

Faculty Development Grant 2002-2003

Title: Affirming Diversity in the College Classroom: A Faculty Development Program in the School of Education and Professional Studies

Applicant: Penelope L. Lisi, Ph.D., Professor
Department of Educational Leadership, and
Director, Center for Multicultural Research and Education
Central Connecticut State University

Project Significance:

In 1996 the CSU Board of Trustees established the Center for Multicultural Research and Education in the School of Education and Professional Studies as a “primary source for providing professional development support and technical assistance to university and school educators in individual and systemic change for education that is multicultural.” In order to achieve the goals established for the Center, a variety of activities have been implemented. For example, the Center has sponsored the development and delivery of model training workshops for school personnel; co-sponsored an annual statewide multicultural conference (the 7th conference is planned for fall 2002) for more than 500 people each time; established the Diversity in Teaching Network (DITN); and secured a \$500,000 three-year grant to support recruitment of diverse students into the teacher preparation program. The Center is recognized for providing vital outreach to the schools of our state.

In addition to providing support for K-12 educators, the Center strives to provide professional development support for university faculty to implement education that is multicultural. Unfortunately, with few resources available to the Center, this area has received limited attention. Recently, two events have prompted renewed attention to support for university faculty professional development in multicultural education. First, in fall 2001 this writer was asked to facilitate a series of diversity workshops for CCSU faculty and staff. During the sessions, participants were able to discuss, albeit for a brief period of time, challenges in creating culturally responsive and responsible college classrooms. As an example, while some faculty appear to have transformed courses to include diverse perspectives and approaches into how they teach, the practice is not widespread. Further, while some faculty delve deeply into diversity issues with their students, others either believe that the college classroom is an inappropriate setting for facilitation of dialogue around diversity issues, or have low comfort levels in facilitating classroom dialogues in issues related to diversity. They also may not be aware of how their own conscious and unconscious beliefs and stereotypes influence their expectations of student performance.

Second, faculty in the School of Education and Professional Studies are preparing for an NCATE accreditation review, to take place in spring 2003. A deep and current understanding of diversity will be essential for the future of the School of Education and Professional Studies. Faculty knowledge and skill in multicultural education is considered so important that one of six standards guiding the NCATE review process is

designated the “diversity standard.” This standard indicates “the unit designs, implements and evaluates curriculum and experiences for candidates to acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn. These experiences include working with diverse higher education and school faculty, diverse candidates, and diverse students in P-12 schools.”

It seems as though this is an important and crucial time for us to reflect on the depth of knowledge, understanding, and application of culturally responsive and responsible education within the school, and to redesign where necessary. While faculty in the School of Education and Professional Studies do know much and many have transformed courses to be multicultural, there is much that could be learned from through collegial sharing about best practice, challenges, and diversity issues. The Center for Multicultural Research and Education proposes a yearlong project to enhance faculty leadership in multicultural education and diversity planning in the School of Education and Professional Studies. The centerpiece activity of the proposed professional development project will be a series of facilitated collegial conversations around the incorporation of standards-based multicultural education into the curriculum. Helping CSU faculty to provide leadership in multicultural education and diversity planning (in their own departments) will create a stronger climate for change in public education.

Outcomes:

The program will provide support for substantive dialogues in the School of Education and Professional Studies classroom about race, ethnicity, gender, and other forms of diversity, and about the tensions within our institution and society. If we can support faculty in building classrooms in which these kinds of dialogues are welcome and facilitated effectively, in addition to pedagogy and content that are culturally responsive, we will help students to develop effective interpersonal skills for a diverse society.

The expected outcomes of the project are:

1. Enhanced faculty capacity -- to facilitate dialogue around valuing diversity by incorporating affective learning activities, along with content and pedagogy that are culturally responsive; increase faculty comfort level when teaching about multicultural perspectives and issues.
2. Support classroom culture that values diversity-- provide students in the School of Education and Professional Studies with increased opportunities for dialogue around critical issues and concerns related to valuing diversity in the college classroom.
3. Leadership core group -- Develop a leadership core group of faculty who will then share within their respective departments perspectives and resources gained through the collegial discussions.
4. Project publication -- Each faculty member will be asked to reflect on the collegial conversation process in relation to his/her own practice. Each participant will be asked to contribute to a project publication (to be disseminated initially within the School of Education and Professional Studies) by choosing to:

- write a reflective statement about involvement in the collegial conversations;
- contribute to the development of an annotated bibliography; or
- develop a case of a critical incident linked to diversity with which they have dealt in the college classroom.

Methodology:

Oversight of the project will be the responsibility of the Center for Multicultural Research and Education at Central Connecticut State University.

Selection of project faculty and conversations facilitator (August- September)

- Advertising about the project and recruitment of project faculty
- Selection of 12 project faculty from the School of Education and Professional Studies Each to receive \$200 to apply towards purchase of relevant resource materials. Criteria to include: commitment to being a member of a learning community; interest in reflecting on own practice in relation to the NCATE diversity standard
- Selection of collegial conversations facilitator (e.g. Sonia Nieto, professor, School of Education, University of Massachusetts- Amherst; author of several books on valuing diversity)
- Selection of project readings

Seminar session on racism and discrimination (October)

Lee Mun Wa, nationally recognized filmmaker who produced the Color of Fear will be the keynote speaker at the 7th annual statewide conference on multicultural education on October 16. He has agreed to visit CCSU on October 15 for an afternoon seminar session open to all CCSU faculty and students. Faculty with this particular project will have a separate opportunity for conversation with him.

3 collegial conversations (November, February, April)

The Center will bring project faculty together for 3 collegial conversation sessions. Each session will have a primary focus and readings to be completed prior to the session. For example, faculty will be asked to consider how their own perceptions and attitudes toward diversity, in addition to the content and pedagogical strategies they choose to use, influence their teaching, their relationships with students, and student outcomes. Conversations will be facilitated in such a way to encourage faculty to reflect on their own practice in relation to the NCATE standard. Other topics may include recent scholarship on race, class, gender; relating different forms of diversity to each other; teaching a diverse class of students; effective approaches to facilitating dialogues around diversity issues and concerns.

On-going communications

The Center will encourage ongoing communication and dialogue among project participants through e-mail. The Center realizes that ongoing support and encouragement of these faculty is the foundation for the long-term acceptance of multicultural education as an integral part of teacher preparation.

Project publication (spring 2003)

Each faculty member will be asked to reflect on the collegial conversation process in relation to his/her own practice. Each participant will be asked to contribute to a project publication (to be disseminated initially within the School of Education and Professional Studies).

Budget:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Requested</u>	<u>Other</u>
Materials		
10 faculty @ \$200 each	2000	
Food	540	
3 lunches x 12 faculty x \$15 each		
Consultant on curriculum transformation in schools of education	2,000	
Project supplies		500
Printing of faculty reflections/ annotated resource list Made available for dissemination within CCSU 100 @ \$5.00. each		
Total	<u>\$4,540</u>	<u>\$500</u>

Budget narrative. In lieu of a stipend for participation in this work, the project will cover the cost of up to \$200 in topic-related resources for each faculty participant. The consultant will be asked to advise on the selection of project readings, as well as facilitate collegial conversations for three sessions. The cost of the project publication will be covered by the Center for Multicultural Research and Education.