

Diversity Plan for Edgecombe Community College

Defining Diversity

Diversity can be defined in a wide variety of ways. Throughout the course of this document, “diversity” will be defined as all of the ways that people are different. This includes individual, group, and cultural traits that manifest in such dissimilarities as race, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, ethnic origin, learning styles, physical disabilities, veteran status, and others. Due to the similarities in many of their goals, the Diversity Committee and the Global Education Committee were merged in January, 2007. The new committee, the Diversity and Global Connections Committee, was formed to "foster an environment inviting educational and cultural opportunities designed to heighten awareness of diversity and global issues affecting Edgecombe Community College students, employees, and the community."

Why Have a Diversity Plan?

Throughout the country, most colleges and universities recognize that all students benefit when campuses reflect a “broad range of intellectual and social perspectives.” A well-written diversity plan will ensure such a broad range of perspectives, thereby attracting a diverse student population.

The research also suggests that institutions that have staff who are “Diversity Conscious” tend to exhibit greater flexibility in thinking and take into consideration a variety of learning styles. This flexibility of faculty and staff will lead to greater student success in the classroom.

In addition, changes in our cultural landscape have precipitated the need for such a plan in order for both the student's and institution's success. Such changes include, but are not limited to, changing national and local demographics, heightened awareness of diversity due to terrorism, and globalization of technology. In comparing the census data from 1990 and 2000, the Hispanic population has grown in the United States by over 500%, and there has been a sizeable increase in other populations due to an influx of immigrants from Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Research suggests that diverse student populations are more successful when served by faculty and staff having similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds. In the aftermath of September 11, the topic of diversity has been frequently addressed in the media. These stories tend to deal with such issues as affirmative action, global conflict, the impact of immigrant workers, and religious differences. As a result, diversity has become more visible in everyday life and is more apt to be discussed and debated both publicly and privately.

Although changing demographics and heightened awareness weigh heavily on the establishment of a diversity plan, the most significant factor may be the institution's need to educate students in such a manner as to ensure their viability in a diverse workplace. We currently are living in what Marshal McLuhan terms a "global village." In other words, we live in an environment where computers, satellites, television, and other technology have brought us closer together, making cross-cultural encounters an almost every day occurrence. As a major provider of workforce development and training, community colleges must prepare themselves to meet the needs of all students.

“Colleges, businesses, and nations that ignore or fail to recognize the growing diversity of their, students, employees, or markets” will suffer grave consequences. On the other hand, those that thoroughly seek to embrace the concept of diversity consciousness will see an increase in the number of students and employees who are more innovative and adaptable, better communicators, and more productive. Retention will also improve.

Current Diversity Profile of Edgecombe County and Edgecombe Community College

Edgecombe Community College (ECC) is located on two campuses in Edgecombe County, North Carolina; one in Tarboro and one in Rocky Mount. It is also important to note the demographics of Edgecombe County taken from the last U. S. Census of 2000. The Edgecombe County 2000 census population was reported at 55,606 people with the following race designations: 57.5% Black; 40.1% White; 2.8% Hispanic/Latino; 2.2% Other/Two or more races; 0.2% American Indian; and 0.1% Asian. The census report also shows that 53.5% of the population was female and 46.5% of the population was male in 2000. (See chart below.)

One important trend to note is that while 2000 Census figures show a population of 55,606, a U.S. Census estimate of the county’s 2006 population shows a decrease of 3%, with an estimated 53,964 persons living in Edgecombe County.

**Edgecombe County U. S. Census Figures
2000**

Population, 2000	55,606
Population, 2006 estimate	53,964
Population, percent change, 2000 to 2006	-3%
White persons, percent, 2000 (a)	40.1%
Black or African American persons, percent, 2000 (a)	57.5%
American Indian and Alaska Native persons, percent, 2000 (a)	0.2%
Asian persons, percent, 2000 (a)	0.1%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, percent, 2000 (a)	Z
Persons reporting some other race, percent, 2000 (a)	1.6%
Persons reporting two or more races, percent, 2000	0.6%
Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin, percent, 2000 (b)	2.8%

(a) Includes persons reporting only one race

(b) Hispanic may be of any race

(z) Value greater than zero but less than half unit of measurement

Fall 2005 and Fall 2007 demographics of the workforce at Edgecombe Community College provide snapshots of campus diversity in terms of race and gender. A total of 203 people were employed at ECC at the start of Fall Semester, 2007. Of this total, 66.5% were female and 33.5% were male. This is virtually identical to the gender breakdown of Fall, 2005. ECC employees were 66% white, 32% black, and 2% other races at the start of Fall, 2007. This represents a small increase in the number of minority employees at ECC just in the previous two years. A closer look at new employee hires over the past two years shows that the hiring ratio of females to males is similar to the current ratio of the school. Of the 27 employees hired between September 1, 2005 and August 30, 2007, 17 (63%) were female and 10 (27%) were male. Importantly, significant strides are being made in recruitment of qualified minority candidates, with 14 of 27 hires (52%) being minorities. A complete analysis of the five areas of the College and their respective diversity in terms of race and gender for Fall, 2005 and Fall, 2007 is provided below.

**Edgecombe Community College
Administration, Staff, and Faculty
Fall 2005**

	Admin.	Curric.	Con. Ed.	Workforce Dev.	Support Staff	Total
<i>Race</i>						
Black	1 (17%)	7 (9%)	21 (64%)	10 (59%)	17 (30%)	56 (29%)
White	5 (83%)	69 (88%)	10 (30%)	6 (35%)	40 (70%)	130 (68%)
American Indian	0	0	0	1 (6%)	0	1 (.5%)
Hispanic	0	1 (1%)	2 (6%)	0	0	3 (2%)
Other	0	1(1%)	0	0	0	1 (.5%)
<i>Sex</i>						
Female	2 (33%)	46 (59%)	27 (82%)	10 (59%)	39 (68%)	124 (65%)
Male	4 (67%)	32 (41%)	6 (18%)	7 (41%)	18 (32%)	67 (35%)
Total	6	78	33	17	57	191

**Edgecombe Community College
Administration, Staff, and Faculty
Fall 2007**

	Admin.	Curric.	Con. Ed.	Workforce Dev.	Support Staff	Total
<i>Race</i>						
Black	1 (20%)	10 (12%)	22 (73%)	7 (58%)	25 (34%)	65 (32%)
White	4 (80%)	71 (88%)	6 (20%)	5 (42%)	48 (65%)	134 (66%)
American Indian	0	0	1 (3%)	0	0	1 (.5%)
Hispanic	0	1 (0.5%)	1 (3%)	0	0	2 (1%)
Other	0	0	0	0	1 (1.5%)	1 (.5%)
<i>Sex</i>						
Female	2 (40%)	49 (60%)	23 (77%)	6 (50%)	55 (74%)	135 (67%)
Male	3 (60%)	33 (40%)	7 (23%)	6 (50%)	19 (26%)	68 (33%)
Total	5	81	30	12	74	203

A more complete picture of campus diversity at ECC includes student numbers. In

Spring 2005, 2,386 students were enrolled at ECC with the following race designations:

58% Black; 40% White; 0.4% Asian; 0.9% Hispanic; 0.2% American Indian; and 0.6% Other. These numbers changed only slightly by 2007, with slight decreases in percentage enrollment by white and Asian students, and corresponding increases in all other categories. One interesting comparison is that student figures closely mirror the representative numbers of racial designation in Edgecombe County in the 2000 census (57.5% Black, 40.1% White, 2.8% Hispanic/Latino, 2.2% Other/Two or more races, 0.2% American Indian, and 0.1% Asian.)

		Spring 2005	Spring 2007
	Headcount	2386	2500
<i>Race</i>	Black	1377 57.7%	1495 59.8%
	White	956 40.1%	928 37.1%
	Asian	10 0.4%	5 0.2%
	Hispanic	22 0.9%	36 1.4%
	Amer. Indian or Alaskan	6 0.3%	14 0.6%
	Other	15 0.6%	22 0.9%
<i>Sex</i>	Female	1805 75.6%	1864 74.6%
	Male	581 24.4%	636 25.4%

What Diversity Research Shows

How do students benefit from a strong institutional emphasis on diversity and multiculturalism?

A brief examination of the current literature reveals a comprehensive body of research that supports the premise that students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds benefit from a diverse educational environment. A publication from the Association of American Colleges and Universities, *Diversity Works: The Emerging Picture of How Students Benefit*¹ provides the most current review of research reports that support the importance

and value of diversity at institutions of higher education. Some of the conclusions of this analysis of diversity research include the following:

1. Diversity initiatives have positive effects on both minority and majority students. These include student's attitudes and feelings toward interactions with diverse groups, institutional satisfaction, involvement and academic growth.
2. Broad campus commitment to diversity increases recruitment and retention of students from underrepresented groups and student's satisfaction and commitment to improving racial understanding.
3. Diversity in the curriculum has a positive impact on attitudes toward racial issues by providing students with an opportunity to interact with those who are different. In addition, cognitive development advances among students participating in a course on multiculturalism.
4. Racially-mixed student populations have positive effects on intellectual and social self-confidence.

Colleges which feature diverse faculty and counselors can benefit both minority and majority students. Studies show that minority professors have a positive impact on the education of 96% of minority and 83% of non-minority students.² They also serve as mentors, advisors and professional role models for all students. Research also suggests that a significant percentage of minority students prefer counselors of the same race³. Minority students benefit from the insight, support, and counseling of those who have similar cultural backgrounds.⁴ In addition, all students should experience different ways

of approaching problems, varying perspectives on history, and a variety of cultural traditions.

Strong institutional emphasis on diversity also benefits all faculty and staff. According to the diversity statement from the Society for Human Resource Management⁵, diversity initiatives produce work environments which yield greater productivity and positive outcomes. A diverse faculty and staff make unique contributions which are an essential part of what makes us able to better serve our students.

Diversity Issues at Edgecombe Community College

In an effort to address diversity issues at ECC, information regarding diversity was gathered using surveys distributed to faculty and students on both campuses. In January 2005, a total of 118 ECC employees (including 50 faculty and 56 staff along with 12 not identified as either faculty or staff) responded to a diversity survey. The major issues that were identified by employees were: faculty and staff training on diversity issues; attitudes toward fairness regarding gender, race, and ethnicity; and fairness regarding opportunities for career advancement at ECC.

In March 2005, a total of 301 ECC students (including 110 Continuing Education and 191 Curriculum students) responded to a diversity survey. The major issue that students identified centers on their feeling disconnected from ECC.

Also in the spring of 2005, the College arranged discussion sessions featuring focus groups and solicited community members, faculty, staff, and students as participants. Two focus groups were held for students including curriculum and continuing education students—one at the Rocky Mount campus (2 students attended)

and another at the Tarboro campus (6 students attended). Similarly, one focus group was held for faculty, staff, and administration at the Rocky Mount campus (7 attended). In addition, two focus groups were held for community members at both the Rocky Mount campus (6 attended) and at the Tarboro campus (4 attended).

Responses from students, staff, and community members who attended the focus groups pointed to areas that need to be improved at Edgecombe Community College. First, many students felt that the lack of a job placement center on campus adversely affects their ability for success in securing employment upon graduation. The majority of student participants felt that the lack of minority counselors in Student Services and lack of minority faculty in curriculum areas were both issues which contribute to a feeling of exclusion on campus. Students commented that, with the exception of Cultural Studies and Human Services courses, there is little attention given to diversity in curriculum classroom discussion and textbooks.

Among the community participants, one major issue that was brought up was that the College's administration needs to increase their visibility in ethnically and racially diverse communities. Furthermore, community participants felt these issues negatively impact the ability to recruit and retain students from diverse backgrounds.

Focus group responses by faculty and staff echoed the responses provided by faculty and staff on the written surveys which pointed to a lack of fairness in terms of promotions.

Action Plan

Prior to the development of an action plan by the ECC Diversity Task Force, the President of Edgecombe Community College, Dr. Deborah Lamm, began implementing key measures designed to enhance and promote diversity awareness, including:

- Creation of a diversity task force to revisit the ECC diversity plan and updating this plan to meet the current needs of the College,
- Revision of ECC's hiring practices policy
- Institution of the "Bridging the Divide" series featuring faculty/staff workshops with a focus on diversity education
- Placement of a Rocky Mount campus Message Board to post important announcements keeping students informed of current campus events
- Establishment of a Globalization Committee
- Establishment of an ECC Travel Abroad Program
- Named an Assistant to the President for Minority Affairs

After an extensive collaborative effort by the ECC Diversity Task Force, a comprehensive action plan has been created focusing on the planning and implementation stages.

Action Plan Oversight

The Diversity and Global Connections Committee will work to:

- monitor and evaluate the activities and outcomes of the College's Diversity Plan
- annually review and update the College's Plan

- review the status of each of the planned activities in the action plan each semester to ensure that those assigned with the responsibilities for accomplishing the activities are making progress toward their achievement

¹ Smith, D. G., et al. *Diversity Works: The Emerging Picture of How Students Benefit*. Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 1997.

²Turner, C.S.V., *Diversifying the Faculty: A Guidebook for Search Committees*, Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2002; and “*Survey Reinforces Value of Faculty Diversity in Classroom*,” *Black Issues in Higher Education*, August 14, 2003.

³ Bernstein, B.L., Wade, P., & Hofmann, B. (1987). *Student’s Race and Preferences for Counselor’s Race, Sex, Age, and Experiences*, *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 15, 60-70.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ From *Society for Human Resource Management Diversity Tool Kit*.