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Creating Campus Community: Forming Institutional Responses to Students' Lack of Cultural Competencies

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Creating Campus Community: Forming Institutional Responses to Students' Lack of Cultural Competencies

Abstract

This session explores how predominantly white institutions address students' lack of cross cultural awareness and racial stereotyping. A team of administrators, faculty and students share and critique real life situations for analysis. The goal is to use a case study approach to discuss six issues critical in creating effective responses to incidents.

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The goal of this presentation is to utilize a framework of six clearly defined issues to consider the effectiveness of different responses to campus incidents grounded in either a lack of cultural awareness and/ or racial stereotyping. The presentation assumes the overall objective is to raise awareness about the issues of power, culture and context that impact on our methods of addressing complex situations. A team of presenters from different marginalized populations share some of their experiences at a range of higher education institutions. Although the focus of the presentation is on students we know that similar issues apply to faculty and staff populations.

The presentation explores how predominately white institutions address or neglect to address students' lack of cross cultural awareness and racial stereotypes. The goal is to use a case study approach to discuss six issues critical in creating effective responses to incidents. Individual team members will present cases that explicitly illustrate one or more of the issues.

1. Intercultural Communication Skills
2. Social Construction
3. Personal Experience
4. Identity Development
5. Intent versus Outcome
6. Individual versus Institutional Power and Privilege

Participants in the presentation will gain:

1. Understanding of a specific set of criteria that can be used in planning and assessing responses.
2. Developed language for engaging in constructive dialogue around cross cultural conflicts.

3. Experience in applying our criteria to specific situations.

The challenge is to evaluate whether or not we are providing what was intended, with the desired outcomes for those intended to receive the benefits. Understanding begins with defining critical issues and applying them to the situation at hand.

As our populations' cultural changes it means that Student Affairs staff and faculty must have the skills to create flexible responses to complex situations. Cultural assumptions within a structural framework must be explicit if professionals and para-professionals are to respond effectively. The program draws on the works of Banks (1994), Bennett (1998), Caplan (1993), Evan & Wall (1991) and Schon (1983), to expand the tools available for an effective and professional response.

References:

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Caplan, P. (1993) "Lifting A Ton of Feathers." University of Toronto Press. Toronto

Evans, Nancy J. and Wall, Vernon A. (1991) "Beyond Tolerance: Gays, Lesbians and Bisexuals on Campus." American College Personnel Association

Schon. D. 1983. The Reflective Practitioner. p. 21-69. New York. Basic Books

Presenters

Dr. Sherwood E. Smith was born in New Jersey. He early years included a B.S. in Zoology from Washington State University, construction work in Antarctica, Peace Corps in Tanzania, Academic Director for the School for International Training and seven years in student affairs administration. He currently has an appointment as Assistant Professor and Director of the Center for Cultural Pluralism at the University of Vermont. His work involves organizing faculty and staff training, as well as conducting research and teaching courses for the Department of Education. He is currently teaching both graduate and undergraduate courses on multicultural issues in the Education Department at DVM and at the Summer Institute for Intercultural Communication in Oregon. His most recent publication is a chapter titled "An Invisible Presence, Silenced Voices: African Americans in the Adult Education Professorate" written with Dr. Scipio A.J. Colin, III in "Making Space: Merging Theory to Practice in Adult Education."

Sarah Conant Martin was born and raised in suburban Durham, N.C. Stemming from her yearlong exchange in Germany, Sarah is interested in issues surrounding international education, including the experiences of international students in the United States and U.S. students going abroad. She began her undergraduate work at the University of North Carolina at Asheville and finished at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) with a B.A. in International Studies. After graduating in 1998, Sarah spent a year in Northern Wyoming, an exchange of sorts from the South. She then returned to UNC-CH to work in the Study Abroad Office where she was engaged primarily with students preparing to go abroad. Currently a graduate student in the University of Vermont's Higher Education and Student Affairs program, Sarah is committed to improving the experiences of international students in U.S. institutions, as well as

increasing access to and interest in programs abroad for U.S. students.

Jacob Diaz, whom identifies as a Chicano, was born in Anchorage, Alaska and raised in San Diego, Calif. He attended Southwestern Community College in San Diego, Calif. before transferring to the University of California-Santa Barbara where he attained a Bachelor's of Arts degree in English Literature. He recently attained a Master's of Arts in Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration from the University of Vermont. His current interests are in the exploration of how students of color make meaning in their lives on predominately white campus settings and how their ethnic/ racial identity development impacts this process. He is currently a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Program at the University of Vermont.

Wilfrido Cruz was born and raised in the Mexican State of Guerrero. At the age of fifteen, his parents migrated North in search of a better life-style. He began his college education at Mira Costa Community College in Oceanside, California. He then transferred to the University of California at Santa Cruz where he obtained his Bachelor's of Arts degree in Latin-American/Latino Studies and Education. Wilfrido is currently a graduate student at the University of Vermont's Higher Education/Student Affairs Administration program. As a graduate student in a predominantly white institution, Wilfrido has develop an interest in exploring new alternatives to provide minority students with quality education and array of experiences they would and/or could acquire in more diverse institutions.