

The University of Colorado at Colorado Springs

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

***A Proposal for Strategic Planning and Performance Accountability
January 2006***

Submitted by:

2004-2005 College of Education Diversity Committee Members

Dr. Julie Armentrout, Special Education

Dr. Margaret Bacon, Curriculum and Instruction

Dr. Nadyne Guzmán, Leadership, Research, and Foundations

Dr. Andrea Herrera, Director of Ethnic Studies

Dr. Jayamala Madathil, Counseling and Human Services

Mr. John-Michael Warner, Outreach Coordinator, Office of Student Recruitment and Outreach

Ms. Linda Williams-Blackwell, Executive Director of Special Services, Lewis-Palmer District 38

Introduction

Programs in the College of Education (COE) are balanced by diversity in the needs of professional learning communities within the greater society and in the ideas that are basic to beliefs and practices of education. We maintain this balance by recognizing that classrooms within our current and future society represent a “mosaic”, rather than a “melting pot”, that is continuously enriched by the diverse learning abilities, family backgrounds, economic levels, geographical areas, languages, lifestyles, and ethnicities characteristic of our students in elementary, secondary, and higher education settings. The unit acknowledges the growing diversity among students as a social *reality* and we resolve to act upon this as a defining *strength*, rather than a divisive weakness, throughout our teaching, research, and service pursuits.

The College of Education is dedicated to ensuring that our candidates develop and maintain a disposition that honors and appreciates the value of each individual. We believe that teaching the ideals of inclusiveness, pluralism, and mutual respect for all peoples and cultures is a humanistic imperative requisite for ethical living (Dewey, 1938; Hickman & Alexander, 1998) and full civic participation in a multicultural democracy in a diverse human world (Gay, 1994). Initial and advanced coursework, practicum, and field-based experiences throughout the College of Education are designed with the purpose of integrating the study of facts, histories, cultures, values, structures, perspectives, and contributions (Taylor & Whittaker, 2003) of a diverse citizenry. We believe this builds a richer and more accurate knowledge of the human condition within and across particular contexts of time, place, and culture.

The College of Education believes that teachers are critical agents of equitable education in that they teach for democracy and teach democratically. Equity includes fair access to, and growth within, the cognitive, social, cultural, and psychological practices of society. The goal in teaching and working towards social justice and equity education means that the individual is accorded the same respect and consideration as any other individual and to the collective group (Miramontes, Nadeau, & Commins, 1997). Efforts among faculty to promote an equitable education across each of the unit’s program areas are grounded in the multicultural education approach.

Our conceptualization of multicultural education is modeled after the Multicultural Commission for the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development which defines this educational practice as “*a humanistic concept based on the strength of diversity, human rights, social justice, and alternative lifestyles for all people, it is necessary for a quality education and includes all efforts to make the full*

range of cultures available to students; it views a culturally pluralistic society as a positive force and welcomes differences as vehicles for better understanding the global society” (Gay, 1994, p.2).

According to Banks and Banks (1995), multicultural education acknowledges that schools play a critical role in laying the foundation for the transformation of society and the elimination of oppression and injustice; thus, the underlying goal of multicultural education is to affect social change.

College of Education’s Definition of Diversity

The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect for all individuals and the many dimensions of diversity and unique characteristics these individuals represent. With these characteristics come variation of thinking, communication styles, skills and behaviors – all of which serve to enrich and strengthen our society as a whole.

We, the faculty and staff of the College of Education, have identified the following dimensions as representations of a diverse citizenry. Regardless of geographical location, we believe these dimensions must be present in order achieve the ideal, inclusive community:

- Age
- English language learners
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Gender identity
- Nationality
- Physical, cognitive, and emotional disabilities
- Race
- Religious preferences
- Sexual orientation
- Socioeconomic status
- Veteran Status

These dimensions have become “institutionalized” within our College of Education community; that is, they serve as the guiding theme across each aspect of our teaching, research, service, and administrative responsibilities. Most importantly, we hold ourselves accountable for including these dimensions of diversity when designing program curricula, delivering instruction, and implementing assessment systems. As a result, our goal is to ensure our initial and advanced candidates acquire and maintain the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that reflect cultural competence.

Cultural competence refers to the level of knowledge-based skills that are required to provide effective educational services to individuals with unique cultural differences. Acquiring these skills is built on the understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity within, among, and between groups. As

stated within our conceptual framework, we believe this understanding and appreciation can thus be achieved through self-reflection and, thus, cultural competence. We are committed to helping our candidates recognize that his/her own culture is one of many in society and that acquiring knowledge of other peoples and cultures is a means toward better understanding her/his own. We are committed to teaching our candidates the value inherent within multiple cultural perspectives and to help them not just tolerate but understand, respect and appreciate others' cultures. In addition to developing self-reflection as it pertains to cultural competence, we strive to ensure that our candidates have developed this disposition as reflected in the following knowledge and skills:

- Practicing a student-centered pedagogy by blending the life experiences and perspectives of students across all content areas and social activities, thus making learning more interactive and engaging.
- Placing emphasis on critical and creative thinking as a measure of student learning.
- Providing all students with equal opportunities to reach their potential.
- Ensuring that educational materials are inclusive of diverse voices and perspectives.
- Maintaining accountability for the prevention of instructional practices and materials that are deemed to be racist, sexist, classist, homophobic, or in any other way discriminatory.
- Examining "socially just" alternatives for measuring the achievement of students from diverse and underrepresented populations.

Finally, we believe that we must prepare our candidates to view cultural diversity as the driving force in all education decision-making, from determining students' readiness for learning to designing curricula, selecting instructional materials, measuring performance, and developing appropriate programs and teaching techniques for culturally diverse students. Faculty in the College of Education are guided by this knowledge and these perceptions as we continuously improve the content and delivery of programs in order to be more responsive to all students.

College of Education Diversity Committee

The COE Diversity Committee, originally formed in 1998, consists of a multidisciplinary team whose guiding purpose is to provide leadership in promoting and reinforcing faculty and student knowledge of, and sensitivity toward, working with diverse individuals. The committee's leadership is manifested through designing and delivering professional development services, informing the College administration of policies and procedures for recruitment and retention practices, and consulting with

faculty in the design, implementation, and evaluation of diversity in the curriculum and in field-based experiences.

The committee was given the charge of developing an action plan that will help the College of Education accomplish its mission of becoming a leader in providing to faculty, staff, and candidates a quality multicultural education and an inclusive campus culture. This action plan consists of goals and objectives that are meant to ensure the realization of this mission. It is the intention of the committee that this action plan will be reviewed and updated annually by the COE faculty and staff. In addition, the committee chair will produce an annual report that will discuss the progress toward meeting the goals and objectives. Due to the naturally fluid nature of the COE Diversity Committee membership across academic years, the 2004-2005 committee asserts that the task of implementing the action plan is the responsibility of the entire COE faculty and staff, and not the sole responsibility of the members of the committee.

References

- Banks, J.A., & Banks, C. A.M. (Eds.) (1995). *Handbook of research on multicultural education*. New York: Macmillan.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.
- Gay, G. (1994). *A synthesis of scholarship in multicultural education*. (Urban Monograph Series). Oakbrook, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.
- Hickman, L.A. & Alexander, T.M. (Eds.) (1998). *The essential dewey: Pragmatism, education, democracy*. Volume 1. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Miramontes, O., Nadeau, A. & Commins, N. (1997). *Restructuring schools for linguistic diversity: Linking decision-making to effective programs*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Taylor, L., & Whittaker, C. (2003). *Bridging multiple worlds: Case studies of diverse educational communities*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN - GOALS and OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1: Faculty and staff members in the College of Education acquire and practice the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that reflect cultural competence.

Objective 1.A: The COE Diversity Committee will collaborate with the COE Assessment Committee in developing and implementing tools that measure the ongoing professional development needs among faculty and staff in the area of diversity.

Objective 1.B: The COE Diversity Committee will work with the COE Assessment Committee in analyzing data on professional development needs among faculty and staff and will use the data for program improvement purposes.

Objective 1.C: The COE Diversity Committee will host an annual workshop for faculty and staff that centers on best practices for knowledge and skill acquisition in diversity.

Objective 1.D: The COE Diversity Committee will conduct yearly reviews of faculty and staff syllabi to measure the extent to which content related to cultural competence is reflected in faculty syllabi and course curricula.

Objective 1.E: The COE Leadership Team will ensure that at least one person from each department, and at least one staff member, will attend a professional development workshop sponsored by the University of Colorado system and/or by the UCCS campus (e.g., CU Diversity Summit, UCCS “Transforming the Curriculum” workshop).

Objective 1.F: The Dean of the COE will meet with the COE Diversity Committee once a month to discuss diversity-related issues, policies, and practices as they pertain to the College’s faculty, staff, and students.

GOAL 2: Undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in College of Education degree and licensure programs will acquire proficiency in the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that reflect cultural competence.

Objective 2.A: The COE Diversity Committee Chair will work collaboratively with the COE Leadership Team toward ensuring that all candidates complete field placements in ethnically diverse sites.

Objective 2.B: The COE Diversity Committee will work collaboratively with each full-time and part-time faculty toward ensuring that issues of diversity are addressed in course curricula and that instruction is provided within a context of diverse student populations.

Objective 2.C: The COE Diversity Committee will work collaboratively with the COE Assessment Committee in developing and administering assessments that measure the knowledge,

DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN - GOALS and OBJECTIVES

skills, and dispositions on cultural competence among initial and advanced candidates across each program area.

Objective 2.D: The COE Diversity Committee will work collaboratively with the COE Assessment Committee and Department Chairs in developing rubrics that measure the candidates' ability to increase the achievement among culturally diverse K-12 students.

Objective 2.E: The COE Diversity Committee will work collaboratively with Department Chairs, university field supervisors, and clinical teachers to ensure that initial and advanced candidates can work effectively with families, school personnel, and community leaders in meeting the needs of culturally diverse students.

Objective 2.F: The COE Diversity Committee Chair will work collaboratively with the COE Dean, the Director of Ethnic Studies, and the COE Curriculum Committee in offering a course in cultural diversity that will be required among all initial and advanced program candidates in the COE.

GOAL 3: The College of Education will actively recruit and retain faculty and staff from diverse groups.

Objective 3.A: The COE Diversity Committee will identify colleges/universities that prepare and graduate candidates for faculty positions in teacher education and related fields that meet the College of Education's definition of diversity.

Objective 3.B: The COE Diversity Committee will place position announcements in the identified colleges/universities as well as targeted national publications and organizations whose audience is primarily representative of minority and underrepresented populations.

Objective 3.C: The COE Diversity Committee will work collaboratively with web specialists in adding faculty-related diversity information to the COE website.

Objective 3.D: The COE Diversity Committee Chair will collaborate with the COE Leadership Team to establish mentor-mentee relationships between seasoned and new faculty.

Objective 3.E: The COE Diversity Committee Chair will collaborate with the COE Leadership Team to designate a representative of the College of Education to serve on the university's minority faculty organization.

Objective 3.F: The COE Diversity Committee Chair will lead a collaborative effort with community leaders in developing materials that highlight diversity-friendly aspects of the city and surrounding area.

DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN - GOALS and OBJECTIVES

GOAL 4: The College of Education will actively recruit and retain undergraduate and graduate students from diverse groups.

Objective 4.A: The COE Diversity Committee will collaborate with COE alumni, the UCCS alumni director and board, and a UCCS admissions counselor in efforts to recruit diverse candidates for initial and advanced programs.

Objective 4.B: The COE Diversity Committee will work with web specialists in adding student-related diversity information to the COE website.

Objective 4.C: The COE Diversity Committee Chair will work in collaboration with the COE Dean and the UCCS legal counsel in developing and implementing a teacher education affirmative action policy.

Objective 4.D: The COE Diversity Committee will work with university and 7-12 student groups to recruit candidates to initial and advanced programs in the College of Education.

Objective 4.E: The COE Diversity Committee will collaborate with faculty in writing and securing grants to support scholarships and other support for minority candidates.

Objective 4.F: The COE Diversity Committee will collaborate with the Leadership Team in identifying faculty in each program area who will to serve as special advisors to minority candidates.