



GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

Blueprint for Diversity 2010 - 2015

Introduction

In 1999, a group was convened under the leadership of Dr. Andrea Cook to begin a discussion about how George Fox University could become a more ethnically and racially diverse campus. The efforts resulted in a document entitled the “Blueprint for Diversity.” In 2003, the Blueprint for Diversity was updated under Dr. Brad Lau’s leadership and adopted by the board of trustees. This document provided a foundation for programmatic efforts for George Fox University to become a more inclusive community for students, faculty and staff.

Stemming from this document, the institution entered into a partnership in 2005 with Portland Central Young Life, implementing the Act Six program, a national urban leadership scholarship initiative that provides 10 full-ride scholarships to students in the Portland metropolitan area. This effort, combined with the Blueprint for Diversity, has contributed to assisting our institution in becoming a more inclusive place, but there is still much important work to be done.

As part of the institution’s strategic plan to “modify and reframe the ‘Blueprint for Diversity,’” the intercultural concerns committee and the original Blueprint for Diversity group were consolidated to create a diversity committee charged with this task in the fall of 2008. This group consisted of 16 individuals representing faculty, students, administrators and staff, both from the undergraduate and graduate levels. The dean of transitions and inclusion chairs this group.

The diversity committee began meeting in the fall of 2008 to discuss how to make George Fox University more reflective of God’s kingdom (Revelation 7:9; Matthew 6:10), building upon the work set forth by the previous Blueprint for Diversity. We believe that as Christ followers we are compelled to live out our faith in this fashion for the following reasons:

1. THE THEOLOGICAL MANDATE

As a Christ-centered institution, we believe that God has uniquely, fearfully, and wonderfully made all human beings (Psalms 139: 13–16). As such, every human being is of infinite value and worth. The story of God’s work is one of reconciling people to himself (Romans 5:11) and each other (Matthew 5:23–24). We are called to be agents of reconciliation as we reach people from every tribe, tongue and nation (2 Corinthians 5:18).

2. THE GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY MISSION AND VALUES

The mission of the University is the following: “George Fox University, a Christ-centered community, prepares students spiritually, academically, and professionally to think with clarity, act with integrity, and serve with passion.” In addition, one of the institution’s core values speaks directly to reflecting the diversity of God’s people: “All people are created in God’s image. Therefore, George Fox University represents the ethnic, socio-economic, cultural, and gender diversity of the broader kingdom of God. We provide opportunities for students to dialogue about issues of diversity and to live and study in diverse communities.”

3. THE SOCIETY AND CULTURE IN WHICH WE LIVE AND WORK

The university believes that the diversity of communities is an important resource in our society. The United States continues to diversify; estimates suggest that by the year 2040, the non-Hispanic white population will only account for 50 percent of the total U.S. population. To pursue excellence and quality in this diverse society requires an educational experience that acknowledges and appreciates the benefits of a diverse workforce and recognizes the reality of the world into which graduates are sent. As such, the George Fox University community must be diligent about learning how to create and nourish a diverse community on our campuses.

Framework

In order to accomplish the task, a framework was selected to guide the work necessary to bring about lasting change at George Fox. That framework is Daryl Smith’s (1995) *dimensions of diversity*, later enhanced by Clayton-Pedersen, et al. (2007). The dimensions of this framework are institutional vitality and viability, educational and scholarly mission, access and success, and campus climate.

Institutional Vitality and Viability

Characterizes an institution's capacity to plan, implement and evaluate comprehensive diversity efforts (Clayton-Pedersen, et al., 2007)

Educational and Scholarly Mission

Involves the availability of courses with significant diversity content, but also diversity course-taking patterns, faculty engagement with diversity issues, and student learning outcomes related to diversity (Clayton-Pedersen, et al., 2007)

Access and Success

Relates to an institution's undergraduate and graduate populations by field and levels, student success (e.g., graduation rates, persistence, and honors), and pursuit of advanced degrees and transfer among fields (Clayton-Pedersen, et al., 2007)

Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations

Encompasses the type and quality of social interactions among students, faculty, and staff, as well as individual and group perceptions of institutional commitment to diversity (Clayton-Pedersen, et al., 2007)

All of these dimensions work together, and it was important to develop indicators for success within each of these dimensions to provide benchmarks. It was also important that assessment be built into the plan in order to measure progress.

Assessment

In order to avoid what Clayton-Pedersen, et al (2007) refers to as "project-itis," it was important that we not just provide a list of programs but place an emphasis on measuring impact. To this end, we developed indicators within each dimension to guide our work and assist us in tracking change over time. Gathering data will be an important part of moving forward so that we can see progress and existing gaps. This includes obtaining a baseline (when necessary) for certain initiatives in order to determine an appropriate course of action to achieve our goals.

Key Definitions

In an early committee meeting, we decided that our usage of the term *diversity* would refer to the following areas:

- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Socio-economic status
- Disability

We chose *ethnicity* as opposed to *race* because we believe that race is socially, rather than biologically, constructed. We realize that culture is an important aspect of ethnicity and diversity that is not specifically referenced here because of the difficulty in measuring progress when it comes to culture. Over the next five years assessment will play an important role in moving this plan forward. We are sure that aspects of culture will emerge and we will report them as needed in the hopes of helping us understand the role it plays in our conversation about “reflecting the kingdom of God.”

The use of the word gender refers to men and women specifically. We acknowledge that some might want to include sexual orientation as part of that term. We welcome open dialogue about this issue by trying to create safe spaces for people to have conversation about this. Although we are very clear that this issue is a theological one for us, we know that this topic is a very sensitive one that produces a lot of emotion in many people. The stance that George Fox University takes on sexuality is that we believe that God’s plan for the joyful fulfillment of sexual intimacy is found only within marriage between a man and a woman.

The manner in which we define socio-economic status is by using the definition that the federal government uses to award the federal Pell Grant. This criterion can be found at thepellgrant.com/pell-grant-eligibility.shtml. We acknowledge that not everyone will be in agreement with this definition, but currently it is the way that institutions of higher learning track students at institutions who come from a low socio-economic status. Therefore, for tracking purposes, we believe at this time it is the best way to track data.

The committee recognizes that people with disabilities comprise another group that adds to the diversity of our community. We also recognize that there are many students and employees in the George Fox community with disabilities. However, realizing that disabilities can be a very nuanced issue that requires extensive time to understand, we have not specifically addressed this group within this plan. We will make it a part of our conversations as we move forward, and our hope is to develop a comprehensive plan in conjunction with the Blueprint to better address the needs of our students with seen and unseen disabilities. This will also include exploring ways to recruit and retain not only students with disabilities, but also faculty and staff. We would like to acknowledge that the Disability Services Office actively supports our students with both seen and unseen disabilities. This statement has been written in consultation with and has the support of the Disability Services Office, and that office will continue to be part of this conversation as we move ahead with the Blueprint for Diversity.

Further, the committee values the contribution that international perspectives bring to the diversity conversation. We chose to concentrate on domestic diversity because there will be an effort by another campus group to develop a strategic plan pertaining to international programs and globalization.

The End Goal

Why do we seek to become a more inclusive community? We are seeking to create a community that truly reflects God's kingdom as described in Revelation 7:9.

Ultimately we want to prepare students spiritually, academically and professionally to impact the world with their gifts and talents. We believe that in order to do that effectively we need to provide opportunities for all of our students to encounter people who are different from them. This is why we seek to become a more diverse community.

BLUEPRINT FOR DIVERSITY INDICATORS (SUMMARY)

VITALITY AND VIABILITY

INDICATORS:

1. Diversity is a central part in the university's planning process and mission statement.
2. The diversity of the board of trustees, faculty and staff/administration at every level.
3. Institutional strategies and resources dedicated to diversity.
4. A theological basis for our diversity efforts.

EDUCATIONAL AND SCHOLARLY MISSION

INDICATORS:

1. The degree to which diversity-related courses are infused throughout the undergraduate majors and graduate programs
2. The degree to which the general education requirement of Global and Cultural Understanding is tied to specific objectives and outcomes identified by the General Education Committee
3. The level of faculty expertise on issues relating to diversity
4. The amount and depth of learning in the area of diversity and students' capacity to work in diverse settings

ACCESS AND SUCCESS

INDICATORS:

1. The diversity of the undergraduate and graduate student population in all majors and programs
2. Progress over time in the diversity of the undergraduate and graduate student population
3. The success of students in terms of graduation, persistence, fields, honors and performance
4. The rate of transfer among fields where high transfer rates are occurring (specific attention will be given to Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) majors during this five-year period)
5. The pursuit of advanced degrees
6. Involvement in on-campus student leadership positions

CAMPUS CLIMATE

INDICATORS:

1. The perceptions of the institution (climate, commitment, engagement)
2. The levels and quality of interaction among groups
3. The quality of experience for diverse groups on campus
4. The levels of use and engagement in a variety of activities, offices, and resources