

Eastern Connecticut State University

Comprehensive Diversity Plan

2008 – 2013

Approved: February 2010

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## Eastern Connecticut State University

### **Strategic Initiative 4.5**

Benchmark 4.5.1 Develop and implement a Comprehensive Diversity Plan that supports the Strategic Plan at Eastern 2008-2013.

Eastern will develop and implement a comprehensive diversity plan that addresses creating a welcoming university environment, enhancing efforts for a diverse workforce, supporting a diverse student population, and enhancing programs and other offerings.

Benchmark 4.5.2 Action steps and budget implications will be presented in order to institutionalize the achievement of favorable levels of workforce diversity, favorable levels of student diversity, and favorable levels of curricula and co-curricular activities.

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### **Summary**

The Comprehensive Diversity Plan is a blueprint for including diversity within the fabric of the culture at Eastern. This plan is based on a paradigm shift from thinking about diversity as compliance and regulatory behavior to embracing diversity as core to the university mission. Further, this plan is based on a spirit of collaboration and sharing of data and best practices. Inclusion is a core value for individuals to reach their potential. Therefore, the intention in the presentation of the Comprehensive Diversity Plan 2008-2013 is not to establish quotas or strict timelines. Rather, the intention is to present a plan for our future based on a commonly shared university diversity definition and qualitative and quantitative data in three primary areas (campus climate, institutional viability, education and other programs).

Eastern has a longstanding history of commitment to policies and practices of non-discrimination. Already in place at Eastern are a Chief Diversity Officer, and an approved Affirmative Action Plan (that provides practices for hiring). Further, there are many initiatives and diversity program offerings already in place.

The existing Office of Equity and Diversity, under the direction of the Chief Diversity Officer, provides leadership for university compliance with all state and federal laws regarding non-discrimination, sexual harassment and other forms of employment discrimination. The purpose of the Comprehensive Diversity Plan 2008-2013 is to provide a vision beyond legal compliance, connecting good practice to the strategic planning initiatives; and the transformation of Eastern to a public liberal arts university of first choice.

The Comprehensive Diversity Plan is needed to go beyond existing practice. Our goal is to institutionalize our commitment to diversity by:

- 1) By providing a new organizational learning design connecting diversity to the university mission, core values, and other strategic planning implementations;
- 2) By providing qualitative and quantitative data for reporting in three focused areas: campus climate, institutional viability, and education and other programs; and
- 3) By providing a process for future reporting and communication on diversity at Eastern based on research, data collection and other collaboration initiatives.

*Our History:* The first meeting of the Diversity Race and Justice Advisory Committee (DRJC) was in May 2007. The President of the University and the University Senate appointed the first committee members on April 17, 2007. Additional volunteer members to the Diversity Race and Justice Advisory Committee were added in 2008, consistent with other strategic planning design committees.

**Benchmark 4.5.1: By the spring of 2008, develop a five year comprehensive diversity plan.**

*Amendment of plan dates:* SIPS amended the time line for completing the development of a five-year comprehensive diversity plan from the spring of 2008 to the spring of 2009. The five year period that is covered for the Comprehensive Diversity Plan remains: 2008-2013.

The Comprehensive Diversity Plan (4.5.1) uses qualitative and quantitative data on the current environment at Eastern. Further, it provides recommendations for implementation of strategies that are university wide.

***The Comprehensive Diversity Plan 2008-2013 includes the following:***

- I. A definition for diversity.
- II. Qualitative and quantitative data on the status of campus diversity in the following areas:
  - a) Campus climate,
  - b) Institutional Viability: Workforce and student populations, and
  - c) Education and other programs offerings.
- III. Recommendations
- IV. Budget (Revised budget<sup>1</sup>)

**I. Diversity Definition:**

The starting point in developing the Comprehensive Diversity Plan was to create a common language for how diversity will be defined at Eastern. The DRJ Committee researched the definition of diversity to assure consistency with the university core values, mission and vision. Feedback on the proposed definition was obtained through open forums held with students, faculty and administrators during the fall 2008 and spring 2009.

The diversity definition is as follows:

*Diversity at Eastern Connecticut State University is defined by a commitment to inclusive excellence<sup>2</sup>; providing a welcoming campus environment and a learning community supportive of our differences and similarities through the dimensions of race, ethnicity, class, national origin, religion, learning styles, ability, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, age, individual thought, and global perspectives.*

Recommendation:

Adopt and communicate the diversity definition campus wide. The definition should be approved by the University Senate for campus buy-in.

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<sup>1</sup> See President's letter of approval- February 2010 (reference PAC: President's Advisory Committee.

<sup>2</sup> Inclusive excellence is defined as: the connection of educational quality with efforts of diversity. Inclusion is a core value at Eastern Connecticut State University.

## **II. Data Collection in three areas: Campus Climate, Institutional Viability, Education and Other Program Offerings**

The next area addressed was data collection. Baseline data was needed in three areas: campus climate, institutional viability, and education and other program offerings.

### **Campus Climate:**

Creating a welcoming campus climate environment enriches campus life and assists individuals in reaching their potential. In the fall of 2007 President Nunez requested that the Diversity Race and Justice Advisory Committee (DRJ) administer a campus climate survey. A campus climate survey was developed by the Diversity Race and Justice (DRJ) Committee in the spring of 2008 and was administered in the spring and fall of 2008. The purpose of the survey was to provide baseline data about the perceptions of the university campus climate by different segments of our population<sup>3</sup>. A major benefit of doing such a survey is that the data can be used to help us institutionalize the university core value of “inclusion”.

There is a correlation between perceptions of individual fairness and the ability to achieve in an environment (for both students and employees). Thus the quality of university life is enhanced by a positive campus climate. Many universities administer campus climate surveys as part of their diversity goals (i.e. Northeastern, Kent State, University of North Carolina, University of California, etc).

Summary of Procedure for Collection of Campus Climate Baseline Data at Eastern:  
Two campus climate survey instruments were developed: one for students and one for employees (faculty, staff and administrators). The Eastern Committee on Using Human Subjects for Research approved both surveys prior to their use. The surveys were constructed after intensive research by the DRJ Committee members. Consultants for this project included: Dean Donnie Perkins of Northeastern, and Dr. Steve Michael of Kent State.

Summary of survey sample and procedures: The first administration of the survey in the spring of 2008 resulted in 226 employee respondents and 229 student respondents. The DRJ Committee agreed to administer the survey again in the fall 2008 in order to increase the number of survey participants. Employee survey: The spring 2008 and fall

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<sup>3</sup> Notation: Revisions for future campus climate surveys were recommended by the President and President’s Advisory Council (PAC).

2008 survey results for employees were combined for data analysis purposes (only employees who had not participated in the spring survey were asked to complete the fall survey). The total number of employee participants was 364 (spring 2008 and fall 2008 combined).

Student survey: Only students who completed the survey in the fall 2008 were included for data analysis purposes. There were a total of 1143 students who participated in the survey administered in the fall of 2008.

Dr. Brian Lashley, Director of Institutional Research and Dr. Madeleine Fugere, Associate Professor in Psychology provided the data analysis for the campus survey. Conclusions from the baseline data indicate that there were overall very positive aspects found in the existing campus climate; however, there were some areas of the campus climate that should be addressed.

#### General Findings from Campus Climate Survey 2008:

Three general areas from the campus climate survey were analyzed for this report:

- Eastern is a diverse community.
- The leadership at Eastern fosters respect for diversity on campus.
- The climate in the classroom/ work environment is accepting of who I am.

General Findings 2008: The campus climate survey identified positive perceptions and areas for improvement. Although general responses were favorable, there were segments of the Eastern population (i.e. based on race/ ethnicity/ gender, etc.) that have less favorable responses.

*See Appendix 1 for a further review of the 2008 campus climate survey data.*

#### **Recommendations:**

- A campus climate survey should be administered every three years.
- The data from the 2008 survey should be reviewed and discussed at department levels.
- Increase mentoring supports for faculty and students.
- Highlight and communicate best practices for mentoring, teaching and modeling techniques.
- Increase student experiences that support living in a diverse campus environment.

### **Institutional Viability:**

Our next challenge was to address institutional viability. This was to review how we admit and retain a diverse student population, and how we hire and promote a diverse employee population. The base line data on institutional viability included in this plan addresses accessibility by various populations to aspects of the university community; specifically, student admissions, student major selection and success, student persistence, retention, and graduation, hiring, departmental compositions, promotion and tenure. Data on admissions, hiring, recruitment, promotion and retention are essential elements for assessing diversity progress over time. In the future, there may be additional areas of review.

*See Appendix II for baseline data on institutional viability.*

### **Recommendations:**

- Consider the use of base line data on institutional viability when a department reviews department goals.
- Share outcomes with the Diversity and Social Justice Council for university wide communication.

### **Education and Program Offerings:**

The next step in developing a plan was to solicit data on the types of programs and educational offerings related to diversity that were available at Eastern. The DRJ Committee assumption was that program offerings provide students and members of the Eastern university community with opportunities that enrich understandings of various aspects of diversity, that such offerings should be consistent with a university definition of diversity, and that such offerings should represent best practices.

The Diversity Race and Justice Committee collected qualitative baseline data on academic education and other program offerings at Eastern during the academic year-2008-2009. This is a starting point for developing a system for disseminating, communicating and sharing of best practices in the programs we offer.

*See Appendix III for baseline data on education and other program offerings at Eastern.*

The Departments that voluntarily participated in completing the survey on program offerings (fall 2008 and spring 2009) were as follows:



<i>Academic and Other Departments</i>	<i>Student Affairs and Administration Depts.</i>
Admissions	Equity and Diversity
Education	Gallery and Museum Services
English	Human Resources
Environmental and Earth Science	Information Technology
History	Institutional Advancement
Math	Public Safety
Performing Arts	University Relations
Psychology	Student Affairs (including Centers)
School of Continuing Education	
Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work	
Visual Arts	
First Year Program	

**Recommendations:**

- Each department should identify a specific diversity goal that would be included in their annual planning and programs.
- Develop for the university a diversity scorecard<sup>4</sup> that aligns, identifies and communicates education and program offerings.
- Share best practices among departments through existing forums such as through the Teacher Excellence Center.

**General Recommendations for the Comprehensive Diversity Plan**

The Comprehensive Diversity Plan Recommends:

- Develop a university wide diversity definition.
- Provide ongoing qualitative and quantitative data in the areas of campus climate, institutional viability and education and other program offerings.
- Establish a Diversity and Social Justice Council (and the Diversity and Social Justice Collaborative for research and workshops as an arm of the Council).

**1. Adopt a university diversity definition:** It is proposed that the university adopt the following definition for diversity in the fall of 2010:

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<sup>4</sup> The diversity scorecard used by many universities and developed at the University of California is a way of modeling best practices.

*Diversity at Eastern Connecticut State University is defined by a commitment to inclusive excellence<sup>5</sup> through a welcoming campus environment and a learning community supportive of our differences and similarities through the dimensions of race, ethnicity, class, national origin, religion, learning styles, ability, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, age, individual thought, and global perspectives.*

**2. Establish the Diversity and Social Justice Council.** The Diversity and Social Justice Council should be established during the spring 2010. The makeup of the Council will reflect a university-wide commitment to diversity at all levels of the university and will be representative of all major university departments.

*Council Composition:* The Council shall consist of no more than twenty members, representing all aspects of university life. The Council appointments would be made by the following areas: Academic Affairs (1 administrator), Student Affairs (2 general members), Admissions, (1), Advising (1), Budget office/ Fiscal Affairs (1), office of Deans of Arts and Sciences and Education and Professional Studies (2), Facilities (1), police department (1), Presidential appointments (2), faculty appointments by University Senate (6), student government representatives (3), convened by the Chief Diversity Officer (1). The Diversity and Social Justice Council replaces the existing Diversity Race and Justice Advisory Committee, and expands the areas of responsibility beyond the development of a Comprehensive Diversity Plan. The Council advises the Chief Diversity Officer.

*Council Role and Responsibilities:* The Council will provide updates and a bi-annual reporting to the university community on aspects of diversity progress (as noted in the Comprehensive Diversity Plan recommendations). The Council is advisory to the Office of Equity and Diversity. Further, the Council is responsible for the following:

*Develop a Diversity Scorecard<sup>6</sup>:* A diversity scorecard will provide a systemic process for facilitating and communicating in four areas (diversity definition, campus climate, institutional viability, education and other program offerings).

*Establish the Diversity and Social Justice Collaborative:* The Collaborative will be established as the research and program arm of the Diversity and Social Justice Council. The Diversity and Social Justice Collaborative will focus on scholarship,

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<sup>5</sup> Inclusive excellence: a connection of academic quality with the core value of inclusion.

<sup>6</sup> The model for a diversity scorecard was developed at the University of California.

research, conferences and workshops, speakers, dialogue, and publications. The Collaborative supports the work of faculty, staff and administrators who desire to do research or special programming in aspects related to diversity and social justice. Additional funding may be available through grant funding.

Further, the Collaborative (through the Council) is a source for distributing small stipends (three mini-grants per year) to individuals at the university which could be used for research, scholarship or new education and/ or program initiatives.

- 3. *Publicize and communicate the commitment to diversity in all appropriate Strategic Planning Initiatives and Implementation Plans.*** Strategic planning implementation plans should include a diversity goal. Communication about diversity and diversity initiatives should take place at the university level, and also at the department level.

**Outcomes:** The outcome is to have diversity enrich the university's strategic initiative implementation. Further, this Diversity Plan relies on the ongoing use of data for assessment and accountability. It also relies on specificity within departments about the diversity goals they are working on that are consistent with the Comprehensive Diversity Plan. (This means that each department addresses aspects of the Comprehensive Diversity Plan that are most beneficial to their work.)

**Assessment:** All recommendations should be assessed during implementation phase.

**Budget:**<sup>7</sup>

**Benchmark 4.5.2: By Academic Years 2008-2013, action steps and budget implications will be presented in order to institutionalize the achievement of favorable levels of workforce diversity in hiring and retention, favorable levels of student diversity in admissions and graduation, favorable levels of diversity programming in curricula and co-curricular activities.**

The overall goal of benchmark 4.5.2 is achieved through existing reporting systems that were established prior to the development of the Comprehensive Diversity Plan. Specifically, this area is addressed through the development of the existing Affirmative Action Plan and the Student Enrollment Plan for the university. Additional overall

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<sup>7</sup> See President's Letter of Approval and budget, February 2010 (PAC).

support will be provided through the implementation of benchmark 4.5.1 (Comprehensive Diversity Plan).

For example, the following reports that address benchmark 4.5.2 are available:

- Affirmative Action Plan: Hiring and employee non-discrimination recruitment and promotion plan (state required).
- University Enrollment Management Report and annual reporting of student data: Eastern reports annually student data including admissions and enrollment.
- Non-discrimination policies and procedures: Policies and procedures are located in the student and employee university handbook.

**Recommendations:**

Benchmark 4.5.2 is addressed through existing reporting practices of the Office of Equity and Diversity, Institutional Research and Admissions and Enrollment Management. It is recommended that the Diversity and Social Justice Council (see benchmark 4.5.1) become familiar with these existing reports.