What the University Doesn’t Know Could Hurt

Staff Seeks Improved Diversity Reporting

According to census figures released in December, Utah is among the most ethnically integrated states in the nation in terms of different races living near each other; the Ogden-Clearfield area ranked 14th in integration among the 100 largest metropolitan areas in the country.

Weber State University has made it a priority to have a well-integrated university where diversity is represented and served, but that cannot happen unless people from diverse backgrounds are accurately counted.

When the director of Institutional Research, Steve Kerr, noticed that the number of Weber State students who chose not to report their diversity status was higher than any other state university, and continuing to grow, he became concerned.

“IT is important we capture accurate information,” Kerr said. “We are required to report both to the federal and state government, and if it looks as if we have fewer ethnic minorities it can make a significant difference in funding and perception.”

Without accurate information, the university risks losing grant money for a wide variety of programs that help underserved populations, including ethnic minorities, first-generation students and those at financial risk.

Kerr’s concerns led him to suggest some modifications in how the diversity-question instructions were phrased for students applying for admission. The changes resulted in more students self-reporting their diversity in the fall semester, but Weber State is still trailing other institutions. Kerr said the university will continue to make improvements in information gathering and encourage people on campus to help remedy the situation.

“Faculties and staff should discuss with students the importance of providing this information. Students who self-report can receive the financial, academic and personal help they need from any number of programs,” Kerr said.

As the vice president for Student Affairs, Jan Winniford said accuracy helps both with receiving and fairly distributing grant monies. Accurate numbers also help evaluate whether programs aimed at diversity outreach in the community are working.

“We are committed to trying to diversify our population at Weber State University, so we are more reflective of the community and the state,” Winniford said. “If we don’t know who those students are, we don’t know if we’re successfully getting students to attend as a result of our outreach programs and recruiting.”

The coordinator for WSU’s Center for Diversity & Unity, Adrienne Gillespie, said there seems to be an artificial shift away from reporting. People worry about privacy, and in the past they felt as if a single diversity box did not accurately reflect their true identity.

“I think people get caught up in the notion it’s about skin color,” Gillespie said. “Instead accurate numbers create a level playing field for everyone, so resources are allocated fairly and everyone on campus is provided excellent diversity and cultural opportunities.”

Rachel Smith, vice president for Student Affairs, co-authored an article titled “Demonstrating Student Success,” which is a guide to outcomes-based assessment in student affairs.

In October, Kevin Hansen, associate vice president for Facilities and Campus Planning, shared with WSU’s Board of Trustees a list of tasks the university has completed since signing on to the American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment in 2008. The commitment is a pledge for college campuses to be more environmentally sound and energy efficient.

The laundry list of projects included re-roofing the Stewart Library, Social Sciences and Miller Administration buildings with “cool” roof surfaces, replacing two old, inefficient boilers in the heat plant with a new one, and planting more than 500 trees on campus.

Hansen reported that the new chiller plant, built with the most cost-effective, efficient chillers available, is reducing campus electrical consumption by more than 1 million kilowatt-hours (kWh) annually. Replacing outdated lights with motion-activated and energy-efficient lighting.

Carbon Footprint

WSU Taking Steps to Save Energy

A recent initiative undertaken by Facilities Management may have folks on campus breathing a little easier.

Since 2007, Weber State University has reduced its carbon footprint by 6,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide annually. Far from resting on their laurels, administrators suggest the recent success is just a preliminary step in achieving the campus-wide goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2050.

“This was the easy part,” said Norm Tarbox, vice president for Administrative Services. “We accomplished this by addressing obvious deficiencies and replacing out-dated equipment with newer, more energy-efficient devices.”

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Top Power Savings

- New chiller plant
- Replaced outdated heat-plant boilers with new efficient model
- Campus shuttle fleet converted to natural-gas powered

Get Healthy With Help From Weber State

In an office perks through the Strohberg Gymnasium floor, sounds of tennis shoes pounding the track rise over cubicle walls. Rachel Smith stays focused on fitness. As the university’s new employee wellness coordinator, she couldn’t be happier.

“This is like my dream job, and I never thought I would find it within two years of graduating,” Smith said. “I feel as if my education and my work experience have prepared me for what I’m doing.”

Smith is a Weber State University graduate in health promotion and human performance with a minor in nutrition. She wants to get to know the entire campus and attract participants from every level of health and fitness to take advantage of all the free health services available to employees of the university.

“Wellness isn’t just one size fits all; I totally understand that,” Smith said. “I want to appeal to everybody. I think people are intimidated to come here, and they feel guilty, but they don’t need to feel that way. It’s not like a confessional.”

Employees can use the gym, enroll in fitness classes, and access the wellness website, weber.edu/employee, to find healthy living tips, or schedule a thorough, personal physical assessment.

“You have to start somewhere,” Smith said. “Instead of scrabbling around and figuring out things by yourself, we can help you get all the information you need to build your best foundation and get going.”

Smith also plans to get going on a partnership with Healthy Utah and the university’s insurance provider, PEHP, to provide lunch-and-learn...
When Your Purchase Is Not Quite Right
Here are tips from the purchasing department to help you exchange or return items ordered under a purchase order (PO):
- Contact the WSU purchasing agent or buyer listed on your department’s green copy of the purchase order.
- Inform the buyer of your desire to either exchange or return the item.
- Provide the PO number and specify the item.
- Provide the reason for the exchange or return, for example, wrong or damaged item.

After the buyer receives this information, here are the steps for completing the exchange or return:
- Contact the firm for instructions and return merchandise authorization (RMA) number.
- Notify receiving in order to coordinate pickup of the item.
- Depending upon the circumstances of the return or exchange, return shipment and restocking fees may apply.

Staff Development Grants Available
Now is the time for staff members to apply for quarterly grant money available for professional development.

The written requests do not need to be elaborate or complicated, but must be complete and follow specific guidelines available at programs.weber.edu/staff-development.

Grants can be used for activities such as team building, conferences, campus speakers, workshops, audio and video training, and group or individual training sessions.

The deadline for the next selection is Feb. 1, and training is available to assist employees with the process.

Sign up for course #135-01 in Training Tracker. This assistance program is made possible with funding from President’s Council, the WSU Bookstore, and donations from staff members on campus.

Diversity Unifies Community
Reading and discussing together the slave narratives of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs will unite readers on and off campus over the course of the next few months.

Last year Weber Reads selected Hudnall’s Fanny by Mark Twain. This year the group chose two writers, Douglass and Jacobs, who they think may have influenced Twain.

“Weber Reads is a very good example of how significant the university is in our community,” said history professor Kathryn MacKay, a member of the selection committee. “We’ve taken the lead on this project in this community, and it really has been about connecting town and gown. This project came out of a discussion with the group a few years ago, and it’s been very special that the university has been so engaged.”

Members of the Weber community will lead discussion groups from January through April. The schedule is available at www.weberreads.weber.edu.

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Welcome to WSU
Sandra Hogg, Human Resources; Janae Holt, Facilities Management; Lymette Jensen, Davis Campus; secretary; Deborah Larson, Mathematics; Patrick McCutcheon, Grant Writer; Andrew Rabinik, Library; Jodi Shupa, Development; Jam Stisko, Student Affairs Office; Scott Thompson, Student Affairs Maintenance.

On the Move/Promoted
Bryza Barker, Internal Audit; Donald Guthrie, Services for Students with Disabilities; Jassen Nelson, Bookstore; Gregory Nielsen, Career Services; Tina Polack, Human Resources; Shaeve Pitt, College of Health Professions; Amy Reminger, Continuing Education; Elisa Richards, Library; Amber Robinson, Bookstore; Mara Saldave, School of Business and Economics; Sarah Stanton, Child Care Retired
Louise Barrera, Support Services; Tom Day, Child and Family Studies

Source: Board of Trustees report, Nov. - Dec. 2010

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