When we think about diversity in the academy, we typically think about compositional issues, such as whether there are representative numbers of women and people of color in the student body and faculty. When we think about inclusion, we often look at the campus climate and ask if it is welcoming and affirming to people of different backgrounds and identities. But diversity and inclusion are not simply about these questions. They are not real without a central focus on the education itself -- the academic programs and learning experiences a university offers.

If our goal is to prepare students to be global citizens in a diverse and shrinking world, then it is critical that they gain multicultural knowledge and skills now through their education. The most obvious is the content and material that we ask students to engage around, i.e., the "what." However, the "how" is also critically important. The instructional approaches, the assessment strategies, and the classroom interactions (sometimes collectively called the "hidden curriculum") are all crucial.

As instructors, we need to be proactive in shaping a classroom and course experiences, so that students from diverse cultural backgrounds, with different learning styles, and with an array of abilities can all be actively involved. The "what" often establishes students’ interest in the course; while the "how" influences students’ engagement and participation as well as the quality of learning.

I want to flag another aspect of the "how": I call it the "soft curriculum." This has to do with the instructor’s connections with and warmth toward students. There is evidence that underrepresented minority undergraduates are most likely to thrive academically in a humane and caring campus community. For instance, students from non-Western cultures often value a collectivist and communal learning environment, where feeling attached to and encouraged by the facul-
ty can be motivational. For underrepresented minority students, instructors’ efforts to reach out, to embrace, and to foster a sense of belonging can all make a difference in the students’ retention and success.

Traditionally, instructors are responders – addressing the needs of those students who seek us out, who persist, and who are assertive in the ways that are privileged by mainstream U.S. culture. However, attention to the soft curriculum requires us to move toward the student who may feel at sea on our campus and who may, for cultural reasons, be reluctant to speak up and out. While creating an inclusive campus environment is the work of all of us, faculty and graduate assistants are key players.

“The other curricula” – both the hidden and soft curricula are arguably the most important curricula. If instructors are intentional about them, I believe that all of our students will benefit greatly.

**Upcoming Workshops and Learning Communities On Diversity and Inclusion**

This academic year, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and the Center for Teaching Excellence are sponsoring a number of opportunities for faculty and teaching assistants to explore and learn more about diversity and inclusion in teaching:

**Workshop:**

Infusing a Multicultural Perspective in Every Class

Sept. 12, 2012, noon-1:30 p.m. at Maryland Room, Marie Mount Hall, CTE Workshop led by Dr. Kumea Shorter-Gooden, Ph.D. & Spencer Benson, Ph.D.

Contact Spencer Benson at sben-son@umd.edu.

**Learning Communities:**

**Inclusion and Diversity Course Transformation Project**

A yearlong (2012-2013) faculty and graduate student learning community to address issues in inclusion and diversity in undergraduate courses. Contact Spencer Benson, PhD at sben-son@umd.edu.

**Preparing for Controversy in the Classroom**

A semester-long (Fall 2012) learning community of faculty and graduate assistants led by Carol Corneilse, PhD & Mark Brimhall-Vargas, Ph.D.

Contact Carol Corneilse at car-olc@umd.edu.

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