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Understanding the 21st Century Library Patron – Event Recommendations

Western Libraries Diversity Committee

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Note on Document Organization:

This document is a compilation of the recommendations that emerged from the workshop portion of the 'Understanding the 21st Century Library Patron' event. Each set of recommendations is affiliated with the Standard, and the supporting statement, that inspired the discussion. For a quick reminder, these recommendations were given in response to the following question(s) during the workshop:

"Read over the strategies listed for developing a culturally competent organization, and then consider these questions:

- What are we already doing, as an organization?
- What practices could we adopt? And what is the best way to do that?"

Note: Please note that we did not specifically address Standard One ("Cultural Awareness of Self and Others") during the workshops. However, we can establish opportunities to do so at a future date.

Group A

Standard Two:

Statement: Cross-cultural knowledge and skills – Librarians and library staff shall have and continue to develop specialized knowledge and understanding about the history, traditions, values, and artistic expressions of colleagues, co-workers, and major constituencies served.

Recommendations:

- Revisit invitation to bring something from our culture to staff potluck. Invite fusion food.
- Focus on what we as an organization can do for ourselves.
- Find out more about each other's backgrounds in organic, non-intrusive ways.
- Cultural observances. How much do we know about specific observances?
- Understand other cultural practices and negotiate/accommodate them when appropriate.
- Offer information about our cultural backgrounds.
- Share of ourselves as part of a larger community.
- Get informed including watching videos that might be painful/humorous, and determine when it's appropriate to use humor.

Standard Three:

Statement: Organizational and professional values – Librarians and library staff shall develop and support organizational and professional values dedicated to culturally competent service.

Recommendations:

- Examine how supervisors are interacting with employees.
- Look at hiring processes for all employee categories.
- Keep this dialogue going! Compile actionable recommendations, eg. Celebrate our cultural heritage.
- Sponsor continuing series of workshops within the Libraries.

Group B

Standard Four:

Statement: Development of collections, programs, and services – Librarians and library staff shall develop collections and provide programs and services that are inclusive of the needs of all persons in the community the library serves.

Recommendations:

- Need to understand ourselves better as an organization, including the multiple dimensions of identity (and look beyond race/ethnicity as the most easily “visible” dimension of diversity).
- The DDA program equalizes access to collection development purposes for all campus stakeholders, so continue to promote that service to all campus stakeholders.
- Partner with faculty to include diverse materials in the curriculum within classroom settings.

Standard Five:

Statement: Service delivery – Librarians and library staff shall be knowledgeable about and skillful in the use and provision of information services available in the community and broader society, and shall be able to make appropriate referrals for their diverse constituencies.

Recommendations:

- Discuss methods and best practices for performing targeted services for specific needs (i.e., gender neutral restrooms).
- Continue to provide educational materials and training opportunities for Libraries personnel.
- Incorporate some of the workshop recommendations into the current Western Libraries Diversity Plan.
- Capitalize on the tools offered by Rebecca and Human Resources, in order to raise awareness and continue the conversation.

Group C

Standard Six:

Statement: Language diversity – Librarians and library staff shall support the preservation and promotion of linguistic diversity, and work to foster a climate of inclusion aimed at eliminating discrimination and oppression based on linguistic or other diversities.

Recommendations:

- Promote understanding of written, verbal, and non-verbal communication styles.
- Create conversations that address “missing” components of communication, such as paralinguistic features like intonation and non-verbals.
- Promote awareness about the power differentials between native and second language interactions at various services points throughout the Learning Commons.

- Develop practices for addressing second/third language needs without being condescending (i.e., effectively and empathetically).
- Compile a roster of all employees who are multi-lingual, and share internally.
- Understand the need for flexibility in patron interactions in order to be most responsive to patron needs.
- Develop, and employ universal signage around the Libraries in order to communicate with all patron groups.
- Partner with relevant organizations on campus in order to pursue these goals.

Standard Seven:

Statement: Workforce diversity – Librarians and library staff shall support and advocate for recruitment, admissions, hiring, and retention efforts in libraries, library associations, and LIS programs to increase diversity and ensure continued diversity in the profession.

Recommendations:

- Have, and use, the training plan in place for student personnel in Western Libraries.
- Discuss how to address diversity/cultural competency needs in surrounding communities (i.e., community patrons).
- Considering all dimensions of diversity, continue the discussion of representation and equity throughout our employee categories.
- Address representation, recruitment, and retention among our classified and salary exempt professionals.

Group D

Standard Eight:

Statement: Organizational dynamics – Librarians and library staff shall participate in and facilitate the development of organizational dynamics that enable individuals, groups, and organizations to continually develop and exercise cultural competence.

Recommendations:

- Continue workshops like this one (i.e., “Keep the conversation alive”).
- Try to mix it up during meetings and projects; implement roles that are not traditionally exclusive faculty & staff.
- Reward non-traditional rock stars who excel in their discipline and/or field.
- Recognize people from within the Libraries who represent non-majority groups.
- Communicate about, and take advantage of, opportunity hires at Western Libraries.

- Bring attention to texts and projects by non-white authors through exhibits, instructional demonstrations, and more. Partner with campus stakeholders for inclusive/representative collection development.
- Discuss the importance of incorporating identity dimensions in original cataloging at Western Libraries.

Standard Nine:

Statement: Cross-cultural leadership – Library leaders shall influence, support, and encourage the creation of proactive processes that increase diversity skills; empower colleagues, co-workers, and constituents from diverse backgrounds; share information about diverse populations; and advocate for their concerns.

Recommendations:

- Let students lead; reach out to the Associated Students Clubs in order to partner with student voices for projects and exhibits.
- Reach out to student services organizations, such as Student Outreach Services, in order to enhance library services.
- Work with Libraries Marketing Team to increase communication of available resources to student services organization.

Group E

Standard Ten:

Statement: Professional education and continuous learning – Librarians and library staff shall advocate for and participate in educational and training programs that help advance cultural competence within the profession.

Recommendations:

- Continue this conversation. One method for doing so may include an annual event in order to provide updates on local, state, and national trends.
- Continue providing updates on new training opportunities.
- Take advantage of different types of trainings and education opportunities, such as the Human Resources workshops, webinars, asynchronous online courses, and more.
- Partner with organizations on campus in order to provide continuing education/professional development opportunities. One suggested example: Partnering with Admissions to learn more about diversity recruitment for the student body.

Standard Eleven:

Statement: Research – Research shall be inclusive and respectful of non-Western thought and traditional knowledge reflecting the value of cultural ways of knowing.

Recommendations:

- Acknowledge Western/European bias in everything we do, e.g. citations.
- Partner with the International Studies center in order to provide effective and relevant library services to international students.
- Host a panel discussion, of students, staff, and faculty, on international research processes and the differences across these processes.
- Promote conversations about identity and the research process, and how ethnocentrism can inform that process.