Valuing Wholeness Achieved Through Difference Interview Responses

How has your time at Puget Sound been enriched by an experience with someone, student, faculty or staff), from a different race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or socioeconomic class?

“I was invited to a formal Eastern culture tea party by someone in the foreign language department. I learned the significance of the presentation of the tea, then the serving of the tea and who is honored. There were gestures to honor those from the past as well. Each step seemed to have a meaning and it was really a wonderful experience.”

“A colleague born in communist china who works with me speaks five languages and she is versatile in her work. When the Tibetan monks were on campus my colleague was not immediately interested in seeing their work, but she was open. Knowing about the political issues between China and Tibet--the communist were against the Tibetan and other cultures broke away from mainland China. Still, she and I went to the presentation to see the sand mandalas. Once there she did go talk to one of the monks and they began to share stories, they took pictures together and it was a breakthrough. They became acquainted with each other and made a connection.”

“A colleague of mine wanted us to know that she is lesbian, so one day she made pink triangle cookies and brought them to work and said this is who I am. That was such a nice way to open the conversation and tell us about who she is.”

“By my roommate during my first and now second year at Puget Sound. The roommate is from a mid-size city in Western Washington and she used to joke that her town had more serial killers than Black people. She had not grown-up with diversity, but she wanted to learn more. It seems like a lot of Puget Sound students don’t think like this. My roommate got involved in various projects, because she cares about people close to her. She, the roommate, gives me more optimism and hope. Others on campus come from places like the roommate, places that are not diverse, and here, at Puget Sound, it’s the same and they don’t change. She is different. She’s taking opportunities to expand her horizons.”

“My house mate. We’ve been friends for awhile. We have two very different opinions. We go back and forth. I have learned to appreciate what he brings. He brings a different perspective. I value it. The interactions, like this one, need to be more. They allow people to grow and expand, which is what school’s all about.”

“The student initially struggled with the question. She initially identified socioeconomic status and race as two areas where she has encountered difference at Puget Sound, but felt that those intersections had not “enriched” her time here as her social networks at home and in high school had also strongly crossed those lines. “In all honesty, I don’t know if I have gained knowledge or been enriched in ways I wasn’t before.” On further reflection, she did identify a new intersection with Hawaiian culture that she had not previously experienced, and felt that she had learned a great deal from students from Hawaii, specifically mentioning issues relating to food and slang/language differences.”
“The recent visit of Tibetan Buddhist monks was a thrill. Delightful to see how community welcomed the them, how open people were. The Hui-O-Hawaii is very impressive. I can’t think of any similar student production event at any other university that has been on that scale. Broadening my awareness and understanding of other people in the world, what is special to them. Also, being around vegetarians on staff has made me more aware and I am more inclined to eat that way.”

“During my junior year at UPS I took a course called “Gender Matters”. That class opened my eyes to a world I had never been exposed to before. I grew up in a small, isolated town where nobody spoke about their sexual orientation. Before coming to college, sexuality was something that had always felt too distant and confusing for me to deal with. However, taking “Gender Matters” blew my mind. Interestingly, although we had a small class, we had a person of almost every possible sexual orientation, including a female who was in the first stages of transition to becoming a male (I will call this person Alex for sake of privacy). I am very appreciative of Alex and Alex’s willingness to speak openly about the transgender experience. I have read articles concerning this topic, but to be able to talk Alex has given me greater understanding than any book I can possibly read. Alex’s girlfriend was also in the class with us and she shared her experience of what it was like to be attracted to females, and yet for her girlfriend to be transitioning into a male. I could not imagine how confusing that would be for her. I see Alex around sometimes, who has fully transitioned into a male now. He says hello to me in his low-toned voice and a smile spreads beneath his facial hair. Alex has inspired me to be critical of the “norms” in our society and to be brave if I feel the urge to speak my voice about certain social matters that I feel strongly about.”

If we Created a Culture of Inclusive Learning, what would that look like in 2015?

“There would be less cliques and you could sit down with people easily. You would not even be able to recognize cliques. Now when you enter the SUB you see people grouped by certain styles that would not be the case.”

“There would be much more dialogue between faculty, staff and students about their backgrounds and how it contributes to the richness of our campus. Reaching out to the other countries, creating a peaceful world and modeling awareness about economic—how economics impact us. I think our students should have the opportunity to go out into the community and meet people who have overcome economic barriers and learn about how they overcame adversity. Maybe there could be a special type of loan for such people to get higher education and enhance the campus by learning about their experience.”

“It would involve a change in the core. Today, even though there’s a society requirement, it’s possible to avoid issues of diversity – racial and cultural. Adding a core requirement would be the #1 thing.”
Valuing Wholeness Achieved Through Difference Interview Responses

“It would be more integrated with Tacoma as a community. To learn more from them and they from us. If we are going to be a nationally rated liberal arts college we need to know Tacoma’s history. We need to be a campus where people can learn from each other in different ways.”

“Large percent of textbooks used and books in the library would be by authors of different races, from countries other than Europe and the United States. KUPS would play more variety. More recognition of other holidays (non-Christian), faces on campus would have more color.”

“She felt the student body would need to not be “80% wealthy white suburban kids.” We do “okay for Asian/Pacific Islanders but I only know one or two Latinos. We would need to bring in more rural students and more inner-city students – she feels these two voices are lacking on campus and would bring new ideas to us.”

“I truly believe that UPS is very much already a Culture of Inclusive Learning. At least that has been my experience in the past four years. It may not be everyone’s experience, though. First, I think it depends on how involved you become with the programs our school already has. Also, creating a successful Culture of Inclusive Learning depends greatly on learning to be aware of your surroundings. We have a small campus and we see familiar faces everyday, but often we do not know the names of those people we see in the SUB at that same table every morning. To create a culture of inclusive learning might include encouraging people to have greater awareness of those around them and to engage with other students who appear “different” and thus a little distant from themselves. I do notice some “clicks” on campus (particularly with freshman) that tend to group together certain races or students of familiar religious affiliation. I think the trick is to get those groups to interact. I know we already have an interfaith council, which works to integrate different faiths on campus. Programs like these are essential. I believe the UPS campus can encourage a Culture of Inclusive Learning, but it is up to the students to actualize it, to make it the inclusion happen.”