



Confessions From The Balcony: A Perspective of Minority Leadership Inside a Majority Institution

Oliver G. McGee Ph.D.

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This book provides a discussion of the experiences of a first African American full professor and chair of an academic department inside a major top 25 Carnegie Research I predominantly white institution of higher education. The knowledge and insights gained from the narrative shared across a variety of leadership challenges provide both faculty leaders and administrators of color in higher education, particularly inside a majority (predominately white) university, with helpful strategies for academic leadership recruitment, retention, and preparation of minorities of all walks of life, cultures, ethnicities, identities, and nationalities — African American, American Indian, Asian, Asian American, Hispanic American, Latina/Latino, Mexican American, African Nations, Middle-East/Muslim. The experiences documented here extend beyond higher education leadership and administration in general, encompassing a variety of psychological, sociological, economic, and managerial spheres, such as: (1) leading change and effective strategic planning inside an academic unit and institutional climate, (2) psychological processes of attribution in relationships with colleagues and students, (3) facilitating power and influence in difficult social dynamics, (4) managing fiduciary, finance, economics, and risk decisions, and (5) managing diversity enhancement, mentoring and workforce development. Stepping off the dance floor and taking on the point of view of the balcony, the book offers a variety of recommendations and suggestions for a minority leader inside a majority university, so that predominantly white colleges and universities can continue to ensure that institutions adjust with future shifts and latent uncertainties of the demographic pool of prospective academic leaders of color in substantive ways. A quality of this book is the diversity of knowledge, firsthand experiences, and candid insights provided by the author, specifically bringing forward a minority leadership perspective inside a major research organization of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) – fields traditionally and historically underrepresented by African Americans and other minority groups. This book also has the potential to shed further light on the dialogue in academia on STEM education and pipeline development, affirmative action, and the institutional goal of achieving parity so that the academic leadership ranks in higher education mirror the minority talent represented in the nation. Confessions from the Balcony serves as an “elevated-positioned” primer that makes valuable recommendations and suggestions for academic administration and leadership by persons of color – including strategic planning and risk management, comparative business and competitive economic thinking, and organizational development practice – and raises critical issues for commentary, investigation, and research.

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