

Preparing Students for Success in a Global Society

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Cultural competency and diversity education has become extremely important in 21st century knowledge driven global society. Subjects related to cultural competency and diversity, such as equity, social justice and mutual respect are not easy issues to address. Some societies, institutions or individuals have greater difficulty to understand diversity and its importance in individual and community lives. Some 50 years ago, on June 11, 1963 Alabama's Governor George Wallace (d. 1998) stood in front of a schoolhouse door at the University of Alabama in an attempt to stop Vivian Malone (d. 2005) and James Hood (d. 2013) from enrolling at the University of Alabama. After a quarter century, Governor Wallace became a supporter of the civil rights movement and integration.

The greatest challenge for diversity educators is to define and argue for the value and necessity for diversity and inclusion. It took Governor Wallace 25 years to realize the value and humanity of diversity, and it has taken over three decades for educational institutions to introduce diversity. The response has been from enthusiasm to apathy to outright hostility. The slow pace or the absence of progress toward structural and policy change to incorporate diversity means lost time and generations left undereducated. During last 40 years, diversity's significance in education and especially preparing young people for global economy and culture has increased. The studies of diversity have undergone a metamorphosis from race studies to cultural competency and cultural competency education specifically focuses on students acquiring necessary knowledge and skills to be successful in a global society.

In an era of globalization challenges and opportunities for professionals and entrepreneurs have multiplied tremendously. Globalization offer magnum opportunities for

educational, economic, and social-cultural advancement. Those who graduate from universities with cultural competencies will avail economic and cultural opportunities. It is not an ideological battle. It is an economic necessity and an enrichment of educational experiences. Commitments to diversity and to educational excellence are mutually reinforcing. Foremost, the requisite for student success and educational excellence through diversity requires unfaltering commitment from higher administration, faculty, staff and not the least parents. As a famous saying goes, “out of sight, out of mind.” If students don’t see and don’t experience diversity on campus and within their families, they will not realize the importance and necessity of diversity education, and they won’t care about it. In order to understand diversity, they need to encounter it and “know” it in the educational institution, families, and communities in various contexts, where it is assigned symbolic and theoretical importance in policy and curriculum as well as the pragmatic expression through student interaction, staff presence and activities. This could happen when diversity is institutionalized and accepted by community members.

Each institution and home environment is unique due to its traditions, cultures and expectations. Therefore, each family and institution should decide for itself what role they wish to play in the life of their children and families to make them culturally competent and globally conscientious citizen. Without the commitment from all the members of the community and families, the goal of cultural competency would remain an elusive dream. Parents and families’ role in the education of their children does not end by sending them to a university. Messages that students get from their families and educational institutions ought to be mutually enforcing and without diversity education, student will be ill prepared for professional fields and might be shortchanged.

For more information about training and programmatic information, please visit www.multicultural.usf.edu or call 813-974-5111. OMA is located on third floor Marshall Student Center.