

Faculty Caucus Summary Document

Data in this document were gathered at the faculty caucus on equity, inclusivity and campus climate on February 23, 2015. In addition to the 30 or so Faculty Senators who attended, approximately 30 faculty from across campus also attended the caucus. Faculty in attendance recorded their responses to the following questions:

1. What drew you here today? What information & experiences have you had that may inform the Senate's work around equity, inclusivity, and campus climate?
2. What do you see as the most important issues for us to address as a campus around equity, inclusivity and campus climate? What should the work of the Senate focus on in the coming years in light of this?
3. How do we, as a faculty, find ways to more intentionally examine our unconscious institutional biases and how these may be limiting our responses to the challenges we face institutionally?
4. Help us imagine what might a campus committed to equity and quality be like.

These responses were then typed up verbatim and grouped together with like comments. Most of the comments below reflect exactly what faculty recorded with the exception of a few comments, which were edited slightly to preserve anonymity and to improve readability of this document. Comments are grouped into 2 primary headings: Next steps that require funding and next steps that do not require funding. In addition, 1 main theme emerged from the data as well as couple of questions.

In upcoming weeks, this document will be prioritized in response to:

- Feedback from Senators & their constituents
- Feedback from students, faculty, staff, and administration who attend 1 of the 2 upcoming dialogues the Senate will be hosting as a space for faculty, staff, and administration to listen to and learn from students.

These priorities will shape the direction of the Senate's work for the remainder of this year and next year. We look forward to hearing specific ideas from individuals and units across campus about priorities you would like the Senate to pursue.

Next steps we can take that **do not require any financial support:**

Define a core set of values that help to build the culture of success on campus and point to what it is we are working toward with respect to equity, inclusivity, quality (rather than starting first with policies & programs). Then pull these values into all we do; these should define who we are as WWU faculty, who we hire & promote, how we are evaluated, how we develop ourselves, how we design our courses & programs. The Senate should focus on clarifying Western's definition of excellence taking diversity into consideration.

Continued conversations that create change from the bottom up by helping us to

- Build respect and shared vision across disciplines (rather than humanities & social sciences being concerned and science & math faculty being less interested).
- Sustain an ongoing discourse on valuing and supporting diversity to effect a change in our culture & consciousness.
- Have space for informal conversations with colleagues as a way to share ideas and experiences. The current state of the faculty club doesn't meet this need, but perhaps it could be rejuvenated. Openly dialogue as a means of building community and creating an inclusive campus climate.
- More faculty communication about anything. We don't have opportunities to know each other as people.
- Explore new, different, and better ways of responding to our students
- Identify areas that need greater focus for faculty & campus and move to greater specificity (engage concrete ideas), which will bring more faculty involvement.
- Learn from hearing others' perspectives and experiences (especially from our students). Learn about each other. I feel like the biggest obstacle is lack of awareness, both self-awareness of how our lives may be different than the lives of others, and awareness of the experience of others.
- Those experiencing the issues should have a safe space to speak up. Those observing biases must be brave enough to say so. Those practicing must be willing to change.
- Humility & listening more. Talking less. PhD's tend to be highly confident in our views and like to talk a lot. Recognize that although we know a lot, our knowledge has boundaries.
- Not afraid to ask the hard questions and listen to the answers from students and other voices.
- Provide better support for and better understand students and colleagues whose experience and background is different than my own knowing that even those of us who are well-intentioned are likely contributing to marginalization.
- Become better teachers. I want to be sure the climate in my classroom is fair, respectful and equitable. I often talk to students of color & first generation students who don't feel like they have a space and a voice on this campus. Make sure that students and faculty who consider themselves diverse feel included and want to be here.
- See how we are part of the problem so we can find ways to be more a part of the solution. Open ourselves up to learning about the barriers we have constructed.

- Bring the voices of students to our faculty & administration through aggregated data and small group/individual dialogue.
- Actively seek out examples of our own bias and self-reflect. We cannot know about unconscious bias unless we see examples and test ourselves to see if we are personally an example of that type of bias. We must admit and acknowledge bias. (e.g. One unconscious bias I hear often is “If students don’t learn the way I learned, they must be unprepared.”).
- Talk about our own privilege. Experience our own privilege.
- Generate contextualized responses to challenges within various departments and programs
- Collaborate across difference; collective consciousness-raising.
- I hope we can challenge each other without vilifying anyone or calling people out to an extent that shuts people down or excludes people.
- Help my students understand, accept, and celebrate difference
- A space which could be used for ongoing dialogue: a room, a corner, etc, where a question could be discussed for a specific period of time by anyone interested in the question or topic; promoted through campus website (e.g. This weeks’ topic *Ageism in the University*).
- Create spaces where we can change our minds and explore new perspectives (I changed my mind about these issues in the last year but haven’t felt comfortable talking about it with anyone).
- Hold joint student/faculty/staff/administrative cross-discipline dialogues.
- Communicate more effectively with colleagues who do not see the value of diversity. Reaching a point of common understanding among faculty so that people aren’t so reactionary.
- Address **why diversity** matters. Many really don’t know. Simply telling personal stories in which individuals describe themselves could be powerful, perhaps creating a safe space for people who encounter bias to describe it.
- Hold ourselves accountable in what we say and effect change together through taking action. Call it when you see it – directly – civilly.
- Address our reluctance as a faculty to even talk about privilege, inequality, & equity.
- Emphasize the real responsibility we have to empower all of our students and not simply use rhetoric.
- Don’t let faculty opt out of diversity.
- Overcome inertia of our campus in general.

Building background knowledge & conducting ongoing inquiry & research

- Faculty reading groups
- Faculty climate survey (for LGBTQ & faculty of color)
- Analysis of the root causes of the recruitment and retention issues. It seems as though a problem has been identified, but not clearly defined.
- Genuine assessment of structural bias & inequality in the university.
- Data gathering & asking questions of existing data to more clearly see what’s really going on. Actively track progress in the major, all entry into the major, as a function

of ethnicity, class, gender, etc and use that information to hold ourselves accountable at the department level for the success of all students.

- Gathering more data using mixed methods. Gather data on how affected groups experience our teaching environments. Ask the students explicitly!
- More regular & in-depth climate assessments.
- Trainings. Require Safe Zone workshops for all or some version of this.
- Rather than formal or required “training” or workshops, create spaces for students and colleagues to have informed discussions that can be made personal.
- We need to research what minority faculty & students think and experience.

Improved *communication* of information

- Accessing & inquiring into data – value diversity as a practice of inclusivity not just #'s. Define more clearly for WWU faculty (especially those not here today) why diversity is important. For many faculty there is no compelling reason to address diversity.
- Improved communication across campus-wide bodies in general
- Building synergies rather than silos (e.g. Senate & President’s Diversity Task Force; connect to efforts to enhance student academic success as in SSC; collaborations between faculty & work happening in Old Main around inclusivity)

Structural transformation

- Hiring **and retaining** faculty of color and faculty from underrepresented groups (women in the sciences). Our faculty of color are sought out and exhausted. Don’t engage in tokenism (e.g. hiring minorities for the sake of it)
- Value diversity as a practice of inclusivity. Let faculty know that inclusivity as a practice is a highly valued form of understanding & teaching that affects WWU as a whole.
- Institutional reward systems (the tenure & promotion process values and rewards things right now that take time away from what is needed to create a culture where excellence is inclusive). If diversity work is not explicitly in every unit evaluation plan for T&P it won’t happen.
- There should be more incentives for faculty to innovate on courses and work face to face with students.
- Measure and reward inclusive programs & departments.
- Pedagogical approaches – (e.g. I teach remedial classes that are well-known for perpetuating gender & class disadvantages). Change pedagogy.
- Curriculum design (e.g. much of our curriculum is built around ancient categories that inhibit the teaching of material from particular cultures – like oral histories, etc.). Make curriculum relevant.
- Course development to better support all students and creating a space where faculty can learn to do this regardless of disciplines
- A culture of instructors as dynamic learners – “I’m here to begin – a career long project to be a better teacher”

- Restructure the GUR's so they deal with critical consciousness rather than teaching "about the other". Cross curricular diversity learning outcomes in the GURs & all majors.
- Embrace a more transformative approach to education based on an explicit commitment to a set of foundational learning outcomes across the curriculum. These are imperatives of the 21st century but US higher education and WWU still approach them haphazardly at best (e.g. the capacity to collaborate across lines of difference/diversity; global ethics; & ecological stewardship).
- Work on new faculty orientation process so that the expectation of this work is part of every contract & no one can say "not my bag."
- Faculty need to be educated on what diversity & equity mean for their work here.
- Training/opportunities for faculty to explore their biases and behavior (e.g. "Invisible knapsack" list to identify different types of privilege).
- Some professional development that is less like the sexual harassment training could be helpful.
- Can we please offer some undoing racism workshops? Can we find ways to incentivize them? Finding ways to encourage faculty to want to do this rather than feel forced into it.
- Students need to be educated on what diversity & equity look like.
- Student outreach to underserved communities
- Review admissions policies. Remove institutional barriers to acceptance (e.g. SAT scores).
- Intentionally attract and recruit students who are interested in diversity as those who we admit.
- Be empowered by change at all levels to: assessment & program innovation
- Create a sensitive placement process for math & writing and lots of support that does not feel marginalizing.

Create resources we can use across campus in this work/encourage this work across campus

- Reading lists. Find readings that shed light on equity, data, & perhaps highlight effective models. The Senate readings were good.
- Senate can recommend that each department/college convene meetings to discuss these issues and make recommendations on what they can do in response to these challenges.
- Campus climate starts with classroom climate. What tools can we give faculty to recognize their tendencies? How can we incentivize such a process?
- Find resources for supporting faculty to support student success.
- Tap into HR's people & programs.

Integrate diversity physically on campus

- More visual signs of difference on campus (unisex bathrooms, posters, art, music, kosher cafeteria, all buildings with access for individuals with mobility impairment, etc.)

- More food options that match culture & diversity faculty
- More international students
- Intentionally attract and recruit students who are interested in diversity as those who we admit
- A welcoming physical and intellectual place.

Next steps we can take that **require financial support**:

- Structural transformation
 - Class size. Class size. Class size. Class size. Smaller freshman classes.
 - Innovative course development to better support all students
- Putting resources into programs that support and promote diversity (e.g. women, gender, sexuality studies, ACS queer studies, WGSS, ACS, Queer Studies, ESJ minor). Often these programs lack tenure-track faculty, staff, and other resources designated for departments.
- Make funding to implement proven programs a priority. Putting our money where our mouth is and making a financial commitment to diversity and inclusivity.
- More scholarships and research grants for students. Budget + resources for our students.
- Offer resources to make sure that we give our students/faculty the means to succeed.
- More opportunity hires. Commit to hiring more tenure track faculty.
- Reward faculty who serve as liaisons between student ethnic groups & faculty.
- Institutional support for helping faculty create different curricular and pedagogical approaches.

Critical Questions/Ideas to Consider Further:

- How do we protect the structures in place by citing “standards,” “quality,” “excellence” as shields to argue against a diverse student and faculty body? Inclusivity & quality are not opposed, but linked.
- How do we create a space for students and faculty to educate each other?
- Talk about diversity/inclusivity in a truly inclusive way (All socially constructed markers of identity – not just race, LGBT, 1st gen.)
- How do we make sure that all faculty (or the great majority) become involved or committed?

Emergent Theme:

A theme that emerged in much of the feedback can be formulated as a response to this question: *What is our true mission as an institution?*

The following comments led us to identify this question:

- Our conversations around equity and quality will reveal what our true mission as an institution is.
- We need to come together as a community
- Help me understand my mission at Western – it's still forming.
- The Senate should focus on clarifying Western's definition of excellence taking diversity into consideration.
- It seems like Western is reactive – we create programs and allocate funds based on what others want (STEM, etc) rather than creating the types of programs that reflect our values. I hope we become more intentional in our decision making.

And we summarized the data in response to this question as follows: ***Our true mission as an institution is to build a culture of student success, - a culture where all students thrive.***

More specifically, a culture of success would look like:

- Students, faculty, and staff feel safe here; their contributions are valued rather than forcing them to assimilate.
- All on campus to have a sense of belonging
- More programs and policies that foster integration (NOT assimilation) of students and faculty of different backgrounds
- Faculty and students of privileged backgrounds understand & practice the values of inclusivity
- Open dialogue
- Learning together
- Challenging inequities; openly examining institutional biases & our own
- Capitalizing on our capacity to learn as instructors & our history as a university committed to teaching
- WWU should become known as a leader in serving and having a culture of success (this is something we might have greater capacity to do than schools like UW)
- Strengthening our institution's capacity to be an effective agent of social justice & to begin leveling playing field
- Our purpose being to create the world we want, future we want, citizens we want NOT just educate individuals. We all have a stake in future.
- A campus committed to equity and quality would be one where our students make progress toward programmatic goals at or above the level of our peer institutions and where that progress is equally dramatic for students of all backgrounds
- This is not just an issue for people or color or other underrepresented groups to solve and is something we should all be committed to

- Our mission expresses our commitment to learn, adjust, and change to meet the demands and challenges we face.
- Dr. King's "beloved community" might be a good model to strive for.
- A place where we all care about each other and help each other achieve success, - where we seek to build people up rather than wear them down
- "Minority majority."
- A lot more faculty attending commencements, participating in orientation or community-building programs, showing up at events outside of their disciplines and/or that relate to identity groups with which they don't identify
- A shared awareness among faculty and students that inequality does exist and that it compromises our ability to help our students and colleagues succeed.
- Telling students "we hear you."