

Scholarships are not enough: Moving beyond recruitment and prioritizing diverse student retention

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Positionality:

- Mixed Race: Black & white
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Learning Objectives

The learning objectives of this presentation are as follows:

1. Discuss differences between recruitment and retention.
2. Explore factors impacting diverse student retention.
3. Present strategies to support diverse student retention within occupational therapy programs.

Higher Education and Students of Color

Colleges and universities struggle to recruit, retain, and graduate students of color compared to their white peers.

Students of color experience:

- Miscommunication with instructors
- Lack of access to quality mentors
- Feelings of isolation (Dulabaum, 2016)
- Face stereotyping, racism, and microaggressions (Dulabaum, 2016; Harper et al., 2009)
- Racial battle fatigue (Smith et al., 2011)

Recruitment vs. Retention

Recruitment

- Pipeline and outreach programs
- Financial incentives / scholarships
- Student enrollment

(Dumas-Hines et al., 2001)

Retention

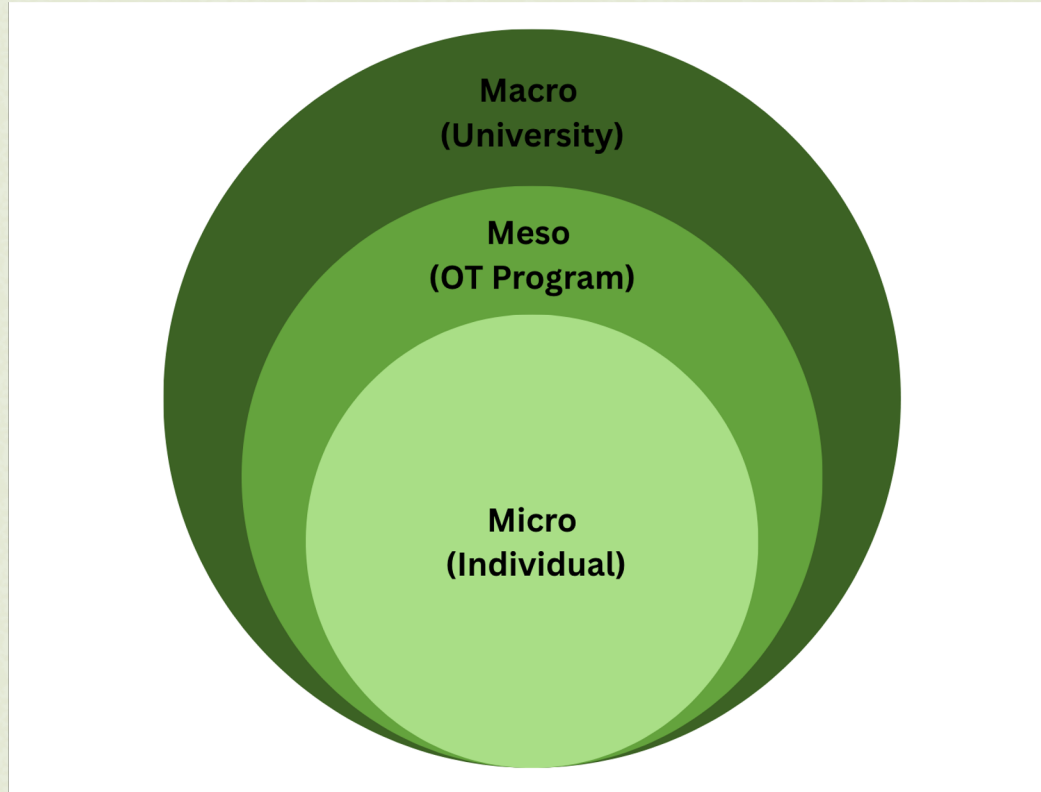
- Inclusion of students, faculty, and staff of color
- Updated curriculum
- Initiatives to support students
(Dumas-Hines et al., 2001)
- Strengths-based approach vs. deficit-remedial approach
(Anderson, 2004; Anderson, 2005)

Factors that Impact Diverse Student Retention

- Institutional historical legacy of inclusion
- Structural diversity
- Psychological climate
- Behavioral climate

(Hurtado et al., 1999)

Intentional Retention Efforts



(Image made via Canva)

Diverse Retention - Micro Level

- Create a culturally inclusive learning environment
- Embed diverse representation into the curriculum through lecture content, assignments, case studies, presentations, and readings
- Showcase & embrace diversity
- Challenge invisible norms & expectations
- Incorporate education regarding racism and how to handle situations of racism within future work settings and clients

Diverse Retention - Meso Level


- Formally acknowledge and address current events and social injustices
- Foster networking skills and encourage involvement with outside organizations
- Promote opportunities for peer mentorship
- Prioritize the mental health & well-being of students

Diverse Retention - Macro Level

- Provide professional development opportunities for faculty and students to develop skills in crucial conversations to improve the confidence and comfortability to engage in discussions surrounding racism, social justice, and implicit biases
- Prioritize the mental health and well-being of students of color, including access to mental health resources and workshops, and create safe spaces for diverse students
- Explicitly recruit, hire, and retain diverse faculty and faculty of color

Contribution to the OT Profession



- Equitable opportunities to for diverse students to succeed in OT school
 - Increased student engagement and reduced experiences of isolation and exclusion
 - Occupational therapy programs can re-examine current retention practices and provide intentional support for diverse students
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Thanks!

Questions?

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