

An EOU Diversity Requirement: A Proposal for Understanding Issues of Difference, Power, and Discrimination

A. Background:

In 2003, the Diversity Committee proposed a university-wide diversity requirement as a strategy to assist students to understand and appreciate an increasingly diverse student body and global society. A “new” general education program had been recently implemented, and the Provost informed the committee that an initiative such as this would not be considered before the new GE program had been assessed. The specific proposal for a diversity requirement was thus placed on “the back burner,” but there has remained broad support on campus for this requirement as part of EOU’s curriculum. In 2006-2007, as we discussed the scope of the newest General Education Core curriculum (approved in June 2007), faculty generally agreed on the importance of a diversity requirement—but favored an institutional graduation requirement rather than making this part of the general education core. During 2006-2007 a subcommittee of the Diversity Committee, convened by Rosemary Powers, developed a proposal. The Diversity Committee agreed to take it forward in 2008 to various campus constituencies for feedback and approval. The initial two-course proposal was approved by CAS faculty but not by Education and Business faculty, who preferred to recognize the diversity instruction occurring across their programs.

In 2009-2010 The Diversity Committee agreed to continue the efforts to pass a diversity requirement. They decided to further specify that the requirement include understanding difference, power, and discrimination (DPD) to better reflect the purpose of the original proposal. In addition, the committee conducted a feasibility study on the institution to assess the number of current offerings of courses with a strong DPD component. According to this study the current offerings are only sufficient to introduce a 5 credit requirement. This requirement could be fulfilled by taking one or more courses, and the DPD component and content could be either national or global in scope.

The Diversity Committee proposes to introduce this requirement as early as fall term of 2010. The requirement applies to new admittances seeking a BS or BA degree starting fall 2010. Within the following two years, EOU would work towards an expansion of DPD courses with the objective to arrive at a 2 course requirement, one of which would have a U.S. DPD focus and the other a global DPD focus. The global component is of importance in order to be consistent with our mission statement. It is understood that going to a two course requirement would be a new DPD proposal that would have to go through the approval process.

In addition to expanding the number of DPD approved courses, the Diversity Committee hopes to promote the inclusion of DPD coverage across the curriculum by offering professional development to faculty so as to aid them in their efforts to include DPD content in their courses. The Diversity Committee also encourages faculty to incorporate a service learning component in their DPD courses.

B. Rationale for the Requirement:

As our mission states, EOU “guides student inquiry through integrated, high-quality liberal arts and professional programs that lead to responsible and reflective action in a diverse and interconnected world.” Further, the university’s strategic plan approved in June, 2007, included commitment to diversity as one of our seven major goals.¹ To carry out this mission and further the strategic goal, we must address the experiences of an increasingly diverse student body. We must offer academic experiences that focus on the diversity of human communities--nationally and globally, and that teach students to

¹ Diversity/Globalization: “ * support and sustain an educational community that respects racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, socioeconomic, physical, ideological and other differences; * promote a climate of inclusion and equity through recruiting and retaining a diverse student body, faculty and staff; * promote understanding of global diversities through internationalizing the educational experience.”

think critically about the way that systems of power and privilege help create and maintain hierarchical relations among people within the U.S. and other nations, among nations, and between the U.S. and the rest of the world.

C. General Description of the Requirement:

The goal of the requirement is to increase understanding of the complexity of the structures, systems, and ideologies that sustain discrimination and the unequal distribution of power and resources in society.

Students will be required to take a minimum of 5 credits (or equivalent) of DPD approved courses. DPD approved courses may have a U.S. focus, a global focus or both. A U.S. focus means that the content focuses primarily on human diversity within the United States (based on race/ethnicity, gender, social class, sexual orientation, religion, disability, age, and language). Discussion of global relationships may be included. Courses may be approved from any field, and focus on a variety of issues; but all should include attention to issues of power and privilege in understanding human difference.

Global DPD courses will focus primarily on human diversity and interdependence beyond the United States, including analysis of international, transnational and global phenomena. Discussion of implications of global issues for the United States may be included. Courses may be approved from any field, and focus on a variety of issues; but all should include attention to issues of power and privilege in understanding human difference.

D. Criteria and Outcomes for DPD Courses:

1. DPD Courses engage students in the intellectual examination of the structures, systems, and ideologies that create and sustain discrimination and the unequal distribution of power and resources in society.

Within the framework of particular disciplines and course content, students will be able to identify specific cases of unequal distribution of power and resources and to present a structural understanding of the sources and ideological bases of discrimination.

2. DPD Courses review the effects of unequal distribution of power and discrimination within the framework of particular disciplines and course content.

Students will demonstrate an ability to analyze the effects of discrimination from the perspective of marginalized groups.

3. DPD Courses provide an opportunity to examine the contributions of underrepresented groups within the framework of particular disciplines.

Students will be able to give examples of the contributions to society of underrepresented groups within the framework of particular disciplines (examples include: creative, cultural, literal, economic, historical, and political contributions).

E. Course Approval Process:

DPD courses must be approved by EPCC. Syllabi must include DPD outcomes, method of assessment, and approximately how much time is devoted to DPD concepts. Programs who are using multiple courses must submit their courses as a package so as to determine that the total coverage meets the DPD criteria and outcomes and is at least the equivalent to what a student would experience in a 5 credit course.

Once a course is approved as a DPD course, it must be taught as such regardless of who is teaching it or what modality they are using (onsite, online, or on campus). Programs should commit to reviewing courses on a regular basis to ensure that the criteria and outcomes are being met.

Program faculty and/or course instructors should engage in regular communication amongst themselves in order to ensure that the language and approach to teaching diversity is consistent across multiple courses so that students can transfer knowledge and achieve some depth of understanding of DPD issues in the discipline. This dialogue will create overt linkages to make it easier for students to recognize and grasp the common thread.

Substitutions and Wavers. Transfer credits may be used to meet the requirement provided students complete a form similar to that used by instructors to have courses approved within their college. Students will need to describe how the course they wish to count helped them achieve each of the required learning outcomes. If possible, the student should provide a syllabus and brief description that shows how the majority of the course content and process—readings, class time, student work—was devoted to the topic of difference, power, and discrimination.

Students earning EOU credits for study abroad involving a stay in a foreign country of three weeks or more will meet the DPD requirement provided the student completes a justification form similar to that used by instructors to have courses approved and an essay addressing how aspects of their experience helped them to achieve the learning outcomes. Likewise, students earning credits for their work with underrepresented groups in the U.S such as with Native American tribes may also meet the DPD requirement. The student must follow the same procedure as outlined above for meeting the DPD requirement with a study abroad.

Any other requests should be referred to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences or the Dean of the College of Education and Business using the student petition process. This would include requests for substituting a non-approved course or an appropriate non-credit experience. These requests would ordinarily be based on a student's personal experiences that the student believes to have enabled him or her to meet the intent of the requirement. Membership in a particular group will not, of itself, serve as sufficient grounds for a waiver. In making this request, students should complete the same justification form and essay required of those seeking approval for an international experience.

F. Implementing and Ensuring a Sustainable DPD Curriculum:

- The Diversity Committee with resources from the Provost's office will ensure continuing opportunities for professional development for faculty, advisors, and relevant staff.
- The Diversity Committee should review and revise this document.
- The Diversity Committee should return a finalized version of this document to the Colleges for review and approval. Then, the plan should move up through the approval process.
- Upon approval, the programs should determine and submit their proposals and courses to EPCC.
- The Provost's Office should develop any paperwork and web pages to support the program and communicate regarding availability of courses