

Ad Hoc Working Group on Campus & Community Diversity Concerns Report

Submitted March 29, 2013

This report has been compiled in the spirit of providing comprehensive goals, actions and recommendations that both identify and seek to resolve issues relating to the importance of diversity and inclusion within both the EIU and Charleston communities.

In response to concerns expressed by EIU students, faculty, staff and members of the Charleston community regarding a series of racially charged incidents within in the EIU and Charleston communities, a Town Hall style meeting was held on January 30, 2013 on the campus of EIU. In response to the EIU Town Hall Meeting, Eastern Illinois University President William Perry and City of Charleston Mayor John Inyart appointed an ***Ad Hoc Working Group on Campus & Community Concerns*** comprised of campus and community partners from Eastern Illinois University and the City of Charleston who were given the following charge –

Develop recommended actions and considerations for the implementing committee of the EIU strategic plan plank of "Campus and Community Life." Dr. Webb is the point person for implementations in that plank of the strategic plan. The actions and considerations proposed should support the objectives of promoting understanding between campus and community, supporting our students in their relationships with the community, and enhancing university-community relationships.

The work of the Ad Hoc Working Group will necessitate that members of the EIU and Charleston communities place greater priority and emphasis on being "proactive rather than reactive" as it relates to fostering a welcoming climate and culture within both communities that embraces inclusion, civility, equal treatment (or human dignity) and representation.

Dr. Heather Webb, Director of Student Standards and Campus & Community Life representative to the Strategic Plan Implementation Group was appointed to serve as convener and to guide the conclusions and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Campus & Community Concerns in this unifying work.

Members represent a broad spectrum of diverse experiences, roles, views and perspectives within the EIU and Charleston communities respectively. Members are: **Ms. Kaci Abolt**, EIU Student Body President; **Ms. Angie Ashby**, Director of Outreach, Salisbury Church; **Chief Bryan Baker**, Charleston Police; **Ms. Ceci Brinker**, Director, Student Life; **Ms. Shanae Connell**, NAACP Student Representative; **Dr. Mona Davenport**, Director, Minority Affairs; **Chief Adam Due**, EIU Police; **Dr. Michael Loudon**, Professor of English, **Dr. Jeannie Ludlow**, Associate Professor of English & Coordinator of Women's Studies; and **Officer Marlon Williams**, Charleston Police.

The members of the working group have been able to identify, examine and articulate a strategy comprised of five key areas designed to reinforce and further enhance processes, principles and practices that promote the importance of diversity and inclusion within the EIU and Charleston communities.

These five key areas are listed below, along with a unifying goal for each area, and a listing of possible recommendations and actions that may help accomplish the stated goal.

Training & Development

GOAL: Within three years, the Eastern Illinois University and the City of Charleston will make a commitment to personnel and funding, with a focus on diversity training and awareness of under-represented groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTIONS:

- Top down diversity awareness training with EIU President, Vice-Presidents, Deans and City Mayor, City Council, and other appropriate city administrators participating.
- Diversity awareness training for faculty.
- Sensitivity training offered both on and off campus in a cohesive manner with training teams of EIU and city personnel working together to deliver training. Some sort of designation for EIU offices and businesses for completing the training that they could display.
- Mandatory training for some personnel who may, as a function of their position, have potentially adversarial interactions with students. Some groups mentioned include RA staff, Night Assistants, Police, staff working Union Dances. There may be others who would also fit into this category.
- EIU Police and Charleston Police should take advantage of opportunities to present to student groups about both their rights and responsibilities, as well as “do’s and don’t’s” when interacting with persons in authority positions.
- Respect/civility meetings in every residential learning community at the beginning of each new year, as well as respect/civility components in new staff and faculty orientation. (Modeled after similar concept at Illinois State University.)

Orientation and Curriculum

GOAL: Recognizing that the understanding and appreciation of diversity is a developmental process, Eastern Illinois University will begin educating others upon their first contact with the University, and continue those efforts throughout their relationship.

RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTIONS:

- Extend the EIU Reads experience to the Charleston community. This will set the tone for student and community interaction early, as well as provide open discussion opportunities around diversity issues, when the book selected lends itself to the topic. Community leaders could be

invited as discussion leaders on campus. Charleston High School instructors could assign their students to the EIU Reads book through English classes and EIU students could go into the schools as discussion leaders.

- Incorporate into summer orientation opportunities for both incoming students and their parents to learn about expectations within the community. The ideas of being a good citizen, being respectful, and everyone being part of the greater community of Charleston should be conveyed. Invite Charleston leaders and community members to participate in summer orientation to help convey the common message.
- Utilize a bystander intervention model to train and create advocates. Encourage members of both the campus and the community to stand up and speak out when they see someone being treated poorly because of their differences.
- University Foundation classes should be required to have at least one diversity discussion module. Lesson plans, activities and other resources should be developed and made available to instructors.
- Students should have the option of earning community service hours for their participation in programs that educate others about diversity issues, such as being a training facilitator.

Opportunity & Outreach

GOAL: Increase the opportunity for cultural exchange between Eastern Illinois University and the Charleston community.

RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTIONS:

- Develop a formalized, intentional program to take EIU minority students to local elementary schools as classroom helpers or activity leaders on a regular basis. By exposing children to diversity early they will be less likely to participate in hurtful and intolerant behaviors as they grow older. Similarly, EIU students could also serve as Pen Pals to students in local elementary schools.
- EIU students, with the assistance of staff and faculty, will develop cultural experiences that can travel to local venues, such as schools, churches, and other community groups, to highlight both culture and talent. These activities may be mini Step Shows, musical performances or other similar activities.
- Establish a Student Speaker Bureau that community groups could utilize to invite students to present at their meetings.
- Utilize a program similar to a Living Legacy Project so students can examine their own family cultural histories.
- Greater promotion of and opportunity to explore the diverse history of Charleston.

Relationship Building & Collaboration

GOAL: Increase engagement between Eastern Illinois University and the Charleston community in understanding and appreciation of diversity.

RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTIONS:

- Seek out opportunities to educate both campus and community members together. Consistently and intentionally promote partnerships across Lincoln Avenue.
- Continue to have regular Town Hall style meetings to offer both campus and community members the opportunity to have an open dialogue about race and culture.
- Engage community groups with a larger following in our efforts. Specifically reach out to churches and other faith-based organizations.
- Establish a festival or other similar event that will serve to bring together students and community, promoting the idea of everyone being part of the larger Charleston community.

Public Relations & Media

GOAL: Utilize mass media to put a public face on inclusion and diversity.

RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTIONS:

- Create a joint statement of expectations or diversity mission statement between EIU and Charleston.
- EIU and Charleston will examine their current efforts to market the diversity of the areas.
- Create a calendar of community events to be shared on campus.
- Utilize local media, such as the newspaper, to communicate civility expectations to everyone in the community.
- Request local media to do more human interest stories highlighting the diversity in our community, both individuals and programs, in an effort to showcase the positive.
- Have a follow-up forum to the original Town Hall meeting to share our recommendations with the community.
- Hold media outlets accountable for how they represent both EIU and Charleston.

CONCLUSION

We strongly recommend that a permanent Campus and Community Advisory Group be formed, including representatives from both EIU and Charleston. We would like to have a member of the journalism department appointed to serve on this group to assist in meeting and evaluating the pieces of the plan relating to utilization of media. This advisory group would be charged with the evaluation of the plan progress, as well as identifying needs that were unanticipated in our ever-changing communities. It is our belief that the creation of a permanent advisory group will be a show of commitment and support in improving the climate in our communities, as well as a mechanism for holding everyone accountable to the adopted plan. In summary it is the hope of the members of the *Ad*

Hoc Working Group on Campus & Community Diversity Concerns that the relevance and impact of the goals, recommendations and actions contained in this report will be taken into careful consideration by members of the EIU and Charleston Administrations.

Respectfully submitted,

CHAIR:

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MEMBERS:

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