



SGA Diversity Ad hoc Committee: Diversity Awareness at JMU

Wolfe Street Communications

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James Madison University, SCOM 461: Public Relations Campaigns



Background of Issue

The Diversity Ad hoc Committee, a branch of SGA that deals directly with issues of diversity on James Madison University's campus, was founded in 2014. The committee "seeks to spread the concept of diversity by collaborating with various other student clubs and organizations on campus."¹

The Diversity Ad hoc Committee is striving to build upon the organization's reputation and presence on James Madison University's campus. Presently, the organization lacks visibility and recognition from JMU students and faculty. Expressing dissatisfaction with the committee's current situation, the Diversity Ad hoc Committee hopes to expand outreach and support from the JMU community through a diversity awareness campaign.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Positive message that unites students of all backgrounds
- Relatively new organization (blank slate)
- One of few organization of its kind on JMU campus
- Part of a larger organization (SGA)
- New and improved language for the committee's mission statement

Opportunities

- Prevalence of diversity issues in today's political climate
- Widespread support for diversity awareness
- Success of similar diversity campaigns on other campuses
- Potential for partnerships on campus

Weaknesses

- Weak social media platform
- Limited communication channels
- Does not have widespread visibility on campus as a committee
- No formal research conducted by the committee
- Ineffective use of relationship with SGA
- Dissatisfaction with lack of support from the administration

Threats

- Lack of diversity on JMU campus
- Low-moderate level of cultural intelligence among JMU students
- No longer considered a "standing committee" within SGA
- Non-minority students at JMU feel relatively unaffected by the issue

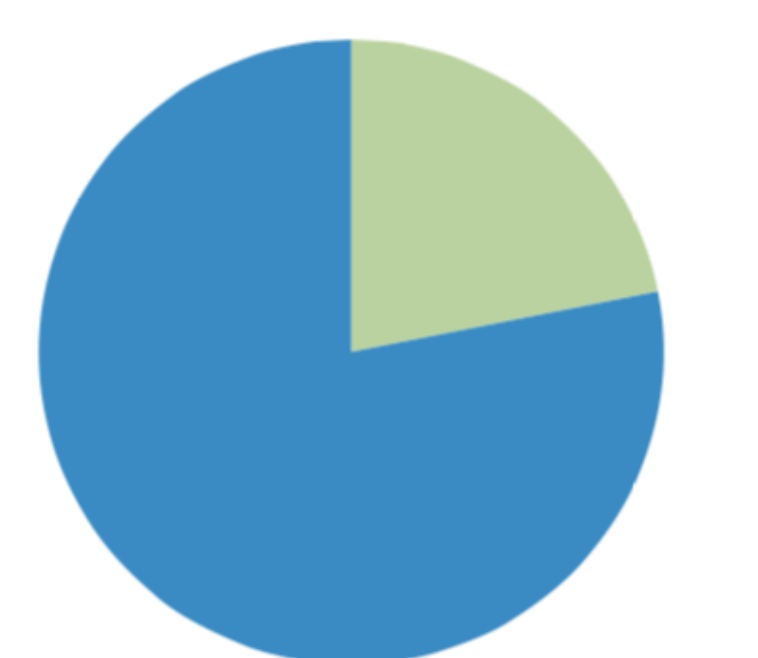


Chart 1. Student Involvement in Diversity Groups

Research Questions & Hypotheses

- RQ1:** What factors influence JMU student engagement with campus groups?
- RQ2:** How do JMU students view diversity on campus?
- RQ3:** What is the current level of involvement of JMU students in campus diversity-related groups?
- RQ4:** What is the level of cultural intelligence among JMU students?
- RQ5:** What communication channels do JMU students use most?
- H1:** There is a relationship between cultural intelligence and involvement with campus diversity groups.
- H2:** Spending significant time outside of the US leads to appreciation for diversity among college-aged students.
- H3:** There is a relationship between the number of cultural leaders that a student can name and their involvement in campus diversity groups.

Methods

Sampling: Wolfe Street Communications utilized an online survey as well as focus group sessions to gather primary research data on the JMU student body. The survey was conducted online using a non-random sample of students. All participants were readily accessible volunteers between the ages of 18 and 23. The first focus group consisted of three members of the Diversity Ad hoc Committee, and the second group consisted of seven members of the larger body of SGA. Member participation was requested based on organization affiliations.

Procedure: The survey was made up of 61 questions and was distributed using the SONA research participation pool and the JMU email system. The questionnaire utilized a variety of question types including yes and no, multiple choice, choose all that apply, Likert scale style, and demographic. During the focus group, six questions were asked that encouraged participant conversation on diversity and diversity-related issues on campus. All research questions were based on secondary research while cultural intelligence was evaluated using the Cultural Intelligence Scale.²

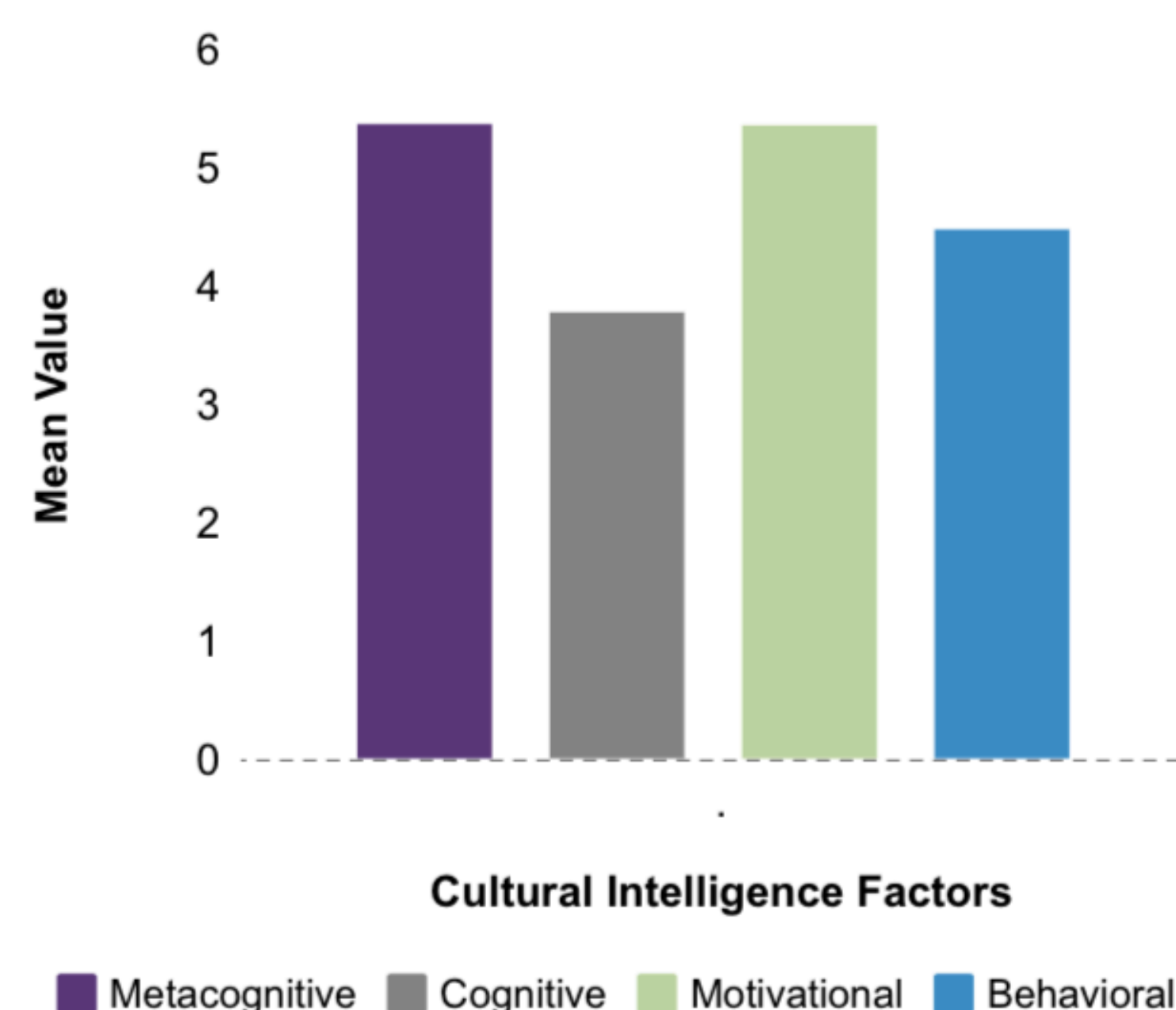


Chart 2. Cultural Intelligence of JMU Students

Results

- RQ1:** 86.5% of JMU students are currently involved in one or more campus organizations. 1) Connection with other people ($N=286$), 2) Sense of belonging ($N=222$), and 3) Friends are a part of the same group ($N=212$) are the most important factors for students when joining an organization.
 - RQ2:** 45% of white students view JMU as welcoming to minority students. 25% African Americans, 25% Asians, and 22.2% of Hispanics feel the same way. Females are more involved than males in diversity-related organizations.
 - RQ3:** See Chart 1 for findings.
 - RQ4:** JMU students report their level of cultural intelligence just beyond neutral on the Cultural Intelligence scale ($M=4.74$, $SD=1.10$). Of all the factors, cognitive has the lowest mean value ($M=3.77$, $SD=1.28$).
 - RQ5:** JMU students' preferred method of communication is Facebook. Their second preferred method of communication is the organization's website.
 - H1:** Those involved in diversity-related organizations have higher levels of the metacognitive factor ($M=5.60$, $SD=1.05$) than those not involved in diversity-related organizations ($M=5.31$ and $SD=1.18$), $t(343)=2.01$, $p<0.05$. Involved students also score significantly higher in cultural intelligence as a whole ($M=4.98$, $SD=.97$) than non-involved students ($M=4.67$, $SD=1.01$), $t(343)=2.36$, $p<0.05$.
 - H2:** Spending more time outside of the US is consistently correlated with higher levels of student cultural intelligence.
 - H3:** There is a negative correlation between the number of cultural leaders a student can name and their involvement in campus diversity groups, $r = -.12$, $N=377$, $p=.02$.
- Emerging focus group themes:** Lack of Interest in Diversity Issues, Lack of Diversity on JMU Campus, Lack of Descriptive Representation, SGA's Lack of Involvement in Diversity Issues, Lack of Knowledge about SGA and the Diversity Ad hoc Committee, and Administrative Concerns.

Campaign Direction

Primary Campaign Message: The SGA Diversity Ad hoc Committee strives to be the leading campus organization for all diversity-related issues, resources, and events.

Key Publics Based on Research: Non-involved minority students (aroused), non-involved non-minority students (latent), and JMU faculty and administration (aware).

Reputation Management Goal: Create positive reputation of the Diversity Ad hoc Committee on JMU's campus.

Relationship Management Goal: Establish a trustworthy mutually beneficial relationship with the JMU community.

Task Management Goal: Increase awareness of the importance of diversity on JMU's campus.

Contact

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References

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2. Ang, S., Van Dyne, L., Koh, C., Ng, K. Y., Templer, K. J., Tay, C., & Chandrasekar, N. A. (2007). Cultural intelligence: Its measurement and effects on cultural judgment and decision making, cultural adaptation and task performance. *Management and organization review*, 3(3), 335-371.