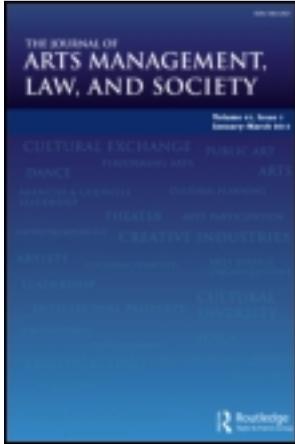


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Publisher: Routledge

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## The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/vjam20>

### Affirmative Action and Diversity: Implications for Arts Management

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To cite this article: Antonio C. Cuyler (2013): Affirmative Action and Diversity: Implications for Arts Management, *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*, 43:2, 98-105

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10632921.2013.786009>

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# Affirmative Action and Diversity: Implications for Arts Management

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Affirmative action and diversity can serve as a powerful framework for helping arts management educators address the challenge of diversity in the arts. This article encourages arts management educators to use affirmative action and diversity to proactively recruit diverse students into academic degree programs.

**Keywords** *affirmative action, arts management education, arts management theory and practice, culturally specific arts organizations, diversity, recruitment*

## INTRODUCTION

In a recent interview with Barry Hessenius of “Barry’s Blog,” (Hessenius 2012) Dr. Doug Borwick, immediate past president of the Association of Arts Administration Educators (AAAE), stated,

With respect to your question about multicultural representation in our programs, on a purely anecdotal, observational level, the make-up of our student bodies appears to me to reflect, in large measure (except younger), the make-up of arts audiences: upper middle class, white, and female. While that’s a gross over-simplification, it’s an issue for the arts as an industry, not just the arts administration profession.

Yet, Stein (2000) reminded arts management educators that arts organizations have a legal, moral, and social obligation to serve the public as a whole. Additionally, nonprofit arts organizations with fifty or more staff and income of more than \$50,000 from the federal government, including tax deductions from the Internal Revenue Service, need to write an affirmative action policy and develop an affirmative action plan (Barbeito 2004).

If arts organizations cannot solve the issue of diversity due to a lack of professionally prepared diverse recruits, what role might arts management educators proactively play in addressing the challenge of diversity? As key decision makers about who gains admissions into graduate and undergraduate degree programs, arts management educators can lead the way in addressing the challenge of diversity by considering and responding to the neglected opportunities provided by affirmative action, diversity, and recruitment. This article encourages arts management educators

to reconsider affirmative action and diversity as a framework for proactively recruiting diverse students into academic degree programs.

## AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Affirmative action continues to generate intense controversy and debate. Nevertheless, two periods depict the ebb and flow of public controversy over affirmative action. The first debate began around 1972 and tapered off after 1980. The second resurgence of debate appeared in the 1990s during the Clinton administration (Fullinwider 2009). Much dispute still exists about the history and intent of affirmative action (American Association for Affirmative Action 2012).

Some scholars have maintained that affirmative action began in 1865 with the abolishing of slavery through the Thirteenth Amendment. However, President Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802 (Roosevelt 1941) banned employment discrimination based on color, creed, national origin, and race in the war industries. According to the American Association of Affirmative Action (2012), five successive presidents—Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson—strengthened affirmative action. Nevertheless, the concept of “affirmative action” did not appear until President Kennedy's Executive Order 10925 in 1961 (Kennedy 1961). Before signing Executive Order 11246 in 1965 (Johnson 1965), President Johnson stated the following in his commencement speech at Howard University:

You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and say, “You are free to compete with all the others,” and still justly believe that you have been completely fair. We seek not just freedom but opportunity. We seek not just legal equity but human ability, not just equality as a right and a theory, but equality as a fact and equality as a result. (American Association of Affirmative Action 2012; Miller Center 2012)

Yet far too many distortions, myths, and untruths persist about the true intent of affirmative action due to detrimental and subversive politicizing.

Some believe that affirmative action gives preferences to unqualified people based solely on their ethnicity, gender, and/or race. If managed mindfully, affirmative action does not result in the hiring of unqualified people. In fact, the law specifically prohibits the hiring of unqualified people in pursuit of affirmative action (Office of Equal Opportunity and Compliance 2012). Affirmative action should allow competent and qualified underrepresented people to compete and excel in areas where they have historically not had opportunities, including arts management.

Employers blame affirmative action for the imposition of recruitment quotas in favor of minorities. However, quotas are illegal in affirmative action programs, and reverse discrimination is actionable discrimination too (Kahlenberg 2012; Newkirk 2012; Office of Equal Opportunity and Compliance 2012; Taylor 2012). Instead, employers set goals for the employment of underrepresented individuals and a time frame for achieving these goals. As long as employers make good faith efforts to achieve their goals, they will not suffer legal penalties.

Lastly, some have claimed that affirmative action undermines an employer's ability to make employment decisions based on merit. This very reason explains why the government created affirmative action in the first place. Historically, employers made decisions with discriminatory personnel practices in mind, including the “good ole boy” mentality (Stein 2000). Affirmative

action's true intent, then, is to ensure that the best candidate earns the business, educational, and/or employment opportunity. Even with affirmative action's potential for good, it still comes under fire for pervasive and costly misunderstandings.

A landmark case involving affirmative action in higher education has emerged most recently (Kahlenberg 2012; Newkirk 2012; Taylor 2012). In *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin*, the University of Texas at Austin denied Abigail Fisher, a white Texan, admission for the Fall 2008 entering class. Fisher sued the university, arguing that the denial violated her Fourteenth Amendment right to equal protection because the university denied her admission to the public university in favor of minority applicants with lesser credentials. Now, the Supreme Court will soon decide whether public and private colleges and universities can use racial and ethnic preferences in admissions.

The Civil Rights Project at the University of California at Los Angeles has prepared for this legal battle by examining minority graduate enrollments in California, Florida, Texas, and Washington State because of their bans on the consideration of race in admissions decisions. Across graduate programs in these four states, the enrollment of underrepresented minority groups has fallen by 12 percent (Schmidt 2010; Jaschik 2012;). Although affirmative action has received a great deal of negative press despite its benefits, affirmative action and diversity can help arts management achieve a well-prepared and diverse workforce for the arts.

## DIVERSITY

Unfortunately, definitions of "diversity" have myopically focused on ethnicity, gender, and race to the exclusion of age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and other facts of human difference. Only recently have organizations considered appearance, intellectual ability, religion, sexual orientation, talent, and veteran status as important aspects of human difference (Whitelaw 2010). In addition, few definitions of diversity accept and embrace the fact of human difference with considerations for positive proactive aims. Therefore, I submit a broader definition of diversity for arts management educators to contemplate.

Diversity is the acceptance, acknowledgement, and proactive use of the fact of human difference in practice. Accordingly, Page (2007, preface) argued, "Collective ability equals individual ability plus diversity." Diversity is a fact and will always exist. If the arts community accepts, acknowledges, and makes positive use of diversity, it will reap great benefits. However, as pointed out earlier, diversity remains at risk in colleges and universities, even when students gain a great deal from it in the classroom.

Cases involving affirmative action in higher education (Kahlenberg 2012; Newkirk 2012; Taylor 2012), lack of resources, societal guilt, concerns about political correctness and cultural insensitivity, and the inability to get executive-level "buy in" all challenge the practical application of affirmative action and diversity as a framework for recruitment in education and employment opportunities in the arts. Despite these challenges, arts organizations that truly value the power of diversity have created fellowships and internships to professionally develop diverse arts managers (Arts and Business Council of New York 2012; Getty Foundation 2012; Steppenwolf Theatre Company 2012; Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts 2012). Additionally, the American Alliance of Museums has created professional networks and special committees to address the issue of diversity in museums (American Alliance of Museums 2012). However, the effectiveness

of these programs remains unknown. Still, these programs should inspire arts management educators to consider how they might collaborate with arts organizations to address the challenge of diversity in the arts.

## RECRUITMENT

Recruitment theory encourages the proactive identification of individuals who have the potential to become successful leaders in organizations. Affirmative action, diversity, and recruitment theory can assist arts management educators in viewing the process of recruitment with the understanding that every qualified application is a potential recruit for admissions into academic programs in arts management (Darden 2003). The most important stage of recruitment is attracting the best applicants, including underrepresented populations.

Based on my observations of the admissions pools of five degree programs (three graduate and two undergraduate) in arts management; I agree with Dr. Borwick's assertion (Hessenius 2012), not including programs in urban areas with large enrollments. Arts management has done an excellent job attracting able-bodied, heterosexual, upper-middle-class, young white women. I believe two critical reasons explain this phenomenon. As Stein (2000) suggested, educators unconsciously recruit those who look like themselves. The typical demographic profile of an arts management recruit mirrors (1) the primary audience demographic of the arts and (2) most arts management educators. In support of this assertion, DiMaggio and Ostrower (1992) found that with the exception of attendance at jazz concerts, for which African American rates of participation exceeded those of whites or Hispanics, white respondents participated more in all of the core activities than did African American or Hispanic respondents.

Conversely, many arts management programs have either small or nonexistent recruitment budgets, so their membership in the Association of Arts Administration Educators (AAAE) serves as their recruitment strategy. This passive approach to recruitment further exacerbates the issue of developing a diverse workforce for the arts because arts management remains a hidden field and career option for many people who do not fit the typical demographic profile of arts audiences, arts management educators, and students (DiMaggio and Ostrower 1992; Stein 2000; Cuyler 2007). Nevertheless, academic programs in arts management can offer underrepresented persons the anticipatory socialization processes and the professional preparedness needed to gain entry into the profession (Stein 2000). If arts management educators used affirmative action, diversity, and recruitment to more proactively recruit the best and most diverse students, the implications for the arts and arts management will reap great benefits.

## IMPLICATIONS

### Arts Management Education

If arts management educators use affirmative action and diversity as a recruitment framework, the most important implication I envision manifesting is the actualization of diversity. Diversity significantly adds rigor and depth in students' educational experiences. Diversity in the classroom can increase learning because it creates the intellectual space for students to develop cultural sensitivity, foster creativity, make self-interrogations of their assumptions and received truths,

practice adjusting to new people and situations more productively, resolve conflict, and, most important, enhance problem-solving skills (Gasman 2011; Newkirk 2012), which arts organizations, arts management educators, and students all value.

Furthermore, in a recent survey, employers rated the ability to work in a team structure, the ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization, and the ability to make decisions and solve problems as the three most important skills for new employees to have (National Association of Colleges and Employers 2012). Developing, practicing, and mastering these skills within a diverse arts management classroom will enhance learning but also serve the greater good of the arts community as it works toward becoming more inclusive.

### Arts Management Theory and Practice

Achieving diversity in arts management degree programs will have important implications for arts management theory and practice, too. Emerging arts management professionals will bring multiple perspectives on organizational issues, improved decision making, and enhanced problem solving to their places of employment (Ostrower 2008). Using the same people's intellectual capital to address the same challenges in the same way has been a liability for the arts. The achievement of diversity will truly allow arts organizations to engage their entire communities on multiple levels. Arts organizations will benefit from utilizing new perspectives on chronic challenges that have plagued the arts (Walker-Kuhne 2005).

For example, since the first performance of an opera took place in the United States in 1735, only four people of color have attained executive-level positions with nonculturally specific opera companies. These executives brought unique and new perspectives on the management of opera companies. The only Asian American participant in the study, Michael Ching, served as General and Artistic Director of Opera Memphis. Over half of the population of Memphis is African/Black American. Mr. Ching explicitly practiced experimenting with a variety of strategies to engage the African/Black Americans through the programming of Opera Memphis (Cuyler 2007).

Most important, achieving diversity will allow arts management to maximize its potential human and intellectual capital when it comes to professionally developing the future staffs of culturally specific arts organizations. In the National Arts Indexes, Kushner and Cohen (2012) illuminated the rapid increase in the number of culturally diverse arts organizations. Culturally specific arts organizations are about, by, for, and near culturally relevant communities.

Arts management educators must consider the potential of their cultural, human, intellectual, and social capital when it comes to developing underrepresented arts managers. Maximizing these capitals means access to new financial capital for arts organizations. According to the Selig Center for Economic Growth at the University of Georgia, the total annual buying power in the United States, combining all minority racial categories, will exceed \$12.2 trillion (Selig Center for Economic Growth 2012). A professionally well-prepared and diverse group of arts managers can positively impact the organizational practices of culturally specific arts organizations such as the African Continuum Theatre, Axis Dance Company, El Museo del Barrio, Houston Ebony Opera Guild, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Philadanco, Shen Wei Dance Arts, the Urban Queer Orchestra, Very Special Arts, as well as nonculturally specific arts organizations such as the New York City Ballet, the Birmingham Museum, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, or the New World Symphony Orchestra.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this article, I sought to encourage my arts management faculty colleagues to reconsider affirmative action and diversity as an effective framework for recruiting students into academic degree programs. However, challenges might preclude their use of this framework in recruitment (League of American Orchestras 2012). In addition to procedural knowledge about how to plan and implement a strategic plan for diversity, arts management educators must recognize that they do not need to lower their admissions requirements in pursuit of diversity. Affirmative action provides the basis for only admitting academically qualified recruits. Still, this does not mean that the only qualified recruits for admissions into arts management degree programs are able-bodied, heterosexual, upper-middle-class, young white women.

Arts management educators should also anticipate and understand the financial, historical, individual, psychological, and social barriers that prevent underrepresented students from pursuing degrees in arts management (Stein 2000). Historically, Jim Crow Laws prohibited the integration of arts audiences (Cuyler 2007). Though the Civil Rights Movement did a great deal to integrate ethnic and racial groups, U.S. society's collective memory of that time has deep and prevailing psychological and sociological issues to overcome. The benefits of addressing the complex challenge of diversity in the arts should outweigh the challenges that might preclude arts management educators' use of affirmative action and diversity in recruitment.

The government has also provided five recommendations for educators to consider that will ensure diversity in higher education (Gasman 2011). The U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice (2012) stated that:

1. An institution could consider an applicant's socioeconomic status, first-generation college status, geographic residency, or other race-neutral criteria if doing so would assist in drawing students from different racial backgrounds to the institution.
2. An institution could include in its admissions procedures special consideration for students who have endured or overcome hardships such as marked residential instability (e.g., the student moved from residence to residence or school to school while growing up) or enrollment in a low-performing school or district.
3. An institution could implement a plan that guarantees admission to a top percentile of students graduating from all in-state high schools.
4. An institution could select schools (including community colleges) based on their demographics (e.g., their racial or socioeconomic composition) and grant an admission preference to all students who have graduated from those schools, regardless of the race of the individual student.
5. An institution could consider an individual student's race among other factors in its admissions procedures; in so doing, an institution should follow the legal guidelines concerning the individualized use of race that are set forth above.

In developing a strategic diversity plan for recruitment, AAAE must also take the leadership role by setting a diversity goal and a time frame for achieving this goal. AAAE might start by adopting a public statement about how it values diversity. The Network of Schools of Public Policy Affairs and Administration (2013) has done so. In fact, their accreditation standards for master's degree programs stated the following: "The program will promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment and retention of faculty members" (Paragraph 19) and "The

program will promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment, admissions practices, and student support services” (Paragraph 25). In adopting such a statement, AAAE could aim to inspire a more diverse faculty and student body and measure this accomplishment through an annual survey that required each program to report on the diversity of their faculty and students.

For arts management educators, I suggest using the true intent of affirmative action, a more holistic definition of diversity, and the suggestions made by the U.S. departments of Education and Justice (2012) as a beginning strategy for pursuing diversity. Additionally, I encourage arts management educators to develop strategic alliances with performing arts high schools, college and university arts departments, as well as colleges and universities that serve high populations of underrepresented individuals such as historically black colleges and universities and land grant institutions.

I also advise arts management educators who recruit at the graduate level to remain cognizant of recruits who might desire a career change into the profession. Professional and social organizations such as the American Association of People with Disabilities, the Asian Professional Exchange, the National Society for Hispanic Professionals, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, OUT Professionals, the Prime Timers, and the Urban League might serve as rewarding partners in pursuing diversity in arts management. Finally, if arts management educators truly believe in the power of the arts to build communities and audiences, they must engage with all members of communities despite their differences.

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