Diversity Grant Expected To Bring Changes

Uw-whitewater, Scene Of Racial Incident In 2001, To Fund Course Changes And Other Activities.

Wisconsin State Journal :: LOCAL/WISCONSIN :: B1

Wednesday, March 26, 2003
Karen Rivedal Higher education reporter

More than two dozen faculty at UW-Whitewater have won grants totaling $80,000 to put their ideas on diversity into use for students next fall.

A visit by a controversial cartoonist, a new class about the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the creation of a library on Asian culture are among the projects awarded grants. Provost Richard Telfer was happy about faculty response to the grant offer, first made by university administration just a little over two months ago.

"It was very quick," Telfer said. "We had a nice representation of different kinds of ways to learn about diversity and infuse it into courses."

Finding new ways to incorporate diversity into existing classwork was the top recommendation of a task force that studied diversity and the campus climate last year. The committee formed after a racial incident during the 2001 Homecoming, when some fraternity members appeared in blackface during a skit.

The awarded grants ranged from $100 to cover workshop costs to $7,200 to build an archive of online curriculum known as a Diversity Web. The site, to be created by James Winship, a professor of social work, will showcase different teaching methods and acquaint faculty with resources beyond their area of expertise.

University officials hope to offer the grants annually, but no one is sure that will be possible because of the state's money problems, Telfer said.

"Obviously we are undergoing a budget situation now where it may be difficult next year," he said. "But we see this as an important priority."

Among the grant-funded offerings next fall will be:

* Comic visit: Art professor Greg Porcaro and political science professor Paula Mohan will bring syndicated cartoonist Aaron McGruder to campus for a workshop and public lecture. His strip, "The Boondocks," covers culturally charged topics on race and civil rights.

"I thought, This kid should come to Whitewater," Porcaro said about the young cartoonist. "There just seems to be a general ignorance in the majority of our white students about what it means to be a minority."
The strip, which features three minority or mixed-race children and their take on the world around them, is notable for its mix of humor and sharp satire. Like "Doonesbury," it is one of the few strips to stay true to cartooning's history of political motivation, Porcaro said.

* Expanding history: Anthony Gulig, history professor, will revamp a course on American history to use more material about blacks and American Indians.

* Retracing race: History professor Seth Meisel will develop a course on the roots of race relations in America, beginning with colonial encounters and covering the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The class will explore how America's multi-ethnic character evolved from these early encounters.

* Asian culture: Sociology professor Larry Newman will develop a library of instructional materials on Asian Americans, the second fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States. Newman said Asian-American culture is nearly absent in the current curriculum.

* Race and TV: Darrell Newton, professor of communications, is sponsoring a public lecture by Hollywood actor/director Tim Reid, best known for his role in the television series "WKRP in Cincinnati." Reid will discuss perception and reality in TV's portrayal of blacks.

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