Appendix 5: Inclusive Excellence

Inclusive Excellence
Program in International Affairs
March 2016

The Program in International Affairs (IAFS) convened its faculty (tenure line, instructors, and lecturers), staff, and students to respond to a series of questions regarding inclusive excellence in the program. Both meetings and surveys were conducted. The meetings were divided into instructors, lecturers, and staff; tenure-line faculty; and students. Student surveys took place in our IAFS 4500 senior capstone courses, on the premise that these students would best reflect the program, its needs, and record.

The following comments and recommendations were drawn from responses to two questions:

1) What values or behaviors contribute to your understanding of excellence, and particularly in the context of enhancing diversity? These could include values or behaviors related to courses, faculty, advising, co-curricular activities, and student interactions, and

2) How would you make these values and behaviors inclusive for all groups in the IAFS program?

Students (it should be noted that all of our small handful of respondents came from underrepresented ethnic and racial protected classes) responded to Question 1 with the following: excellent students should be driven by values of self-discipline and motivation. They should view themselves and their efforts as individuals and not as members of groups. While diversity is a good value for an institution, the history of these efforts eventually will result in the establishment of a quota system which benefits politically-powerful groups over the individual. Another student believes that the IAFS department does an excellent job of promoting diversity, and recognizing contributions from all students. Other students counter that CU’s diversity efforts are not effective.

For student responses to Question 2: some students would ignore efforts to classify people by arbitrary classifications. Another believes that no improvements are in order, and that both faculty and staff are remarkable in promoting diversity. Another respondent urges a requirement at CU Boulder (not necessarily through the IAFS program) that all students take a course on social justice. There is more talk than walk on the campus when it comes to engaging diverse populations, and compelling the majority of white, straight, and privileged males to understand what students of color and others face every day is a necessity. Such a course would not have to make
students want to change everything wrong in the world, but it should help students recognize their privileges and understand where others are coming from. Professors should also be careful not to single out students of colors in a lecture to ask them about certain concepts of race or ethnicity, under the assumption that the student identifies with that group. Such a practice is extremely discriminatory and singles out the student of color.

Faculty, instructors, and staff understood excellence, and strive for inclusiveness, by the following responses: Faculty push for a classroom environment in which nobody feels threatened but in which students are challenged and provoked by controversial subjects. In general, faculty and staff wish to promote a culture of shared accountability, applying to everyone from the director to first-year students, which values all members of the program with dignity and respect. In so doing, IAFS hopes to build a community based on academic success.

More specifically, faculty believe that IAFS has a unique responsibility to speak back to the zeitgeist of xenophobia in a national context, and not only in the United States but in other national settings as well. There also seems to be a culture of elitism on campus and in IAFS – for instance, how many students have been to Africa? Mostly the affluent have traveled there, and there needs to be an effort at comparative analysis to show that a geographic area of focus may hold certain biases and experiences for certain students. In addition, the study of international relations and global affairs also will help students think about privilege here at home.

Faculty also believe that there are many elements of diversity in IAFS. These include non-social sciences courses (and there were demands to add more humanities and science courses to the curriculum); more acceptance of students with a special forces/military backgrounds; more treatment of subjects such as homophobia, religion, and conservatism; and valuing the international perspectives of non-U.S. students and those who have traveled widely – and conversely, those first-generation and non-traditional students who may not have such travel experience. There are also means, distinct to IAFS, to be more sensitive to diversity. One major one arises from our stress on foreign language study and study abroad, which we champion but which on occasion restricts access to foreign language courses for heritage speakers. In addition, we need even more financial support and awareness for study abroad, for all students. In hiring, of IAFS’s four jointly-rostered tenure-line faculty, two are women, and one is Asian. Our advertising for positions was sent out to a wide number of sites to attract diverse candidates. In the curriculum, we continue to expand our offerings in all geographic and subject areas, sometimes combining these efforts into one course, such as IAFS 3000: Gender, Geopolitics, and Islam. In courses, we also provide funding for community building to each instructor, host a fall “convocation” to promote such community by showing the diversity within courses and activities, and engage in sponsorship of a wide-ranging number of clubs, forums, and speakers.
The faculty, in general, holds that the values that undergird diversity in IAFS are expressed by the global, wide-ranging nature of the major and its courses. We host a diversity of geographic areas, though we should do better to demonstrate that regardless of different areas of the world, there are commonalities in issues (racism, inequality, etc.) faced in each area, and that areas should not be studied in isolation. And, we should persist not only in teaching in ways that do not assume a U.S.-centered perspective in the world, but also in demonstrating that non-Western cultures should be prominent both in the major and in the College core/distribution requirements.