

Multicultural Education Goals for the Curriculum

Multicultural education is one important component of a liberal arts education at Carleton, and it involves both what and how we teach and learn. It is important that the College concern itself with multicultural education in the curriculum (which we address here), in classroom climate (which the ECC will address separately and in which the Learning and Teaching Center should continue to play a leadership role), and in the larger campus climate (with the Dean of Students staff, the CSA, and the CSL, the Office of Multicultural Affairs, etc., taking active roles). Continuing our efforts to hire a more diverse faculty can help advance multicultural education goals in all three areas.

We offer the following simple, pragmatic definition: multicultural education in the curriculum means attention to differences in human culture and experience - such as issues of race, ethnicity, religion, cultural norms and beliefs, language, class, gender and sexuality - and the human commonalities that make communication and community possible.

We acknowledge that the idea of a culture or cultural group is itself a relative, not an essential, concept; what is recognized as a culture is to a large extent the product of particular perspectives and interpretations. The cultural attributes in the above definition reflect currently salient ideas of culture that have been the basis of substantial scholarly inquiry and hence are available for study.

Curricular Goals with regard to Multicultural Education:

1. To encourage an understanding of the diverse world and country in which we live. This means expanding and modifying the traditional curriculum where appropriate to acknowledge that ours is a world composed equally of women and men most of whom are not white, and that our country is one in which issues of diversity have been formative at every stage of our development. It is important to foster understanding of both human commonalities and differences, including the social, political and moral consequences of these differences.
2. To offer courses dealing with multicultural issues both in the U.S. and elsewhere in the world.
3. To incorporate education about multicultural topics and issues into the curriculum in ways designed to benefit all students, not exclusively members of particular groups. That is, we affirm a pluralistic vision of multicultural education.
4. To encourage an understanding of traditions and experiences in addition to one's own. This in turn should foster fuller understanding of one's own experience and recognition of one's own position in a multicultural world.
5. To foster multiple approaches to multicultural topics: to offer introductory and advanced courses, as well as discipline-centered and interdisciplinary courses; to offer separate courses on multicultural issues, as well as to include multicultural topics and perspectives in other courses.
6. To promote open, full, and ongoing discussion of issues of diversity, whether or not they are controversial.
7. To support and encourage faculty to develop competence in teaching multicultural topics and approaches, and to seek new faculty who possess such competence. Topics or courses concerning particular groups need not be taught by members of those groups. There are potential benefits from looking at a group both from within the experience of that group and from other perspectives.

Approved by Faculty at Faculty Meeting on April 4, 1994