A Report of the Committee on Diversity and Inclusive Excellence

Prepared for President Scott Bierman

by the Committee on Diversity and Inclusion

Cecil Youngblood
Georgia Duerst-Lahti
JingJing Lou
Amber Moreyra
Emily Chamlee-Wright
Tamanisha John
Stephen Heinz

June 7, 2012
Preface

In January 2012, President Scott Bierman appointed the Committee on Diversity and Inclusion. His directive declared:

“Beloit College needs to think carefully about its own commitments and goals in recruiting, supporting, and advancing a diverse student population, and it must seek to develop resources to sustain those efforts independent of federal funding. To that end, I have asked the Committee for Diversity and Inclusion, co-chaired by Cecil Youngblood and Professor Georgia Duerst-Lahti, to provide a report to me by the end of the academic year that accomplishes three important tasks:

1. to articulate more fully Beloit’s learning goals related to social identity and intercultural literacy;

2. to evaluate curricular means – understood broadly to include learning within and beyond the classroom -- for successfully realizing those goals;

3. to generate recommendations for the development and use of resources related to attracting and advancing a diverse student body with decreased dependence on federal funding sources, such as TRiO. Such recommendations should align themselves with other institutional priorities, including implementation of the new curriculum and the liberal arts in practice, and must pay attention not only to their potential programmatic impact but their ability to attract donors and their potential attractiveness to prospective students and parents.”

This report focuses first on task #1 and outlines our articulation, drawing upon the college’s mission and current institutional priorities. It then takes up tasks #2 and #3 together, considering the curricular means and development modules to accomplish them.

Note that we understand this endeavor to be an ongoing process, in which we learn and improve continually. Through this process, Beloit College will become a true learning institution for inclusive excellence.

Task #1: Articulating Social Identity and Intercultural Literacy for Beloit College

Inclusive excellence, likes all other initiatives, flows directly from the mission and the Beloit Initiatives. We propose actions to achieve the mission after articulating the connections between IE, IC and the role of both for making BC one of the finest institutions in the nation.

It is both timely and imperative that we pursue inclusive excellence at this moment in history. The 21st century demands of its leaders a capacity to fluidly cross cultures in order to achieve success. Our alumni will be these leaders, and Beloit College will be known for its distinct excellence in intercultural competence. Importantly, an institutional capacity to achieve inclusion across cultures of all kinds will move the college to a stronger financial foundation. For an educational institution of the 21st century
cannot consider itself excellence without inclusion. Beloit College already knows how important such is to success and reflects this orientation in its mission.

The Mission of Beloit College

Beloit College engages the intelligence, imagination, and curiosity of its students, empowering them to lead fulfilling lives marked by high achievement, personal responsibility, and public contribution in a diverse society. Our emphasis on international and interdisciplinary perspectives, the integration of knowledge with experience, and close collaboration among peers, professors, and staff equips our students to approach the complex problems of the world ethically and thoughtfully.

Senior staff members have created priorities for the Beloit Initiatives in order to achieve the College mission, and have presented these priorities to the Board of Trustees. Key among them are the following priorities:

Institutional Priorities for Beloit Initiatives:

“The chief purpose of the Beloit Initiatives was (and is) to provide a rich, seamless and consistently excellent experience for students by developing a comprehensive and coherent approach to the entire residential educational program.

“The college, by being among the finest schools in the country at conducting its transactional business with its core constituents, will attract more applicants, increase yield, improve retention, produce more satisfied parents, cultivate happier alumni, and thereby put the college on a firmer financial foundation.

The questions become:

How do we best provide a rich, seamless, and consistently excellent experience for students by developing a comprehensive and coherent approach to the entire residential educational experience?

And, how do we be among the finest schools in the country at conducting transactional business with its core constituents?

Many aspects are involved—especially teaching and learning through broad curricular means—but all elements involve becoming an institution committed to inclusive excellence.

How do we achieve this aim and how does it link to the mission and institutional priorities?

Articulating a Beloit College Vision for Inclusive Excellence

Our vision for Inclusive Excellence at Beloit College builds from an institutional character that provokes the active, intentional, and ongoing engagement to increase awareness, knowledge, sophistication, and empathetic understanding of social identity and intercultural competency.
Intercultural competency, as we understand it at Beloit College, involves awareness and understanding of the social identity and embodied experience of self and others, and respect and acceptance of differences. Such competency is achieved through a dedication to civil discourse and sincere dialog that explores, challenges, and debates differences, assumptions, and social systems. This commitment further includes a dynamic process that puts the liberal arts into practice to support and encourage interaction between careful thought and intentional action.

The Link: If Beloit College is to be among the nation’s finest institutions in the 21st century, with students who attain high achievement, make public contributions in a diverse society, and live lives of personal responsibility, we, as an institution, must both be excellent at imparting intercultural competence to our students and be known for inclusive excellence.

Inclusive excellence among all Beloit College faculty and staff is an essential ingredient to empowering all students, as well as all other members of the BC community. Both IC and IE underpin a capacity to optimize close collaboration on campus and—critical for high achievement—approach complex problems of the world ethically and thoughtfully. In fact, arguably in a diverse society and a world of complex problems, to prepare students for lives marked by high achievement, personal responsibility and public contribution Beloit College must become fully adept at teaching its students the skills for lifelong learning around intercultural competence and inclusive excellence.

Not inconsequentially, these same skills, capacities, and attitudes are necessary to be among the finest schools in the country at conducting its transactional business with its core constituents.

Articulating Beloit College Learning Goals for an Inclusive Intellectual Community

A Beloit education is designed to enable each student and community member—through careful thought and intentional action—to become a person who practices inclusive excellence and shapes the larger culture in deliberate ways. We believe that the intercultural competence needed for inclusive excellence is learned and engaged across campus programs and is integral to life-long learning and success.

Toward this end, as a learning community dedicated to inclusive excellence, we hold the following goals so that each member of the Beloit College community:

1. has access to a wide variety of opportunities within and beyond the classroom to understand issues of social identity and develop intercultural competency more deeply.

2. develops a basic awareness of how their own social identity and positionality within society helps to shape their understanding of the world in which they live, learn, communicate, and act, and accordingly, how the social identity of others helps to shape their perspective(s).

3. becomes adept at knowing how one can enter cultures different from one’s own and discern important practices, values, and ways of doing and being that are embedded in the culture.
4. develops the skills, habits, and practices that enable effective communication and engagement, a spirit of inclusion, and how to create space for a wide diversity of perspectives to be heard, and advanced within the college as a whole.

5. learns to recognize and effectively utilize the resources and programs across and beyond the college that foster rich, seamless, consistently excellent learning experiences for all Beloit College students.

6. works to create, support, and advance a deep commitment to continual learning about social identity and intercultural competency across all areas of the college, and the world beyond.

That is, we seek an institution in which learning about social identity and intercultural competency is ordinary, safe, and pervasive action around these topics is expected and inevitable.

Building this institutional character is the responsibility of every member of the Beloit College community—faculty, staff, administration, students, and alumni.

Task #2: Broad Curricular Means to Realize These Goals

Extensive evaluation by earlier committees has identified critical elements to achieve these goals. In many regards, they are necessary preconditions.

- Increase the number of faculty of color

Rationale: At Beloit we promise to engage the intelligence, imagination and curiosity of our students so that they are empowered to lead fulfilling lives marked by high achievement, personal responsibility, and public contribution in a diverse society. In order to fulfill this promise, the Beloit College community must be one in which a wide diversity of perspectives are invited in and heard from. Such perspectives include those that emerge from identities related to race, ethnicity, nationality, class, gender and sexual orientation, religion, physical and mental ability and the intersections among these and other identities. Inclusive excellence requires an institutional commitment to a process of moving toward a point in which the intellectual community reflects the diversity of the country, and when possible, the world as a whole. A diverse faculty is particularly important in ensuring that every member in this intellectual community is able to engage in learning, dialogue, and action around issues related to social identity and intercultural competence.

At this moment in Beloit’s history, we believe that the highest priority is to attract more faculty of color into its ranks, an area where we are particularly deficient relative to our peer and aspirant institutions. Further, recruiting more faculty of color will help us retain the minority faculty who are already here by helping to make their experience at Beloit better. Finally, a more diverse faculty will provide opportunities for students from groups underrepresented in higher education enhanced access to an important source of academic and emotional support that can help them thrive within and contribute to Beloit’s learning community.

- Increase the number of domestic minority students
Rationale: To attract and retain students of color, whose presence and perspective is integral to a robust learning environment that is good for all students learning. It creates the beneficial context in which every student can grow, learn, and prepare for success in the 21st century. A critical mass of students of color is a precondition for all students to believe their voice is vital, that their perspective is understood and shared by enough others to create climate that exposes and values the rich range of student perspectives and US cultures. A critical mass creates a space in which it is safe to challenge and learn. It also contributes to a stronger retention and graduation rate by fostering stronger relationships, a larger and safer social circle, and entry into a wider range of campus experiences.

- Highlight existing offerings better and dedicate more of the formal curriculum to diversity and intercultural competence.

Rationale: We already offer many courses either fully or partly committed to intercultural literacy. Clearly we must agree upon what constitutes a C course, and then highlight them in many ways. In the process, we must make these curricular offering stronger so that C has meaning and contributes to the ends we seek for our students and as an institution. Students also have demanded more courses dedicated to learning about domestic minority topics, which would contribute directly to intercultural literacy and inclusive excellence. An interdisciplinary major or minor of existing and new courses would concentrate expertise and visibly highlight offering of particular intercultural foci.

- Enhance the skills and capacity of all faculty and staff to transact with students and each other in culturally competent ways that continuously improve inclusiveness.

Rationale: As we did with international, writing, and now Liberal Arts In Practice, faculty and staff need workshops, reading groups, and other professional development opportunities to become more skilled at their respective jobs vis-à-vis our core constituents and how they interact as a member of the Beloit College Community.

- Make inclusion central to Beloit College’s public persona and institutional identity.

An overarching precondition is that we create an institutional norm for civil discourse because we expect:

1. For discourse around social identity and intercultural literacy to be robust and advance, every member of our community has something to contribute to the quality, richness, and texture.

2. An inclusive learning environment in which every participant enters into the exchange with a viewpoint and accepts that it is appropriate to challenge respectfully one another’s perspectives, norms, and conclusions.

3. For a dialog around any complex set of issues to be genuine, every participant should enter with openness to the exchange and anticipate that she or he will learn something new and different.
Task #3: Modeling off the best of Beloit College

As a residential liberal arts campus that intends to build upon this positioning into the future. The college can build upon the strong existing synergy that occurs when academic affairs and student affairs collaborate. Proposed initiatives will also tap the critical programing undertaken by student affairs in the residential halls and beyond. We know how to do this well already.

The college has already demonstrated its ability to infuse elements of its mission into its core. We propose development modules that facilitate inclusive excellence becoming as central to Beloit College as internationalism, liberal arts in practice, or writing. To do so, like these three, we recommend using existing college structures, such as the collaboration between student and academic affairs, the curriculum and its elements, such as the new cultural literacy requirement, FYI; opportunities with LAPC; and so on.

Like these three successful centerpieces of the college’s DNA, we therefore propose that the college create a physical center to house a program director and staff. This physical center could be a house, a repurposed Chapel, or South Hall. We propose the director, like these successful core programs, will hold a Ph.D., whether hired specifically for this purpose (OIE and Writing Center) or created as a faculty chair (LAPC, FYI). Staff can be consolidated from across existing programs, such as the Office of Intercultural Affairs and Spiritual Life Programs, and additional strong collaborative ties can be established with units that remain in current divisional locations, such as FYI and TRIO programs. If federal funding is discontinued, this center will undertake reconfigured TRIO program functions, enhancing, drawing upon, and integrating these functions even more fully into existing efforts.

Whatever the exact form that emerges, international education offers an excellent model through its recent history for integrating inclusive excellence into the institution and intercultural competence into the curriculum, broadly conceived. By making it a priority to “internationalize campus” the college has sought and received outside funding and donor support for a multitude of programs such as endowed residencies and lecture series, ongoing faculty development opportunities, and student scholarships for particular kinds of learning. It offered incentives for infusion into the curriculum through GEMS and other focused initiatives. The college should seek funding to institutionalize broad expertise in intercultural competence and to create a Center for Inclusive Excellence that draws together existing resources and directs the Inclusive Excellence Initiative.

The Center for Inclusive Excellence can function as a catalyst, coordinating programmatic efforts, and if it receives substantial funds to do so. These programmatic efforts can be linked to the formal curriculum, with faculty competing for special funds to do inclusive intensive courses, and the CIE undertake efforts on its own, such as reviving a spring break to Beloit, Alabama.

Toward Development Modules for Inclusive Excellence

Some processes require little funding, and rely instead upon processes and commitments.

For senior staff and institution-wide processes:
• Receive trustee commitment to inclusive excellence as central to the College’s public persona.
• Have senior staff undertake training and then speak wisely about this issue at every opportunity.
• Make part of all employee evaluation, from the president on down.
• Create a public relations thrust around inclusive excellence for the next three years.
• Undertake institutional-wide programming with high profile speakers, workshops, other training across all employee groups.
• Student Support Services, McNair Scholars Program and other similar initiatives through existing staff coordinated through a Center for Inclusive Excellence (Inclusive Community), which gives a location and space to drive this initiative.

For faculty and student affairs staff:
  o Make Inclusive Excellence part of position rationale and integrate into position description and search process.
  o Fall conference serially dedicated to aspects.
  o Focusing all programs through a “Year of” in themes related to intercultural literacy and Inclusive community for the next five years.
  o Training for faculty and student affairs staff, through summer workshops and programming throughout the year.
  o Awards for best new “unexpected” example of inclusive excellence in the curriculum.

The committee recommends development modules in broad areas:

1—Curricular Innovation

The basic concept is to pursue a substantial pot of funding for curricular innovation and institutional development that enables innovation toward the many ideas put forth by faculty and staff programming, etc. be spent over the next five years. We recommend a combination of top-down focused priorities and bottom-up competitive innovations.

1.A Build upon Labs Across the Curriculum and emulate its approach of faculty competitions for seed money to experiment, hone, and launch innovations. Beloit students can learn about cultural assumptions, what holds themselves and others back, see what and how theory applies.

For example, replicate life-changing experiences of international experiences, often in shorter time frames, through ideas already suggested by faculty and student affairs staff during meetings held spring 2012:
Faculty teams can reach across the curriculum for to gain intercultural literacy here, perhaps the Chicago Public Schools. Beloit students could go for a week as intensive volunteers, and through full semester programs. Advantageously, this example would create a bridge to enhance the ability of CPS students to attend Beloit.

Block courses or spring-break traveling seminars civil rights museums, with stops at advantageous graduate programs along the way.

Student and eventual Faculty Exchange program(s) with Fiske University and other historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU).

In collaboration with Office of International Education, the Center for Inclusive Excellence, Student Affairs staff and/or faculty create civil rights pilgrimages, and revive the spring break to Beloit, Alabama.

1.B Use our process knowledge from “internationalizing” the college to deeply embed intercultural literacy and inclusive excellence into the fiber or the curriculum and institution also.

Provide incentives for faculty such as GEMS-type curricular incentive to incorporate new aspects into existing courses and create new ones; stipends for workshops and reading groups; ongoing professional development travel to experience situations first hand, know about opportunities, and incorporate into courses, advising, and faculty orientation toward work generally.

1.C Pursue college satellite centers and experiences that dovetail and support curricular initiatives both domestically and internationally.

1.D Create a Residency (like Weissberg) that would particularly include lectures and workshops throughout the year.

1.E Highlight curricular development—both focused and diffused—around the C requirement by creating endowed chairs, fellowships, particular adjuncts hires, and mod or block courses.

2-Student Support

Funds for students (of color) to undertake life changing international and domestic experiences through Liberal Arts in Practice such as internships, domestic and international semesters, reviving the trip to Beloit Alabama, perhaps a Chicago or Washington DC Beloit satellite experience, and so on through Labs Across the Curriculum or other initiatives.

Fund particular scholarships for students who would be eligible for TRIO, McNair, or other support services. Funds could be used for books, tutors, visits to graduate schools, and other support recently cut from federal funding. Such funds would bolster the academic affairs and student affairs synergy and provide more capacity to serve all of our students well.

3—Create a Center for Inclusive Excellence (Inclusive Community).
As detailed under Task #3 above, endowed funds for a center, which include physical renovation to the chapel or another property, and after consolidating current staff on campus, funding for staff as needed. The center would serve as a catalyst across campus, provide a single source of information, as well as administrative support similar to the Office of International Education and LAPC.

- For example, it could be central in facilitating the traveling seminar or block courses described upon for structured learning around civil rights museums, exchange program(s) with Fiske University or and other HBCU, Revival of the Beloit Alabama trip in collaboration with OIE; Civil rights pilgrimage.
- It could create and coordinate an institutional plan of actions with goals, benchmarks, and metrics, in cooperation with the Office of Institutional Research:
  - Study/track all of the programs, steps, incentives, faculty development opportunities, curricular initiatives, registration bulletin designations (GEMS), stipends used to truly highlight and orient the college to international distinctiveness.
  - Advertise, expand, update the inventory included in the roadmap.
- With student affairs and COA, it could help respond to student driven curricular changes and other programing additions around intercultural literacy and inclusion.
- It could function as the symbol and support to “reset” the institution like we did with internationalism.
- Coordinating with student affairs and academic affairs it could inspire and shape advising around LAiP as it relates to Inclusive excellence.

Conclusion

Beloit College has been focused on intercultural literacy and inclusive excellence at least since the Brussel Sprouts inaugurated study abroad and the Black Student Union staged protests in 1969. The committee believes the campus is poised to move vigorously and enthusiastically toward intercultural literacy and inclusive excellence. As an institution, Beloit is committed to do the difficult work required. By building on our deep history of inclusion and embedding this initiative within the LAiP module, we can focus efforts through several attractive broad targets that involve unique and fundable innovations. We gain distinction because, although many campuses actively seek a more diverse faculty, staff, and student body, very few use these efforts to make their college known as an institution of inclusive excellence. Beloit College will be distinctive when intercultural competence and inclusive excellence is embedded in the liberal arts in practice, becoming as core to our DNA as internationalism.

Working with and through complementary initiatives also within LAiP, such as FYI, LAPC, and international education, inclusive excellence and intercultural literacy enhances and fully aligns our mission. Beloit College can weave a strong development module for this initiative and attract funding sources that see our current positioning and strengths and know our daring and life changing educational history. Let us once again seize the moment and lead in higher education.