

# **ENGAGING MULTICULTURAL STUDENTS AS SCHOLARS**

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## **Introduction**

One of the most discussed issues in higher education is how to close the achievement gap between majority (white) and multicultural (underrepresented minority) students. Many different theories and approaches have been debated and utilized in the effort to address this issue. As a faculty member and administrator at University of Wisconsin – Whitewater, Chancellor Richard J. Telfer has endorsed a comprehensive approach that has scholarly engagement of multicultural students at its center. Telfer's ongoing support of the following initiatives has demonstrated an administrative commitment to engaging multicultural students as scholars: McNair Scholars Program; King/Chavez Scholars Program; Wisconsin Alliance for Minority Participation in the Sciences (WiscAMP); Grow Our Own; Plan 2008; and Equity Scorecard.

As Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies in 1991, Telfer teamed with Roger Pulliam, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Support Services, to co-write a successful proposal for funding the McNair Scholars Program at the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater. This program helped to facilitate a core group of first generation and multicultural scholars' preparation for doctoral study and the professorate (UWW Lydecker Award Application, 2006). This was Telfer's first foray into administering the formal engagement of multicultural students in scholarly activities at the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater. Following the successful launching of the McNair Scholars Program at the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater in 1992, Telfer was instrumental in providing administrative support and resources for other initiatives that encouraged multicultural students to participate in high demand activities, initiatives and majors in various positions that he held on campus: Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies; Chair of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction; Associate Vice Chancellor; Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs; Interim Chancellor; and Chancellor.

Telfer was an early champion of the King/Chavez Scholars Program which was designed to attract and retain talented multicultural students at the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater in order to produce a pool of prospects for the McNair Scholars Program, Undergraduate Research Program, University Honors Program and other high demand initiatives (UWW Lydecker Award Application, 2006). He also encouraged Jeff McKinnon, Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences to work with Richard McGregory, Director of the McNair

Scholars Program to pursue the WiscAMP initiative for the campus in order to expand the number of underrepresented multicultural students that participated in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) majors in 2004. Additionally, Telfer has always been a strong proponent of “Grow Our Own,” an initiative that was conceptualized as part of the University of Wisconsin - Whitewater’s Plan 2008 and Equity Scorecard efforts at diversifying the faculty, staff and administration (UWW Plan 2008 Final Report, 2008).

## **Traditional Approaches to Engaging Multicultural Students**

As various Midwestern states have implemented innovative approaches and initiatives for encouraging their citizens to pursue higher education such as the Wisconsin Covenant, Kalamazoo Promise (Michigan) and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholars (Indiana), many campuses have continued to engage multicultural students in the same manner in which they were served in the 1970’s and 1980’s. High profile potluck dinner events, diversity speak outs and sensitivity sessions have often served as major components of deficit models that focused solely on getting students to attend class and/or tutorial sessions. While this sort of approach has some merit, it does not have the same educational and pre-professional development benefits as the expanded classroom offered by participation in undergraduate research, study abroad, research/work internships, serving as residence/campus assistants, and serving as teaching/research assistantships (Kuh, 2008). In fact, many talented multicultural students first identified in the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater’s pre-college operations once flocked to historically black colleges and universities (HBCU’s) and Hispanic serving institutions (HSI’s) where they perceived that they would receive this sort of academic engagement and pre-professional exposure (UWW Lydecker Award Application, 2008).

## **University of Wisconsin – Whitewater’s Approach**

Chancellor Telfer’s involvement with initiatives that impact multicultural students has played a role in the development of a multi-dimensional approach. This approach is comprehensive, extending from pre-college to college retention to graduate study to developing multicultural professionals. Telfer’s involvement has been administrative as well as curriculum focused.

The University of Wisconsin – Whitewater approach for multicultural student engagement begins with its pre-college operations. Since 1986, the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater has had extensive summer academic enrichment programs that have served over 300 sixth through twelfth graders each summer (UWW Board of Regents Diversity Award Application, 2008). These programs have been specifically tailored to academic and career exploration for students. High school students have been given the option of ACT testing and test preparation. Middle school students have had the opportunity to test for the eighth grade state research requirement by participating in the Reading for Success in Math and Science program. Pre-college Academic Summer Camps include five-weeks of academic, career, cultural and recreational activities. The camps are: Latino Institute; Native American Institute; Southeast Asian Institute; Math & Science Institute; GEAR UP; ACT Preparation Camp; Business & Commerce Camp; Science & Technology Camp; Arts & Humanities Camp. These camps are funded by the Wisconsin Department of Instruction and the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater general funds. The Upward Bound Program (1992) and Educational Talent

Search Program (1994) added an additional pool of 768 students to the pre-college pool of the campus (UWW Board of Regents Diversity Award Application, 2008). These programs are federally funded TRIO programs; they also provide an enriched group of diversified academic achievers (Academic Support Services Annual Report, 2008).

The University of Wisconsin – Whitewater currently has the following retention programs and initiatives in place for multicultural/disadvantaged (M/D) students: Academic Network; FRESH START; Latino Student Programs; Southeast Asian Support Services; Native American Support Services; Minority Business/Teacher Preparation Programs; McNair Scholars Program; and King/Chavez Scholars Program. Each of these programs has a general focus that networks students with support services and helps students to understand the campus climate (Academic Support Services Annual Report, 2008).

It is illustrative to discuss some of the retention programs that have a general advising and support services referral focus. Academic Network targets students, for advising and academic services referrals, who are not designated users of other M/D programs. The FRESH START initiative targets incoming freshmen who show promise for academic success for participation in a summer residential transition program and academic support during the fall and spring semesters. Latino Student Programs fosters the retention and graduation of Latino and other students through: academic advising; multicultural/globalized programming; and study abroad experiences. Southeast Asian Support Services (SASS) provides resources for Southeast Asian students on academic, social and personal issues to increase retention and graduation by connecting with Academic Support Services, the community, parents and student organizations. Native American Support Services (NASS) provides support for the retention and graduation of Native American undergraduates by providing students with information regarding campus services, grant and scholarship opportunities and academic advising. The Minority Business/Teacher Preparation Program provides support for targeted students majoring in business and education; the program is located in the College of Business and Economics and the College of Education.

Chancellor Telfer has been a continual supporter of the notion that programs and initiatives that focus on high achieving students would complement the efforts of the general focus retention programs. At the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater, these programs include the King/Chavez Scholars Program as well as the McNair Scholars Program. The King/Chavez Scholars Program was designed to attract and retain exceptional undergraduate scholars at the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater. It reflects the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater's commitment to upholding the ideals and expectations of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Cesar Chavez. Specifically, the King/Chavez Scholars Program: prepares students for the transition from high school to college; provides students with a peer group for academic and social reinforcement; gives students the opportunity to have a relationship with a faculty mentor; introduces students to undergraduate research and its relationship to classroom and career performance; and makes students competitive for graduate and professional study (UWW Lydecker Award Application, 2008). The McNair Scholars Program prepares first-generation and multicultural students for doctoral study and eventual careers as college professors. The program: matches each student with a faculty mentor in their major; provides resources for undergraduate research projects; enhances students' quantitative, computer,

test taking, research methods, and critical thinking skills; provides students with opportunities to present research findings at regional and national conferences; and provides stipends for on-campus and external summer research internships (UWW Lydecker Award Application, 2006).

**Table 1: King/Chavez Scholars Cohort**

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Number Graduated</b>	<b>Number Enrolled</b>	<b>Not Enrolled</b>	<b>Number Transferred</b>
1997-1998	16	9 (56.25%)	0 (0.00%)	6 (37.50%)	1 (6.25%)
1998-1999	13	10 (76.92%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (15.38%)	1 (7.69%)
1999-2000	16	6 (37.50%)	0 (0.00%)	5 (31.25%)	5 (31.25%)
2000-2001	24	15 (62.50%)	2 (8.33%)	5 (20.80%)	2 (8.33%)
2001-2002	25	11 (44.00%)	0 (0.00%)	11 (44.00%)	3 (12.00%)
2002-2003	22	13 (59.09%)	2 (9.09%)	5 (22.73%)	2 (9.09%)
2003-2004	35	9 (25.71%)	11 (31.43%)	13 (37.14%)	2 (5.71%)
2004-2005	28	0 (0.00%)	15 (53.57%)	10 (35.71%)	3 (10.71%)
2005-2006	23	0 (0.00%)	17 (73.91%)	6 (26.09%)	0 (0.00%)
2006-2007	45	0 (0.00%)	43 (95.56%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (4.44%)
2007-2008	50	0 (0.00%)	50 (100.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
2008-2009	62	NA	NA	NA	NA

King/Chavez Scholars have had a remarkable retention and six year graduation rate. The Fall 1997 – Fall 2001 cohorts graduated at a 59% rate, which compares favorably to the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater average of 52%. The first to second year retention rate for the past five entering cohorts was 82%, which compares well to the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater average of 76%. In addition, King/Chavez Scholars’ gravitation toward campus activities and general campus involvement results in academic outcomes and an improved campus climate. This success is also augmented by King/Chavez Scholars becoming: McNair Scholars and campus assistants; experiencing study abroad; enrolling in graduate study; expanding academic majors into science, technology, engineering, mathematics, business, and education; and participating in INROADS internships and TOP Jobs state internships. Table 2 shows the number of King/Chavez Scholars who have participated in study abroad, the Undergraduate Research Program, and the McNair Scholars Program. Finally, King/Chavez Scholars help to make a difference in the quality of life in Wisconsin. Many have elected to remain in the state of Wisconsin after graduation. They are gainfully employed in private, public and not-for-profit entities.

McNair Scholars have been very successful at the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater and in graduate study. Table 3 illustrates the program’s success in the following areas: master’s degree enrollment; master’s degree completion; doctoral study enrollment; and doctoral degree completion. It should be noted that the program’s approximate 75% graduate study enrollment rate is far above state and national rates for first generation, low-income and multicultural students.

**Table 2: King/Chavez Scholars Participation**

Academic Year	Total Number	Study Abroad	Undergraduate Research	McNair Scholars
1997-1998	16	3	3	3
1998-1999	13	5	7	6
1999-2000	16	2	1	1
2000-2001	24	1	6	6
2001-2002	25	3	3	2
2002-2003	22	4	3	1
2003-2004	35	6	9	6
2004-2005	28	2	3	2
2005-2006	23	1	2	1
2006-2007	45	0	4	2
2007-2008	50	NA	3	NA
2008-2009	62	NA	NA	NA

**Table 3: McNair Scholars Cohort Profile Overview**

Academic Year	Number In Cohort	Completed BA	Attended Grad Sch	Enrolled MA	Completed MA	Enrolled Ph.D.	Completed Ph.D.
1992-1993	15	15	14	0	12	1	1
1993-1994	10	10	10	0	8	1	1
1994-1995	7	7	7	0	5	0	2
1995-1996	15	15	11	2	8	0	3
1996-1997	12	12	9	0	9	1	0
1997-1998	14	14	9	3	5	2	0
1998-1999	10	9	7	1	5	1	1
1999-2000	5	5	4	1	2	0	1
2000-2001	8	8	4	1	3	1	0
2001-2002	9	9	8	3	4	1	0
2002-2003	11	11	10	3	6	1	0
2003-2004	9	9	4	1	1	2	0
2004-2005	12	9	5	4	0	1	0
2005-2006	11	3	2	2	0	0	0
2006-2007	10	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>

## Diversifying Faculty, Staff and Administration

In addition to Chancellor Telfer's involvement with (and support of) the pre-college and

retention initiatives discussed previously, his leadership related to diversifying faculty, staff and administration has been noteworthy. As a former co-chair of the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater’s Plan 2008 Committee, he was instrumental in the development of the “Grow Our Own” initiative whereby alumni from M/D backgrounds who were enrolled in graduate study or who had recently completed graduate degrees were encouraged to connect with the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater campus for lectures and other opportunities that would enhance their prospects for employment in higher education (UWW Plan 2008 Final Report, 2008).

To date, “Grow Our Own” prospects have had an excellent record of entrance into tenure track faculty, lecturer, administrative, post-doctoral and other positions. Table 4 illustrates the success of “Grow Our Own” doctoral students.

**Table 4: Grow Our Own**

<b>Ph.D. Completed</b>	<b>Employment</b>
Kathleen Banks (Psych) 2004 UW-Milwaukee	Assistant Professor, University of Iowa
Patti Beth (Psych) 2006 UW-Madison	Lecturer, MATC, Madison
Timothy Blenkinsop (Biology) 2008 New York Univ.	Graduate Student, NYU
Nicole Bronson (Health Policy) 2007 UCLA	Energetics Study Manager, UCLA
Jadawn Muhammad Collins (Educ) 2005 Cardinal Stritch	Administrator, NESI (Non-public Educ. Svcs, Inc.), Milwaukee
Margaret Hurkman (Biology) 2001 UW-Madison	Plant Breeder, California
Edgar Jordan (Psych) 2007 UW-Milwaukee	School Psychologist, Milwaukee Public Schools
Monica Kelsey-Brown (Educ) 2001 UW-Madison	Teacher/Administrator, Milwaukee Public Schools
Sandra Knuteson (Toxic) 2004 Clemson University	Asst Prof, Sciences, Amer. Univ of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates
Richard McGregory Jr. (Econ) 2004 UW-Milwaukee	Interim Director, Academic Support Services, UW-Whitewater
Tiffany Prather (Psych) 2008 WI School of Prof. Psych	School Psychologist, Milwaukee Public Schools
Jon Penterman (Biology) 2007 Univ. California-Berkeley	Post-doctoral Researcher, University of Washington
Khyana Pumphrey (Educ) 2002 UW-Milwaukee	Counselor, Lakeshore Technical College, Cleveland, Wisconsin
RaMel Smith (Psych) 2003 UW-Milwaukee	Psychologist, Children’s Hospital, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Andrew Vila (Biochem) 2003 Medical College of WI	Post-doctoral Researcher, Vanderbilt University
Lisa Watts (Educ) 2004 UW-Milwaukee	State Government, Memphis, Tennessee
Phil Yang (Educ) 2008 Edgewood College	Retention Programs, UW-Stout

<b>Ph.D. Prospects</b>	<b>Employment</b>
Dennis Baskin (Educ) UW-Madison	Executive Director, Pre-College Programs, UW-Whitewater
Goldy Brown III (Educ) UW-Madison	Principal, Beloit Public Schools
Rachelle Brown-Clardy (Educ) UW-Madison	Teacher, Beloit Public Schools
Rita Castillo (Psych) Alliant University	Graduate Student, Alliant University
Michael Endres (Psych) IU-Bloomington	Graduate Student, IU-Bloomington
Christina Garza-Nelson (Urban Educ) UW-Milwaukee	Asst. Professor, Alverno College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Douglas Kiel (History) UW-Madison	Graduate Coordinator, NASS, UW-Whitewater
Al Parchia (Educ) UW-Madison	Director, Education Talent Search Program, UW-Milwaukee
Starlette Patterson (Psych) UW-Milwaukee	Graduate Student, UW-Milwaukee
Mario Pippin (Soc) Howard University	Graduate Student, Howard University
Bethany Price (Psych) Northern Illinois University	Graduate Student, Northern Illinois University
Tami Torrence (Educ) UW-Milwaukee	Teacher, Milwaukee Public Schools
Maysee Yang-Her (Educ) IU-Bloomington	Instructor, Educ. Psych., College of Ed., UW-Stevens Point

## **Accountability**

As Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs in 2005, Telfer championed the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater’s participation in the Equity Scorecard initiative in order to enhance accountability related to the achievement of multicultural students. At present, the academic achievement of multicultural students at the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater presents a mixed picture. Although a gap in the retention and graduation rates of majority and multicultural students persists, data from the Equity Scorecard report suggest that multicultural students are participating in high demand activities (e.g., undergraduate research, study abroad, campus leadership activities and graduate study enrollment) at rates higher than their majority counterparts (UWW Equity Scorecard Report, 2007). This suggests that engaging this population as scholars has some merits. In addition, the recognition of the McNair Scholars Program (2006) and King/Chavez Scholars Program (2008) by the State Council on Affirmative Action bestowing the campus with the Ann Lydecker Educational Diversity Award suggests that professionals beyond the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater campus perceive value in our efforts to engage multicultural students as scholars.