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May 7, 2010
DBSP 102.01

Desousa-Brent Leadership Project: Perspectives of students regarding the issue of diversity in St. Mary's College of Maryland

My interest in the topic of diversity first stemmed from my participation in the Desousa-Brent seminar in both the fall and spring semester of this academic year. Although the content and discussions in the class fostered my interest in this topic, it was the differing of opinions with my peers that made me want to investigate the subject further. What exactly makes a school “diverse” in the first place? Is race the primary factor one should examine when discussing diversity? Most importantly, I wished to investigate whether students that identified as White/Caucasian¹, and students whose ethnicity was identified as something other than White/Caucasian², differed greatly when it came to the issue of diversity and how it is being handled by St. Mary's College of Maryland.

So I set out with a seemingly ancient, but perfectly usable, tape-recorder and went about collecting opinions on the matter. I interviewed a total of 40 people, 22 of which identified with something other than White/Caucasian³ and one of which did not identify with any racial background. For order sake, I have divided this essay into the four questions I asked the participants over the course of the interview:

- What were your expectations of diversity when you arrived at St. Mary's?
- How would you define diversity? Would you say it should be defined more by life experience rather than race? Why or why not?
- Do you believe the college is taking adequate steps to promote diversity on campus? Why or why not?
- How would you rate this campus's openness to diversity on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being completely open and 1 completely shut off?

¹ Although there has been much debate over the use of “Caucasian” (the term is also used to define a mountainous region between the Black and Caspian Sea), in this context it will be used to identify those of Anglo/ European decent.

² It was a difficult task to determine how these two groups in the study would be classified, but I believe I made the best choice. Although it makes my insides churn to use the phrasing that pits everything against White/Caucasian, I believe due to the existing majority on campus it was the only way. I also felt as though the notion of “student of color” was too polarizing, and some students did not only identify with one ethnicity. I also thought the usage of neutral terms such as Group A and Group B would trivialize the experiences of all parties involved, and I would eventually have to explain the two.

³ In regards to this essay, I have included all the participants who primarily claim a bi-racial heritage to be part of the “students of color” grouping.

Although I had a general idea what direction each group's answers were going to take, the variety of insights they provided painted a larger picture of the campus community as a whole. I hope you enjoy reading these thoughts and reactions as much as I enjoyed recording them. I also hope both essays may act as a catalyst for change within our college community.

Perspectives of self-identifying non-Caucasian/non-White students

What were your expectations of diversity when you arrived at St. Mary's?

Kelly '12: "My expectations on diversity were sort of towards the religious side...I'm Jewish. I knew the Hillel⁴ here wasn't very predominant, but I was thinking it would be more diverse than how white it is."

Ann '10: "I thought it would be mostly a white school."

Aaron '11: "They were I guess average..."

Hal '10: "Well I knew that there wasn't much of a minority population in the county and I knew the school just reflected not just not the county, but Maryland."

Patrick '12: "I came here previous to attending this school, so I knew there wasn't going to be too much diversity. I realized there was probably at least 75% white population at this school...so it was what I expected."

Zara '12: "I didn't really have any expectations. My older brother went here and the year before I came I visited, and I noticed this was a predominantly white school. There was really no expectation."

Maya '11: "I didn't expect it was going to be diverse, and it's not."

Yolanda '11: "They were not really high...it's also because I was also not worried about racial diversity, but I did not know about other kinds of diversity."

Miranda '11: "Not very much."

Olivia '11: "I wasn't really sure exactly what to expect. Me, personally, I was coming from a different country... when I came here I was taught what diversity meant."

Adrienne '10: "I didn't expect this much. I remember my freshman year there were not many Hispanics or blacks. It was mostly white so I didn't expect that much."

Sha Lin '10: "I just be here for one semester, so I didn't really have any..."

⁴ Hillel: The Jewish club on campus

Di Jin '13: "I didn't have any expectations."

Eric '12: "It's quite good here."

Nadia '12: "Well, I knew it was predominantly white..."

Ingrid '13: "I expected it to be a little bit of African Americans and a whole lot of white people. A few Chinese people...I didn't think there were going to be any Puerto Ricans here or other Asians."

Carla '13: "I wasn't expecting very much diversity...I guess I kind of expected everyone to just be, you know, white I guess."

Maria '11: "Being a person who is not from Southern Maryland coming to this school, it's a diverse school, but I thought it would be more diverse... There would be more everyone else."

Nazeera '12: "I guess diversity isn't always about race...I guess I was just hoping to learn new things about different people, and for the majority of that not to just be race. But when I first came to St. Mary's, coming from a predominantly black and Hispanic high school, coming to St. Mary's was kind of like: 'Whoa what's going on?' But I just transitioned into it."

Stan '13: "I honestly had no expectations about it—about diversity at all—before I arrived there, and honestly I didn't take the time to research the school at all."

Jason '13: "It depends on what sense. I expected the campus to be predominantly white, which answers what I think of as the implied question. However, as far as actual diversity goes, I expected the college to be fairly open to new ideas and a bit of culture shock."

Pamela '13: "I thought people would be way diverse and really cool...and they are, but there are more white people than anything."

My Thoughts:

As one can clearly see from the answers given above, the expectations regarding diversity vary in importance among those interviewed. It also sheds light on other forms of diversity outside the standard racial measurement. No one answer is wrong or right, but in order to make progress in our community, we must seek to better understand, and communicate these ideas with one another.

How would you define diversity? Would you say it should be defined more by life experience rather than race? Why or why not?

Ann '10: "...Life experiences more...the people you encounter show you the diversity."

Aaron '11: "I think diversity is defined by both, I think diversity would encompass living abroad...coming from a foreign environment also coming from a [different] racial background."

Hal '10: "diversity in terms of race..."

Patrick '12: "I think it's probably race, even though it should be life experiences just based off of history of the matter."

Zara '13: "I don't only define it as race—I also define it as economic status, interests, gender, and I think there are so many different characteristics that define diversity."

Maya '11: "It's both."

Yolanda '11: "It's really a wide range of things not just race."

Miranda '11 : "I think it was mostly built on race."

Olivia '11: "I think it should be more life experiences because race, when it comes with people who are mixed, then how do you define them? Right now in this world we are all globalized. Everyone is interrelated to each other."

Arina '10: "It should be defined more by life experiences than race because sometimes one person will be here, and they'll call it diverse...but not really. It should be based more on experience."

Sha-lin '10: "life- experiences."

Di Jin '13: "race."

Eric '12: "life experience."

Nadia '12: "I think it's a mix of both. You bring your background, your culture, your language, your life experience, and we can all learn from each other."

Ingrid '13: "Race is a more important factor of diversity [but] it depends on what kind of diversity you're talking about...like diverse diversity or personality diversity."

Carla '13: "I think it would be defined by combinations [of] the experiences and the race. I don't think diversity is limited to one concept."

Maria '12: "I think it's both."

Nazeera '12: "Life experience more than race. You have people who are adopted. I think it's more of a balance between nature vs. nurture."

Stan '13: "I would say diversity is an inclusion of people of different ethnic racial and economic backgrounds into a similar environment or cause, and I think it should be equally about race ethnicity and life background."

Jason '13: "Diversity should be measured in terms more akin to the weight of the minority opinion than ethnicity or life experience. The ability to accept ideas that are not predominant, or even within the current paradigm is what diversity really attempts to represent. Of the two options given, life experience is more likely to produce different ideas than race."

Pamela '13: "Life experiences. You can be white and you can travel the world... I think life experience plays a major part in diversity."

My thoughts:

It was only after I was compiling my data in regards to this question, that I realized my error in phrasing. Although some participants noted the discrepancy of how diversity *should* be defined, and how it *is* defined in modern day society. I feel as though with this word change I would have received a less idealistic image of diversity from the participants.

Given the lessons we have learned though Desousa-Brent regarding institutionalized racism, I hesitate to define five white people from different life-experiences as a substitute for diversity. Yes, this may cover a particular facet of diversity, but as an institution of higher education we must take into account the rest of the world's perception of diversity.

How would you rate this campus's openness to diversity on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being completely open, and 1 completely shut off?

Ann '10: "3, maybe a 4. I feel fairly comfortable here."

Aaron '11: "I say about a 4."

Hal '10: "3. It is adequate, I guess, [with] the budget and resources the school has."

Patrick '12: "2 ½. It's open but not to the extent we would want it to be. Everyone joins together in their little clans"

Zara '12: 3

Maya '11: 3

Yolanda '11: "They are really open in a lot of things and still not really open on other things. It's kind of in the middle, maybe like 3."

Miranda '11: 2

Olivia '11: 3

Arina '10: 3

Sha-lin '10: 4

Di Jin Wu '13: 4

Eric '12: 4

Nadia '12: 4

Ingrid '13: 3 ½

Carla '13: 3.8

Nazeera '12: "3.5 to 4. Definitely the demographic of the college has been changing. I noticed people aren't as open as they used to be like when I first visited St. Mary's. [It is] sort of dropping. I would like the campus to be more open to who they are."

Stan '13: 4.8-4.20

Jason '13: "I'd say about a 3 or so. The school is extremely open to the flow of ideas in many sectors (homosexuality for example); however, most differing opinions on things tend to partition the student body rather than remove them from opposition."

My Thoughts:

Looking over some of the participants' answers, I wish I had asked them to elaborate on how exactly the campus was and was not "open." This may have made it easier to discern the improvements that could be made to the campus as a whole. Also this may account for the differences of the numbers given, because each person had something different in mind when giving his or her opinion.

Do you believe the college is taking adequate steps to promote diversity on campus? Why or why not?

Kelly '12: "I would say it's adequate in that they are not doing *nothing*, because inaction is also action. But it's a lot of talk. Huge, huge amounts of talk about diversity, and yet we don't see the demographics changing. Even if you say we have this number of minorities, how much do we see [them] engaged in campus life?"

I don't think they count as much because they are specifically from an abroad program. They are not part of the diversity of the school, like having Chinese-Americans or Vietnamese Americans. I don't consider how many exchange students we have to be part of diversity because there is a disconnect from them. You don't see that diversity interacting with our daily lives."

Ann '10: "I don't know if they're adequate steps... but maybe they're going slow and steady at it...I don't know actually about how much they're doing."

Aaron '11: "I think it is. The study abroad programs, for one, are pretty much world wide reaching areas that are a variety of ethnicities...so I think it's doing a great job. As far as the students on campus, I think we have a pretty diverse campus—although whites are the majority as they are in the rest of America."

Hal '10: "Adequate...I guess [because of] the budget and resources the school has."

Patrick '12: "It's open but not to the extent we would want it to be. Everyone joins together in their little clans."

Zara '12: "No not really. In a sense yeah...there are so many diverse events that go on—films and stuff. But there is still a lot of people being accepted [because of] their higher economic status."

Maya '11: "Things like the Desousa -Brent program, where they encourage minority students to come to the college, show that they want to increase diversity."

Yolanda '11: "I think they are, but to me it's not enough. I think what I see most, for the past two years lately, there has been an increase in racial diversity, but people are not becoming aware of other kinds of diversity."

Miranda '11: "I think they are trying, but they could be doing a way better job. All I see them doing is bringing a whole bunch of international students in and not doing a lot to integrate them into the community, so they just feel left out."

Olivia '11: "They are trying to diversify the races more so with the professors than the students, there is less of a diversity in that sense. They are trying to do more by bringing different cultures together."

Adrienne '10: "They have made progress through these four years. I have seen more diverse students—just a few, you can count them. Which in the sense it's good—and at the same time it's not."

Sha-lin '10: "Yeah."

Di Jin'13: "Yes, I do."

Eric '12: "Yes."

Nadia '12: "I believe we're pretty open college, yes."

Ingrid '13: "Not so much...just the part where they are enrolling, because we don't sing *kumbaya* or anything. I really don't think they should have to promote getting together. It should be the students themselves getting together."

Carla '13: I don't really know.

Nazeera '12: "defiantly through things like lectures campus events...movies..."

Stan '13: "I think the college is doing a good job at bringing these different groups of people to one place, but I am not entirely sure if they are doing the best job they could be in ensuring the inclusion of all these groups in activities. I can't say for sure, because I commute and do not experience the campus all the time."

Jason '13: "I believe the college has done as much as is feasible within its duty to promote diversity on campus. However, it's not truly the college's job to promote diversity but the students who attend. As the student body, we choose how we react to new and foreign ideas, and through this process, determine how diverse the school will become."

Pamela '13: "I think so. We have a lot of bus tours coming in from other parts of Maryland and people shipping off to other countries."

My Thoughts:

Before compiling the answers to this particular question, I had never given much thought as to how the abroad programs contributed to the diversity of the campus. On one hand, the sheer fact that they exist allows students the opportunities to experience new cultures and ways of life they may not have had the chance to participate in otherwise. On the other hand, these programs are not based within the confines of the campus, so the exposure is only given to those who choose to participate in the programs.

The inclusion of abroad students is less of an issue of diversity for the school, as it is the responsibility for the school to make sure students, as stated in the comments above, are integrated into the community rather than simply thrown into a new situation. I am unfamiliar with the tools used to prepare International students for life abroad, but while St. Mary's has a duty towards them, it is also the duty of the students to be welcoming and inclusive of the newcomers as well.

Perspectives of self-identifying White/Caucasian students

What were your expectations of diversity when you arrived at St. Mary's?

Alex '13: "Well, I knew it wasn't going to be the most diverse school, us not being the most cosmopolitan school like [University of Maryland] College Park. I did understand it was going to be more homogenous. I did believe it was going to be more diverse than other small liberal arts colleges."

Allyssa '11: "I did expect some, but because it's such a small school I wasn't expecting such the degree I found here..."

Kelly '11: "My expectations were really small... but it wasn't a big deal how diverse my school was. Whether it was or was not because at my high-school I was a minority."

Vince '10: "Being a liberal arts college I would expect it to be fairly diverse compared to the more public institutions, and things like that. Because our campus tends to have a more liberal valence to it... so I did expect a fair amount of diversity."

Elise '10: "I held pretty high expectations. Transferring from a white Jesuit university, a public liberal arts college would encompass more diversity."

Caroline '13: "I really didn't have many expectations, because I'm already part of a huge majority. I guess I kind of expected to have the same experience I did in high school; I was exposed to many different people. The thing that surprised me most about its diversity was its international students, actually. But then really I didn't have any expectations."

Lana '13: "I came into St. Mary's knowing I would be kind of disappointed in the diversity. I came from a very diverse high school. It was kind of a shock to come here and not have that. A primarily white campus was kind of strange for me. I learned to accept it; it's ok...but I really miss the diversity of my school. I knew it was a trade off for a smaller school."

Anja '13: "My expectations, they were pretty high because some of the representatives that I had spoken to before I came here really emphasized that the school really tries to be diverse."

Maggie '13: "I expected the school to be very diverse, and I would say that it has met my expectations."

Sara '13: "I expected it to be significantly more diverse than my high school, which was an all-girls Catholic prep school. Most of the girls came from upper-middle class families, and most of the girls were white."

Cara '12: "To be pretty diverse, much more than my high school. Especially since St.

Mary's claims to strive for diversity.

Marjanne '13: "There were going to be mostly white students, but they were all going to be smart."

Barry '13: "I figured there'd be a few more non-white people than in my hometown, and I was right. My hometown was like 96% white."

Jane '13: "I expected ridiculous amounts of affirmative action, and, honestly, a lot of different types of people. I was grossly shocked when I found out how white this campus is. I mean, it didn't bother me, I just expected a lot more diversity. But, to be blatant, I'm contented either way. Diversity, at least ethnically, is not important or unimportant to me at all."

Bill '13: "When I arrived at St. Mary's I truly expected little diversity. Being that St. Mary's is in southern Maryland, I thought that the campus would be around 90% white. Therefore I was surprised when I arrived and learned that that was not the case."

Kaya '13: "I expected a bit more of a mixture. I think there's fewer minorities here than there were in my high school, which had the same number of students as St. Mary's."

June '10: "More than I expected."

Beth '13: "Having been fortunate enough to attend one of the largest and most diverse high schools in the state of Maryland, I knew that upon entering St. Mary's, I would find myself among the racial majority for the first time in my academic career. Nevertheless, it was evident that St. Mary's was in no way void of diversity, and the issue had a very minimal impact on my decision to attend this college."

My Thoughts:

As I was comparing answers between the two groups, I could not help but notice the different perception of St. Mary's the White/Caucasian students held in regards to diversity. When determining the amount of diversity within the school, a surprising amount compared it back to their home towns. The fact that their hometowns, for the most part, are predominantly white, may influence how they view diversity.

How would you define diversity? Would you say it should be defined more by life experience rather than race? Why or why not?

Alex '13: "I believe it's more by life experiences. I mean race has something to do with it, but I don't believe in categorizing people because of what they look like. I believe diversity is much deeper than skin color, and people who leave it just at that is making it a very shallow issue. There are so many different aspects of life in America. Everyone comes from different circumstances and those circumstances make the picture more unique. Diversity is more than what we look like but who we are."

Allyssa '11: "Race is a part and life experience. There is also a lot of different things: sexuality, gender, socio-economic background."

Kelly '11: "Well, I don't really have a distinction between the two. Being a Orientation Leader we did an exercise with students...both factors are equally important."

Vince '10: "I think diversity encompasses a lot more than race. I know that's how it's defined typically, but I think it also encompasses very cultural things...food, music... It's more than the color of your skin, where you come from—it's all kinds of things."

Elise '10: "Life experiences."

Caroline '13: "I tend to identify it more with culture ... I may have some initial presumptions based on their race that may be unfortunate depending on what you presume. I'd rather get to know someone based on what they believe than what race they are."

Lana '13: "I guess what any group defines themselves as, whether political or religious..."

Anja '13: "I think probably more life experience. It really has the most impact on who you are and then what you contribute to other people."

Maggie '13: "I think diversity is mostly defined by race. But it can also mean any of your life experiences because those things are what set you apart or give you things in common with others."

Sara '13: "Life experiences are important, but race still seems to have a big impact on life experience, so race is a good rough indicator of diversity."

Cara '12: "I guess I would define it as people from different cultures and areas of the world, with different life experiences, but race should not be the leading factor. Being considered a different race doesn't automatically make someone incredibly different from another person. It could also be a wider age range, with more older people being encouraged to take classes."

Marjanne '13: "Life experiences."

Barry '13: "I would say that diversity is the diffusion of differences in a population. That would include life experience as well as race, but it's hard for college admissions to judge that."

Jane '13: "I definitely think that diversity is almost always ranked and defined ethnically."

I would much rather it be considered by experience. Unfortunately, that's a hell of a lot harder to measure.”

Bill '13: “When I use the term diversity I am purely referring to race. Mostly because that is how society has engraved the term in my mind. It is rather ignorant on my behalf, and I should expand my definition of diversity to include one's experiences, because though people look different they may come from very similar backgrounds and vice versa.”

Kaya '13: “Racial diversity is only part of diversity, but it's usually the most obvious. The problem with defining people by race is that it creates stereotypes, but the problem of defining people by life experience is that sometimes race is part of that experience.”

June '10: “I feel that it's a combination of both but life experience is more diverse than race. There is a necessary combination of the two.”

Beth '13 “To me, diversity obviously encompasses the rather hackneyed concept of the aspect of one's identity which is frequently most obvious: race and ethnicity. However, having been raised with the belief that one's racial background is not one's most defining characteristic, I think it is equally important to take issues such as religion, financial situation, gender identity, etc. into consideration. A group of five Caucasian students could have less in common than a group of five students of different racial backgrounds.”

My thoughts:

It was only after I was compiling my data in regards to this question, that I realized my error in phrasing. Although some participants noted the discrepancy of how diversity *should* be defined, and how it *is* defined in modern day society. I feel as though with this word change, I would have received a less idealistic image of diversity from the participants. From what I gathered in the given responses, a significant portion of the answers are formulated with the help of white-privilege.⁵ In no way am I implying that this group believes themselves to be superior to the non white/Caucasian students, but they hold the luxury of viewing the world where they can freely separate life experience and race.

How would you rate this campus's openness to diversity on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being completely open 1 completely shut off.

Alex '13: If we're talking about students, 4.5. Towards the school itself, 4.

Allyssa '11: 4: There is definitely the value there, but practice and ideal don't often meet.

⁵ White Privilege: In critical race theory, white privilege is a set of advantages that are believed to be enjoyed by white people beyond those commonly experienced by people of color in the same social, political, or economic spaces (nation, community, workplace, income, etc.) (Wikipedia.org)

Vince '10: "I would say...like a 4."

Elise '10: I would say the efforts overall are a 4. Actually, individual student beliefs are a 3.

Caroline '13: I would give it a 3, but as for promoting diversity we could do some more.

Lana '13: "3. We're only open to ideas in the liberal sense...we don't get the other perspectives as much as we would in a larger school or just more diverse schools."

Anja '13: "4. I met so many different people, and I had a lot of great conversations with people who are different from me ..."

Maggie '13: "I think it is a 4 because of all the programs we have with other countries, but there is always room for improvement."

Sara '13: I think that people at Saint Mary's generally pride themselves about how friendly they are. In other words, I think that we are very open and are at least a 4.5.

Cara '12: 4. It is pretty good.

Patty '13: 3.5

Marjanne '13: 4

Barry '13: 4 to 5.

Jane '13: "The campus is very accepting. It can have a 5. I don't know any place that is more understanding of differences. Still, I feel like the campus is not open to all forms of diversity equally. It's very easy to be gay or black or lesbian or liberal on campus, but Republicans seem to get funny looks."

Bill '13: "The school rates about a 3. It is diverse, but it is limited diversity. Sadly there is nothing which really can be done to make it more diverse because the school only appeals to a select few. Therefore the college should be proud it attracts so much diversity considering it is so small."

Kaya '13: I'd give it a 3 or 4.

June '10: "I know we have a renowned diversity rating in the best college reviews. 5."

Beth '13 "Based on my personal concept of diversity, I would give St. Mary's a rating of 5. The college should perpetuate its current diversification practices and always seek to welcome students from all walks of life."

My Thoughts:

Overall these ratings remain optimistic, although I believe a main factor to take into consideration is the different perceptions of diversity between the two groups. This would then lead to a difference in scores depending upon what they find the issue of diversity to encompass.

Do you believe the college is taking adequate steps to promote diversity on campus? Why or why not?

Alex '13: "Well, I think they have been with the Desousa-Brent program along with scholarship programs to help others with [different] socioeconomic backgrounds."

Kelly '11: "I definitely know there are trying to get a lot of people from abroad and getting people money who could not come here."

Vince '10: " To some degree I think that though it has the right ideological views on diversity I think the admissions staff has to recruit more African Americans, Hispanics things of that nature. I'm doing a psych SMP [St. Mary's Project], and among the people I've surveyed, as well as just looking at the statistics, it's a very low number of African Americans and Hispanics. In regard to a normal population they can definitely improve in that sense."

Elise '10: "I think they are by promoting clubs and having students take control of their activities, but I think it would do more if they opened it up to attract students from different states, as well as focus more on international activities not just American culture."

Caroline '13: "I would like to see more activities on campus promoting different cultures."

Lana '13: "I would like to see more. I never hear about anything on campus except the international dinner like this. I think they are trying but they could work a lot harder."

Anja '13: "I think this is such a great environment to meet different people from different backgrounds."

Maggie '13: "I do think that the college promotes diversity, but it is apparent that some of the races seem to stick together more. This may be because people from other countries meet before school starts, and is probably also because they share a native language."

Sara '13: "The only promotion of diversity on campus that I know of are the various clubs that are interested in diversity. I haven't put much thought into the issue, but this seems sufficient."

Cara '12: "Yes, by bringing in people from different countries, but I think they could do more of that. Especially this year I see a lot of the people from the same country all together, and rarely with any Americans. I think that could be changed."

Marjanne '13: "Yeah, they're taking steps."

Barry '13: "I would say yes. I've never seen such a non-homogeneous collection of people as I do here, and it's a really great mix."

Jane '13: "Yes. The college does a lot to ensure diversity. I think it even sacrifices academic competence in the process. Occasionally I feel as though individuals are allowed to enter St. Mary's merely because they are interesting, and almost academically on par with the rest of the student body."

Bill '13: "The college itself appears to be taking steps to promote diversity; however, I feel as this college only selects a certain type of people. The college isn't doing anything wrong, they are definitely trying to become more diverse, but since it is such a small liberal arts school the only ones who come here do so because they want to. If this was a larger college with lower standards and more athletics it would have no problem becoming more diverse."

Kaya '13: "I think they're doing the best they can. They have a lot of out-of-state kids, a lot of exchange students. They welcome groups on ethnicity, interests, sexual orientation, ideology, etc. It ultimately boils down to the people who apply here and the people they accept."

Beth '13: "In all honesty, I find the college's attention to diversity commendable. Obviously, the majority of our student population is Caucasian; given that this reflects the racial composition of our entire country, though, this should appear neither surprising nor problematic. I believe that St. Mary's manages to compensate for whatever shortcomings it may have with regards to its student population by promoting an awareness and appreciation of the diversity that exists throughout the world. By providing a myriad of cultural clubs, promoting the importance of study abroad programs, welcoming students from all over the world, and exposing its students to various foreign cuisines in the Great Room, Saint Mary's fosters a celebration of diversity, which is essentially as important as a diploma to me."

My Thoughts:

While the issues regarding International students was mentioned briefly throughout this interview process, it was not focused upon as critically as when it was discussed with other non-white/Caucasian students. There is no right or wrong answer to this issue, although most interviewed above appeared to find less fault in the school. I wonder if it has something to do with White/Caucasian being the majority, that they are less likely to find something wrong with the system that they already have an advantage in.

Given the lessons we have learned through Desousa-Brent regarding institutionalized racism, I hesitate to define five white people from different life-experiences as a substitute for diversity. Yes, this may cover a particular facet of diversity, but as an institution of higher education we must take into account how the rest of the world perceives, and treats, persons from different racial backgrounds.

Conclusion

Although my research covers only a small fraction of the St. Mary's population, I believe the views presented throughout this process show a wide range of beliefs and ideas. It is my fervent hope that, at the very least, my project will aid others in discovering the issues that play an integral role in our lives. If nothing more, I hope my readers have enjoyed reading my leadership project.