PROPOSAL 26

Project Title: “Difficult Dialogues”—Academic Freedom and Diversity at Eastern Washington University

Project Leads: Dr. Bill Youngs, Professor of History and Vice President of the Faculty Organization; Dr. Doug Orr, Professor of Economics and Treasurer of the Faculty Organization; Sally Winkle, Director of Women’s Studies, Professor of German and President of the Faculty Organization

Narrative:

Last year EWU became a focal point of Difficult Dialogues, both locally and nationally. The Academic Senate and Faculty Organization played key roles in responding to the difficult issues of academic freedom and freedom of speech, and relied on the Senate-approved Faculty Values Statement to form their response. Additionally, the Senate voted for and the faculty as a whole confirmed the creation of a permanent faculty values committee to serve as a watchdog for these values and to issue an annual report on the state of the campus in respect to fundamental values, including diversity and academic freedom. What we learned last year is that the issues surrounding academic freedom and diversity on our campus are very complex; we have not so much “solved” the problem of engaging constructively in “difficult dialogues” as we have developed a deeper appreciation for the nature of the problem.

Our recent experience with important issues involving academic freedom and diversity as well as our campus culture lays the groundwork—and underscores the need—for ongoing dialogue and policy-implementation at EWU. Our Faculty Organization has collaborated with administrative, student, and faculty groups to develop a variety of activities aimed at facilitating such progress.

In early October, the leadership of the Faculty Organization submitted a grant proposal for a Ford Foundation Difficult Dialogues grant, which would begin in January 2006. We are
applying for this Strategic Planning Resource grant to supplement the activities proposed in our Difficult Dialogues project and to initiate preliminary activities to prepare for more activities later. At the same time, if we are not awarded a Difficult Dialogues grant, the project proposed here will be able to stand on its own and will contribute to changing our campus climate.

We are including in this Difficult Dialogues project an examination of the distinction between individuals as citizens and as consumers. If we want to enhance the education of our students, encourage student civic engagement, and help them contribute to a diverse democracy, as articulated in the Phase I Priorities under Student Success, one major issue to examine would be our roles in society as citizens and as consumers. These roles are evident throughout our society, no less than at the university. For example, on the one hand, our Strategic Goals statement suggests that we are trying to “prepare students to be thoughtful competent citizens able to contribute to the common good.” On the other hand, students are often referred to as “our customers,” and told that our goal is to provide them with a superior “educational product.” Commentators as diverse as Former U.S. Marine intelligence officer Scott Ritter, former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, and consumer advocate Ralph Nader argue that these two views are inconsistent and incompatible. Each view defines our particular “campus culture,” and that culture to a great extent defines the University and the larger society.

Consumers only have the “right” to passively choose from a menu of products that someone else has placed before them, but bear no “responsibilities” for their choices. Citizens have both “rights” and “responsibilities.” They are explicitly members of some larger community and they are vitally interested in the health of that community. For the larger community to survive and thrive, citizens must be active participants. Students as consumers passively receive information; students as citizens actively seek knowledge and challenge
accepted “truths.” As more and more aspects of our lives are taking on the characteristics of the consumer role, we are drifting farther and farther away from the civic view of our role in society. In order to overcome this drift, the first step is to recognize that two different roles exist, and that we must make a conscious choice as to which role we want to play. A careful examination of the distinction between individuals as citizens and as consumers is fundamental to our proposal.

The activities proposed for our Difficult Dialogues Project and in this grant application satisfy Goals I & II of the Academic Strategic Plan, since they promote “a rigorous and engaged student learning experience” and contribute to “an academic community culture that supports and engages faculty and staff throughout their careers.” These explorations of the issues of academic freedom, civic responsibility, and diversity will contribute to our “campus culture,” by encouraging extensive collaboration between departments and among students and faculty members. Students will be involved with faculty in the project as developers and presenters.

**Goals and Objectives:**

1. We will devise programs that explicitly address the issue of “campus culture,” as it affects both faculty and students.

2. We will nurture a campus *atmosphere* at Eastern Washington University where students, faculty, and administrators respond to problems cooperatively and in a spirit of mutual respect. We aim to nurture on our campus a capacity in all groups to say, in effect, “Yes this is a difficult issue. Let’s commit ourselves to having a mutually respectful *dialogue* about it.”

3. We will undertake to accomplish the following specific objectives:

   • Students and others who participate in project activities will be more likely to communicate respectfully with people of different cultures and perspectives.
• The project will help faculty and students better recognize how their actions fit into the categories of citizen or consumer as described above, and will allow them to understand the role they are playing in the larger society.

• The project will help students, faculty, and staff make connections between the broad range of activities taking place on this campus that encourage them to address the themes of academic freedom, consumerism, and diversity.

• By the end of the project, EWU will double the number of public events per year dealing with controversial issues that offer a “dialogue” component involving student-faculty-cross-disciplinary collaboration.

The activities proposed to meet the goals of this project promote strategies 1, 3 and 4 of Goal I in the Academic Strategic Plan, by fostering “engaged student learning,” by integrating diversity into students’ learning experience, and by providing “an environment supportive of learning and teaching excellence.” (ASP, pages 6 and 12) The project goals and objectives are also aimed at encouraging “integrated learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom,” as articulated in the Academic Strategic Plan, page 12. One of the major goals of the Academic Strategic Plan is to create an integrated academic experience with engaged students and faculty. The goals and objectives of this project support this type of academic experience and the attention to our campus culture that it entails.

**Project Activities:**

1) The Faculty Organization leadership will select a nationally recognized authority on issues related to academic freedom and diversity, such as Lani Guinier, Bill Moyers or Howard Zinn to bring to the Cheney campus in late winter or spring. The presentation by a keynote speaker will be coordinated with at least one of the public forums described below.
2) Faculty Organization officers Doug Orr, Bill Youngs, and Sally Winkle (in consultation with the Faculty Values Committee, as well as various academic units and student organizations) will organize at least two public forums to focus on some of the Difficult Dialogues facing the campus, the nation, and the world today. Topics of the open forums will include: (a) Citizenship vs. Consumerism — How can we better educate our students on the distinction between these roles? (b) Free Speech and Hate Speech — Where is the Dividing Line? (c) Academic Freedom — What are the Challenges and Responsibilities?

These forums will include participation of faculty and students and will be co-sponsored by departments, academic units, and student groups across campus. The multi-department campus forums preceding the annual Presidential Lecture provide a good model for these forums.

3) In addition to these forums, which we ourselves would initiate, we intend to work with existing programs and lectures helping to develop: (a) discussion components for events sponsored by other organizations on campus and (b) an intellectual “road map” indicating relationships between different cultural activities on campus. (For an example see discussion below on the cross-disciplinary facet of the project.)

4) Under the direction of Bill Youngs and the Faculty Values Committee, the Faculty Organization will prepare a series of essays by students, faculty, staff and administrators from across disciplines and colleges addressing these issues. In some instances, these will be published originally in the *Easterner* and on the Faculty Organization Web page, then republished as an Academic Freedom Reader in a single volume for wider distribution.

**Project relationship to EWU 2006 Phase I priorities:**

This project addresses Phase I priorities by supporting our goals for student success and our commitment to “enable all our students to lead productive, fulfilling lives.” A public forum
devoted to the topic of our roles in society as citizen or consumer directly addresses the need for our students to be educated as citizens who are active participants in their education and in society. The activities proposed for this grant link disciplines, units, and organizations across campus and encourage students to make connections between what they are learning in the classroom and in on-campus events, such as public forums, and in the political and social environment in which they live.

**Potential for successful outcomes:**

We are optimistic about our ability to achieve the goals described for this project for two reasons: (1) The program, while extensive, is based on substantial pre-proposal discussion with other faculty members and students at Eastern. Our team for this project is, in effect, “good to go.” (2) Our goals, while ambitious, are constructed with an eye to practicality as well as utility. The Academic Freedom Reader, for example, will draw on the extensive experience of project leaders and participants in writing and editing and a reservoir of pertinent articles already written. The “editorial assistant” (as listed in the budget below) will provide help gathering and editing articles, making the work on this facet of the project practicable.

**Cross-Disciplinary Component:**

The project is cross-disciplinary to its core. Each facet—ranging from the personnel in the forums to the content of the reader—will draw on the knowledge of faculty members from a wide variety of disciplines. Moreover, the “road map” mentioned in the activities section above (item 3) will draw together information about a wide variety of campus activities. As an illustration, the Drama Department recently produced “The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail,” a play that raises many important points about freedom of thought. Several faculty members, from different departments, led post-play discussions. Our “road map” would build on these activities
with a pamphlet and a calendar of events suggesting the connection between, say, a particular play, a campus film, and a lecture.

We have begun discussing with our colleagues our interest in developing forums, lectures, the “road map,” and the reader. Those with whom we have begun these discussions are: Gene Engene, Theater; Mimi Marinucci, Women’s Studies and Philosophy; Deirdre Almeida, American Indian Studies; and Nancy Nelson, African American Studies. In addition, earlier this fall Bill Youngs and Sally Winkle spoke with a large number of faculty and students from a wide variety of academic units and student groups about participating in the Difficult Dialogues Project as outlined in the Ford Foundation Grant Proposal that was submitted in October. We expect that these faculty and students will want to participate as campus partners in the related activities articulated in this Strategic Planning Grant proposal, which will make this a truly interdisciplinary, integrated campus project. That group includes student leaders such as Alicia Kinne, president of the student body, as well as members of other student organizations and many faculty members. Women’s Studies, Economics, History, and the Faculty Organization are a few of the many programs that will be involved.

**Assessment plan:**

1. What were our **specific accomplishments**? We will produce a report on our tangible accomplishments in the course of this grant, answering such questions as these: Was a nationally recognized speaker brought to campus? Were the forums organized and presented as anticipated in the grant application? Was the “road map” of related activities produced? Was an academic freedom reader assembled and published?

2. What was the **numerical impact** of these activities? This is the bean-counting part of the assessment. We will keep track of the number of persons who took part in the lectures and
forums as presenters and audience-members; we will list the number of articles in the reader and the number of copies published.

3. What was the qualitative impact of this project? We will develop and distribute evaluation forms at the lecture and forums asking such questions as, what was the most important thing you learned at this gathering? Similarly, we will ask people to evaluate the usefulness of the events “road map” and the academic freedom reader.

**Plan for Sustainability:**

We do anticipate that this project will have a life beyond the grant period. Each of the activities listed above can take on “a life of its own.” The Faculty Organization, which would sponsor a nationally recognized speaker during the course of this grant, will continue as an important organization in campus life. The use of the FO’s cross-disciplinary character as an agent in the cultural life of the campus would establish a precedent for organizing speakers and supporting public forums in the future. Additionally, the Faculty Values Committee, which will play a key role in this grant, has already begun discussing future campus publishing projects beyond the Academic Freedom Reader, concentrating on other faculty values such as diversity and teaching.

**Timeline:**

**January, 2006** -- Grant Leaders meet to begin organizing activities and finalize plans for **Keynote Speaker**. Faculty Organization officers work with faculty and students from the ethnic studies programs and student groups and various academic units to begin planning **public forums**. The Consumerism vs. Citizenship forum, for example, would most likely include participation of Economics, Women’s Studies, History, Government, Sociology, and
Communication Studies. Begin developing the “Road Map” for these and other activities. Begin soliciting articles for the Academic Freedom Reader.

**February, 2006 -- First Public Forum** on the topic of Consumerism vs. Citizenship

Possible participants in the public forum would include: faculty, students, and local or regional speakers. Students and faculty would be involved in planning the forum and related discussions. David Korten, author of *When Corporations Rule the World*, is a potential regional speaker for this public forum. Publish (as leaflet and on the internet) the “Road Map” for these and other activities. Continue accumulating articles for the Academic Freedom Reader.

**March, 2006 -- Planning for Second Public Forum** and continued planning for **Keynote Speaker**. Continue accumulating and begin editing articles for the Academic Freedom Reader.

**April, 2006** (3rd or 4th week) -- **Second Public Forum** on one of the following topics: Academic Freedom –What are the Challenges and Responsibilities? or Free Speech versus Hate Speech. Continue accumulating and editing articles for the Academic Freedom Reader.

**May, 2006 -- Keynote Speaker**: Lani Guinier or another appropriate speaker. Continue accumulating and editing articles for the Academic Freedom Reader.

**June-September, 2006** – Publish Academic Freedom Reader. **Complete Evaluation Report** and **Assessment** of project goals and objectives.
**Strategic Planning Grant -- Difficult Dialogues Project**

**Budget**

Keynote Speaker Fees (with transportation) $10,000-$17,000 (range)

Possible keynote speakers depending on availability and cost:

- Lani Guinier $17,000 including transportation
- Howard Zinn 9,000 + transportation
- Greg Palast 3,000 + transportation

Hotel and Per Diem Expenses for Keynote Speaker $500

Public Forums (regional speakers, publicity, etc.) $2000

Possible Regional Speaker:
- David Korten, Seattle $1000 (estimate)

Brochure and Calendar Connecting Campus Events $500

(This is the “map” described above.)

Academic Freedom Reader, Print Costs $1000

Academic Freedom Reader, Editorial Assistant $3000

(Graduate student or recent EWU graduate)

**Total** $16,000 - $24,000

*Note:* Our request envisions a high end speaker, Lani Guinier, at $17,000, but as indicated in the speaker prices, Howard Zinn, also an excellent choice, would save $8,000. Other speakers, one of whom is listed, would result in an even lower total. We have built a range into our budget request in case the committee wants to accept our proposal, but total available funds are limited. We cannot propose specific speakers with certainty until we know whether we will receive the grant and can make a commitment to the speaker and his/her representing agency.