

## DIVERSITY IN ACADEME

# Governing Boards Make Gains in Diversity

**W**HEN RAYMOND E. CROSSMAN was named president of the Adler School of Professional Psychology in 2003, the governing board of the Chicago-based graduate school resembled most boards nationwide: Its members were mostly male and mostly white.

Now, six years after starting a deliberate effort to diversify, Adler's board looks very different. More than half the 17 trustees are women, and one-third are members of racial or ethnic minority groups. The board chair is a black woman, and the vice chair is a Latino man.

"We're going after trustees based on our values, and making sure they're representative of the people we're interested in training and the communities we're interested in working with," Mr. Crossman says.

The diversity of Adler's board is unusual, according to research on governing boards. Although boards of trustees at colleges have become more racially diverse in recent years, the proportion of minority-group members on boards lags behind that of college students and the general population. The same is true of women. Efforts are under way to improve the situation, but the change in makeup tends to happen gradually. Board diversification requires new ways of seeking candidates—typically, board members are nominated by someone they already know on the board or in the administration—and a willingness to be creative during the search.

It also requires time and patience. At a round-table discussion hosted this year by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, Mr. Crossman and Patricia Moten Marshall, Adler's board chair, said colleges needed to take a long-term view of the process and make the effort a true priority.

"If you're really going to do it, you have to make it one of your central tasks," Mr. Crossman says in an interview.

Why bother seeking out a diverse board? People involved in diversity efforts say it is important that a governing body closely represent an institution's students and the community it serves. A range of backgrounds and experiences helps in the decision-making process, and can ensure that a college remains vibrant and relevant, especially in a global society.

"The role of the board is to represent the public trust," says Merrill P. Schwartz, director of research for the governing-board association. "Having a board that reflects the community that the institution serves now and in the future helps ensure that you have a well-rounded board to represent that public."

Survey data from the governing-board group and others show that boards have made progress in this area but still have a way

to go. At public colleges and universities, 21.3 percent of trustees were members of minority groups in 2004 (the most recent data available from the group), up from 17.4 percent from the previous survey, in 1997. Black trustees made up the largest minority group, followed by Hispanic ones. Four-year public colleges had a higher percentage of minority trustees than two-year institutions did. Private institutions had a much smaller proportion of minority board members—11.9 percent, up from 10.4 percent in 1997. Again, black trustees were most numerous, followed by Hispanic ones.

A 2006 *Chronicle* survey found that the vast majority of trustees—almost 90 percent—were white. Almost two-thirds of the 1,478 trustees who responded (63.4 percent) were men.

At community colleges, 78 percent of trustees are white, 9 percent black, 7 percent Hispanic, and 3 percent Asian Pacific, according to a survey conducted this year by the Association of Community College Trustees. Just 1 percent were American Indian, and 1 percent reported being of mixed race. The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges is planning to start a new survey of board members this month, with results expected in the spring of 2010. Ms. Schwartz says she doesn't know how much

the demographics will have changed, but she does know that institutions are interested in seeing how they compare with others. "I do think people are talking about it," she says.

**C**OLLEGES seeking more minority trustees should work more aggressively to reach out to potential candidates, Ms. Schwartz says. Rather than making cold-calls to minority community members when a seat comes open, boards should be cultivating relationships with potential candidates much earlier. Ms. Schwartz recommends naming interested community members to advisory boards or other volunteer committees to get them involved with the college, allowing both the person and the college to see if a board position would be a good fit. "It does take time to do these things," she says. "You need to think long term."

Often, board appointments are based on who knows whom. The most common way colleges find trustees is through recommendations from the college president (37 percent) or another board member (31 percent), according to the *Chronicle* survey in 2006.

Ms. Marshall, the chair of Adler's board and a consultant who works with nonprofit groups, recommends that boards look a step down from the chief-executive position, identifying up-and-comers who haven't received a lot of attention. Women and members of

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**A wide range of backgrounds and experiences on the board can ensure that a college stays vibrant.**

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minority groups may be more likely to inhabit those spots than the top job at corporations and nonprofit organizations.

"You can't always look for people who are in the limelight," Ms. Marshall says.

It may be appealing to go after people who are in the public eye, including entertainment or sports celebrities, because of the attention they could bring to an organization and their ability to make large gifts. But reaching them is hard, Ms. Marshall says, especially if a board does not have a connection to the public figure.

"It makes sense as a strategy if you have access to those individuals," she says. Institutions have a better chance of connecting with high-profile athletes or entertainers who are alumni. Among the well-known alumni who serve on the boards of their alma maters: Derrick Brooks, a former football player with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, who's now an analyst on ESPN, is an education philanthropist who serves on Florida State University's board. Glenn A. Rivers, head coach of the Boston Celtics, is a trustee of Marquette University. The entertainer Bill Cosby has been a board member at his alma mater, Temple University, for more than 20 years.

The astronaut Jose Hernandez is another high-profile board member serving his alma mater. The Mexican-American astronaut, whose recent space mission was covered heavily by the Mexican media (Mr. Hernandez made news when he told one station the United States should legalize undocumented immigrants), is a regent for University of the Pacific.

Still, the number of such celebrities to tap is relatively small. Boards are more likely to find trustee candidates by approaching up-and-comers in business, education, law, and nonprofit organizations.

**F**OR MANY BOARDS, identifying minority candidates is a challenge. But others say diverse candidates are out there—you just need to know where to look.

Adler found success in its diversity effort by changing the way it recruited board members. Its board looks for people who share the graduate school's values of social justice and working with underserved, marginalized communities. When an opening comes up, the board decides where gaps exist in representation related to age, gender, race, ethnicity, and professional background. It then establishes specific criteria for the new board candidate, and sends that list to trustees, faculty and staff mem-

bers, and alumni. Once the board has names of potential candidates, it decides how best to approach those people.

Having a diverse board has definitely helped bring on more diverse candidates, says Mr. Crossman, the president, who counts differences in age and sexual orientation as elements of a diverse board.

"It's easier for a person who has values of inclusion and social justice who is thinking about serving on a board to see the board walk the talk with its actual membership, rather than its desired membership," says Mr. Crossman, an openly gay man.

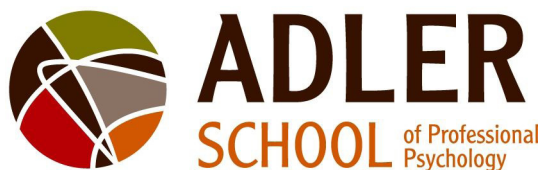
Cynthia Primo Martin, a trustee of the University of Delaware, her alma mater, started an organization called Trustees of Color several years ago to develop a pipeline for qualified minority board candidates for Delaware's nonprofit groups. She and her husband, who until recently was a trustee of Case Western Reserve University, his alma mater, had both been asked to serve on numerous boards and were overextended. They wanted to recommend other minority candidates, but realized they didn't know many younger people to suggest. Trustees of Color helps identify and train the next generation of minority board members.

Ms. Martin looks for board candidates among lawyers, doctors, multicultural groups, and fraternities and sororities. She sends information about her group and the need for diverse board members to local churches and affinity groups at corporations. In April of last year, Trustees of Color held an expo with 80 candidates and 30 nonprofit organizations. About 50 matches have been made since then, Ms. Martin says.

Colleges, which often consider philanthropic capacity when choosing board members, can miss out on good minority candidates if they're only looking at people who have made major gifts or are leaders of corporations. "Their names don't rise to the top as quick," Ms. Martin says.

Her husband, Joshua W. Martin III, a partner at a Wilmington, Del., law firm, says finding members of minority groups to serve has been a challenge for every board he has ever sat on. While he expects boards will continue to become more diverse, he cautions against choosing trustees based on race alone.

"The real focus is to find the person who has the expertise, who just happens to be a person of color," he says. "So many people have the qualifications, but you just have to spend the time looking for them."



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