MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 15, 2019

TO: Dr. Joanne Smith
   Vice President for Student Affairs

FROM: Dr. Gene Bourgeois
       Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

SUBJ: SR 13 Resolution Supporting the Inclusion of a Diversity Component within University Seminar Class

University Seminar (US 1100) is at its heart a transition course, aimed at assisting students in making a smooth transition to Texas State University by connecting them to the resources, opportunities, and people who will help them accomplish their academic and career goals. The US 1100 Faculty Mentoring Group (FMG), responsible for the US 1100 curriculum, examined the curriculum two years ago, reframing the course content to fall under three umbrella topics:

1. Developing Purpose and Defining Success
2. Developing Skills and Relationships for Success
3. Integrating into Community

The FMG designated required topics* under each umbrella category. Faculty may choose other content in each category but must cover the required topics.

1. Developing Purpose and Defining Success
   a. Common Experience and Common Reading*
   b. Career Exploration Assignments*
2. Developing Skills and Relationships for Success
   a. Time Management and Study Skills*
   b. Understanding and Appreciating Diversity*
3. Integrating into Community
   a. Faculty member may choose which item to include*

Understanding and appreciating diversity is a required topic for all US 1100 faculty. The topic is covered in a variety of ways, either in one particular lesson or lessons, woven throughout the course content, or, most frequently, a combination of the two. One vehicle used by most faculty to integrate the topic of understanding and appreciating diversity into the course is the Common Experience/Common Reading, which are also required topics in the curriculum.
University Seminar is closely linked to the Common Experience/Common Reading, and each entering PACE student is provided a free copy of the Common Reading book at New Student Orientation. In addition, every student taking US 1100 is required to attend at least one Common Experience event. In concert, these two longstanding components of US 1100 provide the opportunity to explore a wealth of topics from a diversity perspective.

The past five years’ Common Experience themes and Common Reading books have powered “multiple, sustained conversations in a sea of ideas” in US 1100, many through readily apparent lenses of diversity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014-2015</th>
<th>Exploring Democracy’s Promise: From Segregation to Integration</th>
<th>Coming of Age in Mississippi by Anne Moody</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>Bridged Through Stories: Shared Heritage of the United States and Mexico, an Homage to Dr. Tomás Rivera</td>
<td>...y no se lo tragó la tierra ... And the Earth Did Not Devour Him by Dr. Tomás Rivera, English Translation by Evangelina Vigil-Pitón.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>A Century of Conflict: Dialogues on the U.S. Experience of War since 1917</td>
<td>What It Is Like to Go to War by Karl Marlantes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018-2019</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>The Runaway Species: How Human Creativity Remakes the World by David Eagleman and Anthony Brandt</td>
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Each of the above themes included opportunities for students to hear and engage with speakers from diverse backgrounds on critical topics such as poverty and its consequences (Father Gregory Boyle), unjust incarceration (Anthony Graves; Bryan Stevenson), global humanitarian issues, particularly those related to armed conflict (Dr. Samantha Nutt), and education for migrant children (José Hernández). (See a complete list of previous years’ speakers, sortable by topics such as civil rights, international issues, politics, etc.) US 1100 faculty are provided a Common Reading guide each year, which includes discussion questions for the book and lesson plans to assist faculty as they develop their approach to covering each year’s new topic and book. Because the book and theme change each year, diversity content will, of necessity, change every fall. Required faculty development in May and August includes additional information to assist faculty in connecting their students to the Common Experience and Common Reading.

In addition to the Common Experience and Common Reading as vehicles for discussion on diversity, faculty frequently include other lessons related to diversity in its many forms. US 1100 faculty have access to a TRACS site with resources including lesson plans for diversity learning. Lesson plans and activities include cultural identity, power and privilege scenarios and checklists, and understanding prejudice.

As noted in the faculty manual, “Our aim through US 1100 is not to focus on diversity solely as the recognition and appreciation of race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, age, etc., but rather to demonstrate how experiences with and appreciation of diversity will contribute to students’ intellectual and cognitive development.” (US 1100 Faculty Manual, Chapter 11, p. 5.)
Two particular items seem to be called for in the Student Government Resolution:

1. Addition of the Multicultural Perspective attribute to US 1100 in the course catalog

In the case of US 1100, the Multicultural Perspectives designation is applied at the section level and is reserved for faculty who have completed the Multicultural Curriculum Transformation and Research Institute. This program is a week-long experience and pays a stipend of $1,200 to faculty. University Seminar has approximately 175 faculty teaching every year, which would require a total of $210,000 for each person to complete the institute. About twenty faculty are admitted to the institute each year. Eligible faculty are encouraged to apply to the institute to transform their US 1100 section.

As noted above, understanding and appreciating diversity is a required topic in US 1100, covered via individual lessons as well as through the Common Experience and Common Reading. Common Experience and Common Reading in particular enable students to connect with diversity in current events and with important speakers with meaningful messages. In the 15-week course, each course session has 50 minutes, meaning time is limited to cover all the required topics (identified by the Faculty Mentoring Group as essential). The structures already in place enable diversity to be covered in a meaningful way, while also ensuring that other content crucial to successful student transition is covered. Regardless of whether a Multicultural Perspectives attribute is placed, the course fosters an understanding and appreciation of diversity.

2. Creation of a metric to gauge students' perceptions of inclusion and instruction

University Seminar gathers information from students every semester about their US 1100 experience. In addition to the standard SPIs administered for all Texas State faculty, University Seminar administers an additional evaluation of its faculty, including, among others, the following questions:

- The instructor showed a sincere interest in his/her students.
- The instructor covered the contents outlined in the syllabus.
- The instructor was open to diverse opinions.
- The instructor treated students with respect.
- The course helped me to understand the nature and purpose of a university.
- The course promoted respect for diversity issues and concepts.

An evaluation metric already exists, and data are reviewed and acted upon every semester.

GB: sr

xc: Dr. Dann Brown
MEMORANDUM

TO: Dean of Students Dr. Margarita Arellano
Assistant Dean of Students Kathryn Weisor

DATE: Monday, May 13, 2019

FROM: Corey Benbow, Student Body President

SUBJECT: S.R. 13 Resolution Supporting the Inclusion of a Diversity Component within University Seminar Classes

I approve of this legislation passed by the Student Government Senate which is to support the inclusion of a Diversity Component within University Seminar Classes in relation to the Curriculum of University Seminar.

Moreover, diversity work is designed to create an awareness and appreciation of differences. It is important the university administration recognize students come from diverse backgrounds. Often college can be a culture shock and overwhelming. By the University adding a diversity component to University Seminar (US1100) incoming freshman will start off by building an awareness and appreciation for differences creating a more tolerant and inclusive university community. The university should move to implement this without delay.

Corey F. Benbow
Student Body President '20
A Resolution

A Resolution to be entitled "A Resolution Supporting the Inclusion of a Diversity Component within University Seminar Classes," relating to the Curriculum of University Seminar.

WHEREAS: The Student Government of Texas State University, on behalf of the student body of Texas State University, would like to address the need for more cultural competency inclusion in courses;

and

WHEREAS: The US1100 Seminar class is a class mandated by Texas State University for incoming students with 0-15 hours of credits in order to graduate; and

WHEREAS: University Seminar's objectives are:

1. To expand students' understanding of the nature and purposes of a university.
2. To facilitate students' adjustment to the challenges of life and learning at Texas State.
3. To identify practical learning skills and concepts that will promote students' academic success.
4. To encourage students to explore the connection between university study and life enrichment, lifelong learning, and civic responsibility.
5. To promote respect for diversity issues and concepts.

Despite objective 5 being explained it is felt and recognized by the student body that the University College and Faculty of University Seminar are not doing enough to
promote respect for diversity issues and concepts by not prompting the idea of diversity in its class enough; and

WHEREAS: This is understood as University Seminar lacks the Multicultural Perspective attribute on the course catalog; and

WHEREAS: The response to choosing material for University Seminar Curriculum has been postponed by deciding the necessity of the component and the will of the faculty; and

WHEREAS: Diversity should always be a priority when discussing curriculum; and

WHEREAS: It should be the goal of the University College and Faculty and Staff instructors of US1100 should aim to align the University Seminar classes to reach the status of becoming a Multicultural Perspective class; therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED: That the Dean and Associate Dean of Academic Programs of the University College create a metric to gauge the Student’s Perception on the inclusion and instruction of seminar instructors in the curriculum of their class; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Provost, Associate Dean of Academic Programs of the University College, Faculty and Staff Instructors of University Seminar help align the curriculum to become attributed as a Multicultural Perspective Class within the next two academic years; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: We strongly encourage the development of the cultural competency curriculum be put together in conjunction with the input of faculty and staff who are people of color; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That when such curriculum is created that the Associate Dean of Academic Programs of University College place the aligned curriculum on the University Seminar webpage to assist students in holding faculty accountable for their assistance in creating a safer and more diverse university; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: This legislation be forwarded to the Student Body President, Provost, and Dean of Academic Programs of the University College for further action.