

Evaluating Globally, Assessing Locally

Connecting National Evaluation Paradigms to Campus-Based Assessment Initiatives

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Importance of diversity

- U.S. becoming increasingly more diverse
- U.S. college-going population more diverse (esp. since WW2)
- Need to promote openness to diversity as a crucial learning outcome
- Broad agreement that diversity experiences in college lead to improvement in many critical learning outcomes (Astin 1993a,b; Hu and Kuh 2003; Umbach and Kuh 2003; Shaw 2005)
- Shaw, Emily, J. (2005). “Researching the Educational Benefits of Diversity.” Research Report No. 2005-4. College Entrance Examination Board, New York (www.collegeboard.com)

Aspects of diversity

- Structural diversity (campus heterogeneity)
- Curricular/institutional diversity
- Interactional diversity--the extent to which students from diverse backgrounds come in contact and interact in educationally purposeful ways (Gurin 1999, Hu & Kuh 2003)

Implicit model

Structural Diversity

+ Campus Environment/Curricular Emphasis

----» Interaction with Diverse Others/Ideas

----» Greater Openness to Diversity (Shaw 2005)

“...the number of diverse students [affects] opportunities for interaction across different groups on campus--and ultimately changes in educational outcomes for students.”
(Hurtado et al. 1999)

Previous research

- Students become more tolerant, less authoritarian, and less ethnocentric during college years, suggesting that there may be a corresponding increase in openness to diversity (Pascarella et al. 1996)
- Students' incoming attitudes regarding openness to diversity are the largest factor in predicting their degree of openness at the end of the first year (Pascarella et al. 1996) and at the end of the sophomore and junior years (Whitt et al. 2001), but there is a modest, significant, cumulative impact of diversity experiences during college.
- The frequency of diversity experiences that promote openness to diversity may vary by institution type, class, race, age, and gender (Pascarella et al. 1996, Umbach and Kuh 2003, Hu and Kuh 2003)

Previous research (cont.)

- Students at liberal arts colleges report more frequent experiences with diversity on average than do counterparts at other types of institutions (Umbach 2005)
- The impact of diversity experiences on openness to diversity may be greater on campuses with more structural diversity (Chang 2002, Umbach and Kuh 2003)

Revised “model”

Incoming attitudes Prior experiences Institutional type



Structural Diversity

+ Campus Environment/Curricular Emphasis

----» Interaction with Diverse Others/Ideas

----» Greater Openness to Diversity



Race

Class

Gender

Age

Open questions

- How important are college experiences in promoting openness to diversity? How much does the positive or negative quality of experiences matter? How can campuses identify and increase the frequency and maximize the positive impact of these experiences?
- How do individual campuses differ in the character, frequency, and impact of diversity experiences, and what can be learned from such comparisons?
- What is the variation in the character, frequency of diversity experiences and in growth in openness to diversity among students on single campus?

Open questions (cont.)

- How do students, faculty, and staff understand “diversity”? What ought our diversity goals to be?
- How do students make decisions about college experiences--particularly in regard to those experiences that influence openness to diversity?
- Overall, how good a job are we doing in providing an environment in which openness to diversity grows during college years?

Structure of the presentation

- A. Hampshire College, Allegheny College, Bard College, Hamilton College, Hobart-William Smith Colleges, Hope College, Vassar College, Wabash College, and The Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts / *The Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Experiences*
- B. Bates College, Bowdoin College, Colby College, Middlebury College, Smith College, Trinity College, Wellesley College, NEASC / *Longitudinal Panel Study of the Class of 2010*
- C. Summary and Conclusions

Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education

- 26 institutions
- Approximately 7,500 students
- Longitudinal
 - Follow one class for at least 4 years
- Examine
 - Teaching practices and institutional conditions
 - Outcomes including critical thinking, moral reasoning, openness to diversity, leadership, psychological well-being

2006 institutions

Small colleges

- Alma College
- Bard College
- Columbia College (SC)
- Connecticut College
- Coe College
- Gustavus Adolphus College
- Hamilton College
- Hampshire College
- Hope College
- Wabash College
- Whittier College

Community colleges

- Ivy Tech Community College
- Kirkwood Community College

Larger universities

- Butler University
- San José State University
- University of Kentucky
- University of Michigan
- University of North Carolina
Wilmington
- University of Notre Dame

2007 institutions

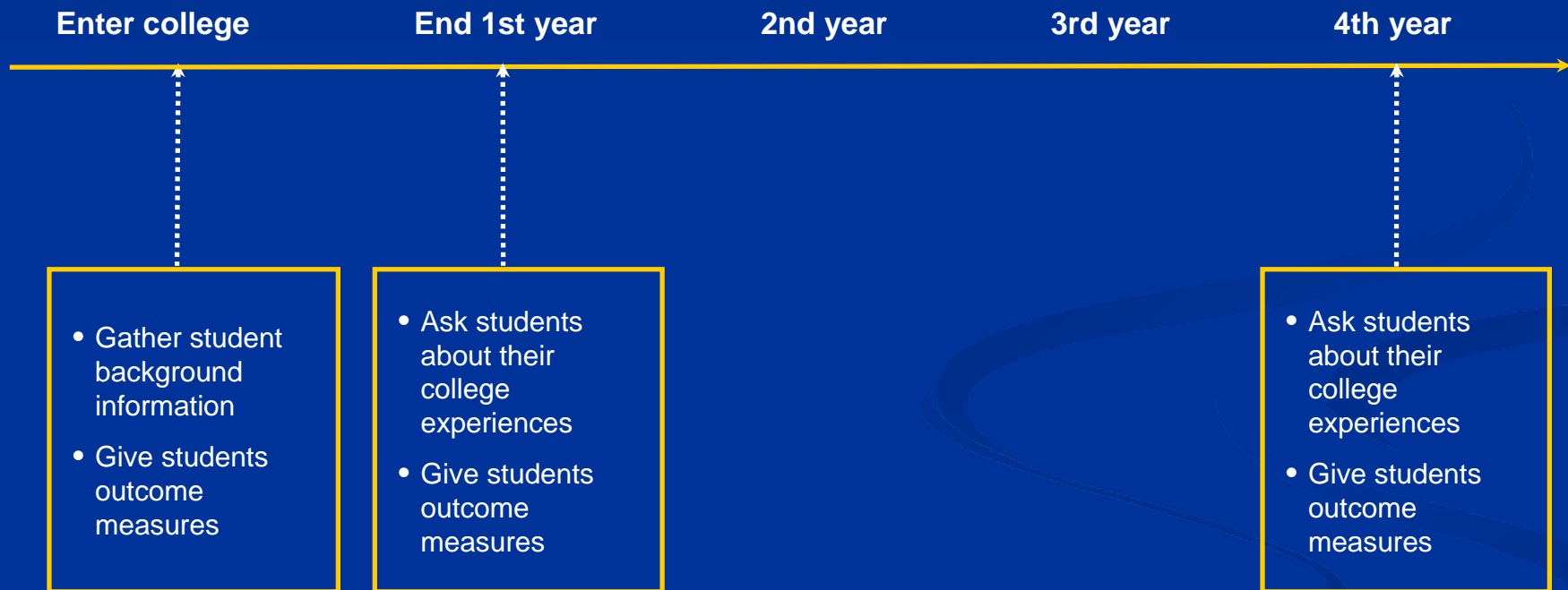
Small colleges

- Allegheny College
- Franklin College
- Vassar College
- Wabash College

Larger universities

- Delaware State University
- Fairfield University
- North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
- University of Rhode Island

Study design



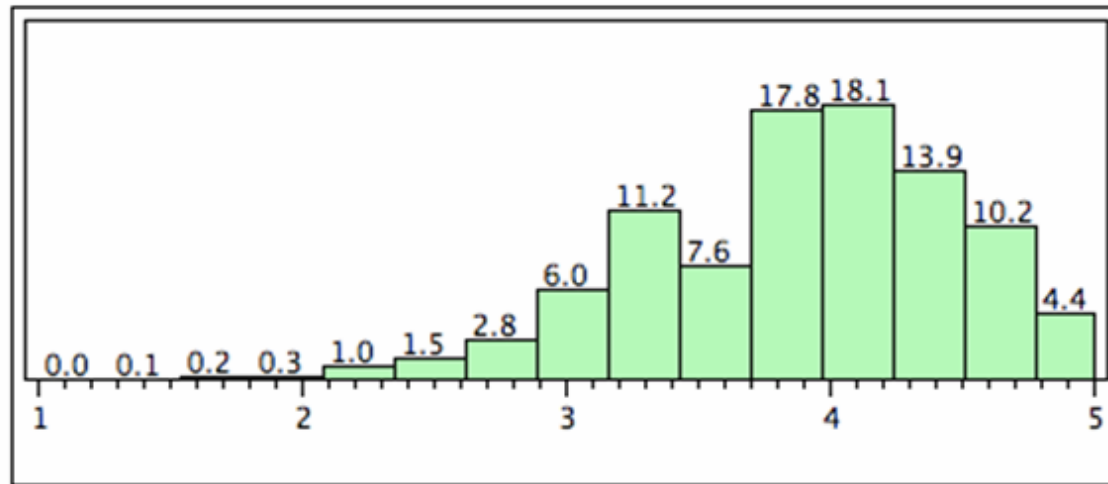
Openness to Diversity scale

- I enjoy having discussions with people whose ideas and values are different from my own.
- The real value of a college education lies in being introduced to different values.
- I enjoy talking with people who have values different from mine because it helps me better understand myself and my values.
- Learning about people from different cultures is a very important part of my college education.
- I enjoy taking courses that challenge my beliefs and values.
- The courses I enjoy most are those that make me think about things from a different perspective.
- Contact with individuals whose backgrounds (e.g., race, national origin, sexual orientation) are different from my own is an essential part of my college education.

Openness to Diversity scale

Fall

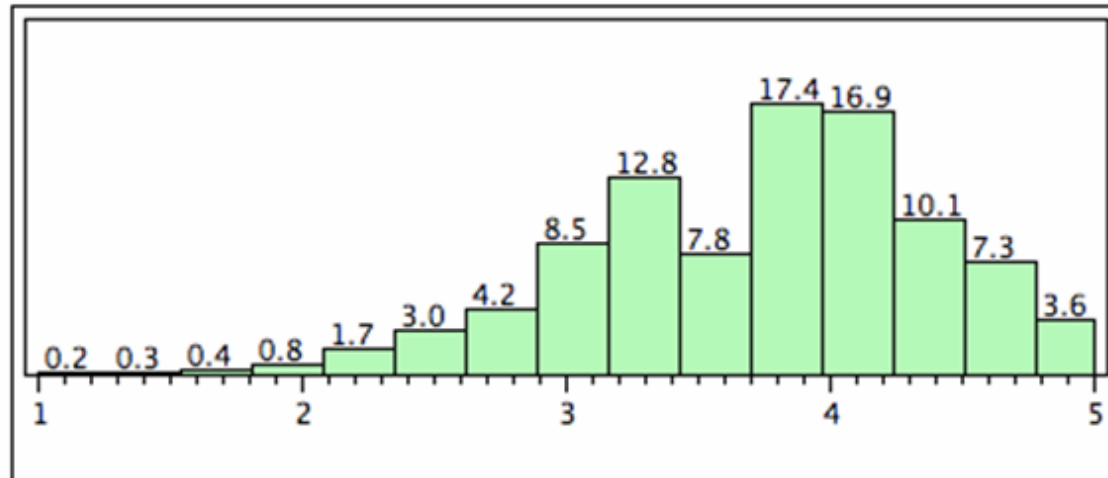
Mean = 3.93



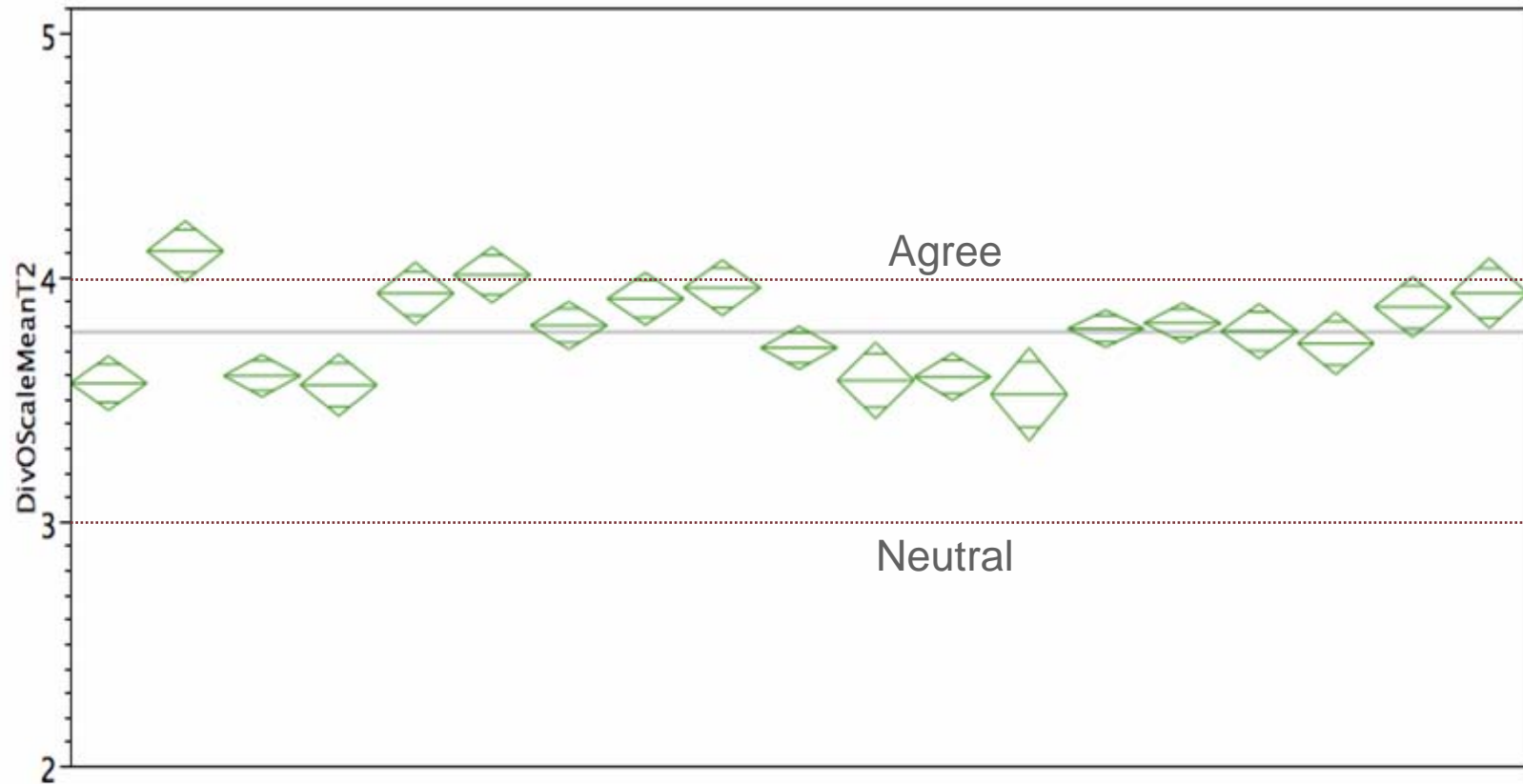
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Spring

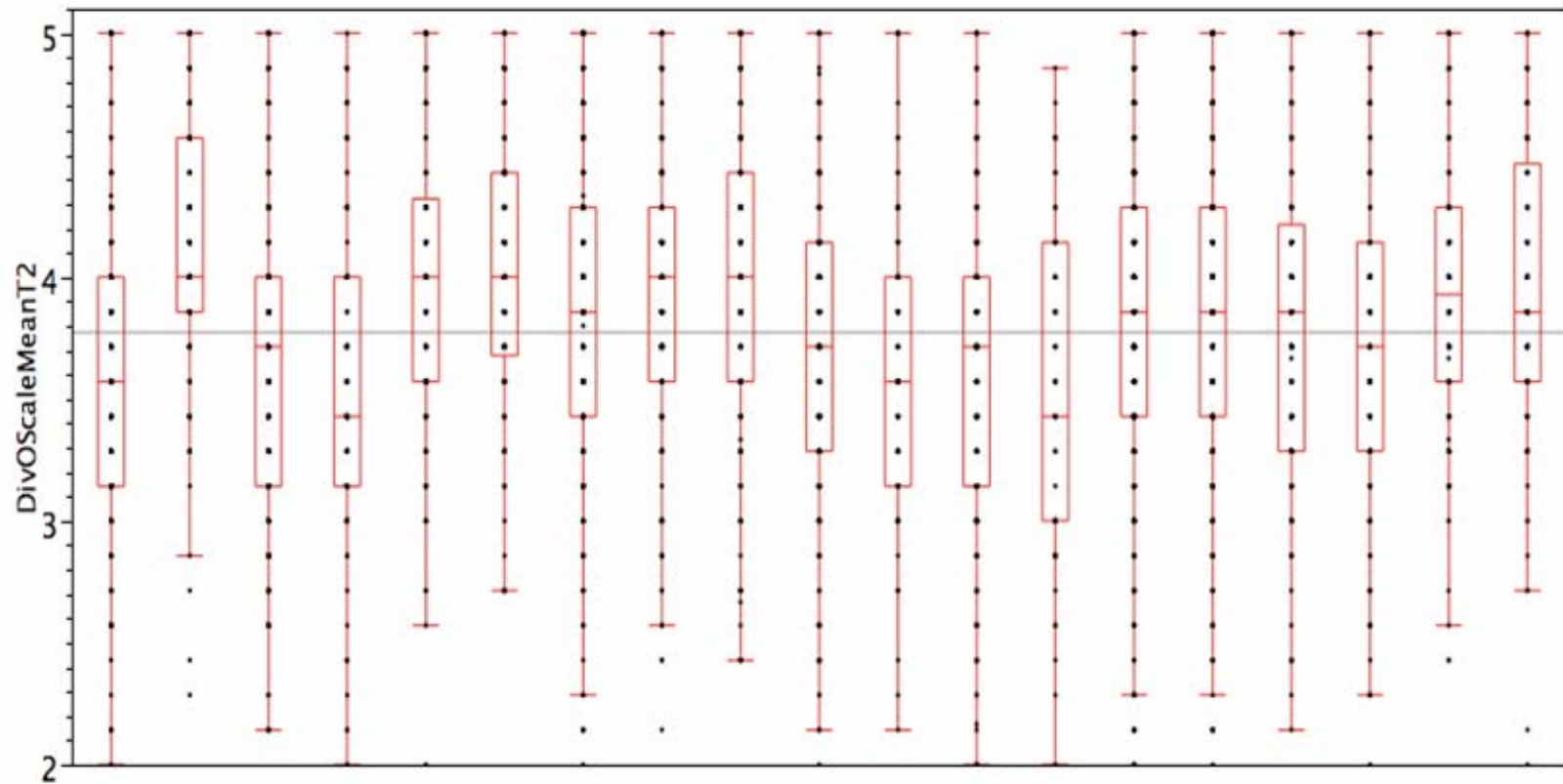
Mean = 3.77



Variation across institutions



Variation within institutions



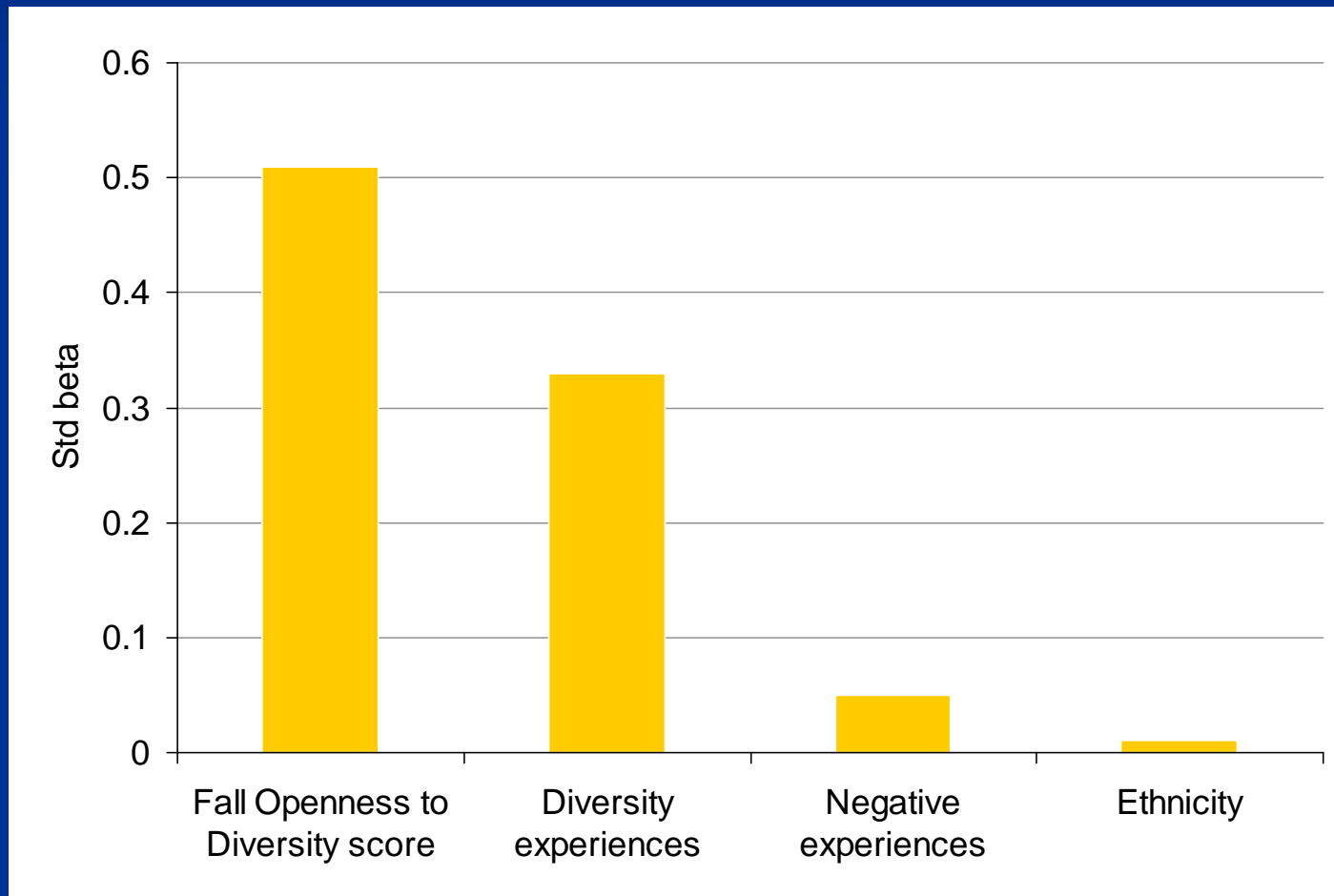
Effective teaching practices and conditions

- Good teaching and high quality faculty interactions
 - Instructional skill, clarity, organization, and preparation
 - High-impact interactions outside of class
- Challenge and high expectations
 - Integration of ideas across contexts
 - Exams/assignments that require synthesis and analysis
- Diversity experiences
 - Experiencing diverse ideas and people
 - Meaningful discussions with diverse students

Diversity experiences

- How often have you attended a debate or lecture on a current political/social issue during this academic year?
- In your experience at your institution during the current school year, how often have you had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own? (NSSE)
- In your experience at your institution during the current school year, how often have you had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values? (NSSE)
- How often have you participated in a racial or cultural awareness workshop during this academic year?

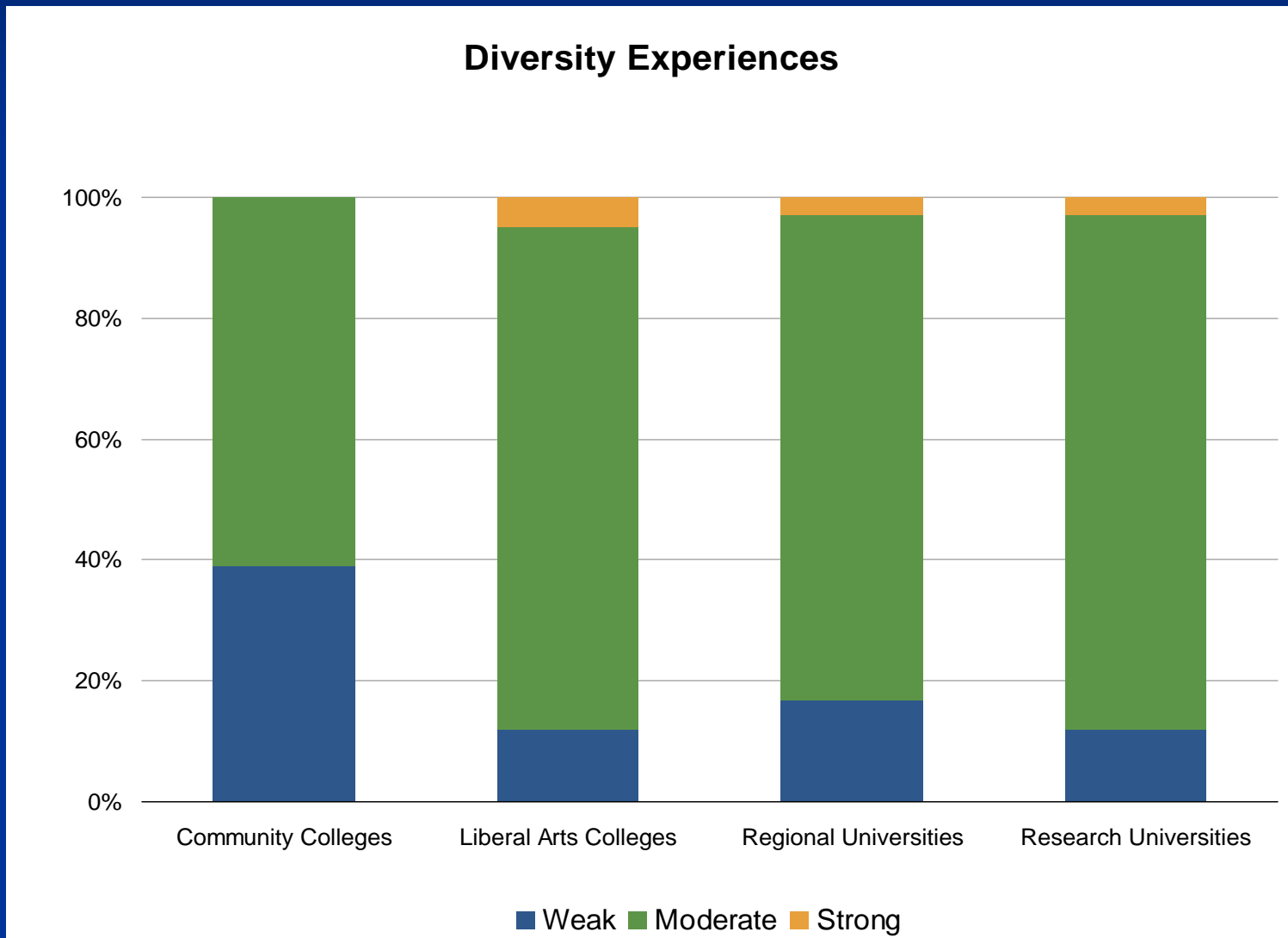
Impact of diversity experiences



Criteria for diversity experiences

- Student reports on diversity experiences
 - Strong – *often* or *very often*
 - Moderate – *sometimes* or *occasionally*
 - Weak – *never* or *rarely*

Experiences by institutional type



National Data

Case 1

- Medium structural diversity
- Diversity experiences – moderate effect
- Negative experiences – no effect
- Ethnicity – small effect ($w > \text{soc}$)

Action

Case 2

- Medium structural diversity
- Diversity experiences – moderate effect
- Negative experiences – small effect
- Ethnicity – no effect

Action

Case 3

- High structural diversity
- Diversity experiences – large effect
- Negative experiences – small effect
- Ethnicity – small effect ($w < \text{soc}$)

Action

Case 4

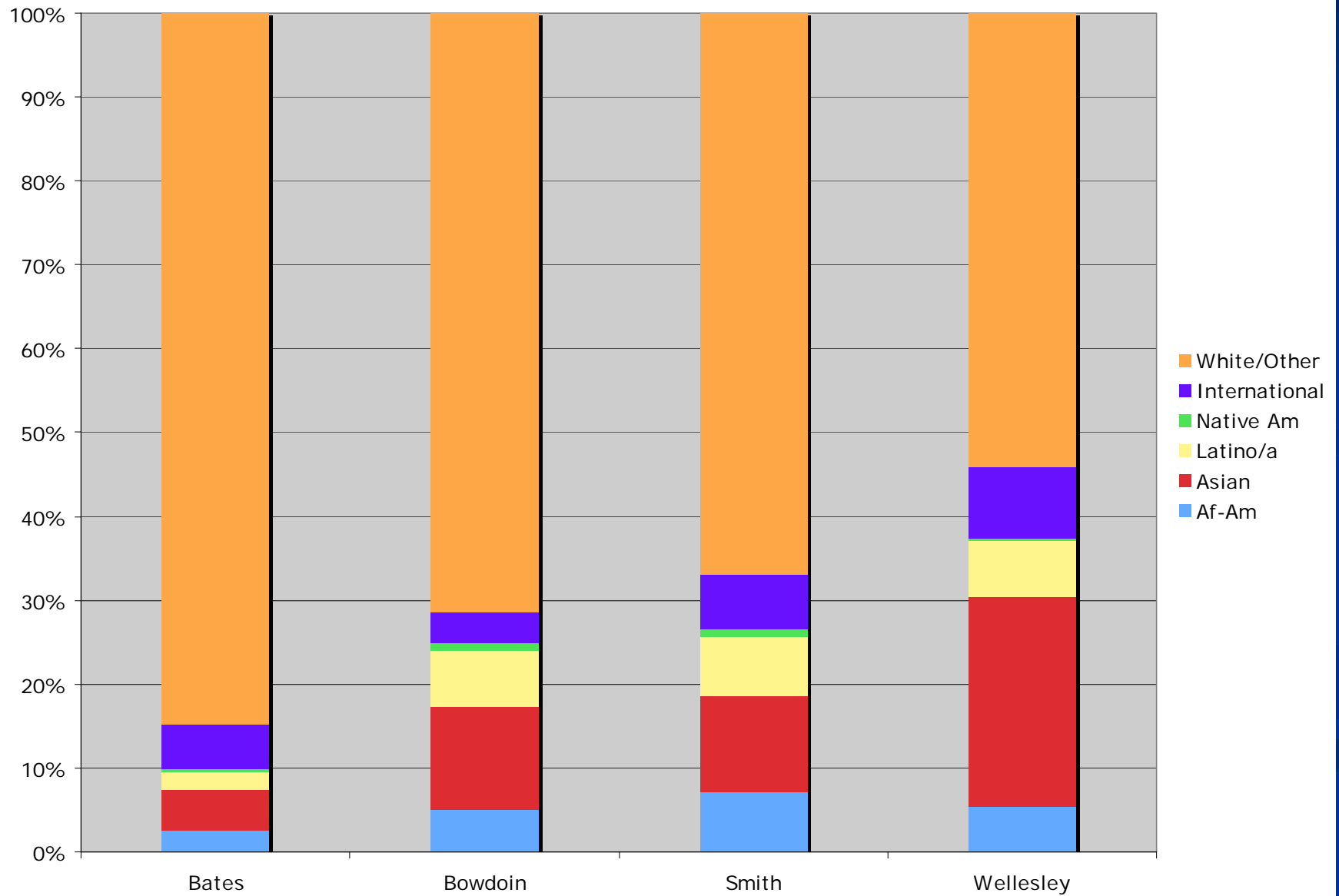
- High structural diversity
- Diversity experiences – moderate effect
- Negative experiences – no effect
- Ethnicity – small effect ($w < \text{soc}$)

Action

Liberal Arts Consortium on Assessment and Student Learning

- Three-year grant from the Teagle Foundation (2005 – 2008)
- Participating institutions
 - Bates College
 - Bowdoin College
 - Colby College
 - Middlebury College
 - Smith College
 - Trinity College
 - Wellesley College
 - NEASC

Structural Diversity



Major questions addressed by the project

- How do students make the transition from high school to college?
- How do students learn?
- How do students make important decisions about their academic program (e.g., major program, international study, capstone experiences?)
- How does academic and social integration vary over time?
- How do our institutional practices and policies affect student learning?

Longitudinal Panel Study of the Class of 2010

- 36 students at each college
- Race-stratified random sample (African American, Asian American, Latino/a, international, and domestic white students)
- Equal numbers of women and men at coed schools
- Three interviews in first year, two in subsequent years
- Student interviewers at all but one college

Diversity questions (January–February of first year)

- How would you define diversity at _____ College?
- Based on your experience thus far, what can you say about diversity at _____ College? (Probe for specific examples.)
- Has your academic experience been affected by this diversity? If so, in what ways?
- Has your residential or social experience been affected by this diversity? If so, in what ways?

Diversity = Difference

“When I think of diversity [here], I think of an amalgamation of a lot of different backgrounds and perspectives and ideas. I mean ethnicity is part of it because it kind of plays into having perspectives on different issues, but I think it’s more a conceptual thing. I think diversity of thoughts more than like what color whoever’s skin is [here].” (Latina FY student)

“It means differences in a lot of different ways, and you see that [here]. It’s just, where you come from, what social class you’re in, makes a big difference. Your ethnicity, what country you grew up in, what different customs you have. Different towns than what you’re used to.” (White female FY student)

“...a lot of it has to do with ethnic background, but diversity is just anything that, a lot of things that are different that don’t necessarily go together but that all need to work together for a common good. Diversity is just anything that is different that somebody might not get much of... But diversity to me is people coexisting that are as good as one another, but just different and have different skills, different talents and different ways of doing things culturally, religiously and everything like that.” (African-American male FY student)

Diversity and the first year experience

Most students fail to see a connection between diversity and their academic experience

Has your academic experience been affected by diversity?

“Not really, I guess. I don’t know, it’s, I don’t really notice it in class. Because, you know, I know it’s there, but it doesn’t really have that much of an influence on academics at all. So I don’t know, it’s mostly just from sitting there in a group listening to lecture, so that’s basically been it.”

(Asian-American female FY student)

“You know, not too much. I feel like any, I mean not to say, I mean not really. It’s not like one thing had nothing to do with another, because it does. But I haven’t been affected to a point where I can’t, anything that I’ve done academically I could attribute to anything dealing with diversity.”

(African-American female FY student)

Diversity and the first year experience (cont.)

More students describe effect of diversity on social or residential experience

Are there any specific examples or instances when you really felt diversity present [at this college]?

“Probably just talking, being in the common room of my floor and us just all talking about back home. I mean literally, there’s a girl from New York who’s Jewish, and I’ve never been exposed to anyone who’s Jewish. And then there’s me who, I live on the border of Mexico and California. And then there’s a girl who’s from Korea and then there’s a girl who’s from Afghanistan. She talks to us about things that are going on in the Middle East. And then there’s a girl from Kenya. Just that. And those are just girls who are on my floor. You know what I mean? And then there’s a girl from Nashville, Tennessee. You get so many different, and it’s good because if we’re talking about one subject, you get the perspectives from so many different people. And from people who have had such different backgrounds. And so that’s definitely, I really, really like that about here.” (Latina FY student)

Has your residential or social experience been affected by diversity or lack of diversity? “Yeah, I was really impressed here, actually, by like all the people from different countries and different places and it, it was like the first time I’d lived so long with people from so many different backgrounds and also with so many Asian people and so many Black people, too. So those like actually were a really good feeling to like come to the dorm and realize that people had come from all over the world and some of them were so different from me. And here we were in the same place studying the same things, sharing so much. And so I learned a lot.” (White female FY student)

Diverse in number but not in experience

“Well, I was impressed with how many Asian people were here, because I think one third of the class or one fourth of the class is Asian pretty much. I don’t know whether that’s maybe a coincidence. Maybe it’s a policy of the colleges to increase diversity. I don’t know. But I’ve found out is that African American people, they all sit at one table. And Asian people they sit at another table. So when they are dining they don’t mix, there are cliques, they are different groups. And African Americans sit together and Asians sit together, but they don’t interact.” (Male international FY student)

“There’s definitely a, not stratified, but like separated to a certain degree socially, people of a particular ethnicity. A lot of them definitely hang out in their own groups. Like there definitely are all Asians that hang out, there’s definitely black people who all hang out. Or sexualities, there are definitely some gay people all hang out...I don’t know. I can’t say I have experience with that. But that’s the way it goes.” (Latina FY student)

Diversity and the first year experience (cont.)

For those students who report connections between campus diversity and their academic and social experiences, the effects are positive and pronounced

So has your academic experience been affected by this diversity?

“Yes, and this is why I don’t notice boys are gone.... There are so many different personalities here, it’s just like, it fills in that gap of not having boys. Like you don’t notice there are no boys until you see a boy and you’re like, oh, they’re not here There’s so much here that we’re not missing anything by not having boys here. So I think it adds richness to the discussion. You know, everyone has their own opinion. It’s just like, that’s cool; I would never have thought of that type thing. And sometimes, it’s kind of like, of, I don’t like that idea. But it’s something to argue against.”

(African-American female FY student)

Diversity and the first year experience (cont.)

- By and large, students fail to see a connection between diversity and their academic and social experiences
- To the extent that diversity “matters,” diversity = race or ethnicity
- Very little difference in how diversity is defined and experienced among racial groups

Contextual factors and the experience of diversity

High school or community

“In my town there is no diversity at all, and I see that as a problem for some people. In my town people are prejudiced or racists, but it’s only because they have never come into contact with someone of a different race, and it’s not their fault. They think that way because their parents have ingrained that in their minds and have been like that forever. I don’t want to be stuck in that. I felt I was one of the few people in my town who didn’t feel that way, and I wanted to come [here] because I was hoping other people would feel that way here. I want to be open and meet lots of people from different backgrounds. But [this college] claims to be so diverse and how they lacked African Americans and women at the beginning, but it still doesn’t really show today.” (White female FY student)

“My high school was more diverse than [this college] is. My junior high school, I was in a vast minority. So, I mean, living in New York City, I think I have a very different idea of diversity from many other people. So I don’t know, to me any institution of higher learning that touts their diversity isn’t going to have the same diversity as a block in Brooklyn. It’s not going to have the same kind of natural, everybody getting along and kind of, you know, just kind of living and dealing. I think the diversity here is a lot more focused on student groups, based on nationalities, ethnicity, and it’s really self-segregated, I’ve noticed.” (White female FY student)

Contextual factors and the experience of diversity

Diversity, recruitment and student expectations

“I was definitely happy to come here. Last year when I was looking at schools, I talked to a guy friend who was going to _____ University. [It’s] a great place, but I was looking at a small liberal arts college in Pennsylvania. But everyone’s the same there. I don’t want to go to another place where everyone’s like me. He’s like, that’s why I’m going to _____ University, and I was like, oh, you have a good time. I didn’t think very highly [of him] when he said that, I guess. So, I’m happy to be here and be with people that appreciate it, too.”
(White female FY student)

Contextual factors and the experience of diversity

Significant campus events

“I think it’s great that [this school] wants more diversity, but I don’t really know how I feel about the protest marches that happened. I’m not a huge advocate for affirmative action. I just sometimes feel like it undermines people’s achievements, even though it doesn’t. If anything, I think [this school] needs more like social economic diversity than racial diversity....

“Some people are really mean. They just, they are very narrow-minded. Like I was, I heard this person that was part of the march and everything be like, we need more of like our people here and all this stuff. And they’re like, yeah, like I want to marry a Black person.... And I’m just like, this is the most horrible thing I heard. And you’re leading the diversity thing. I was just really upset, and I really didn’t want to be involved with people like that....He was just like, oh, you don’t go to the [Latino cultural group] meeting, you are like betraying your own people. I’m really turned off by the whole diversity movement going on here.” (Latina FY student)

Conclusions

- Does structure + climate ----» experiences ----» attitudes?
- Starting attitudes have the biggest effect.
- Experiences have a bigger effect than found before.
- Institutions vary in the degree of structural diversity and in how many students are having diversity experiences. BUT, those two don't necessarily covary.
- Combining quantitative and qualitative methods can tell us a lot about the variation in what students experience on a single campus.

Individual variation

- Student ethnicity is not a big factor in predicting spring openness to diversity, but campuses differ in whether students of different ethnicities have different kinds of experiences. Foreign students may be different yet again.
- Some experiences are required, but most are voluntary: who you spend social time with, whether your conversations seriously engage issues of difference.
- The same event can be experienced very differently by different students--attending awareness workshops seems to have a positive effect on average, but for an individual it may be a negative.
- But there's a difference between being "open to diversity" and liking how the issue of diversity is being handled on your campus.

How students think about diversity

- The typical “theory” of diversity is multi-dimensional and includes diversity of attitudes and values.
- In practice, when students refer to specifics they focus narrowly on race/ethnicity. So do many campus diversity programs.
- In reflecting on diversity, students are mostly thinking about social interactions, not their academic work or experiences. Maybe in later years academic studies will become more salient?
- Many want their institution to have the quality of “being diverse” but seem to expect “the institution” to make good things happen and prevent bad things from happening.

What should or can our goals be?

- Many studies have identified “best practices” – we can either do or encourage them.
- In general, institutions with more positive diversity experiences also have more negative experiences. We can't hope to have lots of good experiences without having some bad ones – fortunately, they seem to be having less impact.
- If diversity includes values, we can't insist on everyone being comfortable or hope to avoid conflict.
- We can't assume that greater structural diversity will necessarily produce attitudes of greater openness.

How good a job are we doing?

- Not good enough, anywhere.
- Some students are having lots of good experiences and benefiting from them.
- We need to find ways to insure that more students have enriching diversity experiences.