Introduction

This is the final report of a site visit of the Department of Multicultural Affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UWSP). At the request of Dr. Robert Tomlinson, Vice Chancellor for Students Affairs, Dr. Bettina Shuford, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and Director of the Center for Multicultural and Academic Initiatives at Bowling Green State University was asked to conduct the program review for the department. The consultant was asked to focus on the following areas:

- Organizational Structure
- Programs and Services
- Recruitment
- Relationship with the Campus Community
- Role of Student Affairs Units in the Success of Diverse Students
- Role of Other University Units in the Success of Diverse Students

To accomplish this task, the consultant met over the course of a one and a half day period with Director, Ron Strege, the directors and coordinators of each program unit, the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, the Chancellor, and a variety of campus stakeholders that interface with the department.

The consultant used the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), as well as her own professional experience from having worked in Multicultural Affairs for over fifteen years as a guide in assessing the mission, programs and services of the department. The CAS standards provide a set of professional standards and best practices for student services units in higher education.

Overview

The role and scope of a Multicultural Affairs department varies from campus to campus. Each institution determines who is served, the organizational structure, as well as the programs and services offered. The CAS standards provide a set of guidelines institutions can follow in determining the role of multicultural student programs on their respective campuses.

The Department of Multicultural Affairs, formerly named Cultural Diversity Programs, was established in 1989 as a part of the UWS Design for Diversity. The department reorganized in 1994 into its current structure. The Department of Multicultural Affairs, under the leadership of Ronald Strege, encompasses six distinct programs: the Multicultural Resource Center, the Native American Center, Student Support Services, Upward Bound, Precollege Programs, and Content Area Tutoring.
The CAS standards state that the mission of a Multicultural Student Program Service Unit should promote academic and personal growth, create a just community, promote access and equity for underrepresented populations, and offer programs that educate the campus about diversity. The standards further state that the programs and services offered through a Multicultural Student Program Unit must promote student learning and development that is purposeful and holistic (CAS Standards, 2006).

The mission of the Department of Multicultural Affairs, while not clearly articulated in its promotional material, was clearly understood by most of the stakeholders that were interviewed by the consultant. The Multicultural Affairs staff and other stakeholders perceived the mission of the department as:
- Promotes academic and personal growth that leads to students success
- Provides access and equity to underserved populations
- Provides multicultural programming and resources for multicultural students that are also accessible to the campus population

The department’s perceived mission clearly meets the standards developed by CAS, with the exception of creating an institutional and community of justice. Although social justice is not formally incorporated into the mission of the department, the programs and services offered through the department have created an environment on campus where diversity is embraced and valued. So, it is an unintended outcome that has benefited the department and the campus community.

It was clear from speaking with staff in the department and stakeholders across the campus that the Department of Multicultural Affairs does aid in the retention and success of multicultural students on campus. The programs and services are viewed as value added in that it promotes the growth and development of multicultural students.

The department is also viewed as being very collaborative with other units across campus. The department’s interaction with Academic Advising, the Tutoring Learning Center and Career Services are excellent examples of best practices in collaboration. Multicultural Affairs pays for a portion of the tutoring budget, which enables multicultural students and Student Support Services participants to have access to one-on-one tutoring at no cost to the student. Career Services has a history of holding office hours in the Multicultural Resource Center and currently provides career assessments to multicultural students. Staff in the Multicultural Resource Center and Student Support Services work very closely with the Advising Center in helping students succeed academically. Although there are many excellent examples of collaboration with Multicultural Affairs across campus, the transition from when students are recruited and when they arrive on campus is ineffective. The services in Multicultural Affairs are not promoted well during the recruitment phase making it difficult for the department to connect with students once they arrive on campus.

One of the major strengths of the department is its staff, particularly the Director, Ron Strege. The Director is very visible on campus and viewed as an excellent resource. He serves on a variety of campus committees, conducts diversity education training with orientation leaders and
residential staff, makes presentations in the residence halls, and shares resources through co-sponsorships with other units on campus. The students who were interviewed spoke very favorably about the support they receive from all staff in the department. It is apparent that the Multicultural Affairs staff genuinely care about the success of students and go well beyond the expectations of the job in providing services to students.

General Findings

Structure
The Department of Multicultural Affairs serves as the umbrella organization to six distinct units. Each unit serves underrepresented students based on ethnicity or first generation, low-income status. Based on the population of students served, the structure works well for each of the units and the University. Each of the directors and coordinators that were interviewed agreed that the current organizational structure is an effective model. If additional TRIO programs are funded in the future, senior management may want to consider organizing the TRIO programs as a separate department.

Although the structure is effective, the department on the whole does not operate in a cohesive fashion. Each unit functions independently from the other with limited interaction between units. It was unclear to the consultant if there were opportunities for collaboration within the department or if there were regular opportunities for units to meet and share information with each other.

Programs and Services
According to the CAS standards, Multicultural Student Programs should provide programs and services that promote the following outcomes: academic success; personal growth; an engaging climate; a just community; programs that increase multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills; serving as a resource for multicultural training, education and development; and assisting students across the range of their experiences at the institution. Collectively, the department does a good job of addressing most of the programs and services identified by CAS.

The Multicultural Resource Center (MCRC)
When asked about the mission of the Center, the staff indicated that the mission of the MCRC is to serve as a resource to students and to create an environment where students feel welcomed and connected. A primary role of the MCRC is to provide academic support to first-year students in their first semester. The MCRC serves as a clearinghouse of information related to academic success and works collaboratively with the Advising Center and the Tutoring Learning Center. The staff compiles data on MCRC participants with regard to their academic standing by gender and ethnic group and was in the process of collecting student satisfaction data on its first-year participants at the time of the consultant’s visit. A second survey was slated to be conducted with all students in the target population. An ultimate goal of MCRC, as it relates to academic success, is to lower the rate of students on probation and to increase retention. The MCRC does not currently have a set of learning outcomes or an assessment plan in place.

This year, a major source of frustration for the staff was with their outreach efforts to first-year students. Despite their efforts to promote the services of the Center, only half of the targeted
population was served by the MCRC, due in part to the Center’s temporary location. The location of the MCRC is not easily accessible and students are not aware of the programs and services in MCRC. Staff indicated that earlier outreach during the recruitment phase would help students make the connection with the Center prior to their arrival on campus. This spring, the MCRC staff had the opportunity to participate in an Admissions program for accepted students who had not paid their deposit. Staff were able to promote the programs and services in MCRC and establish a point of contact for when students arrive in the fall. It is hoped that participation rates will improve as a result of these efforts. The Center’s relocation to the Student Center should increase visibility of the Center as well.

From the discussions with students, the MCRC is effective in its collaborations with multicultural student organizations in sponsoring multicultural programming on campus. However, the students would like to see greater participation of majority students in programs sponsored by the Center. Marketing strategies can be used to broaden the audience at multicultural events.

Precollege Programs
Precollege Programs for Multicultural Affairs began in 1990 and is funded by the University and the Department of Public Instruction. All students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch and are residents of Wisconsin may participate in a precollege program. The program is advertised at all schools. The precollege programs are an excellent opportunity to involve UWSP faculty and staff in teaching courses and presenting information about the University to students. The weeklong camps can also serve as an excellent recruiting tool for the University. The Coordinator indicated that the Admissions Office does not actively recruit from the list of past participants.

In addition to coordinating the Precollege Program, the Coordinator assumes other administrative duties within the department and coordinates the listing of all precollege programs for the campus. When asked about future goals for the unit, the Coordinator indicated that she would like to improve the coordination with Admissions and to have additional help from a part-time person in the spring to help with planning for the summer programs. A graduate student serving in a paid assistantship or internship may be able fulfill that role.

Native American Center
The Native American Center preceded the establishment of the Department of Multicultural Affairs and has provided nearly thirty years of service. When the Center was first established in 1978, it was the only Center of its kind in Wisconsin. The Native American Center has a three part mission of providing programs and services to the Native American communities throughout Wisconsin, providing academic and cultural support to Native American students on the UWSP campus, and serving as an educational and cultural resource to the campus community. In speaking with the staff and reviewing a timeline of programs and services since 1978, the magnitude of services has diminished. External programming has been dependent on the ability to obtain grants. However, once the funding cycle ends, there is no institutional funding to sustain the program. The Center appears to be at a crossroad, seeking a new direction and a renewed purpose. Opportunities to collaborate and teach with the Native American minor have decreased as well. The one course on record for the Center has not been offered in two years.
Support for the Native American studies minor is also losing ground. According to some of the stakeholders that were interviewed, there are only two faculty members currently teaching Native American courses and one will retire soon. Under the 1989 Wisconsin Act, public schoolteachers are encouraged to take a Native American education course, but the availability of the courses is not there. There is great potential for collaboration between the academic program and the Native American Center. Some of the stakeholders were unaware of the array of services in the Center and viewed it as an untapped resource on campus and in the community.

Content Area Tutoring
The Department of Multicultural Affairs provides primary support for the Content Area Tutoring Program located in the Tutoring Learning Center. Students served through the MCRC and Student Support Services can receive group or individual tutoring at no cost. Recruitment efforts are made through e-mail, presentations in classes, and at campus events. Last semester, 50 multicultural students and 80 Student Support Services students used the tutoring program. The collaboration between the Department of Multicultural Affairs and the Tutoring Learning Center is both effective and efficient and serves as an excellent example of a best practice in collaboration.

Student Support Services (SSS)
The Student Support Services Program is one of the major retention hubs for the Department of Multicultural Affairs. It provides comprehensive academic support services to its participants and the staff serve in an academic advising capacity that includes authorizing registration for their participants. Multicultural students in the SSS program may participate in the Multicultural Resource Center and are encouraged to do so by the SSS staff. The inclusion of the SSS program in the Department of Multicultural Affairs is a good organizational fit for the program. However, its presence in the department provides the perception that it is a race-based program. SSS participants who do not identify as a multicultural student are not embraced for full participation in the department. Non-minority students in the program are not invited to departmental events and are not included in retention and graduation data for the department. The Multicultural Affairs director and SSS director can work with the Institutional Research office on how to best report data for the department. The staff in SSS can also serve as a resource to other units in Multicultural Affairs in developing measurable outcomes and best practices in retention.

Upward Bound
The Upward Bound Program at UWSP provides services to 80 students from 10 school districts, which represents 1% of the need in the target population. The staff expressed their frustration at not being able to serve more students. The staff believe they are doing a good job with their services to students, but could do more if they had additional resources. The staff could provide additional services if a greater share of the indirect cost went back into the program’s operational budget and if departments eliminated user fees. The elimination or reduction of user fees can serve as in-kind support from the University.

The staff indicated that they feel disconnected from the rest of the institution. There are not many opportunities for interaction with colleagues due to the nature of the program. Many
departments are unaware of the mission of the program. Greater efforts should be made to
inform the UWSP campus community about the services of the program on and off campus.

Opportunities for collaboration should be enhanced as well. There have been some limited
opportunities for collaboration with the Precollege Program in sharing resources and speakers.
Another area that has potential for collaboration is with the Admissions Office. The staff
expressed a desire to do more with the Admissions Office, but there has been no outreach from
Admissions. Faculty and staff can be invited to do presentations/workshops with the students.

The organizational structure, under the umbrella of Multicultural Affairs, works well for the
Upward Bound staff. At one point in its history on campus, the program reported to the Vice
Chancellor for Student Affairs. The reporting structure for the department has changed three
times. An ideal structure would be to have a department designated for TRIO programs. The
staff indicated that the name, Multicultural Affairs, does not adequately reflect the total mix of
the population that is served by the department. The staff provided no alternative name.

**Perceptions of Campus Stakeholders**

Some of the stakeholders interviewed were familiar with the mission of individual programs in
the department, but were less familiar with the overall mission of the department. The
department is viewed as being very student centered in its provision of services to the target
population. There is an assumption on the part of the stakeholders that the department is effective
in the work it does with students, but they would like to see some tangible measures of success.

Beyond the direct services to the target population, the department is also seen as a leader for
diversity initiatives on campus. There is a willingness on the part of the director to conduct
training workshops for students and staff and present programs in the residence halls. The
faculty and staff were less familiar with the availability of resources in the Native American
Center and the Multicultural Resource Center and believed it to be an untapped resource for the
campus.

**Perceptions of Students**

The students view the mission of the department as providing academic and emotional support to
multicultural students and view the department as a valuable resource to students. The students
gave numerous testimonials of how the staff go well beyond the expectations of the job in
providing support and encouragement to students. As student leaders, they receive a lot of
support from the Multicultural Affairs staff. However, they indicated that multicultural students
in non-leadership roles tend to gain their support from participation in multicultural student
organizations.

When asked about the campus climate, students indicated that the climate is improving and
recognize the efforts the campus is making to enhance diversity initiatives. The students perceive
the faculty as being more inviting than the general population of students. The majority students
lack awareness about diversity and hold many preconceived stereotypes about diverse student
populations. There is also some intolerance to multicultural students speaking languages other
than English. The students would like to see more educational initiatives directed at majority
students to increase their knowledge base about diversity. The students were encouraged that
the SALSA student organization has several members that are non-minority and would like to see greater participation in other multicultural groups. Several suggestions were made for how to increase the awareness of majority students.

The students indicated that they have also observed intra-group conflicts based on regional differences and the formation of cliques, which sometimes happens when the multicultural population on a campus increases. The students would like to see greater interaction between multiethnic groups as well.

The students shared a common theme regarding the disconnection between Admissions and Multicultural Affairs. They indicated that they were unaware of the services in Multicultural Affairs when they first arrived on campus. A peer mentor shared that the mentors will be going on some of the Admissions trips next year.

The importance of early outreach to entering multicultural students was stressed several times by the students, as well as the need to get students connected. The Survival Camp was listed as an excellent way of getting students connected early on in the semester. They would like to see the camp or a similar program offered to students in the future.

When asked in what ways the department can improve, the students suggested the following:

- Early outreach with entering multicultural students
- Better marketing
- Reinstate the Survival Camp
- Increase awareness of majority students
- Increase interaction between multi-ethnic groups
- Work more closely with the Stevens Point community
- Expand services to other groups, such as students with disabilities

**Recommended Actions**

The following recommendations were based on information garnered from campus interviews with staff, students and stakeholders, as well as the consultant’s knowledge of best practices within the profession. Some of the recommendations may not be feasible in the short-term based on resources and university priorities. In some cases, resources may need to be reallocated within the department in order to implement some of the recommendations. The development of a strategic plan (bullet 3) will aid the department in prioritizing the following recommendations.

- **Develop a mission statement.** The mission of each of the individual units in the Department of Multicultural Affairs was clearly articulated in printed material and by the staff during the interviews with the consultant. The mission for the department was more difficult to discern from the printed material. Some stakeholders indicated that they did not have a clear understanding of the overall mission of the department. Most stakeholders were most familiar with the Multicultural Resource Center and see the department and MCR as intertwined. The mission for the department should reflect statements that are representative across units.
The Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) has identified mission statement guidelines for Multicultural Student Program Service Units. According to CAS, the mission should promote academic and personal growth, create a just community, promote access and equity for underrepresented populations, and offer programs that educate the campus about diversity. The standards further state that the programs and services offered through a Multicultural Student Program Unit must promote student learning and development that is purposeful and holistic (CAS Standards, 2006).

Collectively, the programs and services in the department are reflected in all but one of the declarations identified by CAS. The fourth statement related to social justice is indirectly addressed through multicultural programming initiatives with student organizations and through outreach efforts made by the Director of the department.

- **Develop learning outcomes and assessment practices.** The programs and services provided through the department should be intentional in helping students learn and develop in a variety of ways. A set of learning outcomes should be identified for programs and services with students that are sustained over a period of time and assessed periodically to determine the level of achievement for each outcome. For example, learning outcomes can be developed for the peer mentoring program, academic support services, or the content tutoring program. The assessment of outcomes provides relevant feedback on whether the program or service is meeting its intended objectives and provides opportunities for corrective action.

The Council for the Advancement of Standards has identified a set of relevant outcomes for a multicultural student program service unit that includes: intellectual growth, effective communication, enhanced self-esteem, realistic self-appraisal, clarified values, career choices, leadership development, healthy behavior, meaningful interpersonal relationships, independence, collaboration, social responsibility, satisfying and productive lifestyles, appreciating diversity, spiritual awareness, and personal and educational goals (CAS Standards, 2006). The CAS standards document provides examples of achievement indicators for each learning outcome.

- **Develop a strategic plan.** As the demographics on campus are changing and the climate for affirmative action is eroding, the department should develop a three to five year plan to address changes at the national and local level. A SWOT analysis can be conducted to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the department. An examination of assessment data and student satisfaction data can also provide good indicators in determining current and future directions for the department. From the interviews with students, there was an expressed desire for the department to expand its services related to multicultural programming and diversity education on campus. A number of Multicultural Affairs offices and Cultural Centers are expanding their scope of service to include support for gay and lesbian students, non-traditional students, students with disabilities, and international students. The post affirmative action climate is causing some departments to expand direct services to non-minority students.
A strategic plan and the development of annual goals can assist the department in creating greater cohesion and interaction between program units as well. It was not apparent to the consultant if there were regular opportunities for the six program areas to come together to share information or resources. Joint planning and regular meeting updates should provide a climate for greater collaboration between units and the development of a shared mission and vision.

- **Enhance marketing efforts to new students and the campus community.** The need for greater marketing to the multicultural student population and campus constituents was a common theme throughout the consultant’s visit. Multiple attempts to get students connected to the department have been moderately successful. The campus community is unaware of the resources in the Multicultural Resource Center and the Native American Center. The stakeholders were unaware of the background characteristics of the multicultural students on campus, which leads to assumptions about their previous experiences. Majority students are not compelled to attend multicultural programming on campus. It is evident that the programs and services are value added and are making a difference to the targeted population, but the campus community is unaware of the department’s accomplishments. Showcase the successes of students with faculty and staff. Market the availability of resources in the Multicultural Resource Center and the Native American Center to faculty, staff, students, and the surrounding community. Find ways to get majority students to take advantage of the programming efforts on campus. Conducting a needs assessment or focus group can be beneficial in determining the best way to market services to the campus community.

- **Work collaboratively with the diversity recruiter in Admissions.** There was a consistent theme related to the transition of students from the recruitment phase to their arrival on campus. Students indicated that they were unaware of the services in the Department of Multicultural Affairs prior to their arrival on campus, which made it difficult for the department to get students connected in those first few weeks of classes. The diversity recruiter in Admissions is obviously effective in his recruitment efforts based on the increase in enrollment of multicultural students in recent years; however, there is a breakdown in how students are transitioned from the recruitment phase to their actual matriculation to campus. There has been little to no involvement of Multicultural Affairs staff during campus visits of prospective students until recently and that occurred due to the absence of the admissions representative. Since the Department of Multicultural Affairs pays a portion of the diversity recruiter’s salary, one would expect greater collaboration between the two units. The transition between the recruitment phase and students arrival to campus should be seamless. It is critical to the success and retention of students for them to be connected with support services within their first few weeks on campus. Information about the department should be shared during recruitment visits and Multicultural Affairs staff should be invited to participate in campus based recruitment activities. Efforts should also be made to recruit the former participants of the Precollege Programs and the Upward Bound Program. Since the intent of those programs is to create access into higher education, efforts should be made to recruit them to the Stevens Point campus.
Expand multicultural programming and diversity education initiatives. There appears to be a need and an interest on the part of students for expanded programming and diversity education initiatives. The director has availed himself to facilitate diversity training with students groups when asked. However, creating a just community is not a primary mission of the department. With the change in the affirmative action climate, multicultural affairs departments are taking the lead on campuses to promote multicultural programming and diversity education to all students. Staff should be encouraged to facilitate diversity workshops with students and to work collaboratively with other groups, such as the diversity interns and academic units, in promoting an increased awareness and understanding of diversity on campus.

As the department begins to expand multicultural programming and diversity education initiatives, the staff should help students make connections with what they are learning in the Minority Studies courses and Native American Minor. With only two remaining faculty teaching courses in the Native American Studies, Academic Affairs should identify ways to increase the number of course offerings in the minor.

Expand the scope of services beyond multi-ethnic students. As other underrepresented student populations are matriculating to college campuses in greater numbers, a number of multicultural affairs departments are expanding services to other target populations. Some departments have opened their services to non-minority students due to challenges in the courts or the potential of a challenge. Non-traditional students have special needs that are not always met through traditional programs and services on campus and may need additional support that can be provided by the department. Resources may need to be reallocated to expand services to other targeted populations. The strategic plan recommended in bullet three, can address the expansion of services along with the reallocation of resources.

Concluding Thoughts
The Department of Multicultural Affairs is reaching a critical junction in its existence on campus. With the increase in enrollment of multicultural students on campus, the addition of other underrepresented groups to the campus, and the change in the political climate, the department needs to examine whether or not its programs and services are meeting the needs of the targeted population and the campus community. The challenge will be how to move the department to the next level with existing resources. The UWSP Design for Diversity Plan dictates the institution’s priorities related to diversity. Should the provision of direct services to multicultural students remain the primary mission of the department (with the exception of the TRIO and Precollege programs) or should the department expand its services to other targeted populations, and provide a leadership role in creating an environment that embraces diversity for all students? All staff will need to be involved in the conversation about the department’s next steps. The Director will be challenged to lead the process forward. It is hoped that the recommendations put forth in this report will provide a roadmap for establishing best practices within the department.
Reference