FIPSE Grant for FY 2009-2010 # PV116V090044

Hunter College, CUNY

The Centro Cultural Competence Curriculum Initiative

Year One Annual Report to FIPSE

The Centro Cultural Competence Curriculum Initiative (CCCI) is a program designed to promote the development of advanced academic cultural competencies and professional practice in social work, public health, education and other professions where Puerto Ricans and Latino graduate and doctoral are underrepresented. The concept of cultural competence is a way of looking at our cultural identities as a source of knowledge and strength (norms, values, behavioral patterns) that are critical for successful academic achievement and entrance into professional careers. The project is also rooted in the belief that cultural competence is critical for the preparation of all professionals serving Puerto Rican and other Latino communities, whether in education, social work, public health, urban planning, etc., particularly at the graduate level.

In the first year of the CCCI, we have learned different approaches in implementing a cultural competence curriculum to meet the particular demands and structures of the different professional schools at Hunter College, especially regarding how we implement the FIPSE proposal. The FIPSE Team met periodically during the year to discuss project goals and objectives, progress, intervening events and circumstances, and possible alternatives in project programming. We discussed the importance of faculty and students engagement during the first year of the program. The first year was also focused on developing the curriculum and a support network for Puerto Rican and Latino students who seem to have strong interest in a conversation about Latino identity and experience for validation and mentoring opportunities. The most important achievement of the program during the first year has been to demonstrate that Hunter College academic leadership, faculty and students are invested in participating in graduate course work related to cultural competence.

Engagement of the Academic Leadership. Last year we devoted substantial time and energies in coordination of the program with the Hunter College academic leadership. We convened two very successful meetings with the support of the Provost’s and the Dean of Public health’s offices.

The first meeting was convened by Provost Vita Rabinowitz. She sponsored a lunch meeting of Hunter Department Chairs to provide Centro’s director, Dr. Edwin Meléndez (with the assistance of participating faculty and Centro FIPSE project staff) with the opportunity to present and discuss some of CCCI goals, namely:

- getting full cooperation from departments;
• being able to cross list courses and develop curricula that are useful to departments across all Hunter programs;
• getting the Chairs to identify a faculty representative that might serve as liaison to the program with the goal of organizing an Advisory Board across campus)
• getting agreement on a common goal of having content on cultural competence and Puerto Rican/Latino identity issues incorporated into graduate professional preparation;
• Considering the practicum component of graduate coursework being implemented with community partners, especially in Puerto Rican/Latino communities such as East Harlem and the Lower East Side; and
• Getting faculty and administrative support for the incorporation of cultural competence content through the appropriate HC curricular decision-making structures.

Second, Professor Diana Romero, Coordinator, Doctoral Public Health Program, Track in Community, Society and Health, convened a lunch meeting of all the department and program chairs in the School of Public Health. Ten faculty members in academic leadership positions in the School of Public Health’s Community Public Health (CPH) Program participated in a conversation on how to incorporate cultural competence into their graduate syllabi or create new courses. Prof. Romero presented a graph depicting the Framework for the CCCI work in Public Health: serving Puerto Rican, Latino and other students in the Masters Program in Public Health and training these same students as future PH professionals (i.e., to work in diverse settings and communities). Faculty participants shared their thoughts, feedback and questions. A synopsis of the discussion and recommendations follows:

• Students in the MPH program must meet cultural competence requirements and modules do exist in several courses. Since there is a need to evaluate how well requirements are met, the CCCI can be another source of evaluation.
• There are fieldwork and capstone requirements in the MPH curriculum with flexibility as to how they are met as long as students are able to demonstrate competence.
• An overall evaluation of cultural competence as opposed to an evaluation at the level of the individual professor is seen as something constructive.
• Awareness of health disparities is an area covered by certain courses although case studies used in curricula could be strengthened to reflect cultural diversity and to assist in training students in cultural competence.
• As the CCCI develops placement agreements with agencies and CBOs, it can be of concrete utility to professors in the MPH program in their efforts to coordinate fieldwork and internships and place their students in these settings.
• The possibility of CCCI personnel providing guest lectures on cultural diversity and cultural competence would be of interest, especially in the areas of health policy and management and international health.
• There was an interest in understanding what theoretical models and definitions CCCI is using in defining culture, cultural differences, etc. Dr. Meléndez clarified that the theoretical underpinnings of cultural competence varied according to the different fields of study (education, social work, public health, urban planning, etc.).
We need to take into account that 60-70% of MPH students work full-time and attend graduate school in the evenings (i.e., placements at their job sites are desired). The 20% not working full-time are potential participants in the FIPSE project.

In conclusion, there was a consensus that community health is an area where cultural competence would be of great interest. The Department is also interested in facilitating the pipeline of undergraduate students moving from associate to bachelor to graduate-level programs and reaching articulation agreements with other institutions. Participants were asked to pass along any additional thoughts and suggestions about further incorporating cultural competency content into the MPH curriculum, as well as about pursuing a certificate program that can work with what the MPH program already has in place (in the form of our existing fieldwork and capstone requirements). Faculty members were asked to share with Dr. Romero any syllabi that they have that include any readings, lectures, etc., that pertain in some way to cultural competence.

In addition to the coordination of the initiative with Hunter College academic leadership, we have implemented activities to engage faculty and students with the initiative.

**Engagement of Faculty.** Faculty engagement was one of the most successful components of the initiative. We were able to designate a faculty liaison in the three targeted schools. They were able to engage other faculty and students in the CCCI activities and supervised the graduate students conducting the bibliographical search. They were also the authors of the literature reviews and the surveys of cultural competence content in a sample of the graduate-level syllabi in their respective programs and professional schools. They also provided lists of interested Hunter faculty and graduate students for the FIPSE staff to reach out to for the stakeholders conference and other outreach and network-building activities. Lastly, the faculty liaison in the School of Social Work facilitated a graduate seminar presented by Centro researcher/Distinguished Lecturer, Dr. Iris Zavala Martínez, on cultural diversity, mental health and Latinas.

1. **Offered a graduate theory course on cultural competence “Making a Difference: Culture, Identities and Social Change”** in the Urban Planning (UP) department, taught by Dr. Edwin Meléndez, during the spring 2010 semester;

   Course Description. In this course we examine cultural competency as behaviors and attitudes that empower professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. We explore the role of culture in the operations of programs, community organizations, and government services and agencies from a perspective that focuses on how racial and ethnic identities, and the networks and reciprocity that result from such identities, affect social processes and outcomes. Through real world issue analysis and interdisciplinary theoretical learning, we will explore social change at the societal, institutional or organizational, and individual levels of analysis, especially from the perspective of the actors carrying out and involved in the social change process. Topics include:

   - Cultural Competence and Professional Practice
   - Contexts of Social Change: Globalization and Urban Structures
   - Domains of Social Change: Markets, Polis and Community
2. Reviews of the research and clinical literature on cultural competence in various professional fields (education, social work, public health and urban planning). The reviews of the literatures described above are a critical step for the revision of existing courses and the development of new ones. Faculty who had access to the bibliographies in preparation for the May conference rave about the usefulness of the reviews for the updating of their syllabi, and for the conceptualization of new courses.

Cultural Competence in Education: Research Brief (Compiled by Dr. Yvonne De Gaetano and Carla España) based on 33 citations in the literature.

As we began our search for articles, studies, and books that address cultural competence in education, we decided, to be current, to limit our search primarily to the years spanning from 2000 to the present. We also chose a few earlier works that we deemed to be key in cultural competence studies. In searching for the literature on cultural competence, we used the terms more commonly employed in education, e.g., culturally relevant curricula, cultural diversity, diversity, cultural congruence, and cultural responsiveness. We also included multicultural education because of its importance in schools today. Within those terms we identified five categories: (1) Theoretical perspectives; (2) The Development of cultural competence in university faculty and teachers/graduate students; (3) Cultural perspectives in content area studies; 4) Diverse student populations; and (5) Parent involvement. Some of the references fall into more than one of the categories. The research is unequivocal; teacher education programs must coherently infuse all teacher preparation courses with issues of cultural diversity so that we have culturally competent teachers who can spark students’ learning through their cultures and experiences. Teachers need to learn about, and embrace, the diversities of their students, and have high expectations for them so that students in turn can achieve academically. The references in the bibliography that we have prepared stress the immediacy and importance of obtaining cultural competence in the field of education.

Cultural Competence in Social Work: Research Brief (Compiled by Dr. Manny J. González and Alberto Guerrero) based on 27 citations in the literature.

Over the last thirty years cultural competence has evolved as a significant framework--within the social work discipline--for understanding diversity and the importance of work with people of varying cultures and ethnicities. The literature has largely consisted of theoretical and conceptual articles that describe cultural competent models and frameworks for culturally diverse practice across differential organizational, treatment and community venues. The need, however, for empirical or evidence-informed studies on cultural competent practice is well noted upon review of the literature. The core elements or domains that appear to permeate the
social work literature specific to cultural competence include: acculturation, poverty and economic concerns, dynamics of oppression, language, racial prejudice, socio-political factors, child-rearing practices, religious practices, family structure and dynamics, and cultural values and attitudes. These domains have been examined and applied by scholars across fields of practice—such as mental health, health care, family services, substance abuse, school social work—and with specific client populations. Cultural competent social work practice—based on the review of the literature—emphasizes the person-in-environment construct and recognizes the effect of ethnicity, race, culture and other socio-cultural variables on an individual as well as the experience of group identity on an individual's life. The literature review was divided into the following areas of study: Clinical Practice/Mental Health, Cross-Cultural, LGBTQ, Gerontology, Immigration, Culture and Language, and Cultural-Racial Socialization.

Cultural Competence in Public Health: Research Brief (Compiled by Dr. Diana Romero and Andrea Skowronek) based on 14 citations in the literature.

The extensive literature on racial/ethnic health disparities has placed greater emphasis on “cultural competence,” as an integral approach to addressing this problem within medical, nursing, and public health academic contexts. While not a panacea for eliminating health disparities, it has been shown that culturally competent medical and public health providers can effect better health outcomes among diverse populations. After a systematic search of the ISI Web of Knowledge database, 14 articles were chosen because they provide a broad survey of background materials that can inform the development of cultural competence curricula in the UPH program. Although the majority of accredited public health graduate degree programs include material on cultural competence, there is no standardized, evidence-based curriculum that can be used for course creation. Because cultural competence training was part of the curriculum at more than 90% of US medical schools by 2008 lessons learned from that discipline (some of which are outlined in the articles included in this annotated bibliography) might be adapted for public health curriculum development.

Since many of the articles we selected were written from a medical or nursing perspective, the majority of definitions presented pertains to a clinical context and are specific to healthcare settings and organizations and the manner in which they deliver services to patients. One definition reproduced by Luquis (2006) better approaches cultural competence in a public health context. ¹ Cultural competence is the ability of an individual to understand and respect values, attitudes, beliefs, and mores that differ across cultures and to consider and respond appropriately to these differences in planning, implementing, and evaluating health education and promotion programs and interventions. This definition mentions multiple factors of “culture” that could differ across groups and emphasizes the importance of those differences in

¹ From the 2000 Joint Committee on Health Education and Promotion Terminology
the field of health education. We present this definition as a starting point to guide subsequent steps in curriculum development for cultural competence in public health.

Although the number of published resources on teaching cultural competence in public health lags behind that of other fields, there is enough material available to make formative curriculum development work productive. Research linking cultural competence to the elimination of health disparities should continue to spur efforts toward the creation of curricular resources and collaborations among academic and community partners. Hunter College’s Urban Public Health program faculty should ensure that their program continues to develop culturally competent public health professionals.

3. Creation of a multi-disciplinary, annotated bibliographic database on cultural competency. The Centro Cultural Competence Bibliographic Database (CCCBD) is a collection of published and soon-to-be published works related to cultural competency in the four academic fields that we are currently analyzing and studying (Public Health, Social Work, Urban Affairs and Planning, and Education) as part of our Cultural Competence Curriculum Initiative (CCCI). The literature reviews described below were based on a comprehensive effort to gather references broadly as they relate to the topics of interest among the graduate programs targeted by the initiative. The integrated bibliography allows faculty to search for key words across disciplines. The CCCBD contains over 850 references to books, journal articles, book chapters, dissertations, and other academic papers regarding cultural competence. This electronic bibliographic database has basic citation information, abstracts, and indices by author and subject area. It will be available online on the education page of the Centro’s web site. The vast majority of works archived are published; but, there is also a growing number of manuscript works listed here, many of which supplement research reported in publications. The materials in the Bibliography date from 1996 to the present. New entries will be continually added to the Bibliography database, and the web version will be updated at least once a month. Currently, the bibliography has the following headings:

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4. Provided graduate-level seminars to students in the School of Social Work and the Urban Planning Department. Centro team member, Dr. Iris Zavala Martínez, provided a graduate seminar: “Cultural Diversity and the Socio-clinical Encounter with Latinas: Constructing New Narratives.” She examined the intersections of culture, social and clinical factors in Puerto Rican/Latinas; and, she presented cultural competency as an evolutionary dynamic process of constructing respect, awareness and knowledge of one’s and others’ cultural diversity as related to ethnic, national, racial, linguistic, generational, socioeconomic, religious, sexual, or physical challenges so as to enhance the therapeutic encounter. In doing so, she integrated a theoretical framework informed by different theories and disciplines: Critical Psychology, Social Psychoanalysis, Coloniality Theory, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Trauma Theory, and Latin American Liberation Psychology.

5. Prepared Surveys of selected syllabi in Hunter’s three professional schools (education, social work, and public health).

Professor Manny González (SSW) and his Research Assistant, Alberto Guerrero, surveyed samples of Clinical Practice and Human Behavior in the Social Environment syllabi (total of 6) from the SSW that explicitly include cultural competency content in the course descriptions and in the course outcomes. The present list does not provide a complete picture of the extent of the inclusion of cultural competence in the courses provided by the Hunter College School of Social Work. However, the survey indicated that there are more than 30 readings relevant to cultural competence included throughout the various units of these syllabi.

Professor Diana Romero (SPH) and her Research Assistant, Andrea Skowronek, surveyed existing cultural competence content in the Community Health Education (COMHE) track of the Urban Public Health (UPH) Masters in Public Health (MPH) Program at Hunter College, as well as curriculum topics indirectly related to cultural competence such as health disparities and public health interventions for specific populations. They reviewed all available syllabi from required and elective courses of the UPH Community Health Education Program conducted since spring 2007. Prof. Romero found that the nature of the UPH program demands that graduates be prepared to work in various urban settings with diverse populations; and, therefore, information on cultural competence is woven throughout the curriculum in various courses. Six (6) courses include material that is specifically designated as pertaining to the issue of cultural competence. In addition, 2 other public health courses on nursing and nutrition may contain cultural competency material.

Professor Yvonne DeGaetano (SOE) and her Research Assistant, Carla España, surveyed existing cultural competence content in ten (10) courses in three (3) departments (Curriculum & Teaching, Educational Foundations, and Special Education). Their survey only encompassed syllabi that
explicitly include cultural competence content in the course descriptions. There are, however, courses in which cultural competence is, or may be, included but not described in the course description. Thus, the survey does not provide a complete picture of the extent of the inclusion of cultural competence in the SOE courses. Prof. DeGaetano found 16 readings relevant to cultural competence content in these courses.

**Engagement of Students.** We have engaged graduate students through various means:

1. Through the enrollment of students in the graduate theory course ("Making a Difference: Culture, Identities and Social Change");
2. Having current (67), past (47) graduate students, and 25 other students (for a total of 139 students) in the School of Public Health complete a survey of student interests in CC: among respondents, 62% indicated they would be interested in participating in a graduate cultural competence program if they had the opportunity to do so;
3. Eight (8) graduate students and faculty members in the SSW attended a 2-hour graduate workshop on “Latinas and cultural identity” presented by Dr. Iris Zavala Martínez (see #4 in Engagement of Faculty); and,
4. Urban Planning faculty and graduate students attended a lecture by Dr. Arlene Dávila on “Latinos and Gentrification” in East Harlem;
5. Around 25 current and/or former Hunter graduate students from the three professional schools and the urban planning department as well as students from the CUNY Graduate Center participated in the May 21, 2010 stakeholders conference at the SSW. They participated actively in the concurrent roundtable discussions during which faculty, students and community practitioners/partners provided feedback on the research briefs and annotated bibliographies on cultural competence in the education, social work and public health research literatures.

In effect, we have tried to develop and nurture student interest in view of the varied structures and constraints that graduate students experience in the different professional schools and departments.

**Engagement of the Community.** We convened a one day stakeholders conference on Cultural Competence Curriculum where thirteen (13) of the 65 participants were practitioners in the fields of education, social work, human services, and health care, including leaders of community-based organizations and city agencies serving children, youth and the aging.

**Summer & Fall Activities.** We have adjusted our original FIPSE proposal in the context of Hunter’s institutional realities; and, we incorporated the feedback we received during the many meetings with faculty and administrative leadership with the intention of furthering the CCCI goals and objectives, and redesigning the program to insure institutional buy-in. This has involved our focusing on the review of the research literature, writing research briefs, surveying graduate syllabi vis a vis cultural competence content in the three professional Schools (Education, Public Health, and Social
Work); and meeting with faculty in the Urban Planning Department about potential activities, including a literature review of the field as it relates to Puerto Rican and other Latino communities. Future activities covered by the requested no-cost extension include:

- Implementation of Courses, modules, and/or graduate workshops and seminars on cultural competence content;
- Engagement with field-based community partners and practitioners; and,
- Other supplementary CCCI program activities (e.g., training of internship supervisors and peer mentoring and tutoring).

We are surveying Hunter faculty about their interest in continued involvement in CCCI beyond the grant period. Some possibilities are activities during the summer 2010 up to Sept 30th (i.e., changes to the project plan within the grant period involving redistribution of grant funds for summer activities) or activities during fall 2010 semester or into winter/spring semester 2011. The options include:

- Developing a graduate course (syllabus) in cultural competence focused on a particular discipline or professional school;
- Teaching one of the courses in our proposed Cultural Competence graduate sequence (focused on a given department or professional school);
- The development of revised cultural competence assessment instruments (clinical, organizational, systemic, etc.);
- Developing content for course modules or additional graduate seminars/workshops for delivery during the fall 2010 semester.

We have considered how to reach the target of 100 students in year one and during the requested no-cost extension period (October 1 to December 31, 2010) including the following:

- Inviting 20 students in each school to a separate seminar/workshop (SPH) and SOE);
- Present the findings of the literature search using the webinar model, as a supplementary activity, allowing students to interact with the presenter and each other online, including providing a PowerPoint or other resource documents (log-on in real time, submit questions online, provide response online, and administer an evaluation of the activity).
- For certain graduate practicum courses, webinars could be incorporated as part of the requirement for Blackboard participation.
- Webinars and seminars can be considered professional development or trainings that students can add to their C.V.
- Another strategy might be for FIPSE faculty or Centro staffs to visit graduate classrooms, provide readings, make presentations on cultural competence and give out questionnaire to students to document student engagement.

There are five or six faculty members in the School of Education who are particularly interested in the topic of cultural competence. The accreditation agency NCATE told Hunter that serving English
language learners is a weak area in the School of Education. Interested faculty members could form a focus group to assist in the literature review.

**Evaluation.** FIPSE project evaluator discussed the importance of having measurable outcomes for the project, especially for the targeted 100 students. We also have to consider recruiting and engaging students early in their graduate program and build our institutional capacity to get our students to complete graduate school successfully (i.e., provide a continuum of engagement with some students beginning in the first semester and others entering the cohort later). We agreed on the need to develop a **timeline** with milestones and strategies:

- Literature review defining the parameters of Cultural Competence concept
- Points of engagement for faculty, students (in general and Puerto Ricans/Latinos) and administration
- Measurable outcomes of engagement

**Operations and Management.** Centro project staff met with FIPSE team members (cooperating faculty and graduate assistants) to reach consensus on basic operating principles and follow up activities:

- Engage both faculty and students. One proposal is to convene follow up conversations or events with fellow faculty (to weave a network or start a collaboration);
- Plan for supplementary events: one or more faculty events; one or more student events during the fall semester.
- Consider stipends or other incentives for students to review and provide feedback on the cultural competence curriculum and literature reviews.
- Assess the inventory of what CCC exists in Ed, SW, and PH with an evaluation of its relevance and an indication of what’s missing.
- Continue to update the List of Latino Faculty at Hunter College to include other faculty (Latino and non-Latino) in their School who are or might be interested in the CCCI or might help us to recruit graduate students to participate in our planned FIPSE-funded activities.
- Continue to update the contact list of graduate students (Puerto Rican, other Latino, and non-Latino) in the three professional Schools and the urban planning department.
- Encourage the development of courses on cultural competence and/or incorporating cultural competence content into existing courses.