

# **Diversity Plan for Northwestern Oklahoma State University 2011-2015**

## **Introduction**

Northwestern Oklahoma State University published the Strategic plan, “Building a Community of Learners” in 2003. This plan established the formal Diversity Plan for the institution which established its initial definition of diversity and action plan directives. Since that time, Northwestern Oklahoma State University has undertaken another Strategic Planning Initiative which culminated in the publication of its new Strategic Plan “Rising Above” in 2010. Pursuant to the new strategic plan, the diversity plan and directives at Northwestern has continued to undergo evaluation and change.

A dynamic diversity program is an essential dimension of Northwestern’s pursuit of excellence. As the world continues to change, the Northwestern community has responded with a proactive approach for promoting diversity on its three campuses as evidenced by its mission statement “Northwestern Oklahoma State University provides quality educational and cultural opportunities to learners with diverse needs by cultivating ethical leadership, critical thinking, and fiscal responsibility”. Furthermore, students, faculty, staff, administrators and stakeholders realize that a diversity program involves continuous experimentation, assessment, and innovation. Specifically, Northwestern defines and embraces diversity in the following manner:

One of Northwestern’s Core Values focuses on diversity and states that “Northwestern will respect the individual rights of all persons”. Northwestern values the differences of every individual; promotes the expression of differing opinions and beliefs; appreciates the culture and backgrounds of each person; and treats every individual with respect.

Diversity is the presence and valued participation of individuals who differ and are similar by characteristics including race, age, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, national origin, human capacity, community affiliation, religious and spiritual identity, veteran status, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status. This definition guides the institutional climate academically, socially, individually, and economically. The Northwestern community considers diversity as an indispensable component of academic and personal excellence. Northwestern embraces the concept that a diverse learning environment fosters a rich civic learning and engagement process which prepares us to live in an increasingly globalized and complex world.

## **Strategic Directive #1:**

As a key component of Northwestern’s first strategic direction, the institution will provide a broad-based collegiate experience designed to prepare students for leadership in a global society by expanding opportunities for students and faculty to study abroad; assisting our faculty, staff, and students in pursuing and developing relationships with underrepresented groups within our service region; and will provide opportunities to develop a broader global awareness by enhancing the general education curriculum.

## **Institutional Diversity Goals**

The Diversity Committee, as part of its charge to enhance and address issues of diversity within the institutional framework, has established a set of goals which will drive specific diversity related initiatives for the coming four years. These goals include the following:

Improve and support underrepresented groups at Northwestern's multi-campus system through technology, quality communications, supportive services and programs and removal of barriers to access and affordability;

Work to build the number of qualified minority faculty campus-wide;

Provide opportunity in each administrative and academic unit to engage students and to educate faculty and staff about issues of globalization and human diversity;

Improve the institution's ability to accurately track the demographic characteristics of students, faculty and staff.

## **Institutional Diversity Initiatives**

The Diversity Committee has established a set of overarching initiatives which will drive the implementation of diversity programs and opportunities for the coming four years as well as assist with assessment of diversity related strategies. These initiatives include the following:

Encourage campus and community partnerships that build the educational pipeline of under-represented groups;

Establish the President's Award for Student Leadership in Diversity and Civic Engagement;

Make effective use of the First Generation Scholarship Program to assist first generation college students who attend Northwestern;

Develop an improved "Position Announcements" recruitment process to support the institution's efforts to attract a more diverse faculty and staff to the predominantly rural service region;

Develop a faculty and staff incentive fund which would support the efforts of faculty and staff to pursue research, attend conferences, develop presentations, and design curricular changes which improve diversity awareness and engagement within the Northwestern campus community;

Improve the university's website to highlight campus and community diversity;

Create a faculty and staff online training certificate program to insure year-round access to cultural awareness and diversity training and education to all faculty and staff at their convenience as a means of encouraging inclusive excellence both in the classroom and beyond;

Establish an annual faculty development session each year to provide opportunity for promoting “Diversity Best Practices”;

Improving institutional effectiveness in regard to data capture and analysis across academic and administrative units;

Improve communications among and between academic and administrative units for the purposes of disseminating aggregated data collection.

Additionally, the Diversity Committee recommends that Northwestern continue its practice of recognizing faculty and staff contributions to diversity each year as part of the faculty and staff recognition ceremony. Furthermore, it is recommended that the Diversity Committee continue the publication of the Institution’s Annual Diversity Report in hardcopy format and begin offering it in digitized format as well.