

# WORKING ACROSS DIFFERENCE: A CFANS UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION INITIATIVE

The ability to work effectively across difference is essential to student success in serving our national aspirations, meeting employer demands, and participating in the complex national and global grand challenges of our time. The University of Minnesota recognizes the importance of graduating students who demonstrate intercultural competency - *the ability to recognize difference and authentically engage different cultures, races, life experiences, and knowledge systems*. Skills such as self-awareness, appreciation of differences, tolerance of ambiguity, and understanding diverse philosophies and cultures are formally acknowledged as learning objectives within the University's Student Learning and Development Outcomes.

The College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS) has developed the "Working Across Difference Initiative" to fulfill these outcomes and to meet its own undergraduate strategic priority of enhancing multicultural and global competencies. This comprehensive initiative, poised to serve as a national model, has three core components: curriculum, pedagogy, and student assessment.

CFANS students in all majors and in each year of undergraduate education will take courses and participate in activities (e.g., study abroad and service learning) that intentionally incorporate multiple cultural perspectives to develop intercultural competency, learn about cultural similarities and differences, and how those differences frequently result in unequal impacts on peoples and communities.

## TEACHING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCY AND DIVERSITY ARE PRIORITIES

CFANS' "Working Across Difference Initiative" has three primary goals:

1. *Enhance our ability to prepare students to work across difference, engage in complex problem solving, and enter into an increasingly diverse and globalized workforce.*
2. *Increase intentional integration of culturally relevant collegiate course content and pedagogy that reflects the needs and interests of diverse undergraduate students and addresses the unequal impacts of difference.*
3. *Create and integrate best practices to help students develop intercultural and global competencies and an increased awareness of issues relating to diversity and social justice.*



As a premier research and land grant institution, the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus is uniquely situated among its counterparts in a culturally diverse community with:

- *over 80 languages within a 10-mile radius from campus.*
- *largest urban Hmong population\*, the largest Somali population\*\*, a significant African American presence, an emerging Latino/a community, and a large and prominent urban American Indian population.*
- *11 Tribal Nations in the state-- descendants of the First Peoples of Minnesota.*

\* <http://www.hndinc.org/cmsAdmin/uploads/dlc/HND-Census-Report-2013.pdf>

\*\* <http://www.startribune.com/132670583.html>

## WHAT WE'VE LEARNED:

### REFINING OUR MODEL THROUGH EXPERIMENTATION AND RESEARCH

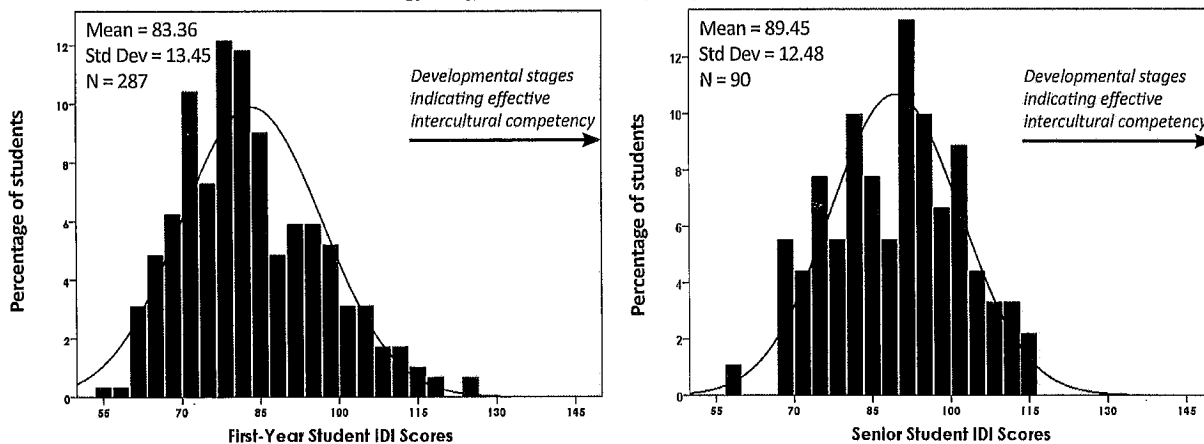
#### FINDING #1 - INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCY DOES NOT JUST HAPPEN

**College Years:** *Students don't develop intercultural skills just by going to college.*

Numerous colleges, universities, and employers have identified intercultural competency as an essential college outcome. *Yet, our research reveals only modest gains in intercultural competency occur as a natural result of college maturation;* most students retain a monocultural worldview. Thus, undergraduate curriculum and co-curricular activities must intentionally foster intercultural competency to ensure significant gains in intercultural skills and readiness among students.

To measure the extent of student gains in intercultural competency over four years, we conducted a comparative analysis of freshman and seniors using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI\*) as our assessment tool. To prepare a baseline of seniors' developmental orientations, a sample of 291 graduating seniors who received no intentional intercultural interventions were asked to take the IDI in the spring of 2014; 90 seniors completed it. We compared their developmental scores to the scores of a first-year cohort to examine the extent to which our current graduating seniors' scores differed from those of the first-year cohort.

*Without intervention there is no meaningful difference between first-year and senior students' developmental orientation*



The data and graphs indicate minimal difference between the mean developmental scores of CFANS first-year students as compared to CFANS graduating seniors. The differences between these two groups emerge primarily in the early stages of intercultural development - a phase where individuals have limited exposure to other cultural communities. Very little difference between the two groups is seen in the later stages of intercultural development, where individuals typically demonstrate a much more complex understanding of cultural difference and skills to work effectively in diverse contexts. Taken together, the data indicate that *limited growth in intercultural competency can be expected without an intentional focus on it in undergraduate education.*

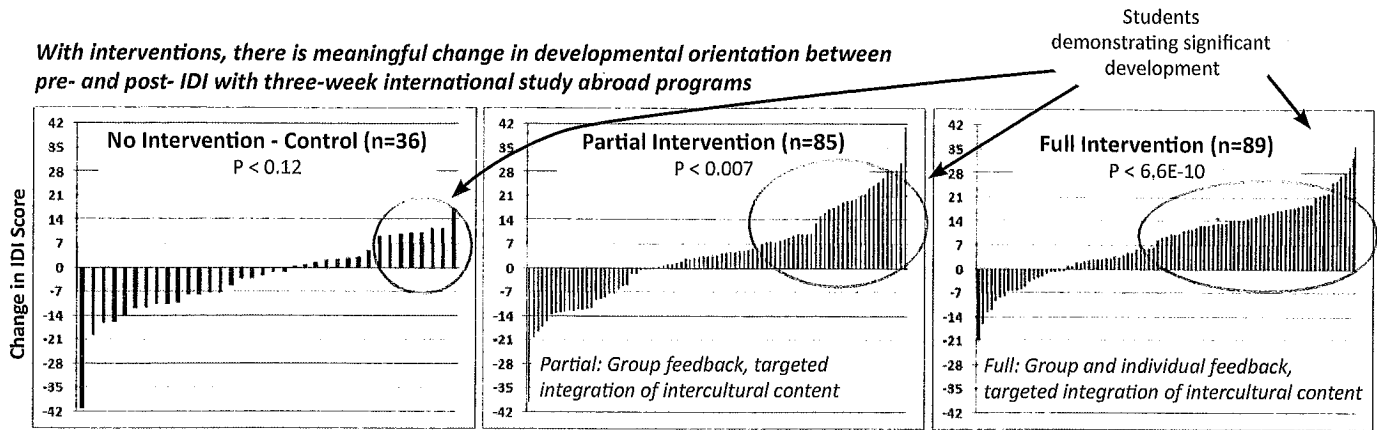
#### FINDING #2 - INTERCULTURAL PEDAGOGY MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

**International Study:** *On its own, study abroad is not enough to effect change*

To measure change in intercultural development among students participating in short-term study abroad programs, CFANS has worked for over three years with the Learning Abroad Center and the CFANS Office of International Programs to administer the IDI before departure and a few weeks after return. Researchers used two models of pedagogical intervention and a control of no intervention with numerous study abroad programs (each intervention is described briefly in the graphs on the next page). The following graphs illustrate changes in developmental orientation for each student between assessments.

\* The Intercultural Development Inventory is a rigorously tested, statistically valid instrument that measures an individual's orientation toward difference. The IDI is based on a developmental model and identifies where individuals and groups are in their intercultural development. The model provides developmentally appropriate learning opportunities and experiences needed to further growth.

*With interventions, there is meaningful change in developmental orientation between pre- and post- IDI with three-week international study abroad programs*



Our findings\*\* show programs using a more robust, integrated approach to intercultural learning (through group discussion, reflection, and intentional exposure to difference) produce impressive gains in intercultural development, while programs using little or no interventions generate meager, if any, developmental gains. *Travel and/or simple exposure to difference, on their own, are not sufficient to build intercultural competency.*

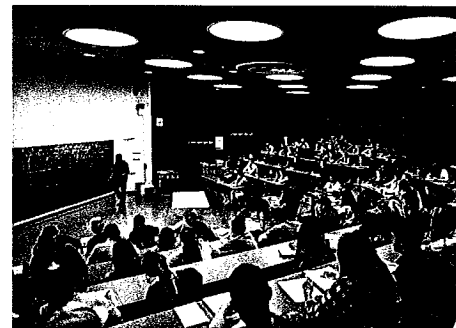
**FINDING #3 - INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCY IS POSSIBLE WITHOUT LEAVING THE COUNTRY OR CAMPUS**

**On-Campus Courses: Campus-based learning provides rich opportunities for intercultural learning**

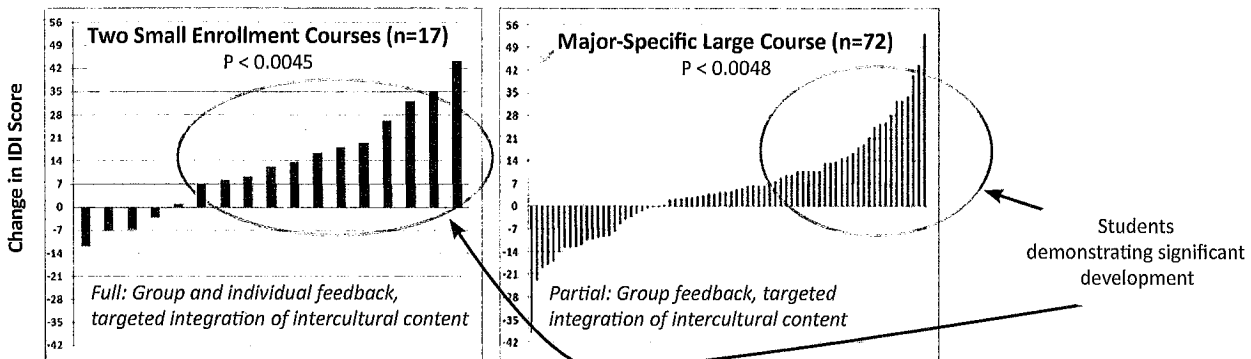
Many on-campus courses and experiences lend themselves well to developing intercultural competency. *Our research shows that intentionally incorporating staged learning that engages difference, supported by providing students with appropriate tools, builds greater skill in working across difference.* Intercultural learning has been integrated into targeted CFANS courses, the Dean's Engaged Leaders Program, and collegiate partnerships in public engagement/service learning. These courses and programs have yielded similar gains in students' intercultural development to those demonstrated in our learning abroad research.

To measure changes in intercultural development among students participating in campus-based courses with intercultural content, CFANS administered pre- and post-IDI to students in many courses. Graphs below exemplify these changes in two on-campus courses.\*\*

*CFANS courses with highly and more fully integrated curricular models that include employing the IDI and other intercultural/diversity content tend to produce greater gains in student developmental orientation.* These classes typically integrate several of the following: case studies, reflective writing assignments, opportunities for students to approach issues from multiple perspectives, and service learning experiences.



*Meaningful change in developmental orientation between pre- and post- IDI in two CFANS on-campus courses*



\*\* A change in developmental orientation of 7 points or greater indicates a significant gain in intercultural development according to validation measures of the instrument. A change of -7 points or more indicates that the student experienced regression in development.

## OUR NEXT STEPS

**The 2013 first-year cohort will re-take the IDI in the spring of 2017** - Students who originally took the IDI in 2013 will be randomly re-sampled at the end of their sophomore year, and students who remain in the college through 2017 will re-take the IDI during what will likely be the end of their senior year. The additional IDI sampling will reveal whether or not campus-based curricular and pedagogical interventions produce measurable gains in intercultural competency by students during their studies in CFANS and provide opportunities to adjust strategies if needed.

**Integrating intercultural content throughout the majors** - We continue to expand our partnerships with CFANS instructors to enhance intercultural learning through the four years of our majors. Approaches include pedagogical methods and integration of intercultural content and diverse perspectives into course curriculum. This systemic integration ensures all students learn to work across difference - from within their discipline to society at large, recognizing potential impacts in the context of social justice and equity.

**Continue development of an intercultural competency online tutorial** - The college has created a 45 minute, interactive, online tutorial that gives students a self-paced opportunity to learn about culture, intercultural competency, and the Intercultural Development Continuum through a series of videos, activities, essay questions, and quizzes. We continue to refine and develop this tutorial as we identify opportunities for its use in the college and university. A second online tutorial that will focus more directly on issues of equity and social justice is in development.

### *Students report finding the tutorial useful in building their understanding of intercultural competency*

Student  
tutorial  
evaluations  
n=158

	As a result of this tutorial, I have a better understanding of what it means to be interculturally competent.	As a result of this tutorial, I better appreciate the value of developing intercultural competence.	As a result of this tutorial, I understand the stages of the IDI model.
Overall Agree	83%	87%	83%
Overall Disagree	17%	13%	17%

## POSSIBLE EXTENSIONS TO OTHER AREAS OF THE UNIVERSITY

**Develop and mentor faculty who are teaching courses approved for the Diversity and Social Justice in the United States and Global Perspectives themes** and service learning courses in the use of intercultural pedagogy for advancing intercultural learning and competency.

**Conduct further research on intercultural competency and build accountability** to ensure intercultural learning outcomes are achieved; the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey and Student Rating of Teaching (SRT) are two such areas considered for integrating additional accountability measures. The Working Across Difference Initiative can also serve as a model for the accreditation process.

**Continue customizing and expanding the intercultural tutorial** for use in a wide variety of University of Minnesota classes and programs.

**Include an introduction to intercultural competency and related pedagogy within all study abroad courses** (currently used in most Global Seminar Programs).



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and Natural Resource Sciences  
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