



Fayetteville State University
MULTICULTURAL TRAINING OF TRAINERS PROGRAM

NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

SUBMITTED BY THE NATIONAL MULTICULTURAL INSTITUTE

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Introduction

The National MultiCultural Institute (NMCI) is currently partnering with Fayetteville State University to develop its multicultural initiative for the campus community. Fayetteville State University (FSU) has long been recognized for its diverse student population and commitment to student achievement, and recognizes the importance of creating a diverse and inclusive environment for all students, faculty and staff.

The University is now taking its multicultural initiative to the next level by developing a cadre of trainers from across the university to facilitate multicultural awareness training campus-wide. The Training of Trainers program will help build internal capacity by ensuring that all members of the campus community have a shared understanding of the value of diversity, a deeper awareness of their own cultural filters, and skills to increase their cultural competence.

In order to design and develop the Training of Trainers program, NMCI conducted a needs assessment to help NMCI better understand:

- the strengths and challenges of the University in meeting the needs of multicultural students, faculty and staff;
- the campus culture and how it affects effective learning and teaching;
- and Fayetteville's vision for a culturally competent campus that completely meets the learning needs of all students and creates an inclusive environment for employees, and ideas and strategies for achieving this vision.

The needs assessment also provides Fayetteville State University with benchmarking information to evaluate the effectiveness of its training program and helps to gain a commitment from potential participants and leadership. It also serves to increase the visibility and perceived importance of the program and provides material for developing relevant activities and case studies for training.

This assessment consisted of twenty individual telephone interviews and two focus groups with a cross-section of individuals from the campus community. The assessment participants included individuals representing students, faculty, staff, and administrative leadership at FSU. The participants were also diverse in terms of gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, academic and professional background, tenure, and school/department at FSU.

A number of key themes and patterns emerged from the analysis of the data gathered, which are provided in this report. The information gathered in the individual interviews and focus groups will be used in the design of the Training of Trainers program and to provide recommendations to FSU on how to develop its strategic plan for its multicultural diversity initiative over the long term.

Key Themes

1. Positive Aspects of Working and/or Living at Fayetteville State University

Campus Environment

For many staff and students, the most positive aspect of being a part of the university is the intimate and friendly atmosphere of the campus. Students expressed satisfaction in the level of attention they receive from professors and other faculty and staff members. Faculty and staff mentioned that they feel comfortable and included by colleagues, and that the university has a familial and team-oriented atmosphere.

Working with Students

Many faculty and staff mentioned that they most enjoy working with the students. Participants have positive feelings about working with young people and seeing the students' achievements and personal growth. These participants also mentioned pride and a sense of accomplishment in being able to provide assistance and guidance to students.

School Pride

Some participants mentioned that there is a great deal of pride in the university and its history. Several students and alumni who now serve as FSU staff mentioned that they have had a positive educational experience, the academic programs are challenging, and the university has provided them with valuable career development opportunities. Some participants mentioned having heard negative comments made by others about FSU, but their experiences have been very positive, and they want the outside community to understand the positive aspects of the university.

2. Dimensions of Diversity at FSU

Racial and Ethnic Diversity at FSU

Most participants agreed that the campus has become more diverse over the last few years, with a larger population of multicultural students, faculty and staff. Most participants felt that the growing diversity of the population is a benefit to the university and helps prepare students for the globally diverse world they will enter as professionals. Some participants expressed a need to further diversify student, faculty and staff populations. They said that although efforts have been made to create a more diverse campus, the university is still majority African-American. Other participants mentioned that FSU, as a historically black university, should remain majority African-American.

International Diversity

Participants also mentioned the growing number of international students and faculty members at FSU. Many participants expressed positive feelings about the growth in the population of foreign-born faculty, staff and students. Several participants mentioned that certain departments have larger numbers of international faculty members, especially the math and sciences. Participants mentioned that FSU has created opportunities for international student exchanges, in particular its exchange program with China. However, several staff members mentioned a desire to see broader collaborations in FSU's international exchange programs in addition to China.

Religious Diversity

Many participants were unsure of what religious diversity exists among faculty, staff and students, saying that it just was not discussed very much. Some participants mentioned that there are people of other religious beliefs on campus, including atheists; however it is not discussed openly.

Sexual Orientation

Some participants mentioned that the university has diversity in terms of sexual orientation, and there are some faculty, staff and students who are openly gay.

Age

Participants mentioned that there is a diversity of ages and generations represented in the faculty, staff and student populations. Participants mentioned that most departments include multi-generational faculty and staff. Participants also mentioned that students ranged significantly in age from teenagers to septuagenarians, since the university has a large nontraditional student population.

On-Campus versus Commuter Student Population

Many participants mentioned that the university has a large commuter student population, which has different perspectives and interests. Many commuter students have full-time jobs, families and children, and other responsibilities, that do not permit them to spend time on campus outside of classes.

Geographic Diversity

Participants mentioned that the campus community is diverse in terms of where individuals come from geographically, not only from other countries, but also other states and regions of the U.S. Also, participants mentioned that individuals come from rural, suburban, and urban areas.

3. Importance of Cultural Awareness to FSU Student Achievement

Diversity of Students

Participants mentioned that their work depends on being able to understand and support their students. Given the growing diversity of the student population at FSU, participants mentioned that it is crucial to learn about students' different learning styles, living styles, modes of communication (verbal and nonverbal), cultural norms, values and beliefs. Participants also mentioned the importance of being open and flexible to meet the needs of students, and to create an inclusive environment for all students, regardless of their race or ethnicity.

Expanding Students' Perspectives

Participants, including faculty, staff and students, mentioned that it is critical to prepare students for a diverse professional world. Participants expressed that students need to develop knowledge and understanding of cultural differences, both for their academic achievement and relationships with faculty at FSU, as well as their professional development.

4. Promoting an Inclusive Multicultural Environment at FSU

Recruiting for Diversity

Several participants mentioned that they have seen a great deal of effort on the part of the university leadership to recruit more diverse faculty, staff and student populations on campus. Participants said that the advertising materials created and distributed by the university depict racially and ethnically diverse students, including publications, brochures and billboards. Many participants said that these advertising materials were instrumental in recruiting more diverse students to FSU, as they depict the university as a welcoming environment for a multicultural population of students.

Several participants expressed appreciation for this movement, and that a multicultural population enhances FSU's capacity as an institution of higher education. Participants mentioned that, although FSU is an HBCU, it has created a campus where all races and ethnicities are welcome. Several participants also said that the chancellor fully and actively supports this movement, and has communicated to the entire campus her commitment to developing a more diverse student population at FSU.

Multicultural Events on Campus

Several participants mentioned that the university celebrates many different cultural events, festivals, and holidays, to bring members of the university community together to experience different cultural traditions, foods, and festivities. Participants mentioned that such events include ethnic foods, people dressed in traditional clothing of their culture, and music.

Some participants also mentioned that the university invites a multitude of speakers and presenters to come to campus. Participants mentioned that the chancellor has a speaker series that includes diverse individuals who come on campus to make presentations to students, faculty and staff on a variety of topics.

New Student Orientation

Many participants mentioned that FSU does a good job with orienting incoming freshman to the university and preparing them for the transition from living with their families to living on a college campus. Participants said that the orientation is critical for acclimating students to the campus environment. Several participants mentioned that commuter students are less likely to attend all of new student orientation, and would usually stop coming to events after the first day or two.

Inclusive Policy and Planning Processes

Many participants felt that FSU creates opportunities for diverse voices to be incorporated into planning around policies and practices, and that the administration does well in seeking input from faculty, staff and students in decision making processes. The university administers surveys campus-wide to obtain feedback and information from all members of the university regarding their needs and views on various campus-related issues. Some participants mentioned that student leaders also have a presence in planning and policy making, including representation at board meetings and on the judicial board. Participants also mentioned that there are annual staff meetings for all members of the faculty and staff at the university to attend.

At the informal level, several participants mentioned that they feel comfortable going to their supervisors or directors with any ideas or issues they wish to address, and those issues are then communicated to vice chancellors for consideration.

5. Challenges to Creating an Inclusive Multicultural Environment

Communication among Departments

Several participants expressed concern around the lack of communication among different departments within the university. Some participants said that each department tends to keep to itself, and that cliques develop that impede departments from collaborating or even taking interest in what other departments on campus are doing. Participants also mentioned that tensions within departments exist due to hierarchy issues, with lack of communication between higher and lower level staff members.

Communications between Faculty and Students

Many participants discussed communication challenges between students and faculty. Participants mentioned hearing students' complaints around not being able to understand faculty members with strong foreign accents.

Participants also mentioned challenges around different communication styles, and students complaining of foreign born faculty members being too rigid and formal in their style. Some participants also mentioned that some faculty members were unsure of how to interact with or discipline their students. Several participants expressed the opinion that faculty members need to adapt to the environment and to the needs of FSU's student population.

Exclusionary Behavior

Some participants mentioned that they have observed students practicing exclusionary or disrespectful behavior toward other students on campus. Several participants mentioned that sexual orientation is a challenging subject, especially among young African-American male students. Participants also mentioned that bi-racial couples have been harassed by other students on campus.

Participants also mentioned observing students practicing self-exclusionary behavior. Participants said that they have seen many minority students self-segregate socially, or try to hide their culture and assimilate to the dominant culture so that they can 'fit in.'

Participants also mentioned exclusionary behavior occurring among faculty and staff. Although people generally get along, participants mentioned that there is an underlying perception that individuals do not belong outside of their particular cultural group.

Some participants also mentioned having observed or experienced exclusionary behavior between higher level and lower level faculty/staff. The participants mentioned that the behavior may not be blatantly disrespectful, but that some staff members feel 'talked down to' by higher level staff, which makes them less willing to interact with or voice their opinions to those individuals again.

Religion

Some participants mentioned that, although FSU is a state university, the dominant religion is Christian. Several participants expressed that it is a challenge for non-Christian individuals to feel included, especially during Christian holidays such as Christmas. Some participants also mentioned that they have observed some staff chastising colleagues and students for behaviors that they believe go against traditional Christian norms.

Generational Differences

With the diversity of age groups represented on campus, including faculty, staff and students, participants mentioned that communication challenges tend to arise. Young faculty and staff members mentioned challenges working with older faculty and staff that have been at the university for many years. Younger faculty and staff members who are eager to find new methods experience frustration when their new ideas are not supported by other staff who feel that they do not need to change the methods they have been using for years.

Also, participants mentioned that challenges arise between faculty/staff and the students, and that older faculty and staff members do not understand the needs of the young adult students. On the other hand, several participants mentioned that students, especially young students, have a lack of respect for faculty and staff members, and there is a need to teach students to respect their elders.

Lack of Participation from Nontraditional and Commuter Students

Participants also mentioned challenges to including nontraditional and commuter students into campus activities. Since many commuter students work and may have families to care for, they are much less likely to participate in campus activities outside of class. Participants mentioned a need to find more appropriate ways to involve commuter students in campus activities.

Perceptions of FSU Outside the Campus Community

Several participants mentioned hearing negative comments and observations about FSU from individuals outside the campus community. Some participants mentioned that the university has a stigma because of its location in a part of the city that has had problems with crime. Other participants mentioned that they hear negative opinions of the university's academic excellence. Participants expressed concern that this is detrimental to recruitment of talented and multicultural faculty, staff and students, who may not wish to attend FSU because of the negative stereotypes about the university.

6. What FSU Needs to Do to Develop an Inclusive Multicultural Environment

Provide Cultural Awareness Training

In order to meet the concerns around cross-cultural communication and respect for cultural differences at the university, participants mentioned a need to train members of the campus community. Participants said the training would develop more knowledge of the different cultural backgrounds of students, faculty and staff in order to more effectively communicate across cultures. This includes building understanding and respect for diverse value systems and traditions.

Several participants mentioned that it will be crucial to develop an understanding and acceptance of diverse sexual orientations, since this is a hot button for many students on campus. Several participants also mentioned that foreign faculty and staff need training on how to work with African-American students. On the other hand, some participants mentioned that students need to also develop more cultural awareness, so as to understand different faculty members' communication and instruction styles.

Some participants also mentioned that it is crucial to examine one's own cultural beliefs in order to begin to understand where other individuals are coming from. Participants mentioned the need to reflect upon perceptions of the majority and minority cultures at FSU, to understand where perceptions of "normal" versus "abnormal" behavior stem from. Participants also mentioned the importance of identifying one's own communication style and how that impacts interactions with others.

Develop Programs to Target Diverse Groups

In order to develop a more positive perception of the university and to recruit a more diverse population, participants mentioned a need to expand outreach into the surrounding community, and to engage the city of Fayetteville in campus activities. Participants also mentioned the need to advertise to multicultural communities for recruitment purposes.

Create More Effective and Respectful Communication

Participants mentioned that there is a need to develop more effective communication across departments and more opportunities for cross-departmental collaboration. Participants also mentioned a need for more respectful and open communication among faculty and staff at various levels within the university.

Also, participants mentioned that faculty, staff and students all need to build more awareness about diverse communication styles, in order to interact more effectively with one another.

Build a Sustainable Multicultural Initiative

Participants expressed a desire for a long-term initiative that would truly enhance the cultural competence of the university. Participants said that one day of training would not be enough to change the culture of the university. Participants said that a failure to implement the initiative in a sustainable way would leave many members of the campus community frustrated and disenchanted with the university. Participants mentioned that an ongoing multicultural initiative would help reinforce and enhance the university's effectiveness in building the multicultural skills of faculty and staff and providing an inclusive campus environment.

NMCI's Recommendations

Develop a Strategic Action Plan for the Multicultural Initiative

As can be seen in the results of the needs assessment, representatives from across the campus community want to see FSU create a sustainable multicultural initiative that envisions a more diverse and culturally competent campus, but also holds onto the rich traditions and history of FSU.

A key component to developing a university's multicultural initiative is creating a vision that clearly articulates the university's goals for implementing multicultural strategies. Terms like diversity and multiculturalism can pose challenges to universities in that they are often narrowly defined and separated from the overall institutional strategies. Therefore, it is critical for FSU to create and articulate a vision for its multicultural initiative that will be implemented through its strategic plan. The initiative must be closely aligned with the university's strategic priorities and core values, and must include both short-term and long-term objectives that will be used to embed the initiative into the institutional fabric.

Develop Multicultural Task Force/Council

In response to the assessment participants' wish to see this multicultural initiative become a sustainable component of the university, it will be essential to develop a council to oversee the initiative over the long run.

In order to ensure the sustainability and momentum of the multicultural initiative, it will be imperative to provide the Multicultural Task Force or some other group with the responsibility to oversee the long-term initiative. This group will include diverse representation from across campus, and will report to university leadership. The direct link between the council and university leadership is critical to the long-term success of this initiative.

Create/Enhance Internal and External Communication Strategy

The needs assessment revealed a great deal of concern around communication both within the campus community and between the university and surrounding communities. Participants wish to see more effective communication and collaboration on the individual, organizational, and community levels.

In order to create more effective individual communication, FSU needs to provide learning support and opportunities for dialogue to occur after all members of the campus community have gone through the cultural awareness training. There is a need for FSU faculty, staff and students to practice the cross-cultural communication skills they will have developed during the training. Engaging individuals in regular dialogues also builds cooperation across the campus and shows that the university supports open

conversations among diverse members of the campus community. FSU could also consider developing a mentoring program for faculty and staff, in which individuals who are new to the university are paired with a faculty or staff member who can provide support and advice. This also can be useful in building cross-departmental cooperation and engagement, if FSU develops the program so new faculty and staff are paired with mentors from various departments.

At the organizational level, it will be crucial for FSU to provide opportunities for members of the campus community to meet periodically, report on current programs and projects, and seek opportunities for collaboration with other departments. This can also be an opportunity for faculty and staff to engage in cross-discipline collaborations to develop innovative research projects.

At the community level, FSU needs to review its current outreach programs and identify any areas for improvement for engaging new multicultural communities in campus activities. This may also include FSU collaborating with the city of Fayetteville, or developing inter-university collaborations with UNC campuses or other universities and colleges in the area. Such collaborations are extremely valuable in sharing best practices and overcoming roadblocks to developing successful multicultural initiatives.

Develop Ongoing Training Opportunities for all Members of FSU Community

The needs assessment revealed a need for cultural awareness training for all members of the university. Participants were especially concerned with developing training that focuses on enhancing individual's personal awareness of how culture impacts their interactions with others, and on building skills for members of the university community to communicate more effectively across all dimensions of diversity.

The Training of Trainers program that NMCI will conduct at FSU in May 2007 will focus on these key components, and will help to develop a group of trainers at FSU who can then facilitate cultural awareness workshops across the campus.

NMCI will also provide ongoing learning support for the trainers, and will co-facilitate workshops with all the trainers to help build their skills and deliver effective workshops.

In addition, NMCI strongly recommends that FSU provide administrative support to the trainers to ensure that they are able to deliver the workshops in a comprehensive and timely fashion. This will include management of scheduling, copying training materials, and communicating with deans and directors to permit participants to attend workshops.

NMCI also recommends that FSU develop ongoing learning activities for individuals who have participated in the base-line cultural awareness workshops and are ready to move deeper in their learning. These learning support sessions may include a variety of topics, including generational diversity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, learning styles, and more. NMCI can work with the cadre of trainers to develop and facilitate these learning support sessions.

Review Recruitment and Retention Policies and Practices

The needs assessment identified recruitment and retention as a challenge, with a desire to reach out to a wider population of potential students, faculty and staff, and to ensure that the university fosters an inclusive atmosphere for its diverse population. Developing a campus climate that promotes diversity and inclusion is crucial to achieving effective recruitment and retention policies.

In order to enhance its recruitment practices, FSU must review and assess current recruitment strategies to identify areas for improvement. This includes all recruiting materials, as well as assessing which communities are included in outreach, and which communities may not be included. FSU must assess its recruitment strategies for students, faculty and staff.

To enhance retention rates and professional development of faculty and staff, it will be essential to review current methods of assessing what makes individuals (students, faculty and staff) decide to leave FSU. The university needs to also review any existing programs for providing support and assistance to students, faculty and staff, to identify any room for improvement.

Ensure Sustainability

As FSU moves forward with its multicultural initiative, it will be imperative to provide the support needed to keep up the momentum of the initiative. Too often, organizations conduct a Training of Trainers program, but do not follow the training up with any support for the new facilitators. Thus, the facilitators are unable to fulfill their purpose of training the rest of the organization, which is not only a wasted expense, it also fails to obtain the support and buy in from key stakeholders. Thus, it is essential for FSU to establish mechanisms to support the new trainers.

Also, the university must take a systemic approach to its multicultural diversity initiative, and embed diversity practices into all of its major strategies. Embedding diversity and multicultural competencies into the university strategic plan ensures sustainability of the initiative. It also communicates the leadership's ongoing support for developing a culturally competent institution.

Summary

In summary, the needs assessment conducted for Fayetteville State University provided data that will be beneficial not only for designing the Training of Trainers program, but also for helping FSU develop a comprehensive strategy for building a successful and sustainable multicultural initiative.

Members of the university community who participated in the assessment shared their pride and admiration for the university, both for its excellent academic programs and for its ability to create a close knit and welcoming environment. Participants also expressed opportunities for FSU to create a more inclusive and culturally competent environment for the increasingly diverse population it serves.

Based on the assessment results, NMCI will tailor the Training of Trainers program to focus on building cultural awareness, expanding the vision of diversity and multiculturalism, and developing more effective communication among faculty, staff, students, and the external community.

NMCI further recommends that FSU commit to a long-term initiative that systemically embeds cultural competence into the university, and makes FSU a school of choice for the most talented faculty, staff and students.