

Diversity Assessment Committee

Teaching and Learning Sub-committee Report

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Introduction

One of Grand Valley's Core Values is diversity and community. The passage of Proposal 2 in the Fall 2006 election has challenged us to be explicit about what we already do to realize this Core Value in our learning and teaching practices, as well as to be more intentional about what we must do in the future.

In 2003, Grand Valley revised its mission statement¹ so as to meet the challenges of liberal education in the 21st century and to more effectively respond to the increasingly diverse nature of the local, national and international communities in which Grand Valley faculty, staff and students move.² In concert with many similar institutions across the nation, Grand Valley reappraised its mission with attention to its central purpose -- to provide students with a quality, liberal arts education.³ As stated in our Strategic Plan, the fostering of a diverse learning environment "...promotes the development of intellect and creativity ..." and, therefore, is essential to continuing to develop Grand Valley as an institution with "... a broad national reputation for excellence"⁴. As in many institutions and professional organizations, the centrality of engaging, reflecting upon and learning from the rich diversity of perspectives increasingly

¹ http://www.gvsu.edu/strategic_planning/ "Liberal Education": Grand Valley State University is committed to providing each student a broad educational experience that integrates liberal learning with preparation for career or profession. Liberal education begins with encountering the great ideas of **diverse traditions** in the humanities, the creative and performing arts, the natural and social sciences, and mathematics, and is an essential part of all of our professional programs. We value the liberal ideals of critical thinking and preparing students for lifelong learning. The practice of liberal learning develops the skills of inquiry and reflection, which guide students to think for themselves, gain self-knowledge, and make ethical judgments. Such learning can inform individual and collective actions and prepare students for the responsibility of local, national, and global citizenship.

² "Diversity Requirements: Part of a Renewed Civic Education" <http://www.diversityweb.org/digest/W01/civic.html>
"... diversity requirements signal the academy's conviction that citizens now need to acquire significant knowledge **both of cultures other than their own and of disparate cultures' struggles for recognition and equity, in order to be adequately prepared for the world around them.** Colleges and universities clearly recognize that international boundaries are blurring and that citizens need what AAC&U's American Commitments initiative called "the liberal arts of translation" in order to live and work in the multi-ethnic borderlands that comprise our world.

³ http://www.gvsu.edu/strategic_planning/ "Vision": A liberal education acquaints students with the tradition of humane values and the heritage, problems, and **perspectives of their own and other cultures.** It transcends the acquisition of information and rests on scholarship and the open exchange of ideas. Students learn to think for themselves as they develop the skills of inquiry, reflection, critical analysis, dialogue, and expression. At Grand Valley State University, the values of liberal education permeate all programs and areas of study.

⁴ http://www.gvsu.edu/strategic_planning/ "Vision": Grand Valley State University is characterized by and known for superior student-centered teaching and learning. **Our diverse environment** promotes the development of intellect and creativity through teaching, scholarship, service, and a vibrant campus culture. **Realizing this vision will result in a broad national reputation for excellence.**

underscores the importance of “global education” that is the future of American education⁵. The United States of America was, is, and will continue to be a diverse nation (i.e. culturally, racially and ethnically, ideologically, in terms of social class, gender, and religion) and this fact is one of our greatest assets in underscoring for our students the importance of critical thinking, engaged citizenship and the personal reflection and growth that are the marks of a genuine liberal education⁶. As a community, we value this diversity alongside the universal truths embodied in the liberal arts tradition⁷. In addition, we believe that we have the opportunity and responsibility to engage the rich diversity of people, knowledge and ways of knowing that now comprise the Grand Valley community in the service of helping our students think critically and prepare to be global citizens.

For the purposes of this report, we are using the following definitions of “diversity” and “inclusion”:

Diversity

A commitment to diversity is a commitment to cultivating respect, acceptance and understanding of individual and collective differences (i.e. of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, religion, culture, abilities and/or other affiliations) -- all essential elements of effective teaching, learning, service and scholarship. A commitment to diversity is also the understanding that these values are essential to (and inseparable from) the processes of personal engagement, critical thinking and transformation that are the substance of a genuine liberal arts education. A commitment to diversity is also an important and tangible means of supporting the

⁵ “Shared Futures: Global Learning and Social Responsibility” <http://www.diversityweb.org/Digest/vol8no3/index.cfm>
“For a liberal education to successfully prepare students to live responsible, productive, and creative lives in a dramatically changing world, it must provide them with global learning opportunities. Ideally, these opportunities challenge students to gain deep knowledge about the world’s people and problems, explore the legacies that have created the dynamics and tensions that shape the world, and struggle with their own place in that world. Global learning at its best emphasizes the relational nature of students’ identities—identities that are variously shaped by the currents of power and privilege, both within a multicultural U.S. democracy and within an interconnected and unequal world. It can, in turn, engage students with some of the most pressing questions of our time: What do we need to know about the world today? What does it mean to be a citizen in a global context? And how should we act in the face of large unsolved global problems?”

⁶ “The ACS Diversity Initiative Within the Context of A Liberal Arts Education” <http://www.colleges.org/diversity/> “While ACS institutions differ in numerous ways, we share a common belief that diversity in our student bodies, faculties, and staffs assists us in attaining our primary mission: providing a quality liberal arts education that prepares students to be responsible and effective local, national and world citizens. We believe that racial and ethnic diversity on our campuses significantly enriches the educational experience and promotes personal growth, by increasing the exposure to and the understanding of differences that are found in the larger, pluralistic society.

At their best, multicultural experiences foster mutual respect, teamwork, and communities where it is the quality of a person’s character and contribution that matter the most. This is of utmost importance in a world where we work and play side by side with people from very different cultures and backgrounds.”

⁷ “Liberal Arts Education in the 21st Century”, W.R. Connor, President the National Humanities Center. Connor notes that the term “liberal arts” is derived from the Greek *technai* and that it is inextricably linked to imparting the tools essential to the “effective citizen”, for whom the practice of the “skills of freedom” should be central. The inclusion of all in the promise of a genuine liberal arts education is not only an affirmation of the principles of freedom and democracy, but a necessity upon which the future of these principles undoubtedly rests. <http://www.aale.org/pdf/connor.pdf>

University's mission (i.e. commitment to providing a quality liberal arts education as a means of encouraging responsible, engaged life-long learners and citizens).

Inclusion

The active, intentional and sustained engagement with diversity – in interpersonal relations, in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, in the university and surrounding communities (i.e. international, social, cultural, geographical/spatial) – as a tangible means of supporting the University's mission (i.e. commitment to providing a quality liberal arts education as a means of encouraging responsible, engaged life-long learners and citizens).

Recent research on diversity has focused on how racial and ethnic diversity in higher education provides educational benefits for *all* undergraduates (e.g., Milem and Hakuta 2000, Hurtado et al. 2003, and Milem 2003). To reap these benefits, Grand Valley must take decisive action: We need a community of faculty and students that is as diverse as possible. Perspectives on diversity and inclusive pedagogy must be embedded in courses across the curriculum, with relevant learning outcomes that are explicitly stated and assessed. Faculty and students require ongoing opportunities to increase their diversity-related skills and understanding. And finally, reward structures must acknowledge the value of work in diversity.

Proposal 2 and Academic Freedom

“Academic Freedom” as it is defined in the Administrative Manual, Chapter 4, Section 2.2, in pertinent part, is as follows:

1. Faculty members are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon a prior understanding with the authorities of the institution.
2. Faculty members are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject.

Proposal 2, by its own definition, does not affect the instructional or research rights of faculty. As defined by academic freedom, faculty may discuss in their classroom all aspects of information as it relates to the subject matter of the course. Courses that focus on the study of gender, race and national origin can continue without any restrictions from Proposal 2. Courses with titles using gender, race and national origin can continue. As the University curriculum does not grant preferential treatment, as defined by Proposal 2, no changes are required. Faculty may continue to engage in scholarly activities and research without any restriction from Proposal 2 as faculty scholarship and research do not provide preferential treatment to anyone.

Diversity Issues in Teaching and Learning as Reflected in Major Surveys

In order to determine how the issue of diversity affects teaching and learning at Grand Valley State University, six assessment reports were examined:

- Cooperative Institutional Research Project (CIRP), 2005;
- Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), 2005;
- Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) Faculty Survey, 2004;
- College Student Survey (CSS); 2006;
- Your First College Year (YFCY), (2006);

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), 2005.

Three of these reports provided useful information for understanding diversity as it relates to teaching and learning.

Diversity seems to be important to the faculty at Grand Valley. The HERI Faculty Survey reports that sixty-three percent of faculty agrees that racial/ethnic diversity should be more strongly reflected in the curriculum compared to 52.5% at other public institutions. Sixty-four percent of faculty agrees that enhancing students' knowledge and appreciation of other racial and ethnic groups is an important goal of undergraduates. Percentages decline, however, when faculty are asked about their classroom practices related to diversity. Forty-one percent of the faculty report in FSSE that they have discussions or writing assignments that include diverse perspectives including religion, gender and race. In addition, thirty-five percent of faculty indicate that they structure their courses to emphasize understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds.

When students report their experiences with diversity and learning, their responses tend to be lower than peer institutions. For example, the NSSE results indicate that when asked if the institution contributed to their growth in understanding people of other races and ethnic backgrounds, seniors reported a slight decrease in the mean response (2.42) to a freshman mean response of 2.48 on the questionnaire's scale ("Very Little" = 1; "Some" = 2; "Quite a bit" = 3; "Very Much" = 4). The senior responses are significantly lower than senior at peer institutions. In response to the question, "How much has your institution emphasized encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial and ethnic backgrounds," seniors respond with a mean response of 2.20, while peers respond with an average of 2.35, which is a significant difference.

Current Practices

It is difficult to analyze the curriculum for the inclusion of diversity or for the use of inclusive pedagogy because Grand Valley currently does not have an organized system for measuring these aspects of our curriculum. However, all students must take one US Diversity course and one World Perspectives course and a quick scan of the curriculum shows that approximately 10% of academic programs have a diversity requirement. The curriculum offers courses on diversity issues, and academic departments and Student Services offer a wide variety of programs that address diversity issues, but we have not yet made a strong and purposeful connection between curricular and co-curricular programming that would support inclusive excellence. Learning goals and assessment objectives for students' success at reaching intercultural competence still need to be developed.

Best Practices for Diversity Teaching and Learning

The committee researched university structures and programs that have made a difference in teaching and learning for an understanding of the value of diversity. We have listed several practices that have succeeded in creating a climate that links diversity and excellence.

- New Jersey Project: the state of New Jersey undertook a comprehensive project to transform the curriculum to include diversity of gender, race, and ethnicity in every part of the curriculum
- IUPUI created a program that links courses focused on diversity education with a focus on critical pedagogy. This program also links curricular and co-curricular learning.
- Wheaton College shifted the general education program to embed diverse content and classroom pedagogy through curricular infusion.

- The Association of American Colleges & Universities report *Making Diversity Work on Campus: A research-Based Perspective*, Jeffrey F. Milem , et al provides examples of best practice at a variety of universities and colleges across the US.

Barriers to Achieving Diversity Mission in Teaching and Learning

In our conversations among members of the committee and with faculty the following issues were raised:

- As the 2005 Diversity Study demonstrates, faculty who bring a diverse perspective to their department, focus on embedding diversity in the curriculum, or engage in research that supports diversity do not feel supported, and there is much anecdotal evidence that some faculty feel punished by colleagues at contract renewal and tenure for their diversity work.
- Faculty report lacking the knowledge to include diversity in the content of their courses, and/or to teach using inclusive pedagogy.
- Currently there is no reward system for faculty or departments who engage in diversity work (dedicated grants, departmental rewards, faculty recognition).
- The curriculum approval process does not contain a mechanism to promote diversity, and may inhibit the development of innovative pedagogy and alternative learning structures that would support inclusive excellence.
- We lack structures that encourage and promote diversity goals in the curriculum and require accountability.
- Although the university states the value of diversity, this has yet to be translated into objectives and actions steps for developing student learning outcomes for intercultural competence and inclusive excellence across the curriculum.

Recommendations for Improving Grand Valley's Teaching and Learning for Diversity:

1. Recommendations for increasing students' intercultural competence

- Create a special Curriculum Committee including members of college curriculum committees, representatives from the Division of Student Services, representatives from Advising Council, and Diversity Teaching Fellows to develop diversity learning outcomes for our students.
- Once the outcomes are established, develop a Diversity Rubric for use in colleges, units, and departments to measure student progress toward diversity student learning outcomes.
- Encourage departments and colleges to report progress toward meeting the learning outcomes and provide an opportunity for ongoing discussions of assessment findings and ongoing revision of diversity learning outcomes
- Provide students with more opportunities for experiences that promote an understanding of diversity and inclusion (internships, practicums, service learning experiences, and study abroad)
- Initiate discussions to help students understand the centrality of diversity for all students in their overall education as we prepare them for citizenship in the global world.

2. Recommendations for increasing the capacity of faculty to use inclusive pedagogy in their classes.

- Develop an annual Summer Diversity Institute to educate faculty in the most efficacious methods of incorporating diversity into their courses and provide opportunities for faculty to become Diversity Teaching Fellows and Diversity Advocates.

Diversity Teaching Fellows will be faculty members who use inclusive pedagogy and significantly incorporate diversity issues into the substance of their courses. They will be a resource for implementing and assessing diversity in the curriculum and also serve as informal advisers to other faculty members.

Diversity Advocates will be faculty members who agree to foreground the value of diversity in their teaching and service commitments. Diversity Advocates will agree to be part of training similar to that of Allies and Advocates and champion the interests of traditionally marginalized members of the academy. The roles and responsibilities of a Diversity Advocate would be :

- committee representation (to take the place of the previous requirement that a minority faculty member must be present on a committee)
 - advocacy on behalf of students in the event of a “bias incident” in the classroom
 - using inclusive teaching methods
 - serving as an informational resource regarding the appropriate steps to take for remedying unfair treatment (e.g. requires knowledge of the process and persons integral to a grievance procedure)
- Develop ongoing Diversity Workshops throughout the academic year that teach pedagogical techniques (such as demonstrating the connection among the concepts of diversity, social justice, and human rights), and incorporation of diverse content in courses
 - Encourage departments to send at least two faculty members to participate in the Diversity Workshops and report back to department as part of their service to the university⁸
 - Encourage team teaching with faculty who have expertise in diversity to help in the mentoring of faculty who would like to use more inclusive pedagogy.
 - Create a catalog of community and media diversity teaching and learning resources

3. Recommendations to develop support structures for faculty doing diversity work in teaching and research.

- Institute Presidential Diversity Teaching Fellows Award

⁸ We conceive this step as modeled on the Liberal Education Initiative, and as a possible replacement of this initiative.

- Institute Presidential Diversity Department Grant for units that have a diversity teaching fellow and at least two other department members that have attended diversity workshops
- Develop a process to recognize the contributions of Diversity Advocates in their own tenure and promotion reviews.
- Collaborate with the newly developed STRIDE committee to advance the University's mission of inclusion and fair treatment in employment matters and everyday campus life

4. Recommendations to increase the capacity of student affairs practitioners to use inclusive theoretical frameworks in their programs and co-curricular offerings and work on developing more connections between student affairs and academic affairs.

Since student affairs practitioners are also teachers of our students, we believe that it is equally important to provide them with opportunities to work with faculty and to develop and increase their diversity skills.

- Provide resources to encourage student affairs practitioners to use the most efficacious methods of incorporating diversity into their scope of work.
- Create annual Summer Diversity Institute in collaboration with the faculty institute to educate practitioners and academic advisors to become Diversity Advocates.
- Develop ongoing Diversity workshops throughout academic year that teach pedagogical techniques (such as demonstrating the connection among the concepts of diversity, social justice, and human rights), and incorporation of diverse content in programs
- Encourage departments to send at least fifty percent of practitioners to participate in Diversity workshops and report back to department.
- Develop support structures for student affairs practitioners and advisors doing diversity work in the co-curriculum and a process to recognize the contributions in the evaluation process.
- Institute Presidential Diversity Department Grant for units that have developed a program or initiative which will significantly increase their ability to serve diverse populations, or embed diversity into the co-curriculum.

5. Recommendations to increase campus community's engagement with diversity and make the successes more visible

- Underscore the centrality of diversity to effective teaching and learning
- Develop ongoing relationships with national experts on diversity in university systems and communities.
- Offer incentives for faculty and staff to attend diversity events
- Establish special section of the Forum to publicize diversity teaching and student diversity work

- Develop workshops that share the current research and application of the impact of diversity in teaching, research, personnel processes, and retention.
- Create diversity website that highlights diversity in teaching (including teaching resources, a catalog of relevant videos, and links to other websites)
- Invite Board of Trustee members and Executive Officers to attend diversity events and classes on campus with a Diversity Advocate or Diversity Teaching Fellow
- Examine the student evaluation process and related forms to assure that the race and gender of instructor and teaching diversity issues do not create a bias
- Create position of Omsbud person to specifically address conflicts around diversity in a confidential environment and provide a forum for discussion of these issues in group settings
- Provide opportunities for those in leadership positions (unit heads, Deans, Faculty Governance Chairs, AP and COT committee chairs) to acquire the skills and knowledge to become diversity champions.

Resources and References

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"Shared Futures: Global Learning and Social Responsibility"

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“Diversity Requirements: Part of a Renewed Civic Education”

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“Liberal Education and Global Citizenship: The Arts of Democracy”

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“Liberal Arts in the 21st Century”

<http://www.aale.org/pdf/connor.pdf>