

Diversity Dimension Report
Eastern Wyoming College

Foundations Institutions ensure that new students experience ongoing exploration of diverse ideas, worldviews, and cultures as a means of enhancing their learning and participation in pluralistic communities. Institutions cultivate an open and civil community in which students interact with people from varied backgrounds and cultures. These institutions guide students to reflect on ideas and values different from those they currently hold, and explore their own cultures and the cultures of others.

Foundations of Excellence (FoE) Diversity Committee

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Committee Members:

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Current Situation

The Diversity Dimension Committee was charged with examining three performance indicators relative to ensuring that (1) first year students experience ongoing exploration of diverse ideas, worldviews, and cultures as a means of enhancing their learning and participation in pluralistic communities; (2) the institution cultivate an open and civil community in which students interact with people from varied backgrounds and cultures; (3) the institution guide students to reflect on ideas and values different from those they currently hold, and explore their own cultures and the cultures of others.

The committee spent a considerable amount of time trying to define diversity. Committee members indicated it was important to think about ethnicity, gender, soci-economic background, age and world view perspective.

Methodology

Eastern Wyoming College (EWC) faculty and staff were invited to join various FoE committees.

The FoE Diversity Committee consisted of the one top level administrator, two professional staff, two classified staff, one community member, and four faculty. Four students were also invited to join the committee. The committee spent a considerable amount of time reviewing EWC's official documents pertaining to diversity and the College's philosophy, as it related to diversity. The committee examined EWC's environment for evidence of diversity related opportunities available to students such as pictures of Fine Arts events, study abroad programs, guest speakers, calendar of events, club bulletin boards, and student groups. The college catalog, course descriptions, randomly selected syllabi, and College Studies courses were also examined.

Performance Indicator

PI 7.1 Diverse ideas To what degree does the institution assure that new students experience diverse ideas and worldviews through the following? (Initiatives based in the curriculum, initiatives based in the co-curriculum and initiatives integrated across the curriculum and co-curriculum).

At the institutional level, EWC supports diversity. However, there is little evidence that diversity is supported throughout all facets of the institution. The committee determined there is an opportunity for EWC to utilize College Studies courses to emphasize diversity and other issues. However, not all students may benefit from this as some can be exempted from the College Studies course by taking the College's Challenge Exam. Furthermore, through an interview with Andrea Bryant, a College Studies instructor, the committee determined that in order to successfully deliver elements of diversity through an integrated curriculum, all instructors must be supportive of the concept. According to Bryant, one of the current problems with the College Studies course(s) is that the instructors who teach the course do not follow a common syllabus and some instructors are simply teaching this course because they have to and are not vested in emphasizing diversity.

While we have been increasing diversity in our student population, the challenge is to increase the interactions between the various student groups and across the curricula. One of the biggest challenges facing EWC is that the student and staff population does not reflect the ethnic diversity of the communities represented throughout our service area. The development of the EWC Honor's Program has the potential to provide expanded resources for students to study abroad, internships, and in-depth exploration of social and political factors facing students as they prepare to enter the world of work.

To determine whether the curricula offered by EWC reflected diversity, the committee began by reviewing the course descriptions in the EWC catalog. The committee then identified courses which may or may not contain examples of diversity. The course syllabi for these courses were then pulled and further scrutinized for elements of diversity. From this review of

syllabi, the committee found two consistent elements that occur at EWC.. First, although the course descriptions found in the EWC catalog indicated elements of diversity, the actual course syllabi and/or topics taught in class (per interviews with instructors) do not reflect a world view on diversity but rather reflect a Euro-centric viewpoint. Assuming that the course syllabi provides an accurate depiction of what actually transpires in our classrooms, the committee found that there seems to be, in some instances, a discrepancy between the actual course descriptions found in the EWC catalog and the topics actually taught in our classrooms. The committee agreed that if courses do include elements of diversity, it should be reflected to some degree on the syllabus.

The student and Faculty/Staff survey results also indicate a very low emphasis on diversity across the curricula. On the Student survey, questions 17-20 referenced this performance indicator and in each question, student response indicated "Very Poor" college performance levels. The results found on the Faculty/Staff survey (questions 30-31) were similar as the faculty and staff seemed to concur with the student findings.

In reviewing co-curricula at the College, the committee determined after reviewing such things as posters, fliers and student interviews that diverse events are minimal and too costly to encourage student participation in these events.

PI 7.2 Interactions To what degree does the institution structure opportunities for new students to interact with individuals from backgrounds and cultures different from their own within the following categories? (Faculty/staff at the institution, other students at the institution, and individuals outside the institution)

EWC is limited geographically and by homogeneous demographics as indicated by the census data shown below which creates challenges in the area of diversity. One of the challenges EWC faces with regards to increasing and maintaining diversity on our campus is reflected in our student recruiting and service area. Academic program offerings likewise reflect the limited opportunities that would attract a more diverse population. Census data indicates relatively low ethnic populations in each county throughout the service area.

County	Total Population	Minority Population Percentage
Goshen	12,129	11%
Crook	6,255	2.7%
Converse	12,861	7.8%
Niobrara	2,253	3.2%
Platte	8,588	7.5%
Weston	6,762	5.4%

Although census data for Goshen County, where EWC's main campus is located, shows an 11% minority population, our student body population in Torrington (7.2% Spring Term 2009) does not reflect parity with the census data. There are, however, numerous opportunities available to positively impact diversity on our campus. One example includes the Gaining Early Awareness Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), a federally funded program designed to work with 7-12th grade students to encourage participation and readiness for postsecondary education. Of the 275 low income students currently enrolled in this program throughout the EWC service area, 20.5% represent a minority population. This large percentage clearly indicates that in the very near future, EWC may experience an increased growth in our minority enrollment.

The committee also examined diversity in terms of employment patterns at the Torrington campus and found that of the 46 full time faculty employed at the institution, 21 are females and 25 are males and only 1 minority. Of the 6 administrative positions, 2 are female and 4 are male with none being minorities. Of the 43 classified benefited (full and part time) staff members, 30 are females and 13 are males and two are minorities. Of the 40 professional staff (full and part time, 24 are female and 16 are male with no minorities.

According to student interviews, there are numerous events, both College sponsored as well as collaborative projects, for students to participate in but attendance is often sporadic. Students interviewed claimed that attendance at these events is, unfortunately, often dependent upon whether food is served or extra credit is offered. Furthermore, the themes of some of the activities do not always appeal to students. Some of the activities the committee examined were: Dr.(s) Kambutu and Nygana presentation on a program of the lessons learned in the role of immigrants, diversity, and education; The "Afghan Women's Project"; The Golden Dragons Acrobatic Production (sponsored by the Fine Arts Council); and Public Policy and You discussions which were held for six weeks in the Fall 2008 semester. Other examples included Domestic Violence Awareness Month, which was held throughout October, 2008; Adelante NiÑos (program targets fifth grade learners); and A Night of Elegance. Student interviews also indicated that many students felt the cost of some of these programs, most particularly the events sponsored by external entities, is too expensive for them to attend.

The committee examined College sponsored activities available to students which have relatively little or no costs associated with them such as movie nights, game nights, intramurals, sports, games, and pep rallies. Some activities are family oriented and include non-traditional students. While some may think that these do not represent "diverse" activities, the committee felt that some diversity related elements (e.g. minority student participation on athletic teams) were present. College sponsored activities are announced by means of bulletin boards, handouts, flyers, posters, college calendars, and the college website. Unfortunately, items on bulletin boards are often vandalized, whether or not it is related to diversity. This simple act of destruction seems to contradict the high rating found on the Student survey (Q24) of the importance of respecting others with differing opinions.

EWC Student Senate actively supports student clubs and organizations. Student clubs and organizations are closely aligned

with fields of study, special interests, and/or honor societies. Membership in clubs varies from year to year. Students interviewed by members of the committee had the perception that the student clubs found at EWC seem to reflect the agricultural values of the College's service and recruiting area. The committee reviewed this and found that of the 22 student clubs found on campus, only 4 are geared towards agriculture which contradicts student perspectives.

Goshen County students have a scholarship program available to them whereby they can enroll in college courses at no charge for tuition and fees for dual enrollment. The committee, after visiting with Student Service staff, found that students who participated in this scholarship program generally enrolled in college courses at EWC after completing high school. This student population includes students from diverse backgrounds. A third example is the Bridge Program (held the week prior to the commencement of the Fall semester), which is designed to help up to twenty four students who are identified as high risk for dropping out and/or failing college. Additionally, the Learning Skills Lab at the college provides tutors, academic workshops and on-line tutoring through SmarThinking (an on-line academic tutoring program). The college also provides various scholarship opportunities to students such as the First Generation Scholarship, Part-time Grant in Aid and other forms of EWC financial aid assistance. EWC also encourages programs working with 'at risk' and/or diverse students by providing opportunities to visit the campus, meet with faculty, sit in on classes, learn about financial aid, and begin career exploration. The College Studies course, a required first year orientation course, emphasizes study skills, resource utilization, diversity, learning styles, health and wellness, and other skills and topics that have been shown to increase student success and retention.

Student survey results for this performance indicator were a bit surprising, most particularly Q21 & Q23. In this question, the students felt that the college was doing a fairly good job at exposing them to other students with differing backgrounds and cultures (44.7% of the students scoring this at high/very high). This contrasts sharply with what the faculty/staff believe is true at this institution (36.4% of the faculty/staff scored this at high/very high). This disparity between survey results was even more prominent in Q23 which evaluated diverse exposure to individuals outside the college. Nearly 60% of the faculty/staff (57.6% of faculty/staff rated this at 'not at all' or 'slight') believe that the college is not doing enough to encourage this. Although the Student survey results concur with the faculty/staff finding, they do not do so at such a high percent as only 39.4 % (students scoring this at 'not at all' or 'slight') believe that diverse exposure to individuals outside the college is represented at EWC.

PI 7.3 Behaviors To what degree does the institution convey to new students the standards of behavior it expects for participants in a diverse, open and civil campus community?

Some of EWC's written materials (Catalog, Resident Life Policies, Student Policies and Administrative Rules) strongly communicate the behavioral expectations regarding respect, professionalism, and acceptance of diversity. Additionally the Policies and Administrative Rules provide clear interventions, sanctions, and due process guidance. Consultation with staff in Student Services found no discussion on conduct and behavior occurs during student orientation.

Question #24 on the Student Survey indicates 36.7% (students who scored this at 'moderate' or below) of students do not think EWC communicates the importance of communicating respect of others with differing opinions. Faculty/staff survey results for question 35 concur with this view (62.6% of all faculty/staff scored this at 'moderate' or below).

EWC would benefit from ensuring that all EWC employees and students are aware of these documents, policies, procedures, and expectations, beyond the written word. The College needs to implement dissemination of EWC conduct and behavior expectations, policies and administrative rules, in a variety of methods during new student orientation and College Studies classes. Ongoing reinforcement of these expectations could occur through course syllabi, bulletin boards, displays, presentations, and guest speakers throughout the academic year. EWC employees should be encouraged to not only reinforce college expectations of conduct and behavior, but to role model them as well.

Recommended Grade: D

Recommended Action Items:

- Encourage programming that focuses on diverse multi-cultural topics. *(High priority)*
- Increase campus awareness of existing library resources encompassing diverse authors & backgrounds *(High priority)*
- Emphasize EWC policies and administrative rules as shown below. *(High priority)*

Emphasize EWC policies and administrative rules regarding acceptance, discrimination, and overall expectation of student behavior in new student orientation, College Studies, in syllabi review, and classroom expectations. This must be done both in writing as well as reinforced orally at various points throughout a student's enrollment in the College.

- Continue institutional support to augment diversity as shown below. *(High priority)*

Continue institutional support to bring guest speakers, exhibits, programs, and studies, to EWC to augment existing diversity related efforts on campus. This should include students, faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds.

- Examine, change, and modify recruiting efforts in order to increase diversity on our campus. (*High priority*)

- Seek to infuse diversity in all aspects/areas of EWC (*High priority*)

This must be done in the curriculum, co-curriculum, college catalog and faculty should be encouraged to include diversity in their syllabi whenever possible.

- Encourage faculty to include diversity in classroom topics. (*High priority*)

- Form a committee to enhance diverse activities throughout the EWC service area (*High priority*)

This committee should be representative of as many diverse populations as possible, however small they may be, from our service area. This committee can work as a liaison with established on-campus and community representatives who work with students from various diverse backgrounds.

- Review and revise College courses to emphasize diversity (*High priority*)

One course which needs special attention is the College Studies course that all income freshmen are strongly recommended to enroll in. Because this is only a one credit course, it may not be able to carry the bulk of the opportunity to reach new students; thus, the committee suggests that elements of diversity be included in as many college level courses as possible.

- Include students from diverse backgrounds in campus event planning & existing committee structure (*Medium priority*)