Proposal Date: October 29, 2013

**University College**

**Department of Diversity & Community Studies**

**Proposal to Create a New Major Program**

**(Action Item)**

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1. **Identification of program:**
   1. Program Title: Diversity & Community Studies
   2. Degree type: Bachelor of Arts (BA)
   3. Classification of Instructional program Code (CIP): 05.0299 Area, Ethnic and Cultural Studies: Ethnic, Cultural Minority, Gender, & Group Studies, Other.
   4. Required hours in proposed major program: 33
   5. Special information: This is an interdisciplinary major, drawing on courses within the department and across the university.
   6. Program admission requirements: Admission to Western Kentucky University. Students transferring from KCTCS may receive credit for general education courses, per state-wide agreements.
   7. Catalog description: The major in diversity & community studies requires a minimum of 33 hours and leads to a Bachelor of Arts degree. A minor or second major is required. The major provides graduates with a critical multidisciplinary framework for understanding multiple intersecting systems of oppression, practices and strategies of resistance, and movements for social change. Drawing on interdisciplinary theory, practices, and analyses, the major examines intersecting systems of oppression at local and global scales. By taking on diverse perspectives, students hone their problem-solving skills and gain practical skills related to citizenship and advocacy. Such knowledge and skills are necessary for a wide range of vocations, ranging from social services to governmental and non-profit organizations. The major prepares students advanced study in a range of interdisciplinary fields and for jobs that strive to alleviate social inequities and to improve the quality of life in diverse communities.

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| **Sample Four-Year Program of Study for the Major in**  **Diversity & Community Studies** | | | |
|  | | **Courses** | **Hours** |
| **First Year** | *Fall* | ICSR 200 | 3 |
| *Spring* | AFAM 190 | 3 |
| **Second Year** | *Fall* | GWS 200 | 3 |
| *Spring* | 6 hours from Category I | 6 |
| **Junior Year** | *Fall* | ICSR 300 | 3 |
| *Spring* | 6 hours from Category II | 6 |
| **Senior Year** | *Fall* | 6 hours from Category III | 6 |
| *Spring* | DCS 400 | 3 |
| **Total Hours for Major in Diversity & Community Studies** | | | **33** |

1. **Rationale:**
   1. Reason for developing the proposed major program:

A random survey completed by 113 undergraduate students in Honors, Gender & Women’s Studies, African American Studies, and the Institute for Citizenship & Social Responsibility classes from roughly 42 different disciplines revealed that 57% of students would either pursue or venture to gain knowledge about a major in Diversity and Community Studies. The most common response to a question asking students to describe perceived benefits of the major centered on citizenship skills that would help students personally and professionally after graduation. Students also discussed the interdisciplinary skills that would raise awareness concerning age, race, gender, and community action, which would help prepare them to facilitate progressive and sustainable changes in our communities. Other common responses concluded that the interdisciplinary skills and knowledge created in a DCS major would broaden perspectives, thus making WKU’s campus a safer space for diversity and cultural awareness. The majority of responses suggest the Diversity and Community Studies major would help to meet WKU’s mission statement by allowing students of “all backgrounds to be productive, engaged, and socially responsible citizen-leaders of a global society.”

The name of this major, Diversity & Community Studies, reflects the expertise of the faculty within the department, who are active in a wide range of interdisciplinary fields, including African American Studies, Gender & Women’s Studies, Ethnic Studies, and American Studies. Numerous emerging fields and national organizations support interdisciplinary majors that are theme- and problem-based. For instance, American Studies serves as a gathering point for emergent “interdisciplines” such as disability studies, comparative ethnic studies, critical race theory, eco-criticism, and media studies. One of the leading professional organizations for public scholars, the American Studies Association supports a host of majors like this one. For instance, at the University of Southern California, a similar major “investigates the multi-faceted problems of race, immigration, urban geography, culture, power, gender, sexuality and social justice.” The ASA also places a great deal of emphasis on civic engagement, having helped to launch Imagining America, a leading professional organization for public scholars, and one that WKU has participated in. The ASA website claims that “The greatest value of the American Studies major is diverse thinking” and that such a major “encourages critical and creative thinking aimed at drawing connections and building bridges between these diverse aspects of the American Studies experience, both past and present.”1 The major in diversity & community studies embraces this value, while going further to affirm additional important values and principles, as described below.

The prospect for jobs with this major is analogous to the prospects for numerous other majors that are not tied to a specific profession. Unlike a degree in accounting or hospitality, for instance, or a professional degree, students earning this major typically choose from a broad range of career options. A search of such sources as Workforce KY or Occupational Outlook Handbook results in a very narrow list of options. Most jobs do not necessarily use the word “diversity” or “community studies,” and those jobs that are listed under “community” tend to be for social work services. For this reason, data supporting the usefulness of this major must rest with the professions and educational organizations such as the Association of American Colleges and Universities. In their 2013 publication, “It Takes More Than a Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Studies Success” (Hart Research Associates), they identify eleven key findings. The first note is that “the challenges employees face today are more complex and require a broader skill set than in the past. Notably, employers indicate that they prioritize critical thinking, communication, and complex problem-solving skills over a job candidates major field of study when making hiring decisions.” Number 4 of the key findings adds that employers place “the greatest priority on ethics, intercultural skills, and the capacity for professional development.” Finally, several of the findings emphasize the importance of “building civic capacity,” “complete an internship or community-based field project,” developing “an electronic portfolio demonstrating a student’s work and key skill and knowledge areas,” and involving students in “active, effortful work—practices that involve such things as collaborative problem solving, research, senior projects, community engagement, and internships.”

As with any major, the key to gainful employment rests in part on the opportunities available, especially if the student is committed to remaining in a certain area, in part on the quality and abundance of experiential learning while in school, and in part on the student’s motivation and ability. This major is committed to building a cadre of graduates with a strong foundation of knowledge and a range of experiential learning, locally and globally. Based on the kinds of work graduates in majors like ours at other institutions pursue, careers in the following areas are expected: public administration, non-profit management, local or state government, community service and advocacy, public policy, education, and law. We anticipate that a significant percentage will go on to graduate school in a wide range of fields.

With respect to other justifications, including the CPE’s key indicators and five key questions, it seems that the most relevant are “Are we preparing Kentuckians for life and work?” and “Are Kentucky’s communities and economy benefiting?” As already mentioned, this major provides important skills that employers have indicated they want to see in their employees. The emphasis on understanding social structures that perpetuate inequities, on fighting the legacies and newly emerging permutations of racism, sexism, and homophobia, and building of interpersonal skills for working with others across difference, are collectively the kind of preparation students will need as they return to their homes and communities, in Kentucky and around the world.

Finally, this major is effectively helping to enhance the minors and certificates that the department already offers. Students from all majors will benefit from the expanded range of courses and perspectives that this major offers, whether they choose it as their official major, take courses that count toward the Colonnade Program, or select one of the department’s minors (African American Studies, Gender & Women’s Studies, Gerontology, as well as the certificate in Citizenship & Social Responsibility).

1<http://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/le-sp13/hartresearchassociates.cfm>

* 1. Projected enrollment in the proposed major program: Based on current enrollment in WKU minors and on the results of surveys, we anticipate enrollment to grow to 20 within the first two years.
  2. Relationship of the proposed major program to other programs now offered by the department: This is the first major to be offered by the department. It represents a synthesis of three programs—African American Studies, Gender & Women’s Studies, and Citizenship & Social Responsibility—as well as an elaboration and expansion of the kinds of topics they address.
  3. Relationship of the proposed major program to other university programs: A number of other majors offered at WKU deal with issues of diversity and/or community, including sociology, folk studies, history, political science, public health, social work, and economics. Some of their courses are included in this major as course electives. While some of those programs approach these topics from more than one disciplinary perspective, their majors are directly tied to their discipline’s accrediting bodies. Drawing from the core academic programs housed in the department, the DCS major privileges multidisciplinary approaches in pedagogy and knowledge production and places considerable importance on civic engagement. Thus, this major is compatible but not duplicative. It offers another option for students who prefer a multidisciplinary, theme- and problem-based focus.
  4. Relationship of the proposed major program to similar programs offered elsewhere in Kentucky and in other states (including programs at benchmark institutions): Most of the benchmarks offer minors or certificates that are related to this major (or the minors already mentioned). Some offer bachelor’s or master’s degrees in either women’s studies (Eastern Michigan) or African American studies (Indiana State) or Pan-African Studies (U Louisville). Northern Arizona University offers a BA with a concentration in community development and sustainability, and Missouri State offers a degree in intercultural communication and diversity. The range of titles speaks to the flexibility afforded interdisciplinary programs. Nonetheless, it’s clear that majors and/or minors in diversity and community studies are plentiful. A DCS major would, therefore, bring WKU in line with major offerings at peer institutions, regionally and nationally.
  5. Relationship of the proposed major program to the university mission and objectives: The *Challenging the Spirit* plan (to 2018) frames the WKU mission to “prepare students to be productive, engaged, and socially responsible citizen-leaders of a global society” along four broad goals. The first three of these are addressed in this major: “enhancing the quality of our academic programs in ways that will set us apart as an institution”; building “a diverse university community that supports the learning and success of our students”; and working “with our community partners to enhance WKU’s positive impact on the quality of life in our region.” This major, innovative in its multidisciplinary and theme- and problem-based approach to learning, is not duplicated anywhere in the state, though prestigious institutions throughout the country do offer similar majors. We cannot build a “diverse university community” without addressing diversity across our units and in more academic programs—and doing so in ways that do not skirt the most complex challenges we face locally and globally. Finally, the community-based research our students engage in will contribute to WKU’s mission to improve the quality of life in our region.

1. **Objectives of the proposed major program:** The major in diversity & community studies is interdisciplinary and transformational, integrating themes and questions into our curriculum in ways that challenge us to respond thoughtfully and to think proactively about life in the 21st century. The curriculum invites students to grapple with systems that shape communities globally and locally and to develop skills for direct action and social change. Courses investigate the interactions of race, class, gender, ability, and sex. Topics arise from African American Studies, Gender & Women’s Studies, and Citizenship & Social Responsibility, all of which offer minors that students may take as an important component of their major. Seven specific objectives drive the curriculum:

* To provide a critical interdisciplinary framework for understanding social and structural forms of oppression at local and global scales
* To provide perspectives that enable students to confront racism, sexism, and heterosexism
* To help students develop, through multiple perspectives, an understanding of the social and historical contexts of diversity in the U.S.
* To provide a 4-year strategy for the development of research skills, including interdisciplinary and community-based research methods
* To encourage community-based approaches to problem-solving with respect to citizenship and advocacy
* To approach the acquisition of knowledge as transformative and as a means to empower self and community
* To provide experiential learning opportunities at every level of coursework

1. **Program Description:**
   1. Curriculum:

The major in diversity & community studies requires a minimum of 33 semester hours and a minor or second major.

The following courses are required for the major (15 hours)

ICSR 200: Introduction to Social Justice

ICSR 300: Public Problem-Solving

AFAM 190: The African American Experience

GWS 200: Introduction to Gender & Women’s Studies

DCS 400: Capstone in Diversity & Community Studies

Students are required to take an additional 18 hours of electives, selecting at least six hours from the following three categories:

Formations of identity and narratives of oppression (minimum of 6 hours):

COMM 463 Intercultural Communication

ENG 360: Gay and Lesbian Literature

ENG 393: African American Literature

GWS 375: American Masculinities

PSY 355: Issues in Cross-Cultural Psychology

SOCL 210: Interaction Self & Society

Advocacy and social change (minimum of 6 hours):

AFAM 3XX: Hip Hop and Democracy

DCS 343: Communities of Struggle

GWS 301: Art and Social Change

HIST 358: Blacks in American History Before 1877 OR

HIST 359: Blacks in American History Since1877

HIST 453: American Women’s History

ICSR 435: Reimagining Citizenship

PS 373: Minority Politics

SOCL 350: Social Inequality

Systems, Local to Global (minimum of 6 hours):

DCS 360: Place, Community, Resilience

ECON 434 Economics of Poverty

FLK 330: Cultural Connections and Diversity

GEOG 110: World Regional Geography

HIST 446: American Legal History

RELS 408: Religion and Ecology

SOCL 240: Contemporary Social Problems

SOCL 360: The Community in Rural and Urban Settings

SWRK 330: Human Behavior in Social Environments I

* 1. Accreditation, certification, approval and/or licensure: Not applicable.
  2. Program delivery: The curriculum for the proposed major combines courses that are currently offered with five new courses. The courses will be offered primarily in classrooms on campus with some online offerings.

1. **Resources:**
   1. Faculty: Currently the department has faculty who teach in one of our minors or certificates. In addition, two newly hired faculty (2013) and one in process are joining the department to teach in the department’s minors, the M.A. in Social Responsibility & Sustainable Communities, and the proposed major. No additional faculty are currently being considered. However, if the number of majors increases beyond the department’s current capabilities, there may be a request for an additional tenure track position.
   2. Technological and electronic informational resources (e.g., databases, e-journals): Current resources are adequate.
   3. Facilities and equipment: Current resources are adequate.
2. **Proposed term for implementation:**
3. **Dates of prior committee approvals:**

Department: Diversity & Community Studies \_October 29, 2013

University College Curriculum Committee \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Undergraduate Curriculum Committee \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

University Senate \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_