

A Roundtable Conversation About **READY FOR THE WORLD**

UT's Quality Enhancement Plan: The International and Intercultural Awareness Initiative



Keep the Conversation Going

from Chancellor Loren Crabtree

Many people worked hard for two years behind the scenes during the planning and accreditation phases of UT's Quality Enhancement Plan. Then, at the end of fall semester, their hard work paid off when the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools granted UT overwhelmingly positive reaccreditation. Campus leaders didn't await outside endorsement to begin thinking interculturally. We've had a wonderful array of events on campus this year – speakers and performers whose experiences have enlivened our desire to know the world and to become superior intercultural partners.

This month we've officially entered a more public phase of the QEP. We're drawing student, faculty, and staff attention to the plan with a new Web site and a new name, **Ready for the World**. And, we're drawing every area of university life into the process of attuning to the global experience. Four faculty-staff groups are at work: Global Advisory Committee, Assessment Work Group, Curriculum Infusion Work Group, and Fostering Intercultural Awareness Across Campus.

I want to thank the campus leaders who participated in this Commission for Women roundtable for continuing the discussion of our intercultural and international initiative on campus in such a wonderfully constructive way. Let's keep conversing and learning -- and nurturing a community where we are all creative, engaged and **Ready for the World**.

Conversation Coordinator:

Deb Haines (Communications Director, Commission for Women)

Conversants:

Dr. Jim Gehlhar (Director, Center for International Education);
Pam Hindle (Chair, Commission for Women);

Dr. Carolyn Hodges (Co-Chair, Commission for Blacks and
member of the Commission for Women);

and Sarah Peacock (Chair, Women's Coordinating Council)

Why does UT need the Ready for the World Initiative?

HODGES: The QEP initiative began about two years ago as a requirement of the SACS accreditation committee. The chancellor came up with the idea of focusing on internationalization and intercultural awareness because it fits UT's strategic plan to focus on better understanding and appreciation of cultural pluralism. The whole idea is that we enhance student learning, especially in our undergraduates, but also that we engage faculty, staff and students all across campus.

GEHLHAR: QEP, which just this month adopted a new name -- **Ready for the World** -- not only engages UT goals but those of the state of Tennessee and society in general. It is imperative that today's university graduates be fully aware of society inside and outside the United States. If UT graduates are not conversing broadly, they will not perform as well in their professional careers or in their lives.

HINDLE: I see **Ready for the World** offering a unifying theory for the campus, the state, and beyond, which lays out opportunities for learning to thrive in a pluralistic society. The world is getting smaller and smaller due to our communicating and traveling worldwide, and we have a growing dependence on each other. Technology now allows us to do good things together or to do destructive things to each other unless we communicate and understand each other. This great theory of unity is long overdue.

HODGES: I like the fact that you talked about our growing dependence on one another. I think that understanding is at the center of being **Ready for the World**, and the QEP document serves as a framework for how we can do this -- not only for the next 5 or 10 years as SACS requires, but as we go on and on and on. This framework will help us appreciate and make the most of our dependence.

How do student, faculty, and staff demographics relate to Ready for the World goals?

GEHLHAR: If you look at who is earning PhDs in hard sciences and engineering, statistics show that it's overwhelmingly international students. Fewer American grad students are enrolled now in the U.S. and at UT in those areas, so as baby boomer professors retire, more international faculty and staff will come here because they are the ones with the qualifications. That means a more diverse faculty. **Ready for the World** is key to retention of minority students, faculty and staff who are recruited from diverse universities. We must show, once they are on campus, that we value diversity and have programs to support that.

HODGES: Over the past decade, the number of minority college students [at the University of Tennessee] has increased tremendously. I think in part it is due to lottery scholarships. But I hope an atmosphere of diversity will begin to draw them -- in their classes, their extracurricular activities, and through study abroad opportunities.

GEHLHAR: I've noticed very strongly in the last decade that the percentage of international students who are graduate students has gone up. The trend is toward fewer undergraduate international students. Undergraduates interact with other undergraduates. Graduate students of any nationality tend to be more involved with their research and don't mingle with undergraduates. So, we'd like to recruit more international undergraduates.

HINDLE: We see a trend toward more and more women college students. In fact, more women now than men are enrolled in veterinary medicine, and perhaps soon in law. Some academic programs don't enroll as many women and the Commission for Women is concerned about that.

HODGES: We compete with so many schools to recruit, and then retain, minority and international students, faculty, and staff. As associate dean I oversee faculty and staff searches. A heavily mentored system -- with organizations like commissions for women and blacks -- is important. I talk about those things to every candidate. I also talk about our commitment to **Ready for the World**, intercultural and international awareness, and our diversity plan.

Will students benefit?

PEACOCK: International cultures have a presence on campus through the I-House, but it seems optional for students to participate. The idea of **Ready for the World** seems not so much forced on the students, but certainly that they feel compelled by the benefits to participate. Otherwise I think a lot of students won't make time. For example, I've been meaning to get to the International House and to go to the study abroad office, but I just haven't done it yet and I've been here for a couple years.

GEHLHAR: CIE's Programs Abroad Office is greatly expanding its push to send students abroad and to make it easier for UT faculty to consider leading programs abroad. Across the street is the International House where we are

working to increase the variety of programming. For example, we are hosting speakers through the Conversations About World Affairs series coordinated with a geography department course syllabus. We're trying to be more visible.

HINDLE: I like what Sarah said. QEP's goal isn't to browbeat students into taking part in multicultural programming and curriculum against their wills, but quite the opposite -- to create an environment where a normal process immerses students, faculty and staff in environments where broader perspectives are presented. We don't have to agree with everything presented, but it offers lots of opportunity for constructive exchange, and even sharp exchange about ideas that disagree with each other.

PEACOCK: One more related point. I hear students complain that they can't understand their teachers' accents or that there are difficulties in communications sometimes. Even so, I think it's good for students in broad topics like math or engineering, war or culture, to see different faces on the subjects than they saw in high school where all the teachers were probably the same color, gender or nationality.

HODGES: Aside from the immediate affect of helping students see these different things that Sarah so well stated, it helps students prepare for their careers. In past student surveys some have said "I wish I had studied abroad or interacted more with students from other backgrounds." Through **Ready for the World** programming and initiatives, our students now can engage in interactions with other cultures while they are here and become much better prepared for their careers.

PEACOCK: I just had a thought: If faculty members reinforce multicultural events and say, "This has my stamp of approval, I really think you should go," it could be really helpful. I know my cultural anthropology teacher mentioned cultural attractions events she was impressed with and told the whole class about every one, and I think that reached a lot of our students. As little as you would think that, students do listen to their teachers.

Are staff included?

HINDLE: That's one of the greater hallmarks of the plan -- inclusion of staff as well as students and faculty. As a staff person I feel very positive about that. It takes a village to have a university. We're all in this thing together and we need each other. **Ready for the World** calls on all of us to stretch and grow, to get training in new areas. Students and faculty are used to stretching, but staff, perhaps, haven't done as much stretching. **Ready for the World** compels us to do so, and I think that's a wonderful, wonderful thing. Can you tell I'm rather delighted with this whole initiative?

HODGES: That's so true. **Ready for the World** brings people together to support one another -- for example, the necessity of planning and programming brings student affairs and academic affairs much closer -- and that's one of the goals we have at the university. Faculty depend on staff like Jim and Pam who interact with our students. Their

understanding and engagement in this awareness process will make it work because faculty can't do it all. Students spend as much, if not more, time with staff as they spend in classrooms and labs, so staff are very influential in passing on an understanding of what it means to be **Ready for the World**.

GEHLHAR: From a personal point of view, and as a staff member, I would say that life is much richer in diverse societies and on diverse campuses. It's more satisfying to be part of a community that cares about global relationships.

HINDLE: **Ready for the World** emphasizes an expanded view of diversity. The Commission for Women's "Gender in the Work Place" survey shows that to work, teach, research, and study at UT we need a welcoming environment, family-supporting, that offers opportunities for growth outside the classroom. **Ready for the World** speaks to that issue very clearly, and so does the Diversity Council: How do we create a welcoming environment? That means more than just getting bodies here that represent previously underrepresented groups. It means providing support mechanisms to help people thrive in the classroom and outside the classroom as well.

What role does the Diversity Council play?

HODGES: I serve on the Diversity Council with Pam and a major focus is to make sure that people understand that the Quality Enhancement Plan and the Diversity Plan go hand in hand, that they support one another, they work together, that they are not separate.

GEHLHAR: And every academic and administrative unit is to come up with its own diversity plan.

HINDLE: Not only are they coming up with them, but also they are making them work and will be held accountable for reaching measurable goals.

Will Ready for the World improve the quality of education on campus?

HODGES: Infusion is central. We'll have more cross-cultural perspectives throughout the curriculum so it becomes a natural part of what students learn; they will come into contact with cross-cultural perspectives throughout their studies. It gives faculty a chance to think in different ways about what they teach, think more from an interdisciplinary approach, showing more and more international and intercultural perspectives in what they teach.

PEACOCK: Students realize their careers depend on a now global economy where it's important to know how to interact with people from other cultures, make a good impression, and get along well. For example, in business it's very important to know how to shake hands! It's hard for me to put it into words, but I think **Ready for the World** will be an awesome improvement in the quality of education at UT. And, **Ready for the World** will benefit Knoxville as a whole, if it takes off. It will expand on the sense of community I feel in Knoxville -- you walk down the street and

people smile at you. If you can introduce more diversity on the smaller scale then it will have an impact on the larger and larger scale, too.

GEHLHAR: And it applies not to just the business community but really to any profession nowadays. No profession is in isolation. If anybody's going to advance in any field they have to be able to get along with others, exchange ideas with others -- on the other side of town or on the other side of the globe.

HINDLE: Or in Washington D.C.

GEHLHAR: Yes. Anywhere in the United States, too. We want UT graduates who are not afraid of other people, but rather, are comfortable working with all people.

Summary Comments

GEHLHAR: As long as UT's Quality Enhancement Plan remains a document, it's nothing. It has to be appreciated, used and implemented -- not just by one set of people, but across campus.

PEACOCK: From the student perspective, I hope campus organizations can begin to work together more, to network through the central program council and other central leadership bodies. We'll become informed about each other's international and intercultural programming and begin to collaborate and reach our target groups with the news about what's going on. The weekly Student @tennessee that started this semester can help us with that.

HODGES: The International and Intercultural Awareness Initiative is a "framework," something upon which to build, something upon which to grow. That's how I look at the Quality Enhancement Plan -- a framework for moving into something grander in the future.

HINDLE: QEP is an organic thing, isn't it? We are growing as we work with it and move with it and expand it and internalize it. So the Quality Enhancement Plan will cause change and then it will change. Its working name has already changed! Now let's go get **Ready for the World!**



READYFORTHEWORLD

More Information

The Center for International Education coordinates a listserv called I-Events. You can enroll at:

<http://web.utk.edu/~globe/i-events.php>

The **Ready for the World** Web site has a calendar of events and much more information about multiculturalism and diversity on campus in beyond. The address is: <http://www.tennessee.edu/readyfortheworld>.

Edited by Linda Weaver, Office of Public Relations

<http://uthr.admin.utk.edu/tandd/>

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How to Shine at Meetings
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