

Diversity Dimension Report
Pulaski Technical College

Foundations Institutions ensure that new students experience ongoing exploration of diverse ideas, worldviews, and cultures as a means of enhancing their learning and participation in pluralistic communities. Institutions cultivate an open and civil community in which students interact with people from varied backgrounds and cultures. These institutions guide students to reflect on ideas and values different from those they currently hold, and explore their own cultures and the cultures of others.

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CURRENT SITUATION:

Diversity at Pulaski Technical College (PTC) must be viewed from two perspectives. First, the traditional perspective of diversity that deals with racial identity. In this regard, PTC mirrors the State in that there are two primary groups identified as Caucasian and African American and a fast growing Latino group and several minority groups existing in smaller numbers. The second perspective deals with the many conditions, concerns and situations that cross racial lines. Such as, students who are disabled, single parents, low-income, academically unprepared and formerly incarcerated represent some of the diverse groups that have been identified. There is evidence that some groups receive additional support, for example, The Single Parents Scholarship Program and PTC Disability Counseling Services. However the questions at hand are: Does the college expose students to diverse ideas through the curriculum and co-curriculums, does the college provide opportunities to interact with others, specifically faculty, students and individuals outside the institution from different backgrounds and how does the college convey standards of expected behavior that promote an open and civil campus community?

DIVERSE IDEAS AND WORLD VIEWS:

Initiatives based in the curriculum are ranked high due to entry level classes in Liberal Arts, taken by a majority of university parallel students in their first year of college (the history of western civilization, political science, sociology, and foreign languages among others) have a strong emphasis in cultural, religious and political diversity in their content, as evidenced in the master syllabi for these courses. *However, some technical and certificate programs do not require such courses, thus a significant number of students graduate without receiving a rich cultural experience.*

Initiatives based in the co-curriculum and integrated across the curriculum and co-curriculum is ranked low due to the following:
Lack of student, staff and faculty participation and support of existing diversity events.

Lack of incorporation of diversity in curriculum and co-curriculum in all course work.

Lack of inclusiveness and the narrow scope of current diversity programming.

Questionnaires and other surveys imply that faculty and staff low awareness of Cultural programming may prevent faculty and staff from incorporating such activities into their curriculums and co-curriculums. Comments from members of the Cultural Diversity Committee (CDC) also indicated difficulty in getting students and faculty to attend events. The CDC relies heavily on faculty to announce events to students and encourage student participation. The success of this method could possibly depend on the amount of interest the instructor has in the event and/or amount of time the instructor can take from class time to make such announcements.

Negatively impacting the ability of the institution to assure new students experience diverse ideas and world views is the lack of an accepted definition of diversity and a statement of support of diversity for the institution. Responses to a questionnaire created and disseminated by the committee revealed the campus community identified at least 24 diverse groups existing on campus. That same instrument reflected that the majority of respondents believed that the diverse needs of students were being met, yet they could not identify a specific task or program designated to meet those needs. While on another instrument, the Faculty, Staff and Student Survey indicated that 30% of the faculty and staff ranked the college as average in exposing new students to different world cultures, religions, political perspectives, issues of social class and economic status. Another 30% of faculty ranked the college high in this area. While 53% of the students also ranked the college high. *An institutional statement defining diversity for this campus along with efforts to increase awareness of strategies that are in place would improve the current situation greatly.*

The current situation could further improve by reducing the negative impact of the lack of diversity found among faculty especially in comparison to the makeup of the student body. Only 8% of minority representation exist among fulltime faculty with 55% minority representation within the student body. It is very important that the majority of students see themselves reflected among staff and faculty and that they can readily identify role models from among them. The role that readily identifiable role models play in student success should not be minimized in the creation of an inclusive environment. *Establishing an Affirmative Action Committee as well as making hiring committees aware of the make-up of departments for which they are hiring would suggest a sincere level of commitment for diversity.*

Another situation adversely impacting this college's ability to expose students to diverse world views is the polarization of the campus by divisions. Some majors focus less on the development of world views and diverse interactions. Compounding this dynamic is the problem that progress brings with satellite campuses being established without adequate programming and support services being provided. Every student should have the same opportunity for exposure, experience and interactions.

INTERACTIONS WITH OTHERS FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS:

The degree the institution structures opportunities for new students to interact with faculty and staff, other students at the institution and individuals from outside the institution with different backgrounds and cultures is ranked low by the committee.

The Cultural Diversity Committee list a variety of opportunities for students to interact with others of different backgrounds and cultures. However, these programs are voluntary. Student Ambassadors and Student Government Leaders have more opportunity to interact with others outside the college and with faculty and staff than the average student. Again, leaving many students neglected in this area. College Seminar Students surveyed indicated that attending Cultural events is not a high priority. In the Faculty/Staff surveys respondents ranked opportunities to interact with students, faculty and staff of differing backgrounds as average. Students ranked this category higher with 44 to 53% believing that opportunities to interact with others different from themselves is high. Students demographics and the makeup of faculty reflect two major racial groups; suggesting little opportunity to interact with cultures outside these two groups. An assertive effort must be made to expose students to and provide opportunities for interaction with a variety of cultures.

EXPECTED BEHAVIOR CONVEYED:

The committee concludes that the degree the institution conveys to new students the standards of behavior it expects for participants in an open and civil campus community is low, with the exception of academics and the classroom setting.

The results of the faculty survey support the committee's findings with high rankings of 61 to 76% in the area of ethical conduct, academic integrity and honesty; suggesting that appropriate class room behavior is stressed. The student survey indicated that 46% of students agreed that respecting others ranked high.

Based on responses to the questionnaire created and disseminated by the committee some faculty have strict policies while others do not. Some faculty indicated they believed many disciplinary problems stem from cultural misunderstandings. There is no institutional standard for behavioral expectations other than references to conduct in the Student Handbook. According to the Dean of Students, the handbook is not widely disseminated and generally referred to during new student orientation. Only when an offense has occurred does it receive serious attention. Demographic data reveals that a number of students are first generation, academically under prepared, low income with social concerns that may cause them not to have the social aptitude that promotes college success. *The college must also set an example for respecting rules by not bending its own rules, thereby sending mixed messages about what is acceptable behavior. We are suggesting that not enough attention is given to positive instruction for developing a civil community.*

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE:

College Seminar Student Cultural Activity Participation Survey
Cultural Diversity Committee list of activities and comments
Diversity Dimension Questionnaire for Administrators, Faculty and Staff
Faculty/Staff Survey
Student Survey
Student Demographic Data from Admissions and Records
Interview with Dean of Students
Statistical Information from Human Resources

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES:

We have a wonderful opportunity to create a college culture that encourages personal excellence. We have an opportunity to create a culture where respect permeates from the highest levels of administration to academia to student services and to the student body. We have an opportunity to prepare students for a diverse world paying attention to educating the whole person. We have the opportunity to provide the disenfranchised student with a way to feel connected while empowered with mechanisms to resolve their own issues. We have the opportunity to take the community college to the next level having embraced all through our open door policy, now refining those we have embraced.

The challenge will be getting people to buy into the possibility of achieving such idealistic goals. It will be challenging to put ideology into practice and practice into attitudinal changes. Easier challenges are finding resources and funding and of course stretching the dedication of committed staff and faculty one more time.

Recommended Grade: C-

Recommended Action Items:

- Create an Affirmative Action Committee for PTC (*High priority*)

The college needs to create this committee.

- Diversity Statement (*High priority*)

Adopt a statement for the college that is endorsed at the highest level

- Behavior Policy: Students (*High priority*)

Adopt a standard of behavior policy that reflects pride in oneself, the college, and the academic process

- Diversity Training (*High priority*)
Provide diversity and sensitivity training and train college employees to provide training
- Hiring Practices (*High priority*)
Hiring committees need to be made aware of departmental makeup
- Affirmative Action Committee (*High priority*)
An AA committee needs to be established.
- Curriculum Development: International Experiences (*High priority*)
Add a portion to the curriculum in all disciplines that incorporates the global experience.
- Behavior Policy: College Employees (*High priority*)
The college should model appropriate behavior for students. In addition, it should not bend or break its own rules.
- Best Practices: Programs for Diverse Populations (*High priority*)
The college should identify strategies and programs that best serve diverse populations.
- Co-Curricular Activities (*High priority*)
The Cultural Diversity Committee will work with faculty to plan events and to give advanced notice to the college community about co-curricular opportunities for students. In addition, this committee will work with faculty to suggest ways to infuse diversity into the curriculum.
- Co-Curricular Activities: Accessibility (*High priority*)
Cultural and other co-curricular activities need to be more accessible and family-friendly in order to serve the college's population. Special consideration needs to be given to the needs of working parents.
- Co-Curricular Activities: Assessment (*High priority*)
Co-curricular activities not only need to be connected to learning objectives, but they must also be evaluated for their effectiveness.
- Funding (*High priority*)
Program quality can be improved through increased funding.
- Social Services: One-Stop Center (*Medium priority*)
Establish a one-stop center on campus that provides students information and referrals to existing social services available in the community. The college should also offer space to these agencies on campus. The college should hire a person to coordinate these efforts.
- Support Groups: Diverse Populations (*Medium priority*)
The college should survey students to establish which populations (for example, populations such as formerly incarcerated or older students) may want to participate in support groups.
- Communication: Publicity (*Medium priority*)
Attention must be given to the amount of publicity events receive.
- Orientation: Diversity Information (*Medium priority*)
Diversity info needs to be included in student orientation.
- Communication: Student Email Use (*Low priority*)
Student email should be used to notify students of cultural events and programs.

- Behavior: Motivational Posters (*Low priority*)

Display posters in the common areas that depict behaviors (such as honesty, respect, etc.) that students should display