

2007-08 Diversity Progress Report – Overview
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Board of Trustees Meeting, February 2009

Background

In 2002, the Earlham Community (Earlham Student Government, Employee Council, Faculty Meeting, and the Board of Trustees) affirmed a Diversity Aspirations Vision Statement, including a set of goals to guide the College toward a fuller realization of that vision. Working with those goals, a Diversity Aspiration Task Force formulated a set of objectives to help us to make progress.

One goal was to create a committee that would monitor our progress and facilitate ongoing attention to those goals and to initiatives and priorities that will contribute to their realization. The Diversity Progress Committee was created to fulfill this function. That committee includes key administrative leaders who manage aspects of College operations related to specific diversity goals. Membership includes: the Provost (convener), Director of Multi-cultural Affairs, Academic Dean, Dean of Student Development, Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, Associate Academic Dean, Director of Human Resources, and Co-Presidents of Earlham Student Government.

The 2008 GLCA Diversity Summit Process

A key diversity initiative of 2007-08 was the creation and work of the GLCA Diversity Summit Team. That group was charged by the President to prepare for and represent Earlham at a GLCA Presidents' Diversity Summit in April, 2008. The membership of that Summit Team included most of the Diversity Progress Committee as well as additional teaching faculty and student leaders. That group led the campus through a process of understanding Earlham's Diversity Aspirations Vision Statement and of examining our efforts to actualize that vision. After the Summit meeting, the Earlham Summit Team produced a report, including recommendations for action. That report may be found in the Community Documents section of Earlham's Web site.

The work of the Earlham Diversity Summit Team concluded in the Fall of 2008. Two steps marked that conclusion. First, the aforementioned report was shared with the Faculty and a discussion was held in Faculty Meeting. Faculty were each asked to share on index cards two priorities that they would draw from that report. Second, based upon the priorities listed on those cards, a survey was constructed to solicit responses of students and staff to nine priorities identified by the faculty. That survey and its results are included in the 2007-08 Diversity Progress Report.

Examination of students' ratings of the importance of each of the nine priorities (75 students responded to the survey) revealed that students gave their strongest support to the goal of "strengthening diversity through community processes" (rated #3 by faculty and #2 by staff), closely followed by "recruiting and retaining a more diverse student body" (rated #2 by faculty and #7 by staff). Students also considered it very important (in descending order) to "focus on socio-economic diversity" (rated #6 by faculty and # 7 by staff), to "increase

diversity of thought or belief (political, intellectual, religious)” (rated #7 by faculty and #4 by staff), and to “recruit and retain a more diverse faculty and staff” (rated #1 by faculty and #9 by staff). Students rated as moderately important the goals of “clarifying the idea of diversity” (rated as #4 by faculty and #2 by staff), “supporting diversity through institutional structures” (rated as #8 by faculty and #1 by staff), “strengthening diversity through the curriculum” (rated as #5 by faculty and #6 by staff), and “working collaboratively with other colleges on diversity” (rated as #9 by faculty and #5 by staff).

In short, this survey revealed some differences between students, faculty and staff priorities, although all seemed to agree that working on internal community processes is of high importance. Students and faculty agreed that it is very important to enroll a diverse student body. There was only moderate importance accorded by all groups to emphasizing socio-economic diversity and diversity of thought or belief and to addressing diversity more through the curriculum. While faculty saw it as most important to recruit diverse faculty, students and staff viewed that as much less important.

The open-ended comments by students (staff offered virtually no such comments) suggested that attention should be given to clarifying the meaning of diversity (i.e. its relation to maintaining tradition, the link of diversity and oppression, diversity as a means to educational ends), to creating opportunities for wider community discussion of this issue and to recognizing the diversity that exists at Earlham. Additionally, they noted that the attitude toward diversity needs examination, emphasizing that Earlham should promote real respect for differences and open-mindedness toward the expression of those differences. There was some mention of the need to honor all forms of diversity, particularly socio-economic diversity, but also diversity of intellectual ability, religion, politics, and thoughts and beliefs. The point was made several times in these comments that Earlham needs to promote more active, everyday engagement of diverse persons and groups, that we should see diversity as a process of interaction rather than just numbers in various categories, that we should strengthen the sense of community and of person-to-person relationships and strive to overcome existing fragmentation and clustering of diverse groups that do make up Earlham. Finally, it was noted that academic programs and faculty can help to promote diversity.

The Diversity Summit process on campus has yielded several fruits. First, it was an occasion for community education about and re-affirmation of the existing Vision Statement. That statement is distinctive in emphasizing a broad, inclusive conception of diversity and in defining the rationale for Earlham’s commitment to diversity. That rationale rests equally upon the value of justice, which leads us to strive to redress oppression of certain groups, and the value of seeking a better world through excellence in education. Hence, Earlham’s dedication to diversity in our community is both a matter of justice and of providing the kind of educational experience that can contribute to social change; both an end in itself (i.e. a diverse Earlham community that mirrors the diversity of our larger world) and a means to the end of empowering Earlham graduates to help create a more just society and world.

Second, the Summit process provided a realistic picture of both the successes and the shortcomings of Earlham’s diversity efforts. Those successes serve to encourage us with the sense that change is possible; those shortcomings serve to challenge us to do better in our efforts to pursue our vision.

Third, the Summit Team report reminded us that the charge to the Diversity Progress Committee (DPC) has given the committee a role beyond merely monitoring progress toward our diversity goals (as important as that function is). The DPC also has the companion responsibility to analyze and interpret the data it collects and to identify priorities for more effectively pursuing those goals. As a result of the Summit Team's work, the DPC should give more focused attention to partnership with the various units of the College which are responsible for taking action with respect to diversity.

Fourth, as the DPC does its work, it should be mindful of the breadth of the Vision Statement. Accordingly, the DPC ought to seek ways to emphasize not only the aim of justice by recruiting and representing traditional target groups (including gender, race, and culture) but also the aim of educational richness by including attention to socio-economic, religious, political, intellectual and other groups so that the diversity of students' learning experiences at Earlham prepares them to engage respectfully with the full range of diversity in the wider world. The DPC remains committed to highlighting these forms of diversity in all that we do together -- recruitment and retention of faculty, staff and students, the academic curriculum, and co-curricular life of community members.

Highlights of the 2007-08 Diversity Progress Report

Academic Life:

In the general education core, courses designated as "domestic diversity" offerings have increased (22 in 2006-07 vs. 25 in 2007-08) and those designated as "international diversity" have also increased (38 in 2006-07 vs. 41 in 2007-08). Diversity is a theme in a few more Earlham Seminars this year (63% of ES offerings had diversity as a theme this year vs. 57% last year). A total of 22 Interpretive Practices courses were offered in 2007-08, with 55% having diversity content (vs. 62% in 2006-07), while there were 23 Comparative Practices courses in 07-08, 70% of which included diversity themes (vs. 62% in 06-07). Overall, there were 109 courses in the general education core in 2007-08 that had a diversity focus (vs. 91 such courses in 2006-07). It seems reasonable to conclude that diversity is well-represented in Earlham's general education core.

There are certainly other courses with diversity themes in the curriculum – other general education offerings (e.g. in the arts, languages, sciences), elective options (e.g. off-campus programs, social sciences, philosophy, religion), and courses taken for academic majors and minors. At this point, no comprehensive review of diversity in these curricular arenas exists. This may be a task for the Curricular Policy Committee to undertake, perhaps through annual unit plans done by departments and programs. Of course, such an inventory would require careful thought about the meaning of "diversity," which might be a useful question for us to address.

Within academic majors, 40% of our 30 majors have some form of diversity requirement. An additional 30% having optional diversity courses that students may take.

Beyond the classroom, nearly half of faculty Professional Development Fund and Ford/Knight projects had diversity content. Approximately half of the Convocations and Artist and Lecture events also had themes of diversity.

Should Earlham do more to promote diversity within its academic program? Should we pay more attention to the specific forms of diversity represented (i.e. international, racial, socio-economic, political)? In terms of the assessment of student learning, what do we hope our students will have learned through their engagement with diversity? How important is the element of respect for alternative perspectives? What do our students actually take away from their diversity-related courses? And, in terms of process, who should be responsible for addressing these questions (i.e. Curricular Policy Committee, the Academic Dean) and what approach should be taken to promoting more diversity in the academic realm – institutional encouragement, incentives for professional development, shaping of hiring priorities?

Co-Curricular Life:

Earlham Student Government gave particular attention this year to the appointment of members of traditionally underrepresented to committees. The planners of student events strived to incorporate diversity into those events and to appeal to a broad range of student interests. Four student organizations cooperated to sponsor several activities related to racial diversity. Three new student organizations with a focus on international diversity were initiated. In residence life, a variety of housing options fostered experiences with diversity, including foci on religion, sexual orientation, culture, race, and social values (peace).

Special efforts were made to engage Fall sport athletes in New Student Orientation. Athletes also reached out to the Richmond community through volunteering and supporting local agencies. The Bonner Center for Service and Vocation focused on involving international students in volunteer service and vocational counseling.

The hiring of diverse staff who can relate well to Earlham's diverse student population has been a priority for both Campus Safety & Security and the Counseling Service. Some special programming has focused on Native American culture and on issues related to mental health in relation to international experiences.

In campus religious life, a variety of activities and events (e.g. Faith & Values luncheons, dinners sponsored by different faith groups) were held that celebrated and affirmed various religious beliefs. A panel discussion involving local religious leaders of differing faiths addressed issues of religion and sexuality.

Goals and plans for 2008-09 include continuing to sponsor events and programs that emphasize diversity (e.g. speakers, artistic events, cultural festivals, Black History Month, Pride Week, residence hall programs), involving students in GLCA diversity meetings, providing diversity training for residence life staff and Campus Safety & Security officers, increasing service and vocational opportunities for international students and students of color, expanding academic enrichment training with regard to disabilities (e.g. Autism Spectrum Disorder), revising our policies and procedures for students with disabilities, seeking greater diversity in the counseling staff, and enhancing interfaith religious dialogues.

Challenges identified in the co-curricular area include identifying financial resources to support expanded diversity training, working on improving the atmosphere of welcome for students whose backgrounds are underrepresented at Earlham (e.g. Indiana, first generation, conservative), developing paying internships locally to attract underrepresented populations, and striving to overcome cultural barriers to seeking counseling.

A special challenge during the 2007-08 year was the abrupt departure of the Associate Dean for Diversity and the fact that that position remained vacant for the rest of that academic year. As we go through the 2008-09 year, it will be important to re-activate and re-vitalize the focus on multi-cultural affairs, particularly with regard to students and to provide administrative leadership in this area.

Recruiting students from diverse identities and backgrounds:

The Admissions Office focused special efforts on multi-cultural recruiting in certain geographic locations (primarily urban areas) with increased success. A variety of networking initiatives were continued and expanded to connect with multi-cultural student populations – including the National Scholarship Service College Fairs, the National Hispanic Institute, the Indiana Latino Institute, High Sight in Chicago, the Indiana Black Expo, and the U.S. Hispanic Leadership Institute. Other multi-cultural recruiting efforts included visits by Earlham admissions officers, including expanded numbers of interviews with multi-cultural students, contact initiatives with African-American and Hispanic students, work with the African-American Advisory Board, and outreach to African-American churches. Special efforts were made to reduce economic barriers faced by multi-cultural applicants – providing travel subsidies for visits to campus, waiving application fees, making realistic offers of financial aid.

The results of these initiatives showed in applications and enrollment for the Fall of 2008. The application pool of multi-cultural students included a 71% increase in applications from African-American students, a 10% increase in Hispanic applicants, and a 29% increase in Asian-American applicants. Enrollment showed some successes – a 16% increase in African-American students and a 160% increase in Asian-American students, as well as a 24% increase in international enrollees. The geographical diversity of enrolling students of color increased, with 72% of that group coming from outside Indiana. Unfortunately, the percentage of enrolling Hispanic students decreased by 25%.

Plans for 2008-09 include involving current students as multi-cultural admissions ambassadors and increasing receptions and off-campus interviews for multi-cultural students. Other efforts from the previous year will be continued. The Admissions Office is also committed to developing a better measure of socio-economic diversity to facilitate more effective planning and tracking of recruiting initiatives in that area.

It remains challenging to convince urban multi-cultural students that they should come to Earlham and Richmond. Providing financial aid sufficient to allow high-need students to attend Earlham is particularly difficult in a time of budget pressures. Likewise, budget limitations make it harder to devote resources to new programs and initiatives.

Recruiting faculty and staff who reflect our diverse and multifaceted world:

In hiring, the percentage of staff who represent multi-cultural backgrounds rose in 2007-08 to 9.2% (vs. 7.1% the previous year). Additionally, of five new tenure-track faculty hires, 60% were women, one of whom was international/Hispanic. The percentage of overall teaching faculty associated with an identifiable minority group remained essentially stable (22.8% in 2007-08 vs. 22.2% the previous year). The percentage of teaching faculty who are identified as Black increased slightly in 2007-08 (8.3% vs. 7.1% last year) and those identified as Asian decreased a bit (8.3% in 07-08 vs. 9.1% in 06-07).

The handbook for teaching faculty searches was re-written, with an enhanced focus on recruitment of minority faculty. Preliminary planning was also begun for a new partnership with the University of New Mexico to recruit Hispanic and Native-American doctoral candidates as visiting faculty for a year (with the hope of attracting them to apply for permanent positions).

Goals for 2008-09 include planning diversity training programs for staff and supervisor training. With eight tenure-track searches scheduled for 08-09, there is good opportunity for further progress on recruiting multi-cultural faculty. Efforts will be made to encourage active affirmative action strategies for those searches. We will seek to appoint a new Affirmative Action Officer to assist in this process. The partnership with the University of New Mexico will be finalized and implemented, with the first Minority Fellowship beginning in August of 2009.

Challenges facing this area include further development of Banner analysis for staff to provide information to guide Affirmative Action efforts and the possible development of a Human Resources database. With regard to teaching faculty, a major challenge is that of competing effectively with other institutions in attracting minority candidates (including starting salaries, start-up funds for research and identifying attractive job opportunities for candidates' partners in the local area).

Agenda for the Diversity Progress Committee in 2008-09:

As an outgrowth of the Diversity Summit process, it seems clear that the Diversity Progress Committee should assume (as its charge already suggests) a more activist role in promoting the pursuit of the goals contained in Earlham's Diversity Aspirations Vision Statement. This certainly involves continuing to collect and disseminate annual information from the various administrative units of the college. However, it also extends to the analysis and interpretation of that that information and to the heightening and maintaining of wide community awareness of both our progress and possible strategies for extending that progress.

For the immediate future, the following seem to be important priorities for the Diversity Progress Committee:

- 1) Facilitate the exploration of the broad meaning of diversity inherent in our Vision Statement

- 2) Develop additional ways of assessing our progress across the spectrum of diversity that we intend to pursue at Earlham
- 3) Propose specific initiatives for promoting diversity that can be considered by Earlham's administrative and governance structures
- 4) Create more effective ways of enhancing community awareness of both our progress and our challenges in relation to our diversity goals