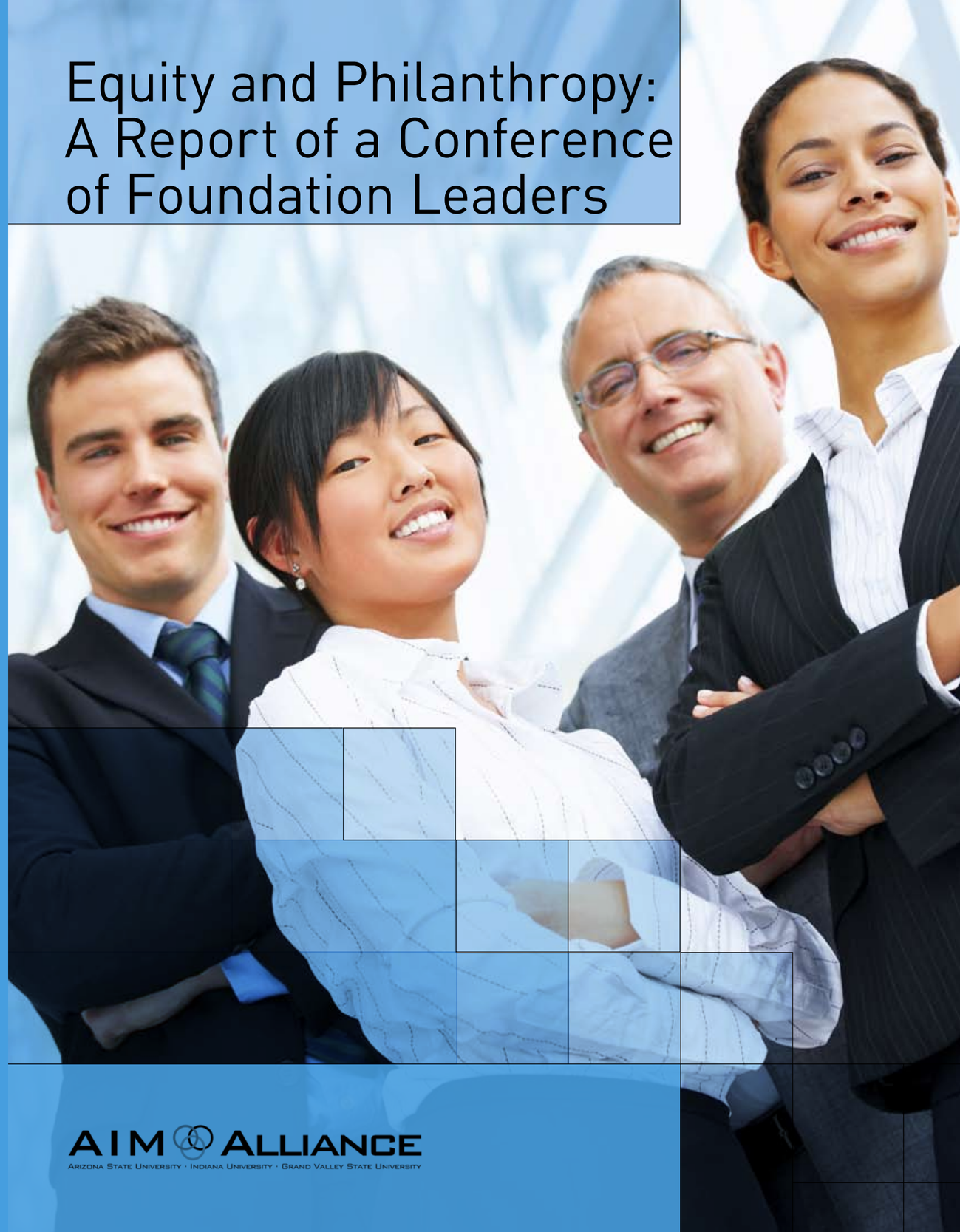
Equity and Philanthropy: A Report of a Conference of Foundation Leaders



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Resources

Surrounding active grantmaking foundations are the many and varied satellites within the sector that engage people. They include: academic centers, consulting organizations, Affinity Groups, research organizations, and others, including but not limited to:

- ASU's program, previously focused on increasing the capacity and practical skills of sector leaders and managers, is now also focused upon board, volunteer and donor capacity.
- Utilize tools that are driving the field, like the new, first set of "Curricular Guidelines for Undergraduate Study in Nonprofit Leadership, the Nonprofit Sector and Philanthropy" developed by the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council.
- Philanthropic studies, like the field's leading program developed by the Indiana University center, is integral to helping how we think about philanthropy.
- Many institutions now have professional development, or programs focused on learning and teaching, within the organization itself.
- The field has a lot to learn about understanding cultural competence – central to this is "a two-way flow of communication".
- *Giving USA*, researched and written by the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University for the Giving USA Foundation, is "the most comprehensive manual and compendium on giving and volunteering in the U.S."
- *The Nonprofit Good Practice Guide*, accessible at www.npgoodpractice.org, is an excellent tool for nonprofits interested in finding information on topics such as board development, governance, accounting practice, and many more issues integral to nonprofit practice and management; the resources cited on the site have been vetted by the Dorothy A. Johnson Center staff.
- Leadership and Entrepreneurial Apprenticeship Development Program (LEAD). Visit firstnations.org.

Table of Contents

Equity in Philanthropy: Not Just a Direction But an Aim

The convening of professionals in the field of philanthropy is more than a summation of the state of affairs across the sector, but a sharing of knowledge and experiences that provide a context for moving forward. The participants at this convening took on the task of exploring equity with the goal of developing an *intentional* approach to bringing greater diversity to foundation staffs, boards of directors and givers.

In aiming for diversity, as one participant put it, we should "focus on diversity not just being skin tone, but diversity in education, diversity in economic backgrounds, diversity in all those different areas, [including the political arena]… ." It is this broader view of diversity and the inevitable cultural change that will impact foundations and the communities they serve.

Therefore, as professionals, we must not be content to simply "sit at the table" but we must continually seek inspiration to facilitate change through the empowerment of ourselves first, then other individuals and groups.

The information and shared experiences exchanged during this convening and others like it, when carried back to sponsoring organizations have a sum greater than their individual worth. For it is within the richness of these combined experiences and shared learning that can be found a synergistic energy that will produce solutions to the present and future challenges facing foundations

So it is within these pages that you will be challenged — first, to *listen* — not only with your ears, but with your heart — to the experiences of others and thereby build *a context for true collaboration* and exploration. Read these pages keeping in mind your own career within the context of the foundation in which you serve and the inherent strengths and weaknesses of both. As you *listen* and begin to hear your own personal *call to action*, find the one area of focus in which you are uniquely qualified, and accept the challenge to join with others who share the commitment, and work together to make a positive difference.

How to Build Your Career

Facilitated by Dr. Ken Gladish, director, and Allison Lugo Knapp, associate director of the Grantmaking School at the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership at Grand Valley State University

Purpose: To provide tools and input from participants on ways they effectively manage their careers.

Formal Structures of Orientation and Professional Development Training

Ken Gladish and Allison Lugo Knapp posed a series of questions to promote conversation around "the development of [ourselves] as individual professionals with an eye to the resources and capabilities that might be available to us" from institutions, centers, and others:

When you began work in your current foundation roles, how many of you were engaged in "an extended and formal orientation program…about the foundation and its work" and about the employee's "role and responsibility" and "professional tasks and obligations?"

How many foundations [represented here] have "a formal program of ongoing professional development, which: requires that employees are involved in drafting a professional development plan; provides an individual and departmental budget for professional development, and whose success of its professional development program is considered one of the chief executive officer's deliverables?"

Conferees indicated that they or their foundations had a limited number of the elements cited in these questions — a response that is typical, Gladish asserted, of such informal surveys. Often only two or three of a group of 25 participants will answer that they have all the listed elements of professional development. Gladish noted that even the multi-billion dollar foundations have a limited response to his these questions about orientation and professional development. Gladish suggested that, asked the same questions, foundations' boards would respond affirmatively at an even smaller rate.

Regarding formal orientation, one attendee commented it was simply the nuts and bolts of the position: "This is how you process a grant…just how to get the work done." Interestingly, being an alumna of a program at Indiana University's Center on Philanthropy helped her "figure my way out, and I've been building a network of peers who are young and in the foundation."

One participant brought attention to the attitudes in the field, such as, "we don't need [professional development]" or the type of attitude that says "I did it (sink or swim) and you can too." Finally, there is the subtext that foundations want to spend most of their resources on grantmaking, "not in preparing their people."

Why have foundations tended to undervalue professional development? One attendee noted that educational programs were not around when current foundation leaders started. "They aren't accustomed to this idea of pursuing professional development opportunities, after all, they didn't need it, so why would others?"

Gladish observed that foundation career tracks are idiosyncratic — there is no clear route to professional leadership positions. He speculated that some members in the audience might not quite understand how they got to their positions and level of responsibilities. This point was supported by several attendees. Additionally, professions in many of the largest foundations have no clear entry point, career tracks, or objective measures tied to compensation, recognition, and practices. Often in these institutions, careers are short. It is typical for individuals to leave after five years and "take that richness of experience somewhere else."

One CEO related that a previous foundation he had managed had a very small "staff improvement budget," but the amount of money spent on international conferences about "understanding our investments, managing the money," was hundreds of thousands of dollars. His board members, eager to attend international business conferences, would not attend conferences focused on issues like equity "because…they just thought they knew how to do it."

The Value and Relevance of Academic Programs

Candy Marshall, director of operations, Global Healthcare Program at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, provided an insider's view of the young foundation with a distinctly strategic and nonconventional approach to building its staff. "We rarely hire from within the sector…from academia… government. We hire from a number of nonprofit fields…in which we're focused. We're also increasingly doing a number of private sector hires, but rarely hiring from [foundations]. "As these world experts come into this organization and suddenly find themselves engaging in a practice at which they don't feel particularly competent, …we have to…build not only basic grantmaking skills, but…people leadership skills," an experience that led to the launch of a leadership development initiative in 2008.

"Do you think there will be a call in the field to have certification and certain standards of professional development (i.e. social work and healthcare) where everybody gets assessed by the standard?" Panel members offered a range of comments — some espousing that it did not matter how much knowledge a person has from within this field; others preferred the practice of hiring known experts from other fields; still others noted the benefits of a business background or MBA, or 'who you know' as key to getting foundation or board positions. A panel member noted that the situation of the Gates Foundation's hiring of experts has already begun to balance out. Now that Gates has experts capable of the creative problem-solving needed for the foundation to meet its mission, it's became obvious that these are not the same people who could manage programs. At the time of the conference, the foundation was in the process of hiring "people that look a lot more like the folks that come out of these programs."

A representative of the AIM Alliance noted the importance of recognizing the history of the field's development observing that the discussion reflected notable differences in experiences of younger versus more senior participants. This suggested to him that foundations are now, and will in the future, be looking for new expertise that can be gained in academic nonprofit and philanthropic studies programs.

Developing Core Competencies

Gladish presented an approach to competencies derived from *Governance as Leadership* by Richard Chat, a book about board governance in the nonprofit sector. "Technical thinking" is concerned with practice inside the foundation and within your area of grantmaking. Competencies in this area include the basics needed to begin in the field — the grantmaking process, how to read financial statements, etc. "Strategic thinking" refers to the logical — skills including planning and development abilities. "Generative thinking" is the cognitive process of "what to pay attention to, *what it means*, and *what to do about it*" (see Chait, Ryan and Taylor, 2004). "Generative competencies" (creative competencies) include leadership expertise and the ability to make sense of cues.

An audience member asked for thoughts on the necessity of "philanthropic studies as a discipline…" Several participants expressed views from mild to assured support of the discipline's value. A conferee admitted that he felt it was beneficial that the programs exist to provide credentials… "As a black man in America, it's a necessary evil… People can't dismiss you [if you have that credential]." He described his position as a program officer as that of a generalist, and felt that after he's gained some experience he might want to seek an advanced degree in the field to "sharpen skills."

A participant, speaking from experience as both a foundation executive and a graduate of Indiana University's doctoral program (the country's only liberal arts-based philanthropic studies Ph.D. program), stated, "I think the academic program brings an understanding as to why people do some of the things they do, and gives a *context* in which to put those decisions…" The Center on Philanthropy brings in mid-career people for their master's and Ph.D.'s creating a mix of experiences. Another member suggested that academic programs can help provide a *check and balance* for foundations, and that the research done at these institutions can lend *guidance* to the field and keep it "on the right path." He reminded participants that the only entity "watching over foundations… making sure that we're providing good practice" is the IRS.

Larry Smith, executive director of the Third Millennium Leadership Initiative at the Center on Philanthropy at IUPUI, noted that this initiative is addressing this issue with three concurrent research projects. The first is focused on both tradition and Native American involvement in mainstream philanthropy. The second studies "the extent to which racial and gender diversity on nonprofit boards of directors has an effect on nonprofit performance. A paper on this research was presented at the ARNOVA (Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action) conference in 2007. The third is an oral history project capturing interviews with women and people of color "who are or who have been senior leaders in the philanthropic sector. The intent is to turn [the resulting white paper] into one or maybe two courses for academic programs."

Dwight Burlingame, professor of philanthropic studies at Indiana University and associate executive director of the Center on Philanthropy, explained that curricular guidelines across the country are informed by the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council (NACC), which is comprised of schools of higher education with academic programs focused on philanthropy and nonprofit management. Guidelines for graduate studies and new guidelines for undergraduate programs were released in 2007 and are available online. Burlingame commented, "The integration of [the guidelines are really important tools to inform people of what [should be occurring]." He identified an exciting new leadership program from First Nations Development Institute, the "Leadership and Entrepreneurial Apprenticeship Development Program," which is training Native Americans for nonprofit leadership. Funded by the Ford Foundation, it focuses on building skills like money management, fundraising, and how to run a nonprofit.

"Broad-based knowledge and education is positive," cautioned one participant, "Hopefully the field won't "require that people have a degree in philanthropy for their work in philanthropy."

Relevance and Usefulness to Communities

Bob Long, of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, explained an interesting similarity between the three collaborating public universities (Grand Valley State University, Arizona State University and Indiana University) — *in that their public missions make them relevant to their respective communities*. What he saw in the distinctively different public-assisted institutions was that they had missions with "a public good commitment in them" and that they "genuinely wanted to honor the law. The 1969 Tax Act and the creation of the 501(c)(3) model was you have to have a *public good mission*…most nonprofits don't honor that. [Their missions are] so focused it's not a common good mission." Long suggested that all universities with "*a public commitment* in their mission need a program like this that relates to the community in some meaningful way." This [commitment] gave the Kellogg Foundation a confidence to make a large investment to fund the AIM Alliance — the second largest grant in 15 years.

Five Areas to Advance Career Capacity and Performance

Gladish offered five areas of concern in which upcoming leaders can take responsibility for advancing capacity and performance in their careers: 1) developing competencies; 2) developing affiliations; 3) developing service; 4) developing and maintaining values; and, 5) addressing existing paradoxes.

Suggestions for Board Members

- Influence the establishment of new criteria for recruiting new board members.
- Lay out an intentional professional development plan for managers including a discussion of equity, similar to the conversations at this conference.
- Discover other trustees who are allies discuss with them the dynamics of what it means to be effective as a person of color.

"If higher education does not become both relevant and useful to society…it will become the dinosaur institution of the future."

— Ernest Boyer

Equity and Grantmaking

Facilitated by Roderick Wheeler, a program manager of the Central Indiana Community Foundation, Indianapolis

Purpose: To determine the definition of *equity* and some solutions participants could enact to make change in the field.

Wheeler and the audience posed four expectations for the session:

1. To define *equity*
2. Identify solutions that participants could enact
3. Discuss the disparity between grantmakers' own institutional diversity issues and their expectations of the grantees
4. Balancing the nonprofits' focus on increasing diversity of those educated and prepared to enter the field of nonprofit work with how to educate a more diverse pool of donors

Participants reflected on their own personal *definitions of equity*, which included:

- A democratic distribution of resources
- Equal understanding of all dimensions — economic, cultural values, and knowledge
- People that look like the giving community, giving proportionately to that community

One participant commented that inequality is a mindset: "When you start talking about equity and why inequality happens, it generally starts with a belief that an individual or a group or an issue is lesser and has less to add value to the cause."

Another observation pointed to looking beyond simple ethnicity or race: "…focus on diversity not just being skin tone, but diversity in education, diversity in economic backgrounds, diversity in all those different areas, political…to then change the culture of your organization."

Larry Smith provided context around the debate in the research field about whether informal philanthropy should be viewed as *philanthropy*. Referring to the AIM Alliance's contributions, its research on giving and volunteering for regions in Arizona and Michigan, and locales in Indiana, will measure *informal philanthropy* (giving that does not go to formal organizations). This joint research is an attempt to produce truly comparable data utilizing the same methodology, challenging how philanthropy is currently defined and how it should be measured. This is in contrast to the giving and volunteering research conducted by Independent Sector and others which only surveys philanthropy to formal nonprofit organizations (501(c)(3)s and 501(c)(4)s). *This shift is about changing the mindset and thinking about what is defined as philanthropy.*

Staff and Board Composition and Grantmaking

The representative of a foundation known for its emphasis on diversity with grantees and its giving to historically black colleges and universities, commented on the disparity of non-inclusivity in the foundation's program staff. She posed, "How can we as a foundation go forward and move for more diversity in the field if we don't reflect it ourselves?" Several members spoke to this paradox of foundations holding nonprofits accountable for displaying the ideal of equity in diversity. One participant remarked, "We have nobody to hold us accountable for that…there's nothing that [the nonprofits] could really do to us that would make us change."

"How can we as a foundation go forward and move for more diversity in the field if we don't reflect it ourselves?"

Similarly, a participant observed a need to focus on changing the composition of the donor base — "If we have more donors who are from these sorts of communities and ethnic groups, then I think we will definitely see a change in the way foundations operate…"

Control of the Assets

The heart of a foundation's power to promote equity is its grantmaking. [In the past] the assets left for the community were generally amassed by the predominant culture and the predominant culture had control over them. "We need to shift the financial support to represent that of our community," noted Wheeler. He further observed that approximately 20 percent of the American population control 80 percent of the wealth, with the top one percent of income earners controlling 20 percent of the wealth. An audience member noted that the expected multi-trillion dollar transference of wealth to come over the next two decades, presents an opportunity for communities of color to create their own foundations, thus creating financial equity.

Other Resources and Solutions from Foundations

Foundations can improve equity by utilizing resources other than grantmaking. One participant offered two examples: *time* to provide technical assistance to potential grantees, and *connections and networks* from which organizations can benefit.

Grantmakers can create opportunity for communities of color by accessing vendors and financial industry contractors. "Imagine if you could devote 10 percent of your portfolio; say we want to make sure it's managed [by] women, people of color, Wheeler offered. "For instance, looking at some family foundations, money is managed by a family member who enters investment banking and then becomes successful. The success is, naturally, in good part due to the fact that, off-the-bat he manages 30 percent of the foundation's investments.

One participant offered her foundation's process as a beneficial example: First, the senior executives and board had a conversation about equity as they identified the institution's values, which was part of a strategic planning process. Next, they utilized these values to define criteria for board member recruitment, taking into account ethnicity, skill sets, expertise, and other characteristics in order to pursue the best candidate to represent the community. This foundation has only one Latino on its board of 17, but he is a strong contributor, and as the editor of one of the city's newspapers, he is well-respected in the community of color he represents. Finally, staff and committees identify people representing parts of the community to help assess information about the community as they set funding priorities for the foundation.

Wheeler summarized the group's major points: First, "being at the table" isn't enough — the important contribution is "you have to push or to empower a group." Second, for foundations, equity work is not only about grantmaking, but how they *empower* communities of color. Third, foundations need people of influence from communities of color on their boards and staffs.

Core challenges to foundations are:

- how they recruit and build mechanisms that provide a renewable resource of good people
- how they institutionalize diversity as a priority
- how they become partners in communities of color
- how they invite community members to the table to help their own causes
- where they place their assets, and
- how they use technology to acquire knowledge quickly and put it to use.

Spotlight: Leaders in Institutional Philanthropy

A Panel Discussion with Dorothy "Dot" Ridings, former president and chief executive officer, the Council on Foundations; Judy Jolley Mohraz, president and chief executive officer, the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust Foundation; Lesley Grady, vice-president of Community Partnerships, the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta; Martha Lamkin, founding president and chief executive officer, the Lumina Foundation for Education; Paul Luna, president, the Helios Educational Foundation; and Candy Marshall, director of operations, Global Health Programs, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Purpose: A discussion with senior leaders in the philanthropic sector on the importance of developing leadership in the grantmaking sector. The perspectives offered by these senior leaders in the sector were meant to provide a broad view of the issues related to equity and leadership.

Dot Ridings: Lifelong Learning and Recognizing Gifts along the Way

Dot Ridings offered a historical perspective of the field, while role modeling how a leader continues to grow even when considered by others to be an expert in the field. She explained that her primary purpose for attending the conference was to learn — "Because this is how I keep up with what the field that I love is doing." Ridings had entered retirement two years prior. She added that lessons and gifts that help us thrive and survive will come in many forms (such as this AIM Alliance conference) to which a leader must be open and receptive. She noted, what was a unique concept a decade ago — sessions at organizational conferences, or conferences focused wholly upon the topic of attracting and retaining high level leaders and professionals, with an emphasis on diversity — are now fairly commonplace. In fact, today numerous Affinity Groups exist, serving specific communities of color. These include the Association of Black Foundation Executives (ABFE), Hispanics in Philanthropy (HIP), Native Americans in Philanthropy, and, particularly relevant to this gathering, Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy (EPIP). These groups are helping to develop a well-trained and more diverse population of philanthropic leaders. Moreover, the field of philanthropy is now "much more conscious of the need to attract, retain, and train young professionals, especially those who bring diverse viewpoints and experiences to their work."

Judy Jolley Mohraz: Transparency and Authenticity in Leadership

Panelist Judy Jolley Mohraz highlighted three concepts essential to American philanthropy: *transparency*, *accountability*, and *inclusiveness*. Historically, transparency was not an issue, as foundations "operated below the radar" and did not participate in a relationship — a creative exchange — with potential grantees. During those times, proposals had to be in a finished form before they were submitted. Today, both the government and the public have an expectation of more openness about a range of issues, from the identity of the foundation to its decision-making process, and accountability is an expectation. Mohraz asked the group, **"How do we cast our net in ways to ensure that, [our complex society] is reflected in the composition of our staff, our boards, and our grantees?"** Two examples were shared from the young Piper Trust foundation. The first is the Piper Fellows program that awards up to five sabbaticals for nonprofit executives for professional development every

year. The staff works to ensure that the selection reflects the population's diversity. A second program is Piper 101 — monthly sessions open to all nonprofits interested in learning how Piper Trust awards its grants, the content of a strong proposal, and other resources for nonprofits. These types of programs, Mora suggested, are grounded in a leadership philosophy put forth by the organization and its trustees — to create a *flat organization*, one that is as transparent as possible — juxtaposed to the philosophy of hierarchical, secretive leadership. She concluded by advising emerging leaders to be authentic — true to themselves.

Paul Luna: The Impact of Leadership Skills and Changing Demographics

Paul Luna emphasized that *building relationships* is the core skill needed by a leader. Luna's own career path has been a good example that one's primary knowledge area is not the key to successful leadership, rather it has been the relationship-building focus of his work that supported his success in past positions and finally led to his appointment as president of the Helios Educational Foundation. Luna's second observation was the demographic shift in U.S. communities. Years ago, when he became the president of United Way, there was discomfort that he would change it into a Hispanic organization. His reaction was that the United Way serves the *entire* community, which includes communities of color and the underserved. Recently, at the Helios Foundation, more than half of its first $40 million in grantmaking was directed to people from underserved populations and communities of color. Luna summarized, "If you're doing the right things in the community and you're serving those in need, you would be and should be engaged in the demographic change of the community, because that's just where the numbers are."

Martha Lamkin: The Servant-Leadership Model

Panelist Martha Lamkin reflected that Indianapolis, the location of this conference, is the home of the Robert K. Greenleaf Center, begun by the business-turned-nonprofit-leader who formed the theory of *servant-leadership*. Larry Spears, CEO of the Center, captured the essence of the theory: "Traditional autocratic and hierarchical modes of leadership are slowly yielding to a newer model — one that attempts to simultaneously enhance the personal growth of workers and improve the quality and caring of our many institutions through a combination of teamwork and community, personal involvement in decision making, and ethical and caring behavior. *This emerging approach to leadership and service is called servant-leadership*." Servant-leadership influences management experts, leadership scholars, and institutional leaders in the corporate philanthropic sectors. Many companies named in *Fortune* magazine's annual "100 Best Companies to Work For" (including Starbucks and Hewlett Packard) espouse servant-leadership and have integrated it into their corporate cultures. Cutting-edge leadership authors and thinkers, affecting change in all sectors, write and speak about servant-leadership as an emerging leadership paradigm

for our century. They include: Warren Bennis, Stephen Covey, Max DePree, Parker Palmer, M. Scott Peck, Peter Senge, Margaret Wheatley, and Danah Zohar.

"We see more and diverse talent emerging, more need and opportunity in society, and more encouragement for the insights that you can help us bring to the work," said Lamkin. "This applies to staff opportunities and also to opportunities among grantees." Early on, the Lumina Foundation identified college students as a large population it wanted to serve. "Not a lot of people were paying attention to community colleges," Lamkin recalled. "And certainly, low-income, first generation and ethnic minority students in large measures go to community colleges." Lumina focused on helping community colleges understand their data, work on inequities in their systems, and address some of the challenges that "community college students have in trying to become successful entrants into the postsecondary space." Lamkin's final advice to conferees: "Treat everything as a learning experience."

Lesley Grady: The Transition Phase of the World of Philanthropy

Panelist Lesley Grady began with three points. First, she reminded conferees that, though much discusson had occurred at the conference about "the changing world and the dynamics and complexity of philanthropy," it is also true that *much of the world has not changed*. Secondly, to this point, *the glass ceiling is still in place, it's just moved to a higher level*. Where, at one time, the program associate level was an achievement for a woman or a person of color, they have now moved onto director of program levels and vice presidents. The ceiling is now at the president and chief executive level. Her third point is that this topic of equity is set in a much larger context — "the world we're trying to change, the conditions that we're trying to ameliorate go far beyond any resources we're ever going to have." It requires that the philanthropic sector engage with society in the public policy arena. In other words, *change needs to happen society-wide*.

Grady's own professional experiences include being the first African-American woman to serve as a VP for the chamber of commerce in her city. She reflected that, after a long and varied professional life she loves her current work in philanthropy. "I think it's magic when you can put the pieces together; when you have the people, the circumstances, the resources, the time, and the relationships to really connect at that critical nexus, fantastic things can happen."

Candy Marshall: Today's Leader Seeks Answers and Open Communication

In a continuation of her earlier comments on leadership development at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Marshall shared the results of a survey the Foundation conducted with the assistance of the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP). First, they learned that the Foundation's grantees perceived that the Foundation had great impact in its areas of grantmaking focus, and its excellent ratings seemed to back up the perception. This positive feedback actually provoked an interesting reaction — one of concern. "We feared that the perception was greater than the reality," admitted Marshall. This concern spawned an initiative toward greater transparency — the staff would be transparent about what they know and don't know, and strategies that failed. It takes a very unique leader in today's world," said Marshall, "To lead people when you don't have all the answers. In the past, the leader was supposed to be…the expert in the field. In today's world, with the complex, ever-changing environment, that type of leadership no longer works. A leader needs a very unique set of skills to help people find the answers to complex problems. The second finding from the survey revealed that grantees felt the Foundation's staff was not responsive and did not have the open communication that allowed grantees to share their challenges or their strategies that were not working, and as a result did not take the time to communicate with one another. Marshall summarized that the kind of leader needed today in the philanthropic sector is "*…all about relationships, all about open communication…making it safe for people to speak out, take risks, make mistakes, and then learn together from the mistakes…*"

"It takes a very unique leader…to lead people when you don't have all the answers."

Inter-Institutional Collaboration and Relationship Building

Facilitated by Robert Long, director of Greater Battle Creek Programming and program officer of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, distinguished professor of Nonprofit Philanthropic Studies and Nonprofit Leadership and Management at Grand Valley State University; and, senior fellow at Arizona State University.

Purpose: First, Dr. Long shares his personal experience of becoming more effective as a leader by learning to value culture and differences. Secondly, he makes the case for collaboration by relating experiences from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation on working across race and culture.

Long's personal story, includes hearing stories about his great-grandparents' experiences as abolitionists from Tennessee. "As abolitionists in the early 1800s…they were burned out and came up the Tennessee River…into southern Illinois, where they could practice their faith and some of their social beliefs." As an adult, Long's U.S. military and service in Vietnam began against the backdrop of the civil unrest in America from 1968-1972, (a period in history defined by assassinations, riots, and various protests and movements). "If you know the draft of the 1960s, the majority of those of us were…men of color, and what we all had in common was we were poor…corrupt local draft boards; no rich kids got picked." Afterwards, Long took advantage of the GI Bill and earned several degrees. — Long's wife, a Mexican-American, had a similar heritage to his in that her grandparents experienced two social movements in Mexico and were ostracized because of their beliefs. What stayed with Long about his wife's experiences and his own was, even though their paths were very different, "…there are some life journeys that connect you." Long summed up, "Without somebody telling me to go do something, I was being influenced by…this commitment to equal rights."

The Value of Relationships

A chance interchange in a Chicago airport with the legendary John Gardner forever changed Bob Long's leadership approach. "[Gardner] was the person the Johnson Administration credited with giving legs to the Civil Rights Act," said Long. "He put it in action, held people accountable and was fearless about going in and saying…to Congress, 'You're not delivering on this; you're not funding it, you're not backing it.'"

Long seized the opportunity to ask John's advice: "John, I don't think I'm very effective as a leader and I really am working hard to be more effective, especially working across race and culture. I've got courage, but I don't have skills… I've got lots of coaches, but my skills aren't developing. What would you tell me?"

A summary of Gardner's advice was to "*genuinely care about the other person*, which [will allow you to] also receive the fact that they can care about you." Long recalls that Gardner expounded, "…*learn to listen deeply*…and understand what the person has to say…therefore, you might value what they have to say. This goes beyond the "relationship-building" language we often use in this work," Long explained. "We're talking about *love*…a deep sense of understanding and appreciation [that enables you to] love somebody else." He espoused that, just as hope is an asset, love can be also. He noted that a person obtains leadership or becomes empowered…perhaps as a result of such an exchange. Long concluded that his conversation with Gardner "helped me realize that [my life journey] made me a person who could work across

race and culture, who could be fearless about it; build trust and be trusted."

Long used the advice to change his approach at the Kellogg Foundation and offered this advice to conferees: "Find that place in the world — that issue, that challenge, that opportunity — where you can put your heart and energy…there you will find all these people who share that commitment, and that's where that relationship work really can pay off."

This approach created some discomfort at the foundation initially, "…especially cross-race," Long explained, but noted that he has never encountered roadblocks in this work at Kellogg. In fact, regarding the foundation's size and diversity he explained, "We're lean in staff with about 200 total staff. We have about 32 program staff giving away $350 million a year worldwide. So per capita, we're really thin, but we are wonderfully representative by culture and race. I believe we're practicing what we preach."

The Kellogg Foundation — Working Across Race and Culture

Long explained the strategic support of the Kellogg Foundation and the resulting growth of programs over time. In 1993, he was asked to promote the development of educational programs for the nonprofit sector. At the time, approximately one dozen undergraduate programs and a dozen graduate or executive programs existed in the U.S. Long enlisted the counsel of the three academic centers involved in the AIM Alliance.

He suggested to conferees that they may have been positively affected by some of the early initiatives already in place then, including grantmaking, scholarship programs, testing new ways of engaging and recruiting. Some important questions were just beginning to be asked: **Is the curriculum culturally competent? Is the faculty prepared to engage across culture? Are the students supported and empowered differently based on their frame of reference, culture, history and race?** Long recalled that, at the beginning of his work in 1993, the answer to each of these questions would have been "no." Yet today amazing progress has taken place due to the deep commitment of the three AIM institutions, in partnership with Long and the Kellogg Foundation, with relationships based on familiarity, affection, and trust. He reflected, "I now have this head full of experiences with people who I care about, who I have a deep relationship with, who I have an affection for, who will tell me, "that worked because.." So when I go ask them how the curriculum is working, I trust what they tell me. In 1994, I couldn't, because we didn't know each other…"

This type of trust is central to healthy, caring relationships and is also at the heart of deep institutional collaboration, Long asserted. Institutions naturally compete with each other if they don't take time to *know* and care about one another. Applying this experience to the AIM Alliance, he said, "Until [the AIM institutions] know each other really well and trust each other, they're not going to get to the level of real shared application, genuine partnerships around degree programs, being willing to work with doctoral students in different ways across those divides of geography. "*The underlying assumption for us is if they take the time to build an alliance that's genuine.. they're going to get to the level of impact on changing that pipeline of new leadership,*" said Long. He encouraged them to "get deeper in" to the work, seek relationships with the AIM institutions, whether as alumni of programs or adjunct faculty.

One conferee asked what she can do as a leader to promote the concepts of "relationship and strategic alliance." Long put forth the "*the community fund model*" which gives the authority for the grantmaking decision to those "people who represent the issue, and suggested use of a judicial model — a jury of peers — noting that care must be taken because [peers] tend to set the standards too high, when holding each other personally accountable. Secondly, Long suggested that a foundation

"*be extremely clear with grantees about what they want*" — be specific about the results they are pursuing, choosing a result that clearly, in their eyes, is not possible to accomplish with only one of the organizations participating."

"The final responsibility for engagement starts with the individual," he said. This applies to a young professional who seeks counsel, guidance, or leadership opportunities, as well as the veteran leader who is also responsible for engaging, and providing what the new person seeks. He advised conferees to *have the courage to ask*. "Prepare yourself. Know them as best you can. Don't ask a question that doesn't imply that you've thought about an answer." He cautioned that the person being asked may possibly have some discomfort "in working across race and culture" but to *be respectful of the discomfort* if you do that it's hard for somebody to not want to be with you in this journey…they know they're going to learn in this journey with you." The key to a mentoring program that thrives is "when one person has made an intentional connection with somebody else…a learning experience that can often be a lifelong journey. Your journey doesn't stop because the internship is over or they took another job and moved on."

"There's nothing inherently progressive in [the passage of] time, it's only what people *do* in their time to effect positive change."

—Larry Smith, quoting Martin Luther King

In closing, Long's entreaty to participants was that this is the ideal time for professionals from communities of color — they are needed both by the field and by all types of communities (the culture which they represent, their geographical community, their area of interest).

Larry Smith added a final element for working across race and culture — *compassion*. Though its meaning is "to suffer together," its connotation is about *having empathy*, attempting to identify with the other, and is encapsulated in the saying "To comfort the afflicted, sometimes you must afflict the comfortable." "This," said Smith "is when that compassion can aid the process."

In Closing

Attendees were thankful for the experience of honest dialogue, idea-sharing, renewed empowerment, and the ability to convene. One thread tied the sessions together — veteran leaders and new professionals alike agreed that they had enjoyed and benefitted from *the experience of new learning*, which they would take with them and put into practice.

Throughout the two days of sessions, many attendees and presenters shared their feelings about being change agents and working to effect positive change. Smith commented, "This connotes a hope in the goodwill of human beings and recognition of their willingness to do the work." He concluded with the words of Martin Luther King. "There is nothing inherently progressive in [the passage of] time," Smith explained. "It is only what people do in their time to effect positive change." ■

Action Steps for Change

For All Attendees

- Fulfill the role as *change agents* in the field. Take on the responsibility of leadership. Maintain connections and relationships with one another so that we can support each other's work moving forward.
- Mentor someone in the sector.
- Continue the conversations started at this conference with peers and colleagues, co-workers, families — all those with whom we associate. Otherwise people will not know…[things like] 50 percent of the foster kids in Alaska are Native or people would not know…that there isn't Latino history in philanthropy.
- Talk to people with whom you regularly interact throughout your day, about the importance of philanthropic work and what it encompasses.
- Focus on one area in which you can truly make an impact and spur change.
- Look for others in nonprofit organizations and in the community to bring into the pipeline.
- [Develop] vehicles to capture new voices that have not been heard and to help professionals influence their trustees.
- "Hold in your hearts" the intangibles that make philanthropic work important.

For Participants from Communities of Color

- Be willing to break down barriers and fight inequity from within institutions.
- Be an example by "creating and leading institutions in which we're doing the work and being inclusive."

For the AIM Alliance

- Take on the philosophy of *collective, community change* versus individualism.
- Make programs more specific to change the field.
- Encourage involvement in the nonprofit sector through education at a younger age.
- Make the academy people-friendly. Don't segregate giving and learning, or who can participate because some of the most active philanthropists aren't the usual suspects.
- Create an infrastructure that allows participants to assemble, dialogue, and examine the philanthropic field at least every two years.
- Show that participation in their program creates higher performing professionals who are better at their philanthropic work.

For Foundations

- Prepare for the next wave of leaders to take over leadership roles. If this doesn't happen there will be a "serious crisis" among foundations.
- Do more *leading-edge philanthropy* and consider capstone grants.