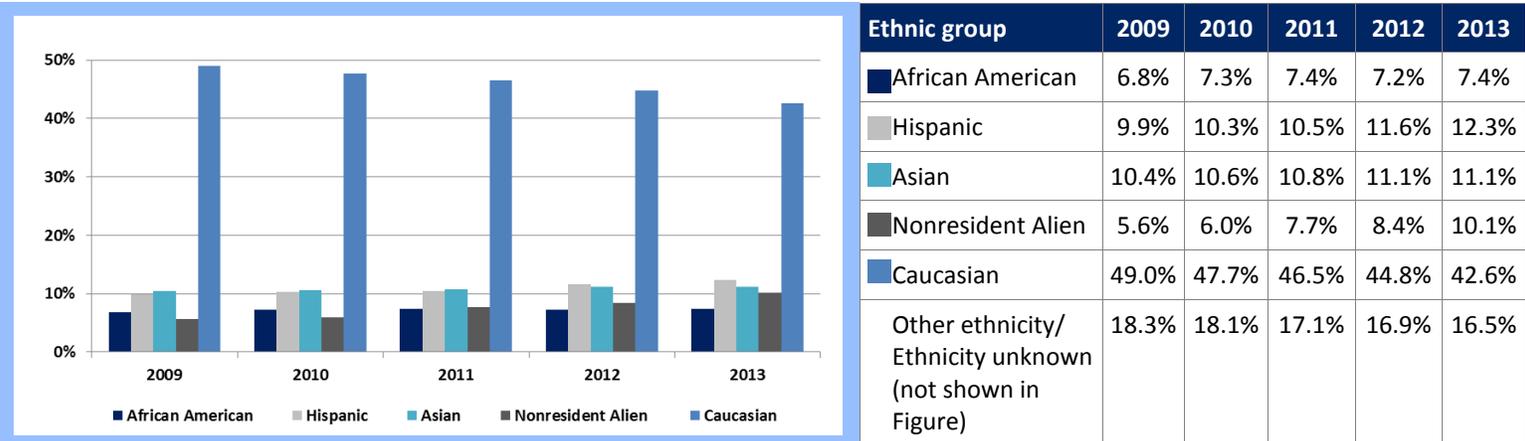
Although Pepperdine University is composed predominantly of white faculty and students, the white student population has been steadily declining. Among all five schools, the white student body decreased from 49.0% in 2009 to 42.6% in 2013 (Figure 3). This trend was more pronounced at Seaver College, where the percentage of white students decreased from 59.3% of the total student body in 2009 to 43.1% in 2013. In addition, a growing number of ethnic groups are represented in the University's study body overall (Figure 4). For the whole university, Latinas made up 9.9% of the population in 2009 but grew to 12.3% in 2013. The nonresident alien population grew from 5.6% to 10.1%. The Asian and African American population for the entire university grew at much smaller rate. At Seaver College, more Latino, Asian, and nonresident alien students were enrolled. The African American student population at Seaver College remained relatively stable, at approximately 6.6%.

Figure 3. Pepperdine University total student enrollment by ethnicity, 2009, 2011, and 2013



Source: PeopleSoft, 2009, 2011, and 2013.

Figure 4. Pepperdine University diversity trend for selected student population, 2009 -2013



2009 n = 7,733.  
 2010 n = 7,604.  
 2011 n = 7,539.  
 2012 n = 7,319.  
 2013 n = 7,315.

Source: PeopleSoft, 2009-2013.  
 Source: PeopleSoft, 2009-2013. "Other ethnicity/Ethnicity unknown" includes American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, two or more ethnicities, and ethnicity unknown. Selected data are not displayed in Figure, as noted in Table.

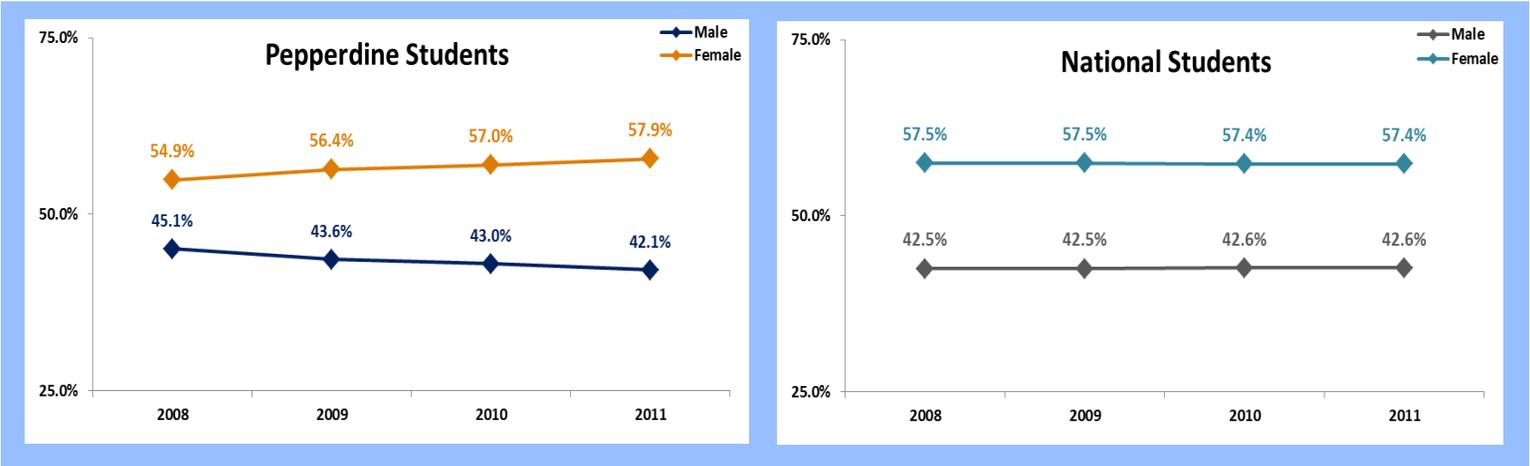
With respect to gender, male-to-female ratios have also changed at Pepperdine University. In 2008, there were 45.1% men ( $n = 3,435$ ) and 54.9% women ( $n = 4,179$ ); but, in 2011, the ratio changed, with women representing 57.9% of the population ( $n = 4,364$ ) and men 42.1% of the population ( $n = 3,175$ ; Figure 5). Examining gender and ethnicity revealed that between 2009 and 2013, the Population of Latina students grew from 10.3% to 13.0%, which was more pronounced than growth in the numbers of Latino men (9.4% to 11.3%). The growth in the African American population, whether male or female, remained constant, at approximately 5.4% for men, and 8.5% for women. The proportion of nonresident alien women increased at a higher rate (5.0% to 10.1%) when compared to nonresident alien men (6.4% to 10.2%). The Asian population grew more evenly among both genders, with Asian men increasing from 10.8% to 11.8%, and women from 10.2% to 10.7%.

Seaver College graduation rates revealed more minority and white female undergraduates graduated within six years than did males

(Figure 6). The six-year overall graduation rate at Seaver College (for both genders) is 80.5%; the rate is 85.0% for women and 75.0% for men. African Americans, however, have a much larger gender gap, with 97.1% of African American women graduating in six years but only 47.8% of African American men reaching that status. Similarly, another large gender gap exists in the Latino student body, with Latina students graduating in six years at a rate of 96.4%, while male Latino students graduate at a rate of 75.7%. White women have a graduation rate of 84.9%, which is higher than the 76.5% rate of white men. However, a reverse trend was observed among Asians, with 79.2% of Asian women and 83.3% of Asian men graduating within six years.

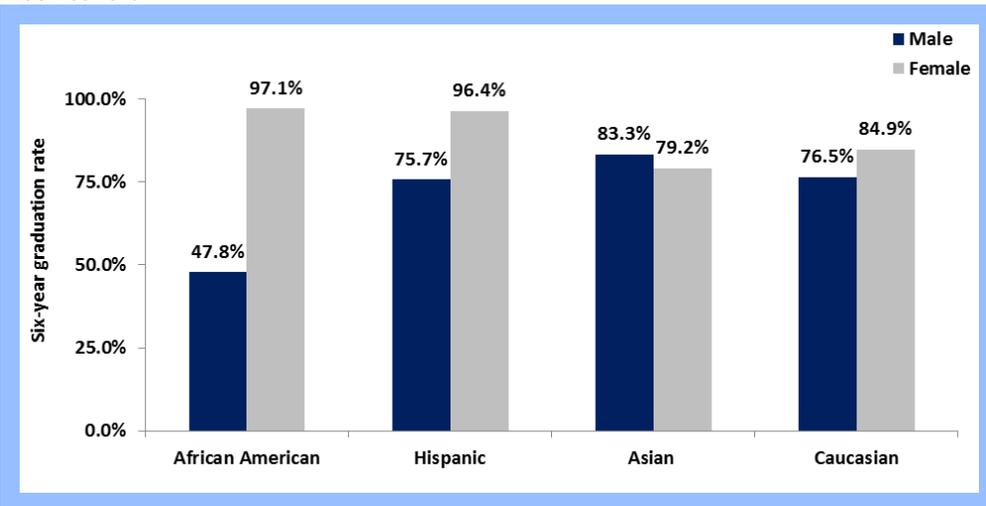
Overall, Pepperdine's minority student population has steadily increased, with female minority students performing as well as, and often better than, the majority population.

Figure 5. Student population of Pepperdine University and of U.S. private, four-year institutions, 2008-2011



Pepperdine University: 2008  $n = 7,614$ ; 2009  $n = 7,733$ ; 2010  $n = 7,604$ ; 2011  $n = 7,539$ .  
 U.S. private four-year institutions: 2008  $n = 3,411,705$ ; 2009  $n = 3,511,495$ ; 2010  $n = 3,606,007$ ; 2011  $n = 3,655,024$ .  
 Source: PeopleSoft, 2008-2011

Figure 6. Seaver College undergraduate six-year graduation rates by gender and ethnicity, 2007 cohort



Cohort  $n = 752$ .  
 Source: PeopleSoft, 2013.

## CONCLUSIONS

The value that diversity brings to successful student learning has been established in the literature (Hu & Kuh, 2003). When students are exposed to more diverse groups and settings, they learn from others' perspectives and are better prepared to enter into—and work within—global communities. Pepperdine University's mission posits, "Pepperdine is a Christian university committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and Christian values, where students are strengthened for lives of purpose, service, and leadership." The University's values mean that it sees the importance in directly addressing diversity, educating students to understand the merit of diversity, and teaching the meaning of diversity through the realization of the Christian mission.

Andrew Benton, the President of Pepperdine University, explains, "Pepperdine's commitment to diversity stems from a Christian heritage that compels us to love justice and treat every individual equally with respect and compassion. Our faith also confirms that we are finite and therefore our knowledge is incomplete. It is through the inclusion and experience of others from diverse points of view that we often begin to see dimensions of truth previously unseen by us. Pepperdine views diversity as one facet of the prism of values formed by our mission."

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310-506-6629  
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[oie@pepperdine.edu](mailto:oie@pepperdine.edu)  
<http://oie.pepperdine.edu>