

education review

a journal of book reviews

[reseñas educativas \(Spanish\)](#)
[resenhas educativas \(Portuguese\)](#)

This review has been accessed **516** times since April 15, 2008

Pope, Rachele L.; Reynolds, Amy L. & Mueller, John H. (2004). *Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

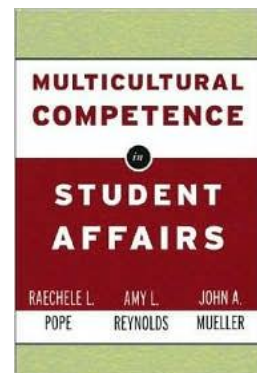
Pp. xxiv + 261 \$41 ISBN 0-7879-6207-42004

Reviewed by Brenda L. H. Marina
Georgia Southern University

April 15, 2008

Multicultural Competence in Student affairs, written by Rachele L. Pope, Amy L. Reynolds, and John H. Mueller is a book that features figures, tables, models and case scenarios that focuses on multicultural skill development. Although this first edition was written in 2004, this unique book still merits much attention with so few on the market as such. As a result of years of study, the authors wrote this book to assist student affairs practitioners become multiculturally competent. With the belief that defining and describing multicultural competence, the authors express the need for all practitioners to develop knowledge, awareness, and skills, rather than leave the complex issue of diversity to a select few. This exposition is a much needed tool to fill the void in the student affairs and higher education literature regarding multicultural competence. While the intended audience is student affairs and higher education practitioners, this book speaks to public administrators anyone concerned with social justice. The authors' style is formal, clear, concise, and suitable for the intended audience.

Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs is a guide and resource which explains what this concept should look like in daily practice and challenges the reader to reflect and evaluate one's values and assumptions to create or maintain a healthy and vibrant multicultural campus climate. At a time when hate crimes are once again rearing their ugly heads, this book should be of interest, importance and usefulness to higher education institutions. Each author has a professional background that uniquely contributes to the philosophy of the book: professors of higher education and student affairs administration and a staff psychologist. This combination hints to the focus and integration of thematic how-to instruction. The comprehensive bibliography speaks to the scholarship and authority owned by the authors. The book is divided into two sections; part one is centered around a model which describes seven core competences. Part two emphasizes the implications for future research and practice utilizing this model.



In chapter one the authors espoused multicultural awareness, knowledge and skills as the necessary competencies for quality student affairs practice and introduced a synthesized list of these competencies to assure the profession. A chart depicting characteristics of the multiculturally competent student affairs practitioner was provided for professionals to measure their level of acculturation. This chapter calls for practitioners to meet that challenge, which they deem necessary for the “effective, affirming, and ethical work in student affairs” and to create a more welcoming and inclusive campus community.

For the student affairs practitioner who has been inundated with theory and concerned that their academic studies failed to address multicultural competence, chapter 2 adds relevance to theoretical studies. Many theories that guide student affairs practice have ineffectively addressed multicultural issues and concerns leaving many practitioners to feel inadequately prepared to handle situations that arise with students from different ethnic backgrounds and those dealing with diversity. The authors call for more inclusive theories and translation that doesn’t eliminate or alienate underrepresented groups and research that pulls from a more diverse sample of participants. The authors suggest that the present theories used in student affairs can be beneficial by careful examination of their relevance and shaping them so they are successfully applied to the various, diverse individuals that make up a campus and organization population.

Theory and practice are instrumental in guiding multicultural awareness, however, strategies and assessment tools such as the Multicultural Organization Development (MCO), Multicultural Change Intervention Matrix (MCIM) and the Multicultural Organization Development (MCO) template are designed to guide effective multicultural change practices within an organization. Chapter 3 pays specific attention to assessment tools and further emphasizes the need for professionals of all ethnic groups to utilize strategic planning within their organization in order to create multicultural campus environments. If student affair practitioners lack strategic planning and cultural inference about the staff and students they supervise the end result is an unsuccessful or negligent implementation of multicultural initiatives.

Chapter 4 recognizes that administrators, managers and leaders should be trained in the area of counseling since the core of their work involves helping and advising students in some aspect of student life. Interpersonal skills are identified as pertinent to helping and advising students successfully. The authors note that while historical theories don’t acknowledge cultural differences as they apply to advising, understanding the importance of diverse individuals and the experience that each contributes is significant to understanding the relevance of multicultural competence. Seven multicultural competencies are identified and deemed necessary for effective interactive campus relationships and constituents within the campus community.

It is no secret that the survival of student affairs practice depends upon funding and the professionals are now required to conduct assessments to determine the effectiveness of their services and support their request for funding. Chapter 5 differentiates between assessment and research explaining how assessments are used, their importance and their usefulness in guiding practice for institution-specific programming. Research guides theory and provides deeper inference. Multicultural competence has relevance to the assessment process because assessments can help practitioners learn more about the population of students they serve, race, nationality, ethnicity and other social constructs. Chapter 5 also identifies the different types of instrumentation such as surveys and direct mailings and warns that instrumentation can be ineffective if not used appropriately. Cultural test biases usually develop and manifest in the development of the instrument, reliability and validity. Alternative research approaches are encouraged to further diversify research samples, address diversity issues which can result in the creation of more inclusive and multiculturally competent campus environments.

In chapter 6 the authors contend that multicultural competence is imperative to effectively respond to both ethical and multicultural issues and suggest that student affairs professionals should have a

basic understanding of legal parameters in their role, such as affirmative action. According to Pope, Mueller, and Reynolds, there are four underlying core values of the Student Affairs professional: personal values which are often minimized; institutional values which get downplayed; professional values which receive the most attention (these influence campus culture); and ethical values. These values are constantly expressed and changed as one develops. Examples of exemplary practices are provided to assist in the conceptualization of multi-cultural competencies in Student Affairs. The authors also suggest that professionals can learn how life and cultural experiences influence student beliefs by spending some informal time with them.

Chapter 7 explores the knowledge, awareness and skills of these professional and examines the assumptions and beliefs that influence their training, and teaching. Teaching responsively by respecting different ways of knowing will enrich educational experience. But few have been trained on how to develop learning environments that affirm diversity. Defining and redefining core competencies for higher education professionals are essential. More specifically multicultural competence within student affairs preparation programs needs to further exploration. There is evidence of multi-cultural issues in Student Affairs curriculum but most practitioners have received little training and have limited multi-cultural knowledge or experience. The authors listed and described seven practices necessary for infusing multi-cultural issues into teaching and learning. It is vital that educators have the ability to address issues related to the interpersonal dynamics influencing the learning process in the classroom.

Chapter 8 asserts that multicultural competence research in student affairs is emerging, still with few studies from the higher education arena. Multicultural competence for Counseling Psychology had its beginning just before 1982 and the information serves as a framework for multicultural competence in student affairs, and higher education. In the field of Counseling Psychology, there are four instruments that have made significant contributions to the research of counseling multi-competence and described in this chapter. The Multi Counseling Inventory (MCI) developed by Sadowsky et al (1994); The multi-cultural Awareness Knowledge & Skills survey (MAKSS) developed by D'Andrea et al (1991); The Cross Cultural Counseling Inventory Revised (CCCI-R) developed by La Frombose et al (1991); The Multi-cultural counseling attitudes scales form B-Revised (MCAS-B) developed by Ponterotto et all (1993). While these are quantitative measures, qualitative research is necessary to understand how multicultural competency is operationalized. It can also inform and propel quantitative research. Currently, there is one instrument that has been developed to measure multicultural competence in student affairs: The Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs – Preliminary Form 2 (MCSA – P2). Although research is limited in student affairs, the overarching implication from the research is the need for ongoing professional preparation and development of the practitioners in the area of multi-cultural competence. Multicultural awareness and knowledge can be acquired through coursework, personal reflection and reading, but develop skills, one must practice specific tasks, behaviors and interventions. Case studies can serve the purpose to develop such skills allowing real-life practice for administrative decision making.

In chapter 9, the authors present seven case studies with discussion questions and case exploration activities. A discussion about the components of the case exploration activities is key to understanding and performing the tasks. The exploration activities challenge the participants look beyond the possible solutions and consider the reactions and outcomes that may occur as well. The book concludes with the task of describing the complexity of multiculturalism and the authors encourage the readers to consider new ways of thinking about this ever-changing multicultural world.

This book extends and relates to a broader audience, such as Public administration and Urban studies because it addresses diversity, ethics, and social justice issues. The case studies demonstrate how multicultural competence can enhance the effectiveness of higher education professionals specifically, but the multiple perspectives for problem-solving can enhance the effectiveness of other professions in general. I have followed the work of Pope, Reynolds and

Mueller because they were on the cutting edge when I began my research on the topic of multicultural competence in higher education. I searched for models and instruments and found a wealth of information from the fields of counseling, K-12, and social work. I was intrigued when I began reading their works; this book extends the research for higher education to another level, from conceptual to practical. I plan to utilize the book as a text for courses related to diversity and ethics. I have yet to find another book that effectively addresses the need for the higher education practitioners. I recommend this book to those in higher education administration and for student affairs/personnel preparation programs.

About the Reviewer

Dr. Brenda L. H. Marina serves as Assistant Dean of University College at the University of Akron. As Assistant Dean, she assists with establishing college goals and priorities, developing and implementing college retention strategies and academic progress review, and serving as liaison for various campus units. Dr. Marina coordinates the Student Success Seminars, a baccalaureate credit-bearing course that assists students in their transition to college. Her research interests have focused on multicultural competencies in higher education and the assessment of student learning.

Copyright is retained by the first or sole author, who grants right of first publication to the *Education Review*.



[Editors: Gene V Glass, Kate Corby, Gustavo Fischman](#)

~ [ER home](#) | [Reseñas Educativas](#) | [Resenhas Educativas](#) ~
~ [overview](#) | [reviews](#) | [editors](#) | [submit](#) | [guidelines](#) | [announcements](#) | [search](#) ~