Welcome to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion's Building Bridges Newsletter

Since fall 2007, Tehama Group Communications has produced the biannual newsletter Building Bridges for the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

We invite you to explore this newsletter, as it celebrates diversity at Chico State and the surrounding community by combining stories, photography and video.
The Chico State Wildcat Ambassador Program continues its strong efforts this semester to bring diversity to Chico State while also adjusting to the reinvention of the program. Building a diverse applicant pool continues to be one of the objectives at the Office of Admissions. The University values recruiting students from various backgrounds and viewpoints. Diversity doesn’t just include ethnicity, but also students of academic diversity and who demonstrate a variety of experiences.

“Specifically, the ambassador program was created so that we could use diverse students to recruit more diverse students,” said Teresita Curiel, assistant director for the Admissions and Outreach Program. New opportunities and providing more resources to students is what drove the reinvention of the program. Fall 2012 is the first semester the newly created program is in effect, and it has already grown to 11 individual ambassadors. Curiel hopes that it continues to grow.

“We wanted to give the ambassador program a try in a different format,” she said. “We wanted to add some formalization. The reinvented program is now considered an internship. Students are required to sign up for the class UNIV 390, and they receive one unit of credit.

“Wildcat ambassadors are nominated by faculty and selected to represent the breadth of the Chico student experience,” said Curiel. One of their primary responsibilities as ambassadors is to encourage prospective college students to apply to Chico State. Another goal is simply to convey the importance of higher education to high school students throughout California.

Admission counselors train the ambassadors and give them a working knowledge of requirements to apply to Chico State so they can relay that information to prospective students.

“Being involved in the University and seeing different aspects of it is very beneficial,” said Wildcat ambassador Cindy Melendrez. The ambassador program is twofold, benefiting both the admissions office and the students involved.

“I’m learning as I go, and it’s pretty cool to learn things that I myself didn’t know about Chico State,” said Wildcat ambassador Rosana Chavolla-Hernandez. Ambassadors visit an average of three local and nonlocal high schools every semester. They are required to visit their hometown high school and advocate on behalf of Chico State at least once during the semester.
“Back home, there is a real lack of motivation for students to go to college, so I feel this is a really good experience for me, to work with students in my own community,” said Chavolla-Hernandez. The ambassadors are encouraged to communicate their own stories when they present to schools.

“It is really important to us to keep authenticity in their voice,” said Curiel. “We’re not going to tell them what to say, because they have their own experience.”

The Wildcat Ambassador Program is one of the best ways to recruit potential students and help increase diversity at Chico State, said Curiel. “The student-to-student conversation is so powerful as far as generating interest about the campus and all the wonderful things that happen here,” she said.

Building a diverse population is an important goal Chico State holds each semester. The Wildcat ambassadors greatly contribute to maintaining this goal. All students who think that they can effectively communicate their Chico student experience to others are encouraged to contact the Office of Admissions or visit their website at http://www.csuchico.edu/admissions/

Rosana Chavolla-Hernandez is a sophomore at Chico State nominated to be an ambassador from the Equal Opportunity Program.
Diversity Academy Promotes Best Practices for Faculty and Staff

By: Jillian Luchsinger

This summer marked the second annual Diversity Academy, an intensive and interactive program for faculty and staff that addresses a wide range of topics relating to diversity.

The Diversity Academy supports the priorities of the Diversity Action Plan by encouraging university faculty and staff to practice cultural sensitivity and build a more inclusive campus. Sponsors of the academy include the Office of the President, Academic Affairs, the Cross Cultural Leadership Center, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and Enrollment Management.

Goals and Expectations

During the eight-day program, faculty and staff are encouraged to learn and discuss ways of integrating the best practices into teaching, professional activities, and services on campus.

In the classroom, participants are guided through conversations and activities that help examine their own prejudices and biases and how these affect the way they do their jobs.

Tracy Butts, chief diversity officer, has attended the program twice, in summers 2011 and 2012.

“One of the goals of the academy is to evaluate how we are better able to empower students,” Butts said. “We want to teach them to become more active students, and be in charge of their own learning while also fully realizing their potential,” she added.

Linguistics professor and ESL Resource Center Director Saundra Wright attended the Diversity Academy in summer 2012 to gain a wider perspective of diversity. Although she regularly deals directly with language diversity and cultural differences, she wanted to learn more about diversity of all types.

“While I hoped my expertise as a linguist might be beneficial to other participants of the Diversity Academy, my main interest in participating was to gain a better understanding of—and appreciation for—what diversity really involves,” Wright said.

The experience had the potential to help in her professional pursuits as well as her personal pursuit to become a better advocate for diversity on campus, she said.

Course of the Program

To start off the two-week program, participants are given a syllabus with required reading. In keeping with Chico State’s commitment to sustainability, all participants are given iPads and digital access to the course material.
Participants are instructed to write an “impressions autobiography” their first day to explain their attitudes about race, class, gender, and sexuality in order to better evaluate where they stand at the start of the course and to help connect with others.

Sue Peterson, a faculty member of the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences, also attended the Diversity Academy this summer.

“The interaction with the cohort was truly meaningful to me,” she said. “It has highlighted similar concerns and frustrations, but more importantly it has offered a method of engaging in a process to change those things that are concerning or frustrating.”

Each day of the Diversity Academy, participants watch movies, engage in interactive conversations, participate in role-playing, and discuss how the required readings relate to the activities.

“What I learned most from this experience was the importance of active involvement,” Wright said. “While I’ve always cared deeply about the struggles and issues that students from diverse backgrounds face, after being in the academy, I now realize how important it is to act on those concerns.”

The Diversity Academy has attracted a wide variety of Chico State faculty and staff. In summer 2012, the program grew to include 23 representatives from various services on campus such as the Wildcat Recreation Center and the Admissions Office, as well as departments including nutrition, Academic Publications and Scheduling Services, and many others.

In order to participate in the academy, faculty and staff must go through an application process and receive permission from the chair of their department.

### Building Relationships

In addition to facilitating an environment in which participants can freely evaluate different aspects of diversity, many walk away from the experience with valuable relationships with new peers.

“The Diversity Academy brings together people from different parts of campus and the community that wouldn’t usually interact,” Butts said. “They improve on professional connections, and we found that we missed each other after being together all day for eight days.”

Creating new connections with faculty and staff was the highlight of the program for many of the participants.

“I feel like I’ve not only made some great friends, but I’m now fortunate to be part of a wonderful support system,” Wright said.

The success and feedback the program has received from the past two years provide encouragement that it will continue in the future. Many of the participants have found successful ways to implement what they learned at the Diversity Academy into the way that they teach and work with peers.

Following the program, Wright became involved with putting into place silent protests to the “angry preachers” on campus and began working with students at the ESL Resource Center to create a meditation or prayer room after a few international students expressed concern about inadequate space on campus to pray.

“I’ve even found myself making changes in ways I present information in my classes,” Wright said. “When I choose images for PowerPoint slideshows, I make sure to find images that showcase people of different ages, abilities, racial, and cultural backgrounds.”

Peterson also has plans to alter her assignments to be more inclusive and to allow students to discuss their background and cultural differences with each other.

“It is easy to fall into a rut where you do things the way you’ve always done things and do not ask questions or challenge yourself to do more or do better,” she said. “I took away that desire to do more and do better.”
A Second Chance at Education for Re-entry Students: Increasing Student’s Sense of Belonging

By: Kelsey Hilton

The first day of a collegiate career can be intimidating for any first-time freshman, but having relatable peers helps students develop a sense of belonging. For a re-entry student returning to school later in life, the first day of college courses can be even more overwhelming.

The majority of re-entry students are about 10 years older than the average 19-year-old undergraduate. Coming back to school later in life can be a challenge for many students and include an added pressure to succeed.

For re-entry student Tamara Braden, the experience of coming back to school as a single parent with five children was one of the more challenging experiences in her life, but it was also one that made the most impact, she said.

“I felt really out of place because I was 38 at that point,” Braden said. “So after that first semester, I realized ‘OK, this is something I can do,’ and after that first semester, I kind of got my confidence and I started making friends with people.”

What is a Re-entry Student?

Traditionally, the definition of a re-entry student is any undergraduate student over the age of 25 who has had a gap of three or more years in his or her formal education.

Re-entry students make up about 12 percent of the total student population at Chico State, and this number is growing. This sector of students needs to be acknowledged with the same respect as first-time freshmen; they also need additional support services.

Jenn Duggan, admissions evaluator and former re-entry student, felt like the “unpopular kid in school that no one wanted to hang out with.” She decided to implement an event to assist the different types of re-entry students so that they too can develop the sense of belonging that she later found at Chico State.

Career advisor Jodie Rettinhouse helped Duggan establish the Welcome Reception for Re-entry Students this semester. It was designed as a discussion about the triumphs and tribulations that come with being a returning student, as well as inform students about support services on campus.

Faculty and staff are dedicated to students and want to extend their own knowledge and resources to help students find their pathway to success. The welcome reception was the first step toward making that happen for re-entry students.

Not all re-entry students have the support of significant others, family, and friends. Many of these students are single parents who have to juggle working full time, going to school, and raising a family.

This was the reality for Braden. At one point, she was working three jobs in order to support her family. Braden
was urged to return to school when she received a scholarship after a 10-year break from school.

“I got so sucked into life that I didn’t really think about going back to school,” Braden said. “It just didn’t seem like it could ever be a reality, but once I got that scholarship, it felt like doors opened and things changed.”

In the ’80s, ’90s, and early 2000s, Chico State had additional resources tailored for re-entry students. There was an appointed advisor who directly assisted re-entry students, but once this faculty member retired, most of the organized activities and organizations for re-entry students went away as well.

**Chico State Faculty and Staff Encourage a Reinstatement of a Re-entry Student Club**

Duggan is adamant about pushing for a re-entry student club or organization on campus by spring 2013 to increase students’ sense of belonging.

“One of my goals for services for re-entry students is to really have the club or organization be student run, so that it can be passed down generation to generation through students,” Duggan said.

This will allow the organization to continue to flourish and not be affected by whether or not there is a specialized advisor who oversees the group, Duggan said.

It is important not to generalize re-entry students. Each group of students on campus is diverse, and each individual within that group is unique. The common theme among these groups is the notion that students thrive in an inclusive environment where they can communicate openly and express themselves in order to reach their academic goals.

The prospective club will act as a support system open to all Chico State students to ensure they receive the true Chico experience and get the support they need and deserve.
Time to End Ageism

By: Shelby Hudak

Each day 10,000 U.S. citizens turn 65, according to the Census Internet Release and Current Populations Report, Special Studies. Thanks to advanced medicine, people are living longer, giving the United States its largest population facing the potential of ageism.

The International Longevity Center states that “ageism refers to ideas, attitudes, beliefs and practices on the part of individuals that are biased against persons or groups based on their older age.”

In the book Agewise: Fighting the New Ageism in America, author Margaret Morganroth says, “Ageism is more than a negative view of old or middle age, it provides a set of terrifying anticipations.”

It is important for everyone to be aware of the negative impacts of ageism.

Seema Sehrawat, director of the CSU, Chico Interdisciplinary Center on Aging, said ageism “impacts your self-image and how you look at yourself.”

Of the challenges people face as a result of ageism, employment is one of the biggest.

“It takes older people usually six weeks longer than their counterparts to find a job,” Sehrawat said.

Companies often hire young employees because they find it more beneficial to invest in them, as opposed to an older employee. A 30-year-old simply has the ability to stay at the company longer than a 60-year-old.

Ageism mainly affects the older population, but there are also cases of reverse ageism affecting youth.

“Just like college-age students who feel that they may be discriminated against in the workplace for being too young, older adults are discriminated [against] – in a culture that values youth – for being too old,” said Cynthia Siemsen, chair of the sociology department.

Feeling attractive and valuable is also complicated by ageism.

“The media really forces us to look younger,” Sehrawat said. “We are always put on this stand of trying to look younger and not feel comfortable with our age so people are buying all these products to look younger.”

People internalize how they perceive their age. American culture teaches us at a young age that youth is beauty, and people feel unattractive as they begin the aging process.

Because Chico is a college town, older individuals can really feel out of place with the majority of students being younger in age.

Students can help fight ageism by avoiding assumptions about people based on their age, and by accepting individuals for who
they are.

“We need to focus on the positive aspects of aging,” Sehrawat said. “Aging brings experience and the ability to open one’s self up to different experiences.”

“Ageism is equally as important as any other ‘ism,’” Sehrawat said.

“We think less about age despite the fact that it doesn’t matter what gender you are, what race you are, or even what class you are, we are all aging.” Siemsen said.

Chico State is an active ally for preventing ageism through the Office of Diversity and Inclusion’s conversation on diversity regarding ageism and through Dr. Seema Sehrawat’s constant research. It is important we come together as allies to fight ageism. To learn more, please visit http://www.csuchico.edu/icoa/index.shtml
Mechoopda Tribe Desires Greater Outreach and Education About Its Heritage

By: Chris Tavolazzi

Long before the first cornerstone of Chico State was laid, the Mechoopda people were the stewards of this land. The native people of Chico lived, played, ate, and dreamed here for centuries before John Bidwell's arrival.

“We're here basically because they're not,” said Professor Jesse Dizard of the Department of Anthropology.

The indigenous people of the Chico valley were forced from their land, and memories of that relocation run deep, Dizard said.

In the mid-19th century, John Bidwell founded the city of Chico, and the native people were driven out. Their land was taken by force, and many Native Americans died in the process. Chico State is now built on that land.

“I want people to know sometimes that this is Indian land,” said Ali Knight, secretary for the Mechoopda tribe. “And I sometimes think the people are kind of happy about natives proclaiming this is their land still.”

Possession of land is a huge thing, and Knight, secretary for the Mechoopda tribe, describes herself as having “chip on her shoulder” about what happened to her ancestors, she said.

She would like to see the University and the Mechoopda tribe come together and be more proactive about educating people about the history of this land, Knight said.

Knight works for Kids and Creeks, an organization that educates children about Chico ecology and the environment. When she teaches about her heritage, she gets a lot of questions.

Kids ask if Native American people still live in teepees or if they live in a regular house, Knight said.

“They ask a lot of questions about primitive living and see ‘native’ as very primitive and undeveloped,” she said.

The stereotyping and lack of information are persistent problems, as is under-representation of Native Americans in education, Knight said.

As of fall 2011, people of Native American heritage made up just 0.8 percent of the population at Chico State. That means only 126 out of almost 16,000 students were of Native American heritage.

The Mechoopda tribe has about 400 members, and about 70 of those live in the Chico area, Knight said.

In 2005, President Zingg signed a memorandum of understanding, or MOU, stating the University will consult the tribe when making decisions that concern the tribe's cultural interests and that the tribe will consider the
University's interests as well.

The Northeast Information Center, a Chico State center that identifies and archives tribal sites in the area, works with tribes in 11 counties. Amy Huberland, associate director at the center, is familiar with Native Americans' desire to protect their heritage.

“The Mechoopda still consider this to be their homeland,” she said.

The MOU means the University will try not to do anything—without the Mechoopda's knowledge—that might offend them or affect one of the important sites in their area, Huberland said.

The University has put on various cultural events centered around Native American history in recent years, including hosting the 26th annual California Indian Conference in 2011, which was the most attended conference in the history of the event, she said.

Those who attended had a great time, Knight said.

“As far as the University checking in on that note, they won total big kudo points with not only Mechoopdas but all the tribes in this area,” Knight said.

The intention to reconcile with the tribe through an MOU and an increased desire to consider Native American culture shows Chico is moving in the right direction, but more needs to be done, Knight said.
Richard Lipari: Founder of Student Veteran Organization

By: Jillian Luchsinger

When Richard Lipari attended Chico State in 1967, anti-Vietnam demonstrations and protests created a hostile environment for veterans returning to school after the war.

"The transition from the military to civilian life was terrible," Lipari said. "There were demonstrations on campus, and people did not appreciate the individuals in the service."

In his first semester as a Wildcat, Lipari began the process of pledging a fraternity on campus. After noticing a difference between the attitudes of those who were in the service and those who were not, he decided to withdraw from the process.

Instead, Lipari was prompted to create an organization of his own. In 1967, he founded and became president of the Student Veteran Organization, a group that was supportive of individuals going through the same transition from the service to education.

The organization created camaraderie and support for soldiers at a time when other outlets didn't exist on campus, he said.

More than 40 students showed up to the first meeting, and from there, the organization appointed officers, participated in events, held study halls, and planned meetings.

"Today they have rooms for meetings," Lipari said. "We used to meet at a bar or pizzeria."

The members quickly bonded and were very dedicated and committed to supporting each other personally and academically, he said.

During the time that Lipari attended Chico State and was involved with the student veterans, the organization received the highest GPA rating out of all of the organizations on campus.

"The attitude of veterans was much more serious than most of our peers," he said. "In the service we went through very serious training, so we were very serious when we got to college about education and studying for good grades."

Lipari explained that it was very rewarding when other members succeeded academically.
“We weren’t competing – we were inspiring each other to get good grades,” Lipari said.

Reflecting on his experience at Chico State, Lipari is pleased that soldiers discharged from the service now have transition services and educational benefits from the Veterans Affairs that are supported by college campuses.

“It wasn’t handled like it is today,” he said. “Now, veterans can plan college plans with advisors.”

Chico State recently made Victory Media’s list of Military Friendly Schools for the third year in a row. The list honors the top 15 percent of colleges in the country that do the most to support America’s military service members, veterans, and spouses in advancing their education.

Since Lipari founded the Student Veteran Organization 45 years ago, the group has continued to provide support for men and women in the service.

“As a young soldier, getting out of the military and making the transition to education is easier with the Student Veteran Organization,” he said.

Lipari graduated from Chico State in 1969 with a B.S. in accounting and earned an MBA from San Francisco State in 1972. He became a licensed Certified Public Accountant in 1972 and worked until he retired in 2009. He is still involved with the veteran community and supportive of the Student Veteran Organization at Chico State.
One Woman’s Vision for a More Inclusive World Starts by Embracing Diversity

By: Kelsey Hilton

Terry Kozloff, prefers to keep the word “pity” out of her vocabulary. Instead, she accepts the obstacles that she is faced with and dedicates herself to helping others.

Her determination and compassion have brought her from a brief period of homelessness to where she is today – publisher and editor for WE for Everyone magazine and co-owner and co-director of AMJaMB Supported Living and Day Services.

Kozloff’s agency, located in Paradise, Calif., assists adults who live with developmental disabilities in their own homes. But it wasn’t always the successful program that it is today. It took a lot of hard work and dedication to start a business with no money.

Kozloff and her business partner, Domenic Console, previously worked together at another supported living program. They were unsatisfied with the quality of services they provided working for such a large organization.

Together they implemented a business plan for a program that they could be proud of. In the midst of designing their proposal, both were dismissed from their former organization, and Kozloff was forced to live in a tent with her husband for six weeks.

“We started out with zero – we had nothing,” Kozloff said. “We hadn’t planned on leaving, and we hadn’t planned on actually starting the program for another year or so. It was a big shock.”

Kozloff’s sources of inspiration and strength are her children Michelle, 26, and Ben, 23, whom she raised on her own.

Ben was born blind, and it was later understood he was also deaf and a quadriplegic, which motivated Kozloff to become an advocate for people with developmental disabilities, she said.

Console appreciates Kozloff’s determination and her compassion for their clients.

“Terry is a real, very caring person when it comes to all of the consumers we serve,” Console said. “She has very high standards, especially when it comes to medical care in their everyday care and their everyday life – she cares deeply about them.”

Kozloff made a point to never sacrifice the quality of service she provides in order to make a greater profit.
something that we didn’t feel good about doing, so we always maintained our values and continue to do so.

Kozloff doesn’t let setbacks keep her from reaching personal goals. She believes that everyone has a voice and deserves to be heard. Kozloff’s family-managed magazine is an outlet for contributors to speak their minds, and it allows everyday people to share their previously untold stories.

An Inclusive Magazine Written Exclusively for Everyone

“WE call it WE for Everyone because it’s not all about people with disabilities, it’s about just, people,” Kozloff said. “Helping people understand that we’re all different, but we all have feelings, and we all have hopes, and we all have experiences that made us who we are.”

Kozloff’s publication, which is distributed in both print and online, is a family hobby. Kozloff’s husband, Steve, does all of the layout and binds the magazine by hand. Terry’s daughter helps with co-editing articles, and the whole family takes part in the photography.

“There is nothing like this magazine out there anywhere,” Steve Kozloff said. “It’s a National Geographic-quality magazine that does so much good for so many people.”

WE magazine explains its purpose in its subtitle: “A magazine exclusively for everyone.”

“It’s our contribution to the community; helping with the whole concept of diversity,” Kozloff said. “It’s truly about helping people appreciate that we all make the world go round and we all belong in the same magazine.”

Inspired by the life story of Tray Robinson, director of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Kozloff decided to share his story with her readers. Robinson will be on the cover of the third issue of WE magazine, coming out the first week of December 2012.

“I have learned that I am an intelligent person and that everyone has intelligence,” Kozloff said. “And absolutely I have learned that if you spend enough time with a person, you can find that they all have gifts that they can offer this world. No matter their disability and no matter where they’ve come from.”
Students Embrace Tolerance, Promote Conversations on Religious Diversity

By: Christopher Tavolazzi

Two women in headscarves carefully lay prayer rugs on the lawn in front of Butte Hall. They kneel down and begin prayer just as class is dismissed. Hundreds of students pass by and look, but the women remain undisturbed.

This is the climate of religious acceptance at Chico State.

There are 15 registered student religious organizations at the University. Most are Christian, a few are Muslim or Jewish, and one is secular.

The groups all support each other, said Hussein Alkhalifa, last semester’s president of the Great Prophet Mohammad Association. “We share our morals and our prayers with each other.”

The Great Prophet Mohammad Association is a student organization that focuses on educating the public about Muslims and Muslim affairs. “We would just like a chance to explain ourselves,” said Alkhalifa.

One of the main obstacles of religious acceptance is the amount of ignorance in this country, said Kate McCarthy, associate professor of religious studies at Chico State.

People often don’t know the difference between a Sikh and a Muslim, and this hurts us as a country, said McCarthy. Americans come to adulthood without a grasp on the different religions represented in our country.

“I think we can go beyond polite tolerance to deeper understanding and community building,” she said.

The Religious Diversity Association (RDA), an organization founded this semester, plans to promote discussion to raise awareness, said Kaylee Dixon, secretary for the association. “We’re trying to have a nonjudgmental, neutral platform for people to come to.”

As its first unified act, the RDA will be running a campaign to combat stereotypes, said Dixon. It will have representatives of various religious and nonreligious groups fill out fliers that state their affiliation on one line and make a comment against a stereotype on another.

People have written things like “I’m a Catholic, and I’m pro-choice,” or “I’m a Mormon, but I’m not a polygamist,” said Dixon. Even if people don’t have a religious affiliation, they still have an opinion about religion, she added.
Another student organization, the Secular Students Alliance, advocates for education coupled with critical thought.

As long as religious groups are asking questions and thinking, instead of blindly following religious dogma, then that’s good, said Brian Ervin, president of the Secular Students Alliance. Most religions represented at Chico State seem to be open to each other, and the level of religious diversity on campus is great, he added.

“I think everyone gets along,” he said. “I’ve never seen any protests of any one group against another.” Most religions share common bonds of working together, community, and treating others like you would want to be treated, and these elements are good, said Ervin.

Ten years after 9/11, there’s still a lot of stereotyping and confusion about Muslims in America. Terrorist attacks often get blamed on all Muslims, not just the extremist groups that are actually responsible. Students in the Great Prophet Mohammad Association want the chance to let people know how they feel about these events as “Americans first, then Muslims,” said Alkhailfa.

Though politics are something Muslims can’t ignore, Chico is a place that’s different from most of the United States, said Alkhailfa. He now lives in Texas, where the contrast in tolerance from Chico is noticeable.

Alkhailfa believes people should take the message of education to their friends and family. “Before we learn about other religions, we have to learn about ourselves, because we’re all human.”