Introduction

Colleges and universities have a unique opportunity to impact the personal development of students (Astin, 1977; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). In particular, the benefits of diversity initiatives in supporting the educational excellence and development of students and improving the campus climate are clearly articulated in higher education research (Astin, 1993a; Astin, 1993b; Gurin, 1999; Hurtado, S. L., Milem, J. F., Clayton-Pederson, A., & Allen, W. R., 1998; Hurtado, S. L., Milem, J. F., Clayton-Pedersen, A., and Allen, W. R., 1999; Pope, 1993; Rendón, 1994; Rendón, Garcia, Person, 2004; Smith, 1989; Smith & Associates, 1997; Smith & Schonfeld, 2000).

Diversity of students continues to increase in higher education and provides today’s colleges and universities with a unique opportunity to contribute to the development of positive multicultural attitudes and the multicultural competence of our students through cross-cultural interactions. With increased campus diversity, there has been a proliferation of campus diversity efforts. Examples of programs designed to promote positive multicultural attitudes and multicultural competence include alternative Spring Break programs, classes, cross cultural retreats, counselor training, cultural centers, cultural events and heritage month programs, culture-specific clubs and organizations, dialogue groups, diversity transcripts, immersion and travel experiences, learning communities, multicultural seminars, panels, peer to peer diversity training, seminars, service learning opportunities, speaker series, teacher training, theatre programs, theme housing programs, and workshops (Adams, 1997).
These curricular and co-curricular learning opportunities on college campuses are designed to promote positive multicultural development. For participants in these learning opportunities, the benefits of participation may include increased awareness of and sensitivity to multicultural issues and increased motivation to develop higher levels of multicultural competence.

This article describes current multicultural development efforts in higher education, reviews existing literature about the effectiveness of these efforts, and provides data about what one campus is doing to achieve the goal of promoting positive multicultural attitudes and multicultural competence. More specifically, we describe the Cross-Cultural Retreat—a diversity program at a state University with over 18,000 students—and provide empirical support for the program’s effectiveness at impacting the multicultural attitudes of campus participants.

Literature Review

In general, the literature shows that campus diversity initiatives can positively impact student’s institutional satisfaction, involvement, academic growth, and attitudes and feelings toward intergroup relations on campus (Smith, et. al., 1997), and can lead to attitude and behavior change (Zirkel & Cantor, 2004). Most of the research assesses the outcomes of classroom efforts, counselor training, dialogue groups, teacher training, and workshops. Limited studies evaluate the impact of participation in cross-cultural retreats, culture-specific clubs and organizations, learning communities, peer-to-peer diversity training, peer theatre programs.
Almost no research measures the impact of cultural centers, cultural events, diversity leadership transcripts, heritage or history month programs, immersion experiences, national & international travel programs, panels, or speaker series. This article will focus on efforts aimed specifically at undergraduate students.

First, there are programs that focus on classroom efforts. Faculty and student affairs professionals have both engaged in research regarding the learning outcomes of diversity courses. Hardiman & Jackson (1992) discussed the importance of understanding racial dynamics in the classroom to promoting diversity. Banks (1994) articulated the need to transform the mainstream curriculum to include issues of diversity, while Meacham (1994) encouraged the utilization of e-mail discussions to enhance the experience of a multicultural course with a large enrollment. Finally, research by Hurtado (1996) showed that an emphasis on diversity in the curriculum leads to improvements in the learning environment for students.

Both inside and outside the classroom, intergroup dialogue groups, which are groups of people that are brought together to talk with one another across identities and boundaries, in higher education were found to eliminate or reverse increases in negative attitudes toward minority students, even in those who started out with especially negative attitudes (Nelson, 1994), enhance diversity learning outcomes (Zuniga, et al., 1995), bridge the divide between cultural groups (Nagda, 1995; Zuniga & Sevig, 1997), impact participant’s cognitive and affective development by positively changing their perceptions of themselves and society (Alimo, Kelly,
and Clark, 2002), and increase student motivation, interest in learning, and academic achievement (Clark, 2005).

Other studies assessed the impact of multicultural workshops. Astin (1993a, 1993b) found evidence of the positive impact of racial and cultural awareness workshops on students’ racial attitudes using multi-institutional studies. In contrast, Neville & Frulong (1994) found limited research being done to assess the effectiveness of racial or cultural awareness workshops for students. A few studies, however, found that workshops have an impact on first-year freshman students. Nesbitt, et al. (1994) and Springer (1995) focused specifically on sensitivity training for college freshman. Using data from the National Study of Student Learning (NSSL), Springer (1995) examined the effectiveness of cultural awareness programs on the attitudes of first-year, White college students toward diversity on campus at 17 institutions. The study found that students who participated in racial or cultural awareness workshops developed more favorable attitudes toward diversity on campus.

Coller & Summers’ (1981) ERIC report emphasizes the success of combining a course in intercultural communications with a weekend camping retreat at Kauai Community College. After ten years, the course continued to successfully increase the awareness, understanding, respect, and appreciation of cultural differences through discussions on common social experiences (e.g., friendship, male/female roles, and family patterns) and improved the interaction of participations with different cultural backgrounds. In his unpublished dissertation, Trevino (1992) describes the benefits of participation in ethnic/racial student
organizations. In another study of first year students, LaGuardia Community College’s learning communities were studied. Tinto & Love (1995) found that students who were part of learning communities that dealt with issues of diversity, diversity in their communities more than those who were not part of the learning community. The study was designed to see how participation in a collaborative learning program influenced students’ learning experiences and how those learning experiences fit in with their broader experiences as first-year students.

Peer-to-peer interventions, such as peer mentor programs and peer group discussions were effective in confronting racial bias (Christie & Borns, 1991) and peer theatre programs, where students are trained in interactive techniques that encourage audience participation and perform for other students were found improved attitudes about date rape and sexual assault in freshman men and women following their viewing of a play performed by students that addressed these issues (Lanier, Elliott, Martin, and Kapadia, 1998).

Well designed diversity programs effectively support a culturally-diverse campus community and have numerous educational and social benefits, because they simultaneously promote positive intergroup interactions and culture-specific support groups (Smith & Schonfeld, 2000), foster cultural pride and promote culture-specific activities (Rendón, 1994), promote the politics of difference instead of the ideal of assimilation (Young, 1990), and develop positive multicultural attitudes (Smith, et. al., 1997). Garcia, et al. (2002) argue that, “When exposed to diverse students and courses and campus environments, students are more likely to recognize inequality when it exists, to engage in remedying it in society, and are more
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ready to live in racially diverse neighborhoods after they graduate” (p. 2). In order to achieve these goals, it is critical that programs are assessed for their effectiveness. This review gave examples of different types of programs and research results that evaluated them. Next, we will describe a specific program—the Cal Poly Pomona Cross-Cultural Retreat—and report data on its effectiveness.

The Cross-Cultural Retreat

History of the Cross Cultural Retreat

In 1988, the campus hosted its first Cross-Cultural Retreat (CCR). The first Retreat was planned by students from the Associated Students, Incorporated, the Multicultural Council (MCC), and professional staff from the Office of Student Life, ReEntry and WoMen’s Resource Center, and Counseling and Psychological Services, along with supportive faculty members and administrators. In 1999, the CCR became an Instructionally Related Activity that is now coordinated by the Office of Student Life and Cultural Centers, which includes the African American Student Center, Asian and Pacific Islander Student Center, Cesar E. Chavez Center for Higher Education, Native American Student Center, Office of Student Life, Pride Center, and the Violence Prevention and Women’s Resource Center.

Support for the CCR grew after 1990 when the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Accrediting Commission team issued a report on their visit to [Name of institution]. They stressed the need for the University to move aggressively toward creating a climate which supports women and minorities (WASC, 1990). Specifically, the team stated that:
Some women and people of color report that they feel unsupported and--in some cases--unwelcome in this environment—‘vulnerable’ is the term the team came to use. Incidents of racial and sexual harassment have occurred in recent months, and relations with the Campus Police are strained. While it is clear that a significant number of University resources (some in the form of ‘soft money’ and some in the form of a program to increase faculty diversity) are being spent in an effort to mitigate some of these programs, the efforts are scattered and relatively uncoordinated. There is a general sense that faculty and administrators are meeting their obligations with regard to implementing the ‘letter’ of policies and initiatives related to supporting multi-culturalism, but that there is much work to be done in improving compliance where the ‘spirit’ of the institution is concerned (WASC, 1990, p. 38).

Forty students, faculty, staff participated in the inaugural CCR in 1988. In subsequent years, the demand for the Retreat increased and, in 2001, the Retreat allowed 147 participants (108 students and 39 faculty, staff, and administrators). Since 2003, participation has been limited to 100, because of limited funding and the desire for more limited.

Purpose of the Cross-Cultural Retreat

The purpose of the CCR is to provide an opportunity for all members of the campus community to get away for the weekend and talk about issues of diversity. Each year the CCR focuses
on different issues, such as ability, age, gender, national origin, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and/or spirituality. The more specific goals for the Retreat are to:

- Expand awareness of each other as students, faculty, staff and administrators in the [Name of institution] community.
- Provide a safe and non-threatening atmosphere for sharing and exploring one another's cultural experiences.
- Promote self-knowledge.
- Identify strategies that would help promote diversity and affect positive change at [Name of institution] and in the community.

Format of the Cross-Cultural Retreat

The CCR is linked to many courses throughout the University, several of which include the Retreat as part of their curriculum [Examples?]. Faculty support the CCR by serving as committee members, small group facilitators, and participants. Faculty participants come from a wide variety of departments, such as accounting, biology, business, chemistry, engineering, ethnic and women’s studies, finance, real estate and law, interdisciplinary general education, liberal studies, management and human resources, philosophy, psychology and sociology, and theatre. For several years now, the Center for Faculty Development has sponsored faculty to attend the Retreat. Since the Retreat’s inception, our campus Presidents participated in the Cross Cultural Retreat at least once during their tenure, as have the Provost and Vice President for Student Affairs.
The CCR is planned and coordinated by co-chairs from the Office of Student Life and Cultural Centers, who are assisted by a committee of faculty, staff, and students from across the university. Pre-Retreat preparations include selecting a theme, hiring consultants to facilitate the large group sessions, orienting participants, selecting and training small group facilitators, and handling logistics.

It is a requirement that all the CCR participants prepare for the Retreat by attending a pre-Retreat workshop to ensure that they are aware of the intense nature of the program and are willing participants. Each year, there is a waiting-list of individuals who want to attend, after the 100 spots are filled. In addition, all facilitators must complete four hours of training prior to working at the Retreat to review program goals, Retreat exercises, and facilitation guidelines. The Retreat provides opportunities to develop participants’ multicultural awareness, attitudes, and identity. This is done through a dialogic method, whereby participants explore the intersections of each issue in light of stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, oppression, and institutional oppression. The dialogic method relies on face to face discussions in alternating small and large groups.

The CCR exposes participants to highly sensitive and multi-faceted issues of human relations and diversity. Many times it is the participant’s first experience of talking about racism, sexism, heterosexism, homophobia, classism, abilities (physical and mental), religious intolerance, ageism, and immigration issues.
The CCR typically takes place across a 3-day weekend, from Friday through Sunday. (See Appendix A for the Retreat schedule from 2005). The Retreat formally begins on Friday evening with a community meeting where each major issue is presented, goals are introduced, common definitions are shared, and all participants, including facilitators, participate in an experiential exercise.

Experiential exercises are used throughout the CCR as a tool to examine diversity issues from a personal perspective. This approach focuses on individual experiences, thoughts and feelings surrounding a specific layer of identity. In 2005, the year that the current study was conducted, the theme was, “Exploring the Layers of Race, Class, & Gender in a Multicultural Community.” The goal was to engage students, faculty, staff and administrators in an exploration of identity, personal and institutional power and privilege, and alliance-building relating to race, class, and gender. Experiential exercises include wagon-wheels, large group activities, dyads, forced choices, four-corners, movement, fishbowls, art projects, written exercises, identity interviews, silent exercises, walk-arounds, and speak-outs (Adams, 1997).

Alternating culture-specific groups are used to separate the large group into smaller, more homogeneous groups. This approach provides an opportunity for specific groups to dialogue about intragroup issues and dynamics. When these separate groups reunite with the larger community they share what they discussed and listen to other groups’ thoughts and feelings.
Home groups consist of 8 – 12 participants of differing racial, gender, and class identities. Each home group is co-facilitated by one student and one faculty, staff, or administrator. At various points throughout the weekend, participants join their multicultural home group to explore the thoughts and feelings of people who have different life experiences than they do and to process Retreat experiences in a more intimate setting. Home groups extensively use the dialogic process.

At the end of each CCR assessments are conducted. Participants complete a survey that includes questions about overall Retreat goals, each specific Retreat activity, and the impact of the Retreat on personal identity development, understanding of diversity issues, and commitment to engaging in future learning opportunities upon their return to campus. In 2005, the clear majority of participants (72.7% - 92.6%) agreed or strongly agreed with questions about retreat activities, indicating an overwhelmingly positive response to the experience. Some participants say that the CCR literally changed their lives.

In 2005, we conducted a more formal assessment of the CCR by administering a structured measure of multicultural attitudes at the beginning and end of the retreat. Next we report the findings from this study.

Method

Participants

The participants were recruited from a group of students, staffs, and faculty members who attended the retreat. The sample consisted of 64 participants, 64.1% (n = 41) female, and
35.9% ($n = 23$) male, with a mean age of 23.92 years. The sample included 3 freshmen, 7 sophomores, 14 juniors, 25 seniors, and 15 staff and faculty members. The racial/ethnic composition of the sample included 25.0% ($n = 16$) Asian-American, 25.0% ($n = 16$) European-American, 20.3% ($n = 13$) Multi-racial, 18.7% ($n = 12$) Latino/a, 9.4% ($n = 6$) African-American, and 1.6 % ($n = 1$) Native-American. Undergraduate student participants came from a variety of majors, including biology, engineering, sociology, architecture, psychology, marketing, and many others. Participants did not receive any incentive.

**Materials**

*Multicultural Attitudes.* Participants completed the Multicultural Attitude Scale (MAS), a survey developed for a previous study (Barker-Hackett, Holland, Vaughn, and Martinez, 2005), at the beginning and end of the Retreat. The scale measures participants’ thoughts, feelings, and behaviors regarding diversity issues. The scale contains 76 items. 50 cognitive items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5). Sample cognitive items include, “It is important to learn about other cultures,” and “I respect the opinions of people from backgrounds different than my own.” 26 behavioral items asked participants to rate how likely they are to participate in various multicultural activities on a 5-point scale from “not at all likely” (1) to “very likely” (5). Sample items include, “Take a class on multiculturalism,” and “Be more outspoken when people are discussing multicultural issues.” Negatively worded items are reverse scored. Scores are means ranging from 1 to 5, with higher scores reflecting more positive attitudes towards multiculturalism. 3 Scores are calculated—an
overall score for the entire scale (MAS-O), a score for the cognitive items (MAS-C), and a score for the behavioral items (MAS-B).

**Social Desirability.** The short form of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (SDS; Reynolds, 1982) assessed response bias and the possible tendency of participants to give “politically correct” answers. The scale consists of 16 true/false items such as, “I sometimes get resentful if I don’t get my way,” and “I’m always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.” Items are scored 1 if the item is endorsed in the socially desirable direction and summed. Scores range from 1-16 with higher scores reflecting greater social desirability. Higher scores decrease confidence in the accuracy of participant’s responses on other measures.

**Demographic Characteristics.** A series of 20 items asked participants for basic demographic information such as gender, age, class standing, ethnicity, etc.

**Procedure**

The campus IRB gave approval for surveys to be distributed at the Retreat. At the first general meeting of the Retreat on Friday evening, one of the Retreat coordinators explained they survey, its purpose, and informed attendees that their participation was completely voluntary. Retreat staff then distributed the survey along with 2 copies of the consent form. They signed one copy and turned it in with their pretest and kept the second copy for their records. Surveys were distributed again at the end of the Retreat during the last meal and collected as students left the dining hall.

**Results**
64 participants completed both the pre- and post-surveys. 10 surveys could not be matched and were thus left out of this study. Data from the remaining surveys were entered into SPSS for statistical analysis.

To test for response bias, MAS scores were correlated with social desirability (SDS). No significant correlations were found between MAS and SDS scores at either pre- or post-test. Interestingly, post hoc analysis of pre-posttest changes revealed a significant decrease in SDS scores, $t(63) = 3.510, p = .001$, before ($M = 6.313$) and after the retreat ($M = 5.453$).

Paired samples t-tests examined changes in the multicultural attitudes of retreat participants by comparing their MAS scores from the beginning and end of the retreat. Statistically significant increases occurred on all three MAS scores from pre- to post-test (see Table 1), with the greatest change observed on MAS-B (Mean Difference = -.23, SD = .38).

Discussion

Results of this evaluation suggest that the Cal Poly Pomona Cross-Cultural Retreat is successful at changing participants’ attitudes toward multicultural issues in a positive direction. Participants’ scores increased overall, as well on both cognitive and behavioral measures. In other words, at the end of the retreat, participants reported a stronger desire to combat issues such as racism, sexism, and homophobia, recognized a greater level of importance in increasing their own ability to address such issues, and expressed a greater conviction to put these ideas into action.
Most of the change occurred on the behavioral portion of the survey. In other words, while participants’ attitudes increased overall, there was a slightly greater increase in their expressed willingness to participate in various multicultural activities. Thus, participation in the retreat seemed to increase commitment to putting attitudes into action. What we don’t know is whether the participants actually followed through with these behaviors once the Retreat was over. We attempted to do a follow-up study approximately 3 months after the Retreat. Surveys were mailed to all participants, but too few were returned to allow statistical analysis. This is something that will be important to do in the future by finding ways to improve the response rate.

It should be noted that participants began the Retreat with high scores on the Multicultural Attitude Scale. The increase in scores suggests that their attitudes simply became stronger by the end of the Retreat. What this means is that the Retreat attracts participants who already have relatively strong, positive thoughts and feelings regarding multicultural issues. In the past, certain members of the campus community were required to participate in the retreat. Now, however, attendance is voluntary, even though some participants are strongly encouraged to attend. For example, students who work for campus housing are given several options for multicultural activities they can participate in as part of their training; the Retreat is one of those options. Apparently, the Retreat successfully strengthens a portion of the campus community that already supports multicultural issues, but may miss those that
might also benefit from it. It would be interesting to see what happens with individuals who are mandated to attend such events.

Results also indicated that participants responded honestly to the survey. In fact, their degree of honesty, as measured by the Social Desirability Scale, increased after participating in the retreat. This suggests that, after the retreat, participants were more willing to admit personal faults and weaknesses and less likely to give “politically correct” responses. Thus, participation in the retreat resulted in closer, more critical, self-examination. The activities and discussions that take place during the retreat require participants to do a lot of self-exploration. This seems to be reflected in the decrease in social desirability.

In sum, the Cross-Cultural Retreat is a successful campus diversity program that appears to increase the conviction of campus members who already support multicultural issues. If these members go back to campus and follow-through, there could be a ripple effect where participants impact those on campus who did not attend the Retreat, and eventually improve the atmosphere and climate of the entire campus.

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References


DiversityWeb began, in 1995, as a collaborative project between the University of Maryland, College Park and AAC&U. As of June 2002, AAC&U's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Global Initiatives

http://www.diversityweb.org/diversity_innovations/institutional_leadership/index.cfm

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Table 1

*Pre- Post-test Changes in MAS Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Pre-test Mean</th>
<th>Post-test Mean</th>
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<tr>
<td>MAS-Overall</td>
<td>4.127</td>
<td>4.319</td>
<td>-5.630*</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAS-Cog</td>
<td>4.141</td>
<td>4.309</td>
<td>-4.824*</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAS-Beh</td>
<td>4.105</td>
<td>4.335</td>
<td>-4.838*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p < .001