Woodring College of Education

Proposal: Professional Development for Diversity and Social Justice

2010/11

Submitted by the Professional Development Subcommittee
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BACKGROUND

Woodring College of Education is committed to promoting cross-cultural understanding. The college mission specifies that WCE members will “act with respect for individual differences” (Woodring College of Education, 2009, p. 2). Particularly, faculty and staff are charged with fostering “a culture of learning that advances knowledge, embraces diversity, and promotes social justice” (Chu & Carroll, 2010, p. 2).

Our reputation depends, in no small part, on our ability to embrace diversity. In Washington, WCE is a recognized leader in preparing teachers, educational leaders, human services and rehabilitation counseling professionals. To a large extent, this deserved reputation is built on the quality of our graduates, who go into the workforce prepared to serve all learners. Our institutional credibility also rests on our progress in meeting the WCE mission and vision. NCATE certification, for instance, requires us to demonstrate how our policies and practices are aligned with the mission. In this respect, “embrac(ing) diversity and promot(ing) social justice” is not simply a slogan; it is a metric by which the College is judged.

We cannot rely on our historic status to attract and serve future students. Our peer institutions, as well as prospective students, recognize that schools of education must develop culturally competent professionals who are prepared to meet the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of students in public schools. There are a growing number of options for teacher certification (Zeichner, 2010). If prospective students don’t feel that their perspectives and ways of knowing are respected, they will simply go elsewhere.

While WCE has made progress in affirming diversity, we recognize that a good deal remains to be accomplished. The Teacher Education Recruitment and Retention (TER&R) Taskforce concluded that, despite constructive work within Woodring, there are persistent perceptions among students and prospective applicants that the institutional environment does not make space for culturally diverse ways of being and knowing (Chu & Carroll, 2010). The Taskforce recommended in no uncertain terms that WCE must “address the compelling perceptions of many students from underrepresented populations who question their welcome in the College” (p. 22).
A central challenge for the Woodring community is to shape the institutional culture in ways that embrace diverse ways of being and knowing. Our goal should be to change our cultural praxis—the manner in which we, as a college of education, reflect on and engage with the world. The term “cultural praxis” is used here with the understanding that educators across the disciplines employ a range of related terminology (e.g., cultural competence, critical consciousness, multicultural awareness). It is not our intention to enforce a particular ideology or methodology regarding cultural change. Rather, the aim of our proposal is to create spaces where we can explore our different understandings of this complicated topic. If we are to develop culturally sensitive educators who are prepared for today’s schools and communities, then we must be actively involved in doing the work to further our own cultural awareness. This work is never complete, so our aim is to create a community that will support and engage in ongoing inquiry, reflection and action to learn from one another.

This is a delicate, long-term project that requires college-wide support and collaboration. The Woodring Diversity Committee formed the Professional Development Subcommittee to propose a procedural framework. The Subcommittee was tasked particularly with “challeng(ing) faculty to create more inclusive environments which build community across various dimensions of difference” and “challeng(ing) staff to recognize their essential role in maintaining a culture of caring and facilitating a sense of belonging for an increasingly diverse student body” (Chu and Carroll, 2010, p. 22).

We propose a year-long professional development effort involving all programs in WCE. This work will be conducted and assessed during academic year 2010/11. Depending on the results of the assessment, the professional development project may be extended or modified for academic year 2011/12. This document focuses on major directions and activities. Details of this plan will be decided in consultation with the Dean, the Diversity Committee, Woodring Leadership Council, and Program Chairs.

It is important, we believe, to recognize the relationship between professional development and organizational development. Professional development is usually defined as work done by individual faculty or staff members to improve their abilities and knowledge. Typically, the focus is on self-improvement. Organizational development is “fundamentally about increasing institutional capacity for effecting change” (Latta, 2009, p. 32). This occurs through changes in individuals, as well as changes in institutional procedures and structures. Historically in WCE, the emphasis of professional development has been on individual improvement as an end in itself. We, the Professional Development Subcommittee, support this aim. At the same time, we believe that the goal of individual improvement should mesh with the broader goal of organizational improvement. Specifically, professional development in the areas of diversity and social justice should contribute to the collective work of implementing WCE’s vision of “fostering community relationships and a culture of learning that advance knowledge, embrace diversity, and promote social justice.”
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This professional development plan is situated within the research on sociopolitical contexts of multicultural education (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Zeichner, 2010, Nieto & Bode, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Cochran-Smith, Davis & Fries, 2004; Cochran-Smith, 2003; Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002; Vavrus, 2002). For purposes of this proposal, we provide a brief overview of the literature regarding faculty and staff development concerning issues of educational equity, diversity and social justice. In particular, we use a lens of individual, collective, and institutional research on the “rich dialectic of both scholarship and practice” (Cochran-Smith et al, 2004, p. 946). Research in this area emphasizes the importance of providing faculty and staff with “transformative learning opportunities, experiential learning, and problem-posing dialogue” as colleges pursue a coherent agenda for addressing multicultural issues (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004, p. 962). WCE faculty and staff already understand that learning to teach continues across our professional life-spans. This framework provides the rationale for supporting the continued development of multicultural personhood through self-study, instructional practices, research, and service opportunities in multicultural education. More particularly for WCE, the literature supports a coordinated approach to addressing recruitment and retention issues while pursuing the college’s mission and vision.

Much of the literature and research on multicultural teacher education suggests that teacher education must “move beyond the rhetoric” and begin to reinvent practices to respond to the unique needs of students, teachers, staff and faculty of the 21st century (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Zeichner, 2010, Nieto & Bode, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Cochran-Smith et al., 2004). The key to successful professional development is to begin with a common language and understanding of our locally contextualized definition of multiculturalism. Cochran-Smith (2002) further provides a framework of essential questions that staff and faculty, individually, collectively and institutionally, engage with and must respond to: the diversity question, the ideology question, the knowledge question, the teacher learning question, the practice question, the outcomes question, the recruitment and selection question, and the coherence question. If coherence of each of these questions and our common understandings of educational equity, diversity and social justice are our common goals, then a reignited commitment by each faculty/staff member, program/department, and college through self-examination, review, revision, and refinement of all programs and approaches is central (Wallace, 2000). These questions provide a means for us to analyze how our beliefs and practices influence students.

CHALLENGES TO ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Shaping the institutional culture is no easy task. In a recent meeting, Diversity Committee members pointed out a variety of challenges:
• The budget crisis has both physical and psychological effects. Budget cuts affect core functions (e.g., instruction, research) within Woodring, making it difficult to justify spending on seemingly less tangible goals such as “creating more inclusive environments.” Faculty are likely to “hunker down” rather than aggressively take on new projects. At the same time, students who are already marginalized are likely to see college as less attainable.

• Time is limited for everyone in Woodring. For the most part, faculty and staff are working at or near maximum capacity. There is little appetite for taking on new responsibilities, especially if the work is considered unnecessary “fluff,” without real substance or purpose.

• The tenure and promotion system does not place sufficient emphasis on professional development work. Faculty who organize and facilitate professional development for colleagues might receive recognition for performing professional service but, typically, this work is not counted as scholarship. Those who participate in professional development are likely to receive less credit. For staff, external rewards are even scarcer. There are effectively no incentives to participate in professional development activities that are not directly related to a staff member’s job description.

• The tenure and promotion system does not sufficiently recognize learning and growth that occurs communally. While collaborative work is recognized (e.g., co-publishing), the T&P system tends to privilege individual leadership and, ultimately, individual accomplishment. Consequently, faculty are inclined to pursue professional development as an individual journey.

• Current professional development activities are isolated. While there are effective and worthwhile programs to promote cultural praxis within Woodring, these tend to be discrete events with little or no continuity between them. Linking existing professional development work with a college-wide vision for organizational change will move WCE forward while preserving individual choice.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We recognize that professional and organizational development are ongoing processes that build on existing knowledge and experiences and current efforts. In light of the concerns raised, the following core principles will guide the proposed work:

• Professional development should take an appreciative, asset-based approach (as opposed to a remedial, deficit-based approach).
• Professional development should support and coordinate with work that currently exists; this should not be an add-on.

• Some mandatory activities should be included along with mostly voluntary activities to foster accountability, while allowing for individual choice.

• The purpose of professional development should be communicated consistently across the college.

• Goals should be ambitious and, at the same time, specific and do-able. There should be a focus on next steps and progress made.

• Departments and individuals should have opportunities to customize the work to suit their particular needs.

• Supports (e.g., release time) should be available to help facilitators and staff participants.

• Opportunities and supports should be available to sites beyond Bellingham.

• Institutional research should be conducted in Woodring to inform future professional development planning.

• Future role statements for faculty and staff should identify professional development activities as an employment expectation.

• Future tenure/promotion/retention reviews should recognize the role of professional development in enhancing the faculty or staff-person’s effectiveness.

HOPEFUL OUTCOMES

The ultimate goal of this professional development project is to “create more inclusive environments which build community across various dimensions of difference” (Chu & Carroll, 2010, p. 22). Throughout the 2010-11 academic year, we will work toward these outcomes:

Fostering Critical Self-Awareness
We will gain awareness of our cultural identities, including our biases and assumptions. We will explore how our beliefs influence our actions, and we will practice suspending our initial beliefs to see the world through another’s perspective. This will help us to reflect on our educational practices.

Understanding Students
We will explore diverse assets and funds of knowledge that students bring to education. Adopting a learning stance, we will seek to understand students in their life contexts. Acknowledging the complex and constructed nature of identity will be an important step in creating a positive climate for ethnic identity development.

**Reaching Communities**
We will work collaboratively with representatives from communities that are underserved by Woodring. Bringing stakeholders to Woodring and, perhaps, going out to community sites will help us to understand how community members view Woodring. We will consider how we can be better emissaries and facilitators. At the same time, we hope to raise the profile of Woodring in the eyes of underrepresented groups.

**Working Collectively**
We will proceed as learners who collaboratively pursue a common goal. In doing so, we will model for our students how a learning community moves forward collectively through inquiry and problem-solving. This is both a means to pursuing the goal of inclusivity, as well as an end in itself.

**Taking Action**
We will begin to practice what we learn during the year. We will draw on our evolving cultural knowledge to devise strategies to recruit, support, or retain underrepresented students. Plans will be devised and implemented primarily at the departmental level.

**EXISTING WORK**

It is important to note that the principles and outcomes advocated in this document are not new to Woodring. Faculty and staff in Woodring have long histories of putting these ideas into practice. Table provides some illustrations.

**Table 1. Examples of Existing Work Supporting Diversity and Social Justice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>• Multicultural Faculty Fellows</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Journal of Educational Controversy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Diversity Committee</td>
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<td>• Center for Education, Equity, and Diversity</td>
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<td>• Recruitment and Retention Task Force</td>
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<td>• LinC</td>
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<td>• Compass to Campus</td>
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<td>• Northwest Center for Holocaust, Genocide, and Ethnocide Education</td>
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Dept and Program

- Woodring Departments: Current avenue for communication and collaboration
- Language, Literacy, and Culture Major
- Student Affairs - Diversity minor
- TESOL with CIRCLE Grant

Individual

- Ten faculty members have received Circle Mini – grants to address curricular infusion of content and strategies related to supporting English learners
- Many faculty doing diversity-related research or recruitment

(This list is for illustrative purposes only and is NOT comprehensive.)

As this table suggests, there are numerous individuals in WCE who are engaged in heroic efforts to foster inclusion and social justice. In some cases (e.g., Marsha Riddle Buly’s work with Latino communities), a faculty person’s work directly influences programmatic practices to recruit and retain diverse students. In most other cases, however, the faculty person operates on her or his own volition, pursuing diversity-related work on a more or less autonomous basis (e.g., Dina Benedetti recruiting in urban schools). Much of this important work is done in isolation, with little coordination with colleagues. Consequently, there are few institutionalized opportunities (particularly at the departmental level) for these pioneers to share their work or to disseminate promising practices. In recent years, this has changed somewhat at the institutional level, where there are a growing number of resources (e.g., Multicultural Faculty Fellows) for faculty and staff who do diversity-related work. These institutional resources have tended to serve support functions to help individuals pursue their own objectives. These efforts illustrate the institutional emphasis on individual change. Individuals are exerting considerable effort in enacting WCE’s vision of “embracing diversity and promoting social justice.”

We applaud these efforts and wish to provide means to support them. At the same time, we hope that this professional development proposal will move the Woodring community toward a more collaborative pursuit of organizational change.

**PROPOSED ACTIONS**

We propose several new initiatives, along with modifications of current activities. These are designed to address the previously noted challenges to organizational change by incorporating many of the guiding principles laid out earlier in this document. Above all, these actions are designed to guide the collective project of creating a more inclusive environment, while at the same time preserving individual choice in professional development.

A central feature of the proposal is a two-day workshop conducted by REACH. This will provide an anchor point from which other activities (e.g., Departmental Action Project, Woodring
participation in TLA) will proceed. We recognize that some faculty and staff are already familiar with the content of the REACH workshop. The experience will be valuable for them, as well as for others. The workshop will facilitate a dialogue between participants. Those immersed in the subject matter will benefit others by articulating their views and they, in turn, will benefit by reflecting in a mediated setting. We agree with Latta who reminds us that “because cultural knowledge is largely tacit, it often requires the mediation of an outside facilitator to elicit” (2010, p. 41).

**College Development:** Faculty and staff are expected to participate in the following activities promoting college-wide conversations about diversity and social justice.

**All-College Meetings.** Two meetings will be scheduled. During the fall meeting, the new professional development plan will be discussed. A spring meeting will focus on findings from the Departmental Action Projects (see “departmental development” below). By that time, assessments of the professional development program will be completed. These findings will inform a discussion of future directions for college-wide professional development.

**REACH Workshop.** Faculty and staff are expected to attend a workshop to promote critical reflection on culture and identity. The purpose will be to encourage participants to think about their cultural beliefs and to provide them with a common vocabulary regarding diversity. Participants will examine REACH principles and the goals of multicultural education. While some in the Woodring community have done extensive work in this area, they and others who are newer to the subject matter will benefit from the opportunity to talk to each other in a mediated environment. REACH is nationally recognized as a top professional development organization addressing issues of diversity. Woodring is uniquely positioned to tap our special relationship with REACH.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tr>
<td>REACH Workshop</td>
<td>$7,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>All College Meetings</td>
<td>$0</td>
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**Departmental Development:** Departments are encouraged to support and publicize effective work conducted by individuals and programs.

**Departmental Action Project.** Faculty and staff in each department will identify one or more policies or practices in the department (or program) that are welcoming to diverse students. Over the academic year, each department will analyze why the policies or practices are successful in fostering access and/or retention. The purpose is to identify how (or if) these promising practices can be spread to other areas of Woodring. This
inquiry will be informed by other professional development activities in Woodring (see Professional Development Menu below). By participating in other events (e.g., REACH Workshop), department members will gain conceptual tools to frame and articulate their findings. Later in the academic year, department members will present their findings at the spring All-College Meeting (see above). Funds will be available to support this inquiry. This is an opportunity to document results and to make good work broadly visible.

**Infusion of Content Related to English Language Learners:** Departments are invited to review the NCATE/TESOL standards in a reflective process to assess current strengths and next steps. This would then guide efforts to support individual faculty members to pursue change while also offering college-wide professional learning opportunities through workshops, and book groups.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tr>
<td>Departmental Action Project</td>
<td>$12,000</td>
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<td>($2,000 per department x 6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infusion of Content Related to ELL</td>
<td>Paid by CIRCLE Grant</td>
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**Individual Development:** Faculty and staff are encouraged to select activities that suit their interests. This list is not comprehensive. Individuals may choose activities not listed here.

**Woodring participation in Teaching Learning Academy.** Historically, there has been a substantial presence of Woodring faculty, current students, and prospective students in TLA. This is a natural venue for these groups to work together in exploring issues of teaching and learning. Starting in fall 2010, TLA will hold some meeting in CEED. Additionally, participants will consider themes related to equity and difference. Woodring students, staff, and faculty are encouraged to join this year-long exploration.

** Courageous Conversations and other CEED Events.** CEED will continue to offer the Critical Conversations series and other learning opportunities for students, faculty, and staff. Events will be unified around key themes (e.g., funds of knowledge) that complement college-wide professional development efforts. Some activities may be organized in collaboration with community groups. Distance technology (e.g., Polycom) will be used to include participants who are not on campus.

**Professional Development Menu.** CEED will create and distribute a list of suggested professional development activities for faculty or staff. This list will include CEED events, as well as other activities within and beyond Woodring. Individuals are not obligated to choose from this list.
**Faculty Development Travel Fund.** Faculty members are encouraged to request support for travel related to scholarship or professional development concerning diversity.

**Annual Faculty Evaluations.** Currently, probationary faculty are asked to identify goals for improving teaching, specifically addressing “the integration of diversity issues and diversity responsive teaching.” All faculty (tenure-track, tenured, specialty) will be encouraged to describe their participation in or their facilitation activities related to this professional development plan.

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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tr>
<td>Woodring participation in TLA</td>
<td>$200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Courageous Conversations and Other CEED Events</td>
<td>Paid by CEED budget.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Development Menu</td>
<td>Paid by CEED budget.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty Development Travel Fund</td>
<td>Paid from WCE Faculty Professional Development Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual Faculty Evaluations</td>
<td>$0</td>
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**TIMELINE**

The following timeline is tentative and does not include CEED events (e.g., Courageous Conversations, William G. Demmert Symposium, Gary Howard Institute, MCED 21st Century Event, Circle Sponsored Speaker) which have not yet been finalized.

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<td>Aug 2010</td>
<td>• Planning with DC Leadership, Dept Chairs, Dean</td>
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<td>Sept 2010</td>
<td>• Department Retreats (introduce PD plan, Departmental Action Project)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• All-College Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 2010</td>
<td>• Professional Development Menu available</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Departmental Action Project (identify promising practices, choose PD activities)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• TLA meetings</td>
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| Nov 2010 | • Departmental Action Project (individuals participate in chosen PD activities throughout the academic year)  
• Deadline for requesting DC support for professional development activities.  
• TLA meetings |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dec 2010 | • Initial assessment of PD activities  
• TLA meetings |
| Jan 2011 | • REACH training (pt I)  
• Departmental Action Project (gather/analyze data through winter and spring quarters)  
• TLA meetings |
| Feb 2011 | • REACH training (pt II)  
• TLA meetings |
| Mar 2011 | • Winter assessment of PD activities  
• TLA meetings |
| Apr 2011 | • TLA meetings |
| May 2011 | • All-College Meeting (present Departmental Action Projects)  
• TLA meetings |
| June 2011 | • Final assessment of PD activities  
• TLA meetings |

**REFERENCES**


