

# Overview of Literature on Chief Diversity Officers

Created for the President's Task Force  
on Equity and Inclusion

# Task Force Charge:

Initiate a broad campus discussion and process to determine if a Chief Diversity Officer (called *Vice President for Equity and Inclusion* at WU) is the appropriate strategy for Willamette to build a more equitable and inclusive environment for our students, faculty and staff

# Task Force Members:

## STAFF

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- **Jackie Balzer**, *Special Assistant to the President and Title IX Coordinator* (Task Force Chair)
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- **Danny Santos**, *Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Administration*
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# Historical Changes in Higher Education

- 1950s-60s: Increases in # of underrepresented students and faculty and effort to eliminate overt discriminatory practices via affirmative action programs and plans
- 1960s-70s: Campus protests bring additional academic and social services to under-represented groups, which included multicultural centers and women's and ethnic studies programs
- 1990s-00s: Broad campus-wide diversity plans/initiatives are created, including curricular "diversity" requirements and holistic admissions to include all members of the community
- 00s-Current: Increased need for diversity specialists in executive level positions

# What is a CDO?

The Chief Diversity Officer is a relatively new and rapidly growing executive level position in higher education administration that provides strategic guidance when developing diversity capabilities, and seeks to incorporate diversity into the organizational structure of institutions of higher education

Currently, campuses have dozens of offices, initiatives, programs, courses, and committees designed to reach ever-expanding institutional diversity goals

**The job of a CDO is provide leadership to organize and integrate these efforts**

# But...what do they do, exactly?

Many things, including:

- providing expertise on local, state and federal laws related to diversity (i.e. Title IX, ADA or bias reports)
- offering support for the faculty on developing an inclusive curriculum and research agendas
- conducting campus climate surveys and suggesting measures for improvement
- leading/organizing workshops/symposiums centered on diversity
- advising on best practices for recruitment and retention efforts of underrepresented faculty, staff, and students
- reviewing and make recommendations for marketing and communication materials
- providing a lens of "equity and inclusion" into all major university decisions

Broadly, that means they **raise the visibility** of the institution's diversity efforts; **clarify goals** and **assesses progress**; and **provide expertise** on issues of access, equity, diversity, and inclusion

# How schools differ from one another:

- (a) in the level and scope of administrative authority given to the CDO
- (b) in the organizational structure of the offices headed by the CDO
- (c) the level of fiscal resources (\$) dedicated to the unit
- (d) the level and types of qualifications required to perform the duties of the CDO
- (e) career tracks prior to becoming CDO

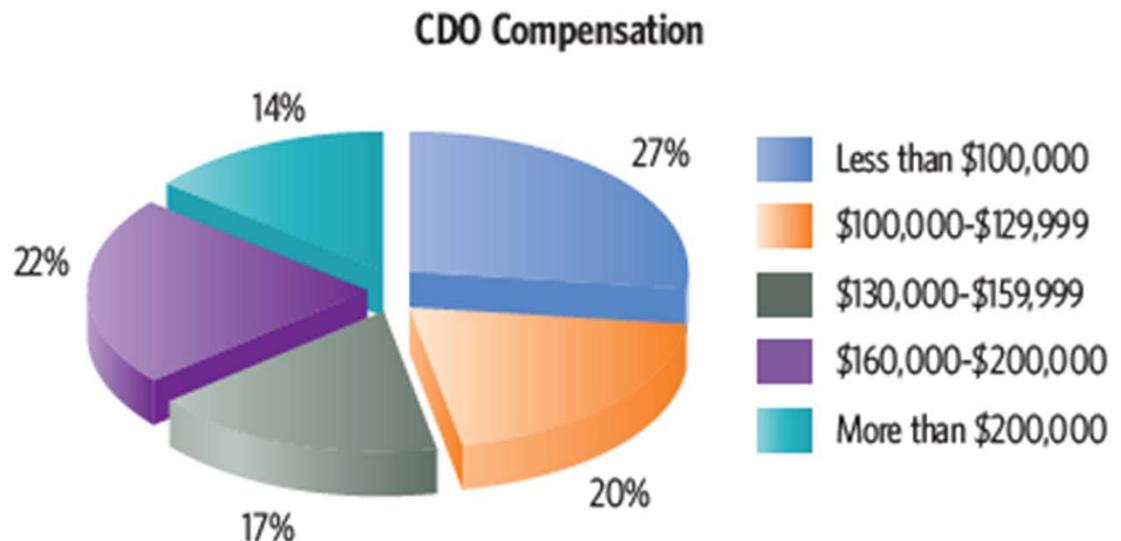
# CDO compensation varies

27% percent income < \$100,000

37 income \$100,000 to \$159,000

22% income \$160,000-\$200,000

14% percent income > \$200,000



From survey of 94 CDOs from range of institutions in 2011

# Potential Pitfalls

- Creates a "diversity messiah"- one person solely responsible for equity/inclusion issues on campus
- Concern that they'll face “passive resistance” from powerful constituencies such as students, faculty, administrators, or alumni
- Risk that the position will not be given sufficient staffing, power, or financial resources to do the job
- They may experience tokenization and marginalization, especially if they are people of color themselves

# In Other Words...

CDOs will only be successful where there is/are:

- supportive campus leaders
- institutional readiness for change
- a commitment to long-term, systemic efforts
- financial investments

However, “success” is difficult to define and the above conditions are no guarantee of increased diversity and feelings of inclusion on campuses

## Sources cited:

- Nixon, 2013
- Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007
- Williams & Wade Golden, 2013
- Witt/Keiffer, 2011