**Cultural Competence**

**Narrative Report**

Cultural competence, according to Cross et al (1989), is the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services, thereby producing better outcomes. The goal of cultural competence is to provide experiences embedded in curricular and extracurricular activities at both the local and international level. These activities should be inclusive of students, staff, and faculty and should recognize the holistic and developmental nature of cultural competence. This goal is critical to the mission of the college which includes providing quality educational experiences supported by technology in a student-centered environment. Achieving this goal will require SUNY Cobleskill to examine and, where appropriate, modify existing curricular/extracurricular cultural offerings as well as identify and design new and dynamic offerings across programs.

From the Cobleskill Creed comes the following:

Embrace and respect diversity and equality:

* I will accept and learn from others who are different from me
* I will participate in multicultural experiences and diversity workshops and encourage participation by others

The College has already included cultural competence language in its creed. The institution must now examine to what extent competence is being achieved and what more needs to be done. The college must investigate what programs/initiatives/strategies other campuses are engaging in to meet the cultural competence required for student success. One such campus is Middlebury College in Vermont with an international focus and a mission statement that reflects the importance of cultural competence through programming:

**Middlebury College Mission Statement**

At Middlebury College we challenge students to participate fully in a vibrant and diverse academic community. The College's Vermont location offers an inspirational setting for learning and reflection, reinforcing our commitment to integrating environmental stewardship into both our curriculum and our practices on campus. Yet the College also reaches far beyond the Green Mountains, offering a rich array of undergraduate and graduate programs that connect our community to other places, countries, and cultures. We strive to engage students' capacity for rigorous analysis and independent thought within a wide range of disciplines and endeavors, and to cultivate the intellectual, creative, physical, ethical, and social qualities essential for leadership in a rapidly changing global community. Through the pursuit of knowledge unconstrained by national or disciplinary boundaries, students who come to Middlebury learn to engage the world.

**Outcome 1:** Develop new and enhance existing curricula that integrates a variety of congruent behaviors and attitudes.

**Introduction:** The campus needs to createan environment where cultural differences are recognized and wherestudents and faculty understand how to behave appropriately in cross-cultural situations.

**Strategy 1:** Investigate ways to embed cultural opportunities into program/course offerings.

Measurement:  Line added to new course/programs forms to allow for cultural opportunities. List of program and course cultural opportunities added.

**Strategy 2:** Continue to support and develop opportunities for non-traditional students to be successful within their chosen programs.
Measurement:  Success rates of non-traditional students.

**Strategy 3:**  Continue to support and develop international programs and opportunities.
Measurement:  Increase in the number of and participation in international programs and opportunities.

**Strategy 4:** Incorporate faculty cultural experiences and projects (e.g., professional development) into curricula.
Measurement:  List ways experiences and projects were incorporated.

**Strategy 5:** Address cultural competence in the First Year Experience initiative.
Measurement:  Cultural competence is included in the First Year Experience initiative.

**Strategy 6:** Foster cross-cultural communication in courses by integrating technological applications (ex. social networking, course management systems).
Measurement:  List of cross-cultural technological applications.

**Outcome 2:** Provide extracurricular activities that enrich and extend student experiences at local and global levels.

**Introduction:** Student retention, success and satisfaction have been associated with the quality of educational experience such as international exchange and student involvement with clubs and organizations.

**Strategy 1:**  Increase opportunities for student international exchange and travel.
Measurement:  List of student international exchange and travel opportunities.

**Strategy 2:** Increase off-campus activities and involvement through businesses and community service initiatives.
Measurement:  List of activities and participation rate in off-campus activities.

 **Strategy 3:** Increase club and student organization involvement and travel, both locally and internationally.
Measurement:  Inventory of club and student organizations regarding local and international travel and involvement.

**Outcome 3:** Diversify student, staff, and faculty populations through employment, recruitment, and exchange opportunities.

**Strategy 1:** Develop and implement a plan to enhance the diversity of faculty and students.
Measurement:  Plan developed and implemented.

**DEFINITION OF TERMS**

The seminal work of Cross et al in 1989 offered a definition of cultural competence that established a solid foundation for the field. The definition has been widely adapted and modified during the past 15 years. However, the core concepts and principles espoused in this framework remain constant as they are viewed as universally applicable across multiple systems.

A number of definitions and descriptions of cultural competence were reviewed to compile the selected list. The following definitions of are highlighted because they represent or are based on original and exemplary work, and because of their potential impact to the field of health and human services.

Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals in enabling that system, agency, or those professions to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.

Culture: An integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting, roles, relationships, and expected behaviors of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group; the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations; is dynamic in nature.

Cultural awareness: Being cognizant, observant, and conscious of similarities and differences among cultural groups.

Cultural sensitivity: Understanding the needs and emotions of your own culture and the culture of others. Cultural Competence: There is no one definition of cultural competence. Definitions of cultural competence have evolved from diverse perspectives, interests, and needs and are incorporated in state legislation, in Federal statutes and programs, in private sector organizations, and in academic settings.

**Citations:**

Cross et al, 1989. Retrieved from the Internet April 9, 2010:
<http://www.nccccurricula.info/culturalcompetence.html>

Middlebury College Mission Statement. Retrieved from the Internet April 12, 2010:

<http://www.middlebury.edu/about/handbook/general/mission_statement>