



Draft Framework for Meeting the Diverse Needs of our Students

April 27, 2016

Introduction

This framework outlines Grinnell College's commitment to broadly support the growing and diverse needs of our student body, including but not limited to the needs of underrepresented students at Grinnell. Several factors have informed our thinking about the nature of the challenge before us, and the framing of appropriate and effective responses to it. As a college, we seek to answer a vital question: How do we live out our core value to create and uphold a diverse community, and are our commitments to academic excellence and social responsibility realized for students from all backgrounds? We offer this framework to the community and welcome the feedback and discussion that will develop it into a plan of action.

We know that our students do not experience life at Grinnell equally, and that students do not encounter the social and cultural environment of the campus in equal terms. We must address both academic success and the lived experiences of our students as well. While our recent six year completion rates of 88 to 90 percent exceed the vast majority of colleges and universities in the United States, we also know that they do not compare favorably with the highly selective liberal arts colleges that we benchmark ourselves against. Retention is one way in which Grinnell is able to reflect upon the fulfillment of our commitment to our students and a key measure of our institutional mission. Through data analytics and better use of our advising resources on campus, we are moving toward a model of interventions designed to improve student completion and academic success, a project that is underway as part of the College's accreditation plan for the Higher Learning Commission.

We are also committed to addressing questions of campus inclusivity and student well-being. Starting in the fall of 2014, we restructured the Division of Student Affairs into the Division of Academic Affairs, allowing for an integrated approach to key policy questions. To carry that effort forward, the College created a Residential Learning Task Force with responsibilities to integrate the college's mission into the residential experience, make recommendations to improve student well-being, and engage in discussions of student leadership and governance. In the summer of 2015, we implemented a new structure to support diversity at Grinnell. Lakesia Johnson was appointed Chief Diversity Officer, with oversight of diversity and inclusion institutionally and in the curriculum, and Leslie Bleichner '07 was appointed Director of Intercultural Affairs, charged with oversight of diversity and inclusion in the co-curricular experience. This growing partnership of Academic and Student Affairs marked an intentional decision to frame the experiences of our students, staff, and faculty holistically.

In the fall of 2015, amid national discussions regarding race and equity in higher education, we seized an opportunity to come together in solidarity and promote longer-term, productive change to support a campus climate that is supportive of people from all backgrounds. Concerned students, staff, and faculty drafted a list of recommendations that highlight key areas of campus life inside and outside the classroom that should be addressed to create a more inclusive environment for all at Grinnell College. The recommendations in this Call to Action included points related to policy review and implementation, curricular recommendations, co-curricular recommendations, city of Grinnell, and Grinnell College relations. They have continued to guide our thinking and planning.

Grinnell has significantly deepened its student diversity over time. In recent years, the College has enrolled entering classes of about 440 students, and approximately twenty-five percent of them have been domestic students of color. Approximately fifteen percent of our new students have been the first from their families to go to college and approximately twenty percent of our new domestic students have been Pell-grant eligible. If we consider diversity in global terms, it is also worth recognizing that international students from fifty different countries have made up eighteen percent of our last two entering classes. These are results we can be proud of, and we aim to continue them in the future.

But admission and enrollment are only the first steps. We need to find ways to ensure that all Grinnell students receive the support they need. We believe that the current moment is ripe for significant improvement and change. Our reflection has begged the question: can we not endeavor to provide a structure to support, mentor, and encourage students from all backgrounds to thrive at Grinnell, successfully graduate, and pursue meaningful and purposeful lives and careers? Solutions to that challenge require thinking holistically about the nature of the student experience, and the means through which we can provide additional support to students as they enter the college, experience its academic and residential settings, and begin to plan for their futures.

Recommended Programs and Structural Modifications

The following list of recommendations is guided by several key principles. These include a commitment to the professional development of our faculty and staff in the areas of student mentorship and advising; the improvement of academic support structures and resources that facilitate the ongoing collaboration among advisers from Academic Affairs, Careers, Life and Service, and Residence Life; a systematic approach to identifying students in need of assistance quickly and effectively; and a comprehensive approach to monitoring and addressing issues of campus climate. We also recognize the imperative of promoting student leadership as a means to empower students to shape the environment in which they live and to develop vital skills and abilities that will serve them well for the rest of their lives.

1. Develop PCPOP into a First-Year Impact Program

The Peer Connections Pre-Orientation Program (PCPOP) is an enrichment program designed to create a positive adjustment to Grinnell College for first-year students from historically underrepresented identities and backgrounds, including but not limited to students of color, first-generation students, students with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ students. In the 2016-2017 school year, Grinnell will transform this program from a short-term orientation experience to a project supporting participants throughout their first-year at Grinnell, organized along three main themes: social adjustment, cultural identity exploration, and academic success. This year-long program will provide a chance for students to build intentional relationships with peers, staff, and faculty to greatly enhance their academic, social, and cultural capital during their four-year tenure at Grinnell College. It will also create an opportunity to provide focused mentoring to cohorts of students from peers, faculty, and staff to achieve greater mutual support, respect, and understanding.

2. First-year Common Reading and Subsequent Programs

We plan to connect a first-year summer 'common read' to the diversity component of student orientation which meets two aims: 1) giving our students a common vocabulary and intellectual framework through which to understand the values of diversity; and 2) responding to student demands that we create additional opportunities for serious discussion of diversity on campus. Claude Steele's *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do* (2011) will be our first common reading. The book provides an accessible way to understand the realities of implicit bias, stereotype threats, and their impact, and the text offers a bridge between academic research and practical application. We will also create opportunities for faculty-student discussion and colloquia with visiting speakers around the text and its themes.

3. Enhance Staffing Support for Student Success

To realize the vision of greater student success, we have to build a strong, connected student support network that provides a welcoming environment, integrated advising, inclusive pedagogy, and continuous academic, health, and wellness support.

Additional staff will be necessary to take on these strategic initiatives. We recommend adding approximately five to ten staff, over the course of three to five academic years, to a variety of key departments that will significantly expand our capacity to support student success. The total cost of these positions would result in approximately \$500,000 - \$1,000,000 in salaries, benefits, and operational program budgets.

The departments that likely need additional staffing to meet the diverse needs of our students include, in alphabetical order:

Academic Advising

Academic Resource Centers administered by the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

Disability Resources

Human Resources

Intercultural Affairs

Student Health and Counseling Services

4. Provide Opportunities to Promote Connection and Ameliorate Feelings of Isolation

Our "Friends of International Students" host program has been very successful at providing local community resources for students who are adjusting to being far from home in a foreign country. Developing a similar host program for underrepresented students could help with feelings of loneliness and isolation that many of our students experience. In addition, members of the city of Grinnell would have a chance to interact with our students in a meaningful way, which can lead to improved town relations and mutual understanding.

5. Regular Diversity Training for Faculty, Staff, and Students

Grinnell College's commitment to providing an environment where all of its members can thrive requires educational interventions designed to provide practical tools for students, faculty, and staff to support inclusive hiring, teaching, learning, and living practices that support our diverse community. To ensure that faculty, staff, and students have the knowledge and skills to contribute to these goals, the College will deepen its commitment to implicit bias training, inclusive teaching workshops, and regular professional development focused on cultural competency and inclusive working practices.

6. Student Leadership Development Programs

Following the Residential Learning Task Force's recommendations, create a student leadership development workshop series for skill-building in areas such as conflict mediation, budget management, and strategic planning. A few examples include increasing access to leadership opportunities from diverse student populations and urge students to apply for leadership positions including PCPOP mentors, Community Advisors in Residence Life, cabinet members in groups that comprise the Multicultural Leadership Council and positions in the Student Government Association, as a few examples.

7. Ongoing Collaboration on Issues of Diversity and Inclusion

Engage in overall diversity planning and assessment through the Council for Diversity and Inclusion. Create opportunities to connect persons with diversity-related goals in their work. These people include but are not necessarily limited to our Chief Diversity Officer, Director of Intercultural Affairs, Multicultural Recruiter in Admissions, Director of International Student Affairs, Dean of Religious Life, Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator in Athletics, Disability Coordinator, and several new positions proposed below. This should include regular consultation with "diversity-focused" employees on campus on large campus initiatives such as Global Grinnell, the Interdisciplinary Taskforce, the Residential Learning Taskforce, and Development and Alumni Relations.

8. Ongoing Funding and Support for Successful Programs that Support the Achievement of Underrepresented Students

Expand support and resources for initiatives such as the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship, the ACM-CIC Graduate School Exploration Program, the Grinnell Science Project, cultural and educational programs through Intercultural Affairs, the Stonewall Resource Center, the Black Cultural Center, and Student Leadership Training. Development of an emergency fund for students, which can be used creatively to assist students with financial and/or personal needs so that they can focus on their academics.

9. Collaboration of Academic Advisers, CLS Advisers, and Residence Life Advisers

In order to deepen the connection between these three advisers, we will establish regular collaborative meetings to coordinate support for students and develop strategies for educating

students about the vital role of each of these mentors. The goal of this collaboration is for students to have enduring relationships with each of these three advisors.

Assessment

The results of these approaches will be measured by the following criteria:

- 1) Quality of life for all students as measured by campus climate surveys
- 2) Academic experiences in inclusive learning environments as documented through survey data
- 3) Retention and completion rates for all students
- 4) Successful and rewarding post-graduation lives for alumni

For those seeking additional reading on the issues discussed, the following may be useful.

Bibliography

Ahmed, Sara. 2012. *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Aries, Elizabeth. 2008. *Race and Class Matters at an Elite College*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Brown-Glaude, Winnifred R. 2009. *Doing Diversity in Higher Education: Faculty Leaders Share Challenges and Strategies*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Chambliss, Daniel F. and Christopher G. Takacs. 2014. *How College Works*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Cleveland, Darrell. 2004. *A Long Way to Go: Conversations about Race by African American Faculty and Graduate Students*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Press.

Freire, Paulo. 2000. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic.

Giroux, Henry A. and Susan Searls Giroux. 2004. *Take Back Higher Education: Race, Youth, and the Crisis of Democracy in the Post-Civil Rights Era*. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Press.

Harper, Shaun R. 2008. *Creating Inclusive Campus Environments for Cross-Cultural Learning and Student Engagement*. National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Inc.

hooks, bell. 1994. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York, NY: Routledge.

_____. 2000. *Where we stand: class matters*. New York, NY: Routledge.

DRAFT

Khan, Shamus Rhaman. 2011. *Privilege: The Making of An Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Lareau, Annette. 2011. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Stanley, Christine A. 2006. *Faculty of Color: Teaching in Predominantly White Colleges and Universities*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing.

Steele, Claude M. 2012. *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affects Us and What We Can Do*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.