I. Proposal Description

This three-pronged proposal is for a signature domestic diversity program that provides our students with meaningful interactions with people unlike themselves and significant study of domestic difference. The ultimate goal is for every Elon student to experience difference in an international and domestic\(^1\) comparative context, a key to learning in the 21st century (Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2004, p. 148).

We suggest a menu of domestic difference options that are seamlessly interwoven into an Elon education, much in the way that study abroad already is. At Elon, students are far more likely to ask other students where they are studying abroad rather than if they are studying abroad. The proposal envisions a culture where Elon students have myriad experiences with difference, both through study abroad and a domestic counterpart.

Elon already excels in domestic difference through courses, the Elon experiences and co-curricular programs. The QEP would provide support for ongoing domestic difference initiatives. It will provide resources and development for those doing domestic diversity work in and out of the classroom and provide development for those who want to start. The QEP will supplement Elon’s nationally recognized study abroad program by deepening exploration of difference through a domestic lens of exploration.

The three prongs for this proposal are a winter term emphasis on “Encountering Difference,” creation of a fund for innovative projects, and development of an assessment plan that measures how and what students learn through their encounters with difference domestically and abroad. Each component is further explicated in the next section.

II. Proposal Goals and Strategies

The primary components of this proposal are:

1) A winter term emphasis on **Encountering difference** as a core value with courses focused on cultural difference in a comparative U.S. and international or U.S.-based context, including Intergroup Relations Dialogue (IGR) pedagogy, domestic study and residence linked courses.

2) Planned interaction and learning among a range of groups outside the classroom through a **fund for innovative projects** that create purposeful engagement with difference\(^2\). Grants will allow students to take ownership of the experience and will also support faculty, staff and student-led initiatives such as a campus wide intercultural education program. IGR training will also benefit faculty and staff leading discussions.

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\(^1\) The term “domestic” here is defined as all educational programs that take place inside the U.S., recognizing difference is a cultural artifact not necessarily predicated on geography. While the term might be contested, “domestic” is perhaps the broadest and most succinct indicator of the type of study this proposal advances. The words “diversity” and “difference” here refer to groups of people within a pluralistic society distinguished by characteristics such as, but not limited to, gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, class, religion, gender identity or disability.

\(^2\) Examples from current Elon students include Zac Jordan, whose internship at the Interfaith Youth Corp led to the creation of the “Better Together” living learning community of students from a variety of faith backgrounds; and Neima Abdulahi, whose interest in Muslim hip-hop artists led to the creation of a student record label that promotes world music to Elon.
An assessment plan for diversity work across campus that can be used to inform future programs at Elon. This investment in assessment will benefit other Elon hallmarks, such as study abroad. A solid assessment model builds on the work already happening on campus and will allow us to assess the learning in a domestic study program and deepen our understanding of other learning that takes place outside of the classroom, such as study abroad, service learning, leadership and internships.

Goals
Through these proposal components, the overarching goal is for our students to obtain knowledge about diverse cultures, engage in and value difference, and learn to navigate difference. These goals are in the foreground as the university works to create positive and meaningful interactions between and among diverse groups of people and students. These goals also extend the work of numerous committees and historic initiatives at Elon and are clearly connected to the university mission.

Elon’s mission and strategic plan
The Elon commitment calls for an unprecedented university commitment to diversity and global engagement. This proposal furthers that goal by creating an institutional focus on student learning about difference. Our mission statement professes that we “integrate learning across the disciplines and put knowledge into practice, thus preparing students to be global citizens and informed leaders motivated by concern for the common good and foster respect for human differences, passion for a life of learning, personal integrity, and an ethic of work and service.” A signature domestic diversity program directly addresses the Elon commitment theme of an unprecedented commitment to diversity and global engagement by providing innovative learning structures, pedagogical approaches and programs to foster respect for human difference and pluralism.

According to Eboo Patel, Executive Director of the Interfaith Youth Core, pluralism is an intrinsic feature of a globalized world. Patel defines religious pluralism as “…a form of proactive cooperation that affirms the identity of the constituent communities while emphasizing that the well being of each and all depends on the health of the whole. It is the belief that common good is best served when each community has a chance to make a unique contribution” (Patel, 2007, page XV). Patel envisages a strong link between pluralism and engagement, suggesting pluralism “requires deliberate engagement with difference…” (Patel, 2007, page XIX). We strive to provide clear and evidence-based opportunities for our students to learn about themselves and learn about and interact positively and productively with people from backgrounds different from their own.

Douglas and Jones-Rikkers (2001) identify a global citizen as a global-minded person who values a broadened perspective on various issues, opposes prejudice, and sees viewpoints that differ from their own gender, ethnic, national, sexual orientation or religious perspectives. Hett (1993) identifies components of global mindedness as responsibility, cultural pluralism, efficacy, globalcentrism, and interconnectedness. This proposal focuses on respect for and understanding of human difference while connecting to global citizenship, informed leadership and lifelong learning for the common good.

These notions are rooted in traditions and values across campus, such as the multicultural center’s Rationale for Multicultural Education, which summarized its value as follows:
Campus diversity and multicultural education are central to Elon University’s mission of “preparing students to be global citizens.” Recent studies show diverse learning environments enhance student learning. Daniel Yankelovich revealed that Americans support diversity in higher education, recognize diversity has a positive impact on the campus and student success, and encourage campuses to take explicit steps to ensure campus diversity in order for students to learn how to function in a multicultural and global economy. Research by Professor Patricia Gurin of the University of Michigan and recent studies from the American Council on Education and the American Association of University Professors illustrated that students actually learn better by interacting and exchanging ideas with people different from themselves. Diverse classrooms and courses dealing with cultural differences enhanced student intellectual growth by challenging long-held beliefs and ideas. (http://www.elon.edu/e-web/students/multicultural_resources/rationaleformulticulturaleducation.xhtml, ¶ 1).

**Relevant literature review**
Additional literature on transformative learning informs this rationale. Mezirow (2000) defines transformative learning as the process whereby “we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action” (page 214). Mezirow proceeds to explain that for such transformation to occur, students must alter their frame of references by critically reflecting on their own assumptions and beliefs and striving to think of new ways to define and understand their environment. John Dewey (2000) argues that transformative learning occurs when the learner sees something in a new way and finds values in the new meaning. The literature in general suggests transformative learning relies on three key components: 1) experience 2) awareness of the conscience 3) analysis of discourse, dialogue with others and reflection that brings the learner to a deeper understanding and action (Greene, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978; Dewey, 1993). Our proposal goals address the literature by expanding students’ experiences with difference, making them aware of the underlying issues of the experience and then ensuring analysis, reflection and discussion.

Transformation can occur in discrete experiences such as an on campus class, domestic study program, academic service learning project or internship (Toncar & Cudmore, 2000). Transformation comes in many forms and can include “a moment of transition from passivity to naiveté to some animation and critical awareness” (Shor, 1987, p. 34).

Finally, research on difference specific to international education and study abroad provides another basis for our proposal and approach. A group of internationally known intercultural scholars identified some common elements of intercultural competence as “the awareness, valuing, and understanding of cultural differences; experiencing other cultures; and self-awareness of one’s own culture. These common elements stress the underlying importance of cultural awareness, both of one’s own as well as others’ cultures” (Deardorff, 2006) and understanding of the overlapping of identity (Torres, 2009; Renn, 2004: Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007). The panel of scholars found most agreement in a definition of cultural competency that stresses “the ability to communicate
effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes (p. 194).

The key for any transformative experience or intercultural skill is an attitude fostered by taking the experience and resultant knowledge and applying it to a new situation. Okayama, Furuto & Edmondson (2001) reinforce the foundational importance of attitude and future application by emphasizing the need to “maintain culturally competent attitudes as we continue to attain new knowledge and skills while building new relationships. Awareness, the valuing of all cultures, and a willingness to make changes are underlying attitudes that support everything that can be taught or learned”³ (p. 97).

**Strategies**

Strategies for achieving the student learning goals outlined in the previous section include IGR, an innovative pedagogical technique; short term domestic study and domestic travel imbedded courses; learning communities and courses linked with residences; a domestic diversity fund; and a resourced assessment plan grounded in research.

**Winter term theme**

The winter term theme will be a focal point of the Elon first year experience, although students from across all four years will take courses in the theme. The theme will emphasize on campus courses with diversity related content, IGR courses, short-term domestic study, and domestic travel imbedded into on campus courses.

**Domestic Study**

Domestic study in the winter term will vary from a three week course off campus in the model of the short term study abroad (i.e. our current course in Hawaii) to a 2-3 day domestic travel module embedded into an on campus course. Off campus study will be fee-based similar to the study abroad system. The University will create need-based funds connected with each course to ensure more equal access.

**Intergroup Dialogue (IGR)**

One key aspect of the proposal is the introduction of Intergroup Dialogue (IGR) courses on campus during all terms, but highlighted as one of the options during the winter term theme, along with domestic study away imbedded courses. IGR is a well-researched pedagogy with a host of studies demonstrating short-term and long-term benefits for those participating in intergroup dialogue, including learning about the perspectives of people from other social groups, valuing new viewpoints, understanding the impact of social group membership on identity, gaining increased awareness of social inequalities, and developing analytical problem-solving skills, leadership, and cultural awareness⁴

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³ Clearly, we need to be careful not to conflate study abroad with domestic difference. There are similarities, of course, but study abroad brings another set of issues that are not wholly captured in domestic programs. But the literature shows that there are some broad assumptions about learning that apply to both instances.

⁴ A multi-institution study of IGR results show that, as compared with the control groups on each campus, students in IGR experienced greater increases in their understanding of race, gender, and income inequality; and increases in their intergroup empathy and motivation to traverse differences; their commitment to social and political action after college; the efficacy and frequency of intergroup action during college and their cognitive openness (Gurin, Nagda, & Sorenson, 2011).
(Hurtado, 2005). IGR courses explore social group identity, conflict, community, and social justice. Each class involves identity groups defined by race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic class, gender, sexual orientation, or national origin. Each identity group is represented in the dialogue by a balanced number of student participants from each group. Two faculty members -- one from each represented identity group -- lead the courses. Faculty are trained to teach using dialogic pedagogy and the skills gained in the training are also useful in creating an inclusive campus climate outside of the classroom, as faculty can apply these skills in committee work, faculty meetings and in managing classroom discussions.

**The Domestic Diversity Fund**
The grants from the domestic diversity fund will provide financial support to enhance experiential learning, one of Elon’s defining features. A fund committee will work with applicants to help them with their learning outcome goals and assessment. The umbrella concept for this fund will be the student learning outcome of intercultural skills. Byram (1997) suggested those outcomes are “Knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others’ values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing one’s self.” (Byram, 1997, p. 34). Byram’s definition of cultural competency will form the basis of the specific student learning outcomes for domestic diversity funded projects. Each grant be expected to produce outcomes in one (or more) of Byram outlines areas including: (A) interest in knowing other people’s way of life and introducing one’s own culture to others, (B) ability to change perspective, (C) knowledge about one’s own and others’ culture for communication, and (D) knowledge about intercultural communication processes. We would not expect that students would be able to demonstrate change in all four of the areas.

Domestic diversity ideas can also be supported through strategic advising, incentives for faculty and staff participation in programs, professional development, and planned interaction in the residential campus across difference with meals, learning communities and paired classes in residences. Scholars have shown the important and consistent role that students' informal interactions across ethnic groups, for example, play in their pluralistic development in college (Chang et al., 2006; Engberg, 2007; Hurtado, 2005). Our residence linked courses and the proposed fund will provide students with informal opportunities to interact with other students across difference. The training for our faculty and staff will help to ensure that the faculty and staff led conversations on campus are planned, honest and intellectual. Therefore, some ideas for the fund are:

- Team simulation work with Elon, another U.S. university and/or an international university using video conference to do project-oriented work together;
- Domestic study with innovative partnerships for collaborative academic service or undergraduate research. This might entail Elon students encountering students who are different from themselves. Examples:
Elon students working with an Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) on an interfaith service project; or Elon and a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) students together in a domestic course (two classes, one faculty from each), examining civil right history in Greensboro connected with the International Civil Rights Museum; or academic service learning focused on a project where there is learning about an issue (public health and disabilities, for example) and then service to a U.S. area related to this social issue.

III. Measures of Success

After participating in the domestic diversity program, graduating students will be able to:

- Explain their own cultural perspective and make meaningful comparisons to other cultural perspectives
- Make meaningful comparisons among cultures
- Demonstrate the ability to respond constructively to issues that arise between cultures or between diverse groups within their own society

Because assessment should take place as close to learning as possible, each experience in the menu will also have learning outcomes and measurements.

For example, the course objectives for an interfaith IGR course in religious studies:

Demonstrate knowledge across the spectrum of faith traditions; apply communication skills in negotiating religious conflict; identify and discuss religious stereotypes; describe the role of interfaith cooperation in multiple faith traditions; critically evaluate their own traditions; and make meaningful comparisons to other religious perspectives.

For faculty members, our proposal would provide incentive money for faculty and academic advisors in a variety of areas:

- to participate in training sessions around the domestic diversity menu options;
- for faculty who want to develop domestic study programs,
- for faculty who want to learn better ways to teach off campus,
- for faculty and staff who want to explore the ways in which students best learn about difference, in classes, off campus experiences and in residence halls.

The proposal also calls for the development of a sophisticated assessment plan. This plan can illustrate that assessment is part of the reflection for students to understand and see their own progress. Institutional financial support would be needed to develop a university data dictionary, purchase a data mining/warehouse program and create a plan to collect new and better use existing data\(^5\) to understand the impact across the entire Elon student body.

\(^5\) For example, our NSSE and BCSE data currently show that our students in high school expect a higher level of interaction with difference in college than they experienced in high school and that we are not meeting their expectations.
IV. Proposal Outcomes

The overall goal of this QEP plan is to measurably enhance intercultural skills for all Elon students. Specifically we anticipate that students will score higher on a pluralistic orientation measure that assesses students' thinking and social interaction capacities (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986), socio-cognitive skills involved with perspective-taking (Bennett & Bennett, 2004, Davis, Conklin, Smith, & Luce, 1996) and intercultural maturity (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005). We expect that students will demonstrate high levels of “complex thinking that enable students to engage in cooperative behaviors, manage controversial issues, and develop a high regard for others' perspectives, beliefs, and backgrounds” (Engberg and Hurtado, 2011).

Expected Outcome/Goal: Upon completion of an item in the domestic difference program menu, students will have a broader knowledge of the global and domestic dimensions of difference and how difference crosses geospatial boundaries. Students will be able to identify and reflect on the cultural relationships that link domestic and global communities.

V. Budget and Resources Requirement

Winter term theme
Need based scholarships for each domestic study program.

For our initial training, the University of Michigan IGR team will train an unlimited number of people on our campus. Every year after, a team of four will attend the conference in Michigan.

Cost of courses with two instructors.

Stipend or release for faculty organizer of theme and assessment program.

The fund
The fund should supply both “mini” and major grants. Mini grants encourage student spontaneity and creativity from short proposals that are considered in an accelerated time frame and provide modest funds to enhance informal interactions in residence halls or to collaborate across student affinity groups. Proposals for major funds will be more elaborate and provide money for longer-term projects.

Assessment needs
The Institutional Research office will work with assessment experts on campus and outside consultants to create an assessment plan that demonstrates student learning and is also part of the learning process. Darnell Cole, a diversity expert who visited Elon last year, has found remarkable outcomes in his assessment of a required diversity course at the University of Southern California. We also contacted Cathy Beyer at the Office of

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Institutional Assessment at the University of Washington, who provided several examples of UW’s multi-method assessments and ways to demonstrate what students learn from diversity courses and co-curricular experiences. We propose hiring Cole and Beyer or other similar scholars to work with a team at Elon to create an assessment plan for the signature domestic diversity program.

Professional development for faculty and staff
These programs will be developed and sponsored by CATL and will be tied to best practices in teaching and learning outside of the classroom as a way to deepen a core value (engaged and experiential learning), serve the domestic difference content goals and deepen our excellence in short course study abroad programs.

VII. Literature Support


Impact the Knowledge and Understanding of International Students on U.S. Diversity Issues and Contribute to Intergroup Peer Relationships?

7 See http://www.was.ah.edu/oea/sou.html for examples. Beyer suggested a pedagogical strategy of “controlled reflection” where students are provided prompts before and after an experience or class to assess different ways of seeing an issue or topic. In Beyer’s experience, it is far easier to measure student learning outcomes related to attitudes and behaviors than critical thinking and problem solving.


