



Across Cultures

NOTES FROM WESTMONT'S DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

ISSUE 15

FALL 2006

WESTMONT COLLEGE'S COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

BASED ON EXCERPTS FROM THE LONG RANGE PLAN

It's been ten years since Westmont's current Long Range Plan was presented to and adopted by the Board of Trustees. One of the eight priorities included in the plan is "that the Westmont community be creatively and energetically responding to the significant issues related to diversity—including both ethnic and gender diversity." But why? Here are relevant excerpts from the Long Range Plan.

The Educational Challenge

One's view of the world, including one's understanding of the Christian faith, is profoundly shaped and at times severely limited by one's own particular history and culture. Because of this, an important dimension of self-understanding and self-criticism must include being a community informed and enriched by thoughtful and intentional study of and interaction with cultures other than our own.

The Rationale for Greater Diversity

As a Christian institution, we have special reasons for celebrating diversity as an aspect of God's creation, and for striving to create community out of rich diversity as an aspect of building God's Kingdom in the world.

As a liberal arts institution, diversity contributes to a more interesting and more stimulating intellectual environment. To the extent that diversity of gender, ethnicity, class, etc. among students, staff and faculty brings together a range of perspectives on the world, it is valuable for stimulating intellectual and personal growth.

As an institution that is committed to preparing students to live compassionate lives in the world, and to give leadership both within and outside of the evangelical world, our commitment to diversity is part of

creating an environment where students can be helpfully apprenticed in the art of dealing with diversity in constructive ways.

The Aims of a Westmont Education

Our world has increasingly become interconnected and interdependent, despite deep divisions and antagonisms. To prepare people to function intelligently, effectively and for the good in a world of global politics, global economics, and global communications must be one of the aims of a Westmont education.

Such an education can play a significant role in transforming lives and putting students on a trajectory that will yield, over time, graduates who are characterized by a range of valuable knowledge, helpful skills and positive attitudes—graduates with:

- Knowledge about the world in which God has placed them.

Continued under Commitment, page 2

Westmont strives to be a community informed and enriched by thoughtful and intentional study of and interaction with multiple cultures. As a liberal arts college rooted in Christ, we celebrate diversity as an aspect of God's creation; we strive to create community out of rich diversity as an aspect of building God's Kingdom in the world; we value the range of perspectives on the world that stimulates intellectual and personal growth; and we seek for faculty and staff to apprentice students in the art of dealing with diversity in constructive ways. It is an aim of Westmont to prepare graduates who will function intelligently, effectively and for the good of our increasingly intercultural world.

From Long Range Plan Excerpts

ETHNIC/INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ENROLLMENT

FALL SEMESTER

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Native American/Alaskan	22	21	16	24	20	33
Asian/Pacific Islander	63	78	77	85	98	91
Black	8	10	15	23	26	28
Hispanic	92	77	89	105	127	129
Non-Resident Alien	6	7	11	13	11	10
TOTAL	191	193	208	250	282	291
College Enrollment	1381	1330	1347	1376	1379	1337
% of Total Enrollment	13.8%	14.5%	15.4%	18.2%	20.4%	21.8%

PROGRAM STANDARD ON DIVERSITY

Commitment, *cont. from page 1*

- Interpersonal competence that enables them to participate in dialogue, work with a group, and be characterized by tolerance and appreciation of differences.
- The resources and skills necessary to handle tensions that arise between Christian faith and other seriously argued positions, to live confidently yet self-critically, in a world of competing ideologies.
- Broad and expansive sympathies, including concerns for the spiritually lost, the homeless and hungry, those suffering from racial and gender prejudice, and the destruction of our biotic, cultural and sociopolitical environments.
- The knowledge, skills and motivation to be effective participants in the civic, charitable and cultural lives of their communities.

After the adoption of the Long Range Plan, the faculty approved the following **Program Standard**:

Students have the understanding and skills to engage people unlike themselves—both

individuals and groups—in ways that affirm others as persons created in God’s image. Students are able to approach others respectfully—avoiding the natural tendency to deal with differences by vilifying, romanticizing, or victimizing.

Student Learning Outcomes

Self-Reflection. Students demonstrate increased self-reflection on how their beliefs, values, ideas, and practices—while not solely a function of one’s context—are influenced by social class, gender, ethnicity, culture, and historical moment.

Discussion and Analysis of Issues. Students demonstrate the ability to bring the dimensions of social class, gender, ethnicity, and culture to the discussion and analysis of issues within their disciplines, as well as to discussions of broader social, cultural and political issues.

Formulation of Knowledge. Students are able to recognize that, while knowledge is not solely a function of social construction, any

formulation of knowledge may be affected in important ways by gender, social class, ethnicity, and culture.

Cross-Cultural Communication Skills. Students have gained increased cross-cultural communication and adaptation skills, empathy, self-awareness, flexibility, understanding of the influence of context, social roles, and culture on behavior, and the ability to locate and evaluate information about other cultures.

Process of Making Choices. Students understand the process of making ethical, Christian choices within multiple cultural contexts, avoiding premature judgments.

Essential Christianity v. Cultural Peculiarities. Students have an understanding of the Christian church cross-culturally, distinguishing between what is essential to Christianity and what is peculiar to a particular culture.

Foreign Language. Students will have an appreciation of the advantages and insights to be gained from the study of foreign languages and literature.

**A SUMMARY OF
RETENTION/GRADUATION RATES OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS CLASS COHORTS
FOUR-YEAR AVERAGE RATES**

	Cohort Years Included		Entire First-Year Class	Men	Women	White/ Non-Hispanic	Students of Color
After 1st Year	2002-2005	Retention	87.7%	90.5%	86.4%	87.6%	86.0%
After 2nd Year	2001-2004	Retention	78.3%	82.0%	76.5%	77.1%	73.9%
After 3rd Year	2000-2003	Graduated	4.5%	1.7%	5.9%	4.4%	4.0%
		Continuing	69.1%	76.6%	67.1%	70.7%	67.6%
		Persistence	73.6%	78.2%	73.0%	75.0%	71.6%
After 4th Year	1999-2002	Graduated	67.5%	68.7%	66.8%	69.0%	62.1%
		Continuing	1.5%	2.7%	1.5%	1.7%	1.7%
		Persistence	69.0%	71.4%	68.3%	70.6%	63.8%
After 5th Year	1998-2001	Graduated	70.3%	74.3%	68.1%	71.2%	70.9%
		Continuing	0.5%	0.6%	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%
		Persistence	70.7%	75.0%	68.6%	71.6%	71.3%
After 6th Year	1997-2000	Graduated	72.5%	75.8%	70.8%	73.5%	67.6%

- Note:
1. Persistence is the % of students that have received degrees + the % of students still enrolled.
 2. The four-year average was selected since this is the federal standard established by the I.P.E.D.S Graduation Rate Survey.

PROBLEMS OR POSSIBILITIES?

by Elena Yee, Director of Intercultural Programs

Last month at the Diversity Committee meeting, Dr. Randy VanderMey sincerely asked, “Can we see diversity more as possibilities than problems?” It was refreshing to be reminded of the inherent goodness and value of diversity. In truth I don’t believe anyone would really argue against the value of diversity. All we have to do is to walk around our own campus. Indeed, the possibilities are truly endless when we consider the breadth and depth of the diversity that surrounds us and is in us.

Yet I’ll speak more directly about the most common definition for diversity, which is about race. The “problem” isn’t diversity in itself; rather it’s about ascribed power and privilege based on race, the daily barrage of images and stories in our media, and the weight of our common history as citizens of this nation that continues to perpetuate these stereotypes. If we are honest, we truly believe these “stories” we tell about each other and about ourselves. The common refrain is “stereotypes must have a grain of truth to exist.” Maybe so but it doesn’t take much to bust a stereotype or reinforce

one for that matter. At a recent Reel Talk, the film “Crash” blatantly revealed this to us one scene after another. And as much as we all know that race is a social construct and not biological, it’s still the most salient characteristic of our society. That is, it’s real and, yes, it really makes a difference in our relationships, in our workplaces, in our neighborhoods, in our businesses, in our schools and in our churches whether we realize it or not.

Racial diversity and racism are the most difficult and controversial issues for us in the United States as well as for our campus. We don’t talk about it or preach about it. When was the last time you heard a sermon about the sin of racism? In the racial justice study class that I’m teaching, the students’ fear of being misunderstood and of being judged is so great that these fears that have become the great divide. The silence is nearly deafening at times. Even in a class intended to talk about race, students and I have realized how very difficult, painful and even (and often) personal it is to broach these issues. We are indeed a microcosm of our society.

So why talk about it if it’s so hard? Who really benefits? I suppose it would be easier to focus on the celebration of diversity or as Tim Wise, author and white anti-racist commentator, sardonically describes as “food, festival and fabric.” But for me to get beyond my own racial prejudices, I need to listen to other stories: stories that counteract my stereotypes, and stories that belie my beliefs about “the other.” It’s imperative for me to discover and accept the complexities of racial/ethnic/cultural identity, to share my own story, and to have the courage to lovingly confront when I encounter racially biased attitudes, misinformed opinions and discriminatory action however unintentional they may be.

So, problems or possibilities? For me it’s “and/both.” It’s talk and action. It’s you the individual and it’s you the system. It’s me and it’s you. It’s despair and hope. Gandhi once said, “Be the change you want to see.” With God’s help, wisdom, and perseverance let us take on the challenge of bringing about the fullness of the promise of our nation, “liberty and justice for all.”

WHAT IS WHITE?

by Andrea Anderson, ‘09

For the past two and a half years, there has been a “diversity and racial justice” movement across the Westmont campus. This class is a part of that progress toward campus awareness of these tough issues. We tackle questions such as “What does it mean to be White?” and “What will it mean for you to confront prejudice, racism?” and “What are you afraid of?” What has been tough for me is confronting prejudices I have in my own life, and realizing the prejudices that I was raised with and how they have inadvertently affected what I believe and how I look at people of different colors. Open conversation and figuring out what others around me think is, partly, the key to even begin to dismantle racism. And this is a process... as our class has proven quite thoroughly. When I think about how long this could take I kind of get tired, but I do have hope that racism will continue to be dealt with, because of movies (e.g., “Crash”

and the hope that there will be more like it) and classes and clubs (e.g., ours and those at other colleges).

As stated previously, we have started to tackle the question “What is White?” There are many examples of those who are categorized as “white” people, and thus have lost their culture because of society’s absurd idea that white people are somehow superior to others. Some of the things that help are asking myself questions like: Am I doing anything to help? And if I’m not, then what is my role at this point and what can I do to try to alleviate those prejudices? Justice for all races... I honestly don’t know what that would look like. Although a couple of weeks ago, we did talk a little bit about making ourselves and others aware of the racial divisions and unfairness. I think this helps, but is only scratching the surface of the problem of racism. *One of my fears is that when thinking about these tough issues I*

will actually see the prejudice in my life that have been instilled in me. I fear that they are coming out in my actions and speech and I do not realize it. I’m afraid I’m going to be offensive, and not able to portray to others that I am God’s child.

The readings that this class requires have given me just a little more insight to see what minorities go through. I know that I can never completely understand what other people experience, whether that means racism, sexism, or even someone who has lost a parent to a horrible accident. There are things I can understand, those things that I have also experienced. But those things are few and far between, and I can never understand because I have never experienced and probably never will experience them. I think that’s the hardest part about confronting racism, the prejudices I have, as well as those prejudices that our society has persisted through many different means.

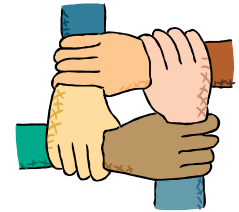
PROVOST AND VP VISIT CONSULTANTS

In September, Shirley Mullen and Jane Higa had the opportunity to visit with consultants Brenda Salter McNeil and her husband Derek McNeil. Brenda heads up an organization (Salter McNeil and Associates) that works with non-profit organizations in “reconciliation training, consulting and leadership development.” Derek is a member of the faculty at Wheaton’s Graduate School of Psychology. They have done excellent work with InterVarsity and various church bodies and came to us with strong endorsements from our trustees Ken Fong and Roy Goble.

In a desire to better understand what our written documents communicate, early in the summer the college asked Brenda and Derek to review our key institutional documents. This includes everything from the college’s mission statement, to the Community Life Statement, to our general education requirements, to our learning standards, to our admissions brochures, to our statements regarding diversity. Shirley and Jane were impressed with the accuracy and helpfulness of their insights and observations.

Brenda and Derek will be joining us in the Spring semester to further talk

with various constituency groups about these observations. Their feedback will be incorporated in the Long Range Planning Report and shared with the President’s Staff and the Campus Diversity Committee. In addition, Brenda will again be joining us in Chapel. We look forward to further conversation with these gifted leaders.



REFLECTIONS ON ETHNICITY, RELIGION AND VOCATION

By Elena Yee, Director of Intercultural Programs

Senior Carlisa Stevenson and I recently attended the 2006 Global Conference Sisters of African Descent: Connecting Spirituality Religion and Vocation. I was deeply moved as I listened to African and African American women whose voices were deeply rooted in past and present suffering and in deep faith and hope. The workshops and resulting relationships broadened and enriched my understanding of women of African descent as I seek to mentor and support African American women at our campus.

As an Asian American, I realized how little I knew about the history of African Americans pre- and post civil rights. In fact I was so convicted of my lack of knowledge that when the conference brochure came across my desk, I thought, “This is a God-given opportunity that I need to take.” I must say that some of my African-American women colleagues teased me after I told

them I was planning to attend saying, “Um, Elena, you’re not Black.” We had a good laugh about that and realized how our worlds were colliding into each other in good and challenging ways.

I also believe strongly that it is time for Asian Americans to move beyond our ascribed “model minority” status and to align ourselves with other people of color to seek justice for all. I also feel it is important for each of us to be willing to “displace” ourselves as Doug Schaupp wrote in his book, “Being White: Finding our Place in a Multiethnic World,” so we can experience what it means to be “the other.”

Last, I am grateful for how Carlisa Stevenson felt empowered as a woman of African descent and for her current role as the leader for our fledging Black Student Union. She commented, “It was definitely worth my time to attend the conference. It was wonderful to be surrounded by such

accomplished women of African descent. It’s something that I have never experienced before. It was also great to hear about all the different organizations these women are a part of. I didn’t know that there was so much being done to better our lives,” and “I just want to let other young African-American women like me know how much we have ahead of us. We do have a support group out there. I also want to try to strengthen the bond among our African-American women. I know there is one there, but it’s a matter of making it stronger. I really want BSU to become a support group for Black students.”

May we continue to be a campus that supports all our students as they seek to encourage and exhort each other as people of faith who are diverse, creative and distinct in all the ways God has imagined for them and for us.

DIVERSITY COMMITTEE 2006-2007

Randy VanderMey, Chair

Chris Call	Lydia Kim
Beth Cauwels	Joyce Luy
Toya Cooper	Michele Molkoy
Julissa Delgado	Shirley Mullen
Mary Doctor	Helen Rhee
T.K. Erickson	Bill Wright
Jane Higa	Elena Yee

DIVERSITY WEBPAGES

www.westmont.edu/_academics/pages/diversity/ - a source of information about diversity at Westmont.

www.diversityweb.org - Diversity Web, the most comprehensive compendium of campus practices and resources about diversity in higher education; provided by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U).