Diversity & Inclusion Campus Report

Spring 2015

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Introduction

The University of West Georgia (UWG) is experiencing unprecedented enrollment growth. Under the leadership of President Kyle Marrero, UWG has implemented a strategic plan to better align academic initiatives, service units, and facilities to meeting the needs of an increasing diverse faculty, staff, and student body.

The creation of the Presidential Committee on Campus Inclusion (PCCI) is an initiative created by the president to begin the process of developing a six-year Diversity and Inclusiveness Plan for the university. Under the leadership of Dr. Betsy Dahms and Dr. Lara Willox, the committee is charged with providing Dr. Marrero recommendations to improve diversity and inclusiveness at UWG.

The purpose of this report is to provide the PCCI and President Marrero with the findings and recommendations based on the careful review and consideration of documentation and information gathered during the on-campus visit.

External Consultancy

The PPCI engaged an external consultant to assist with meeting the goals of the committee outlined by Dr. Marrero. The consultant provided professional and neutral evaluation, analysis, and recommendations to improve the campus culture and climate around diversity and inclusion. Specifically, the consultant reviewed current processes and practices associated with diversity initiatives at UWG. The charge was to explore and answer the following questions related to diversity and inclusion:

Comments from the PCCI Student Subcommittee Report

2015

~Dr. Marrero has been doing an intentional effort to engage with the community. Staff and faculty are involved in civic clubs.

~Most UWG students don't understand the difference between diversity and inclusion. There should be more education offered to all students regarding this topic, not only to student leaders, but also to all students.

~Some students do not feel comfortable celebrating religious holiday and reserving rooms to celebrate these holidays. For example, at University Suites (one of the residence halls), some students wanted to celebrate Dia de la Rosca (Mexican Holiday)

- What are the historical perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors regarding diversity and inclusion (D&I) at the University of West Georgia?
- What systems and processes are currently in place to support diversity and inclusion efforts?
- What systems and structures need to be implemented, possibly consolidated, and/or strengthened in support of D&I?
- What type of systems and models would be most supported and realistic for a Chief Diversity Officer role at UWG?
- What are the realistic fiscal, human, and structural resources available or could be made available to sustain D&I initiatives?
- What are the best methods to assist UWG with holding colleges, units, and departments accountable for D&I efforts?

On-Campus Visit

The consultant conducted on-campus discussions on April 1st to 3rd, 2015. The visit started with a dinner meeting with President Kyle Marrero, Dr. Lara Willox, Co-Chair of the PCCI and Dr. Mike Hester, PCCI member to set the scope and expectations of the campus visit. The following day, the consultant met with various members of the campus community that included the Vice President of Business and Finance, International Services and Programs staff, Center for Student Involvement staff, Adult Learners and Veterans staff, Staff Advisory Council, ADVANCE Grant Principle Investigators, Center for Diversity and Inclusion, LEAD student participants, and the Presidential Committee on Campus Inclusion.

The last day of the campus visit started with a follow-up meeting with President Marrero. Meetings continued with Human Resources staff, the Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, and concluded with lunch with the Association of Black Faculty and Staff.

Each individual and group interview started with an explanation of the process and an explicit re-assurance by the consultant that no responses will be attributed to individuals in the report to encourage open and honest feedback. During the on-campus visit, the consultant was provided additional reports and documentations about various diversity initiatives and departmental functions associated with diversity and inclusion.

Prior to the visit, the consultant was provided with documents that included the University Strategic Plan, University Fact Book, President Marrero's Charge Letter to the PCCI, PCCI members, current list of Diversity and Inclusion resources on campus, University Organizational Chart, and a draft of the Campus Climate Survey. The PCCI also completed White Papers on aspirant institutions and made those available as well. Additionally, the consultant attended PCCI meetings through Google video conference call, telephonic conference calls, and during the on-campus visit.

The assessment and evaluation of UWG's D&I programs and services and its future direction must be conducted within the framework and in alignment with the institutional Strategic Plan through 2014-2020. The following sections will provide recommendations based on the overall impression of UWG's current and future potential for assessing and sustaining diversity and inclusion efforts.

> *Coordination and collaboration is needed to increase awareness across campus of the ways in which diversity and inclusion are already prioritized by some faculty and departments.*
>
> *~Faculty Committee Report, PCCI, 2015*

Overall Impressions of University of West Georgia's D&I Climate

There is a renewed energy and excitement around the possibility of productive growth and change amongst faculty and staff. This excitement is attributed to President Marrero's leadership style that many described as encouraging bold ideas, accountability, team-work, transparency, realism, and student-centered. As a result of President Marrero's vision for UWG, the "Go West" campaign is the unifying message leading UWG in development, recruitment, retention, and student success.

Several factors have led to institutional growth: realized proximity to Atlanta, Georgia, an emerging Nursing Program, Division II success in select athletic sports, affordability, and continuous growth of the student body, specifically, female students. UWG recognizes that the culture and climate on campus is changing and the need to proactively engage change rather than react is paramount to sustaining positive growth.

In addition to the stated factors above, UWG has experienced significant leadership changes at various levels at the institution. One of the challenges with new leadership is "on boarding" faculty and staff to a new culture and mindset of operating. These challenges and opportunities with regard to diversity and inclusion are highlighted throughout this report and should assist in determining the next steps for UWG's diversity and inclusiveness plan. To move to the next level of service with regard to diversity and inclusivity, the following "Strategic Initiatives" are put forth. These initiatives are intended to strengthen the overall D&I climate at UWG, while pointing out potential areas of growth and opportunity.

Collected Data

Data collected from interviews revealed the following themes:

1. Climate
2. Trust and Retaliation
3. Staff Orientation and Retention
4. Hiring and Promotion
5. Community

> *Third, inclusiveness requires tending to the overall culture of campus that is "celebrating our diversity, our collaborative spirit, and creating a welcoming campus that is emotionally and physically safe for all"*
>
> *~Faculty Committee Report, PCCI, 2015*

Climate

Observations and interviews with various constituent groups revealed the obvious, that UWG is a diverse campus with multiple subcultures and identities. It is highly likely for students to only engage in their cultural group without stepping outside of their comfort zone. This exclusion does not appear to be intention, but a product of the environment that exists at UWG. Themed programs such as Hispanic Preview Day and International Night are well attended by Hispanic and International students. There is not a concerted effort to emphasize the importance of cross cultural engagement or involvement by students from different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. With continuous enrollment growth, the student body will continue to become more diverse. Therefore, interactions inside and outside of the classroom should reflect similar diversity to prepare students to be productive in a global society.

Faculty and staff described the campus climate as welcoming, but not diverse considering the demographics for women and underrepresented groups. With such close proximity to Atlanta, the perception is that UWG should be more progressive and attractive to professionals wanting access to a large metropolitan city. To the contrary, many interviewees described UWG as an institution with unlimited potential that keeps missing opportunities to move to the next level.

Trust and Retaliation

Faculty and staff discussed in detail a disconnect between administration and faculty/staff. Specifically, faculty and staff didn't feel that there was a genuine desire to make meaningful change at all levels of the institution. Interviewees shared that those who spoke out seemed to be shunned or demoted if they decided to stay at UWG. Statements shared during the interview process focused on not trusting the administration to do the right things regarding diversity, hiring, promotion, and tenure. Interviewees further stated that under previous administrations, the same structures and systems were allowed to stay in place and were not held accountable for actions that were detrimental to staff morale and the university. There seemed to be a sense of renewed hope and optimism due to the actions and decisions that President Marrero have made in a short period of time regarding

compensation, shared governance, accessibility, and commissioning of the Presidential Committee on Campus Inclusion.

Staff Orientation and Retention

Overwhelmingly, there seems to be a desire for more professional development opportunities at UWG. The need for professional development in the form of diversity education, diversity training, and diversity awareness for current and new faculty and staff was a consistent theme across most groups. There is a perception of "systemic stagnation" from not retaining faculty and staff who were invested in UWG. Interviewees shared that lagging salaries, lack of accountability, and micro aggressions towards those who speak up have contributed to the attrition of women and ethnic minorities leaving UWG, not always for better financial opportunities, but for better cultural and working environments.

Hiring and Promotion

Several faculty and staff talked at length about the lack of women in leadership roles at UWG. Specifically, among the academic leadership ranks, women deans and department heads are few. The explanation given for this disparity was lack of accountability for hiring practices and processes in colleges and units.

> *To contextualize this disparity, UWG's Black student population meets the Federal definition of "Black Serving non-HBCU" and qualifies for Federal funding under Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965, yet less than 40 of its more than 450 faculty members are Black.*
>
> *~Faculty Committee Report, PCCI, 2015*

Interviewees stated that training on how to conduct inclusive searches is needed. Additionally, other institutional barriers such as homogeneous search committees, inappropriate questions during the search process, and low starting offers contributed to women and other minorities declining offers.

Community

The City of Carrollton is disconnected from the University. Although the economic impact of nearly 12,000 students and 1,400 faculty and staff is significant, many interviewees felt underappreciated by the City of Carrollton. A significant number of faculty and staff do not reside in Carrollton for a number of reasons, but most agreed that the town and gown relationship is severely lacking. Issues with international students and lease agreements, entertainment and party facilities, and profiling are issues that seem to plague most college towns. However, interviewees stressed that the above-mentioned issues have begun to escalate over the years due to the city's failure to understand that UWG is no longer a "small country school" and will continue to grow. The challenge, as explained by

one interviewee, is to get the administration to develop relationships with the city and plan growth for UWG and Carrollton collaboratively instead of reacting to growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The "Strategic Initiatives" listed below are recommendations based on a review of documents provided to understand UWG's Strategic Plan, mission, the PCCI white papers, and interviews with faculty, staff, and student groups. Recommendations are made in the context of best practices and emerging practices for creating and sustaining pluralistic communities that value and respect diversity as a measure of institutional excellence. The recommendations are intended to provide a framework for deeper conversations and implementation of strategies to create a more diverse and inclusive campus climate at UWG.

Strategic Initiative 1.0

Diversity of Faculty and Staff

The racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of the faculty and staff is disproportionate to the diversity of the student body. Furthermore, the number of women in leadership roles is also inconsistent with the demographics of UWG.

Recommendations:

- Review hiring and promotion processes, practices, and procedures to ensure access and equity is consistent across colleges and units.
- Human resources should be engaged in all hiring processes to ensure that minimum diversity and equity standards and best practices are followed across colleges and units. This includes but is not limited to: reviewing position descriptions, reviewing and recommending the placement of ads in diverse networks and publications, reviewing hiring committees ethnic and gender make-up, requiring a hiring matrix for all search committees, and written justification/documentation of hiring and promotion decisions.
- Require human resource training for Vice Presidents, department heads, deans, and search committee chairs of colleges and units. Training should address topics related to hiring with regard to diversity, disability, sexual orientation, gender, class, gender expression, and veteran's status.
- Review and amend policies and practices that do not take into consideration discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender expression.
- Better organize, develop, and engage Affinity Groups to assist with recruitment and retention efforts of faculty and staff. A model to consider is having these groups coordinated through External Relations or the Alumni Association with intentional purpose and programs to assist UWG with welcoming and networking new faculty and staff to the community.
- Establish staff development opportunities that educate, train, and empower faculty and staff to lean into their discomfort with diversity related issues.

Strategic Initiative 2.0

Re-establish Institutional Trust

Interviews suggested that over time, discussions and decisions regarding diversity and inclusion were not genuine. Due to inaction or lack of commitment by top administrators, a sense of distrust or business as usual regarding diversity became the norm.

Recommendations:

- Building institutional trust over time requires trust and transparency. Communicate information to the university community on the context of why decisions are made regarding issues of diversity and inclusion (i.e, budget implications, state or federal requirements, etc.)
- Consistently engage stakeholders through frequent communication with social media or other media that acknowledges the diversity, accomplishments, and uniqueness of UWG faculty, staff, and students.
- Meet consistently with Affinity groups, clubs, and social networks with updates on diversity and inclusion initiatives and use these groups to solicit feedback and assistance.
- Review the role and scope of the ombuds positions. The ombuds space should be a resource for faculty, staff, and students when they are in need of impartial advice or assistance. Ultimately, this is a place where concerns can be expressed, disputes resolved, and conflicts managed. Proper selection and training for these positions are crucial for establishing institutional trust. These positions should be independent, confidential, and neutral.

Strategic Initiative 3.0

D&I Capacity Building

There are a host of individuals, departments, and offices involved in different aspects of diversity and inclusion at UWG. The challenge is to collectively focus the efforts on institutional culture change by making diversity and inclusion a priority for administration, all colleges, and units.

Recommendations:

- Identify individuals, departments, and offices that currently do diversity work and align their efforts with the Diversity Strategic Plan.
- Conduct a comprehensive program review to update diversity offices and departments with CAS standards and best practices outlined through ACPA and NASPA Core Competencies around diversity, leadership, and student engagement.
- Review the curriculum and look for opportunities to intentionally infuse diversity into the curriculum and co-curricular activities.
- Consider the creation of a diversity certificate program broadly focused on domestic and global diversity and awareness.
- Encourage and promote the creation of offices, programs, services, and networks that provide safe spaces for all identifiable marginalized communities.

- Provide learning opportunities for students to engage in high impact practices associated with diversity and inclusion. Examples of such practices are learning/cultural houses, study abroad, lecture series and debates, service learning, difficult dialogues, and UWG's Courageous Conversations.

Strategic Initiative 4.0

Community Building

UWG's student community openly self-segregate. Observations and conversations with interviewees reinforced that the campus culture is welcoming once students are affiliated or connected with a social, cultural, ethnic, or religious group. Although not intentional, this culture does not optimize opportunities for students to develop an understanding or appreciation of groups that may have different values, world views, or beliefs.

Recommendations:

- Establish student led traditions and programs that bring students together to celebrate and acknowledge the university's core values.
- Develop programmatic opportunities for quality interactions between different subcultures and groups on campus. With assistance from faculty and staff, themed months and holidays should be inclusive, student planned, student led, and educational in nature to maximize learning and engagement opportunities for students.
- Be attentive to the needs and religious considerations of international students with regard to prayer locations and obligations, attire, dietary limitations, language barriers, living arrangements, and travel limitations.
- Explore and implement best and emerging practices for welcoming, retaining, and graduating international students, low socioeconomic students, and first generation students.
- Emphasize the university's commitment to social justice, civility, and respect as values that guide UWG's campus community in print media, social media, and other marketing materials.
- Ensure ADA considerations are at the forefront of current and future curricular and co-curricular planning and development.
- Universally accessible physical and virtual environments should be planned and discussed for new and renovated spaces.
- Gain a better understanding of the socioeconomic status and privilege that may exist between Greek and non-Greek communities and the tension it may cause on campus.
- Consider tasking External Relations with enhancing the town and gown relationship with the City of Carrollton. Co-programming welcoming activities with the city and local Chamber is a way for student organizations to begin collaborating and building relationships with the Carrollton community.

Strategic Initiative 5.0

Define Diversity

Interviews and observations revealed that there is not a clear understanding of the value of diversity at the University of West Georgia. The overwhelming sentiment is that ethnic and racial diversity is all that matters. The PCCI is in the process of developing a definition for diversity for UWG. This definition should recognize diversity broadly and inclusively while differentiating the uniqueness of all groups.

Recommendations:

- Develop a theoretical or conceptual framework to operationalize diversity and inclusion efforts at UWG.
- Acknowledge what diversity means at UWG with regard to accepting and respecting other cultures, religions, sexual orientation, veterans, age, class, gender, disability, etc.
- Incorporate strategies of Inclusive Excellence into diversity practices and publications.
- Consider the future composition of the PCCI to include Faculty and Staff Co-chairs.
- Incorporate diversity statements in print and social media.
- Create a web presence that highlights diversity and inclusion efforts at UWG.

Strategic Initiative 6.0

Creation of a Chief Diversity Officer Position

The need for a diversity and inclusion officer was consistent across all groups. Currently, UWG does not have an individual or office charged with marshalling diversity resources and strategically advancing diversity and inclusion efforts.

Recommendations:

- Create a Senior Diversity Officer (SDO) at the Senior Leadership Level that sits on the President's Cabinet.
- Fund the SDO position at the Vice President level.
- Consider the SDO having a dual reporting relationship to the President and the Provost.
- Provide support staff and space for the SDO to adequately operate, facilitate, and implement goals of the Diversity and Inclusion Plan.
- Appropriately fund D&I initiatives and efforts to emphasize importance and sustainability.
- Charge the SDO with coordinating and leading efforts to assess the productivity and success of current programs, policies, practices, and services that impact campus climate and culture.
- Empower the SDO to conduct an equity study of colleges and units with regard to tenure, promotions, and salary.
- Refer to the Draft SDO Position Description for recommended qualifications and duties of the SDO.
- With support from the President and Provost, the SDO should have the authority to review, replace, enhance, and recommend changes to programs, policies, practices, and services that do not align or show progress towards goals outlined in the Diversity and Inclusion Plan. The SDO should

appropriately inform university governance bodies and adhere to university governance processes to recommend and implement changes in colleges and units.

Strategic Initiative 7.0

Accountability and Reporting

Aside from the PCCI and those departments and units with diversity in their mission, there does not appear be a sense of universal ownership for diversity at UWG. Making the campus welcoming and inclusive should be everyone's responsibility.

Recommendations:

- Create a Council on Climate and Diversity (CCD) that consists of Vice Presidents and Deans to engage them in the issues, challenges, and recommendations from the PCCI.
- Hold colleges and units accountable for hiring, promotion, and tenure through the use of performance measures and metrics. The SDO and Institutional Research should develop and evaluate the metrics with colleges and units before implementing.
- Require an annual assessment of colleges and units to show progress towards diversity and inclusion goals through open updates and presentations to the CCD and PCCI, coordinated by the SDO.
- Incentivize colleges and units that show continuous progress towards diversity and inclusion goals through merit, special budget allocations, diversity research and travel grants.
- Celebrate and recognize achievements with diversity and inclusion through the creation of an awards ceremony for faculty, staff, and students.

Conclusion

Throughout the visits with faculty, staff, and students, it was evident that everyone wanted the best for UWG. The challenges for UWG are not insurmountable, but they will require time and patience with a focused plan and champions. With the suggested creation of a Senior Diversity Officer (SDO), and the continued support from the President and Provost, the challenges will become areas of strength. The SDO should use the recommendations listed herein with a comprehensive analysis of the campus climate report to begin crafting a campus Diversity and Inclusion plan.

Moving forward, the genesis of a Diversity and Inclusion plan is within this document. Beyond the Diversity Crisis Model article by Damon Williams, is a recommended resource to assist in mapping each phase of your diversity planning and implementation process. The critical component in this process is ensuring that accountability metrics and measures are in place to consistently revisit, acknowledge, and reward colleges and units that are making progress and professionally push units that are challenged. Go WEST!

References

- Presidential Committee on Campus Inclusion White Papers, Faculty and Student Sub-Committee Reports, 2015.
- President Marrero's Charge Letter for the Presidential Committee on Campus Inclusion, August, 28, 2014.

Resources

Please see email attachments for the resources listed below

1. **What is Chief Diversity Officer**
2. **Beyond the Diversity Crisis Model: Decentralized Diversity Planning and Implementation**
3. **Organizational Diversity Capabilities in Higher Education**
4. **NADOHE Standards**
5. **Achieving Inclusive Excellence**
6. **Effective Practices in Diversity**