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Enhancing Diversity in FYE 2100 and Beyond

Everyone Counts Learning Community

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Enhancing Diversity in FYE 2100 and Beyond

P R O B L E M

The Problem: There is little doubt that meaningful in-class engagement with diversity issues leads to important educational outcomes for students (antonio et al, 2004; Cole, 2007; Umbach & Kuh, 2006). The frequency of this engagement often depends on institutional climate, faculty discipline, and faculty socialization (Patton and Hannon, 2008).

WMU has made interactional diversity a priority within the Diversity and Multicultural Action Plan (DMAP): "Goal 5: To enhance curricular, co-curricular, research, service, artistic, and study abroad activities as a means to fully engage the university community in an affirming diverse and multicultural learning environment."

NSSE results (2010) tell us first-year WMU students report diversity interactions at nearly the same rate as students at similar institutions. However, the personal experience of the project authors suggests that many first-year students struggle with the demands of WMU's diverse environment.

O P P O R T U N I T Y

The Opportunity: Each section of FYE 2100 must contain a diversity-related assignment or activity. Instructors are free to choose how their class will fulfill this requirement. Currently, there seems to be a wide variety of approaches taken to fulfill this requirement. We see this aspect of the FYE class as a tremendous opportunity to promote interactional diversity.

Current classroom activities that fulfill the FYE 2100 diversity requirement include a visit from a panel of LGBTQA students, the viewing of a multicultural art exhibit, and various in-class diversity exercises. We believe all of these activities are educationally beneficial, and want to provide instructors with even more options.

Because FYE 2100 instructors are drawn from every part of the university, not all instructors may be comfortable with or trained in facilitating interactional diversity experiences. We seek to fill this gap with our project.

S T R A T E G Y

Strategy: We seek to equip FYE 2100 instructors with the tools to create meaningful interactions with diversity for their students. In doing so, we believe that we will also contribute positively to the overall environment for diversity on campus.

Training for FYE 2100 Instructors: we are working with the First-Year Experience Office to provide a training experience built into the May 7 training day for FYE 2100 instructors and student assistants. The training will include education on the benefits of in-class interactional diversity experiences and a demonstration of a diversity activity.

Instructor handbook of resources and class activities: we are developing a handbook for each FYE 2100 instructor that will contain resources and suggestions for facilitating inclusive classrooms as well as ready made in and out of classroom activities for instructors to use.