

Effective Techniques for Teaching Diversity in MPA Programs

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Abstract

The purpose of this presentation is to provide strategies to effectively teach cultural diversity courses in the Master's of Public Administration Programs. The need to include the professor's cultural and personal experiences within the classroom context to advance the dialogue is noted. In a classroom examining diversity issues, it is crucial to assist students with processing sometimes uncomfortable and controversial subject matter.

The United States is becoming increasingly more diverse and with this diversity comes challenges. Within the next century, the minority population in the United States is projected to surpass the majority population (Schaefer, 2010). With the changing landscape of the U. S. population including a more diverse population as well as an aging workforce, cultural, social, and political challenges as well as opportunities must be examined and addressed by public administrators, educators, and other public officials. My presentation will address the question: How can we foster competency in generational and cultural diversity? How can we go beyond constraints and open up to new challenges.

The purpose of this presentation is to emphasize the importance of including cultural diversity courses within MPA programs. The need to include the professor's cultural and personal experiences within the classroom context to advance the dialogue is noted. In a classroom that is culturally diverse, it is necessary to assist students with complex and sometimes controversial subject matter that is an essential part of the cultural diversity dialogue. This presentation is designed to provide strategies to begin that discussion.

The rationale for this presentation is to highlight the importance of implementing a cultural diversity course within the Masters of Public Administration curriculum without a cultural diversity component to prepare professionals for an ever increasing diverse society. With the demographics of the United States expected to change dramatically within the next couple of decades, it is imperative that we take this necessary step.

Preparing students to work in a diverse workforce and world is important to developing effective leaders and ensuring these leaders have the necessary skills to become successful and productive citizens. It is also important to advancing social justice and civility within society and preparing students to work and live in a culture diverse world. It is important for students to understand why knowledge of diversity is critical.

In particular, the proposal addresses changes in the academic content within the Master's of Public Administration program at Southern Arkansas University. Two years ago, I began teaching a special topics course PA 6193 Cultural Diversity in our program. The course is now one of the electives for the degree, and the course is designed to ensure that students in our program will be more culturally aware and informed. Challenges involved in teaching the course will be examined as well as effective strategies to alleviate some of those challenges.

References

Schaefer, R. T. (2010). *Racial and Ethnic Groups*. Upper Saddle River, N.J. Prentice Hall.