

September 5, 2014

Dear Dr. Crowder,

I am writing to express my interest in the opportunity to serve on the Diversity Enhancement Committee. I have a strong interest and commitment to the diverse needs of all communities. My commitment is shown on a daily basis through the student groups I support, international students that I mentor and faculty/staff relationships that I build.

As an emerging leader on the WKU campus I have seasoned and skilled mentors to support my success in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Lacretia Dye , Ph.D, LPCC, NCC, PSC
Assistant Professor
Department of Counseling and Student Affairs
Western Kentucky University

Dear Margaret and SEC members,

WKU's Diversity Statement, adopted in March 2008 and endorsed by the Administrative Council and President Ransdell in April 2008, defines diversity as "The encompassing dimensions of diversity involve an appreciation of the differences and unique contributions represented by individual identity, opinion, and culture. Differences may be represented through areas such as race, gender, ethnicity, language, religion, sexual orientation, geographic location, abilities or disabilities, and socioeconomic status."

(<https://www.wku.edu/dec/wkudiversitystatement.php>, Sept 3, 2014). This definition is very inclusive, and embraces the spirit of diversity; it is also, I'd like to think, what Dr. H.H. Cherry would call "above the rim."

When it comes to diversity, WKU is far from the rim.

WKU's Diversity Plan (<https://www.wku.edu/dec/wkudiversityplan.php>) contains disabilities in both its Mission Statement and Diversity Definition. However, these are the only two places disabilities are mentioned in the entire document. WKU Policy 1.3001, Equal Treatment of Students also fails to mention disabilities (<http://www.wku.edu/policies/docs/36.pdf>). When revised in 2011, I brought this to the attention of the chair of the Faculty Senate, who then sent it to committee, whose disheartening response was that disability was covered by EEO and therefore did not need to be included in the policy. Even more disheartening, however, was the sworn testimony on May 23, 2013, WKU's Chief Diversity Officer stated, "We have not included disabilities in our definition of diversity." (documentation upon request).

Sadly, this exclusion, this lack of embracing diversity as President Ransdell endorsed it, has been my experience at WKU as both an employee with a hidden physical disability and as the mother of a student on the autism spectrum. I want change. I want to be a part of establishing diversity policies (of which there are currently none per the policy website) that are truly inclusive and reflective of WKU's Diversity Statement. Serving on the Diversity Enhancement Committee will allow me this opportunity.

For the past several years, I have been a partner in the "I am...." Diversity Movement for the Commonwealth of Kentucky (<http://www.iamdiversityky.org/#!/aboutus/c154i>). Diversity, and the issue of social justice, are in the forefront of my discipline, public health. I genuinely embrace the concept of diversity and practice it in my professional and personal lives, far beyond the disability issues I've mentioned. I know that I have volunteered for just about every opportunity that you've presented, but this is one where, if I thought it would be helpful, I would beg for the opportunity to do so. =)

Please select me to serve.

Respectfully (and Hopefully),

Marilyn Gardner

P.S. As you perhaps know, Kentucky Protection and Advocacy, the federally-funded legal agency that protects the rights of people with disabilities, filed a federal lawsuit on my behalf against WKU. This lawsuit is still active. Serving on this committee will not place WKU, nor me, in jeopardy. Hopefully, however, enacting policies and practices that are inclusive of disabilities, both visible and hidden, will prevent future litigation by others. I am happy to address any concerns, doubts, or questions you, or the SEC, might have about my ability to serve, and hope if there are any, I will be provided with the opportunity to do so. My cell is 270-779-2767

September 4, 2014

Dear Dr. Crowder:

I saw your email announcement about an opening seat of the Diversity Enhancement Committee (DEC) on September 3, 2014. I am writing this letter because I am very much interested in serving on this important committee.

Since I joined WKU in fall 2005, I have been supporting the diversity at WKU as well as in the community in multiple ways. For example, I was (I believe) the first faculty member who took my (American) students to the English as the Second Language International (ESLI) program to directly communicate with each other in 2007, and I have continued this program with ESLI for over 2 years until I started teaching different courses. I have also sent these students to the Bowling Green International Festival as volunteers to increase their awareness of diversity in the community. I myself have been serving as a volunteer since 2006. For the Department of Communication, I have served as an advisor for international graduate students to assist their transitions to the new educational systems in the U.S.

I have also tried to contribute to the diversity enhancement through my personal networks. For example, I visited my alma mater in Japan to make an exchange agreement for WKU students and faculty in 2009 (Unfortunately, it was on hold and gone due to a significant structural change at WKU). In 2011, I invited a group of Japanese professionals via the Consulate of Japan to hold a campus event on traditional Japanese music and dance for WKU students, faculty, as well as the community. This event, which was held in Van Meter Hall, was a huge success.

While I am glad to see rapidly increasing diversity on campus in past years, I always hope the healthy enhancement for everyone because diversity could also bring challenges. I have contributed to this area as well. For my students, I have given an assignment to develop a diversity training program so that they can learn how to overcome the challenges. I have also been conducting research among international faculty members to learn about their experiences working in the U.S.

Finally, I have also been serving on the International Education Week Planning Committee this year. Along with that committee, I hope I can make further contributions to WKU by serving on the DEC.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. In the meantime, I look forward to serving on the DEC.

Sincerely,

Kumi Ishii, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Communication

Dear Dr. Crowder:

I read the WKU Diversity Statement and realized that if there is a committee I wanted to be a member of this is it! Professionally through my 30+ years of working at various educational institutions in Europe, the Middle East, and the United States, I have had the opportunity to teach and help thousands of students of various backgrounds and nationalities. Before joining WKU in 2002, I taught Emirati young ladies for 4 years in the United Arab Emirates and previously students in Iran, Iraq, and, of course, Greece where I originally am from. I have also traveled extensively to most European countries and in Egypt, Oman, India, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore, just to name a few.

I am a firm believer of diversity enhancement where our students learn to be productive members of the global community and not close-minded where they favor a certain group of people over another, based on color, gender, ethnicity, religion, and so on.

This week I am at an international conference in Chicago and in fact tomorrow I have a presentation to make about one of my WKU class projects where my students work collaboratively with businesses in helping them to create effective web sites to help attract customers, etc. I do enjoy conferences where professionals from various countries meet to share experiences they are having in the classroom, and this conference is one of the best. Although my heavy schedule this week (I also teach 3 online and 2 face-to-face classes) does not allow me to write to you the “perfect” 1-page letter that you are looking for, I still would hate to miss the opportunity to tell you how fitting this committee is for me.

Thank you,

George Kontos, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
School of Professional Studies
University College
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, KY 42101-1067
(9/3/2014)

September 4, 2014

Dr. Margaret Crowder
Chair, University Senate
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky 42101

Dear Dr. Crowder,

Please consider this letter as an expression of my interest in serving as the Senate Representative on the Diversity Enhancement Committee at Western Kentucky University. Since I came to WKU in August 2011, I have sought ways to meaningfully share my experience and expertise that meet the needs of, and contribute to, the missions of the Social Work Department, the College of Health and Human Services, and the University. For me, service is not an added responsibility; rather, it enriches, and is enriched by, my scholarship and teaching.

The overarching focus of my research is the examination of the determinants of economic and social injustice, and the development and assessment of interventions aimed at promoting equity. I am interested in the efficacy of diversity training in education with specific regard to the impact on explicit and implicit curricula. I am committed to the retention and graduation of historically marginalized students. Through teaching and advising, I work to ensure that at risk students are ready for the workforce or/and graduate school.

I believe that I would be an excellent addition to the Diversity Enhancement Committee. In addition to what I have discussed above, my own experiences as a Jewish lesbian give me a unique understanding of the struggles of oppressed groups. Thank you and the Senate Executive Committee for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gayle Mallinger, PhD

Dear Dr. Crowder,

I am pleased to accept the nomination by Dr. Eric Reed to represent the University Senate on the Diversity Committee. This is a very important position, and I have extensive experience both in university governance and in outside organizations working to further diversity and inclusion at the university, local, and state levels. As an historian who studies legal history, specifically civil rights and human rights, my work to foster a more diverse and inclusive campus climate is a natural outgrowth from my areas of scholarly expertise.

As a member of the University Benefits Committee, I worked with Senate leaders and faculty allies to enact Domestic Partner Benefits (known at WKU as Other Qualified Dependents) from 2005 until 2010. We built a coalition of faculty and student activists to make this a reality, and in the wake of our success, Murray State, Eastern Kentucky, and Morehead State Universities followed suit. More recently, in 2013 I became a founding member of the Campus Pride Index Committee, a group working with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to make WKU a campus where LGBT students are welcome and safe, with the larger goal of increasing WKU's reputation as a university where diversity is not merely a talking point, but a core value towards which we constantly work. In the community and statewide, I am an active member of the campaign to enact a local Fairness ordinance in Bowling Green and to pass a statewide Fairness law. These ordinances, which already exist in eight Kentucky cities and towns (five of which are university or college towns), protect people from discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodations on the basis of sexual orientation or perceived orientation. Such laws would make Bowling Green a better place for university students and employees to live, many of whom come from cities where such protections have long been in place. Finally, I give talks and participate in panel discussions both on campus and across the state on civil rights and diversity issues, from voting rights, housing discrimination, same-sex marriage, and immigration and immigrant rights. In sum, the struggle for equality and the intersections of discrimination form the basis of my intellectual life, my university service, and my public outreach.

Through my statewide work for rights and inclusion, I have built an extensive network of contacts and allies, including university diversity/inclusion officers as well as faculty, staff, and student activists. These contacts will help me bring new ideas to the Diversity Committee and to work to achieve not only CPE diversity and inclusion goals, but also to exceed their expectations to make WKU a campus known for being diverse, inclusive, and welcoming for all faculty, staff, and students.

[Dr. Patti Minter]

September 4, 2014

To the Senate Executive Committee,

Please accept this letter as my statement of interest in serving on the Diversity Enhancement Committee at WKU. I am a full-time faculty member in the Honors College at WKU, and I have a deep and abiding interest in the issues addressed by this important committee.

I have a doctorate in educational leadership and I am trained as a social historian, so I have a professional interest in issues related to diversity in society at large and in higher education in particular. I have worked in postsecondary institutions that have diverse faculties and student bodies and I have worked in institutions that are relatively homogeneous. These experiences have given me a first-hand appreciation of the benefits that come from working and learning in an environment that includes the perspectives of a wide array of people. Given the multiplicity of experiences in society at large, I believe that higher education institutions must reflect this diversity if they are going to fulfill their mission of preparing students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will help make them effective members of society.

Being a welcoming and diverse campus will strengthen WKU. However, it is clear from my perspective within the Honors College, that there is significant work to do. We do not have a diverse staff, faculty, or student body, and I think this is a significant liability for everyone in the unit— and by extension, for the campus as a whole. Therefore, I am committed to improving this situation and I would welcome the opportunity to serve on a committee dedicated specifically toward that goal.

I believe that my personal and professional experience, combined with my desire to contribute to enhancing diversity at WKU, will make me to be an effective and hard-working member of the Diversity Enhancement Committee. I appreciate your consideration of my qualifications and interest.

Sincerely,

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