

THE STRUCTURAL RACIAL DIVERSITY DISCONNECT IN ENTRY-LEVEL HIRING IN THE MARKETING AND ADVERTISING INDUSTRY



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BACKGROUND

To truly embrace diversity, specifically racial diversity, the industry must examine the overall construct of talent mobility when entering the industry and keeping this talent engaged through their career journey. Since 2018, the ANA Educational Foundation (AEF) has conducted an annual study on the disconnects across academia, industry, and talent, specifically new hires and undergraduate students. The first focused on general talent; the second on diverse talent, specifically through the lens of racial diversity; and the third on analytics talent. Collectively, they highlight the structural entry-level disconnects that exist within the marketing and advertising ecosystem.



- **The Talent Disconnect (2018):** This study uncovered many disconnects that challenged industry to attract and retain top-flight entry-level talent. All stakeholders uniformly agreed that the best path to bridge these many disconnects was through internship experience. This experience often gives employers the highest degree of confidence that those entering the industry can “hit the ground running” when joining the firm. However, research demonstrated that many internships are gained through privileged networking opportunities, while the quality of experience is both variable and inconsistent. This led the AEF to create the Marketing and Advertising Education (MADE) program, designed to democratize access to summer internship opportunities based on skill and competency.



- **The Diversity Disconnect (2019):** This study discovered that while both academia and industry were fully committed to diversity and inclusion efforts, diverse talent still did not feel a full sense of belonging. This was classified into four categories: microaggressions, cultural illiteracy, management disconnect, and workplace dissonance. Research revealed that to achieve representative diversity outcomes, inclusion and equity are key. The output of this study was to build an inclusion framework that linked inclusion behaviors to key business decisions and performance metrics.



- **The Analytics Disconnect (2020):** This study identified three major disconnects — a marketing and advertising perception problem, lack of access to real and contextualized data in the classroom, and the need for talent to have both hard and soft skills — when recruiting analytics talent. The key takeaway of the study emphasized the importance of critical thinking as the most important criterion to solve business problems using data and analytics. This led the AEF to commit to building a marketing case study library for academic purposes with data and analytics at the core of each teaching module.

BREAKDOWN OF STRUCTURAL DIVERSITY DISCONNECT

The past three years of research have shown that a racial diversity disconnect exists because there is a structural disconnect. Different stakeholders own various components in the talent ecosystem and often struggle to collaborate. In academia, for example, professors are often not connecting with career counselors. In industry, marketers are not joined at the hip with recruiters. Aligning different groups in each ecosystem makes it challenging to bring together efforts across all ecosystems to drive better diversity outcomes.

The collective AEF research has shown that the disconnects in the talent ecosystem drive an overall structural disconnect, broken down into six categories:

- 1. Lack of Clarity with the Field of Marketing and Advertising:** Many students associate the field of marketing and advertising as “making ads and selling stuff” according to research conducted by McCann Worldgroup. Lacking a clear value proposition about what an innovative, exciting, and rewarding career marketing can be limits the overall candidate pool. Having a consistent and clear message about what opportunities exist in marketing and advertising can improve industry’s ability to attract the diverse talent the industry needs.
- 2. The Bias Inherent in Internships:** There is a premium placed by employers on students having internships on their résumés, almost as a prerequisite to securing entry-level roles upon graduation. Employers want their new hires to “hit the ground running” and contribute immediately. However, internships often reflect a certain amount of privilege based on type of access to opportunity and economic ability to afford, in many cases, this unpaid work experience.
- 3. Selection and Evaluation Bias When Hiring:** Data has shown the tremendous amount of bias when selecting and evaluating candidates. Diverse talent is often put at a disadvantage for an entry-level role when evaluated against a general pool of candidates across a variety of dimensions, including résumé selection, interview process, and offer extension.
- 4. Structural Disconnect Between the Recruiting and Marketing Functions:** While recruiting and marketing functions may be coordinated in recruiting talent, these groups are often not fully integrated in maximizing their efforts to recruit diverse talent. There is a significant opportunity to have those functional groups leverage each other’s skills to expand and enrich the pipeline of diverse candidates being considered for the organization.
- 5. Diversity Perceived as Outside the Mainstream:** Getting diverse talent is sometimes seen as a checkmark to acknowledge organizational commitment to diversity and inclusion. When diversity is pushed to the sideline, these diverse employees are often just seen as the “diverse hires”, which creates a miscast perception that not everyone is equal. Diversity must be integrated into the mainstream hiring and orientation process to normalize diversity as a key component in, not an exception to, the entry-level class.
- 6. The Inclusion Disconnect:** Many organizations struggle to integrate diverse younger talent into the overall company culture. Fitting in to a culture can be challenging for that diverse talent because it is often a culture they must learn to adapt to instead of having company culture embrace and celebrate their unique talents.

A DEEPER DIVE INTO THE DISCONNECTS

Within each disconnect, there are multiple disconnects that are drawn from the research the AEF has conducted in the past three years, often using student and new hire verbatims to illustrate each point.

1. Lack of Clarity with the Field of Marketing and Advertising

- **Lack of Clarity About Where to Start:** “I’m still trying to navigate it and I’m a senior. I have to do a lot of internet research, see how people got through, see how people started getting through things. Reading a lot of personal testimonials. I’ve had the opportunity to talk to a few people in the field so I could learn how they did it,” recounts a Hispanic female student.
- **Resources on Campus Can be Limited:** “I went to Career Services like, ‘Hey, I’m trying to figure out my next three years. I don’t really know what I want to do. Can you help me?’ All they could really do was look over my résumé and give me suggestions. I’m like, ‘No, I need a plan. Help me out.’ They of course gave me a couple of little pamphlets and said like, ‘Oh, do this, this, and this.’ It was super basic and really no direction... and I just started to look for internships. I looked for ones in New York. I looked for ones around the southeast area. I actually landed an internship with Coca-Cola, nothing sports-related [I was studying sports marketing]. It was just like, ‘This is a good internship and they’re paying,’” recalls an African-American female new hire.
- **Ambiguity About the Scope of Marketing:** “I didn’t know all the background to PR. I didn’t know it covered social and paid media. It wasn’t until I interned at a PR office that I realized there was so much more. Actually, I originally was looking for more traditional PR, because I didn’t know digital PR was an actual position that existed. I just thought you applied for a traditional PR job and digital PR was just a part of your job,” shares an African-American new hire.
- **“Mad Men” Perceptions Still Exist:** “What is marketing? It’s an abstract concept, but my professor made it more digestible. She made the material easy to understand. Before my Marketing 101 class with her, I definitely thought marketing was this high-up, corporate, cold thing. I thought it was definitely C-suite people having very intense board meetings. That was my presumption and that was really abstract. It was sort of this *Mad Men* agency world, very cutthroat, but in that class I learned there’s lots of different aspects to marketing,” says an Asian male new hire.

A DEEPER DIVE INTO THE DISCONNECTS

2. The Bias Inherent in Internships

- **The Privilege of Having an Unpaid Internship:** Landing the first job after graduation often requires interning while at school, where more often than not this work experience is unpaid. Employers look at work experience as one of the most important criteria when evaluating that candidate. Unfortunately, this puts many students, particularly those of color, at a disadvantage because they cannot afford not to get paid for their time. Having an unpaid internship often becomes a symbol of privilege for those who can afford it, which continues to perpetuate the inequity in how talent gets evaluated.
- **Privileged Access to Internships:** Many students are able to get access to internships through their network. Being referred by a C-level executive via a family connection almost guarantees an entry-level role at that company. Many students of color lack that same network and access which gives them the experience they need to position themselves for that coveted entry-level role at a prestigious company. As one African-American male student shares, “In my experience growing up, it wasn’t about networking. The people I met, I didn’t always keep in contact with. Not that my parents didn’t know important people... but I’m a public school kid. Not that it’s a bad thing to go to public school, I think it’s a great thing, but the circle of people you meet at public school and then their extended circle doesn’t necessarily go up for you — it just goes lateral or down. So if you go to someone’s parent’s house, they may not be the CEO, but they may be mid-level or struggling to make it by. So there wasn’t much I could pull from my circle or my mom’s circle to get a leg up.”
- **No Safety Net to Experiment:** “I don’t have the same access to things as, say, someone whose dad owns a law firm and who can get these great internships. They have opportunities that can come to them whether or not they excel and deserve it. That’s not the question, but I feel like the access to opportunities that I get or people of color in general get are different,” shares a Hispanic female student.
- **Lack of Standardization in Internship Quality and Consistency:** While the internship experience is an indicator that the student was exposed to a working environment, it does not necessarily reflect the quality of the experience. The internship experience can be highly variable dependent upon the type of company, the project work given, the interest from the manager, and the overall drive of the intern. Despite this high level of variability, industry still places a significant premium on this kind of experience as a reflection that the student will be able to perform at the same level in an entry-level role.
- **Referrals Often Perpetuate Bias:** Referrals are often considered the easiest, most efficient way to get quality talent. That candidate referral is then fast-tracked and has an internal advocate who will, in all likelihood, accelerate the process to hire that individual. While referrals are often the best way to acquire new talent efficiently, the organization is often acquiring that talent at the expense of diversity. This becomes even more pronounced when those referrals are from top executives who provide candidates from their pool of connections.

A DEEPER DIVE INTO THE DISCONNECTS

3. Selection and Evaluation Bias When Hiring

- **The Rigid Cycle of the Recruiting Process:** Many companies take a very standard approach to recruiting. They go to the same schools every year and do not deviate from that core list because the process has been established. Companies then become filled with alumni from those schools who want to see more people join the organization from the schools they attended. That process reinforces itself annually. There is no incentive to change that process even when there is a lack of diverse candidates. Not having a marketing mindset to recruiting hinders a company's ability to discover talent in places it does not normally explore.
- **Job Spec Complexity:** Over the past several years, entry-level job requirements have become more demanding for specific types of skills. For diverse candidates, particularly Black students, according to Chris Motley, founder of Mentor Spaces, those requirements deflate their confidence levels, which prevent them from even applying to these roles. Making job requirements more accessible to students today encourages them to apply for those roles and become considered in the overall application process.
- **Name of School Not Well Known:** "I think it was important for me, especially because, you know, HBCUs with, I guess, the greater public who aren't really educated on them get a bad rep. And I just want to be one of those alumni that people look to like, 'Oh wow, she went to an HBCU?' And kind of just like break that barrier. Just because it's a Black school doesn't mean it's not a good school," says one African-American female new hire.
- **Bias in Résumé Selection:** Data from Harvard Business School shows that diverse candidates get more interview requests when they eliminate racial clues from their résumé.¹ According to the study, employer callbacks for résumés that removed racial clues — for example, Black students dropping the word "Black" from a membership in a professional society for Black engineers — fared much better in the application pile than those that included ethnic information, even though the qualifications listed were identical.
- **Lack of Experience:** "I mean I don't have too much experience. I'm looking for my first job out of college and you're coming across these jobs that are, 'Once you have a bachelor's degree and do this, this, and this, but we need you to have two to five years experience doing them.' But I don't have that number of years of experience, so it's hard to find an 'in'. It's hard to break through unless you get really, really lucky and I'm hoping for a miracle. But it's just hard to get in. That's all I can say because I haven't had too much experience within the industry myself," shares an African-American female new hire.

¹"Minorities Who 'Whiten' Job Résumés Get More Interviews," *Harvard Business Review* (May 2017)

A DEEPER DIVE INTO THE DISCONNECTS

4. Structural Disconnect Between the Recruiting and Marketing Functions

- **Marketing and Recruiting Functions Often Operating in Silos:** Organizations need to bring a marketing mindset to recruiting. Similar to how marketers convince people to buy their products based on a whole variety of factors — brand, reputation, price, positioning, convenience, or friend recommendation — marketers can play a role in helping bring in the best, most diverse talent. Leveraging this marketing skill set often proves difficult, as most marketing departments operate separately from the recruiting function. The marketing department typically reports to the CMO. The recruiting department will typically report to the chief human resources officer. That siloed organizational structure prevents the functions from leveraging the full marketing capabilities of the company to drive access to diverse talent.
- **Employment Branding Crucial But Underleveraged:** Brands can take years, sometimes decades to build credibility in the marketplace. Having a strong consumer-facing brand does not automatically translate into a strong employment brand. Marketing needs to be a strong ally in building that capability through time-tested techniques that help build that equity, from identifying the employer brand positioning to developing creative that communicates that positioning to different, diverse audiences. Quantitative evidence suggests that building an employment brand is crucial to initiating an awareness funnel to nurture relationships with talent, particularly diverse talent who may require completely different messaging.²
- **Lack of Interviewing Practice and Training for Managers Who Are Hiring:** Proficiency in a skill often requires practice and feedback. Most managers might only hire once, maybe twice a year for open positions. Also, there is often no training for interviewing. The manager doing the hiring must evaluate a candidate based not on the actual skill level of the candidate but on comfort level based on how that manager runs the team. That makes it hard for diverse candidates to excel when being hired by someone who does not look like them. This is compounded when these managers may only hire once or twice a year, and they walk into that conversation without any formal calibration of their own biases.

²"Everything You Need to Know About Employment Branding," HubSpot (2020).

5. Diversity Perceived as Outside the Mainstream

- **Diversity Pipelines Can Often Be Sidelined from and Not Integrated into Mainstream Entry-Level Class:** There are some outstanding diversity pipeline programs, such as the 4A's Multicultural Advertising Intern Program, Publicis' Multicultural Talent Pipeline, the LAGRANT Foundation, the AAF Mosaic Center for Multiculturalism, and the Marcus Graham Project. All of them provide powerful communities for diverse talent to enter the industry. These programs celebrate diversity and allow diversity to come into an organization in a very intentional way. Organizations must integrate diversity into the mainstream recruiting process. This enfranchises diverse talent: they know they deserve to be at the table instead of feeling like they are at the table because of diversity. Perception matters, and organizations can do a better job of managing that perception around the quality and capability of diverse talent.
- **Perception of Championing Diversity Offset by Reality of the Overall Entry-Level Talent Composition:** Addressing the diversity issue isn't as simple as, for example, stating intentions to work with the 4A's Multicultural Advertising Intern Program (MAIP), which has championed diversity for the past 30 years. Celebrating 300 diverse interns joining the industry on an annual basis is a wonderful accomplishment. The backdrop is that there are thousands of non-diverse students who are entering the workforce who comprise the majority of entry-level roles.
- **Discouraged from the Start:** "Ultimately it makes me feel very annoyed to see the same white man in every position... Nine times out of 10, when I'm looking at people, physically going through LinkedIn, it's always white men. Or sometimes white women. And like it just seems like, it's not quite a coincidence at that point," says an Asian-American male new hire.
- **Gap Between Perception and Reality in the Workplace:** "I think the first time I actually felt genuinely discouraged was probably when I was at my internship last summer. That was the first time that I was like, 'Okay, I don't know if this is for me.' Because I think largely, like, HBCUs, and it's not a bad thing, they put you in a bubble. And of course, you know, our professors are very real with us and they're very candid about what it's going to be like in the world or whatever. But to actually have to work in an environment where there was only one person who looked like me was an adjustment," shares an African-American female new hire.
- **Nobody Who Looks Like Me:** "One thing that I struggled with... is there were no people who looked like me in positions of power in that company. So that was kind of like, 'Okay.' But then also there were so many events, you're meeting people in positions of power from other companies, and then you're also still not seeing people who look like you. And then you're like, 'Is this attainable for me?' I'm a first-generation college student. I come from a single-parent home. Whatever, you can check all those boxes. But at times, I felt like maybe this wasn't my space. And I never want to feel that way. And that was a challenging thing to get over. To say, 'Okay, maybe there aren't a lot of people that look like me in this industry, but what am I going to do about it?' So I tried to flip it more toward that way," says a Hispanic female new hire.
- **Fear of Not Being Able to Blend In:** "I also thought about if I could not make any friends or if I can't blend in. For me, blending in is the feeling that if a group of people are having a conversation in a part of the office, I could run over and talk to them. Versus if they're speaking over there and I know that if I go over and try to join they wouldn't include me," shares an Asian-American female student.

6. The Inclusion Disconnect

- **The Burden of Tokenism:** Many diverse employees are often burdened by being the only one of color in the room. They are often looked to for guidance on the entire race when making plans to target, for example, the Black consumer. Their perspective becomes tied to their racial identity versus the quality of what they have to say. The result is often that their opinion only matters when it is tied to race instead of to addressing a business problem. One African-American female new hire points out, “No, I am not the spokesperson for all Black people, so to speak, but if I’m the only Black face that this person is consistently seeing in a professional environment, I am the spokesperson for the Black people. I have to be the voice and I have to be that example to show them.”
- **Microaggressions Continue to Exist:** “Yeah, a lot of people are like, ‘Oh, so where are you from?’ I’m like, ‘China.’ She’s like, ‘Cool. I didn’t know. Your English is so good.’ I’m like, ‘Ugh.’ Like I don’t even know what to think about it. ‘Like what do you mean? Like if I’m international I’m not supposed to speak good English? How am I supposed to take this? Are you complimenting me on my language skills or is there something more?’ But I usually just say ‘Thank you.’ I mean the last time it happened it was with a recruiter and what am I going to do, say something to the recruiter who could give me a job?” says an Asian female student.
- **Making Everyone Else Feel Comfortable (Except Yourself):** “If I want to maintain my position in that kind of environment [ad agency], I have to actively ‘dance’ around them to make everyone around me feel more ‘comfortable.’ Yes, it means I have to wear a mask, but it’s something I choose to do to move ahead,” recounts an African-American male new hire.
- **First Time Managers Often Do Not Get Training to Manage:** Many who get promoted never receive training on how to manage. It is often a promotion based on how well the person did as a doer versus the potential of how that person can perform as a manager who can lead that team to a successful business result. In many cases, these managers do not know how to be inclusive of all perspectives. They succeeded because they achieved success a certain way, and understanding what that success looks like might limit their thinking of other ways that someone else can achieve that same level of success.
- **Lack of Shared Experience with Direct Manager:** “My boss is a white female and her perception of the industry is different than mine; her concerns are different. She is a single mother of two kids and she brings up all the time how it’s difficult for mothers and women, and yes that sounds hard, but those aren’t my problems. I have this very particular set of issues that you know nothing about. So, I can tell you, but you’re already holding your own problems to that high standard, so you’re not going bring mine to the same level as yours,” shares an African-American male new hire.
- **The Promotion Process Can Be Biased:** While the promotion process is designed to be objective, many promotions are handed out based on how hard managers push for them during the evaluation process. If the manager does not support the direct report for promotion, that promotion will often not be granted. The challenge for diverse talent is the need to adapt to a management culture that requires them to learn the behaviors of their manager instead of putting the responsibility on the manager to understand and maximize the skills of that diverse direct report.

STRUCTURAL PROBLEM REQUIRES STRUCTURAL CHANGE WITH NO ONE “SILVER BULLET”

Addressing the issue requires evaluating how the structural disconnect can be made more inclusive in a holistic way. The AEF has built programming that addresses each piece of the structural disconnect in the entry-level recruiting, orientation, and retention process. These are, however, not the only solutions: it requires a collective, intentional effort across the ecosystem. Our principles in approaching this structural disconnect is:

- **Open Source:** Collaborate with other organizations, programs, and people who would like to build and expand on this framework.
- **Ongoing Collaboration Forums with an Action Orientation:** Create forums that drive ongoing collaborative forums with an action orientation to drive structural change with entry-level hiring.
- **Solution Integration:** Identify ways to integrate programs so the collective power is much greater each individual component part.
- **Technology Enablement:** Explore technology solutions that identify new ways to recruit and retain entry-level, diverse talent.

OVERVIEW OF AEF APPROACHES

The chart below captures the current and future program approaches the AEF has taken to address the structural diversity disconnect with the entry-level recruiting and retention process.

KEY ISSUE	PROGRAM APPROACH
Lack of Clarity with the Field of Marketing and Advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best Jobs Ever • Masters on Campus • CMO Career Pathing
The Bias Inherent in Internships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pledge to Reflect College Demographics in Internship and Entry-Level Class
Selection and Evaluation Bias When Hiring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing Case Studies • HBCU Connect • Diversity Disconnect Deeper Dive
Structural Disconnect Between the Recruiting and Marketing Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talent Week
Diversity Perceived as Outside the Mainstream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing and Advertising Education (MADE) Internship Program • Longitudinal Tracking of Diverse Talent
The Inclusion Disconnect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive Conversations • Inclusion Index

BACKGROUND BEHIND AEF PROGRAM APPROACHES

Since 2017, the AEF has developed each of these programs in response to specific disconnects identified or calls to action made by the executive-level marketing and advertising community. Many are not new initiatives, but are areas that reflect a consistent commitment to diversity and inclusion.

PROGRAM APPROACH	POINT OF ORIGIN	YEAR LAUNCHED	DESCRIPTION
Best Jobs Ever	ANA Global Growth Council	Nov 2019	A campaign launched by McCann Worldgroup in collaboration with the AEF to drive greater awareness of and accessibility to the marketing and advertising industry
Masters on Campus	AEF Board of Directors	Fall 2020	A campaign to have top marketing and advertising executives visit campus and syndicate that content across academia
CMO Career Pathing Analysis	ANA CMO Growth Council	Fall 2020	A report that quantifies the demographics and attributes of the CMO career path
Pledge to Reflect College Demographics in Internship and Entry-Level Class	AEF Board of Directors	Forthcoming 2020	An industry pledge to have all incoming internship and entry-level classes reflect the racial and ethnic diversity makeup of universities
Marketing Case Studies with Data and Analytics	Analytics Disconnect Report	February 2020	A joint effort between academia and industry to build more marketing case studies that contain actual data sets for classroom purposes
Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Connect	AEF Board of Directors	Winter 2020	Creation of a program that specifically builds a recruiting pipeline to industry from the HBCU community
Diversity Disconnect Deeper Dive	All Three Disconnect Studies	Early 2018	Application of the disconnect study approach across industry, academia, and talent to specific racial segments to specific racial and ethnic segments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black (2021) • Latinx (2022) • Asian (2023) • LGBTQ+ (2024)
Talent Week	Diversity Disconnect Study	Sept 2018	A forum to bring key stakeholders that focus on talent — academia, marketers, L&D, diversity executives — together three times a year for one week to work on key talent-related issues
Marketing and Advertising Education (MADE) Internship Program	Talent Disconnect Study	October 2017	Creation and launch of a leadership program that is the common application for students interested in the marketing and advertising industry. It has scaled from its first year of 700 applicants to more than 1,800 in the third year.
“Let’s Talk” Inclusive Conversations	AEF Board of Directors	June 2020	Hold “Let’s Talk” discussions to discuss issues of race and ethnicity with key stakeholder groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students/new hires (specifically the MADE Alums) • Professors (specifically our Visiting Professor Program alums and our <i>Advertising Society and Quarterly</i> contributors) • Industry (from our Talent Week community)
Inclusion Study: My Voice Matters	Diversity Disconnect Study	November 2019	Fielded a study that links inclusion to growth outcomes, looking at inclusion across three different dimensions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the room • In the company • In the industry
Longitudinal Tracking of Diverse Talent	AEF Board of Directors	Fall 2020	Combine data across all entry-level programs that champion diversity to have a tracking system that publicly publishes how well diverse talent performs (e.g., promotions)

DEEPER DIVE ON EACH PROGRAM APPROACH

PROGRAM APPROACH	POINT OF ORIGIN	YEAR LAUNCHED	DESCRIPTION
Best Jobs Ever	ANA Global Growth Council	Nov 2019	A campaign launched by McCann Worldgroup in collaboration with the AEF to drive greater awareness of and accessibility to the marketing and advertising industry

In November 2019, the AEF tackled the marketing industry's ongoing talent crisis head-on with a new multi-tiered campaign designed to inspire talented and diverse university students to choose marketing as a career. Dubbed "[Best Jobs Ever](#)," the campaign includes a video and a new partnership with WayUp, a digital platform that connects marketers with millions of college students seeking summer internships and entry-level jobs.

ANA CEO Bob Liodice said the campaign was rooted in a simple, powerful idea: The marketing industry offers some of the best jobs young people have never heard of. He added that the campaign is designed to optimize the talent pipeline from college students through to CMOs. "Top-quality talent is the lifeblood of our industry, but the current system for attracting and retaining talent isn't working, and we need to take immediate action," Liodice said. "This campaign demonstrates just how creative, innovative, and powerful a career in marketing can be."

The campaign resulted from research conducted in partnership with McCann Worldgroup that revealed marketers' recruiting efforts are beset by a perception problem in which most students view marketing as simply ads and selling. They fail to see that marketing is a diverse, multi-disciplined career that calls for a variety of skill sets ranging from creative to analytical. The campaign video was created by McCann Worldgroup and highlights the wide variety of marketing industry jobs available to students. What is crucial in today's complex and challenging environment is to maintain focus on the next generation of talent.

DEEPER DIVE ON EACH PROGRAM APPROACH

PROGRAM APPROACH	POINT OF ORIGIN	YEAR LAUNCHED	DESCRIPTION
Masters on Campus	AEF Board of Directors	Fall 2020	A campaign to have top marketing and advertising executives visit campus and syndicate that content across academia

Each academic year, the AEF matches 300 industry executives directly with professors to speak in their classrooms. This Campus Speakers Program exposes both professors and students to current industry practices ranging from brand strategy to digital marketing.

The AEF will look to build upon this successful Campus Speakers Program by enlisting 100 senior marketing and advertising executives in a program called Masters on Campus. Similar to the Campus Speakers Program, the AEF will arrange for virtual school visits for these executives with two distinct differences:

- A higher production value to ensure that the content can be captured and syndicated to other classrooms, as many universities will still be hungry for content in the online, remote learning environment anticipated for fall 2020.
- The content will align with the ANA CMO Growth Council four pillars:
 - Society and Sustainability
 - Data and Technology
 - Brand Experience, Creativity, and Media
 - Talent and Marketing Organization

PROGRAM APPROACH	POINT OF ORIGIN	YEAR LAUNCHED	DESCRIPTION
CMO Career Pathing Analysis	ANA CMO Growth Council	Fall 2020	A report that quantifies the demographics and attributes of the CMO career path

Using LinkedIn and Bloomberg data sources, the AEF is reconstructing and analyzing career paths of top CMOs looking at demographic data, educational backgrounds, and types of roles. There are two purposes:

- To capture quantitative trends in the CMO career path for students to see how the leaders reached the senior-most marketing positions
- To help CMOs benchmark their own career paths and determine skills they need for their teams and for themselves in leading growth for their organization

DEEPER DIVE ON EACH PROGRAM APPROACH

PROGRAM APPROACH	POINT OF ORIGIN	YEAR LAUNCHED	DESCRIPTION
Pledge to Reflect College Demographics in Internship and Entry-Level Class	AEF Board of Directors	Forthcoming 2020	An industry pledge to have all incoming internship and entry-level classes reflect the racial and ethnic diversity makeup of universities

As an arm of the ANA, the Alliance for Inclusive and Multicultural Marketing (AIMM) is an industry-wide alliance representing the entire marketing ecosystem: advertisers, media, research companies, trade organizations, and agencies across Hispanic, African-American, Asian-American, LGBTQ+, and non-multicultural segments. Together, this working group of industry leaders is focused on developing and enhancing the relevance, effectiveness, and impact of multicultural and inclusive marketing to legitimize connections with consumers and in turn maximize business growth.

In June 2020, AIMM published an open letter to the marketing and advertising industry to highlight its continued commitment to equality, inclusion, and structural change. The first commitment was focused on representation, stating, “We will achieve representation that better reflects our country’s demographics throughout the industry: marketers, media companies, agencies, production companies, and service providers. This means equity in representation at every level, access, and voice — in other words, a seat at the table.”

Since 2018, AIMM has published a diversity scorecard of the ANA board of directors and the demographic breakdown of marketing departments by seniority level from entry to the most senior. While this is a limited sample size, this data provides a benchmark in providing a guideline for what diversity guidelines the AEF recommends for organizations hiring entry-level talent.

As a comparison, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) provides data on racial and ethnic composition for four-year institutions.³ The table below shows there is a significant gap in ANA Board of Directors data (2019) and NCES data when it comes to specific racial and ethnic groups, specifically Black and Latinx.

DATA SOURCE	WHITE	BLACK	ASIAN	LATINX	TWO OR MORE	OTHER
Four-Year College Average	54.0%	13.3%	7.1%	20.9%	4.0%	0.7%
Entry-Level (ANA Data)	69%	8%	11%	8%	2%	2%

To achieve true diversity outcomes, the AEF recommends that organizations commit to hiring entry-level talent that reflects the racial and ethnic composition of universities today. Specifically, the AEF is asking companies to pledge to follow these guidelines in their own entry-level hiring practices as a public commitment to racial diversity.

Despite falling short on racial diversity, the ANA Board of Directors study reveals significant progress with achieving gender equity. There is gender parity reflected at the senior most levels of marketing organizations while there is a higher share of women entering into the industry from universities than men.

³National Center for Education Statistics (2018)

DEEPER DIVE ON EACH PROGRAM APPROACH

PROGRAM APPROACH	POINT OF ORIGIN	YEAR LAUNCHED	DESCRIPTION
Marketing Case Studies with Data and Analytics	Analytics Disconnect Report	February 2020	A joint effort between academia and industry to build more marketing case studies that contain actual data sets for classroom purposes

The AEF's recent research "Bridging the Analytics Disconnect" revealed a dearth of marketing analytics case studies complete with data sets from which students could learn. Professors have long maintained that using marketing case studies in classrooms is an effective way to engage students in all aspects of marketing and provides real-world experience that will help them as they enter the industry. Research shows that marketing is perceived as more qualitative than quantitative; therefore, every case study will include data sets (real or simulated) to maximize learning.

In February 2020, more than 50 industry practitioners, CMOs, and professors convened to discuss the project parameters and how to best move forward in building a marketing case study library. Dawn Lerman, professor of marketing at Fordham University, led the discussion, with the collective group committing to continue to invest in this effort. In June, we convened the same group to provide feedback on case study access, format, length, media, data sets, teaching companions, distribution, and scale. From that session, the group agreed to meet in September to evaluate a case study that the ANA would write for additional feedback based on those parameters. The goal is to have five case studies completed by the end of 2020.

Marketing case studies allow professors to inject real-world examples into curricula that are often inflexible, rigid, and not consistent across schools. The influx of case studies will help standardize access to teaching the same content and test critical thinking skills that are crucial to success in the marketing and industry. This standardization helps smooth out the variability in types of curricula available at different schools and create a more equal playing field for talent, particularly diverse talent, to come into the industry.

DEEPER DIVE ON EACH PROGRAM APPROACH

PROGRAM APPROACH	POINT OF ORIGIN	YEAR LAUNCHED	DESCRIPTION
Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Connection Plan	AEF Board of Directors	Winter 2020	Creation of a program that specifically builds a recruiting pipeline to industry from the HBCU community

The AEF has historically worked with professors from HBCUs across all of its programs:

- Visiting Professor Program
- Campus Speaker Program
- MADE Program
- *Advertising and Society Quarterly*

In winter of 2020, the AEF partnered with Omnicom to pilot an advertising immersion session at Howard University. The key success factors for this two-day visit:

- **Professor Engagement:** Howard University professors have a deep familiarity with AEF programming and staff. This relationship opened up this unique opportunity for Omnicom to participate in a range of classroom and career experiences that exposed Howard students to the advertising business.
- **Marketing the Visit:** AEF leveraged the Best Jobs Ever campaign to drive awareness of the Omnicom visit in a creative way to differentiate this kind of visit from other corporations looking to recruit talent on campus.
- **Agency Commitment:** Omnicom sent eight recruiting and hiring managers along with Howard alums to campus to speak directly to students and participate in the classroom experience.
- **Integrated Student Experience:** The two-day visit was set up by professors and career services so that it was a true integrated experience for the students; it started in the classroom but was connected to Career Services.

In 2021 the AEF will launch its HBCU Connect program to scale industry involvement in a majority of the 110 HBCU campuses across the nation.

DEEPER DIVE ON EACH PROGRAM APPROACH

PROGRAM APPROACH	POINT OF ORIGIN	YEAR LAUNCHED	DESCRIPTION
Diversity Disconnect Deeper Dive	All Three Disconnect Studies	Early 2018	Application of the disconnect study approach across industry, academia, and talent to specific racial segments to specific racial and ethnic segments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black (2021) • Latinx (2022) • Asian (2023) • LGBTQ+ (2024)

For the past three years, the AEF has conducted research on the key disconnects in the talent ecosystem through different lenses: talent, racial diversity, and analytics. The approach helps focus on what the true disconnects are and provides credibility to propose solutions that have the potential to scale. For example, the MADE internship program, an output from the first study, has gone from 700 to more than 1,700 applications over the past three years with a 50 percent diverse candidate pool.

The AEF will take the same research approach to different minority constituencies to determine how we can truly understand how the industry can tap into and retain this talent in a sustainable way. Our research roadmap:

- Black (2021)
- Latinx (2022)
- Asian (2023)
- LGBTQ+ (2024)

This approach will reveal specific disconnects that each segment faces and offer sustained and scalable solutions that will nurture this specific talent pipeline into the industry.

DEEPER DIVE ON EACH PROGRAM APPROACH

PROGRAM APPROACH	POINT OF ORIGIN	YEAR LAUNCHED	DESCRIPTION
Talent Week	Diversity Disconnect Study	Sept 2018	A forum to bring key stakeholders that focus on talent — academia, marketers, L&D, diversity executives — together three times a year for one week to work on key talent-related issues

The AEF focuses on building the bridge between academia and industry to inspire the next generation of talent. The AEF takes an inclusive approach when building this bridge, working with professors, career counselors, and deans across academia and collaborating with agency heads, marketing executives, line managers, and HR teams across industry. While the focus of the AEF is on entry level talent, talent development extends across all levels of the organization.

To focus on talent holistically, the AEF created Talent Weeks where we bring all parts of the ecosystem together — marketers, agencies, publishers, academia, other associations — and within those bodies, all functions that touch talent development, such as HR, marketing capabilities, line managers, training and development, and diversity and inclusion executives.

Meeting three times a year for one week, the AEF organized this community into four groups with specific deliverables:

- **Rebuilding Reputation with Students:** This is a marketing and agency executive group focused on how we as an industry could market marketing to the next generation of talent. This group developed and launched the Best Jobs Ever campaign.
- **Reconnecting with Academia:** This group convenes analytics executives and professors to work on building a marketing case study library with data and analytics at the core.
- **Reskilling the Organization:** This community convenes heads of marketing capabilities and L&D executives to discuss ways to retrain the marketing organization in the face of dynamic change.
- **Recruiting and Retaining with Purpose:** This forum offers the opportunity for HR and diversity executives to share best practices on recruiting and retention.

The AEF placed diversity and inclusion at the core of Talent Week where this theme was integrated into work sessions of every group.

DEEPER DIVE ON EACH PROGRAM APPROACH

PROGRAM APPROACH	POINT OF ORIGIN	YEAR LAUNCHED	DESCRIPTION
Marketing and Advertising Education (MADE) Internship Program	Talent Disconnect Study	October 2017	Creation and launch of a leadership program that is the common application for students interested in the marketing and advertising industry. It has scaled from its first year of 700 applicants to more than 1,800 in the third year.

The MADE (Marketing and Advertising Education) internship program originated from the findings uncovered in the study “Bridging the Talent Disconnect: Charting Pathways to Future Growth.” There was a resounding call from all key stakeholders surveyed in the study — students, academic, and industry — about the need to have a robust summer internship experience as a critical step to future entry-level employment. Key findings:

- **Internship Experience Critical:** All stakeholders agree that the internship experience is critical as a signal to future employers that they are ready to “hit the ground running” when joining their organization.
- **Quality of Internship Experience Is Variable and Inconsistent:** While the internship experience is an indicator that the student was exposed to a working environment, it doesn’t reflect the quality of the experience. The experience can be highly variable, as factors such as source of placement, interest from the manager, quality of projects, and the drive of the intern play into that experience. That doesn’t dissuade the industry from placing a premium on this kind of experience. However, the lack of standardization in the internship experience puts the onus on the student to source and extract the most value out of an internship.
- **Path to Securing an Internship Is Often Done Through Personal Networking:** Securing an internship is often done through personal referrals. That puts many students who don’t have access to this kind of network at a disadvantage. Securing an internship often reflects on who students know instead of what they know, which is often a poor indicator of how well they will be suited to particular jobs in the future

The goal of the MADE program is to attract the highest quality of students from a diverse student population for this summer internship sourcing program. All participating companies pay their summer interns, an important sign to students that their work is valued. This program enables the AEF to achieve:

- **Entry-Level Skills Standardization:** Positioned as the “common application” for internships, this program will create entry-level skills standardization for the industry. It is an opportunity to identify the core skills that are necessary for the entire industry to evaluate future talent.
- **Diversity Emphasis and Tracking:** The AEF’s geographically expansive academic network produces a consistent pipeline of talent. Close to 60 percent of MADE interns are from diverse backgrounds.
- **Summer Intern Program Experience:** The AEF has offered a range of resources for its MADE interns to succeed, including training programs, mentorship matches, and case study competitions. AEF wants to establish the MADE experience as the standard of excellence for quality when organizations recruit for talent, diverse or otherwise.

DEEPER DIVE ON EACH PROGRAM APPROACH

PROGRAM APPROACH	POINT OF ORIGIN	YEAR LAUNCHED	DESCRIPTION
Longitudinal Tracking of Diverse Talent	AEF Board of Directors	Fall 2020	Combine data across all entry-level programs that champion diversity to have a tracking system that publicly publishes how well diverse talent performs (e.g., promotions)

While there is much qualitative evidence on promotional velocity of diverse talent or why diverse talent leaves the industry, there is not much quantitative data to track this progress. Most companies are reluctant to share this data set. The AEF wants to publish a series of metrics that combine inputs from different organizations that are pipeline programs into the industry:

- AEF MADE Program
- Verizon Ad Fellows
- 4A's Multicultural Advertising Intern Program
- Publicis Multicultural Talent Pipeline
- AAF Mosaic Center for Multiculturalism
- Marcus Graham Project
- LAGRANT Foundation
- One Club for Creativity

The goal is to track longitudinally how well diverse talent performs from respective feeder programs while allowing the industry to benchmark itself at an individual company level.

DEEPER DIVE ON EACH PROGRAM APPROACH

PROGRAM APPROACH	POINT OF ORIGIN	YEAR LAUNCHED	DESCRIPTION
"Let's Talk" Inclusive Conversations	AEF Board of Directors	June 2020	Hold "Let's Talk" discussions to discuss issues of race and ethnicity with key stakeholder groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students/new hires (specifically the MADE Alums) • Professors (specifically our Visiting Professor Program alums and our <i>Advertising Society and Quarterly</i> contributors) • Industry (from our Talent Week community)

Scorecards around diversity numbers are certainly crucial to drive accountability. Often overlooked, however, is the ability to have inclusion conversations with each other about an emotional topic such as race and ethnicity. In this climate of racial injustice, those conversations need to happen within and across organizations. Overemphasizing just the numbers creates an environment where the output is considered more important than the inputs that go into it.

The AEF has established ongoing "Let's Talk" series with each of its key stakeholders to discuss these issues of race and ethnicity as safe forums for expression:

- **Talent:** Our MADE alumni from classes 2018, 2019, and 2020
- **Industry:** Executives from our Talent Forward community, comprising academics, heads of marketing capabilities, L&D executives, agency diversity executives, and recruiting specialists
- **Academia:** The AEF professor network built through *Advertising and Society Quarterly* and the Visiting Professor Program

The AEF plans to expand this discussion format to encourage these important conversations outside their companies.

DEEPER DIVE ON EACH PROGRAM APPROACH

PROGRAM APPROACH	POINT OF ORIGIN	YEAR LAUNCHED	DESCRIPTION
Inclusion Study: My Voice Matters	Diversity Disconnect Study	November 2019	Fielded a study that links inclusion to growth outcomes, looking at inclusion across three different dimensions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the room• In the company• In the industry

From the Diversity Disconnect study, the major output was to build an inclusiveness index that helped link inclusion to business growth. The AEF partnered with technology company Morning Consult to devise a survey instrument that measured inclusion across three dimensions:

- **My Voice in the Room:** Is my voice heard when business decisions are made?
- **My Voice in the Company:** Do I feel I have the same chance to succeed as my peers in my company?
- **My Voice in the Industry:** Do I feel a sense of belonging within the marketing and advertising industry?

Starting in early 2019, the AEF worked with HR and diversity executives from the marketing and advertising industry to secure input into developing this benchmarking study. The results of the study will be released in Q1 2021.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The AEF has built a strong foundation to drive structural change in entry-level hiring to welcome, nurture, and retain diverse talent. But building a foundation is only the beginning. We need partnerships with everyone who is focused on achieving the same result: embracing the highest quality diverse talent to deliver inclusive growth for all of our respective organizations.

In June 2020, the ANA CMO Global Growth Council convened to set leadership priorities in four key areas:

- Society and Sustainability
- Brand, Creativity, and Innovation
- Data and Technology
- Talent and Marketing Organization

An overarching goal for the Council was to achieve true diversity and inclusion in organizations through structural interventions in recruiting, retention, development and advancement of talent. The AEF will play a central role in fulfilling this mandate through research such as this and the expansion of its programs developed to significantly improve diversity and inclusion outcomes at the entry level.



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