

**Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) Fellows
Summary for
The Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Studies**

In no more than two (2) pages, please complete and return by June 2, 2003

- 1) Name and title

Susan Birden
Assistant Professor
Adult Education Program
Educational Foundations Department

- 2) Project Title:

“Reflections on Buffalo State College’s Best Practices in Diversity Education”

- 3) Brief Description of Project:

This project in reflective practice was designed to identify some of the best practices in academic diversity education that are currently taking place on the Buffalo State College campus. The work consisted of four phases.

In the first phase, I identified relevant Buffalo State College graduate and undergraduate courses that utilized diversity content and the professors who teach those courses. I used the Buffalo State College catalogs to identify courses, and then contacted the departments and/or professors to obtain copies of syllabi. I then reviewed all of these syllabi to determine which courses looked promising for contributing to this project. I wanted to find a good cross-section of the campus and limit my choices to no more than 15 professors.

The second phase consisted of a literature review of diversity pedagogy in a cross-disciplinary context. Once it became apparent that there was little literature that represented a cross-disciplinary approach, something that I had suspected would be the case, I then proceeded to look at diversity pedagogy within the Buffalo State College disciplines that I had identified in the first phase.

The third phase took place simultaneously with the second phase. In the third phase, I obtained permission from the Research Foundation for human subject research, and then conducted an in-depth interview with a total of 13 professors on the Buffalo State College campus who are actively structuring their courses to involve various aspects of diversity. (I had identified 14 professors that I wanted to interview, but one individual was unwilling to be interviewed.) The areas represented in the interviews were: Elementary Education, Sociology, Exceptional Education, Women’s Studies, Educational Foundations, Criminal Justice, Art Education, History, African American

Studies, Hospitality and Tourism, Student Personnel Administration, and Speech-Language Pathology.

The fourth phase, which is ongoing, consists of analysis of the qualitative data, follow-up questions to the interviewees, and preparation of a manuscript to submit for publication in a refereed journal.

4) Summary of Major Recommendations:

This CASTL project has been incredibly valuable for my professional development. My training has been in philosophical and historical research, so undertaking a qualitative study of this scope was an enormous opportunity for growth. It required me to do research on how to do qualitative research as well as completing the four phases of the project that I described above. I believe that I will find a ready audience for refereed publication of the results of this qualitative study. Further, I have no doubt that both this research and my newly gained understanding of qualitative research will bear fruit for several years to come.

In addition to the benefits that this fellowship has produced for my own professional development, however, I am certain that the Buffalo State College campus will benefit from this project. My own students will be the most immediate beneficiaries of this study. I teach "Diversity in Adult Education and Training" and I plan to revise it this summer based on what I have learned from the interviews and literature reviews that I conducted for the fellowship.

It seems clear that there will be further benefits to the campus, however. I heard more than once during the interviews that I conducted that Buffalo State's Equity and Diversity Council has reached a turning point. The council is ready to explore how to encourage and assist faculty development in the area of diversity. The raw data from the interviews that I conducted will offer some baseline data to the council regarding the state of diversity education on this campus. Further, as the council begins to consider how to conduct faculty development, the best practices that are cited in these interviews should be a valuable place to begin to look at diversity pedagogy that transcends narrow disciplinary content.

Finally, I believe that the investment that Buffalo State College has made in the CASTL fellowships has produced much that will benefit this campus. Certainly, this opportunity and support for my professional growth has been a wonderful experience that I will never forget. In addition, several colleagues have commented about how inspiring it was to see a colleague launching into a new area of development and how that has improved their morale. Further, from a purely practical perspective, the college has gained, and will continue to gain, a great deal from all three of the three fellowship projects conducted this year. I strongly recommend that Buffalo State College continue to support the faculty and continue its commitment to the development of the campus community through these faculty fellowships.