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## CREATING AUTHENTICALLY INCLUSIVE AND RESPONSIVE CAMPUS ENVIRONMENTS

### CAMPUS CLIMATE AND MULTICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

On many fronts, higher education is being challenged to transform its teaching, learning and working environments so that they are not only multiculturally diverse in appearance but also authentically inclusive and responsive in their acknowledgement, validation and full development of the diverse gifts and talents of all. Before 1998, UW-Madison had no sustained cross-time multicultural development interventions that impact how we conduct our work and relate to each other. Multicultural development requires moving beyond tolerance, accommodation and pressures to "fit in" towards a focus on changes in policies, processes and practices in order to genuinely invite and engage diverse voices, perspectives, experiences and peoples.

Actualizing this vision calls for the sustained convergence of the will, the skills and the opportunity. Expansion of the *WILL* seems evident in much of the rhetoric over the years which suggests a growing desire and commitment within the campus community. *OPPORTUNITY* looms large given our campus-level diversity strategic plan, *Plan 2008*, and its predecessor, *Design for Diversity*. Opportunity was further spotlighted and energized by Chancellor Wiley's charge that campus climate is one of his top three strategic priorities along with his dedication of a Dean's Council Meeting to this issue shortly after his inauguration. The convergence of these sociopolitical developments—even in the absence of significant infusion of new resources—spotlights needs for critical review of priorities, processes and practices to secure the third critical component: capacity-cultivating *SKILLS*. See the last page for a graphic illustrating the prospects for actualizing the vision given the potential intersections of *will-skills-opportunity*.

To put wheels under our vision of a vibrant multicultural community of teachers, learners and workers, UW-Madison has been developing mechanisms that address the often stifling fears and concerns associated with communicating, engaging and collaborating across diversity divides. One of the most prevalent and paralyzing concerns articulated by many is the fear of unbridled conflict and controversy. Through our capacity-building educational agenda, we strive to cultivate skills in transforming *interpersonal conflict* into *substantive conflict* in order to unleash the riches associated with "*creative abrasion*." (See *When Sparks Fly: Igniting Creativity in Groups*.)

To breathe life into the rhetoric and help people walk-the-talk, UW-Madison continues to develop a diverse menu of sustained capacity-building opportunities with multiple points of entry that differ in the required time, preparation and other resource commitments. More specifically, we aim to create a multi-tiered approach to diversity education, training and multicultural development initiatives that maximizes accessible options. For the workforce—academic staff, classified staff, faculty and administrators, the 4 learning/networking communities include the Leadership Institute (LI), the SEED Seminar (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity), the SEEDED Seminar (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity for Experienced Doers) and the Excellence Through Diversity Institute (EDI). Spearheaded by the Equity and Diversity Resource Center, LI was started in Fall 1998 followed by SEED in 2000 and the last 2 in Fall 2002. A key collaborator in some of these efforts is the Office of Human Resource Development.

## CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

Our program development, improvement and assessment efforts are significantly enhanced if they are informed by a contextual framework that more fully characterizes the patterns and flows of exposure and experience as students and members of the campus workforce navigate and negotiate campus environments. A holistic framework for examining teaching, learning and workplace resources increases the prospects for real understanding and ongoing improvement. A comprehensive model of the university environment includes the following broad domains.

### ◆ *Teaching and learning community*

Who's present among faculty, staff, administrators and students?

- ▶ Structural diversity: the levels and types of sociodemographic differences represented
- ▶ Psychological climate: intergroup and intragroup perceptions, beliefs and attitudes
- ▶ Behavioral climate: intergroup and intragroup relations and relationships

### ◆ *Teaching and learning infrastructure*

What resources do members of the university community have to work with?

- ▶ Physical plant and facilities
- ▶ Computers and other technologies
- ▶ Libraries and other information resources
- ▶ Artifacts

### ◆ *Teaching and learning process.*

How do we put it all together?

- ▶ Curriculum
- ▶ Cocurriculum
- ▶ Pedagogy
- ▶ Research and Scholarship
- ▶ Community Service

These complementary components--teaching and learning community, infrastructure and process--have relevance at the individual program/course micro level as well as the more macro campuswide levels.

Employing this more holistic framework supports faculty, staff and administrators who operate as student-centered *educators* and not simply as teaching/profession-centered *instructors*. *Educators*--both in academic affairs and in student affairs--move beyond simply being expert information disseminators and master performers to also being master communicators and life transformers. In contrast to instructors, educators deliberately vision what they want their students to look like, learn and be able to do--ideally in capacity-building partnership with students themselves. *Educators start where their students are and craft the curricular, cocurricular and pedagogical scaffolding that bridges the gap between the being, the becoming and the yet to be.* Educators create a responsive and respectful university environment that embraces, builds upon and engages the many dimensions of diversity. The result is an appreciatively affirming teaching and learning process that is conducive to the full engagement and development of all members of the university community. Similar parallels exist with regard to programming interventions with target groups other than students.

Throughout this process, formative as well as summative assessment and evaluation tools and strategies serve as critical developmental resources. At their best, program design, implementation, assessment, evaluation and improvement processes are intimately intertwined: a robust, learning-grounded program development life cycle.