

DECEMBER 2012 diversitydialogue



A PUBLICATION OF THE ANGELO STATE UNIVERSITY MULTICULTURAL CENTER, MEMBER, TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

A note from Dr. Andy Wallace

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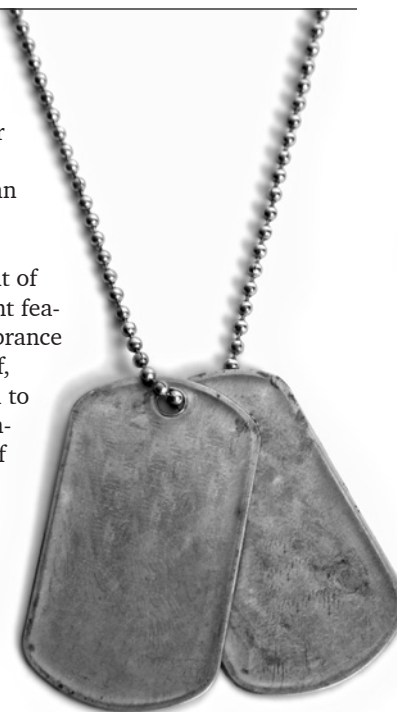
Dictionary.com defines diversity as “the state or fact of being diverse where diverse means a different form, kind or character.” Higher education uses the word diversity in mission, vision and values statements. I’ve even run across the use of diversity in the goals and objectives of state and federal grant programs. You may have run across statements like diversity enriches the educational experience, promotes personal growth, strengthens communities or enhances the economy. So how does a different form, kind or character enrich education, promote growth, strengthen a community or enhance the economy? I don’t really have the answer to this question, but I can tell you what diversity means to me as a scientist and how that meaning could answer this question.

As a scientist, I am aware that diversity in life sciences is different than diversity in physical sciences or any other science for that matter. In biology, diversity is really a measure of species in an area, specifically the number of species and distribution of individuals within an area. If individuals within a species differ in their traits, then biologists call that variation. When a biologist talks about the diversity of plant life, he/she is talking about the richness/evenness of plant species, where each plant is capable of reproducing itself. I don’t know a biologist that would say that a garden with red roses is less diverse than a garden with red roses and white roses; they would say that the gardens differ in the variation of color.

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November in review

During the month of November, the Multicultural Center commemorated Veterans Day to express gratitude and celebrate the achievements and sacrifices of the American soldiers who have given their service to this nation. The ceremony consisted of the traditional posting of the colors, pledge of allegiance, national anthem and a moment of silence, as well as faculty and student remarks. The event featured an emotional candle-lighting ceremony in remembrance of veterans who have served in the military. Faculty, staff, students and community members brought memorabilia to recognize the service of their friends and/or family members. There was also a memorial wall in remembrance of those veterans who are no longer with us. The NapSack Project also gave tribute with their creative activity that allowed students to craft small sacks to be sent out with hand-written poems in care packages for active soldiers and veterans. The event concluded with a speech by ASU veteran and alumnus Billy Cullins, who shared his personal experience and thoughts.



DID YOU KNOW...

...the meaning of the word “dreidel?”

A dreidel is a spinning toy with four Hebrew letters, one on each side. The letters—shin, hey, gimel and nun—are the first four letters of the Hebrew words “A Great Miracle Happened Here.”



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Astronomers have surveyed galaxies outside our local neighborhood of galaxies and found out that some galaxies are made up entirely of ancient stars, while other galaxies have been forming stars almost continuously. There are even a few galaxies that are made up entirely of newly forming stars. I have yet to hear an astronomer that would say a galaxy with newly forming stars and ancient stars is more diverse than a galaxy with only ancient stars; they would say that the galaxies differ in the variation of stellar population. And, it is this variation in stellar population that leads to the richness/evenness of stars in a galaxy, which gives rise to all the galactic shapes and colors one sees in the survey.

From my perspective, variation in traits is the element of diversity that enriches, promotes, strengthens or enhances a college or university. Diversity, as defined, would simply describe the richness/evenness of a particular college or university. So, my initial question should be restated as, "What is the variation in traits that enrich, promote, strengthen or enhance a college or university?" This question is one I think I can answer. Colleges and universities have many traits. The number of majors, minors and concentrations on a campus could be considered three traits. The quantity of student organizations, number of student services and amount of engagement activities on campus would be three more traits. One can even argue that culture and race could be two more traits. Our list of traits can get quite large, but I think you get my point. More variation seen in each trait would lead to a higher level of richness/evenness within a college or university.

I hope you now have a better understanding of why our university makes diversity a part of its value statement and why the university strives to enhance academic programs, student services and enrollment. Please help me get the word out on why Angelo State University is a great place to enrich the educational experience. Thank you for reading, and a special thank you to my colleagues in the Biology Department for help in writing this article.

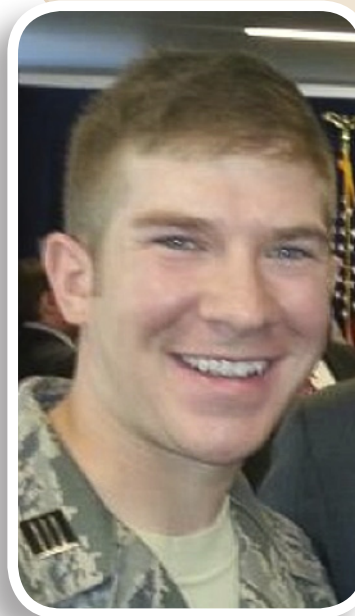
Student Highlight: Scott Vander Ven

CLASS: SENIOR | MAJOR: CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND SECURITY STUDIES

Like most of you, my biggest accomplishment is yet to come. For me, it will be this May when I graduate and commission into the United States Air Force as a second lieutenant. As for now, being here at Angelo State University with a 4.0 GPA since last fall has been my biggest accomplishment. This accomplishment, of course, must be teamed with my five years as an enlisted service member in the Air Force.

After one semester (a long, long time ago), I realized how expensive college and the real world could actually be. Due to lack of funds or scholarships, joining the Air Force was my only choice if I wanted to get out of my small town in southern Illinois. I will be honest, for the first year of my enlistment I felt ashamed and had no sense of pride in what I was doing. All of my friends were halfway through college at the time, and I felt like I was a college drop-out. It wasn't until I went home for the first time after being away for over a year and a half that I realized that I hadn't missed much. To my surprise, many of my friends were envious that I moved away from Illinois, that I was serving our country and that I was getting ready to be stationed at my second overseas location (England).

When I finally realized all that I had accomplished by joining the military, a true sense of pride overwhelmed me. However, I knew that I wouldn't feel completely



accomplished until I met my goal. The goal I had set for myself was to earn my degree and commission. In order to do that, I had to start taking online classes, continue my strong work ethic and apply to the Air Force for an ROTC scholarship. This was no easy task, as it required me to retake my ACT exam, complete a standardized Air Force test and apply for the scholarship. At the time, it had been years since I had even looked at a math problem or written an essay. After many nights of studying, I did surprisingly well on the tests. But when I finally

submitted my package for the scholarship, I was disqualified at the final round of selection due an issue beyond my control. Needless to say, my goal had been crushed.

A few months following that heart-wrenching news, I was sent to Germany for my third overseas tour in the Air Force. With support from my command and friends, I decided to apply again for the ROTC scholarship. After another six months of creating a new scholarship package and four long months of anticipation, my greatest accomplishment was met. I was awarded an \$18,000 scholarship to complete my degree and to commission as a second lieutenant. During my time as an enlisted member, I faced many challenges that could have kept me from my goal, but I overcame them all with self-motivation and the support of the ones closest to me.

The Multicultural Center wishes everyone happy holidays.