Diversity Portfolio/eBriefcase

Purpose
Goal 4.1, Initiative 4.1.1 of Strategic Direction #4 in the College of Education and Allied Profession’s (CEAP) Strategic Plan* calls for a Diversity Portfolio/eBriefcase. The purpose of this Diversity Portfolio/eBriefcase is to provide co-curricular educational experiences to students admitted to the undergraduate teacher education program that will promote their knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to diversity and cultural competency. Through these curricular and co-curricular educational experiences and the open exchange of ideas that allow, students can become more reflective thinkers and commit to moving beyond the status quo to address and take action on complex contemporary social issues (Pang & Park, pp. 64-65, as cited in University of Oregon, n.d.).

The Vision, Mission, Goals statement of the CEAP’s Diversity Committee asserts:
Cultural competence is a cornerstone of culturally responsive practice, in education and our allied professions.

Cultural competence refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. Cultural competence comprises four components: (a) awareness of one’s own cultural worldview, (b) attitude towards cultural differences, (c) knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews, and (d) cross-cultural skills. Developing cultural competence results in an ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures. Cultural competence is a developmental process that evolves over an extended period (Martin & Vaughn, as cited in UC Berkeley, 2009, p. 33).

In addition, the Vision, Mission, Goals statement asserts that cultural competency consists of: social and interpersonal skills that “allow individuals to increase their understanding, sensitivity, appreciation, and responsiveness to cultural differences” and the resulting interactions (University of California, 2009, p. 33). “The particulars of acquiring cultural competency vary among different groups,” and involve an ongoing effort to develop inclusive and trusting relationships (University of California Berkeley, p. 33). The process of becoming culturally competent is developmental, across students’ formal education and across their life span.

Learning Outcomes
Learning Outcomes for students admitted to the undergraduate teacher education program

Tier I: Exploring the Iceberg of Diversity
1. Students will acquire a greater breadth of knowledge of the diversity they will encounter in school settings.
2. Make personal judgments about the importance and relevance of issues related to diversity in education to which they are exposed through speakers, workshops and/or films.
3. Students will begin to develop strategies for addressing the needs of all their future
students.

**Tier II: Melting the iceberg of Diversity**

4. Students will model a personal and professional commitment that exemplifies dispositions that promote the educational growth and overall wellbeing of themselves, their students and/or others in a diverse world.

**Experiences, Documentation and Assessment**

Experiences and reflection on those experiences will provide students with in-depth knowledge regarding diversity, engage students in sustained experience with diverse populations and generate the outcomes stated above.

**Tier I: Exploring the Iceberg of Diversity**

The iceberg is a fitting metaphor for diversity. Most of an iceberg floats below the surface, which makes judging the size and shape of an iceberg difficult. Judging a person simply by looking at or becoming a bit familiar with him or her is no less difficult. Like an iceberg, there’s much more to each of us than one notices at first glance. Each of us is a complex assortment of factors, the large majority of which are imperceptible, hidden “below the waterline.” Early in their course of study, students in teacher education must begin to acquire knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will enable them to look below the waterline, to begin to understand and value the complex assortments of factors present in P-12 students. Therefore, when students in teacher education are enrolled in courses in the Professional Education Sequence (PES) (EDCI 201, PSY 323, SPED 339) they will attend events, such as presentations by speakers, workshops and films, in order to satisfy the diversity competency in each PES course. They will attend one event during EDCI 201 and two events during both PSY 323 and 339. Students then will post a reflection according to standardized guidelines** on each event or presentation under “Diversity Competency” on their TaskStream portfolio and receive credit for their reflections from the instructor of each course in the PES.
Events could include Diversity Dialogues sponsored by the Diversity Committee of the CEAP, the CEAP annual Diversity Blog and other events, presentations and/or films that address diversity, such as those sponsored by the Office of Intercultural Affairs, WCU’s LMP, and by organizations in the community.

Topics that could be addressed in these events, presentations and/or films could include, but would not be limited to:

- Racism and other forms of prejudice and discrimination
- Closing the Achievement Gap
- Native American education
- Poverty and social class
- White privilege
- Students with emergent bilingual Proficiency
- Sexual orientation or preference and its impact on students’ school experiences
- Students with special needs
- Participate in the CEAP’s Annual Diversity Blog held each spring semester

**Tier II: Melting the iceberg: Learning to Swim in the Sea of Diversity**

In terms of the “iceberg” metaphor, one of the goals of the CEAP’s Teacher Education Program is to “melt the iceberg” (SALTO Information Resource Centre): to prepare North Carolina teachers to work with a diverse population of P-12 students and in a wide variety of school cultures. The goal, then, is to help students in teacher education learn to “swim in the sea of diversity”. To that end, the Office of Field Experience makes every effort to ensure opportunities for each licensure candidate to experience a variety of school settings and work with students of different races, ethnicities, abilities and socio-economic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Undergraduate degree-seeking candidates in the Teacher Education Program are required to document at least one 7-hour field experience interacting with students in a culturally diverse setting. This experience could occur in the field placement for EDCI 201, PSY 323, SPED 339, ELMG 390, EDMG 411, internship or student teaching. Appropriate experiences outside WCU courses might include participation in culturally diverse camps, tutoring programs, service learning projects or study abroad programs. For these purposes, schools or classrooms with a minority population of 20% or more of the total school population are considered culturally diverse. A documentation form signed by an official representative of the organization must be submitted in TaskStream in the Diversity Competency section.

**Earning a Diversity Certificate**

In addition to the requirements listed above, students who wish to earn a “Diversity Certificate” will participate in one or more of the sustained diversity experiences listed below. They will document a minimum of 40 hours in these experiences on TaskStream in the Diversity Competency section by submitting a form signed by an official representative of the organization hosting the experience and a reflection according to standardized guidelines ***. These experiences must go above and beyond those required in the PES courses listed above. The CEAP Diversity Committee will consider and evaluate submissions for the Diversity Certificate and approve candidates for the diversity certificate.
Options for a sustained experience in a diverse setting could include, but would not be limited to:

- Sustained interaction with students of minority status in after-school programs; e.g., spending time with English language learners at Cullowhee Methodist Church
- Sustained interaction with individuals or small groups of students with exceptionalities.
- Sustained interaction with adults who are English language learners
- Participate in the CEAP’s Annual Diversity Blog held each spring semester
- Serve at the Museum of the Cherokee Indian
- Volunteer at an alternative school in a local school system
- Interaction with international students at WCU
- The Rural/Urban Exchange
- Participate in a service learning program such as the Alternative Spring Break in Jamaica
- Study abroad, including an internship and/or field experience
- Volunteer with the University Participant Program to be a support for a student with intellectual disabilities
- Experience that involves being the “other” or minority

- Pre/Post Assessment
When students are admitted to the teacher education program, they complete a pretest, *Personal and Professional Beliefs about Diversity Scale* (Pohan & Aguilar, 2001). Students also complete this instrument as a posttest during Internship II or student teaching.

* Direction #4 of the CEAP’s Strategic Plan
Foster and maintain a diverse, welcoming community that supports the development of culturally competent and globally minded professionals

The CEAP strives to cultivate and sustain a community that values open dialogue, cooperation, shared responsibility, mutual respect, and cultural competence.

Goal 4.1: Integrate content into curricular and co-curricular experiences in order to promote students’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to diversity and cultural competence.

Initiative 4.1.1: Offer wide-ranging, diversity-promoting activities, such as "diversity dialogues," "intergroup dialogues," a "Diversity Portfolio/eBriefcase," and other mechanisms, that strengthen knowledge and skills and refine dispositions that are characteristic of culturally competent and globally minded professionals.

** In a reflection at least 1½ page in length:
1. Explain why you chose to attend the event/presentation.
2. Describe what stands out for you as interesting, important or valuable.
3. Explain how you could apply what you learned in to your future teaching.
4. Refer to information from your course (EDCI 201, PSY 323, SPED 339) that relates to the topic of the event/presentation.

Please post your reflection in your TaskStream portfolio under Diversity Competency.
*** In a reflection at least 2 pages in length:
1. Explain why you chose to participate in this sustained experience.
2. How has the experience impacted you? What did you learn about yourself, and about others? How have you grown as an individual?
3. How will the experience influence your teaching practices?

Please post your reflection in your TaskStream portfolio under Diversity Competency.

References

Brook Graham Diversity and Inclusion Specialists,  
http://www.brookgraham.com/WhatWeDo/Iceberg.aspx


