



University of Utah

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH JOURNAL

**THE FIGHT FOR DIVERSITY: MARKETING DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION
AND ITS MISLEADING IMPACTS ON INCOMING STUDENTS AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF UTAH**

**Alessandra Cipriani-Detres (Faculty Mentor: Erin Castro)
Department of Educational Leadership & Policy**

Predominantly white colleges and universities across the US are trying to diversify their campuses by recruiting students of color. One of the most prominent ways this is done is by marketing institutions as more diverse than they truly are. This is done by using students of color as tokens on marketing materials and eventually enrolling students of color who believe they will be well-represented on a campus that values diversity. The issue is that many students of color see other students who look like them posterized around campus more often than in their actual classes. The goal of my project is to bring up a problem to marketing, admissions, and recruitment offices and show that although marketing racial minorities can diversify a student body, these students consequently face unintentional challenges that negatively influence their educational experiences. The two questions that have driven my project are 1. How do universities market to students about diversity? and 2. Why do universities market diversity the way that they do? To understand how higher education's marketing of diversity impacts students of color, I have done extensive research on relevant literature, conducted individual student interviews, and led a focus group with students to expose the ignored side of this issue. The findings indicated that tokenism, racial capitalism, racial battle fatigue, and more negatively impacted students of color via the University of Utah's marketing of diversity. This research is important since higher education institutions are fighting to retain and admit students from racial and ethnic minority groups in an effort to expand their commitment to diversity and inclusion, but some efforts have silenced the voices of already marginalized students of color.