Working Collectively across Differences
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### About Diversity & Democracy

Diversity & Democracy supports higher education faculty and leaders as they design and implement programs that advance civic learning and democratic engagement, global learning, and engagement with diversity to prepare students for socially responsible action in today’s interdependent but unequal world. The publication features evidence, research, and exemplary practices to assist practitioners in creating learning opportunities that realize this vision. To access Diversity & Democracy online, visit www.aacu.org/diversitydemocracy.
FROM THE EDITOR

Working Collectively across Differences

If virtues are measured by votes, it might be difficult at times to see the ability to collaborate across differences as an asset. As of this spring, the US presidential primary races have surfaced a high degree of divisiveness. The two leading candidates are both viewed more unfavorably than previous frontrunners since polling on this topic began in 1984 (Salvanto et al. 2016); their closest challengers were ranked last and second-to-last in bipartisanship among sitting senators (Lugar Center n.d.). Yet although some voters might respond to this divisive atmosphere, voters also bemoan the resulting “gridlock in Washington” and seek changes that would clearly require bipartisan collaboration.

Employers, too, demonstrate mixed ideas about the skills required for collaborative work in contemporary settings. Among employers responding to a survey conducted for the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) by Hart Research Associates, 96 percent agreed or strongly agreed that “all college students should have educational experiences that teach them how to solve problems with people whose views are different from their own” (2015, 3). Eighty-three percent ranked “the ability to analyze and solve problems with people from different backgrounds and cultures” as such (4–5). And yet, less than 40 percent ascribed equal importance to “awareness and experience with diverse cultures and communities” within or outside of the United States (5)—learning outcomes that are surely necessary for employees to engage in teamwork effectively within a globally interconnected and domestically diverse workforce.

Fortunately, colleges and universities are calibrating their teaching and learning goals to meet the very real demands of a changing workforce and society. Through a set of Essential Learning Outcomes articulated as part of its Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative, AAC&U has pointed toward the importance of “integrative and applied learning … demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems.” Such learning does not occur in a vacuum. On the contrary, it should be tightly entwined with other Essential Learning Outcomes, such as “teamwork and problem solving” as well as “civic knowledge and engagement—local and global” and “intercultural knowledge and competence … anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges” (AAC&U 2015, 9).

To achieve these interconnected outcomes, college students should (as employers have signaled) have significant practice solving complex problems with diverse groups of collaborators. This issue of Diversity & Democracy contains articles highlighting courses, programs, and initiatives where students are engaging in such collaborative problem-solving across differences. The issue also underscores the importance of conducting this work not only with students, but among faculty, staff, administrators, and community members. Contributing authors explore such topics as the elements required to build campus-community partnerships and the institutional practices that allow practitioners to come together across professional roles in support of student success. Critically, the issue also calls readers to reflect on the current climate for diversity within higher education, and to work together to address the racism, sexism, and range of phobias currently afflicting higher education and the public sphere.

As AAC&U President Carol Geary Schneider wrote when she introduced the first issue of Diversity Digest (now Diversity & Democracy) nearly twenty years ago, “It has never been more important for educators to make explicit the connection between campus learning and the democratic values that guide diversity work” (1996, 1). Today, it has never been more important for these connections to manifest in the ways students, faculty, staff, administrators, and community members work collectively with those who are unlike them. This issue is designed to help practitioners consider avenues toward such collaboration, for the sake of students, the economy, and civil society.

—Kathryn Peltier Campbell
Editor, Diversity & Democracy

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Many institutions of higher education include within their mission statements the goal of preparing students for work and civic participation in a diverse and changing world. This laudable goal is influenced by three imperatives: the economic imperative, the imperative of education for participatory democracy, and the imperative for equity. Employers expect graduates to be able to work in teams and collaborate with people who are different from themselves (Hart Research Associates 2015b). Research has shown that experiences with diversity in higher education have significant benefits for student learning outcomes that are valuable to participatory democracy, such as cognitive complexity, creativity, a sense of connection to the larger society, and concern for the public good (Antonio et al. 2004; Hurtado 2006; Hurtado et al. 2003). And in the face of significant demographic shifts and widening socioeconomic disparities, institutions are under urgent pressure to address historical and continuing inequity in higher education.

The challenges facing institutions of higher education as they strive to meet these three imperatives are multifold. Colleges and universities need to achieve greater diversity among students, staff, and faculty; they also need to build students’ capacity—as well as the capacity of faculty, administrators, and staff—for inclusion, on campus and beyond. They need to admit, matriculate, and retain students from underrepresented groups, and they need to simultaneously address debates about systemic discrimination that persist on campuses despite the breadth of research documenting hostilities and microaggressions that affect the academic identities, academic achievements, career paths, and successes of women and underrepresented students (Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso 2000; Sue 2010; Watkins, LaBarrie, and Appio 2010).

To become both more diverse and more inclusive, institutions of higher education need to examine their own organizational capacity to prepare all students for a world that is changing, complicated, and already diverse. In short, we cannot educate students to meet the complex needs of our society if we cannot meet those needs within our own institutions (Bial 2016).

**The Current Context for Diversity and Inclusion**

Within colleges and universities, diversity and inclusion have long been the focus of experts in social justice, equity, and multicultural education. Historically, these professionals have been located at the margins of our educational institutions, in multicultural centers within student affairs and in departments of ethnic studies, women’s studies, and social justice education. But over the past few years, concerns about diversity and inclusion have reached all corners of our institutions. Across the United States, colleges and universities are experiencing highly visible levels of student activism in response to racism and sexism, with students demanding and sometimes securing the resignations of campus leaders. Aided by social media, students and campus communities across the nation have protested in solidarity, calling on institutions to remove symbols of colonialism and genocide; to challenge acts of racism, sexism, homonegativity, and classism; and to address the isolation that marginalized students often experience on campus.

In effect, these students are calling on higher education institutions to undergo a paradigm shift in how they attend to and prioritize diversity and equity. With the groundswell of support for the Black Lives Matter movement and intense focus on specific incidents of racism on campus, the nation’s students of color and their allies among students, faculty, and staff have reached a critical moment in the journey toward awareness of—and impatience with—the pace of structural change. This heightened awareness is the culmination of years of less visible activism for racial justice in institutions of higher education across the country, and it has converged with advocacy and action around gender equity, LGBTQ inclusion, and other interconnected aspects of identity.

Institutions often conduct their work related to these contexts using the language of diversity and inclusion. These terms can evoke myriad responses from different individuals—for some, suggesting political correctness and efforts to stifle free speech; for others, centering on people of all identities while ultimately failing to dismantle inequitable organizational practices; for others still, signaling a commitment to social justice and equity. It is clear that in order for our institutions to truly transform, we will need to find commonality and negotiate alliances across these different interpretations and worldviews. To meet the imperatives of educational equity and prepare all students for participation...
in public life and the workforce, we will need to effect substantial change in our own institutions. As we strive to meet the needs of a diverse society, we must come together around the common goal of educating our students, both those currently enrolled and those yet to come, including those who have been historically excluded from higher education.

**Embracing Demographic Change**
The context described above is occurring at a time of drastic demographic change that will shape higher education’s continuing work on diversity, inclusion, and equity. Recent figures indicate that 50.3 percent of public school students and 48 percent of public high school students are students of color (Kim 2014). The National Center for Education Statistics projects 33 percent growth among Latino/a students in K–12 education, 20 percent growth among Asian/Pacific Islanders, 44 percent growth among multiracial students, and 2 percent growth among African American students between 2011 and 2022, while projecting decreases of 6 percent among white students and 5 percent among American Indian/Alaska Natives during the same time period (Kim 2014).

With these burgeoning demographic shifts, diversity and inclusion have become central to higher education’s survival and success. But racial gaps in recruitment, enrollment, and retention of students persist. In 2014, national enrollment of first-year students at four-year institutions was approximately 33 percent students of color, a much lower percentage than in K–12 education (Chronicle of Higher Education 2015, 32). From 2003 to 2013, at a sample of 255 universities, graduation rates rose slightly more for underrepresented students (6.3 percentage points) than for white students (5.7 percentage points), but the graduation rate for underrepresented minorities was still 50.1 percent, compared with 64.2 percent for white students (Education Trust 2015, 2).

Moreover, faculty of color are still grossly underrepresented in higher education, with few campuses having a critical mass or even a cluster of faculty of color who can provide support or mentoring to each other and to students of color. In fall 2013, among full-time professors, 84 percent were white, 4 percent were black, 3 percent were Hispanic, and 9 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander, while American Indian/Alaska Native and those of two or more races each represented less than 1 percent (NCES n.d.). Such underrepresentation among faculty of color is detrimental to the success of students of color. While intercultural mentoring and support are critical, they cannot replace the benefits of seeing oneself reflected among one’s mentors and across the organization.

**Institutions need to examine their own organizational capacity to prepare all students for a world that is changing, complicated, and already diverse.**

**The Challenge to Higher Education**
The focus on diversity and inclusion at colleges and universities is rooted in a belief that higher education should offer equitable opportunities to people of all social identities. Commitments to racial equity, gender equity, and equity for disabled individuals are reflected in the policies, practices, and programs supporting affirmative action, Title IX, and the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as the ethnic studies, women’s studies, multicultural, and bridge programs that have historically advanced these efforts. These policies, practices, and programs have been and continue to be instrumental in promoting equity in higher education.

And yet, the current wave of student activism calls attention to the fact that racism and other forms of exclusion continue to exist on campuses. Clearly, it is not enough to simply support students of color so they can resist, thrive, and excel in exclusionary climates. In addition to creating policies, practices, and organizational structures that are inclusive, we must address those policies, practices, and structures that exclude. Exclusion and inclusion are complex processes that involve as well as implicate the campus community as a whole. Many of our current practices related to multiculturalism and diversity, though highly effective, do not invite those in the majority to participate in creating inclusive institutions, nor do they directly critique the exclusionary policies, practices, and structures that continue to exist.

In order to effect meaningful organizational change related to equity, diversity, and inclusion, institutions must embrace these values across the whole organization, among institutional partners, and within surrounding communities. By taking into account the holistic context for learning, higher education can drive the changes necessary to meet its central mission of educating all students—and can do so within the context of the new world that has already arrived in K–12 education and that will soon appear within higher education as well.

Within this world, it is both a matter of social justice and an imperative for the future of participatory democracy that diversity and inclusion be key values guiding higher education. But diversity and inclusion are also essential to meet the needs of a global economy that requires innovation, agility, and resilience on the part of both organizations
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and individuals. In higher education and in the private and public sectors, researchers are conducting, creating, and applying important work on the relationships among inclusion, intellectual diversity, and innovation. This work should be adopted more broadly by faculty, staff, and administrators across each institution.

**Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations**

Organizations in the private and public sectors are calling colleges and universities to prepare students to work with people who are different from themselves at the peer level, client level, and leadership level (Forbes n.d.; Hewlett, Marshall, and Sherbin 2013). Students themselves recognize the importance of practical skills related to collaboration, diversity, and inclusion (Hart Research Associates 2015b).

In the private sector, diversity is viewed as critical to the ability of organizations to innovate and adapt in fast-changing environments. Diversity—of perspectives, experiences, cultures, genders, and age—is essential to the growth and prosperity of any company. Diversity breeds innovation, and innovation breeds business success. Lu Hong and Scott Page have found that groups of diverse problem solvers with lower levels of expertise can consistently outperform groups of high-ability problem solvers with little diversity (2004). Research has also shown that companies with strong commitments to diversity outperform their peers, with higher profit margins and greater returns on equity and assets (Slater, Weigand, and Zwirlein 2008). Companies with greater racial and gender diversity perform better in terms of sales revenue, number of customers, and market share (Herring 2009). Those with the highest shares of women in their senior management teams outperform those with no women by 41 percent in returns on equity and by 56 percent in operating results (measured through healthy revenues and cash flow) (Hunt, Layton, and Prince 2015). Companies with diverse executive boards enjoy significantly higher earnings and returns on equity (Hunt, Layton, and Prince 2015). And employee satisfaction and engagement hinge partially on satisfaction with a company’s treatment of diverse people (Catalyst Information Center 2013).

We need to apply the best of what we know about working collaboratively and inclusively across identities to honor diversity rather than flatten it.

In order for companies and nonprofit organizations to reap the benefits of diversity, they need employees at all levels who not only represent diverse identities, but also are able to collaborate robustly across these different identities and life experiences. Colleges and universities need to build their institutional capacity to serve these needs by creating purposely inclusive practices, structures, and organizational climates.

**Changing the Whole Institution**

Many higher education institutions have made incremental gains in relation to diversity and inclusion by creating chief diversity officer positions, offering programming and resources for under-represented students, and focusing on recruitment and retention of faculty of color. On some campuses, these activities have increased in response to student demands. But to address the three imperatives related to equity, participatory democracy, and the needs of the business sector, campuses need to make diversity and inclusion an essential responsibility of everyone on campus—students, staff, faculty, and administrators.

One key area of purposeful practice is the curriculum. In a survey of institutions conducted for the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), only 34 percent of provosts reported that their institutions “require all students to participate in diversity studies and experiences” (Hart Research Associates 2015a, 3). A survey of 550 university presidents conducted by the American Council on Education found that 33 percent of respondents were diversifying and revising their curricula (Ruff 2016). It is critical that institutions follow through on this work, including by investing in ethnic studies and women’s and gender studies. It is also essential that colleges and universities improve recruitment and retention of the underrepresented faculty who bring their expertise to these and other disciplines.

Across the curriculum, many faculty members of all backgrounds are struggling to help students participate in the difficult dialogues occurring across higher education. They may report walking on eggshells in their classrooms, unsure of how to facilitate rigorous discussions about institutional discrimination, political correctness, microaggressions, and freedom of speech. They worry about “coddling” their students with trigger warnings (Lukianoff and Haidt 2015), and they wonder if higher education is preparing students for the harsh real world. To help faculty members address controversial topics, institutions can offer focused training on how to facilitate difficult dialogues that produce productive conflict and discussion, which has been shown to increase cognitive complexity.
and problem solving (Gurin, Nagda, and Zúñiga 2013).

Student affairs staff are an excellent resource for training and facilitation on diversity and inclusion. These professionals are often trained in student development, with a focus on caretaking and student-centered responsiveness. Student affairs and academic affairs divisions should share the responsibility of keeping students safe, engaged, and enrolled. Institutions should create formal structures that bridge the organizational chasms that often exist between these two groups of personnel in order to coordinate outreach to students, including the outreach that occurs in response to difficult situations.

Whole-campus coordination of diversity and inclusion efforts requires strong leadership from campus administration. On many campuses, administrators from the top down—from presidents and chief academic officers to deans and associate deans—recognize that their institutions need to build capacity for creating truly inclusive environments. On campuses where protests have occurred, many administrators are sympathetic to students’ concerns. But even sympathetic administrators may lack knowledge about the issues affecting campus climate for students of color, LGBTQ students, and students from other marginalized groups. Presidents and provosts must take responsibility for their own knowledge about these topics. Their peers, consultants with expertise in diversity and inclusion, American Council on Education fellowships, the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education (NCORE), and AAC&U conferences are all potential sources of good information.

Conclusion
To effect the change required for our institutions to meet the imperatives posed by business, participatory democracy, and equity in a diverse and changing society, colleges and universities need to engage as whole institutions in building our capacity for inclusion. The stakes are high for students, for employers, for our own institutional excellence, and for the promise of an equitable democracy. We need to apply the best of what we know about working collaboratively and inclusively across identities, organizational positions, and interests to ourselves and our own institutions in order to honor diversity rather than flatten it.

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I recently came across the syllabus from my first service-learning course. As a student I had never taken such a class, but as a brand new assistant professor in 1993, I joined a small group of faculty willing to take the pedagogical plunge. We met regularly for a year, first to conceptualize and develop projects and syllabi, and then to share, troubleshoot, and support each other as we offered the college's first set of service-learning courses. It is striking to compare the rhetoric in that early syllabus with the language routinely used today to articulate the purposes and priorities of community-engaged learning and civic engagement. The former was long on "service" and "needs," the latter on "collaboration" and "assets." The journey I and many other civic engagement professionals have taken is the same one we wish for our students and our colleges or universities—a journey from paternalism to partnership.

Partnership is both the norm and an aspiration within higher education civic engagement practice today. Books, journal articles, organizational mission statements, and student learning outcomes routinely feature the language of partnership, collaboration, and co-creation in descriptions and discussions of civic work. In the Carnegie Foundation's Community Engagement Classification, partnership functions as a core value and is presented as a defining attribute of the publicly engaged institution. While service-learning practices have evolved over the past few decades, on many campuses, the very language of "service" has fallen out of favor because of the asymmetry it implies, the lack of full and equal partnership it connotes.

At my institution, for example, what was once the Office of Service-Learning was transformed over a decade ago into the Center for Community Partnerships—a shift that included not only a new name, but also new ways of seeing and relating to the off-campus community and of allocating staff time and other resources.

**Partnerships as Relationships**

Even as partnership, collaboration, and the co-creation of programs and knowledge are increasingly embraced as best practices for college-community engagement, they are only ever partially achieved. Notwithstanding the best intentions, the smartest program design, the most committed collaborators (among faculty, staff, and community colleagues), the best institutional support, and so forth, partnership is an essentially elusive thing. Why? Because rather than being primarily an exchange or an agreement, partnership within the context of civic engagement is fundamentally relational, and a relationship is always a work in progress. Much like deep friendships, partnerships need ongoing cultivation and care. They require sustained attention, stubborn commitment, flexibility, empathy, humility, patience, imagination, and a generous sense of humor.

Unlike many friendships, however, campus-community partnerships typically span significant differences, bringing together individuals and institutions from (sometimes dramatically) divergent contexts with the expectation that they will work together toward a shared vision. This is a strikingly ambitious expectation because in most cases, the differences to be navigated are many and complex. At the organizational level, there is the college or university, where a civic engagement mission and program require negotiation among and support from a range of diverse stakeholders, including administrators, faculty, staff, and students. No less complex is the off-campus community, with nonprofit, for-profit, and governmental sectors, each of which comprises a complex array of organizations, policies, and personalities. A typical partnership involves a college or university civic engagement staff member, a faculty member, one or more undergraduate and/or graduate students, one or more staff members from a community organization and, either directly or indirectly, the constituency whom that organization serves. These individuals may embody myriad differences such as age, life experience, education, employment history, race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual identity, physical ability, language, religion, politics, citizenship status, and so forth. How can such differences be navigated so that authentic and life-giving relationships are forged in their midst? Much depends on how the partners conceive of themselves and of the other(s) with whom they will connect.

If we take Jewish philosopher Martin Buber ([1937] 2010) seriously, we will aspire to establish I-You rather than I-It partnerships. Instead of seeing the other as an “it”—the object of our will; the means to an end; the recipient of our benevolence, curiosity, guilt, activism, or entrepreneurial zeal—we can open ourselves to the realization that the other is, in fact, also a subject: the author of his or her own story and
the bearer of a complex host of intentions, experiences, strengths, desires, needs, vulnerabilities, and possibilities. To share work with such a one is to be a partner. To commit and apply oneself to that shared work over time is to participate in a partnership. Differences do not fall away in partnerships; but instead of being sources of division, domination, or diminution, they function as points of encounter and differentiated strength. Thus, when prospective partners come together for shared work, they intentionally look for the assets that each member brings, and they develop strategies and programs or projects rooted in those assets. Where an I-It orientation produces instrumentalist, asymmetrical relationships, an I-You orientation fosters genuine recognition of each other and, ideally, reciprocal, mutually transformative relationships.

One of the most important things we can do to develop and sustain authentic partnerships across differences, then, is to contest dominant narratives and practices of social value and hierarchy by cultivating I-You relationships. This cultivation can take many forms—for example, asset mapping, in which the experiences, strengths, and wisdom of one’s partner are identified and acknowledged as valuable; privilege walks or circles, in which unearned advantages or unseen expertise are surfaced and reflected upon; storytelling and deep listening; meditation and mindfulness exercises; journaling and reflection activities. While some practices may take place only occasionally, others can be folded into weekly class assignments, monthly meetings, or even daily routines.

An important precondition of I-You relationships between campus and community members is cultural competence—basic knowledge of the historical and cultural context of one’s prospective partner. Such competence can develop organically over time, but opportunities to build it can also be intentionally front-loaded so that students and faculty can be as knowledgeable and thoughtful as possible in their initial encounters with prospective partners. At Bates College in Lewiston, Maine, where a growing minority of residents are recent immigrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers from various parts of Africa, opportunities to develop cultural competence include presentations about (and sometimes by members of) the local community as part of new faculty, staff, and student orientations; facilitated walks for all new students through the city’s downtown; readings, films, community speakers, and/or cultural competence trainings as part of community-engaged learning courses and civic leadership programs; and on-campus and/or site-based orientations for community work-study students and volunteers. For those wishing to establish partnerships across significant differences, activities such as these lay a foundation for understanding and self-awareness that can be built upon through continued study, ongoing reflection, conversation, and deep listening.

Deep Listening
Civic engagement is usually cast in activist terms, but authentic partnership requires receptivity—attentiveness to the distinct experience and embodied specificity of the other, an openness to being moved and even changed by the other. According to Jay McDaniel, philosopher and theologian at Hendrix College, an essential ingredient of authentic relationships is “deep listening,” which occurs when we listen to others “on their own terms and for their own sakes … without trying to change them according to preconceived purposes” (2006, 26–27). When it comes to the cultivation of effective campus-community partnerships, such listening is both vitally important and surprisingly difficult, not only for students but also for faculty and staff. For those who are accustomed to being heard or attended to by others, it is especially important
to create institutional structures and practices that support deep listening to community partners. Mechanisms for such listening might take the form of community advisory groups or boards, focus groups, listening circles, community partner surveys, and community institutional review boards or community representation on the college or university review board.

At Bates, we find that some of the deepest listening and relationship-building across difference happens not only in formal structures like these, but also as faculty, staff, and students simply participate as fellow citizens in the quotidian realities of off-campus community life. For students, this has included becoming active fans of the local high school soccer team, some of whose team members began playing together as kids in a Kenyan refugee camp; joining a grassroots affordable housing initiative; and choosing a downtown park over the campus quad for afternoon study sessions or friendly games of Frisbee. For faculty, staff, and a growing minority of recent graduates, it means choosing to live in or near the city of Lewiston, where the majority of the college’s community-engaged work takes place, and becoming full participants not only in the growing arts and cultural scene but also in efforts to combat poverty, racism, Islamophobia, addiction, and other social challenges. When an institution’s students, faculty, and staff tether their own fates and the fates of their families and neighborhoods to the fates of the community partners with whom they are volunteering, they also invite deep listening. While surveys of community partners typically elicit plenty of praise for the college or university, they can also articulate constructive criticism. In recent surveys partners applauded the “thoughtful approach to making sure that students build the organization as well as learn new skills,” and the “open and honest communication” that has enabled a “long-standing and cherished partnership,” but they also voiced a desire for improved tutor training and “more direct communication with faculty.” Within a context of mutual respect and reciprocity, such feedback offers significant opportunities to reevaluate practices and fortify partnerships.

Students, too, are challenged by community-engaged work to listen deeply to both self and other. Working across differences frequently prompts a reevaluation of assumptions and norms that can be both unsettling and emancipatory. Even at a small, collegial institution like Bates, community-engaged courses often require students to team up with fellow students with whom they ostensibly have little in common. Because their shared work will have real-world impacts, students are especially motivated to figure out how to collaborate effectively. A case in point is the environmental studies major, where seniors in a required semester-long capstone course work together in small teams to complete a range of community-engaged research projects for real-world partners. Among this year’s projects, one team researched dam relicensing provisions and related water recreation opportunities for the city of Auburn, another worked with a grassroots citizens’ group to explore the feasibility of creating a community kitchen in a downtown mill, and another partnered with a local farm to address waste and recycling challenges. In each case, students had to navigate not only differences among themselves, but also those between themselves and their community partners.

Collective work across differences is rarely easy, but the growth it propels can be impressive. An analysis of the nearly two hundred anonymous evaluations completed by Bates students who took at least one community-engaged learning course last semester showed that after oral communication, the skills or capacities most often enhanced by publicly engaged academic work were collaboration, self-awareness, problem-solving, cross-cultural understanding, and empathy. Reflecting on her thirty-hour experience in a special education classroom, one student wrote, “We need to expose Bates to the non-neurotypical world. This program is so crucial to our community’s understanding of difference.” A student from a history course that included a community-engaged...
Layers of Connection

Once a partnership and the relationship at its heart have been established, cultivated, and fortified by practices of deep listening, what is the secret to sustaining mutually transformative collective work over the long term and across differences, even as the individuals involved in particular initiatives may change? At Bates, we have found that there are two key ingredients. First, sustained partnerships demand stubborn commitment. Not unlike a longstanding marriage, a connection maintained over the long haul is often less a matter of sentiment than of will. When commitment to the well-being of the other is certain and steadfast, partnerships can weather change, allow for valuable risk-taking, and stand the test of time.

The other key to sustained collective work is not attitudinal, but programmatic. Community partners need, and often struggle to get, connections that are reliable throughout the year, from year to year. Consistent connections are hard to establish for understandable reasons: for example, student schedules change each semester, courses may be offered only once a year or once a decade, students may go abroad or graduate, the college calendar may not align with the K–12 calendar, or a dedicated faculty member may not get tenure or may take a research leave. Whatever the reasons, community partners can easily find themselves without the kind of sustained and reliable higher education relationships they want and need. Sometimes well-intended but inconsistent partnership is more trouble than it is worth. The solution is to develop layers of connection between campus and community—what engineers might call redundancy structures or what health services professionals know as a continuum of care—so that partnership gaps can be avoided or reduced.

At Bates, this looks like a nimble network of curricular and cocurricular efforts organized to ensure sustainable partnerships and projects over time. At the core of the network are more than fifty community-engaged learning courses offered in any given year that connect students to projects identified as important by the off-campus community. Radiating out from this core are numerous strands of additional or redundant connection. Some of these strands are constituted by faculty members like sociologist Emily Kane, who offers a series of courses that successively build students’ capacity for partnering with a local organization to understand and address the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and the health and social problems of adults. Another strand is the Short Term Action/Research Team, a small team of students with diverse research skills who spend the five-week spring term working on community projects that could not be addressed during the rest of the school year. Still other strands are constituted by participants in our multitiered civic leadership and outreach programming, including Bonner Leaders, who participate in sustained community work and reflection during their four-year college experience; Community Outreach Fellows, who recruit and train fellow students for connection with particular community organizations or projects; Bates Civic Action Team members, first-year students who volunteer throughout the year in local literacy programs; and students in the Community Work Study program, who receive federal or college funds for their work in off-campus nonprofit organizations. Additional network strands include participants in our summer fellowship and work study programs, who help maintain campus-community partnerships when school is not in session; community liaisons who mobilize student clubs and athletic teams for both one-time and longer-term volunteer projects; and residence life student staff, who build participation in the off-campus community into every student’s experience. With these interconnected strands, Bates attempts to weave a web of sustained support for our community partners.

Sustaining partnerships and collective action over time and across differences is important and rewarding but also challenging work. While a coordinated network featuring layers of connection and built-in redundancies is one way to approach this challenge, the key to any model’s success is the care with which it establishes and continuously stewards I-You relationships that are fueled by practices of deep listening and an attitude of stubborn commitment to the well-being of the other. As I reflect on my own experiences over the past two decades, I have to admit that the multitudinous community-engaged projects, courses, and initiatives with which I have been connected are a bit of a blur. However, the relationships undergirding those efforts come easily into focus. In community-engaged work as in life itself, it is ultimately the quality of our relationships that defines us.

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Institutions of higher education are under great pressure to improve completion rates. Old approaches to reform, such as pilot or targeted programs, have not created the attainment gains required in the new millennium (Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins 2015). To improve completion rates and ensure student learning, colleges and universities need to substantially redesign how they are structured, how they engage with students, and how they approach the educational enterprise. In short, they need not only to reform—they need to transform.

Those leading transformative reforms need insight into how best to shepherd change in ways that resonate with institutional stakeholders. One key insight from my colleagues’ and my research in six transformation-minded institutions is the importance of achieved and assigned characteristics—professional roles, responsibilities, reputation, and authority—in the institutional change process. In this article, I examine the role that differences in these characteristics play in transformative reform, and describe two of these colleges’ efforts to help institutional actors work effectively across those differences.

Transformation and Higher Education

Over the past decade, policymakers and educators have broadly coalesced around a “completion agenda,” shifting the focus of higher education reform efforts from increasing access to college to improving college completion (Bailey and Morest 2006; Executive Office of the President 2014). The need for this shift is well-substantiated: while access to college has increased, college completion rates remain stubbornly low, particularly in those institutions enrolling high proportions of students who are low-income, first-generation, and/or from minority backgrounds (US Department of Education 2015). Moreover, institutions of higher education are seeking ways to ensure that completion goes hand-in-hand with high-quality learning experiences (Arum and Roksa 2010; Humphreys 2012).

Previous reforms tended to address only a small part of the student experience. But discrete reforms such as learning communities and first-year seminars usually have positive results, such as increased semester-to-semester retention rates, that fade over time (Rutschow, Cullinan, and Welbeck 2012; Visher et al. 2012). More comprehensive approaches are necessary—and beginning to get underway (see, for example, the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ Roadmap Project, the American Association of Community Colleges’ Pathways Project, and state initiatives supported by Complete College America).

These new reforms are efforts in transformation because they encompass the entire institution and engage all stakeholders in change to improve student outcomes. Transforming colleges engage three interconnected change processes at the same time: structural change, shifting the organization or design of systems and business practices; process change, defined as shifts in individual engagement and interpersonal interactions; and attitudinal change that shifts core attitudes, values, and beliefs (see, for example, Kezar 2014).

Given its complexity, institutional transformation is difficult. To understand the conditions that support or inhibit such change, my colleagues and I conducted an in-depth case study of six colleges engaged in a specific type of transformative reform effort. The institutions included four community colleges and two broad-access universities, and they varied in terms of urbanicity, size, and student demographics. They had all sought funding from a private foundation to engage in technology-mediated redesign of advising and student supports, sometimes referred to as “integrated planning and advising for student support” (iPASS).

Our data come from visits to each of the case study sites, conducted before and after implementation of the redesign. During the first visit, we examined project plans and organizational culture. During the second, eighteen months later, we assessed institutional and individual change. During both visits, we conducted semistructured interviews with key personnel, administrators, advisors, and faculty (101 interviewees pre-reform, and eighty-nine post-reform); surveyed participants to capture information about their backgrounds and roles within the organization; and conducted “guided observations” of advising tasks to assess changes in student service delivery.

We found that three of the six colleges used iPASS to begin transforming, displaying shifts in institutional structures, processes, and attitudes over the course of the project. At the other three colleges, we saw small shifts in one or
We found that differences in role-related worldviews and status created challenges for some project teams—but opportunities for others.
Leaders at Bluffview College deliberately sought to align worldviews among those holding different professional roles. The college’s implementation of reform was jointly driven by IT and student success professionals. Moreover, the IT director was included on the team responsible for setting the college’s student success agenda and developing new student support approaches. This enabled the IT staff to become invested in and prioritize iPASS. At the same time, the advising lead had deep knowledge of IT processes and needs and could “understand [IT]’s communication … and jargon.” In essence, these two individuals were able to code switch, enabling them to explain the overarching vision of the project in ways that were understandable to multiple sets of stakeholders.

In addition to staffing the project strategically and inclusively, the college overcame differences in worldview by devoting substantial time to cross-staff engagement and knowledge sharing. Project staff met regularly, engaging with one another as colleagues who each possessed unique and important expertise. Freeing up staff time to generate shared worldviews was a key way this college leveraged the iPASS reform for transformation.

Participants at Lakeside College struggled with status differences, which at first impeded their progress toward transformation. At the time of our first visit, institutional-level leaders had a clear vision for their iPASS reform and had shared that vision with project-level leaders. However, project-level leaders had not in turn communicated the vision to support personnel throughout the institution, in large part because they did not see the necessity of sharing information with those of lower professional status. Implicitly, project leaders seemed to expect support personnel to engage in change because they were told to do so by those higher in the institutional hierarchy. This created substantial resistance to iPASS on the part of the very personnel who needed to engage in the greatest degree of process change.

Halfway through the project, college leaders realized that a mismatch in power dynamics was impeding progress and deliberately attempted to bridge status differences. They brought in a different day-to-day project lead, who understood their vision for reform and who was respected by support personnel. After confirming a shared vision, college leaders gave the project leader wide latitude to communicate that vision to her peers. Moreover, they used their institutional status as a bully pulpit—communicating the importance of iPASS reforms, supporting the project lead’s efforts, providing her with resources, and empowering her to make day-to-day decisions. The combination of two types of power—institutional influence and peer respect—enabled this college to move quickly. Once personnel at Lakeside College learned to use differences in professional status and power to their advantage, they created multidimensional change that is likely to be sustained over time.

Conclusions and Implications

Our case study research in six colleges and universities indicates that the transformative change necessary to improve college completion rates is challenging, and not always successful. One important commonality among transforming institutions was the ability to work across professional role differences. We found that differences in role-related worldviews and status created challenges for some project teams—but opportunities for others.

This finding underscores the importance of recognizing differences in achieved and assigned characteristics. Colleges that recognized these differences and actively sought to bridge language, professional orientation, and status divides among team members were able to leverage difference rather than be stymied by it. At successful colleges, project leaders and participants used the relative strengths of their professional positions to complement one another. Project leaders rethought professional roles, gave project members time to get to know one another and learn about the worldviews of other team members, and ensured that everyone truly shared an overall vision for the project. When colleges did these things, their projects were more successful. They turned the challenge of difference into an asset.

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Global Opportunities for Cross-Cultural Learning

SCOTT MANNING, dean of global programs at Susquehanna University

Learning through engagement with difference—discovering meaning by comparing and contrasting beliefs, values, and cultures—is essential to liberal learning in a diverse society. As a small liberal arts institution, Susquehanna University long had a traditional core curriculum to ensure that all graduates experienced a breadth of disciplines beyond their major fields of study. But in the early 2000s, significant transformation began to occur at Susquehanna, influenced by two currents converging across higher education: a growing awareness of the indispensable nature of learning through the exploration of difference, and a burgeoning understanding of the necessity and benefits of a robust assessment program.

In 2003, Susquehanna faculty and administrators were dismayed to see that our students’ scores on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) were generally low for questions dealing with difference, whether those questions addressed students’ experiences working with others different from themselves or incorporating diverse viewpoints into their work. Worse, these numbers seemed to decline over students’ four years on campus. We all knew students who reported that they had come to Susquehanna because it offered a comfortable environment, similar to that of their hometowns. These anecdotal reports suggested that avoidance of difference was valued by at least some students, and that we were not successfully challenging those students—even though we were working hard to create a more inclusive and diverse campus, and Susquehanna was in many ways already the most diverse spot in our homogenous, rural area of Pennsylvania.

Faced with this reality, a group of faculty colleagues identified the practice of getting all students off campus to engage with others cross-culturally as a way of ensuring that they stepped out of their comfort zones and engaged with difference. In our earliest conversations, we talked about study abroad as a way of achieving this goal, but we quickly realized that our aims were more about helping students experience cultural difference than about ensuring that they crossed national borders.

At about the same time as these discussions, we were beginning our self-study for decennial reaccreditation, which President L. Jay Lemons had linked to a full year of campus-wide strategic planning. One outcome was the decision to create a set of university-wide learning goals, upon which we would build a comprehensive assessment program. The strategic planning process also led the faculty to develop a new central curriculum linked directly to university learning goals, which was adopted through a full faculty vote in 2008. Within that revision, the cross-cultural experience requirement was seen as a means for students to achieve several university learning goals focused on exploring different beliefs and values, addressing complex and sometimes ambiguous problems, and other areas of practice (Susquehanna 2016a, 2016b).

Cross-Cultural Experience Requirement

All Susquehanna students complete the cross-cultural experience requirement by selecting one of three Global Opportunities (GO) options. All three options include a cross-cultural immersion experience, which runs for a minimum of two weeks and is embedded in preparatory and reflective course work on campus. The majority of our students, 55 to 60 percent, participate in GO Short programs, all three components of which are designed entirely by our faculty. They begin with a seven-week (one credit) predeparture course to prepare students for intercultural learning and introduce the culture of the communities they will visit. Students and program directors then work and study on location for two to six weeks during winter or summer break. The group meets for another (one credit) seven-week course during the semester after their travels to reflect on their shared experience, discussing how to build on it in terms of both becoming global citizens and furthering their academic and career development.

Although GO Short programs are commonly referred to as “faculty led,” we encourage both faculty and staff members to serve as program directors. Each program has at least two directors, and in many cases programs are codirected and cotauht by one faculty member and one staff member. These directors lead the programs and assign grades, but they also facilitate the development of student–teacher relationships across another important layer of difference. Traveling and learning together promotes a very different type of interaction than that of the typical classroom. While GO Short programs are courses and have particular topical foci, their primary thrust is on learning from the interactions we all (students and directors) have with the people we
Critical Chances for Learning
The GO program is young and evolving, but through project-based learning and community-based research, it is providing critical opportunities for cross-cultural learning in short time frames. For example, GO Villandraut is a two-and-a-half-week program in May, primarily based at the archeological restoration site of a fourteenth-century chateau. In this program, ten to twelve students, two Susquehanna directors (including me), and eight to ten French volunteers work together, learning and practicing stoneworking and building using only fourteenth-century tools and techniques. Participants cook and eat together, spending hours at the same table getting to know one another. French is the official language of the worksite, but the French volunteers know that they will also have opportunities to speak English with US students. And while the restoration is fascinating work, it serves primarily as a vehicle for people from different cultural backgrounds to live and learn together, furthering the cross-cultural knowledge and skills of each group. In their reflection course following our travels, students describe insights into French cultural values related to work, the preservation of the past, food and dining practices, relationships to time, and more. They also demonstrate much greater awareness of some of their own cultural values. Other GO Short programs have included Sherpa Life and Culture, Travel Writing in South Africa, Galápagos, and many more.

Students can also choose other study away options, such as semester-long (GO Long) and noncredit (GO Your Own Way) opportunities, and the Susquehanna learning goals apply equally across these options. Volunteer experiences, internships, or research projects can count toward the requirement if they include cross-cultural immersion sufficient for students to make progress on the learning goals. Students have identified fascinating experiences that satisfy some of their own academic or personal goals, often at very little cost: work at a Native Hawaiian community organic farm, shark research with a South African team, a month living in Japan with a former high school exchange student's family, or study at a højskole (folk high school) in Denmark (described by Regan Breeden on page 17). Like GO Short students, students participating in GO Long or GO Your Own Way take preparatory and reflective courses; however, their course sections include students traveling to many different locations, as well as international students fulfilling the requirement with their time at Susquehanna. In these courses, students focus on developing intercultural skills so that they can maximize their time away. When they return to campus, they reflect on their own experiences, but also compare those experiences with the experiences of students who went elsewhere.

The directors of all faculty-led programs—overseas or domestic—must demonstrate that students who have completed their programs can meet Susquehanna’s cross-cultural learning goals. As Susquehanna courses, these programs are reviewed and approved by the curriculum committee. GO Long and GO Your Own Way programs are not designed by Susquehanna, so students in these programs must demonstrate in their proposals how they will accomplish the learning goals by participating in these programs. All students complete graded assignments in the pre- and post-experience classes, allowing instructors to measure their progress on cross-cultural learning goals.

Additionally, each year the central curriculum committee assesses achievement of two selected learning goals across the program as a whole, using writing samples collected from a cross-section of courses. This programmatic assessment revealed the need to add a portfolio requirement to students’ on-site work in order to improve their reflective work after returning to campus. Students’
subjective responses to their experiences are also compelling: the majority of our graduates report that their cross-cultural experience was the best part of their Susquehanna education.

A Paradigm Shift
The cross-cultural experience requirement has caused a real paradigm shift on our campus. In our NSSE data, our seniors now report more interaction with difference than do our first-year students. But other, more substantive changes have occurred as well. Instead of focusing on traditional study abroad—international experiences that are typically available to students with the best grades and the ability to pay—we focus on cross-cultural learning for all.

The implications of this philosophy are significant. As noted in the New York Times, Susquehanna is a leader in economic diversity among students (Leonhardt 2014). GO can have a positive impact on any student, but it is enormously powerful for students who would otherwise never own a passport. Because the cross-cultural experience is a curricular requirement, substantial financial aid supports students with demonstrated need, no matter which option they choose. Since adopting the requirement, Susquehanna also has experienced notable growth in the number of nonwhite and international students. We are becoming a more cross-culturally aware campus as we are becoming a more diverse campus, although more study is needed to establish a link between these trends.

One of the most important measures of success will be seen in the outcomes of our graduates. Just four graduating classes have fulfilled the requirement, but increasing numbers of students are pursuing postgraduate fellowships and service, attending graduate programs overseas, and finding employers who value their cross-cultural skills and global experience. We plan a full review at five years out. Stay tuned.

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[PERPECTIVE]

Two Months in Denmark

Regan Breeden, 2016 graduate of Susquehanna University

During the summer of 2015, I spent two months as the only American studying at a folk højskole (high school) on the southern border of Denmark. This højskole is one of many government-funded campuses that offers students the experience of living and studying in an intellectual environment with people from around the world, gaining exposure to subjects, from construction to linguistics, that expand upon, or depart from, those typically covered in traditional classrooms.

When I proposed this GO Your Own Way program, I emphasized that engaging with a wide range of subjects, all taught by European faculty living with the students, might help me better appreciate diverse attitudes toward learning. Upon arriving, however, I quickly realized that classes were the least significant part of school life. The school encourages growth through an emphasis on hygge, a uniquely Danish word describing the feeling of contentment that comes from sitting down with friends, normally around a campfire, and recognizing that life is good when you’re with good people.

With this focus on the value of growth through closeness and cross-cultural communication, daily life is a lesson in social and cultural engagement. The school hosts a mix of Danish and international students of different ages and backgrounds. At the højskole, I lived with, and learned to understand the cultures of, students from Syria, Somalia, Cyprus, Japan, Cameroon, Germany, and many other countries while orienting myself within the Danish culture and navigating language barriers.

In conversations quickly translated between Arabic, Danish, and English, we asked each other to consider the value of our culturally informed beliefs, often questioning conceptions of freedom, patriotism, terrorism, and national responsibility. There were nights when I was asked to defend American health and judicial systems and found, in the discomfort of these conversations, a greater understanding of my own political and cultural stance.

I came out of the experience with a new eye for my own culture, one that is both more critical and more inquisitive. I no more readily think about my world as a pliable place, where country borders are only physical and ideological differences can be understood with enough time and respect. I have found camaraderie with other students who have returned from their own experiences feeling similarly, and the changes in my perspective are supported by a university program that recognizes the value in finding new footing by exploring displacement.
Cultural Agility: Leadership for Change

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Minnesota ranks high nationally in both civic engagement and racial disparities (in education, employment, incarceration, and other areas). This stark reality requires new forms of engagement—and new leadership. With its Cultural Agility Collaboration (CAC), Minnesota Campus Compact has been working with a diverse group of fifty community members, students, faculty, and staff to generate campus civic engagement efforts that better equip people to work across differences and advance racial equity.

The CAC is funded by the Bush Foundation, which defines cultural agility as occurring when leaders “(1) understand their own culture and how it shapes their experience, (2) understand and appreciate cultural difference with others, and (3) incorporate this knowledge into their interactions and decision making” (Bush Foundation 2016). Our goals are not only to enhance the cultural agility of individual CAC participants, but also to develop with them key insights and resources that can advance ongoing efforts at colleges and universities and at Minnesota Campus Compact. This essay reflects emerging lessons from the project.

Stories, Trust, and Time

Relationships are essential to the CAC’s work. Participants have welcomed opportunities to share stories and engage authentically with each other, considering both their individual identities and historical and cultural contexts. Informal conversations, structured reflective activities, and discussions of the stories we carry (and those imposed on us) have been instrumental. Devoting significant time to the process has been challenging yet rewarding, and new connections among participants have led to collaborations outside formal CAC programming.

Among the project’s staff and leadership team, varied self-interests, assumptions, and theories of change have surfaced, adding complexity and depth to our collaborative work. The dominant culture—and our own desire to effect change—encourages us to leap prematurely into planning and action. Yet that can mean simply operating in the midst of difference, instead of truly accessing it as a resource. To prepare ourselves and others for full participation in our diverse democracy, we need to be willing to build relationships first—to speak our truth, admit what we don’t know, and listen deeply to others.

Power and Systems Change

As much as CAC members want to make change, they tend to locate power in others. During initial, separate retreats with students, community members, and campus faculty and staff, participants perceived members from the other groups as having more power than themselves. When they convened as a full cohort, they were struck by this pattern. They also sought to break down positional labels, insisting that they all were community members with both room to learn and knowledge or wisdom to share. The concept of spheres of influence became important in these conversations. One participant also offered the metaphor of “moving boulders” for and with one another, sparking discussion of how participants could leverage their own influence and activate allies.

What CAC participants most desire is systems change: for example, faculty and curricula that fully reflect community realities. This is also the area where participants feel least equipped, because systems change requires long-term strategies and relationships as well as deep, context-specific knowledge and skills. Leaders must be able to support small successes without distracting from the broader goal. They must also be able to identify when they are colluding with the systems they hope to change.

A Critical Phase

Collaborative leadership requires patience and adaptation, and the CAC is in a critical transitional phase as we shift from defining visionary goals to identifying specific actions for change. CAC working groups are now focused on developing their own and others’ capacities to facilitate inclusive, equitable spaces; to support institutional change and emotionally sustain themselves in that hard work; and to promote authentic community engagement, grounded in deep relationships rather than short-term projects. We are far from done, yet we are surer than ever that cultural agility, a network of trust, and a shared sense of power are essential to achieving these goals.

For more information about the CAC and related resources, see http://www.mncampuscompact.org.

REFERENCE

[RESEARCH AND ASSESSMENT]

Bridging Worldview Diversity through Interfaith Cooperation

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ALYSSA N. ROCKENBACH, associate professor at North Carolina State University

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Society faces significant and complex problems related to human trafficking, climate change, fear of terrorism, access to quality food, and conflicts between diverse religious and nonreligious groups. Social change related to these issues will require collaboration between diverse individuals and communities, as well as students prepared for leadership within these contexts. So how are educators creating spaces for students to cultivate vital skills to engage productively with diverse peers in leadership for social change? What educational experiences foster students’ abilities to mobilize coordinated efforts within diverse communities?

Two important collegiate experiences that leverage student leadership development for social change involve facilitating productive conversations across or about difference and participating in community service (Dugan and Komives 2010). While engaging in dialogue with diverse peers, students learn about different ways of understanding and existing in the world and begin to recognize their own assumptions and unconscious biases. Through community service, students encounter persistent social problems, start to recognize systemic issues, and identify community assets for alleviating these problems.

Collaboration across difference to engage common action for the common good has powerful implications for student leadership development and community improvement. However, in conversations about personal identity and social change, comparatively less attention has been given to one particular aspect of diversity: worldview identity.

Engagement across Worldviews

Worldview is defined as a “guiding life philosophy, which may be based on a particular religious tradition, spiritual orientation, non-religious perspective or some combination of these” (Rockenbach et al. 2014, 5). It is the overarching outlook individuals have on life that shapes values and behaviors. Worldview diversity can be divisive, making engagement across such difference intimidating and, to some, threatening. However, the same deeply held convictions can move students to take action for the common good—action that can be more influential when enacted in concert with others and leveraged to bridge differences and build social capital (Putnam 2001).

Across the country, students are cooperating with peers across religious difference to address challenging issues. Students at Texas Christian University coordinated a series of interfaith events around literacy, including a book drive and childcare for community members completing their General Education Diplomas, while students at Mississippi State University encouraged faith-based and secular student groups to work with food pantries as part of an effort to address food scarcity. These are just a few examples of students banding together across worldview differences to advance positive social change.

With employers calling for workers who can effectively collaborate with diverse others (Hart Research Associates 2015), it is critical that students retain and apply valuable lessons learned from interfaith service in their personal and professional lives. After witnessing a Muslim student being assaulted off campus, Skyler Oberst, an alumnus of Eastern Washington University, created an interfaith student group to raise awareness about and engage across lines of worldview diversity; he continues building bridges today. Beyond his work for the city council in Spokane, Washington, Skyler is cultivating relationships between religious communities by creating a series of videos about visiting different religious communities and their services. He is partnering with Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and Christian communities on this project to establish individual and communal relationships between faiths. With faith-based and secular organizations serving as central and influential social communities, helping students understand the importance of bridging across worldview differences for positive social engagement is all the more important.

Research on Interfaith Experiences in College

Interfaith service experiences can provide powerful learning opportunities for students and contribute to their...
development as engaged citizens. But what types of learning experiences are most influential for achieving interfaith outcomes? Researchers from New York University, North Carolina State University, and the Interfaith Youth Core have partnered to provide campuses with vital assessment tools and collect data on student experiences with and attitudes toward worldview diversity. Since 2011, the Campus Religious and Spiritual Climate Survey (CRSCS) has been administered to over fifteen thousand students at more than sixty institutions across the United States. The survey provides campuses with information about how students of different worldview identities experience and engage with the campus community, and assesses students’ appreciative attitudes toward specific worldview identities (e.g., Evangelical Christians, Muslims, Jews, Mormons, and Atheists) as well as their level of pluralism orientation (i.e., the degree to which one is accepting of, recognizes shared values and divergent beliefs with, and meaningfully engages with others of different worldviews).

CRSCS findings highlight connections between campus environments and key interfaith outcomes. Four particular campus practices have significant relationships with appreciative attitudes toward others and pluralistic orientation:

- providing physical and social resources to support students’ expression and meaning making;
- responsibly facilitating challenging and stimulating experiences with people of different worldviews;
- offering opportunities for students to engage in interfaith activities (e.g., attend a multifaith celebration or do

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**FIGURE 1. Characteristics of IDEALS Respondents**

**INSTITUTIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS**
- Number of participating campuses: 122
- Percent of respondents by institutional affiliation:
  - 41% Public
  - 23% Private, Nonsectarian
  - 21% Private, Protestant
  - 8% Private, Catholic
  - 7% Private, Evangelical Protestant

**STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS**
- Number of respondents: 20,497 first-time first-year students (1,300 of whom are transfer students)
- Percent of students by worldview identity:
  - 55% Worldview Majority (i.e., Christian students)
  - 28% Nonreligious (i.e., students of no formal religious identity)
  - 16% Worldview Minority (i.e., students of a formal religion other than Christianity)
  - 1% Another Worldview (i.e., students who identified with multiple groups)

**WORLDVIEW INFLUENCES**
- Percent of students reporting combinations of religious and spiritual identities:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious</th>
<th>Not Religious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Spiritual</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Percent of students who indicated the following as the top influence on their worldview:
  - 36% Family background and traditions
  - 23% Religious beliefs/faith
  - 10% Nonreligious beliefs/perspectives
  - 8% Philosophical tradition (e.g., existentialism, humanism, feminism)
  - 6% Cultural backgrounds and traditions
  - 6% Social class and/or socioeconomic background
  - 4% Political views
  - 3% Racial/ethnic identity
  - 2% Gender identity
  - 1% Sexual orientation
  - 1% Other influence
service work with others of different worldviews); and
- encouraging students to socialize, dine, study, and have conversations with students of other worldviews.

These practices show promise as strategic interventions that staff and faculty can leverage to promote pluralistic development, thus increasing the likelihood that students will engage and serve with others of diverse worldviews both during and after college. However, additional research is needed to discern how particular aspects of students’ interfaith encounters and the campus environment contribute to students’ pluralism development over time.

Thus, our research team recently launched the Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey (IDEALS) to investigate the influence of college on students’ attitudes and behaviors related to worldview diversity. IDEALS will track a cohort of students over the course of four years to ascertain the impact collegiate experiences have on student outcomes related to worldview diversity and pluralism. The first of three surveys was administered in fall 2015 to incoming first-year students at 122 campuses.

To gauge the interfaith potential of the 2015 cohort of first-year college students—and the role college may play in attitudinal and behavioral change—it is essential to take note of several defining characteristics. Namely, what are these students’ worldview identities, how do they understand their religious and/or spiritual identities, and what factors have shaped how they see the world? (See fig. 1.) Whereas Orthodox, Protestant, and Roman Catholic Christians compose a slight majority of IDEALS respondents, nonreligious students (e.g., atheist, agnostic, secular humanist) and worldview minority students (e.g., Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim) constitute 28 percent and 16 percent, respectively. Additionally, reported intersections of religiosity and spirituality add another layer of complexity to students’ worldview identities; students may share a particular worldview identity, but attach different religious or spiritual connotations to that shared identity. Exploring factors that influence their worldviews, over a third of students report their families as the top influence, with another third identifying religious and nonreligious beliefs as the most important influences.

Recognizing the diverse worldviews and influencing factors of this student class, the research team will focus both on how students engage across difference and on how that engagement may vary by worldview identity. What campus experiences seem to affect student growth related to pluralism outcomes? How might those experience differently affect diverse student populations? What practices can educators best leverage for students’ interfaith learning? These are a few of the questions our research team intends to explore.

Findings from IDEALS will promote ongoing dialogue about worldview as a deeply embedded and influential component of our institutions and society, as well as an integral aspect of many students’ identities and core beliefs. Building on survey findings, campus leaders can intentionally and effectively integrate interventions to increase students’ motivation and capacity to work cooperatively across lines of worldview difference. Information about this unfolding research will be available at www.ifyc.org/ideals.

A Critical Skill Set
Assessment of student experiences and attitudes toward worldview diversity is imperative for educators to achieve interfaith learning outcomes among students. In our religiously diverse society, citizens can no longer initiate effective change without connecting across different worldview communities. Higher education carries a unique responsibility to support students in developing this critical values orientation and skill set to use for social change leadership on campus and beyond.

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In an address at the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ 2015 Global Learning in College conference, L. Lee Knefelkamp noted that college and university campuses are among the most diverse places in society, and opportunities for intercultural interaction abound there. Fittingly, one of higher education’s key goals is to help students gain intercultural competence, or the ability to interact effectively with people who are culturally different from them.

Despite its important role in higher education’s work, cultural difference often has been perceived as problematic. It has been conceptualized as a source of dissonance (Allan 2003), anxiety and uncertainty (Gudykunst 2005), or shock (Pedersen 1995); the cause of miscommunication or misunderstanding (Ting-Toomey 1999); or something to be accepted, accommodated, or integrated (Bennett 1986). Renowned intercultural researcher Geert Hofstede has described cultural difference as “a nuisance at best and often a disaster” (quoted in Stahl and Tung 2015, 391). In keeping with these frameworks, intercultural competence often has been defined as the ability to deal with problems.

In our Intercultural Work Project, we are exploring an alternative approach to intercultural competence development. The project is organized around a central question: What if cultural differences are seen as sources of positive potential rather than as problems? Such an adjustment in perspective might allow us to interpret and support intercultural interactions in different ways. For example, when supporting intercultural group work, our focus might shift from avoiding and managing problems to identifying how cultural differences can enhance the quality of a group’s interaction and work product.

Based on our initial research findings, we believe that the impact of cultural differences may not be as large or as negative as it is frequently characterized. In fact, cultural differences could be viewed as assets with the potential to improve collaborative work. Moreover, the degree to which differences are sources of either problems or potential may depend on contextual factors such as the nature of the work and the individuals involved. In some contexts, cultural differences may indeed be problematic. In others, these same differences may be assets. With an asset-based vision in mind, we are examining how colleges and universities can help students develop a new form of intercultural competence.

The Intercultural Work Project
In the Intercultural Work Project, we have explored one possible approach to helping students develop intercultural competence. As the project’s name suggests, we have focused in particular on what happens when culturally different students come together with the primary goal of producing good work (as opposed to coming together primarily to talk and reflect on their cultural differences).

Our initial study focused on undergraduates from the United States, China, and Japan as they worked together over a two-week period on a meaningful project in Japan. The American and Chinese students were participating in a study abroad program organized by the College of Education at Michigan State University (MSU), while the Japanese students were enrolled in education courses at Shimane University.

In order for students’ work to foster their appreciation for the potential of cultural difference, we decided that it should have the following characteristics. First, the task had to be collaborative, with students working together rather than in parallel. Second, the task had to be meaningful to the students. Third, the work had to be complex enough to require sustained, thoughtful, collaborative engagement. Finally, the markers of high-quality work had to be relatively unambiguous.

We placed students in five different mixed-culture groups and presented them with a task selected by the president of the host university: to develop a plan for making the host university more “global.” Each group could focus on one of two strategies: increasing the number of international students on campus, or sending more students abroad. After two weeks of collaborative work, the groups presented their ideas to an audience of high-level administrators who selected one group’s plan for implementation during the following school year.

Project Findings
As the students worked, we gathered observational and survey data on how cultural differences affected the quality of their work processes and products. Before collaborating, students completed a survey composed of modified items from well-known measures of intercultural values and communication, with surprising results. Prior research (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010;
Ting-Toomey (1999) revealed large differences among similarly constituted groups related to individualism and collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and communication style. However, among these students, differences were small to moderate.

At the conclusion of their collaboration, students completed another survey regarding how cultural differences influenced the quality of their work. More than one student noted that contrasting conversation styles actually helped the groups collaborate. For example, one Chinese student had the impression that American students were better at talking, while Japanese students tended to be better listeners. Students seemed to think that this difference improved the quality of the collaborative work. Similarly, an American student noted that the Japanese students excelled at collaborating and may have inspired American students to be more cooperative.

In contrast, language differences stood out as adversely affecting the quality of the work. The groups conducted their work in English, and Japanese students reported struggling with comprehension and expression. Moreover, communication difficulties between groups were caused by differences not only in English language proficiency, but also in background knowledge. For example, campus-wide change occurs differently within the Japanese and American universities. For the Japanese students, the very idea that students can promote change was hard to comprehend. Finally, the groups understood the meaning of “globalizing a campus” differently, since MSU’s campus was already significantly more internationalized than the Japanese campus.

Next Steps
In our initial research, students demonstrated the ability to do good work both in spite of and because of their differences. It’s not hard to see how even the “problems” we identified could, in certain contexts, become springboards for productive discussions where the diversity of students’ experiences inform their work. The pedagogical task facing institutions is that of fostering situations that enable cultural differences to contribute to good intercultural work.

What if cultural differences are seen as sources of positive potential rather than as problems? Such an adjustment in perspective might allow us to interpret and support intercultural interactions in different ways.

Our next step is to determine what kinds of collaborative work are most likely to benefit from group members’ intercultural differences.

While our initial study focused on assessing how cultural difference affected students’ work projects, we suspect that students developed greater understanding and respect for each other as a result of their work together. Even though students were working with their differences instead of working on them (as is common in many on-campus intercultural discussions), we imagine that understanding and respect were indirect, natural consequences of their collaboration. In future investigations, we might assess whether this is indeed the case.

Moving forward, we are inspired by a series of remaining questions. How might students learn to better recognize and actualize the potential of cultural differences in collaborative group work? What types of preparation or training might foster this type of intercultural collaboration? We plan to explore the construct of “intercultural metacognition”—knowledge, awareness, and strategies for working productively with people who are culturally different from oneself—by implementing a short training program to foster American and Japanese students’ intercultural metacognition, and examining the program’s effects on their intercultural collaborative work. We invite readers to share their thoughts with us at dwong@msu.edu and simps249@msu.edu.

REFERENCES


[CAMPUS PRACTICE]

Working across Differences: A Necessity for Students, Employers, and Society

MICHAEL WHITE, associate dean in the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences at the University of Minnesota

KARL LORENZ, director of the Office for Diversity and Inclusion in the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences at the University of Minnesota

The ability to work effectively across difference—to engage authentically across cultures, identities, races, life experiences, and knowledge systems—is essential to student success in serving national aspirations, meeting employer demands, and addressing complex global challenges. Recognizing this, the University of Minnesota (UMN) includes among its formal learning and developmental objectives skills such as self-awareness, appreciation of differences, tolerance of ambiguity, and understanding of diverse philosophies and cultures.

UMN’s College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS) developed the Working Across Difference Initiative (WADI) to meet these university-wide objectives and its own strategic priority of enhancing undergraduates’ multicultural and global competencies. WADI has three primary goals:

- to prepare students to work across difference, engage in complex problem solving, and enter an increasingly diverse and globalized workforce;
- to integrate culturally relevant course content and classroom strategies that reflect the needs and interests of diverse undergraduate students and address the unequal impacts of difference; and
- to create, identify, and integrate best practices that help students develop intercultural and global competencies and an increased awareness of issues relating to diversity and social justice.

WADI aims to accomplish these goals by ensuring that all CFANS undergraduates, in each year of their education, take courses and participate in activities (e.g., study abroad and service learning) that intentionally incorporate multiple cultural perspectives in order to develop intercultural competency, learn about cultural difference, and recognize how difference frequently results in unequal impacts on peoples and communities.

Context for WADI

Current study abroad research (Vande Berg et al. 2009) challenges the long-held assumption that exposure to difference alone is sufficient to enhance intercultural competence: the development of “a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts” (Bennett 2008, 97). CFANS’s own research, conducted in collaboration with UMN’s Learning Abroad Center, has demonstrated that little positive intercultural development occurs through contact alone without the intentional implementation of intercultural competence goals and appropriate pedagogy. In response to these findings, CFANS developed a set of tools for faculty that have dramatically increased students’ intercultural learning while abroad. We are now seeking similar gains in intercultural learning with on-campus classes.

We see this work as intimately connected with our goal of creating an inclusive campus climate—traditionally the province of diversity offices that have long served as moral stewards for social justice and equity within US institutions of higher education, which have frequently exhibited histories of exclusion. Whether supporting historically underserved populations, new immigrant communities, or international students, or striving to cultivate greater understanding around gender expression, sexual orientation, gender equity, disability, and other aspects of identity, campuses—and our society—require broad awareness and understanding of how difference matters and adds value. The many identities our students embody must be acknowledged, empowered, and respected. This broad educational mission of valuing difference necessitates greater attention to the need for increased intercultural skill and understanding.

Finally, we are responding to employers’ stated needs. According to a UMN career center survey, intercultural competence is central to three of the top five skills that employers seek in new hires: the ability to “appreciate and interact with individuals different from themselves,” to “function as a member of a team,” and to employ “effective interpersonal communication skills.” Similarly, in a recent report commissioned by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, 96 percent of surveyed employers agreed or strongly agreed that students of all majors “should have experiences in college that teach them how to solve problems with people whose views are different from their own” (Hart Research Associates 2015, 4).

A Model for Faculty Engagement

WADI supports students, employers, and society by helping students develop a core skill set that is essential to the current and emerging needs of a pluralistic democracy and a global community. The initiative involves faculty in creating an intentional framework that scaffolds learning across the curriculum through
pedagogical innovation and cocurricular opportunities. Participating faculty have integrated intercultural learning strategies into courses, programs, and engagement and service-learning partnerships.

Some faculty initially expressed hesitation to become involved in this work. They felt they were not adequately prepared to integrate intercultural learning content into their classes. In response to this concern, we invited early adopters to participate on an Intercultural Task Force that met regularly to lead the initiative and innovate classroom interventions. To build capacity and extend the task force’s impact, we developed the Teaching Across Difference (TAD) fellows program—a faculty mentorship cohort. This initiative offers the supportive environment of a mentor/cohort learning community facilitated by experienced faculty from the Intercultural Task Force and staff from the Center for Educational Innovation. In TAD's first year, each of three faculty mentors is facilitating a cohort of six faculty members, involving eighteen newly engaged instructional faculty in developing classroom strategies to advance WADI.

Approximately 25 percent of CFANS instructional faculty are now engaged in WADI. These faculty are developing classroom strategies influenced by James Banks’s (2010) criteria for multicultural classrooms. They are employing case studies that reflect diverse perspectives on critical, discipline-specific issues; drafting explicit intercultural student learning outcomes to incorporate into their syllabi; inviting diverse speaker panels; and identifying highly engaging experiences in diverse communities.

**A Focus on Student Outcomes**

Two years into WADI, curricular integration has reached over 50 percent of CFANS students, with more than thirty college courses (including freshman seminars, orientation classes, core courses within majors, and learning abroad classes) participating. Two CFANS majors (Food Systems and Agricultural Education) are aligning intercultural learning strategies across their curricula to meet the goal of offering at least one WADI-infused opportunity in each year of the major.

While these successes are heartening, we continue to refine our efforts to broaden faculty involvement, expand our faculty resource toolkit, and develop online tutorials illustrating intercultural concepts for classroom use.

We employ the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to measure changes in students’ intercultural development. A valid and reliable instrument (Paige et al. 2003) developed by Mitch Hammer and Milton Bennett and based on Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), the IDI assesses an individual’s or group’s intercultural developmental stage. We augment IDI data with in-class surveys and continue to review the applicability of other tools and instruments for supporting our assessment needs.

Our research demonstrates that intentionally incorporating developmentally appropriate learning opportunities that engage difference and providing students with the requisite tools in targeted classes are key ways of building students’ skill in working across difference. Courses with highly integrated intercultural and diversity-infused content tend to produce gains in student intercultural development. The most successful courses typically incorporate several of the following approaches: case studies, reflective writing assignments, opportunities for students to approach issues from multiple perspectives, and service-learning experiences.

Student response to this initiative is overwhelmingly positive, with 87 percent of those surveyed agreeing that they have a better understanding of why intercultural competency matters;

**The broad educational mission of valuing difference necessitates greater attention to the need for increased intercultural skill and understanding.**

81 percent indicating that they better understand how it applies to their major; and 88 percent stating that they can apply their learning to their own development. The ability to recognize differences and respond positively with skill, curiosity, and empathy is essential, and we must identify ways to infuse intercultural competency into our work as educators. WADI represents one effort to meet that demand.

**REFERENCES**


I have a story to tell. I am no hero. I am like you. I could be your brother, father, uncle, cousin. I could be you. In another time, in another place, this could be your story and that’s why you must understand. I am one man, with one story, but there are many more like me.

—Sudanese refugee in Cairo, 2006

I watched the flood of Syrian refugees cross borders north and south—anonymously, young and old, fearful and hopeful. Who were these people, and how did they handle the pain of displacement? What inner strength kept them going? A picture of a middle-aged woman cradling the face of a young man brought on a mix of emotions. Something about her looked like me. Was the boy her son? Had he been in college? Had he played for the basketball team? Had he stayed out late with friends, and had she constantly told him off? “I could be you,” I heard the woman’s voice in my head. I was reminded of another time, almost ten years previously.

It was 2006. I was teaching a capstone course, Writing for Publication, in the rhetoric and composition department at the American University in Cairo (AUC). The students were taking the class as part of their core curriculum, and they came from majors as diverse as literature and engineering, economics and philosophy. Working with the theme of “Citizenship and Inclusion,” we grappled with definitions and implications, difficulties and failures. Questions were raised and concepts were challenged. As a teacher passionate about experiential pedagogies, I seized the opportunity to introduce a community-based learning (CBL) project—a difficult one.

Just a few months before, about three thousand Sudanese refugees had settled in a park in front of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees office in Cairo. Without documentation testifying of their refugee status, they had no access to employment, education, health care, and legal protection. For three months, the refugees had camped in the park, waiting to be heard. Residents of the neighborhood spoke of them with great disdain, saying they “dirtied the streets,” “hampered the traffic,” and “spread diseases.” Few people listened to their complaints or understood their problems. They were seen in mass form, rather than as individual humans with families, goals, and lives. Eventually, they were violently dispersed and detained by police authorities.

“Who are these people?” I had asked. “What are their stories?” And, thus, the idea of the CBL project arose. What better service than enabling refugees to have their stories told and their worth acknowledged? And what better opportunity for learning than writing with engagement, communicating voice, and seeking publication? I envisioned a collection of first-person oral narratives, highlighting personal experiences and dreams. This was going to be a great service project.

What better service than enabling refugees to have their stories told and their worth acknowledged? And what better opportunity for learning than writing with engagement, communicating voice, and seeking publication?

Invaluable Learning

When the semester started, I shared with students the course learning outcomes of research, writing, editing, publication, and presentation. As undergraduates, none had published before, and they were worried about what was expected of them. We analyzed journal mission statements and submission guidelines, critiqued articles, examined book proposals, and learned about publishing policies. By the fourth week, the students felt comfortable with the language and expectations of publication. Their enthusiasm for the CBL project rose, and they were eager to embrace both learning and service.

We watched a documentary on Sudanese refugees in Cairo, covering history, politics, social conditions, and current challenges. The tough reality brought most of us to tears, but one student was so agonized that she refused to take part in the project. “I can’t listen to stories of trauma,” she sobbed. “I can’t handle it.” I was moved by her reaction, but how could she not participate? The teacher in me worried about uniform assessment and grading. No incentives or persuasive tactics convinced this
The rest of my students were busy at work. We contacted AMERA—the Africa and Middle Eastern Refugee Assistance NGO—and invited the founder, Barbara Harrell-Bond, and several refugees to our class. We wanted to negotiate a partnership, where both students and refugees were learning something valuable while supporting each other. The meeting was exceptional. “What do you know about the Sudan?” asked one of the older guests. We didn’t know much: that it was in Africa, south of Egypt, and had been in conflict for a long time. The guest pulled a large map from his pocket and unfolded it on the floor. One by one, we slid off our seats and knelt beside him. The geography, history, culture, politics, art, and literature of the Sudan came to life as he walked us through the territory. One by one, the refugees opened up and introduced themselves. One by one, our stereotypes about refugees came crashing down. We had assumed refugees would be poor and uneducated. They were teachers, lawyers, businessmen, students, landowners, and farmers. They could be any one of us.

For the next couple of classes, we planned the project more thoroughly. Some students became concerned: “What if we hear stories we can’t handle?” “Are we allowed to cry?” “What if they are too emotional?” “What if I ask the wrong questions?” We contacted our community partner, AMERA, and received coaching in conducting interviews with people who had suffered loss, persecution, and violence. Students also took an online training course on protecting human subjects. The learning was invaluable.

**Lasting Impacts**
Students spent the semester composing stories with their partner refugees—selecting pseudonyms, mapping story lines, adopting voice, negotiating angle and word choice, developing detail. They worked on and off campus, occasionally sharing coffee and snacks, visiting each other’s homes, and communicating through social media. Deep friendships developed, with jokes and tears and secrets. The students, the refugees, and I grew in the process, and became … well, better human beings—more sensitive, more empathic, and more refined.

As the stories took shape, we wrote a book proposal for AUC Press. This was the service we were offering: a publication that brought the distant mass of people closer and made visible their familiar human side. I invited my colleague, Brooke Comer, to engage her own students in a similar activity the following semester. The stories from both classes would form the collection for publication, edited by my best student writer, Nora Eltahawy, as well as Brooke and me. The book royalties would go to AMERA, in support of refugee legal aid. In 2009, AUC Press published *Voices in Refuge: Stories from Sudanese Refugees in Cairo*—the press’s first book written and edited by undergraduate students.

As I reflect on this activity, I know that it was not without challenge: the constant negotiation of a delicate partnership, the breaking down of boundaries and stereotypes, my own uncertainty and parallel learning, and the extended publication process, which culminated several semesters after the students had graduated. But when the students and refugees received the e-mail with the published book link … my, we had a celebration!

As a teacher, I continue to celebrate my CBL experiences. I have learned that keeping sight of course learning outcomes is key to success. The best CBL experiences are those with clear relationships to academic goals; activities that are loosely relevant lose their significance and appeal.
[CAMPUS PRACTICE]

Multicultural Education and Mass Violence: Critical Examination by Two Student Groups

JULIA CARROLL, associate professor of reading and writing to ESL students at Queensborough Community College

AMY E. TRAVER, associate professor of sociology and education at Queensborough Community College

Following recent terrorist attacks around the globe, our country is in the throes of increasing anxiety, with fear mongering, ethnic stereotyping, and finger pointing elevated among politicians and average citizens. Never has it been more important for higher education to foster civic, diversity, and global learning through initiatives that help students deepen relationships across differences.

In this article, we outline a project designed to meet this imperative at Queensborough Community College (QCC) of the City University of New York. QCC is one of the most diverse colleges in the country, with students hailing from 139 nations and speaking eighty-seven different languages. In fall 2014, over 70 percent of QCC’s incoming first-year students required remediation. Significantly, most QCC students have college and career aspirations extending beyond completion of an associate’s degree.

To support these students’ success, QCC employs seven high-impact practices (HIPs), including service learning and global/diversity learning, in the five academies in which all degree-seeking students enroll. (Editor’s note: For more about HIPs, see www.aacu.org/leap/hips/) Faculty often use these HIPs in connection with campus-based cultural resources. One such resource, QCC’s Kupferberg Holocaust Resource Center and Archives (KHRCA), provided the setting for our project.

Gender, Mass Violence, and Genocide

In 2010, the KHRCA received a National Endowment for the Humanities challenge grant to support an annual faculty-designed and -administered colloquia series that encourages Holocaust, genocide, and human rights education across disciplines. The 2015–16 series, designed and administered by the second author and titled “Gender, Mass Violence, and Genocide,” consists of eight events where participants engage diverse perspectives to study how gender structures individuals’ experiences of mass violence and genocide.

Complementing the colloquia series is an exploratory research protocol that examines QCC students’ responses to aligned curricula. During the 2015–16 academic year, students in fifteen courses will attend an event from the series and complete a written assignment connecting their insights from the event with course material. A team of four faculty will then assess these assignments using the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ (AAC&U’s) Global Learning VALUE Rubric, which measures students’ efforts to “analyze and explore complex global challenges” within and across courses (AAC&U n.d.).

Project Description

In fall 2015, students from BE226, an advanced English as a Second Language (ESL) reading course, engaged in a service-learning partnership with students from EDUC101, an education course for pre-service teachers, to explore what it means—within the larger context of mass violence and genocide—to acquire a multicultural education. In the process, the ESL students developed their English reading and speaking skills, while the EDUC101 students gained experience in lesson design, teaching, and assessment.

One major contributor to the project’s success was how seamlessly students from both courses collaborated across language, skill, and cultural barriers. The ESL students had failed the ACT reading test and were required to retake it at the end of the semester to enter credit-bearing courses. These students came from nine different language and cultural backgrounds and had resided in the United States for four years or less. All spoke a language other than English at home and had very little exposure to English outside of the classroom. The EDUC101 students were predominately Hispanic and female and hoped to become elementary school teachers.

Students learned about colloquia series themes as they provided service to one another in myriad ways. Students in both classes commenced the semester by reading The River Runs Salt, Runs Sweet by Jasmina Dervisec-Cesic (2014), which documents the author’s experiences during the Bosnian war. As they read, the ESL students created open-ended reading comprehension questions based on the book. In the first meeting of the two classes, the ESL students used these questions to connect with their EDUC101 partners and converse about their diverse backgrounds.

Because the ACT reading test is so significant for the ESL students, a major component of the project involved learning about assessment. In the second meeting, the ESL students presented on multiple-choice question construction using sample questions they had developed about the book. The EDUC101
students then created a multiple-choice “practice test” on an article about multicultural education. Before administering their test, the EDUC101 students needed to scaffold the ESL students’ knowledge about the article’s challenging content and vocabulary. Therefore, in the third meeting, the EDUC101 students taught vocabulary and concepts from the article before assigning the article and homework to the ESL students. In the fourth meeting, students worked together to review the homework and test and to develop questions for Dervisevic-Cesic, who spoke to a campus-wide audience as part of the colloquia series. The fifth and final meeting brought closure to the project, as students shared their reactions to Dervisevic-Cesic’s talk and reflected on multicultural education.

**Project Outcomes**

Critical reflection is a major element of successful service-learning projects (Maloy and Carroll 2014). During this project, students completed five in-depth written reflections, many informed by QCC’s concurrent participation in the Teagle Foundation’s “Student Learning for Civic Capacity” project, assessing their attitudes regarding their own learning. Several overarching themes emerged from these reflections.

The ESL students described increased confidence in their language proficiency. They also mentioned relishing the opportunity to enhance their conversational skills with native speakers. The EDUC101 students zeroed in on “career learning,” reflecting on their experience prepping materials, leading a class, and creating learning strategies on the spot. This project also achieved our shared course objective: to engage students in critically analyzing the necessity of multicultural education. Many students began the semester with limited knowledge about multicultural education, often defining it as focusing on ethnic fairs, food, and festivals. However, by working collectively across differences to analyze Dervisevic-Cesic’s book and attend her talk, create lesson plans and presentations, and engage in discussions, the BE226 and EDUC101 students assisted one another in augmenting their definition of a multicultural education and their understanding of its importance. As one student wrote, “Multicultural education [helps] to spread knowledge and perspectives as well as sympathy towards other cultures. Multicultural education is of value to society because it gives us the opportunity to learn from one another and spread cultural diversity and awareness.”

Overall, the most prevalent theme that emerged across all five reflection exercises was how much students had learned from one another. For instance, an EDUC101 student wrote, “[This] experience helped me work on my communication and teaching skills through the activities we participated in together. It made me see the perspectives of foreign-born students and how I am not much different from them.”

**Preparation for Work and the Global Community**

In this unique project oriented toward student success, community engagement, and workforce development, ESL and EDUC101 students benefited equally from an intense collaborative experience focused on critically analyzing the significance of multicultural education within the larger context of mass violence and genocide. All project participants heightened their understanding of the importance of reducing hatred, discrimination, and violence worldwide. What is more, the pre-service teachers stand to bring this knowledge into their future work creating inclusive educational environments.

As mentioned above, this project is just one example of learning activities designed by QCC faculty to support Holocaust, genocide, and human rights education during the current academic year. Other projects have linked coursework with events in the colloquia series through such activities as historical research or photography. Preliminary analysis of papers written by eighty-two consenting students indicates that students’ learning across these projects has clustered around the “global self-awareness” dimension of the AAC&U Global Learning VALUE Rubric, demonstrating students’ development of an “integrated identity with a systemic understanding of the interrelationships among the self, [and] local and global communities” (AAC&U n.d.).

**REFERENCES**


Resources on Dialogue Across Difference

Across higher education, institutions and individuals have made multiyear commitments to engaging students and other stakeholders in dialogue across difference. Selected examples of this work, including resources for educators and practitioners, are highlighted below.

Intergroup Dialogue
Institutions across the country are engaged in the practice of intergroup dialogue, where individuals from different social identity groups come together for facilitated discussion. The Program on Intergroup Relations at the University of Michigan, a leader in the field, hosts an annual National Intergroup Dialogue Institute for faculty and staff across higher education. The 2016 institute will take place on June 20–23 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. For more information, visit https://igr.umich.edu/article/national-intergroup-dialogue-institute.

Sustained Dialogue
Created by American diplomat Harold “Hal” Sanders, Sustained Dialogue is “a unique change process which (1) focuses on transforming relationships that cause problems, create conflict, and block change; and (2) emphasizes the importance of effective change over time” (from the website). The Sustained Dialogue Institute comprises over forty campus chapters involved in pursuing this work. For more information, visit http://sustaineddialogue.org/.

National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation
The National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD) is a network of individuals across various sectors, including higher education, who are working to address difficult contemporary issues through dialogue and deliberation. NCDD’s website includes an extensive resource center, and the coalition hosts regularly scheduled events, including a “confab call” series and a national conference (scheduled for October 14–16, 2016, in Boston, Massachusetts). For more information, visit http://ncdd.org.

Remembering Bernie Ronan
AAC&U joins colleagues across the country in mourning the death of Bernie Ronan on March 29, 2016. Bernie was a senior fellow at AAC&U, a member of the Diversity & Democracy advisory board, cofounder of The Democracy Commitment, and associate vice chancellor for public affairs at the Maricopa Community Colleges. These and his many other titles do not begin to measure his impact. A listener, elicitor, leader, and doer, he eloquently spoke of the importance of using the head, heart, and hands in civic work. He wrote in one of his last published pieces: “If civic work is sustained over a lifetime, it can become one’s ‘body of work,’ a lasting legacy of good done for the world…. This is the purpose for which we were all born into the polis, which was there before we came and will last beyond our leaving.” Bernie made the world we share a more humane, democratic, and just one before he left.

Essential Global Learning
Edited by Dawn Michele Whitehead

Essential Global Learning is a compilation of seminal AAC&U articles about global learning. The publication provides a working definition of global learning, a framework for assessment of global learning, and case studies featuring high-impact global learning activities on a variety of campuses. This volume is a foundational resource for individuals as well as groups of educators and leaders interested in exploring the range of global learning opportunities currently available across higher education contexts.

Contents include the Global Learning VALUE Rubric, developed by a national group of faculty experts as part of AAC&U’s Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) project. The rubric is designed to assess students’ global learning achievements and has been tested on campuses across the country.

To order print copies, visit http://www.aacu.org/publications. Member discount available.
Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Calendar

The following calendar features events on civic learning sponsored by members of the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (CLDE) Action Network and others. For more information, please visit AAC&U’s CLDE Calendar online at http://www.aacu.org/clde/calendar/.

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<td>Wye Deans’ Seminar: “Citizenship in the American and Global Polity”</td>
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AAC&U and the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (CLDE) Action Network

As part of its commitment to preparing all students for civic, ethical, and social responsibility in US and global contexts, AAC&U has formed the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (CLDE) Action Network. The CLDE Action Network builds on the momentum generated by the 2012 White House release of the report *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future*. Coordinated by Caryn McTighe Musil, AAC&U senior scholar and director of civic learning and democracy initiatives, the network includes thirteen leading civic learning organizations that are committed to making civic inquiry and engagement expected rather than elective for all college students. *Diversity & Democracy* regularly features research and exemplary practices developed and advanced by these partner organizations and their members:

- American Association of State Colleges and Universities
- Anchor Institutions Task Force
- Association of American Colleges and Universities
- The Bonner Foundation
- Bringing Theory to Practice
- Campus Compact
- Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement
- The Democracy Commitment
- Imagining America
- The Interfaith Youth Core
- Kettering Foundation
- NASPA–Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
- New England Resource Center for Higher Education

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Upcoming AAC&U Meetings

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<th>MEETING</th>
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<td>Network for Academic Renewal Global Learning and the College Curriculum: Nurturing Student Efficacy in a Global World</td>
<td>Denver, Colorado</td>
<td>October 6–8, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Network for Academic Renewal Transforming Undergraduate STEM Education: Implications for Twenty-First-Century Society</td>
<td>Boston, Massachusetts</td>
<td>November 3–5, 2016</td>
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About Diversity & Democracy

Diversity & Democracy supports higher education faculty and leaders as they design and implement programs that advance civic learning and democratic engagement, global learning, and engagement with diversity to prepare students for socially responsible action in today’s interdependent but unequal world. According to AAC&U’s Statement on Liberal Learning, “By its nature... liberal learning is global and pluralistic. It embraces the diversity of ideas and experiences that characterize the social, natural, and intellectual world. To acknowledge such diversity in all its forms is both an intellectual commitment and a social responsibility, for nothing less will equip us to understand our world and to pursue fruitful lives.” Diversity & Democracy features evidence, research, and exemplary practices to assist practitioners in creating learning opportunities that realize this vision. To access Diversity & Democracy online, visit www.aacu.org/diversitydemocracy/.

About AAC&U

AAC&U is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915, AAC&U now comprises more than 1,300 member institutions—including accredited public and private colleges, community colleges, and universities of every type and size. AAC&U functions as a catalyst and facilitator, forging links among presidents, administrators, and faculty members who are engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Information about AAC&U membership, programs, and publications can be found at www.aacu.org.

AAC&U Membership 2016

- Masters: 31%
- Baccalaureate: 24%
- Associates: 12%
- Res & Doc: 17%
- Other*: 16%

*Specialized schools, state systems and agencies, and international affiliates