

Diversity Profile **for the** **University of Wisconsin** **Extension**



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DIVERSITY PROFILE: UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN - EXTENSION

I. ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

The University of Wisconsin-Extension (UWEX) is beginning to mirror the world's demographics in a new way. White women, women and men of color, lesbians and gays, and younger employees are present in numbers that did not exist just twenty years ago. Yet, despite efforts to improve diversity, it is clear that race/ethnic, gender, age and sexual orientation parity have not been achieved within the institution or among the clientele UWEX seeks to serve. We believe this profiling process can assist in understanding some of the forces that help or hinder success in realizing the Extension's Vision for Diversity, and that UWEX can address issues of parity within the organization and create a more vibrant multicultural environment.

This assessment recognizes that UWEX's commitment and efforts with respect to Affirmative Action and Diversity are noteworthy. The institution's next steps require that employees learn to internalize and understand the ways in which parity and justice are represented interpersonally and organizationally as a continuation of the nation's historical oppressions (i.e., racism, sexism, classism, etc.). Also, in order to create true and effective cultural change, UWEX employees and managers must learn how to relate across hierarchical lines in a dramatically changing environment. The recommendations that follow are intended to focus positive, constructive action where it can produce the greatest strategic impact.

II. INTRODUCTION

A. Overview and Demographics

The present descriptive narrative, commissioned by the Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Extension, provides a summary of the impressions gathered during extensive interviews and focus groups between May 12-16, 1997. This profile was requested to facilitate on-going planning and organizational development efforts at UWEX. It includes recommended next steps for the institution regarding the current work environment and employee relationships.

The profile was conducted by Hilda Guterrez Baldoquin and Thomas Griggs of VISIONS, Inc., and examines these issues from a multicultural perspective. The information used to generate this report was drawn from a combination of focus groups and individual interviews with over 180 Extension employees. The demographics of the respondents in terms of race and gender included 145 Whites (75 women and 70 men); and 37 People of Color. These latter individuals can be further identified as: 4 American Indians (2 women and 2 men); 20 African Americans (12 women and 8 men); 4 Asians (3 women and 1 man); and 10 Latino/as (8 women and 2 men).

We also reviewed written materials such as the UW-Extension Vision for Diversity, the UWEX Urban Initiative, staffing information, statistics on UWEX workforce, and Affirmative Action data.

This final report incorporates all the anecdotal data gathered at four Wisconsin sites -- Madison, Milwaukee, Eau Claire and Green Bay -- throughout the state of Wisconsin: from the 12th to the 16th of May 1997. Respondents represented the entire spectrum of University of Wisconsin-Extension in terms of divisions and programs.

The Diversity Profile was **not** intended as a systematic organizational development assessment. However, during the course of engaging staff in discussions of multicultural issues, institutional issues did arise that are relevant to the Profile process. We have incorporated these organizational observations and recommendations where supportive of the objectives of the Profile process.

Why people came to the focus groups

The respondents were typically candid and appeared to be willing to discuss their thoughts and feelings regarding diversity, multiculturalism and inclusiveness. In answering the question, "what motivated you to participate in the focus group process?" employees' responses fell in three categories: those who were curious and interested; those who came because they were invited, asked, or told to attend; and those who were concerned with the state of affairs regarding diversity within UWEX. All three themes were well represented among employees of color and white employees of both genders, and across Divisions and Programs.

Examples of people's responses to the invitation to participate were:

"I was invited by the Chancellor...when the Chancellor calls you, you respond."

"I was urged by my mentor."

"I hope that this will make a difference in the policies and procedures that keep people of color segregated."

"I am aware that changes are inevitable, and [I] want to understand changes."

"[It's a] great opportunity to say things."

"[I'm] concerned with the issue of diversity.....it needs improvement....[I] see areas where University needs to do something."

"I am concerned about the climate, in particular when we are wanting people of color here and then have processes that make them leave."

B. Design of the Diversity Profile Process

During the profiling process we sought to identify and articulate the issues and concerns of significance to an assessment of Extension's climate for diversity and inclusiveness. We were looking for how employees define multiculturalism and cultural diversity. We paid attention to what participants said they see as the successes and the challenges in dealing with these issues. We inquired about areas for improvement in developing a more

effective multicultural environment for all who work at the University of Wisconsin-Extension.

The entire Diversity Profile Process - - the individual interviews, focus groups, the report and recommendations - - are based upon these four levels of analysis: personal, interpersonal, institutional and cultural. It is extremely critical that UW-Extension leadership have a good working knowledge of these concepts in order to bring about positive changes. Briefly, these levels are summarized below:

Personal

What are the reported attitudes, beliefs, values, and feelings about various aspects of multiculturalism and inclusiveness? Of these, which ones support the desired goals, and which ones serve as barriers?

Interpersonal

How are faculty, staff, students and other stakeholders behaving toward each other on a variety of dimensions? How do different groups or members experience the cultural climate of the University of Wisconsin-Extension? What behaviors maintain or enhance a multicultural environment and which create or reinforce barriers?

Institutional

What are the ways that the institution conducts business? How do both formal and informal policies, practices and organizational structures of the University of Wisconsin-Extension support a multicultural mission?

Cultural

What are the norms, customs (ways of being successful, right and appropriate) implicitly endorsed at UW-Extension? How are these working and/or not working for various members of the community?

These levels of analysis were reflected in the questions that were asked of all of the participants. The questions were:

What aspect(s) of multiculturalism and inclusiveness work well for you?, and what aspects present you with the most challenge?

How do you experience the climate around issues of multiculturalism within your work environment?

How does the University of Wisconsin-Extension (through its policies, practices and structures) support a multicultural mission?, How might it improve in this area? Please give some examples.

How have you seen the norms, customs, traditions and ways of different cultural groups encouraged and supported by the University of Wisconsin-Extension?

C. DESIGN OF THE ASSESSMENT REPORT

The assessment report summarizes the outcomes of the focus group meetings and the individual interviews, and contains recommendations and strategies for action to be taken into account in future planning. By using a consistent framework to gather data, we are able to examine areas of consistencies and inconsistencies. Our impressions represent a pulling together of all individual comments into a series of common themes. Within each theme we have attempted to note areas of strength, as well as those areas for growth. We have included verbatim comments in the body of this report rather than as an appendix, since the assessment is driven by participants' thoughts and reactions, and the intent of a multicultural discourse is to bring forth voices historically under-represented. The quotes reported in this document are representative of the opinions stated in all of the focus group discussions.

Specific differences for particular segments of the institution are noted when applicable. Recommendations for possible organizational and educational initiatives within UWEX complete this report.

III. ASSESSMENT OF THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

A. Overview

UWEX has important strengths on which to base future actions. These include highly caring personnel, an influx of new ideas and possibilities with new members of the leadership team and new employees from other organizational cultures, and a long tradition of concern for exploring effective teaching and learning in adult populations.

In addition, the Vision for Diversity and the efforts of the Office of Equal Opportunity & Diversity Programs have been effective in alerting essentially everyone in the UWEX system of the importance of a diverse workforce. As a result, people are highly motivated to diversify Extension. Many staff and faculty appear to have strongly embraced a commitment to diversity.

In general, the participants seem to appreciate working for UWEX. It was our impression that the institution provides a great deal of personal security in terms of job stability and benefits. This was highlighted several times. UWEX is seen as a major employer in comparison to other work opportunities available in the respective geographic area.

Many of the people interviewed enjoyed their colleagues and work relationships in general. They perceive each other as "good human beings." This perception was localized within intra-cultural (white and people of color) groups.

"I like working here. I enjoy my job. UWEX has always treated me with the greatest caring and respect."

"I think its a good institution. There are good human beings; they want to do the right thing."

"Extension has challenged me, my assumptions."

Most people interviewed like the nature of the institution's work and its mission and goals. Some were pleased with the cultural diversity of the institution.

A large majority of employees did note concerns in several areas. These were in almost all cases offered not as indictments, but as places where UWEX can, and must, improve. It was obvious in the discussions that employees care a lot about the people they serve, and thus, about the institution that provides the services to the communities of Wisconsin. Many believe that by discussing and figuring out ways to address concerns that arise, the institution can reach new heights.

At the beginning of a change process like this, however, it is not uncommon that there will be considerable tension. Some UWEX employees do not like change, and do not think it is needed; others want change rapidly and worry that nothing will happen. Further, for many employees, in particular, employees of color, the biggest concern about expressing their views was the possibility that the institution's leaders would not hear their message.

We hope that the leaders who review the results of this assessment will offer employees the possibility of a different view of leadership by simply listening and hearing non-defensively, not with an immediate eye to either "fixing it" or trying to rationalize away the feedback. It is important to acknowledge that UW-Extension is in transition. The move away from a tax-supported culture to a culture of competitive grants and short-term funding is an important signal of that change.

The recommendations that follow include strategies for continuing to enhance these efforts to better support and respond to the needs of all employees. It is important for all UWEX employees to find ways to engage in the change process as well, even though it is not always an easy process.

We identified four areas of concern raised by employees:

- 1) Organizational and Structural Concerns
- 2) Climate for Diversity
- 3) Educational Resources
- 4) Educational Partners

In the following sections we describe each area of concern. Direct quotes are sometimes offered to capture the spirit of employee's voices. In some cases, we will offer our assessment of possible implications of the issue being addressed. In the final section of the report, we will identify specific interventions for addressing these concerns.

B. Organizational and Structural Concerns

From discussions with the Chancellor and members of the Executive Council it is clear that **a crucial overall challenge to accomplishing Extension's diversity mission is the concurrent mandate to transition the organizational culture of Extension to a new funding base, and develop the organizational structures and processes that will accomplish such a shift.** This is for many an unstable and frightening time because the shift to a new funding base necessitates pushing decision-making out and down in the organization, empowering employees at all levels to create a new organization.

Target group members (i.e. women and people of color) invariably experience organizational change differently than non-targets (i.e. white males), while non-target group members typically believe that organizational changes are of over-riding importance and much more likely to effect everyone equally. For example, most non-target group members focus most readily on organizational issues such as how the three divisions manage differently.

Some staff perceive that inconsistencies among UWEX divisions and programs too often set up tension. These inconsistencies relate to how programs and divisions are managed, how hiring is conducted, how employees are compensated, how programs are designed, and how things are communicated. The tension is experienced by many employees as creating "oppressive experiences" in how people deal with each other and as resulting from insufficient formal mechanisms for communication. The rifts and tension that are experienced lead to such consequences as secrets, dysfunctional behaviors on the part of staff, and a sense that some people do not know what others are doing.

Several Extension staff, for example, believe that there is little room for upward mobility within UWEX. They perceive that their programs, in particular Food and Nutrition, the norm is premised upon the expectation of high turnover. This is reflected in the recruitment and hiring of primarily older, women of color. Although staff of color who were interviewed saw their work as essential and meaningful it places them in the position of providing linkages between their community and the university, upon hiring they are told that:

"the jobs they do were not made for people to stick around a long time, it was never intended to be long-term employment."

Therefore, many of these staff believe that:

"the only reason there are women of color in the offices is because of grant stipulations. The only reason they have these jobs is because they don't have the degree requirement and they have to have people of color to fulfill the requirements of the grant. If there was not grant, there would be no job."

Another concern of Extension staff is the issue of employee compensation. There is a belief that "[t]his situation causes you to lose good staff", and that performance reviews are not consistent with decisions about raises. The following statements capture staff's feelings on this issue:

"Staff is not compensated fairly, people doing the same jobs but receiving different pay. [I] feel exploited."

"There is no trust in the office. The same standards should exist for everyone in the office. There is a significant pay difference and the jobs are the same. They give compensation for degrees with no experience but they don't compensate for education."

"Why don't they provide a way for you to advance and go to school to become prepared for higher level jobs?"

Thus, there is apparently no career development plan for some staff, nor staff orientation process for new employees. There is no formal staff training for employees who assume supervisory responsibilities, nor clear performance review process for administrative or professional staff.

Concern was also expressed regarding financial resources. The shift from primarily a tax-based support to competitive grants and short-term funding is rapidly changing the organizational culture in terms of funding. It appears that there will not be a return to the previous culture because the new tax dollars are not there. As these new grants get merged with established offices, a new work force must be matched with customers. This shift in personnel has had great impact on the programs internally.

Finally, concerns voiced regarding the County Boards were unanimous with regard to the Boards being perceived as problematic to Extension realizing its Vision for Diversity. Employees acknowledged that the 72 counties are a major political force, and in order to maintain the partnership, Extension has had to give up something. Thus, the final hiring authority has been given to the counties.

C. Climate for Diversity

1. Introduction

The sense of disempowerment that many staff feel is one example of the complex cultural diversity issues University of Wisconsin-Extension needs to examine. This seems to represent troubled management of race, class or status issues. The major concern voiced by these employees was the sense of being devalued and/or under-appreciated.

There was also a sense of what we describe as an "endemic discourtesy" across status lines that is par for the course for many employees. This issue is often reflective of cultural bias against lower status employees. Traditionally, most people in the United States were trained to view employees in lower status roles as having less "worth". Even when we intellectually change this, these attitudes and beliefs may still be manifested in feelings and behavior, i.e.; clerical people who have been with the institution for many years and know many "unwritten rules" are typically excluded from planning regarding organizational change.

It is also true that when people are in roles that traditionally have been defined as "less than," they tend to internalize certain beliefs that can lead to "one down" (self-effacing, overly humble) behaviors. The process of examining how such beliefs play out interpersonally by those who have been historically included, as well as by those who have been excluded, is essential on all variables (i.e., race, gender, class) that inhibit the recognition, understanding, utilization and celebration of differences.

Perceptions of comfort and differential power by race and gender were quite prevalent among those interviewed. Racism, along with gender and status were strongly articulated concerns in the area of cultural diversity. Women tended to perceive that men have more power, get more attention and are more likely to be successful in the organization. A similar dynamic is experienced by employees of color vis-à-vis white

employees. It is also the case that at present, white men are more likely than white women and women and men of color to be in jobs that offer greater authority and higher salaries.

Overall, the employees interviewed were not aware of the dynamics of internalized oppression, that is, the way in which they give their power away as people of color or women, and feel inadequate or "one down" as compared to whites and men in the organization. Examples of interpersonal monoculturalism based on age, religion and sexual orientation were also noted. The sense of discomfort and the apparent lack of understanding of the impact of these variables on interpersonal relationships is a major concern.

The following section details employees responses to the issues highlighted above. Responses have been identified by the four levels of analysis that guided the questions that were asked in this assessment.

When asked to respond to the questions of how they experienced the climate around issues of multiculturalism within their work environment, and how UWEX supports a multicultural mission, employee responses were consistent across race, gender, and job status lines. In general, employees do not believe that the UWEX Vision for Diversity has any "teeth" in it whatsoever, nor do they believe that the administration is committed to do what it takes to put the vision into action. Thus, the perception of staff is that UWEX does not truly support diversity. Furthermore, some staff who are supportive of multiculturalism find themselves at a loss in knowing how to put the Vision for Diversity into action.

"We are being told to affirm differences but we're not given the tools to deal with the conflicts, values clarification..."

"You walk the line between wanting to be effective and being true to your values - man, is that tough."

"[We] need more tools to work with [4-H] adult volunteer with being more accepting."

"There is a lot of racist, sexist jokes around the table and I don't know how to deal with it...the county on one hand and the university on the other...we need to have more training."

2. Institutional Level Climate

Staff of color in general, and many white employees hold the belief that UWEX is not committed to multiculturalism, that such discourse "is an effort to lump all groups of people together to avoid dealing with issues that are unique to any group," and that it does not have the best interests of people of color at heart.

There is a perception that the leadership at UWEX is not truly committed to the Vision for Diversity. The fact that the Interim Chancellor will not be in that position long-term

fuels the perception that no substantive changes will occur within the organization. A representative collection of comments:

"Focus groups are extremely helpful...bring people together - however, the report goes to the powers to be who do not want change."

"We need the encouragement of the people above. People have to walk the walk."

"If administrators do want the change - are there moneys to do it?"

People experience UWEX as hierarchical although it is not explicitly acknowledged. Decisions are seen as being made from the "top down", with employees of lower status feeling that they are not consulted, although the decisions will impact them and the consumers they serve. Staff concerns around this issue seemed to arise from some sense that leadership communicates a more participatory style of management than in fact exists. Several statements summarize employees' sentiments on the issue of diversity at the institutional level:

"Extension needs to critically examine itself, but getting at the truth will be a challenge...people in Extension have a great fear about their own racism and they are afraid to look at their own racism overcome the fear of seeing/confronting their own racism....until they do, they will be unable to effectively address this problem."

"Self-critical analysis is never part of the program. The institution needs to look at itself in terms of what it is doing...UWEX has never done any serious self-analysis. They need to do a genuine self-analysis to assess whether they are who they say they are."

"There are good people in extension; very good people.. I don't want to make it sound like it [all negative]...they can do more to push this process along...put money where your mouth is."

"The discussion is about...the university and it's closed. The university needs to open up. For example, this facility is \$50.00 a day [UW-Milwaukee Continuing Extension Facility]...it is too expensive for the types of programs I run. Co-op for example is trying to change...people are hostile to that...to the attempts to change...The Urban Initiative...involves working in the inner city...people of color; and politicians and traditional stakeholders don't like the change...they question, why do this?...Co-op is agriculture based."

"...the term diversity is not well defined. I think some think that if we have X # of women, blacks that it solves the problem of diversity. Issues go way beyond race and gender: class, sexual orientation, disability, kids, education, etc."

"[T]he entire discussion about diversity is a joke! They [administration] need to put their resources and money behind making actual changes....there is nothing to back it up. No money to support [it], no financial resources are committed."

"If they [the administration] want to attach value to their words, [they must] actively seek to populate UWEX with more people of color; more ethnically...not for the purpose of quota or self-determining statistical purposes [but] to proactively make UWEX a true diverse organization."

"I don't see the diversity up on the Co-op Extension floor."

"A lot of people give a lot of good lip service, do not take the word to heart and do not practice it, diversity is compartmentalized."

Recruitment and retention were other key institutional issues that consistently came up during the focus groups and the individual interviews. It was acknowledged that the organization must focus more resources - time, personnel and, most importantly, money - in order to truly impact this area. For retention, the majority of the employees expressed serious concerns regarding the tenure process as it applies to faculty and staff of color. The present tenure process is perceived as unfair, and thus, an obstacle to building a truly diverse organization at UWEX. The following comments are representative of both white and employees of color's responses.

"The whole issue of the tenure process - comes out of a scholastic, European male tradition."

"Extension wants to be diverse, but it is not there. The Faculty tenure situation is a hurdle."

"[I]n Co-op Extension...tenure system in the context of academic classroom, but their work is not there."

"In general, it is a very hostile environment; very competitive environment...very hostile toward Black faculty...Diversity is meaningless in this hostile environment when the issue is tenure...Unless the discussion [about diversity] is going to lead to helping African Americans stay here, it is meaningless."

"Diversity issue should be about access, not about having people like you."

"The Black agents get twice as much work..showcased...compete in a tenure process that's hard and doesn't have time to prepare."

"I don't want to see people given tenure just because of their ethnicity or race...there's a way to reward quality work in diverse settings."

"Regarding diversity?...there is none. Every opportunity we have had to place people of color in positions of power, UWEX has not done so. It seems that they [administration] put family and friends in the positions..."

"...some people in Cooperative Extension with a Bachelor's degree get more money [than staff of color with higher degrees]...I always believed that the degrees counted for something. It is a constant struggle to have to always sell yourself to people to get an opportunity."

In terms of how the processes of recruitment, retention and compensation interact with the Vision for Diversity, additional sentiment is that:

"There is no support of Vision for Diversity. It does not represent what we are all about right now. The word is used too lightly. There is no action. People are selected based upon whom they know. They do not post positions that need to be posted. No one says or does anything."

"Nepotism...that this university endorses nepotism is unacceptable, you can't make legitimate complaints about a problem because you might have to complain to someone who's related to the person you have a complaint about."

"The hiring business is as usual. They hire people they know. People were put in Specialist positions and they were hired without a Ph.D., but they make it seem that you have to have one to be a State Specialist."

"There are not minority State Specialists as far as I know...there are pay inequities...they play games with the salaries and how [people] are rewarded."

"We're trying to do the right thing. Why can't we just hire qualified people and bring them into the system. We are not that diverse [for] an academic institution."

3. Cultural Level Climate

There were several examples that addressed the issue of diversity at the cultural level, some of the statements highlighted the continued sense that things at UWEX are done in a way that is historical and considered acceptable, although it is not written down as an institutional practice. There is also evidence that what is celebrated or considered right, important or beautiful is still seen through a monocultural lens. In other words, "this is just the way things are":

"[I]n Co-op, longevity dictates level of respect and level of inclusion and competence, [the division] has a lot of lifers...some people who have been here a long time like it just the way it is."

"The climate in Madison is anti-multiculturalism, period. Just look at its make-up and you can see it. People are very cordial but business continues as usual. You can give suggestions, but they [whites] don't listen or respond. They do not recognize the achievement of others accomplishing things they have not been able to do."

"Extension programs...tendency to be light years behind...programs led by women faculty equal 'fluff'; men's agricultural program is 'real' program...the environment is stifling."

"For holidays and other days of recognition...need to do more to recognize the cultural celebrations of other groups."

"...Sometimes people view cultural artifacts and food as their work on the area of diversity and even then they don't understand that the entire issue is very complex."

"Where I work there is a hierarchy of white males - over 55 - they say things that are inappropriate."

4. Interpersonal Level Climate

Employees, particularly women, were candid in expressing what it is like for them, at the interpersonal level, to deal with diversity on a day to day basis. There was consensus that Nutrition Educators are the most diverse employee group, and work with the most diverse clientele; however, the feeling is that they are never asked for their thoughts and opinions. This is experienced as insulting by the group. Their comments reflected issues of diversity, not only based on race and gender, but also on class, age and sexual orientation.

a. Age

"I think age plays a big role. Once I hit 50 I can feel that...'she's not going to be around long'...age and being female... a no answer, they don't have time; put down - shallow from men."

"It's hard just being heard...age may be a problem. It seems if [I] try to make a change, it's not good enough. [I] work to change the curriculum to be culturally and age relevant...supervisors try to force [the] use of curriculum developed a long time ago...people in the office 'look down' on [us] because of [our] ages [young women in their 20's]."

b. Class:

"Retention, in general, is a problem. It seems to be revolving door where I work. There are no attempts to make people comfortable at work. They should at least talk to you when you are doing something good...not only when you are doing something wrong. There is no communication from the top down."

"You have managers not interested in whether an employee is comfortable."

"What I see in Co-op Extension is classism between faculty and academic staff."

"Some people say I am not as dedicated because [I] don't have a full time position."

"Part-time people are devalued...salary increases denied because people are seen as less dedicated...undervalued."

"The policy says 'we serve everyone'...we do not; we serve people who can afford it. I think we are kidding ourselves...low-income people will be left out."

"People are careful around me...that can work both ways...immediate office environment very amenable; internal class issues I've picked up among clerical; work sharing, hierarchy among upper level support staff."

c. Gender:

"In my building there's a degree of sexism - blatant;...example...the boy's club... top administration...middle age white men."

"...despite the fact that [my] job is the same and is just as important;...women are treated less than in the group... men do not value [women's] contributions, despite [women's] work in technical areas...[m]en are paid deference to more and [I] am not respected because of my age."

"When we are in a meeting the people who are listened to are men...we women are not listened to."

"I work with men, hang out, get along well and a middle age white male wonders what you are doing here."

"In a department with more women than men, we still have traditional hierarchies that men are valued more, paid more."

"It is tough to address your professional needs as well as parental and spousal needs."

d. Race:

"People know enough not to say the racial epithets - but things do go on."

"We [people of color] are treated as though we are not able to handle information about large occurrences in UWEX. Maybe we are just little peons but we can handle information, and should be informed about what is going on."

"Sometimes people of color have to justify [our] existence...I have had white colleagues tell me that it is 'shocking' that I am here."

"[At the] administrative level there is racism and sexism; for example, we were going to order lunch - Chinese [food] - an administrator said 'I don't feel like eating dog today & I said [I] didn't appreciate it'."

"With Co-op program...have been struggling with diversity applicants, every time have had minority in program we lose 'em."

"It's hard...being a person of color; I know that I have to work twice as hard to be good. I know that if I make a mistake that it will be viewed as representing the entire group to which you belong. In one sense, it is good that they hired you because you are a minority, you have the opportunity to get in."

"One person told me that all Asians look alike although I have not experienced racial epithets at work."

e. Sexual Orientation:

"I don't want to send someone who is gay to lead a camp for children."

"We ought to be able to draw the line [re: gay role models]."

5. Personal Level Climate

Four types or categories of attitudes and beliefs appear to be woven through the topics discussed. When these attitudes and beliefs are expressed interpersonally, through speech and behavior, they become part of the organization's invisible norms..." These four personal level themes are given here to help illuminate the difficulties in pursuing institutional initiatives in pursuit of the Diversity Vision.

a. The historic lack of contact with people and dynamics of other cultures.

A generous amount of time and discussion was spent in many discussion groups comprised of native mid-western participants explaining or revealing how little knowledge they had growing up, about people from other cultures different from their own. This may account for the overwhelming emphasis amongst UWEX employees on the numbers aspect of diversity. Discussions of how to create a multicultural environment even with the diversity that does exist at UWEX seemed relatively few and poorly understood.

b. The introjection of blame, by self or others, into the discourse.

Probably the most significant challenge to Extension's success in pursuing its diversity mission is one shared by most organizations today: the unconscious, but persistent, interjection of blame into the discourse. In almost any attempt to explain the dynamics of modern multicultural communications it is necessary to cultivate a deeper understanding of the historical forces that continue to operate on, and overwhelm, our current attempts to improve our environments.

However, at even the first mention of such necessary terms as oppression, racism, sexism or privilege, the great majority of historically-advantaged (non-target) Americans experience a sense of blame, and frequently criticize the people or the process that raised the subject. Specifically, within UW-Extension this common phenomenon expresses itself as confusion and resistance to a definition of diversity that recognizes the historical -isms. In our experience it is a

difficult but necessary first step to recognize and work through this initial discomfort.

We have found that the very people we wish to bring in to diversify our organization deeply appreciate this context and platform for dialogue and training, unless they are fearful that the non-target group members will not be able or willing to tolerate their own discomfort during this phase. If target group members, (i.e., people of color or women) do not believe non-targets can accept and handle this discomfort, then they will themselves deny that the -isms remain relevant today. We distinctly see this dynamic as expressed by both non-target and target group members in Extension and, again, it represents a sensitive gateway to all other interventions.

Concerns about the diversity profiling process itself provided an example of this dynamic. A number of people echoed the sentiment that:

"We are afraid our problems will be exposed."

c. A strong preference to focus on similarities and deny the existence of differences.

As you read the quotes that are verbatim comment of participants, you will be able to identify examples of this third theme.

d. Profound disagreement on the significance of the impact of differences.

UWEX personnel recognize that disagreements exist about the political, social, psychological and historical impact of the -isms through such comments as:

"We will be surprised by the outcomes, not ready to hear the depth of the issues."

"...we won't be surprised by the outcomes...that we won't learn anything we don't already know, and this will be a waste of time."

"We won't be able to quickly 'fix' the issues that surface."

"These will be vague measurements, hard to define outcomes."

"apprehension that we won't know how to proceed in response to the findings....that the Executive Council won't believe the results; we won't be trying anything new to address the issues."

Other comments that illustrate how employees experience the climate for multiculturalism at the personal level, include:

"I really don't know how effective a person of color can be in Northern Wisconsin. It might not be to their advantage..."

"I think the climate [for diversity] is sort of lukewarm. Co-workers of mine feel that it's something that needs to be confronted."

"When it comes to discrimination, racism and ignorance, it just festers when you do that (sweep it under rug); I rather deal with somebody who is somewhat prejudiced and you know where they are coming from...then someone who when you walk out says and talks about you."

"[To] truly have a diverse workplace and create a diverse environment, people need to relearn...diversity should be an adjective - not a noun."

"Diversity makes your life more interesting...exposure, getting to know them on an individual basis - the humanity of that."

"[it's] not possible to separate the personal from the work environment...boiling everything down to just race I find it very disturbing."

"We need to go beyond tolerance to appreciation; to cultural appreciation"

"I'd like to see more of it. We would benefit from it, hearing from other experiences."

"I think a big part is just awareness - I think the work place would be better because everyone would learn from it."

"I don't think that I was hired because I'm a minority."

"I think sometime it gets hard...as a person of color I have to work harder and more than anyone else."

"I don't think of myself as a minority, I've not come across any barriers that I've noticed."

"What we're dealing with here is the issue of fear...how much does these things threaten my way of life, my values?...I feel my values are shared by 95% of the people. Values are not just personal, they are also cultural and political."

"I start getting real nervous when I'm told that I have to start affirming."

"The thing that I don't like about diversity is that I'm forced to do something that leads to reverse discrimination...to what point do I have to suck it in or compromise my values to be diverse?"

D. EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Numerous employees working in Extension addressed the issue of the lack of cultural and language appropriate materials that are needed in order to deliver effective service to their clients. The following statement illustrates the experiences that employees are having as a result of the absence of these needed materials.

"We have to go to jobs and teach nutrition education and it's written in a certain way. I tried to explain [to supervisors] that black people need things done a certain way. Some clients need things prepared in a different way...these clients may have never worked, been on welfare, have lost vision and hope..."

There was consensus that the employees feel hampered by the way the curriculum is written, that the curriculum is culturally inappropriate and meaningless to the audience. Thus, the curriculum is not effective because it is not written in the language and manner that the clients understand.

There is a belief that *"feedback about improving is not viewed as legitimate and is discounted."* For those employees that take the initiative to create and provide the needed educational resources, there is a lack of recognition and support. The person who develops the idea is asked for the information, yet it is others, namely white co-workers who end up taking the credit.

Consistently, nutrition educators who work with non-English speaking clients shared instances where they have had to translate the materials themselves, on their own time and without additional remuneration. When asked to do translations, Spanish speaking employees feel concerned that they are expected to do it, however:

"...people don't understand the translation process. They don't understand that it is not simply the language but also the culture..."

Some workers are asked to teach classes where they are not familiar with the language of the majority of their clients. One worker stated that she does not *"speak Spanish, so I have to find materials in both English and Spanish."*

For staff that work in the prisons, they have found themselves having to change the materials in order to be effective in their teaching. Although they acknowledge that their supervisors object to these changes, the educators feel that the changes need to be made to meet the needs of the clients.

The concerns highlight the commitment that the staff have for their clients. Most all agree that there is too much duplication of effort in translation, that the clients are being cheated because there is not a uniform system where all the necessary materials are translated. An example of this is where one educator was given the support necessary in terms of time at work to do the translation, in addition to a computer program that assists with this effort, while another educator had to translate enrollment forms, flip charts, and all the materials about how to eat properly and prepare food without the same support. Thus, the latter educator feels frustrated that she is being asked to do

something that she was not hired to do, and also is not being given the time to do the work.

Although the educators are aware that this is not in their job descriptions, many feel afraid to challenge the work assignments. Some admit that they do not mind translating. What does not feel right is that they are not paid for this additional expertise and work, and the approach that the supervisors take with them is one of expecting them to do it just because they are bilingual.

Concerns about culturally appropriate educational resources, including personnel, were not limited to Spanish-speaking, Hmong, or African American communities. The resources that are presently available to the Native American communities are also inadequate, both in terms of materials and staffing. Like the call to systematize a process for creating culturally appropriate materials, there is also a need for UWEX to institutionalize those programs that are working well.

"The university needs to spend sometime in human resources and financial resources to put together something that is usable for non-traditional extension audience."

"We don't have a lot of resources in the Indian community to draw from...positions are not being filled."

"A lot of the resources the university have are not geared for us [Native Americans]."

"We have this canned program on the shelf and use it over and over...with all the communities...that doesn't work."

"I've seen progress, it's not enough..1 full-time extension agent on each reservation or Indian community [is needed]...that model is good. Need someone who has insight into the community and relationships...trust and respect....have to have respect for them [Indians] and their spirituality. [The attitude from extension is] 'we are here to change you from being Indian into what we want you to be to make it easy for us!'"

"...still not getting the benefits of resources. We need strategies, expertise that affects Indian communities and tribal government."

"When there's a good working relationship is always an individual behind it, not the institution. When the person leaves, that great program goes away. When the person gets to meet the people and build those relationships, the program leaves with them."

E. EDUCATIONAL PARTNERS

Many instances were cited where County Boards were not being held accountable for supporting the diversity effort. Although training has taken place with county supervisors, employees perceive that the attitude on the part of UWEX is that:

"At the county level we have so many people to respond to...people have to get involved."

"We don't want to get supervisors mad because we don't want to get in trouble with our jobs."

In describing what is expected of Extension employees in terms of dealing with diversity vis-à-vis the county, the frustration experienced by staff is evident:

"The staff in our county, when the word 'diversity' comes up people roll their eyes. My sense is that [for them] if we put up with this [diversity] long enough then maybe it will go away."

"The climate for diversity on campus is good; in the community is bad, people in the community resisting to change."

"The action speaks louder than words, this is a total waste of time, this is not this problem, Co-op Extension is obsessed with issue of diversity. I'm tired of this...I don't want to deal with this in the county."

The staff pointed out their need for support from UWEX on this issue. They want to know "how to correct supervisors who appear to be racist; get more support in these situations." They do not see the administration taking an active role, yet their perception is that they are expected to challenge the County Boards' behavior on their own.

"Administration says we need to do more [re: diversity], but the people at the county level are not being talked to."

"At the county level the hiring authority is not with Extension, at county level there is no sympathy, no cooperation."

"I think there's a big job to do to educate local officials."

The reality of the present situation does not make it any easier. There is no denying the power of the County Boards. As one administrator graphically depicted it:

"County Board...a political force, [the] 72 counties united,...it is protected at all cost; it is the jewel; needs nourishment, attention to keep it going; [it's] a partnership... you have to give up something ...final hiring authority we give to the county."

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear that UWEX is committed not only to a Vision for Diversity, but also to a vision of "serving Wisconsin people with educational programs where they live and work." We believe that these visions can best be realized by integrating both visions within the organization, by serving the educational needs of Wisconsin's people in a UWEX climate that honors differences. We believe, as do many of the staff we interviewed, that this work on the "internal environment will also provide important lessons on how to enhance effectiveness in the "external environment."

To accomplish both visions it is necessary to structure interventions ultimately at each of four levels: Personal, Interpersonal, Institutional, and Cultural. In the notes that follow we understand Institutional/Cultural change to be largely, though not solely, based on consultation to organizational decision-makers about structure, planning, and leadership process. Interpersonal level changes are brought about largely by training and education, especially when the training environment is safe and respectful enough to allow people the option to make changes at the Personal level. Accordingly, we offer recommendations in four categories:

**General/Contextual
Organizational/Structural
Managerial/Interpersonal, and
Training/Educational**

Cultural issues are addressed in each category and recommendations are based on feedback from the Extension focus groups. The recommendations include the training and consultation that we think UWEX personnel need to effectively implement many of the other recommendations. At the same time, there are several steps that can be taken independently of such training.

A. GENERAL CONTEXTUAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The overarching challenge now confronting Extension is how to transition to a new culture for the organization, due to such factors as the shift to a new funding base, an increasingly diverse customer population and the need for significantly increased resourcefulness on the part of UWEX staff. The critical need in such an environment is to learn at increasing rates, and to learn how to accomplish several objectives with one intervention. Extension can address these multiple concerns with a series of integrated, interlocking interventions:

1. Integrate the various training needs to accomplish multiple objectives simultaneously.

It is our judgment that this profiling process and recommendations will be valuable in direct proportion to UWEX leadership's ability to integrate implementation with other efforts in support of Extension culture change. In the training/educational section below we outline key concepts which, when defined, will enable Extension employees to acquire a common effective language and skills to attain the objectives within the UWEX vision. The goal of these recommended educational interventions is the creation of a **Learning Organization** within Extension. It is our experience that UWEX can address these multiple concerns with a series of integrated, interlocking interventions to simultaneously integrate multicultural awareness with the skills and perspectives required to steward organizational culture change and model more of a business/managerial approach to the organization. (As an example, training might include how to supervise new hires who are accustomed to an hourly, time-clock style of management in a culture that now requires more entrepreneurial, self-directed competencies.)

2. Recognize that UWEX, in the absence of a rich endowment available to other Universities, must compete for new, diverse faculty and staff by creating a vigorously welcoming multicultural climate.

Such a strategy would be more successful over the long term than throwing money at prospects.

3. Recognize the need to adopt some time-limited strategies to get over the "chicken-and-egg" dilemma of needing more diverse faculty/staff to recruit new diverse faculty/staff.

It is important to recognize the "attractor" effect that a vibrant multicultural community can have in efforts to increase diversity, especially in the face of more lucrative private corporate opportunities.

B. ORGANIZATIONAL AND STRUCTURAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to be considered and enacted at the institutional level by UWEX leadership:

1. First the Executive Council, and then each division's leadership team should engage in planning retreats that would help clarify the philosophy and the goals and objectives to carry Extension through the next two years. Given the transitional environment, it would be easy to plan to "wait and see," but staff need, especially now during this ambiguous period, to engage in dialogue about how they will align their efforts with Extension priorities.
2. Consider restructuring the Board of Visitors to include both diversity leadership and organizational development expertise, in addition to advocacy roles.
3. Define a two year Human Resource development plan.
4. Integrate a managing for diversity training component with other professional development as noted above and below.
5. Align the employees' Performance/Development Reviews and Incentive/Reward Systems with Multicultural Objectives
6. Create an Academic Staff-Faculty Relations team to recommend improvements
7. Create formal mechanisms to enhance communication across Extension.
8. Publish a clarification of the role of the EEO office to align expectations; i.e., EEO presently is not designed to train and facilitate Extension-wide success in generating applicant pools and assisting in the hiring process.
9. Receive expert consultation for hiring authorities on the creation of the criteria for new staff searches so that potentially successful applicants are not screened out a priori; this requires a "creation of a pipeline" mentality, and is not served well with a "we only hire the best" philosophy.
10. Streamline the compliance process for locating and hiring new employees.

This process should include a facilitated retreat. The goals of this would be to:

- Clarify functions
- Define current processes and make indicated changes
- Define relationship between different functions, i.e. Chancellor's Office, EEO/AA, EAP, Human Resources
- Establish accountability
- Set up processes for communication, recognition and problem solving
- Identify resource needs

C. MANAGERIAL/INTERPERSONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to managers and supervisors regarding local, interpersonal and group interventions within their purview:

1. Many staff need more opportunity to simply talk about their responses to various issues that arise.
2. Bilingual staff in Food and Nutrition have ideas for how to collaborate and create culturally and linguistically appropriate educational materials. It is important to find a process for hearing and implementing these ideas.
3. Find ways to increase awareness of the diversity skills many employees bring to UWEX; invest more in younger staff and staff of color.
4. Increase dialogue between managers and support staff. Increase managers' skill in providing recognition and appreciation to staff.
5. Involve county boards' staff more frequently with Extension staff, and in more informal ways so they can get to know each other better.
6. Increase communication regarding the roles of program coordinators and assistants in Food and Nutrition programs.
7. Find ways to increase awareness of the diversity skills that many staff bring to the workplace; in particular, accept leadership from staff who are newer to Extension and bring training and experience from other organizations
8. Increased dialogue regarding the impact of gender and race differences between employees and management. Especially women with male managers/supervisors.

D. TRAINING and EDUCATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

UW Extension is confronting many of the same challenges other U.S. organizations have been struggling with over the past 10 years. The nature of work, the needs and aspirations of employees, and the composition of the workforce are all changing. It is unrealistic to expect any manager or supervisor to automatically know how to handle all of this change. Similarly, non-managers are being asked to be empowered, self-motivated initiators instead of compliant workers who basically do what they are told. The creation of empowered teams means that all employees have to learn new interpersonal and organizational skills. (e.g., administration of basic HR management and management of differences across race, gender, and other groups.) It is our sense that UWEX could enhance its organizational effectiveness by investing in the training and education endeavors outlined below.

1. UWEX Human Resources Team

Human resource managers need assistance to restructure their organization so that employees can more effectively identify and obtain what they need to solve problems as they arise. We refer here to a selected group of organizational leaders who work with the staff of Human Resources to clarify, monitor and facilitate effective human resource management. This group can, for example, analyze existing processes to identify what is working and what is not for at least the following systems:

- recruitment and selection
- performance reviews
- career development
- reward and incentive systems
- grievance resolution
- workload
- crisis management

The HR Team needs to examine these and related systems from a multicultural perspective, taking into account a variety of issues in human resource management, e.g., employee satisfaction, awareness of self and others, identifying and utilizing employees' special talents and skills, and listening and counseling skills.

2. Manager/Supervisory Training

Key needs for UWEX include the following:

a. **Increase understanding by managers and supervisors of what their role is in the changing US work environment.**

Given the increased diversity of workers, it is crucial that organizations do not continue to just do business as usual. For example, the notion of hiring older, women of color and not expecting them to want to stay long may be foreign to this population of employees who are looking for professional and personal growth, career stability and job security. It is important that the leadership at UWEX understand the differences in their potential and present employees, and think through what is the best way to look for new employees in this changing climate. If enhancing the long term diversity and stability of the organization is a major goal, some current strategies will need to be changed.

b. **Provide skill-building opportunities for managers and supervisors in active listening, delegating and empowering, and understanding the subtleties of the impacts of class, race, gender and other differences on communication and supervision.**

Issues 1 and 2 above could be addressed through development and implementation of an ongoing course for managers. For example, a course that teaches managers how to be 'influencing managers' in a diverse workforce and one that empowers employees to take more responsibility for the overall effectiveness of the organization. Such education can also enhance employee

and management understanding of what multiculturalism is and how to manage effectively in a multicultural environment.

Suggested topics in such an educational effort might include:

- The role of the manager in a changing society
- The use of feedback in supervisory relationships
- Hierarchical systems: Understanding power in relationships
- Understanding the dynamics of race and gender
- The process of performance review

3. Professional Development Across Job Categories

New professional development courses should be offered to all levels of employees and staff to both empower employees and increase skills in the service of multicultural and organizational change objectives. Suggested topics include:

- Creating Effective Work Teams
- Understanding the Dynamics of Oppression and Internalized Oppression
- Enhancing Communication Skills:
 - Cross-Cultural Communication
 - Conflict Resolution
 - Giving and Receiving Feedback
- Empowering Leaders and Followers

V. CONCLUSION

It is our sense that the University of Wisconsin-Extension can take several steps to enhance the multicultural climate for its employees. These steps will build on existing organizational strengths and help foster a culture for the 21st century that takes into account both the changing needs of diverse employees and the potential of the institution to be a Learning Organization that develops its capacity to teach itself.

Articulation of Vision for Diversity and undertaking this Diversity Profile are positive first steps. The on-going challenges are to integrate the concepts of diversity and multiculturalisms into strategic discussions and planning for the 21st Century. Simultaneously, UW-Extension leadership must strive to be open to the voices and the messages and engage in two-way communication with employees, throughout the institution to strategically plan its forward movement.