

FOREWORD

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Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) of higher education are a uniquely American creation. These institutions are best understood in the context formed by the racial-ethnic milieu revealed in the United States past and present. The United States is unique in the world's history, representing the only democracy founded on racial slavery. Students of the U.S. Constitution, our founding document, celebrate the soaring *Enlightenment Age* language which privileged individual rights and freedoms, granting the common man previously denied human dignity. However, in the ultimate contradiction, this landmark document also, at one and the same time, ensconced protections for legalized traffic in human slaves. Black people were defined as three-fifths human; stripped of all legal, constitutional, and human rights protections; and condemned to lives of unrelenting humiliation and brutality as chattel slaves. In other aspects, the Constitution also stripped away or strictly limited the rights of women, non-property White males, Native Americans, Latinos and Asians. Written into the U.S. Constitution and/or interpreted as law were provisions that denied women the vote; stole the property of Native Americans and Japanese Americans; and denied native-born Mexican Americans citizenship rights. So it was this remarkable document, the U.S. Constitution and the magnificent national experiment it created, The United States of America, that would come to embody and be haunted by contradictions inherent in the conflicting ideals of the Enlightenment and of White Racial Superiority.

Minority-Serving Institutions of higher learning exist at the intersection where the American Dream of unbridled possibilities meets the American

Nightmare of persistent racial-ethnic subordination. In a society that claimed to grant all the rights of liberty and the pursuit of happiness, which promised that Big Dreams could be achieved by simple people through ability, vision, and hard work, it stands to reason education would become a critical vehicle for social mobility. Moreover, at its founding, this nation self-consciously declared its break with the past order of superstition and inherent privilege to embrace a new world founded on human reason and earned status. Not surprisingly, this new nation experienced a literal explosion of educational institutions—from elementary to secondary schools, from colleges to universities. Churches, state, and federal government, private foundations, and independent organizations linked national progress and the realization of the American Dream to expansion of opportunities for education at all levels. Over the country's history, the proliferation of colleges and universities reflects in simplest terms our national belief in the transformative power of education, especially higher education. We have committed to the ideal that education would set us free, overcoming barriers of prejudice, discrimination, and inequality.

Racial mores and structures shaped the evolution of U.S. higher education. The greatest expansion in opportunities for higher education consistently privileged Whites, particularly White males, since they were the dominant group in terms of power, prestige, and privilege. At various historical points, colleges or universities were founded to specifically serve excluded populations such as Native Americans, women or Blacks. Interestingly, over time colleges and universities were also founded to bring higher education within the reach of poor Whites, Whites in rural areas, and Whites who were ethno-nationally identified. Nevertheless, from the earliest days of the Republic to the present, Whites have been the major benefactors of a national higher educational system which has come to be the envy of the world.

Colleges and universities with significant enrollments of students from racial-ethnic minority backgrounds have not received sufficient attention from scholars and policy makers. As a result, our knowledge about the purposes, organization, outcomes, and future of Minority-Serving Institutions of higher education continues to be somewhat limited. The changing face of American society has implications for participation in higher education generally, but this is especially so for higher education institutions serving more students from racial-ethnic minority backgrounds. What we do know is that Minority-Serving Institutions have played critical roles in the expansion of access to higher education for underrepresented racial ethnic minorities such as Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans, and some Asian Pacific Islander

groups. It is also clear these institutions make substantial contributions to the enrollment of other Asian American groups who are not necessarily underrepresented in higher education.

This groundbreaking volume expands our knowledge and understanding of Minority-Serving Institutions of higher education. Part I examines the historical, social, and cultural foundations of these institutions. We discover how shared experiences (e.g., patterns of discrimination against racial-ethnic minorities) combined with distinctive, unique elements (e.g., treaties between Native American nations and the U.S. government) to create MSIs. A detailed summary overviews selected historical, institutional, and student characteristics from research about MSIs. Equally revealing is the thoughtful examination of the asymmetrical power exercised by majority, mainstream institutions of higher learning in naming and subordinating MSIs.

The complex set of factors that contributed to the formation and evolution of MSIs provide an important backdrop for part II of the volume, which examines the broad range of MSIs across multiple, specific contexts. Attention is given to MSIs commonly ignored in research and discourse, such as Deaf-Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) serving institutions. We are also introduced to topics as varied as Faculty Development and Governance in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); the effects of race neutral policy on Latino enrollment in Public Higher Education; and predictors of academic success for Latino males in Community Colleges.

The final section of the volume offers rich comparative analyses across and within MSIs. The social justice orientation of Hispanic-Serving and historically Black institutions as revealed in mission statements and administrative statements is examined. In the next instance, faculty attitudes and practices toward teaching Latino, Black and American Indian undergraduates are explored. Other chapters study coalition formation among Minority-Serving Institutions; aspects of student engagement and academic success; and the challenges faced by MSIs in securing and maintaining accreditation from regional associations.

In sum, this volume introduces readers to various aspects of Minority-Serving Institutions. The task before the authors is to reframe the discourse on MSIs. In the process, they challenge how we think about U.S. higher and postsecondary education as an enterprise. Minority-Serving Institutions serve constituencies who are mostly first-generation college goers; who are poor; who have weaker academic backgrounds; and who are members of discriminated racial-ethnic minority groups. At the same time, we see the

definition and reality of MSIs morphing and changing, driven by changes in American immigration and demographic patterns. The diversity of MSIs defies simple categorization, including small colleges and large, state universities; HBCUs and TCUs; first-generation, new immigrant students; and students from families with five generations of college degree holders. We are also challenged to see beyond empty rhetoric that applauds individual, institutional, and social diversity even as combined social, historical, and cultural factors continue to ensure extreme serious underrepresentation of the students served by MSIs.

This volume raises important questions and offers thoughtful answers. As such, the volume is a must read for scholars, policy makers, and practitioners who are interested in expanding college access and success for underrepresented racial-ethnic minorities. It has been said the truest measure of a society is to be found in how it treats those on the periphery, who live in the shadows, and who are disadvantaged. Similarly, the circumstances of MSIs and the students they serve reveal much about the true nature of higher education in America. Rhetoric aside, will this society commit to expanded opportunities that will make the American Dream more reality than illusion? Or will the society continue to embrace attitudes and practices that deny these opportunities to all but a select few? How our nation answers these questions is a prelude to the future which awaits. If we are wise, that future will emphasize investments in education, knowing the returns will be magnified many times over.