Meet the Committee on Multicultural Curriculum Transformation

The Committee on Multicultural Curriculum Transformation reports to the executive vice-president and provost and is responsible for promoting multicultural curriculum transformation at Northern Illinois University. The committee membership includes the Directors of the Center for Black Studies, the Center for Latino and Latin American Studies, and Women’s Studies; the Director of Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center; the Vice Provost for Academic Planning and Development; one faculty member from each college, one supportive professional staff member, and one curricular dean.

Faculty and staff members will serve three-year staggered terms beginning in the fall semester, not to exceed two consecutive terms. The chair of the committee will rotate every two years among the directors of the Center for Black Studies, the Center for Latino and Latin American Studies, and Women’s Studies.

The committee will fulfill four the following duties:

1. Promote multicultural curricular transformation on campus
2. Coordinate the annual multicultural curriculum transformation institute and related programs
3. Advise the provost and university bodies on multicultural curriculum transformation issues
4. Submit an annual report on activities of the committee to the provost

The committee meets on the third Tuesday of each month. The next meeting is November 20, 2007.

Contact mcti@niu.edu or call 815.753.8557 for additional information.
Dr. Lisa Finkelstein, Associate Professor of Psychology, recently discussed one method of transforming the classroom into a multicultural experience. “An instructor plays a huge role in setting the tone of the class and needs to do that from the first minute to the last,” she said. “I have found that being open, telling personal stories, can help students feel more comfortable.”

For example, she points out that not everyone in her classroom is a “38 year old heterosexual white female only child from a middle class suburban Boston background adopted by parents who didn’t graduate college but reinforced higher education as the most important thing that no one could ever take away from you. In fact,” she tells the class, “I bet I’m the only one.” Finkelstein then encourages students’ introductions around the room, not just by name, but by mentioning something about themselves that no one would otherwise guess.

“Don’t assume that just because someone looks like you that they see things just like you do,” is the point. “Also don’t assume that if they look nothing like you that you don’t have shared experiences. Ask and listen, share, and learn.”
Peer Experience: Dr. Sherry Fang

Dr. Sherry Fang, Associate Professor of Family, Consumer and Nutrition Sciences, attended the first ever Multicultural Curriculum Transformation Institute in 1994. “What a huge difference to meet fellow faculty with a similar commitment.” She described the Institute as a powerful resource for networking as well as personal and professional development.

Dr. Fang has presented at the Institute several times, and offers the following thoughts for faculty and staff who are interested in learning more about multicultural curricular transformation:

• One reason a multicultural curriculum is important is because an institution of higher education prepares students for life in the real world, including the workforce. Graduates must be able to work with people different from them.
• Professional transformation cannot occur without personal transformation. Develop an awareness of oneself, and become conscious about one’s teaching activities and interactions with colleagues.
• Transformation doesn’t happen overnight. Take small steps. Curricular transformation is an ongoing process.

Contact Us

Published twice yearly, THE MULTICULTURALIST is brought to you by the Office of the Provost. We’d love to hear from you! Send in your multicultural methodology or success story to editor-in-chief Donna Askins. Interviews can be arranged. For all questions related to the Multicultural Curriculum Transformation Institute, contact mcti@niu.edu or call 815.753.8557.