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Wichita: A Diverse Adult Basic Education Program in an Urban Center

Margaret Harris

The History of Wichita's Diversity

Wichita, incorporated in 1870 as a village, is the largest city in Kansas. It is the county seat of Sedgwick County, located at the junction of the Arkansas Rivers in south central Kansas. Westward expansion and financial rewards attracted the first White settlers to the area in the 1850s and 1860s looking to profit from hunting and trapping wildlife and to trade with the native American population, the Wichita Indians, who had moved north from Oklahoma and built a permanent settlement in 1863. By 1886, Wichita had established itself as the region's principal city due to the arrival of the railroad in 1872, making Wichita a destination for Texas cattle being driven north along the Chisholm Trail for shipment to eastern markets. This industry, along with the grain and milling markets, led to rapid growth. *Vaqueros* (Mexican cowboys) arrived from Mexico to help with roping, branding, and managing the large herds of cattle. They remained in Wichita and other Midwestern communities as the cattle industry and opportunities for continued work grew. Wichita's earliest history is of a place where different cultures and races worked side-by-side, mixed, and mingled to accomplish common goals.

Early in the 20th century, Wichita earned its distinction as the "air capital" after the first plane, the Cessna Comet, was manufactured there in 1917. Thousands of aircraft manufacturing jobs came to Wichita in the early 1940s as a result of WWII and thousands more in 1951 as a result of the boom associated with the activation of the Wichita Air Force Base (renamed McConnell in 1954). Wichita's entrepreneurial spirit led to its rise to national prominence with the development of such companies as Mentholatum, Boeing, Beech, Lear, Cessna, Coleman, White Castle, Pizza Hut, and Koch Industries. Wichita remains a manufacturing, financial, educational and cultural center into the 21st century (City of Wichita, n.d.).

The population of Wichita in 1960 was 254,700 and increased continually between 1960 and 2000. Wichita's population increased by 8.6% from 1960 to 1970, 1.0% from 1970 to 1980, 8.8% from 1980 to 1990, and 13.3% from 1990 to 2000. In 2000, the population in Wichita had grown to 344,284. The racial and ethnic composition of Wichita includes Whites, African Americans, Asians (including Pacific Islanders), American Indians, and Hispanics. The decades between 1950 and 1970 saw a major shift in the city's racial

makeup as the African American population increased significantly. Until 1950 African Americans made up about 5% of the population with little variation. Over two decades, their numbers increased from 8,082 (4.8%) in 1950 to 26,841 (9.7%) in 1970, a 230% increase. From 1980 to 2000, the Hispanic population in Wichita grew from 13,057 to 40,353—from 2.96% of the population to 7.4%. The Asian population in Wichita during these same years grew from 4,608 to 15,426—from 1.04% to 2.83% of the population. Both the Hispanic and Asian populations nearly tripled from 1980 to 2000, and with this growth came many challenges for the Wichita community. This also marked the beginning of the decline of a White majority. Even though the White population has increased from 160,000 in 1950 to about 260,000 in 2000, the percentage of the population has dropped from 95% to 75% (CensusScope, n.d.a).

Approximately 16,000 Wichita households earned less than a \$10,000 annual wage in 1999. Sixty-six per cent of students attending public schools in Wichita qualified for free or reduced price lunch in the 2006-2007 school year. The graduation rate is below the state average—66.4% compared to the state average of 77.7%; and the dropout rate is above the state average—3.7% compared to the state average of 1.5%. These numbers are not atypical of similar urban cities in the Midwest (Kansas State Department of Education, n. d.).

The Growth of Adult Basic Education

On March 15, 1962, President Kennedy signed into law the Manpower Development Training Act (MDTA) of 1962. This federal legislation was the result of discussion and fear about automation, technological changes, and obsolete skills that would lead to widespread unemployment. The act called for assistance in training difficult-to-place persons, such as those with criminal records, foreign-speaking, and the chronically unemployed adults. The Wichita Board of Education approved the establishment of MDTA programs in Wichita on October 15, 1962. The focus at that time was strictly employment and teaching technical skills needed to secure employment. MDTA was operated in conjunction with the East High School Vocational Department and Continuing Education, which was responsible for all adult education for the school system. In 1974, Public Law 93-380, Title VI, Part A of the 1974 Amendments to Elementary and Secondary Education Act, introduced by Congressman Perkins of Kentucky and signed by President Ford, provided for bilingual adult education (Van Meter, 1978).

During the 1970s and 1980s, there was a huge influx of refugees into Wichita. Once the United States left Vietnam, refugees from Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) started arriving in the United States. The United States State Department allowed these refugees to come to the United States through volunteer resettlement agencies—VOLAG's. Catholic Charities and the Lutheran Social Services were two VOLAG's in Wichita that helped to resettle the Indochinese refugees into the Wichita community. When these families arrived, it was the responsibility of the VOLAG to take care of them for the first year by assisting them with rent and providing all essential supplies. Later, under the Family Re-unification Program, more and more refugees arrived from Indochina.

When a person arrived in the United States as a refugee, as opposed to as an immigrant, he or she was a legal resident and was allowed to legally work. Refugee families were eligible to receive welfare and food stamps. In return, it was mandatory for them to attend English classes at authorized locations such as the Wichita Indochi-

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nese Center (WIC) and the Wichita Area Technical College (WATC). In addition to teaching English, these agencies taught the refugees life skills and helped them to become productive citizens (Kambampati, personal communication, 2007). During the late 1970s, the Wichita school district, through their division of vocational education, operated English as a second language (ESL) classes at the Dunbar Adult Center as well as at various community centers. At that time, the classes consisted of mostly refugees from Indochina. These students from both North and South Viet Nam often attended the same class, creating uncomfortable situations at times (Shoniber, personal communication, 2007).

In 1981, P.L. 97-35, Amendments to the Adult Education Act (AEA), signed by President Reagan, created the first discretionary program to support ESL programs (NAEPDC, 1998). The WIC was founded in 1983 as a non-profit corporation to assist refugees from Indochina. Later, WIC served refugees from other countries including Iraq, Russia, Bosnia, and Somalia. Funding for WIC ESL classes was provided initially by the State Department funneled through a refugee coordinator working for Social and Rehabilitative Services (SRS) in Topeka, the state capitol. Since 1994, WIC has been funded first by grants from the Kansas Department of Education then by grants from the Kansas Board of Regents (M. Kambampati, personal communication, April 19, 2007). P.L. 100-297 (Hawkins/Stafford Elementary/Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988), signed April 28, 1988, by President Ronald Reagan, created workforce literacy and English literacy grant programs (NAEPDC, 1998).

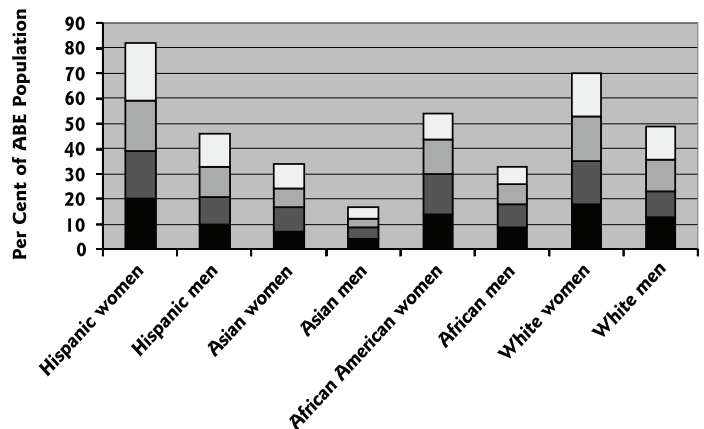
Except for the American Indians, African Americans are the oldest minority group in Wichita dating back to the free-state movement prior to the Civil War. As the White population decreased incrementally from 1980 to 2000, the African American population grew by over 10,000—from 7.3% of the population in 1980 to 11.4% of the population by 2000 (CensusScope, n.d. b). In 2003, WATC's adult education program served 1,278 participants, and 23% of them were African American (Kansas Board of Regents, n.d.). At the same time, there were 618 adults incarcerated in the Sedgwick County Jail, and 470, or 76%, of those incarcerated were African American (Freeman, 2007). In 2004, Wichita's population dropped slightly to 359,665. Participation in the adult education program at WATC decreased slightly by about 10% to 1,144, and the number of incarcerated African American adults rose to 499, or 80% of incarcerated adults that year. The next year, 2005, showed another slight decline in Wichita's population to 358,870, with a drop in participation in the adult education program to 893, and a slight drop in the number of incarcerated African American adults to 479, or 79% of the jail's population.

During the post-Vietnam era, the primarily Mexican-American community in Wichita broadened to welcome individuals from Central America, South America, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Spain, and various Caribbean Islands. The Hispanic population became more and more diversified, and the vast array of cultures and customs with the Hispanic/Latino community grew (Orlando, personal communication, 2007). In Wichita, the late 1980s brought more Hispanics into the ESL classes at WATC. Hispanics made up the majority of students in the classes held evenings during that time. Although various churches and Catholic Charities have offered English classes in the Wichita community, presently the WIC and WATC are the largest providers of ESL

instruction in Wichita. Of the two, WATC provides the majority of ESL instruction in Wichita, serving over 600 students in fiscal year 2007.

Between fiscal years 1997 and 2006, WATC's program served approximately 3,000 ESL learners. From 1997 to 2005, the ESL population remained steady at about 250 to 300 students annually. In 2006, the population nearly doubled to a little over 500 learners, and, in 2007, the population grew to over 550 learners. The growth in the ESL population at WATC has been mostly attributed to growth in the Hispanic population, especially in the Hispanic women's population. In the adult basic education (ABE) program, including ESL students, the percentage of Hispanics grew from 30% in 2003 to 36% of all students in 2006, with the percentage of Hispanic women growing from 20% to 23% and the percentage of Hispanic men growing from 10% to 13% during that same time period. In comparison, during that same time period, the percentage of Asian learners grew from 11% to 15%, with women students growing 7% to 10% and men from 4% to 5%; but African American learners declined from 23% to 17%, with women declining from 14% to 10% of all students and men declining from 9% to 7%. White learners also declined, from 31% to 30% of all students, with women declining from 18% to 17% and men remaining steady at 13% (Kansas Board of Regents, n. d.). (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1
Percentage of Adult Basic Education Students by Race/Ethnicity, 2003–2006



Lisa's Story

Lisa S. (a pseudonym) arrived in the United States in 1986 with her husband and two daughters after escaping from Laos in 1983 to a refugee camp in Thailand. She was 28 years old, and her husband was 32. She and her husband learned a little "survival" English for about three months while living in a Philippine camp for about five months awaiting paperwork that would allow them to go to the United States. They arrived in the United States understanding some but speaking virtually no English. Their children also went to school at the camp and learned a little English. Lisa's parents and younger sisters had escaped in 1975 to Thailand. Her mother was originally from Thailand and had a sister who still lived there, but her parents and sisters lived in a refugee camp. Her father had been a soldier in Laos during the Viet Nam War and had been injured during the war. Her parents and sisters came to the United States in 1979 and lived

in Virginia where a church that sponsored their arrival was located. They remained in Virginia until 1982. After her younger sister married, she and her husband moved to Wichita, along with her parents and remaining sister. Lisa, her husband, and children joined their family in Wichita upon arrival in the United States. Lisa's parents sponsored their immigration. The immigration process lasted almost two years. The United States had ceased accepting Indochinese refugees between 1980 and 1983 except for parents or children of refugees already living in the United States.

Lisa worked part-time as a secretary/clerk in Laos and was a student, and her husband had been a teacher for grades one through three. In Laos, the education system had grades one through six; then students went to college for two years of general studies. A major was chosen in the third year, and students graduated after the fourth year—at age 18 or 19. A student had to be 14 years old to begin college. Most students ended their education after the sixth grade and went to work. During grades one through three, students studied reading, writing, the alphabet, and some math. During grades four through six, they studied geometry and higher mathematics. Both Lisa and her husband attended college in Laos. College graduates were able to teach and work in other professions after college. If one wished to become a doctor, lawyer, or a college professor, three additional years of college were required. Students learned French in grades four through six and then studied either English or French in college. Lisa learned the English alphabet in college but not how to read or speak. The school system changed, however, when the Communists took over. Initially, Laos had a system modeled after the French. Afterwards, the system was more like the American school system with middle school and high school. Lisa and her husband led a comfortable life until the Communist occupation. Her parents fled with two of their children immediately after the Communists arrived, but Lisa, who was married, stayed behind.

When Lisa and her husband arrived in Wichita, they immediately looked for a school where they could learn English in order to secure jobs. They were obligated to repay the cost of their airplane tickets to the United States government after being here six months. The WIC operated an ESL class in the apartment complex where they resided, so she and her husband studied English for three hours a day, Monday through Friday for three months. Her husband got a job with a lawn company for a couple of months where language was not important. He then took a math test, passed, and attended a welding program for six months. He completed the training without the benefit of knowing very much English and secured employment where his brother-in-law was employed so that he could interpret for him. He continued to go to school in 1992 at the Dunbar Adult Center (WATC) as well and was able to complete the requirements for an Adult Performance Level High School Diploma in 1994.

Lisa also started ESL classes at the Dunbar Adult Center in 1992. She, however, wanted to pursue her General Educational Development (GED) High School Diploma and has continued to attend the WATC (formerly Dunbar Adult Center) classes, with a break in attendance from 1996 to 2004. She has also been employed, mostly at two jobs, throughout her educational pursuit. She started working in 1987 as a housekeeper/babysitter for a prominent Wichita family for whom she continues to work. In 1994, she took a second job with a graphics company where she worked for ten years. She then worked for an electrical wiring company for a year to get experience for employment in the aircraft industry. She has worked in the aircraft

industry since 2005. She and her husband raised two daughters, a lawyer and a registered nurse, and a son, born in the United States, who is presently attending college. She successfully completed her GED in May, 2007.

In Lisa's first neighborhood there were no other Laotian immigrants. Over the years there were, at times, Thai immigrants, whose language is similar to Lisa's, so they could communicate. Most times, however, Lisa had Vietnamese and Cambodian neighbors, and communication was not easy. She recalls communicating by drawing or pantomiming and by using body language. The elementary school in their neighborhood was filled to capacity when they arrived, which meant her children had to be bused. In 1989, Lisa and her husband bought their first home, but again there were no Laotian neighbors. Because of her work schedule today, she does not have much contact with the neighbors although her children have always had contact with the neighborhood children, and their friends are mostly American natives. Although most Asians are Buddhists, her family is Christian. Her church preaches the sermon in English but does provide translations in Laotian and Thai.

Monica's Story

Hispanics have been a part of Wichita history almost from the beginning, having come to help with the growth of the cattle industry, then finding regular employment on the ranches and settling into family life and welcoming family members as they, too, emigrated from Mexico. The Hispanic community became continually integrated into the greater community and society of Wichita as the population continued to grow throughout the early 20th century, and restaurants, stores, and other services emerged to meet the needs of these new citizens.

Monica (a pseudonym), a 44-year-old Mexican student, has lived in the United States for 12 years. She had lived here a month when she met her current husband and married him. Her husband is a White American. Monica remembers traveling across the border into Texas and going to the McDonald's restaurant. She was impressed with the bright lights and the apparent affluence of Americans. She believed that all White people were rich! She describes Mexico as a "very poor country." She and her first husband, a Mexican, owned a toy store in Mexico and were considered to be middle class business owners. They owned their home and a car. She and her first husband had one child together. Her husband was abusive, and she ended up divorcing him. Divorce was not an option in her family's eyes, so she was shunned by them. The divorce and the aftermath made leaving her country more desirable, along with the hope of marrying a nice, rich, White American.

Although she has been remarried 12 years and has a son with her American husband, this second marriage has also been difficult. They have attended counseling, but Monica fears this marriage, too, might end in divorce. Monica remains a resident alien even though she badly wants to become a United States citizen. She was involved in a domestic violence incident with her husband not long after marrying him. At the time, she could not speak much English and feels that she admitted to things to the police unknowingly. As a result of that incident, she believes that she has a felony, and felons cannot petition for American citizenship. She would like to get a lawyer to assist her with this problem. Monica has worked as a custodian for the school district for almost six years and feels that she could not

have passed the background check for new employment if a felony for domestic violence remained on her record.

Monica lives in an African-American neighborhood with a few Hispanic and White families. She cooks mostly Mexican food and has no problem finding the ingredients that she needs in the local grocery stores. Sometimes she shops at a Mexican grocery store in the mostly Hispanic neighborhood on the north side of town. She says that she has not had any problems with discrimination, and she has come to the realization that all Whites are not rich in America. She feels now that they are the same as everyone else—no better, no worse. Monica visits her home in Mexico twice each year, and her mother and adult daughter come to Wichita once each year to visit her family.

Monica completed the eighth grade in Mexico and did not learn to speak any English before coming to the United States. Monica has attended the ESL program at WATC since February 2006. Prior to that, she learned English from watching television and from coworkers. Monica's first employment was as a maid in a hotel. She says that lots of female workers who are illegal immigrants take "anything from the bosses" because they are afraid of losing their jobs; nor do they complain about other employees, working conditions, wages, or other problems they may have with their jobs. Monica has become very good friends with a coworker at the school where she works. He helps her with her schoolwork and uses the Bible to help her to learn English. Attending adult education classes has not only helped Monica learn English and other necessary skills, it has also helped her to integrate into society and become accustomed to Wichita as her new home.

William's Story

The majority of the African Americans in Wichita reside in the northeast section of the city. In 2004, there was an increase in homicides and overall crime activity in and around this area. The Wichita Police Department's Patrol North Bureau staff researched crime statistics, listened to neighborhood concerns, and then developed a comprehensive survey designed to elicit input from the citizens. The Wichita Police Department practices the "Community Policing Philosophy" that focuses on prevention by forming community partnerships to solve problems and to address community concerns. The response area designated as "44 beat" encompasses an area in the northeast section that is a socially and economically depressed. This area experiences higher crime rates than other neighborhoods within the city limits of Wichita, has lower median household incomes, more rental properties than private residences, and a high number of abandoned/vacant homes (Kasperek, Pierce, Newman, Nolte, & Norris, 2006). Because of the department's belief in citizen empowerment, a new program called "44 Beat Revitalization of a Neighborhood" was initiated in 2006. The citizens of that neighborhood were surveyed with the intent of discovering their perceptions of crime in their neighborhood and their expectations of the police and other city departments.

When asked how safe the respondents felt in their neighborhood, many shared that safety for them was not measured compared to the city as a whole but compared to how they were affected in their specific neighborhood. One person, for example, felt that the level of safety in her neighborhood was improved because she was now able to sleep in her bed as opposed to sleeping on the floor due to the common occurrence of drive-by shootings. Her residence still

bore evidence of the past shootings, including five patched bullet holes scattered across the front of the residence. The top three concerns identified by citizens were drug activity, abandoned houses, and gangs. Also identified as concerns were: racial profiling; police harassment; police looking the other way when problems arise in the neighborhood; police officers walking by without acknowledging their presence; and slow police response time to 911 calls. They were also concerned that the cost of utilities is higher in their neighborhood than in other neighborhoods in the city and there is no pizza delivery in their neighborhood.

William (a pseudonym), an 18-year old former student in WATC's ABE program, says that the problem for young, African American males in Wichita is that White people think that they are all gang members. Most young, African American males follow the hip-hop dress code—sagging pants, long t-shirts, and "do-rags" (head coverings). He feels that older Whites are afraid of young, African American males and judge them unfairly. Whites, William believes, feel that all young, African American males carry guns, are gangsters, and are, "...up to no good." William says that his mother placed him in the ABE program when he turned 16 because he was having problems in the comprehensive high school he was attending. He was getting suspended from school too often, and he felt that school was "stupid". He said that he was constantly getting blamed by his White teachers for things he had not done. He felt as if the White principal was looking for excuses to get rid of him and "all the other Black kids" in his school. He was convinced that the only African American students who felt wanted at his school were the "nerds" and the athletes. William has been stopped several times by police while driving. He was taken to the Juvenile Detention Facility when he was stopped for a traffic violation, searched, and charged with possession of marijuana. He says that the officer claimed to have smelled marijuana when he was stopped, but William insists that he had not been smoking in his car. He does admit, however, that he did have marijuana in his possession when searched. He feels that he was a victim of racial profiling.

In 2000, the Wichita Police Department, assisted by a working group of community representatives, collected data to assess race-based policing in routine enforcement activities. The effort, entitled "The Wichita Stop Study," was directed by a professor from the Midwest Criminal Justice Institute, School of Community Affairs, Wichita State University (Withrow, 2002). The data were analyzed in four key areas: (1) the decision to stop a car; (2) the events during the stop itself; (3) the decision to search the driver and the car; and (4) the results of the stop. The results of the study indicated that although the general reason for the stop was consistent throughout all racial and ethnic groups, there appeared to be some overall disparity with respect to the race of the individual stopped. African American citizens were being stopped at a disproportionately higher rate than White, Asian, Native American, other race, and Hispanic citizens when compared to their proportional representation throughout the community. Results also indicated that contrary to previous research findings, African American citizens were more likely to have slightly briefer stops than non-African American citizens. However, stops involving African American citizens were more likely to involve physical resistance, and consistent with previous research findings, African American and Hispanic citizens were more likely to be searched when compared to other groups. Overall, the study suggested that there was a disparity with respect to race and

ethnicity within some of the routine enforcement practices of the Wichita Police Department although it could not be determined from the results of this study how much of this disparity, if any, was based on racial or ethnic prejudice.

William, like other African American students at WATC, is very much aware of the daily prejudice he faces in Wichita. One way WATC has addressed this issue is to hire teachers and staff that reflect the cultures and ethnicity of our students. We also strive not to judge people on their appearance. A White support staff member of the ABE center admits that she feels intimidated by the young, African American males in our program. After attending a workshop on “Gangs 101” facilitated by school district security personnel, she was convinced that an African American student who had rolled up only one pant leg was a gang member. She was also convinced that another African American student was a gang member because she was wearing a head covering, only to discover that the head covering was being worn to cover a “bad hair day”. In a community where there is great diversity, segregation and prejudice, the future success of our school is dependent upon overcoming stereotypes and creating a safe environment for both our students and employees.

Participating in Wichita’s Political Structure

“Visioneering Wichita” (2004) is a 20-year plan for south central Kansas. It encourages community collaboration and assists groups with common interests to form strategic alliances to tackle community issues. Visioneering Wichita began in June 2004. Visioneering Wichita concerns itself with “far-reaching, but attainable goals to make the region an excellent place to live.” The vision and goals were developed using a process involving thousands of citizens representative of the four counties—Sedgwick, Sumner, Butler, Harvey—that comprise Wichita’s Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

Key benchmarks are used to measure progress toward goals each year. Strategies in six interdependent foundations require that the community work together in order to make progress. The six foundations are: Economic development; education; quality of life; government; infrastructure; and private sector leadership. Visioneering Wichita has a vision for each of the foundations:

- Economic Development— Before 2024, the Wichita MSA will be a leading community for retaining and expanding current businesses and creating and recruiting new businesses.
- Education— Before 2024, the Wichita MSA will have a globally competitive education system that encourages and supports life-long learning and contributes to the social, cultural, and economic vitality of our diverse community.
- Quality of Life— Before 2024, the Wichita MSA will be a healthy, safe community that has a vibrant recreation, entertainment, arts and cultural focus that embraces diversity and builds pride.
- Government— Before 2024, the Wichita MSA will be a national model for effective, efficient, inclusive, accountable governments that are representative of the community’s needs and desires.
- Infrastructure— Before 2024, the Wichita MSA will have adequate infrastructure to support downtown, urban, and suburban neighborhoods that will enhance quality of life and promote economic development.
- Private Sector Leadership— Before 2024, the Wichita MSA will be a community where citizens actively participate in

public/private leadership that makes the Wichita MSA competitive regionally, nationally, and globally. (Visioneering Wichita, n.d.)

Key to each foundation are goals and strategies to reach the goals. Strategic Alliances, comprised of vision partners, are formed around these goals and strategies. One such alliance is Racial Diversity—Opportunities and Harmony Strategic Alliance. This alliance takes an “intentional and inclusive” approach to community issues. The alliance wants diversity represented in neighborhoods, civic organizations, and businesses throughout south-central Kansas and is striving for inclusion by understanding the region’s perception about race and diversity. The goal of this alliance is to ensure that south central Kansas understands all cultures and embraces racial diversity.

Strategies for this alliance include:

- Understand, celebrate, and embrace all cultures and racial diversity.
- Encourage interaction among all people and break down barriers.
- Encourage employers to be committed to a racially diverse workforce. Recognize that “Visioneering” will not succeed in meeting its key benchmarks without achieving racial diversity, opportunity, and harmony.
- Promote the integration and inclusion of immigrants into the community and workforce.
- Treat each other with a sense of fairness, respect, and creativity while accepting our differences.
- Establish an environment that welcomes, attracts, and retains minorities in our community and workforce.
- Provide equal opportunities for minorities in the workplace, civic events, and volunteer organizations. Provide more diverse board members in order to better represent all community members.
- Promote south central Kansas as a diverse community.

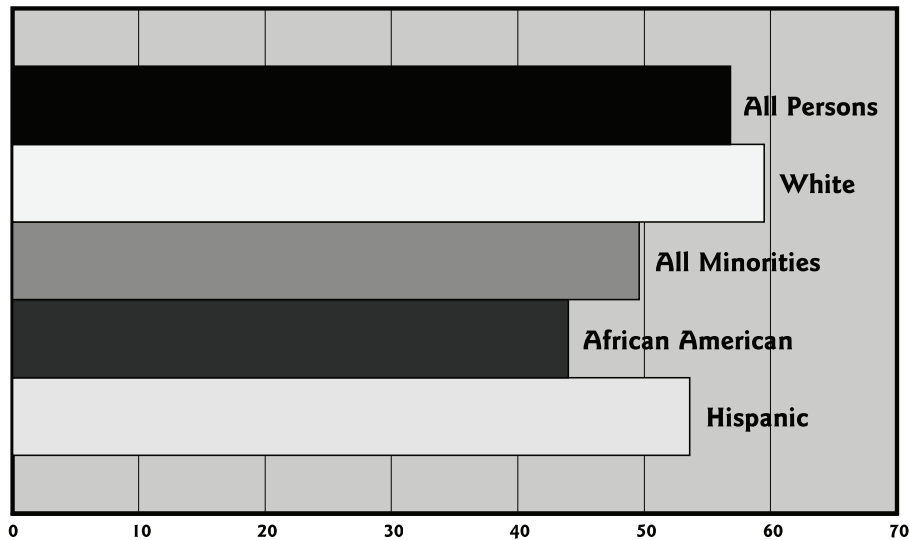
During January and February 2006, a web-based survey was conducted in order to measure Wichita MSA residents’ perceptions of racial diversity, harmony, and issues in social interaction, jobs, education, healthcare, and leadership. The survey was available to respondents in both Spanish and English. There were 2,532 respondents. The answers were analyzed and summarized into one measure that showed the prevailing perceptions of racial opportunity and harmony in the community. Values ranged from 0 to 100, with an index of 50 or greater indicating generally positive perceptions of harmony and equality of racial opportunity. The distance from 50 showed more positive or more negative perceptions. Overall, the results showed that index values varied little across all demographic groupings, i.e., education, age, and income, except race (Harrah & Meissen, 2006). (See the Table for responses to survey items by race.) For 2006, Wichita MSA’s Index of Racial Opportunity and Harmony was 56.8. (See Figure 2 for overall perception scores by race.)

Action steps were created for this alliance based on the results of this survey. Working with community organizations and the Entrepreneurship and Small Business Alliance, Visioneering Wichita introduced a minority business initiative program to help minorities start a successful business or take an existing business to a new level. Any minority resident of the Wichita MSA is eligible for the assistance provided through this initiative. The goal is to grow successful, minority-owned businesses in the Wichita area. All classes,

Table
Survey Results by Race/Ethnicity

Survey Statements	Values Assigned by Race/Ethnicity (0–100)			
	White	African American	Hispanic	Other Races
Actions are taken to improve relations between people of different races in my community.	58.8	45.4	53.2	49.4
People of different races get along with each other in my community.	62.0	55.8	59.7	58.1
Children of different races have an equal chance of getting a good education in my community.	63.3	43.5	55.3	50.0
People of different races have equal opportunities to go to college in my community.	63.7	47.1	52.6	52.1
Racial issues create much conflict in my community.	59.7	48.0	52.1	50.6
People of different races have an equal chance of getting a job in my community.	58.8	33.5	50.3	43.1
People of different races have equal opportunities to start a business in my community	59.9	32.9	53.7	44.8
Difficulties regarding issues are a thing of the past in my community.	38.8	24.2	37.1	30.9
My community faces more conflict over racial issues than other communities.	68.6	56.3	62.6	61.4
Issues between people of different races will improve in my community.	62.5	52.2	59.1	56.0

Figure 2
Overall Perception Score by Race



mentoring, and most of the cost of materials will be free to participants.

Visioneering Wichita also announced a new strategic alliance at its 2007 annual business meeting—Literate Communities. This alliance will coordinate with technical skills training and life-long education initiatives to provide the soft skills and literacy necessary for potential employees to be competitive. The goal of this initiative is to help the Wichita MSA become a Certified Literate Community. The alliance will seek to engage all providers of adult basic education in the region in order to accomplish its goal.

In order to survive, ABE programs in Wichita have to show that they contribute to the economic and community development of the community. Education for the sake of education is not a viable strategy. Although Lisa's, Monica's, and William's stories are not unique, they represent a small fraction of the travails that students at WATC face. In order to be an advocate for our students, WATC must develop and participate in organizational and agency collaboration like "Visioneering Wichita". Our school must be a community participant. In Wichita, gone are the days where we could focus solely on instruction and academic advising. ABE and ESL programs over the last two decades were relegated to the shadows of Wichita's education community because we were not active participants in the political community, and, as a result, we lost some of our funding and put our entire program at risk. Visioneering Wichita has offered WATC's ABE program an opportunity to make a significant contribution to community planning and to make the argument that our programs are good not only for the students, but indeed, for the entire community.

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