

September 2010  
Special Edition

# OEP Newsletter

## Office of Equity and Pluralism

### Special Interest Article:

- From the Desk of Dr. B. (Vision Strategy Team Recommendations)

## Bellevue College

### From the Desk of Dr. B.



Dr. James Bennett, VP for Equity & Pluralism

**At the very end of last Spring Quarter**, the Vision Strategy Team (VST), after a year and a half of working to engage our campus community to build pluralistic vision of equity and inclusion, brought forth an executive summary and shared a set of recommendations. Given the timing, there was no opportunity for further dialogue, but we have, indeed, received a wide range of responses from “Good job” to “you did nothing to address past hurts”.

This wide range of responses is to be expected given the tremendous diversity of people, experiences, and opinions present in our community. What the VST did, however, was to engage and listen, communicate and listen; challenge and listen. What we heard and attempted to reflect can be found in the wide range of recommendations. We understand the nature and culture of our community and would never attempt to be prescriptive in the set of recommendations offered.

As stated in the Executive Summary, we attempted to organize the recommendations into three broad areas—Self Awareness, Our Attitudes About Each Other and How We Interact with Each Other. I redirect your attention to these materials, because I truly believe that the VST has provided us with an opportunity for a “do over”. We cannot and did not attempt revisionist history by explaining away slights, oversights, and pains suffered in the past. We did not put on rose-colored glasses and say that all we will be better “if we could all just get along”.

We did say, with a tremendous amount of community input, that there is much to learn about ourselves as individuals and as an institution. We are aware of and indicated, in the report, that there are a myriad of opportunities available now and projected to facilitate our journey into **Self-Awareness**.

In my experience, no one embarks on this journey without some missteps, some pain and varying amounts of confusion. However, there are no excuses for taking out those frustrations, pain, and anger on others. Therefore, **Our Attitudes about Each Other** are critical ingredients if we hope to be an inclusive and welcoming environment. We must be compassionate, understanding and establish a basis for mutual respect. If we cannot forgive each other for the mistakes that we are bound to make along the way, the journey becomes more difficult and it will take a much longer time to realize positive results.

When I was growing up and during the time that I lived with my grandparents, whenever I brought home a friend unknown to my Big Mama, her response to that friend would be either, “Who’s your people?” or “Who’s your mama ‘nem?” From that I learned early on that if you don’t know someone or about someone, the best thing to do is to respectfully inquire. I believe that this attitude forms the basis for the recommendations found under **How We Interact with Each Other**.

I understand that we are a huge and complex enterprise, but that should not limit our face-to-face interactions, nor stop us from acknowledging and engaging those who are different. We have taken institutional steps to improve our formal grievance and complaint processes, but they will never, nor should they, replace our individual commitments to improving our interactions with each other and how we personally handle disagreements.

All of the recommendations included in the report, call for us to exercise a considerable amount of personal and individual responsibility. Very little will work if we do not want it to work. Much good can come out of our working diligently to make this a more positive and inclusive environment. The VST has done its job in providing a wide range of ways for you to become involved and join those of us who are committed to this journey to make BC a better place to learn and to work. The VST report and recommendations can be found at:

<https://go.mybcc.net/president/community/Documents/Final%20VST%20recommendations%206-08-10.docx>

## Working with Individuals with Non-apparent Disabilities

Sponsored by the Center for Learning Connections at Highline Community College

By Bonnie Berry, June 2010

A group of more than a dozen Bellevue College faculty, staff and administrators attended a one day training to gain knowledge and tools for working with individuals with Non-apparent disabilities. Trainer Nancie Payne of Payne & Associates is nationally known for her expertise in people with disabilities. Her outstanding presenting, facilitating individual simulations and group work conveyed both what it's like to be challenged by mental processing differences and practical tools for a strengths based approach in service to people with non-apparent disabilities. Nancie reminded us that the experiences of people who have non-apparent disabilities are far reaching, different for each person, both positive and negative. Each person needs our understanding and assistance.

The group performed tasks like writing our name in cursive on a paper we held to our own forehead, writing numbers 1 through 20 with our non-dominant hand as quickly as possible, reading a list of colors by saying what the color of the letters is instead of what the word says, attempting to read written passages that include unintelligible phrases, interpreting oral comparisons that include unintelligible phrases. This helped us to step into the shoes of people with non-apparent disabilities.

Stigma can prevent people from seeking and getting treatment. Both stigma and untreated disorders can cause classroom and work management problems and poor performance. Not only is stigma from others an issue, but self-stigma occurs also. The components involved in stigma are labeling, stereotyping, creating a division and discriminating against people based on a label. Stigma that results in discrimination leads to diminished employment opportunities, lack of career advancement and varying degrees of unfriendliness in the classroom and workplace.

Nancie introduced Strength-based Cognitive Mapping to analyze tasks and identify cognitive attributes that relate to learning and working functions. Through practice, we learned to break down tasks into simple steps and identified cognitive attributes that are needed to be successful at the tasks. Cognitive mapping is a useful tool for those who work in direct service and job placement. These professionals can use cognitive mapping to identify job situations that will lead to success for people with non-apparent disabilities.

Finally, we learned about Universal Design for Learning. Deploying a universal design for learning involves thinking in advance about accomplishing tasks in multiple ways. Applying a universal design for learning means modifications on how tasks are taught, accommodations and strategies and methods that work for the widest variety of learning styles and individual differences. This design creates wins for everyone, not just people with non-apparent disabilities. Universal Design provides multiple means of representation, expression and engagement.

Nancie concluded by suggesting approaches in service to people with non-apparent disability including affirming self-worth, listening attentively, showing support of efforts, motivating others to think critically, helping to create networks, being positive and supportive and reframing statements from negative to positive. These are approaches that everyone can benefit from.

BC attendees expressed appreciation for the very specific cognitive mapping tools as a specific benefit to their work in direct service to people with disabilities. Others mentioned the power of the Universal Design concept and that implementing it can improve the culture of an organization. Some reflected on college processes that may be unfriendly to people with non-apparent disabilities. We look forward to brainstorming ways we can share what we learned individually as well as across campus as opportunities arise.

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*“Stigma can prevent people from seeking and getting treatment.”*



## The Spice of Life (Diversity on College Campuses)

### Workplace Diversity Programs: Debunking 3 Myths

By Weldon Latham - Aug 27, 2010

**With the exponential growth** in stories about modern workplace diversity programs, from blogs and articles to scholarly studies and Supreme Court cases, several recurring legal myths have developed that reflect some discomfort with the whole notion of diversity. True, the law of affirmative action, equal opportunity and workplace diversity is oftentimes not very clear. But the vacuum is often filled with speculation, uninformed opinion and bad advice, usually on the conservative side. "If there's any question about legality," the naysayers advise, "just don't do it." Here, three such myths are dispelled to help corporate America make informed decisions about the true legal risks in aggressively pursuing diversity objectives and practices.

#### **Myth 1: Employment decisions based on race (or gender or other protected classes) are illegal.**

**Not true.** Where an appropriate factual basis consider race and other protected characteristics in making employment decisions, such as hiring, promotions, and access to training. The U.S. Supreme Court declared in United

Steelworkers v. Weber (1979) and Johnson v. Transportation Agency of Santa Clara County (1987) that race- and gender-conscious employment decisions are valid when they are made pursuant to a written voluntary affirmative-action program that is based on historic segregation in specific job categories (later clarified to mean "significant underrepresentation").

In *Weber*, the court upheld a training program in which 50 percent of the positions were set aside for Blacks to redress past discrimination. In *Johnson*, the court upheld a gender-based promotion, also as a remedial measure. These cases are still the "law of the land."

Of course, no corporation operating under a merit-based workplace policy wants to, or should, randomly hire or promote people from racially or ethnically underrepresented groups or women regardless of qualifications, nor is that what *Weber* or *Johnson* suggest. Companies should continue to hire and promote the most qualified applicants. In areas of demonstrated historic underrepresentation, companies should first and foremost use outreach techniques, diverse [recruiters](#), [mentoring](#) and other tools to expand their applicant pools. But where underrepresentation persists despite the companies' best efforts, they can establish

programs (like *Weber's* training program) and undertake *ad hoc* decisions (like *Johnson's* promotion) to remediate the underrepresentation, so long as their voluntary affirmative-action plans provide the appropriate basis. These methods help identify highly qualified Black, Latino, women and other candidates who previously may have been overlooked.

#### **Myth 2: [Reverse-discrimination liability](#) is as risky to corporate reputation as "classic discrimination" and thus requires strict limits on diversity practices in the workplace.**


**Not true.** So-called "reverse discrimination" claims—typically a white male complaint that he was not hired or promoted because of his race and gender—do occasionally arise and do present a small risk of liability to corporate America.

Click on the link below for the complete article: <http://www.diversityinc.com/article/7963/Workplace-Diversity-Programs-Debunking-3-Myths/>




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Several recurring legal myths have developed that reflect some discomfort with the whole notion of diversity.



Let's Talk About **Race** Workshop

"Let's Talk About Race" workshops provide an opportunity to learn to dialogue about race, racism and whiteness in a safe place and increase our understanding of others.

Workshop Dates:  
 + October 21 - 22, 2010  
 + February 3-4, 2011  
 + May 3-4, 2011

For additional information:  
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## "Let's Talk About Race" Workshop

It is important to focus our attention on strengthening our campus community connections and exploring our individual role in making the campus an inclusive, nurturing environment for our students and colleagues. One way to take action towards that end is to participate in one of the upcoming workshops, entitled "Let's Talk About Race".

We have scheduled three series of 2-day workshops, one series per quarter, in an effort to provide more opportunities for each of us to engage in dialogue about race, our personal racial identities, and how our concept of race influences our interactions with others. For many of us, feelings of fear, guilt, anger or blame have kept us from talking openly about race. Race and

racism may for many of us be taboo topics talked about only within our racial groups, or even so politely in the larger society.

"Let's Talk About Race" is a workshop that provides an opportunity to *learn to dialogue about race, racism and whiteness in a safe place and increase our understanding of others*. It is designed to help us understand ourselves as racial beings and explore how the world we experience is impacted by race and racism. By establishing a context that is personal, local and immediate, we can begin to understand the wider impact of race and how we can engage in courageous conversations that will ultimately transform the way we think about ourselves, our students and our world.

"Let's Talk About Race" is unique in education and our ultimate goal is to eliminate the racial educational gap among students. More than any other activity, dialogue bridges our differences from the heart and is making an impact on the very subtle and almost invisible, but never-the-less impactful, institutional racism.

We can only fulfill BC's Affirmation of Inclusion, when we all as individuals take action to make it a reality.

**Please mark your calendars for the following workshop dates:**

- October 21<sup>st</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010
- February 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011
- May 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011



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**The Office of Equity and Pluralism is a service office that actively supports and advances the College's commitment to inclusion.**

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