

Multicultural Competence as a Baccalaureate Outcome in the WSU Curriculum

In accordance with Wright State University's vision to be "known and admired for our diversity and for the transformative impact we have on the lives of our students and on the communities we serve," the University Diversity Advisory Committee (UDAC) Cultural Competence Sub-committee proposes that **multicultural competence** be adopted as a required and essential outcome that is reflected in First-Year, general education, and major programming. As the world becomes "increasingly interconnected," we recognize that "the future lies at the Intersection," the place where "cultures, disciplines, concepts, and domains" intersect, where creative and innovative ideas that change the world are generated and realized (Johansson, 2006, pp. 186-189). Our students must be prepared to participate in and contribute to this interdependent global community. *College Learning for the New Global Century* (AAU&C, 2007), a report focusing on "what contemporary college graduates need to know and be able to do" includes "intercultural knowledge and competence" as one of the recommended "essential learning outcomes" needed to prepare students "for twenty-first-century challenges" (pp. 1-3). The process of curriculum development for the semester conversion, in which the university is currently engaged, provides an excellent opportunity for integrating this outcome into the curriculum. Preparing students to be multiculturally competent is consistent with the university's desire to renew the curriculum based on national best practices in an effort to prepare students well for the 21st century global world.

The committee defines **multicultural competence** as *the ability in personal and professional contexts to interact respectfully and effectively with diverse individuals and groups in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth, and protects the rights and dignity, of all*. To foster multicultural competence, the goals of the curriculum should include (a) increasing students' understanding of issues of race, gender, age, language, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, ability or disability, sexual identity, nationality, national origin, and other factors of diversity and hierarchy; and (b) developing their ability to recognize, analyze, and work to transform social relations favoring some groups and subjugating other groups, while understanding their own position in these relationships. The expected outcome is that students will graduate with the ability to interact with others productively in their communities, jobs, nation, and the world.

To implement and assess multicultural competence as a desired outcome, the university would need to identify specific measurable learning objectives that clearly articulate the knowledge, skills, and awareness students should be able to demonstrate. Listed below are potential learning objectives.

Awareness

Students will be able to demonstrate awareness of:

- Their own position in society—as influenced by cultural heritage, race, gender, class, ethnicity, etc.—and how it affects their values, assumptions, behavior, and actions.
- Their misconceptions or biases and how the resulting behavior and actions affect others, and inversely, how the behaviors of others affect them.

- The value of understanding different worldviews.

Knowledge

Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of self, and of groups and individuals who are different from self, specifically:

- What the United States experience is like for different groups of people.
- The importance of intra-group differences, multiple identities and multiple oppressions.
- The existence of systems of privilege and domination including the causes and effects of structured inequalities and prejudicial exclusion, and the effects not only on the victims, but also on the beneficiaries of these systems.
- How legal frameworks and policy incorporate and protect the rights and freedoms of individuals and groups.
- How positive personal and systemic change occurs through individual and collective actions.

Skills

Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to:

- Hone critical skills of listening, asking questions, reading, thinking, and making connections in order to have a well informed understanding of people from cultures different from their own.
- Perceive and openly discuss issues of cultural and group differences.
- Identify and challenge their own participation in processes that lead to insensitivity or social injustice, for instance by avoiding potentially offensive or discriminatory language, representations and behavior, and responding to situations in which others do so in a way that educates them.
- Empathize, gain trust and connect with individuals who are different from them, and navigate skillfully through different cultural contexts and circumstances.
- Identify areas of personal growth and develop a lifelong commitment to improving their own cultural competence.

References

Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2007). *College learning for the new global century: A report from the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education & America's Promise*. Washington, DC: Author.

Johansson, F. (2006). *Medici effect: What elephants and epidemics can teach us about innovation*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.