Benchmarking Change

Current Diversity Efforts at Eastern Washington University

Summary Report
March, 2006

Following the December 2005 Diversity Hearing at Eastern Washington University, the President’s Cabinet commissioned a report on the current status of diversity efforts at the university. Recognizing that constructive progress will require both strengthening existing successful initiatives and implementing new ways to support diversity, the purpose of the report is to create a foundational benchmark against which the university can assess its progress and move forward. This report cannot be and is not meant to be a comprehensive listing of all diversity efforts, but rather a snapshot that helps to create a fuller picture of what the Eastern community is doing in support of diversity.

According to a report by a national task force on diversity, the meaning of diversity for higher education unfolds across a spectrum that embraces equality of access and representation; integration of diversity into the curriculum, scholarship and research; enhanced multicultural understanding and civil discourse; a supportive campus climate; and institutional transformation that makes possible educational excellence and student success (AASCU/NASULGC, 2005). If Eastern is to become a more diverse institution, its efforts must encompass all facets of the diversity spectrum.

To that end, this report does not focus solely on representational diversity—although that is important—but seeks to document efforts across the diversity spectrum. Results are organized under headings that mirror the issues identified at the 2005 Diversity Hearing: Institutional Leadership; Students; Faculty and Staff; Learning and Discovery; and Campus and Community Culture. This report compiles the results of a call to all colleges, schools and units for information on current practice. Statistics outlining numbers of students, faculty or staff of color may not be complete since they rely on data that is self-reported; not all individuals choose to provide information on their race or background.
Defining and Assessing Diversity

As one speaker at the Diversity Hearing noted, the Eastern community needs to define what it understands as a diverse university. While it certainly includes an environment in which individuals of color and multicultural perspectives are integrated and welcomed, it also encompasses a campus that is diverse in terms of sexual orientation, age, physical abilities and economic, social, geographic, political and religious backgrounds.

While the Eastern community continues to refine its understanding of diversity, it is also working to define how it will measure its progress. The Assessment, Institutional Effectiveness and Accountability Committee (AIEA) has proposed a series of key performance indicators that will help us evaluate how well we have met our goals. These are currently under review by the President’ Cabinet, the Faculty Organization and the campus community.

Institutional Leadership

Eastern’s commitment to diversity is lead by its Board of Trustees and administrative leaders. In 2002 Eastern’s Board of Trustees began an ongoing Diversity Initiative that seeks to “engage members of the EWU community in continuous dialogue and action intended to build a stronger community that is inclusive, respectful, and supportive of all of its members; a community that celebrates its diversity and its unity; a community that expects honesty; and that provides an environment for safe interaction among its members.” To that end, the Board established a $50,000 annual pool for competitive grants that support diversity at Eastern—in 2005 it funded projects that addressed retention of Native American students, provided “Stop the Hate” training, and developed a Disability in Society course, among others.

In 2003 the Board commissioned a campus climate survey of faculty, staff and students. Results indicated that both students and faculty believe that diversity is an important educational benefit. Students reported that discriminatory actions were most likely to come from other students. (Results of the campus climate survey are available from Institutional Research.)
Diversity is also a critical element in the university’s strategic plan, developed collaboratively and adopted by both the Board of Trustees and Faculty Senate. It challenges Eastern to be a “model for our region through the diverse community of faculty, staff and students we create together.” As a result of the strategic plan’s priorities, a Faculty Fellow for Diversity position has been created and is currently being filled, with the goal of assisting the university in meeting its vision for greater diversity. The general education renewal, also currently under way, has taken inclusive excellence as a core feature of its vision for learning at Eastern. And AIEA, created to identify outcomes to measure progress on our strategic planning goals, is helping the President’s Cabinet to create meaningful indicators of achievement.

The Strategic Planning Pool, a fund designed to foster implementation of Eastern’s strategic goals, in 2005 awarded $71,200 of a total $270,000 for diversity initiatives, including a series of speakers to foster multicultural understanding and discussion, and funding for cross-disciplinary learning materials focused on White and Native American regional history, geography and anthropology.

Across the university, many colleges and units have adopted mission statements or strategic plans that articulate a commitment to fostering diversity. The College of Business and Public Administration’s Diversity Task Force, for example, used a Diversity grant to hold a college-wide forum to explore plans for enhanced diversity activities that have included creation of mission and vision statements, learning outcomes for the B.A. in Business Administration and syllabus reviews for core requirement courses.

In the area of technical support, SIS Technical Services as well as the new Banner team have worked to enhance institutional capacity to capture data useful for measuring and assessing diversity, including changes to Banner’s ethnicity codes to more accurately measure the diversity of Eastern’s student population.

Interim President Brian Levin-Stankevich made enhanced diversity a leadership priority for his tenure and worked to build community across student and faculty organizations. He met with members of the Yakama Tribe during his fall Goodwill Tour and with students from various minority programs. The interim president charged his Advisory Committee on Diversity with assisting the administration in creating positive change. The Advisory Committee convened the Diversity Hearing in December.

While institutional leadership is necessary if progress is to be made, it is not sufficient. Efforts in support of diversity must be implemented to support students, faculty and staff, as well as curricular and cultural change. Much is being done in these areas, as the following outlines.
Students

Access and Representation

Eastern’s student body is becoming more diverse, reflecting statewide and national demographic trends. According to the American Council on Education, the number of students from underrepresented groups at U.S. colleges and universities increased by 52% between 1991 and 2001 (Harvey and Anderson, 2005). In the state of Washington, public school enrollment trends show a decrease of almost 5% in White students between 1999 and 2003, with a 30% increase in Hispanic and more than 10% increase in African American and Asian students—Spokane County saw a 46% increase in the number of Hispanic residents between 2000 and 2002 alone. We expect that growth to impact Eastern enrollment through the next decade or longer.

As a result, Eastern’s enrollment of students of color has steadily increased, growing from 12% of the student body in 2003 to almost 15% in fall, 2005 (compared to Spokane County which has a population of about 9% individuals of color). The 2005 freshmen class is even more diverse, with almost one in five students (18.6%) from underrepresented groups. Transfer numbers parallel total enrollment with 13.4% students of color.

Women now make up the majority of Eastern students, at 58%—62% of the 2005 freshman class. Eastern serves 162 international students—primarily from Japan, Taiwan and Korea—and has formed agreements with five universities in China to expand enrollment of students from China.

Economic diversity is also a hallmark of Eastern’s student body. In 2005 Eastern provided more than $82 million in federal, state and institutional financial aid in support of socio-economic diversity. Eastern has the largest percentage of students receiving Pell Grants of all four-year universities in the state1. In the 2005-06 academic year Eastern served 304 students with documented disabilities.

Recruitment

Support for diverse students begins at recruitment and continues through their on-campus experience. We have strong financial aid outreach programs in high schools in Othello, Wellpinit and other rural school districts throughout northeast Washington. Eastern’s Washington Achievers program, coordinated by Career Services, helps economically disadvantaged and minority first-generation students. Our program is the third-largest of the 47 colleges participating in the program, serving 167 students.
Recruitment efforts by individual schools and colleges vary. The College of Science, Health and Engineering, for example, has increased its recruiting of minority students by attending information fairs and visiting community college campuses in the Seattle/Puget Sound area where there is a more diverse student body.

Eastern’s Washington Achievers Program is the third-largest of the 47 participating colleges, serving 167 students. It graduated its first class in 2005.

A range of programs provide support and language assistance. In partnership with the Chicano Education Program, the Financial Aid and Scholarship Office provides Spanish-language materials to prospective families. In 2006, the summer STAR program will have two days of parent sessions in Spanish. A Gear Up grant to the College of Education and Human Development has created partnerships between Eastern and low-income rural areas of Eastern Washington where students are at risk of dropping out.

Undergraduate Admissions is also working with the Spokane Public School’s After-School Activity Program serving diverse youth.

**Student Support**

In 2005 diversity training was added for all Freshman Orientation team leaders and four of the 28 orientation interest sessions had a diversity focus. A range of programs exists across the university to provide recruitment, counseling and academic and cultural support to diverse students, including Disability Support Services, the nationally accredited English Language Institute serving international students, the Women’s Center, the HOME program (Helping Ourselves Means Education, which supports non-traditional students), the Asia University America Program, and Eastern’s ethnic studies programs serving the Chicano, African-American and Native-American communities.

The Violence Against Women program and task force has implemented a First Responders program to address issues of violence against women on campus. Counseling and Psychological Services has established strong relationships with the above-mentioned ethnic programs, providing translators as needed, and has worked closely with peer institutions in Japan to improve coordination of counseling efforts for Japanese students at Eastern.

A wide range of activities is coordinated through student organizations and Greek life that support a diverse campus community. In 2005, 24 faculty, staff and students participated in “Stop the Hate: Train the Trainer,” a national program. Diversity training sessions (which included a November session on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues) were also provided at the Greek Alpha Chi retreat and with leaders of student organizations. Eastern’s annual fall World Party celebrates international diversity and featured the unveiling of the diversity
quilt that included almost 100 panels created by Eastern students, faculty and staff on what diversity means for them.

**Student Success**

While Eastern is still developing how it will measure the success of all its students, two measures for which we have data are retention rates (the percentages of students who continue at Eastern) and graduation rates (the percentages of students who graduate). Eastern’s overall freshman retention rate—the percentage of students who continue at Eastern from their first to second year—is 74.1% for first-time, full-time students overall. Retention rates vary by racial groups, however—the 1997 cohort saw retention rates of 91.3% for African American, 50% for Hispanic and 68.4% for Asian students. Retention numbers for those who continued to the third year dropped to 59.5% overall, with third-year minority retention rates ranging from 73.9% for African American students, 41.7% for Hispanic students, 50% for American Indian and 57.9% for Asian students.

Graduation rates also vary. Eastern’s six-year graduation rate for White students who began at Eastern in 1997 was 45.8% compared to a 40% rate for Native American, 33.3% for Hispanic, 31.6% for Asian, and a 39.1% rate for African American students. An enrollment management task force was convened in 2005 to address enrollment and retention issues and the formation of an ongoing Enrollment Planning Team was recommended by the 2004-05 Strategic Plan and by the Task Force.

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**Eastern’s 6-Year Graduation Rates**  
**1997 Cohort**

- African American: 39.1%
- Asian: 31.6%
- Hispanic: 33.3%
- Native American: 40.0%
- White: 45.8%

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1 Data for retention and graduation from the 2004-05 CSRDE Retention Survey.


Eastern’s institutional goal is to have a mix of faculty and staff that mirror our student body. According to Eastern Affirmative Action data as of Fall 2004, faculty and staff classed as minority (African-American, Hispanic, Asian and American Indian individuals) comprised almost 10% of Eastern’s employees (9.9%), compared to a minority student enrollment of 14.1% in 2004. The 118 minority individuals in 2004 represented an increase of 13 persons over the same period in 2002. Faculty of color increased by five individuals between 2002 and 2004.

The percentages of people of color within various employee groups vary: in 2004 10.5% of faculty were classified as minority, 12.5% of administrators and 20.5% of counselors and advisors. Representation ranged from 3% of financial assistants to 20.7% of athletic coaches and 18.2% of food service workers.

Recruiting practices vary across disciplines and units and are coordinated by Eastern’s Human Resources and Academic Personnel offices, in conjunction with each school and college. The College of Science, Health and Engineering, for example, uses the affirmative action list of HigherEdJobs.com. Both Human Resources and Academic Personnel use national minority search vehicles to post positions. College diversity efforts vary: the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences has a five-year strategic plan to increase diversity; all units in the college must submit strategic proposals for new hires and replacements that address a range of criteria including diversity as well as student success. The dean reviews all final candidate lists to assure a diverse pool.

In 2005, Eastern’s Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action coordinator began the process to update the university’s sexual harassment and non-discrimination policies, streamline the discrimination complaint procedures and outline clear guidelines for timely investigations and supervisory accountability.

In October 2005, the Provost invited all deans and department chairs to participate in a web conference titled “Best Practices in Recruiting and Retaining Diverse Faculty.” Following the session, the 50 participants identified several issues critical for recruiting and retaining more diverse faculty, among them the need for more competitive salaries, community support systems for individuals of color, faculty mentors and a more responsive recruitment process that positions
Eastern to compete nationally. Eastern faculty and administrators have discussed a “grow your own” program, but no formal program is in place.

One of the Teaching and Learning Center’s Scholars Learning Communities (open to faculty and staff) focuses on diversity and is currently producing a book of alumni recollections for faculty to incorporate into their classrooms. The Diversity Learning Community has also been awarded a Strategic Planning Grant to conduct diversity training for teaching assistants.

Student Affairs has been active in providing staff development opportunities, including participation in the statewide Faculty and Staff of Color Conference, government-to-government training in working with Washington tribes and attending the Spokane Congress on Race Relations, among other opportunities. Admissions convened a Diversity Book Club with topics ranging from understanding the transgendered community to the Cherokee Nation. And the EWU Libraries provided professional development in diversity issues and communication skills for its faculty and staff.

Learning and Discovery

The University’s strategic plan calls for the integration of multicultural and international perspectives into the curriculum at EWU. To that end, Eastern’s General Education Initiative is proposing six pillars of learning, two of which support diversity goals. The current general education practice at Eastern requires students to take one class from a list of Cultural and Gender Diversity courses and one from International Studies.

The College of Social and Behavioral Sciences offers the majority of these courses; indeed, the college’s curriculum integration project is predicated on the understanding that students must embrace multicultural understanding to be successful in a diverse world. The College’s three college-wide courses (social science theory, research methods and statistics) are built on texts that focus on conducting research in diverse cultures.

A number of academic programs specifically address diversity issues. The College of Arts and Letters recently created a new tenure-track assistant professor position for the English as a Second Language minor/certificate program. It also added a new World Art class. Disability Services has teamed with faculty in the School of Social Work to create a Disabilities Studies certificate program.

Many service-learning opportunities at Eastern also serve to connect students with communities of color or diverse organizations. CBPA has a long history of faculty and student engagement with Native American tribal organizations to assist with
transportation planning and economic development. A recent Department of Housing and Urban Development grant funds diverse students working in urban and regional planning. And, for the past three years, faculty and students have engaged in community work in the East Central and Hillyard neighborhoods of Spokane.

Eastern’s libraries specifically allocate funds to develop collections that reflect the diversity of American and global societies, with particular focus on the ethnic and women’s studies programs. The Media Center also partnered with Disability Support Services in 2003 to obtain funding to purchase a new workstation and special software for the almost 200 students on the Cheney campus who are visually impaired.

Campus and Community Culture

A diverse campus is one at which all individuals not only feel welcome, but find an environment in which diverse perspectives are shared and encouraged. The campus culture at Eastern has been enriched through the range of student organization events that support diversity. In addition, faculty, departments and centers provide a wide array of special programs—lectures, cultural events, discussions and panels. Over the past year these have included presentations by Dr. Scott Finnie on Dr. King and Malcolm X, a panel discussion on Native women artists, a participative presentation by Nani Aki Linder called “How Do You Spell Diversity?” and a visit by Hungarian singer Mátra Sebestyén, to name just a few. Eastern’s Debate Club has sponsored debates on issues involving gender, diversity and representation.

Eastern faculty, staff and students have also taken seriously the goal to model diversity for our community and region by providing service and offering diverse programming in Cheney, Spokane and beyond. Get Lit! has brought to the community diverse national and international writers and poets, including Rita Dove, Deborah Magpie Earling, Salmon Rushdie and David Sedaris. Our faculty and staff have served the region through their research efforts. The Institute for Public Policy and Economic Analysis, for example, has conducted a number of in-depth socioeconomic profiles of diverse cultures throughout our region.

Faculty and staff also volunteer and serve on the boards of a wide variety of area organizations that serve diverse communities, including the Spokane Aids Network, AHANA, Unity in the Community and Yapqm.
Conclusion
This report provides a baseline on the range the types of programs and activities currently in place to support the diversity spectrum at Eastern. Ongoing work sessions convened by the President’s Advisory Committee on Diversity will be designed to build on this foundation.

As James Duderstadt, former president of the University of Michigan wrote, “excellence and diversity are not only mutually compatible but also mutually reinforcing objectives for the 21st century university.” Eastern is committed both to excellence and to becoming a more diverse university.

References
Thanks to the schools, colleges and units across Eastern Washington University for submitting information on their diversity activities.


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