

Diversity in the Workplace: Race, Ethnicity and Gender

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Introduction

“I remember in 1956 when I was 16 years old, with some of my brothers and sisters and cousins, going down to the public library and trying to get library cards,” recalled the congressman with tears in his eyes. “We were told that libraries were for ‘whites only’ and not for ‘coloreds.” – John Lewis, Congressman.

The American Library Association (ALA) has the duty to promote intellectual freedom to all people. Many people with who have a different race and ethnic backgrounds where not able to experience that effort. ALA has established key principles and guidelines to diversify the workforce. ALA has recognizes its strengths and weakness in regards to its current status of reflecting the diverse population it serves. In return, ALA has made a conscious effort to educate, promote and engage in diversifying the profession.

Ethical Obligation

The American Library Association has taken an ethical stance that all libraries must do their part to promote diversity and awareness within their libraries and workforce.

The American Library Association's ethical principles and guidelines states:

“Equal access to information for all persons and recognizes the ongoing need to increase awareness of and responsiveness to the diversity of the communities we serve. ALA recognizes the critical need for access to library and information resources, services, and technologies by all people, especially those who may experience language or literacy-related barriers; economic distress; cultural or social isolation; physical or attitudinal barriers; racism; discrimination on the basis of appearance, ethnicity, immigrant status, religious background, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression; or barriers to equal education, employment, and housing.”

ALA recognizes that libraries play a crucial role in empowering diverse populations for full participation in a democratic society. The library workforce should have concrete programs of recruitment, training, development, advancement and promotion to increase and retain diverse library personnel who are reflective of the society it serves. ALA believes that a diverse workforce is essential to ensure equity of access to all people. Thus, ALA has acknowledged that an effort must be taken to recruit and retain diverse personnel at every level.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to determine whether Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) Library staff currently reflects the diverse population it serves. GTCC is the third largest community colleges in the North Carolina Community College System. GTCC serves more than 40,000 students annually from its Jamestown, Greensboro, High Point, Aviation and Donald W. Cameron campuses as well as its Small Business Center in Greensboro and High Point. GTCC has a mission to cultivate a workplace culture of inclusion that welcomes, develops, supports and empowers employees. Most importantly, foster a college culture that supports employee diversity through recruitment and retention

GTCC serves Guilford County. Guilford County is located in the Piedmont Triad region of North Carolina and it is the third largest county in the state. Guilford County has a diverse population. According to United States Census Bureau report, there are currently 57% White, 32% African American, 7.8 Hispanic and 4.8% Asians that reside in Guilford County. (www.census.gov)

This project will collect and observe data about the student population and library workforce at GTCC. The collected information will be used to determine whether GTCC's library staff mirrors the diverse student body it serves. For the purpose of time and resources, I will only discuss whether GTCC's Library workforce reflects the *Race, Ethnicity and Gender* of GTCC's student body.

Literature Review

In the book "Information Services Today," by Sarah Hirsh.. In the chapter called " Diversity, Culture, and Equity of Access by Patty Wong and Miguel Figueroa. This chapter covers the importance of incorporating diversity and culture within an information organization. Wong makes it clear that diversity changes as awareness of unique experiences and the exclusion, prejudice, or discrimination experienced by groups of people becomes more widely known acknowledged. Wong explains that making information organization and information professionals more diverse will gain greater support from the community and advancement toward the organization's mission and goals. Wong concludes that information organization and information professional must make an effort to address the needs of specific groups and cultures within a diverse population because not doing so, effects the equity of access among all patrons.

In the book " Handbook for Community College Librarians" by Micheal A. Crumpton and Nora J. Bird. This handbook examine aspects of diversity in greater depth and offers tools to help Community College Libraries develop better connection with its diverse clients. In the chapter called, "Diversity Considerations," it makes us understand that there is not enough diversity in the libraries current workforce. According to American Library Association Office of Diversity less than 12 percent of librarians identify with race or ethnicity other than white (American Library Association Office of Diversity 2012).

This chapter informs us that all libraries are lacking diversity. But, the lack of diversity in Community College is more challenging because community colleges serve a larger population of diverse clients. The average community college librarian is white, female, English speaking and identifies with middle class. These very characteristics distance her from the very community she serves. This chapter introduces a list of diverse groups and barriers that are affected by the lack of diversity in Community College libraries. This chapter states that Community College libraries must address: ethnicity and race, refugees and immigrants, language diversity, physical and mental health challenges, learning differences, gender and sexual orientation, generation difference, and cultural competency in order to become better connected with the community serves. Overall this chapter shows that there are several diverse groups that are reflected within the population the Community College libraries serve. Furthermore, Community College libraries must do their part to make improvement because the library needs to identify with each individual it serves in order to accomplish equity of access for all.

In the article, “If Diversity is a Natural State, Why Don’t Our Libraries Mirror the Population they Serve?,” an article written By Samantha K. Hastings and published in *Library Quarterly Journal* in 2015. Hasting explains that diversity is not about color, gender, age, language, or sexual orientation—it is about all of these things. Hastings states, “If we do not ensure that our libraries have frontline professionals who reflect the nature of the communities with which they work, then we will lose valuable patrons. They will turn instead to their neighbor who looks just like them, regardless of whether or not they receive valid information from that person.” She concludes that we must recruit diverse faculty, staff, and students. We must provide an environment of inclusion so the patrons and staff can thrive and survive.

Personal Experience

“If we do not ensure that our libraries have frontline professionals who reflect the nature of the communities with which they work, then we will lose valuable patrons. They will turn instead to their neighbor who looks just like them, regardless of whether or not they receive valid information from that person”. - Sarah Hastings

I am an African American woman who actively volunteers at Guilford Technical College Library (GTCC). I have seen first hand how the lack of the diversity can affect the students we serve. I have experience several encounters with students who identify as African American, personally tell me that they were more comfortable with me because I was African American. I heard this comment from several African American students while volunteering at GTCC Library. While there are several occasions that I have experience dealing with minority students at GTCC. I decided to share an event that made me realize that having a diverse library staff does contribute to the equity of access for all people. Hastings quote lingers in back of my mind and renders pure validity.

One day during my shift at the circulation desk, a student approached the front desk for help. I had recently started volunteering at the Jamestown Campus Library. I observed majority of African American students at this location. I went to help the African American woman with printing and double-spacing her assignment. After I was finished helping her. I pointed to the Reference Librarian who is a white female in her late thirties located behind the circulation desk. I began to list off the services the librarian could help her with regarding her assignment. The woman cut me off in mid sentence and told me that she was more comfortable with her kind. She was referring to me because I am an African American woman.

After this interaction, I began to reflect about all of my experience volunteering at GTCC. I saw first hand how users who identify with certain characteristics sought people with similar traits. I realized that having a staff member that a patron can relate to is very important. The woman was willing to work with me because I was African American despite my lack of experience and expertise compared to Reference Librarian who has worked at the Jamestown Campus for over eight years.

Methodology

In order to conclude whether GTCC Library workforce represents the diverse population it serves. I gathered information from GTCC's Library Staff Directory located the school's website, and GTCC's *Fall Enrollment Report - Four Year Trend*. This report has detail statistics about the demographics of the GTCC's student body. The report has collected data based on the *Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Age of* students who have enrolled into GTCC for the past three years.

For the purpose of this project I will compare Fall Enrollment Report for 2016 . Next, I will compare the data received from *Fall Enrollment Report 2016* , s Library Staff Directory, and my personal observation of the librarians *Race, Ethnicity, and Gender* to determine whether the current library workforce mirrors the GTCC's student body.

Findings

All of GTCC's Student Body Demographic collected from the Fall Enrollment report. For the purpose of the report this project will collect data from 2016.

**Please look at the last column in each chart to determine the percentage represented in the student body for 2016.

Finding 1:

Fall Enrollment Report - Four Year Trend

Four Year Fall Enrollment Trends, 2013-2016

| | Fall 2013 | Fall 2014 | Fall 2015 | *Fall 2016 |
|-----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Headcount | 13,662 | 12,438 | 11,471 | 11,066 |
| New Students | 27.9% | 26.3% | 27.8% | 30.5% |
| First Time in College | 16.4% | 15.5% | 16.1% | 18.1% |
| Recent High School Graduate | 8.8% | 9.3% | 11.3% | 12.6% |
| Full-Time | 54.5% | 46.5% | 45.0% | 47.0% |
| Part-Time | 45.5% | 53.5% | 55.0% | 53.0% |
| Avg. Attempted Credits | 10.26 | 10.00 | 9.88 | 10.13 |
| Out of State Residency | 2.3% | 2.3% | 2.4% | 3.0% |
| Age Category | | | | |
| Under 18 | 4.3% | 4.7% | 5.8% | 6.8% |
| 18-20 | 26.0% | 26.6% | 28.0% | 30.4% |
| 21-24 | 21.9% | 23.2% | 22.0% | 23.0% |
| 25-30 | 16.4% | 16.6% | 17.5% | 16.5% |
| 31-40 | 16.0% | 14.8% | 14.0% | 14.5% |
| 41-50 | 10.3% | 9.2% | 8.4% | 7.7% |
| Over 50 | 5.1% | 5.0% | 4.4% | 1.1% |
| Average Age | 28 | 28 | 27.1 | 26.6 |
| Gender | | | | |
| Male | 43.3% | 43.0% | 43.6% | 43.1% |

| | | | | |
|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Female | 56.6% | 56.9% | 56.4% | 56.8% |
| Unreported | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.1% |
| Ethnicity | | | | |
| African American | 43.5% | 42.0% | 39.5% | 39.1% |
| Hispanic | 6.4% | 7.1% | 8.1% | 8.6% |
| White | 40.7% | 41.5% | 42.3% | 42.1% |
| Other | 6.4% | 6.8% | 7.6% | 7.7% |
| Unknown | 2.9% | 2.4% | 2.5% | 2.5% |
| Financial Aid | | | | |
| Pell recipients | 59.6% | 58.9% | 56.6% | 54.0% |

Finding 2:

Gender: The report shows that there are 43.1% of Men, 56.8% of Women, and 0.1% Unreported enrolled At GTCC for Fall 2016

**Please look at the last column in each chart to determine the percentage represented in the student body for 2016.

Finding 4:

Race and Ethnicity: The report shows that there are 39.1 % of African Americans , 8.6% of Hispanics , 42.1% Whites , 7.7% of Other , and 2.5 %Unknown enrolled at GTCC Fall 2016

**Please look at the last column in each chart to determine the percentage represented in the student body for 2016.

Findings 5: Library Staff Directory

Findings 5: Library Staff Directory

GTCC has a total of 13 Library position that serve GTCC student body. 12 are filled and 1 is vacant. The following information located below is a breakdown of the GTCC library workforce and its student population in regards to *Race*, and *Ethnicity* and Gender.

GTCC Library Workforce Breakdown:

Gender: 8 (Woman) 4 (Men)

Race and Ethnicity: 12 (White) 1 (African American)

Data Collection: This Report shows that there are (12 white) library employees and (1 African American) library employee. There are 8 women and 4 males employed at GTCC library.

GTCC's Student Body Breakdown:

Gender: 43.1% of Men
56.8% of Women
0.1% of Unreported

Race and Ethnicity: 42.1% White
39.1% African American
8.6 % Hispanic
7.7% Other
2.5 % Unknown

Data Analysis

Based on the *Fall Enrollment Report* and the *Library Staff Directory*, the data revealed that GTCC's Library workforce does not currently reflect the diverse population it serves. According to the data collected there were no staff members that reflect Hispanic, Asian and Unknown population. The data also revealed that women occupy the most positions within GTCC's library workforce.

According to the Enrollment report the school has a large population of minority students who are enrolled at GTCC. However, the current Library workforce does not reflect the population because the majority of the workforce population identifies as white. The *Library Staff Directory* and personal knowledge revealed that there are a total of 12 staff members that identify as white and only one minority who identify as an African American works at GTCC. The data collected reveals that the African American holds a highest-ranking position as the Director. This is a great opportunity and it reveals that GTCC is attempting to do its part in promoting diversity within its workforce. A Director position has high responsibilities that can limit their overall interaction with assisting students in the library with library services and material face to face. Staff members who have the most time with interacting with students are particularly located at the circulation desk. The circulation desk has the greatest amount of interaction with all patrons who enter the library space. The data also showed that employees who occupied the circulation desk are primarily white.

Recommendation

ALA states that a library should invest in recruitment strategies that build a diverse staff so that all people see themselves represented in the administration, management, and delivery of library services. GTCC has a large population of minorities. Based on the data collection and data analysis I have created five recommendations.

The following are:

1. GTCC administrative team must hire more employees who represent various groups reflected in the student body.
2. GTCC must create workshops and provide training to all library staff to help each staff member become cultural competent of the diverse population it serves.
3. Librarians must make attempts to engage in a conversation during their interactions with the students so they can learn about their different experience and backgrounds. In return this will help GTCC Library Staff build a meaningful relationship with GTCC's students.
4. GTCC Library must follow ALA's principles and guidelines to create their very own diversity plan. This can provide a blueprint to assist the administrative team with creating a plan to implement diversity within the library and its workforce

ALA considers six elements essential for a successful diversity plan:

1. A definition of diversity for the organization
 2. An assessment of need or justification for the diversity plan
 3. A mission or vision for the diversity of the organization
 4. A statement of priorities or goals
 5. A delegation of responsibilities towards achievement of the plan
 6. A statement of accountability
5. GTCC Library Administrative team must contact ALA's Office for Diversity to seek assistance to start its approach in implementing a diversity plan for GTCC Library. This office can provide resources and material to help the administrative team make effective effort in diversifying its workforce.

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