Teacher Education Diversity Portfolio

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. The purpose of this Diversity Portfolio 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.

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 University of California 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 Berkeley, 2019, 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, 2019, p. 33). The process of becoming culturally competent is developmental, across students’ formal education and across their life span.

This process can be visualized as beginning with the visible portions of an iceberg and moving deeper, or down under the waterline, over time, as shown in the illustration at the right (The iceberg, 2015). 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.”

In light of this, CEAP provides a tiered approach for teacher candidates to develop their cultural competence throughout their time at WCU.

**Tier I Exploring the Iceberg of Diversity (required for all education majors)**

**Learning Outcomes**
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.

**Overview**
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 and will be given 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; 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; and DegreePlus events in the Cultural Responsiveness skill area.

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 seeds
- Participate in the CEAP’s Diversity Blog (as available)

**Tier II: Diverse experiences (required) and Earn DegreePlus Level 2 for the Cultural Responsiveness skill (optional).**

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, students in teacher education are required to have diverse field experiences and are encouraged to earn DegreePlus level II.

**Field Experience.** To earn a teaching certificate in the state of North Carolina, students in teacher education are required to complete at least one field experience in a qualified diverse setting. 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 P12 students of different races, ethnicities, abilities and socio-economic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The Office of Field Experience tracks the field placement of all teacher candidates to ensure students gain a range of school based field experiences. For more information, see the Office of Field Experience website (http://ofe.wcu.edu/)

**DegreePlus.** Completion of the requirements in Tier 1, above, will put teacher education students well on their way to completing DegreePlus Level 2 for the Cultural Responsiveness skill area. Students in teacher education are strongly encouraged to continue with DegreePlus to explore more of the hidden areas in the iceberg metaphor. Go to the DegreePlus website: https://www.wcu.edu/learn/academic-enrichment/ccpd/degree-plus/students-info.aspx for information on DegreePlus level 2. Click on “How Does DegreePlus Work” for an overview of how the three levels work and for earning level II.

**Tier III: Earn DegreePlus Level 3 for the Cultural Responsiveness skill (optional)**
Students in teacher education are strongly encouraged to continue with DegreePlus to explore more of the hidden areas in the iceberg metaphor to develop cultural competence. Follow the link to the DegreePlus website: https://www.wcu.edu/learn/academic-enrichment/ccpd/degree-plus/students-info.aspx. Click on “How Does DegreePlus Work” for an overview of how the three levels work, then peruse the drop down menus for more details. Upon completion and presentation of a project at Degree Plus Day, students will have successfully completed Tier III. They will receive a cocurricular transcript which will include DegreePlus experiences. Students can use the cocurricular transcript to showcase their experiences in this important area to future employers.

*CEAP’s Strategic Plan Direction #4:

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.
**Diversity Event Reflection Guidelines**

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 at this event 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 according to the instructions of your professor.

**References**

[http://www.brookgraham.com/WhatWeDo/Iceberg.aspx](http://www.brookgraham.com/WhatWeDo/Iceberg.aspx)