State of Equity and Diversity at Northern

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The 2014/15 Academic Year proved to be filled with excitement and learning opportunities for the Office of Equity and Diversity (OED). As we continue to grow as a campus organization, we are committed to building infrastructure while continuing to provide high quality opportunities for the students, staff, and faculty of Northern. We are proud to boast that we hosted over twenty curricular and co-curricular events on campus throughout the summer, fall, and spring semesters. In addition to co-curricular events, the OED continues to work on equity and diversity issues through the framework of the “Five V.I.G.A.S of OED.”

Initially introduced to the Board of Regents in 2013, the acronym VIGAS stands for Valuing Inclusiveness: Goals and Supports. This framework for equity and diversity includes five goals and identifies supports that OED hosts and continues to develop on and off campus through collaborations with students, faculty, staff, community non-profits, governmental agencies, and community members at large. Our goal is to become a campus and community resource that helps address wide-ranging issues of equity and diversity that engage issues of access, success, and community health.

The Five VIGAS are:
1. Policy and Procedures
2. Cultural Climate and Welcoming Environment
3. Curriculum Development
4. Research and Creative Support for Students and Faculty
5. Community Outreach (On and Off Campus)

One of the most significant accomplishments of the academic year is the establishment of the Northern Diversity Council. The Diversity Council is bringing together varying levels of expertise in equity and diversity matters, it includes a broad cross-section of occupations/disciplines from all sectors of Northern. Council members reflect the values and multiple perspectives of our diverse campus community here at Northern, and we are working to improve campus climate and performance where equity, diversity, and inclusion are concerned. You’ll read more about them on page three, but know that everyone on campus is welcome to participate, and we are always thinking about ways to be more inclusive. Our charge is to help identify ways to improve academic life at Northern by working together to study...
campus climate policies and best practices and find meaningful ways to apply them to our campus. The Diversity Council brings many of threads of equity and diversity work together to address issues that impact all areas of the College.

Regarding academics, provost, Dr. Pedro Martinez, brought equity and diversity to the forefront of curriculum and instruction with the institution of a Campus-Wide Learning Outcome dedicated to “Cultural Competence.” The outcome reads:

Northern NM College students will:
   a. Understand and appreciate cultural diversity;
   b. Respect difference including racial, ethnic, gender, class and sexual orientation, and those with varied physical, mental and emotional abilities;
   c. Practice acceptance of individuals from different religions, cultures and traditions, and those who express differing political views;
   d. Understand the necessity for sustainability and a healthy global environment;
   e. Understand that NNMC is committed to respect for individual dignity and the distinct cultures of Northern New Mexico.

In an effort to support this learning outcome, OED and the Diversity Council have begun planning for incorporation of equity and diversity across the curriculum. A first step taken this year was to develop the presentation, “Microaggressions: Addressing Inclusivity for Student Success,” a workshop geared towards faculty in an effort to created shared understanding regarding inclusive classrooms and departments. The workshop was delivered to Nursing and Developmental Math faculty. As one faculty member wrote reflected, “I am very privileged, and I know it, but I don’t always think about it and how it colors my perspectives.” With positive survey results, the Diversity Council plans to hold “Train the Trainer” workshops so that more Council members can offer this valuable support to all departments.

To conclude this broad overview of the work of OED, our office has also provided institutional support to the completion of the AQIP Systems Portfolio, leadership of the Professional Development Task Force, and support of Title IX compliance issues. We continue to strive for excellence in diversity, equity and inclusion. As the next pages will exemplify, OED continues to render possibilities and materialize opportunities that continue to build our beloved community. 

Who is the “We” of Equity and Diversity?

The Office of Equity and Diversity has one line dedicated to daily operations and planning for Equity and Diversity on campus, but we still manage to accomplish and serve our campus community. That is because “we” includes everyone on campus! Inclusion and equity are everyone’s business, and we all contribute to the remarkable diversity on campus.

OED acknowledges a profound appreciation for all the students, staff, faculty, and community members who offer of their time, expertise, and service to ensure that our climate at Northern is one dedicated to excellence in equity, inclusiveness, and diversity.

OED utilizes critical collaboration as a central organizational model. In a small organization with lean resources, OED has co-developed a model of mutual benefit. It works a little like this: “You have water. I have corn meal. Who has cups? – Let’s invite everyone over for atole!” If you would like to get involved, please email OED@nnmc.edu or call 747-5448.

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The Diversity Council – *Engaging a Collective Voice*

**Diversity Retreat, March 9, 2015.** The Diversity Council gathered at the “Building Equity” Building (LANL Foundation) to discuss Equity Planning, Strategic Communication, and Self-Care. Pictured left to right: (Front) shash yahzi (facilitator), Tamara Trujillo (Education), Ana X Gutierrez Sisneros (Counseling Services), Patricia Trujillo (Equity & Diversity) DaChelle McBride Sells (Student and Assistant Coach), Verna Trujillo (Accessibility Services), Tania Chavez (Student), Ross Griego (Student), Tobe Bott-Lyons (Advising), Rachel Begay (Humanities), Roy Old Person (Humanities), and Matthew Martinez (Pueblo Indian Studies in the Humanities). Not pictured: Sarah O’Brien (Education), Kristy Pruitt (Education), Jerome Williams (Bookstore), and Brooke Espinosa (Student Activities).

The Diversity Council is a model used by many major colleges and universities to engage multiple voices across the campus. At the first Summit on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, hosted by UNM’s Division for Equity and Inclusion in June 2014, OED was introduced to the model. We adopted the Diversity Council as a way to engage a collective voice regarding diversity issues across our campus. We often laud the diversity of our campus, but the Council recognizes that being a diverse campus is not the same as creating strategic initiatives for serving the unique needs or identifying the strategic advantages of our diversity. Working from a position of transformational diversity, the Council seeks to create an atmosphere where we address and employ diverse educational opportunities to envision diversity as a strategic advantage of our institution.

An open invitation was extended at Faculty Convocation (Fall 14) to students, faculty, and staff. We began meeting in October 2014 and meet bi-weekly throughout the year. We organized the time together to begin to identify and address campus climate issues, identify goals for moving forward, and plans for praxis-oriented action on our campus and in our community. At our Diversity Retreat, held in March 2015, we discussed the role of a council, began planning for effective communication
with administration about E&D issues that need to be addressed in a meaningful way, and left with the goal of creating a communication strategy that we can present to Executive Team and ultimately the Board of Regents. We would like a system of communication that allows us to engage in a process of change with accountability.

Councils, in an indigenous perspective, meet to discuss issues that impact the collective group, often this occurs by listening, learning, and only after careful deliberation, acting. Our facilitator, shash yahzi, encouraged us to think about how we can best be change agents on our campus for the issues that often most impact well-being. As a group we used the indigenous methodology provided to us by our facilitator to imagine frameworks for doing our work collectively. We are meeting throughout Summer 15 to solidify our concepts as to how we want to express the ideas generated at the retreat as a Diversity Plan for the College.

In the time being, Diversity Council members are committed to continuing the work of institutional change and healing through addressing equity issues. We have already instituted activities geared at further establishing a campus culture that supports diversity. We started a monthly faculty reading group, we’ve hosted events on campus, and collaborated on community events. Members of the Council recently attended the 2nd Annual Summit on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in New Mexico, where campuses from across the state learned about our formation, and also entered into a statewide consortium of diversity workers.
Community Outreach – Bridging the Town/Gown Divide

A central component to Equity and Diversity is our commitment to engaging our community in the important, if at times difficult, discussions of difference. We believe in community engagement that addresses what Jose Antonio Burciaga calls “The ironies in the experience of living within, between and sometimes outside of two [or more] cultures; the damnation and the salvation, the celebration of it all” (Drink Cultura 5). Below you will find listing of the events we sponsored this year as we engaged in these important dialogues.

Fall 2014

Suicide Prevention Week (30 in attendance)
Suicide Prevention Week in September was a joint endeavor of OED, Counseling Services, and the Northern Gay/Straight Alliance. LGBTQ youth represent the highest incidences of suicide or attempted suicides. We organized a series of events to begin discussions about suicide in the queer community, and well as hosting conversations for general audiences about suicide and resources for individuals or family members.

Grito de Dolores – Mexican Independence Celebration (over 45 people in attendance)

In acknowledgement of our Campus’ Mexican roots and in honor of our Mexican origin students, we rang the bell for the Grito de Dolores on September 16, 2014.

Left: Members of NM Danceworks performed at the Diez y seis celebration. Right: Dr. Brenda Linnell and Amparo Gidney, Advisor, spoke at the event.

A Place to Stand – Film Screening of Documentary and Discussion with author, Jimmy Santiago Baca – October 9, 2014 (over 120 in attendance)

It was OED’s great honor to welcome celebrated author, Jimmy Santiago Baca, to campus to share his new documentary with our students and the greater community. Northern was honored to host a pre-release of the film.

In an on-going conversation, community members convened on campus to discuss the health, educational, and numerous other disparities for girls and women in northern New Mexico. The discussion allowed participants to network, brainstorm possible solutions, and discuss actions we can begin to make to help close pay and achievement gaps for women and girls in Rio Arriba county.

Veteran’s Day Double Feature – November 5 and 6, 2015 (25 in attendance each film)

OED frames many events through the intersectionality of identities. For Veteran’s Day we featured films that specifically speak to Mexican American experience in the military, but also engage all veterans.

Celebrating Diversity Through Art and Dance
November 21, 2014 (100+ in attendance)

We partnered with Moving Arts to feature multi-generational artists in our community.
Spring 2015

Black History Month Teach-Ins – February 17 and 25, 2015 (20 in attendance)

OED hosted two teach-ins to engage in an educational discussion about the 50th anniversary of the March on Selma and how it connects to current events, in particular, the #blacklivesmatter social movement.

Spirituality Week - March 25 – 28, 2015 (over 100 participants)

In a first time ever experience, OED partnered with colleagues and students from the University of Wyoming to create a student exchange around the concept of spirituality. What happened was truly transformative for all involved.

Photos. Left/bottom: Corrine Sanchez from Tewa Women United leads a discussion about healing and historic grief. Top/right: Interfaith panel including faith leaders from Catholic, Episcopal, Islamic, Jewish, and Sikh traditions. Bottom/right: Students from the University of Wyoming soaking up some sun on the NNMC Campus.
Beloved Communities Weekend – June 5-7, 2015
(Over 200 participants)

What started as a meeting with community partners interested in starting a LGBTQ Española Coalition, lead us to organizing with over 15 governmental and non-profit organizations. Initially we conceived of the event as an Española Pride event, but in listening to queer leadership in our community who were interested in a more broadly defined celebration, we conceived of a Beloved Community event that celebrates pride, unity, and creativity in our communities.

Northern was especially honored to host the 2014 film, Drunktown’s Finest, at the Fine Arts Auditorium. There were over 90 people in attendance to celebrate NM filmmaking at its finest.

Trajectories for Equity and Diversity

OED plans to maintain the energy it has established in the last two years with continued focus on the five VIGAS of OED and development of the Diversity Council’s impact on campus. We want to create programming and college-wide support to truly serve our dynamic and diverse institution.

Future trajectories will include:

- Continued lobbying to administration for a dedicated budget for equity and diversity.
- Establishing a formal process/procedure for OED incident reporting
- Embedding the work and recommendations of the Diversity Council into established procedures on campus, including introducing a standing committee on Faculty Senate, dialogues with Executive Team, and Human Resources
- Launch a marketing campaign to bring awareness to Equity and Diversity on campus
- Updated website by Fall Convocation 2015
- Working with state-wide equity coalition to advocate for an Equity and Diversity requirement in General Education for all New Mexico colleges and universities
- Continued work with AFSC@Sostenga Farm to develop curriculum and access to healthy food on campus
- Continued work with Accessibility Services, Title IX Compliance, and other committees such as the Clery Act Work Group and the Professional Development Task Force

As these trajectories highlight, OED is committed to continued excellence in addressing the diversity needs of our campus community. Thank you.