My Development Studies professor used to say that change is hard, challenging, and incremental; and sometimes not appreciated by people at the time it is happening. That is the perspective I had when I took up the position of Faculty Fellow for diversity at Eastern Washington University in July of this year. I see myself as a change agent, and I welcome the challenges the position presents, while looking ahead at potential changes our collective work may bring to both Eastern Washington University and the Cheney community in general.

I have been asked several times at various forums on campus to define diversity, I will take this opportunity to explain my position on diversity. My perspective on diversity is taken from Rasmussen’s (1996) definition as a “mosaic of people who bring a variety of backgrounds, styles, perspectives, values and beliefs as assets to groups and organizations with which they interact.”

In addition, Rasmussen says there are two dimensions of diversity: primary and secondary. Primary dimensions are aspects of ourselves which we cannot change. They are things people know about us before we even open our mouths (except sexual orientation and sometimes social economic status). Included under primary dimensions are: gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, race, disability, nationalities, social economic status and age. Secondary dimensions on the other hand are those elements that we have control over, and they can change throughout our life. We also have a choice of whether we want to disclose this information or not. Included under secondary dimensions are: work background, geographical location, marital status, religious beliefs, education, income and military experience. We are therefore more concerned with the primary dimensions of diversity because these are things that people can not change and not conceal as is the case with secondary dimensions. Our emphasis at Eastern Washington University is thus on the primary dimensions of diversity.

Visit the EWU Diversity webpage located under “Explore EWU” at www.ewu.edu.
The following are diversity initiatives in the areas of campus environment, community outreach, curriculum transformation and retention of minority faculty and minority students we have taken Fall Quarter 2006.

1. Improving Campus Environment

a) Advisory Committee on Police Students Relations
- Monitors relations between police and students and develops solutions to issues and problems that arise. The committee meets once a month, the first meeting was on November 8th 2006.
- Members are EWU Police Chief, Cheney City Police Chief, Faculty Fellow for Diversity, Chair President’s Committee on Diversity, one student representative each from Chicano Education Program, American Indian Studies Program, Africana Studies Program, Women Studies Department, GLBT Students Organization (SAFE), Asian American Students Organization, African Alliance Student Organization and Associated Students of Eastern Washington University.

b). Students, Faculty, Staff and administrators Gathering
- A diversity gathering to hear and discuss student issues and concerns in regard to campus setting and environment. The gathering will take place every quarter, and the first gathering was on November 15th 2006.
- Besides, students, faculty and staff, university administrators who participated included: President, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs, Chief of EWU Police, Lt. Gasseling EWU Police, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, Vice President for Finance, Dean of Students, Interim Provost and Faculty Fellow for Diversity.

c). Host Family Program
- Program helps incoming minority and international students adjust to life in Cheney and/or the United States. Purpose is to promote sharing of different cultural experiences.
- 16 faculty and staff members from EWU volunteered to host students (matching of students to hosts will take place as soon as the background check of host are completed).

2. Community Outreach

a) EWU Eagles Outreach Program to Cheney School District
- Program serves the community of Cheney. It is a cultural awareness program which involves international students, minority students from other regions of the U.S and students who have study abroad experiences.
- The students discuss aspects of life in other countries/regions of the U.S or talk on any subject as requested by the school. These presentations increase greater cultural and global sensitivity and can help to combat stereotypes, and promote diversity awareness.
- To date three schools-Betz Elementary, Cheney High School and Cheney Elementary have expressed interests in the program.

b) Cheney International Street Fair
- Program is being planned by the City of Cheney represented by the Pathway to Progress community organization and EWU students. The Festivities will occur in May 2007. The program is now in the planning stages.
- The objective is to foster cooperation, promote a better understanding between EWU communities and the Cheney city communities, and above all to celebrate diversity in the Cheney community.

3. Curriculum Transformation

a) Faculty Diversity Committee
- Role of the committee is to identify resources such as books, films etc that will assist EWU faculty in transforming the curriculum to a multicultural one. In addition the committee is responsible for selecting faculty to be recognized for the diversity enhancement in the curriculum award. First meeting of the committee took place on November 1st 2006. It has 4 members.

4. Retention of Minority Faculty and Minority Students

a) Faculty Mentoring Program
- Purpose is to assist minority faculty as they transition to EWU and Cheney, help them learn the rules of the university in regard to academic career i.e., tenure etc
- 17 continuing faculty members volunteered to mentor incoming faculty. 13 in coming faculty were paired with mentors. 3 of the incoming faculty are from minority groups and 10 are women.

b) Peer to Peer Supplemental Instruction Program
- Submitted a pre-proposal to College Sparks Washington.
- Proposed academic support program is meant to reach at least 250 students who are low income, first generation, and students of color.
- The objectives are to reduce rates of attrition within General Education courses such as Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Economics, Psychology, Geology, Biology, Geography.
- Improve student grades in General education courses.
- Increase the graduation rates of students.

We have also set up a diversity web page. I want to thank all the people who helped me during my transition to Eastern: faculty, administrators, staff and most importantly the students that I have had the chance to interact with. I also extend my deepest gratitude to the student assistants, Jordan, Brittany and Miriam, and the student fellows from the office of the vice president for student affairs for all the wonderful work they have done this quarter. Lastly, I want to thank the president, Dr. Arévalo, my supervisor, interim provost Dr. Ron Dalla, and all the administrators who have assisted me. I also appeal to every one of us on campus to support the diversity initiatives we’ll have in the future by attending programs, lectures, gatherings, and contributing to projects as well as engaging in the dialogue.

Thank you,

Dr. James Ochwa-Echel
Faculty Fellow for Diversity