

# Diversity and the Independent School

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# The Study

- Are large, independent schools across the country receptive to a diverse student body?
- What do the mission statements of these large schools indicate?
- Would a non-traditional student feel welcome to apply for admission?

# A definition of diversity:

Diversity is "otherness," or those human qualities that are different from our own and outside the groups to which we belong, yet are present in other individuals and groups. It is important to distinguish between the primary and secondary dimensions of diversity.

Primary dimensions are the following: age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, and sexual orientation

Secondary dimensions of diversity are those that can be changed, and include, but are not limited to: educational background, geographic location, income, marital status, military experience, parental status, religious beliefs, and work experiences.

*University of Maryland Definition of Diversity*

*[www.umd.edu](http://www.umd.edu)*

# Is the following a commitment to diversity?

The XXXXX school admits students of any race, color, national, and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national, and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship, and loan programs, and athletic and other school administered programs.

# 2000 U.S. Census

| <b>Race</b>                            | <b>Number</b> | <b>% of Tot Pop</b> |
|--|---------------|---------------------|
| White                                  | 211,460,626   | 75.1                |
| Black/African American                 | 34,658,190    | 12.3                |
| American Indian/Alaska Native          | 2,475,956,    | 0.9                 |
| Asian                                  | 10,242,998    | 3.6                 |
| Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | 398,835       | 0.1                 |
| Other Race                             | 15,359,073    | 5.5                 |
| Two or More Races                      | 6,826,228     | 2.4                 |

# The Hispanic Population

Because Hispanic could include any of the above categories, it was given a separate area. The U.S. Census revealed that of the total population (281,421,906), there were 35,305,818 who identified as Hispanic. Thus, in addition to the percentages in the previous slide, 12.5% of the total population considers itself Hispanic.

# Is Diversity Important in the Mission Statement?

“In terms of diversity, an independent school’s mission statement is vital to the realization of building and sustaining a diverse and inclusive community. The school’s mission statement regarding diversity must give a sense of vision, go from rhetoric to action, and match the current realities of the school and the larger society.”

*Gene Batiste  
Personal Email*

# Three Questions that Guided the Study

1. How many independent schools actually provide a welcoming environment for students from a diverse background?
2. How do these schools go about informing prospective students that regardless of their background, they are welcome?
3. What are independent schools doing to attract and maintain a diverse student population?

# The Schools

- Day and Boarding
- Enrollment of 500 or more
- No religious schools
- No more than 3 schools from one state
- Randomly selected

# Some Challenges to the study

- Finding the mission statement
- Interpreting diversity statements

# Four Different Categories of Mission Statements

- 1) No mention of diversity
- 2) Full statement
- 3) "Diversity"
- 4) Separate section on diversity

# No Mention of Diversity

"XXXXX" School educates each student to become an independent thinker, confident of her abilities and herself. Integrity, enthusiasm for learning, and respect for difference are fundamental to XXXXX's tradition and philosophy. A rigorous program of academics, the arts and athletics, a distinguished and engaged faculty, and abundant leadership opportunities challenge each student to discover and reach her own potential. In an atmosphere charged with intellectual curiosity, shared endeavor, and joy in the learning process, XXXXX School strives to imbue each student with a profound sense of connection to her community and to the larger world.

# No Mention of Diversity

*XXXXX* provides a demanding academic program, challenging each student to fully develop his or her intellectual, physical, and artistic abilities, and his or her potential for moral conduct and responsible citizenship.

# Full Statement

XXXXX School is a community that values learning as a life-long process and teaching as an art, that respects individuals and their differences, and that honors the pursuit and attainment of excellence. **XXXXX encourages a diverse body of motivated, committed, able students to develop their full intellectual, ethical, artistic and athletic potential and to flourish as curious, creative, and responsible citizens whose lives have meaning, balance, and a capacity for self-renewal.**

# Full Statement

XXXXX, a coeducational day school in XXX,XX, was established in XXXX by the merger of two independent schools, the XXXXX & XXXX, founded respectively in 18XX and 18XX. Located on three separate campuses, we work as one school in the pursuit of excellence. **We celebrate the diversity of our community which enriches our daily experience.**

# “Diversity”

There are the people: a dedicated group of teachers who care as much about why and how each student learns as about what he or she learns; and a **diverse** student body ranging in age from three to eighteen....

# “Diversity”

**XXXXX provides an experience-centered, rigorous and well-rounded education for a diverse community.**

Recognizing that students have a variety of needs at each developmental stage and learn in different ways, the Schools are committed to help each student:

- learn to think critically and creatively
- cultivate a passion for excellence in academics, the arts, and athletics
- master important subject matter
- achieve a sense of emotional and physical well-being
- celebrate both our cultural differences and our common humanity
- gain a sense of personal and community responsibility
- develop a life-long love of learning

# Separate Section for Diversity

Numerous studies have demonstrated that the diversity of a school directly contributes to the quality of its students' education. Exposed to a variety of perspectives, students learn to think critically, to challenge their assumptions, and to explore many approaches and solutions. Multiple voices and differing backgrounds at XXXXX are integral to our strong academic program. The diversity of our community is matched by our emphasis on multicultural education. The awareness that we live in a global community, and that contributions to our society have come from every corner of the globe and every strata of society, is woven into the XXXXX curriculum. At XXXXX, we are preparing our students to live in the world.

# Separate Section on Diversity

At XXXXX we actively seek students, faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds in the belief that a broad range of experiences and viewpoint enhance learning, enrich life on campus, and better prepare us all for full participation in a pluralistic, democratic society.

We also are working toward an inclusive curriculum and pedagogy that recognizes that we live in a multi-cultural nation and world. To reach this goal we know we must confront overt and hidden biases, such as racism, sexism and homophobia, in ourselves and others.

We believe that these goals cannot be reached without an open and continuous dialogue between all members of the Wheeler community, including families and students. We recognize that our diversity - whether based on race, ethnicity, religion, economic status, gender, sexual orientation or some other source - can sometimes lead to conflict, but we also believe that such tension can provide the catalyst for the growth and change we seek.

We are supported in the pursuit of diversity by XXXXX's long tradition of respect for the dignity of the individual and our shared sense of responsibility for the well-being of each other and the larger community.

# Results

|                   | <b>No<br/>Mention</b> | <b>Full<br/>Statement</b> | <b>"Diversity"</b> | <b>Separate<br/>Area</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Number</b>     | 32                    | 45                        | 32                 | 12                       | 121          |
| <b>Percentage</b> | 26.5%                 | 37%                       | 26.5%              | 10%                      | 100%         |

# Interpretation

- Far too few schools do not even address diversity.
- Just mentioning diversity doesn't mean much. Do they mean athletes and scholars?
- Schools must reflect the society in which we live.

# Follow Up Studies

- Once schools accept non-traditional students, what do they do to help them be successful?
- What does the faculty do to prepare for non-traditional students?
- What is the difference between multicultural education and diversity?
- Awareness—Commitment--Action

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