Multicultural Curricular Transformation Institute
Set for May 16 - 20

The 2011 Multicultural Curricular Transformation Institute (MCTI), which runs from May 16 - 20, will feature a keynote address on May 17 from Dr. Maurianne Adams. Dr. Adams is a professor emerita of the School of Education at University of Massachusetts Amherst. The address will be open to the public. Other presentations will feature NIU students, and faculty who have attended the Institute in the past.

The Institute will offer participants a wide array of opportunities for learning about curricular transformation. There will be opportunities to attend sessions regarding:
  • Characteristics of NIU students
  • Gender
  • Sexual identity
  • Disability and ability
  • Race/ethnicity
  • Privilege
  • Underrepresented groups in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

Institute activities will take place at the Holmes Student Center and all of the sessions listed above will be open to the public. Participants will also have regular small group sessions, as well as time devoted to identifying what they can do in their own courses.

As additional details become available, they will be posted on the Multicultural Curriculum Transformation website. Questions may be directed to mcti@niu.edu or 753-8557.

Additional Resources
Not attending the Institute? Check out these online resources:


Peer Experience: Curricular Transformation

The Multiculturalist recently interviewed Lynn Neely from the College of Business regarding methods she uses to transform her course to be more multicultural in nature. Here is what she had to say:

The Multiculturalist: What specific teaching method(s) have you used to transform your curriculum from the traditional to the multicultural?

Lynn: Many more specific companies and techniques with diverse purposes, locations, clients, products, and services are part of the course now. The students shape the course each time with their choices of companies and with their own shared experiences. I invite all the students to share information about themselves through a personal home page feature in Blackboard.

The Multiculturalist: What are the results or outcomes of using this method, and how did you use the results to improve your teaching or programming?

Lynn: The class members participate much more and are more diverse. Each student gives several short presentations, of their choices, and part of their charge is to “engage” other classmates.

The class seems to be more diverse: one student grew up as a child in Africa, one student just became a US citizen, they have diverse interests, and they share those perspectives with one another pretty freely.

The Multiculturalist: How might NIU faculty or staff adapt this method for their classes or groups?

Lynn: The personal home page feature per student is available to anyone using Blackboard. It seems to be a great ice-breaker to get students to be more open. Most instructors could give their students a chance to make some choices-by-interest in the topics of their assignments.

About The Multiculturalist

Published twice yearly, THE MULTICULTURALIST is brought to you by the Office of the Provost. All members of the NIU community are invited to submit their multicultural methodology or success story to editor-in-chief Donna Askins. For all questions related to the Multicultural Curriculum Transformation Institute, contact mcti@niu.edu or call 815.753.8557.
Published in January of 2009, editors Regan A.R. Gurung and Loreto R. Prieto compiled 31 chapters across six sections which include practical, hands-on exercises as well as insightful perspectives on valuing diversity in the classroom. Amazon writes: “How do we educate our students about cultural diversity and cultural differences, and eliminate cultural ignorance, stereotyping, and prejudice? What are the conceptual issues involved in reaching this goal? How can we integrate these perspectives in disciplinary and diversity courses, and the curriculum?

“This book is a resource for answering these questions. Within the framework of current scholarship and discussion of essential concepts, it offers practical techniques, and empirically proven “best practices” for teaching about diversity.

“The book opens with a conceptual framework, covering such issues as distinguishing teaching to a diverse audience from teaching about diversity and contrasting the incorporation of culture across the curriculum with tokenistic approaches. Subsequent chapters identify classroom practices that can optimize students’ learning, especially those from culturally diverse backgrounds; describe feminist principles of education that that promote learning for all students; and address principles of effective online instruction for diverse populations.

“The book is intended for faculty integrating diversity into existing courses, and for anyone creating courses on diversity. The ideas and suggestions in the text can be incorporated into any class that includes a discussion of diversity issues or has a diverse student enrollment.

The contributors offer pragmatic and tested ways of overcoming student misconceptions and resistance, and for managing emotional responses that can be aroused by the discussion of diversity. The editors aim to stimulate readers’ thinking and inspire fresh ideas.

“The book further provides teachers of diversity with a range of effective exercises, and attends to such issues as teacher stress and burnout.

“This book can also serve to inform and guide department chairs and other administrators in the design and implementation of diversity initiatives.”
The Multiculturalist is pleased to reprint, with permission, the following article as a running feature. Part one was published in Volume 2, Issue 2. Read the entire article online now, or stay tuned for future installments.

8. Multiculturalism is divisive. According to this myth, immigrants coming to the United States eventually have been assimilated and considered themselves to be Americans. The myth goes on to state that when ethnicity is turned into a defining characteristic, it promotes division rather than unity. This shallow reasoning denies the multiple diversities that always have existed and continue to exist throughout the United States (Swiniarski, Breitborde, & Murphey, 1999).

9. In predominantly monocultural or bicultural societies, there is no need to study other cultures. This myth is pervasive in such societies. For example, we have heard from some undergraduate education students who protest, “Why should we study other cultures when there are only Whites and Blacks in the class and in our community?” In the past two years, however, that same community has had an influx of Mexican and Asian families. Furthermore, the closest elementary school to the students who made this comment had 71 different nationalities represented. With an increasingly diverse society, bicultural and monocultural areas especially need to learn about cultures to which they will be in close proximity in the immediate future (Greenfield & Cocking, 1994).

10. Multicultural education should be reserved for older children who are less egocentric or ethnocentric. Lynch and Hanson (1998) tell us that “cultural understanding in one’s first culture occurs early and is typically established by age 5” (p. 24). They go on to say, “children learn new cultural patterns more easily than adults” (p. 25). Young children are capable of learning that we are all alike and all different in certain ways. Children in the early elementary grades often study the family and community. Gathering pictures of each family and discussing the differences and similarities is a good place to start. Interestingly enough, the critics who suggest that multicultural education should be postponed are often the same ones who are interested in pushing academics down into the preschool curriculum.

References


Continued
Fifteen Misconceptions (continued)


Credits


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Did You Know?

NIU Offers Multiple Curricular Diversity Initiatives

NIU’s Diversity Development Plan, under the aegis of the Office of the Provost, cites numerous efforts to increase curricular diversity throughout the University. According to the Plan, “[D]iversity is not relegated to one office or area of the University.” Instead, programs are woven throughout the fabric of NIU, and will inform subsequent efforts toward improving campus diversity.

Here are just a few examples from around campus:

- The School of Allied Health and Communicative Disorders’ emphasis on deafness rehabilitation is the only undergraduate offering of its kind in the nation.
- The School of Music’s program in world music teaches students to play authentic international instruments such as the gamelan, North Indian tabla, East African xylophone, and Central American marimba.
- The Center for Black Studies researches, collects, and analyzes data on the African experience on the Continent and in the Diaspora.
- University Libraries provide instruction on using library services for persons with disabilities.
- The College of Engineering and Engineering Technology partners with high-need school districts to help teachers earn master’s degrees in engineering education.