Comparing Jay-Z to Frederick Douglass is just one of the innovative ways that English professor Tracy Butts has engaged students in multicultural learning. Providing new context to historical issues has been successful in the classroom, and now Butts will take that forward-thinking approach to the whole university.

She has taught at Chico State since 2001, and was recently appointed to the newly-created position of chief diversity officer.

Butts has been defined as a leader in diversity efforts on campus, bringing speakers to the University, planning events such as the Harlem Renaissance Rent Party, and working as coordinator for the multicultural and gender studies program.

As chief diversity officer, Butts will now also oversee the implementation of Chico State’s Diversity Action Plan, which aims to create a more inclusive learning environment.

“One of the things that we want to do with the Diversity Action Plan is to get everyone involved with the business of diversity,” Butts said.

The campus has engaged in many diversity efforts, but these were often isolated to a certain group or department, she said. Sometimes these efforts would overlap, and other times there were areas that didn’t receive the attention they deserved.

“This is about helping people understand all of the efforts that are taking place,” Butts said.

Once everyone is aware of the work being done, people and departments can coordinate and combine their efforts to ensure the goal of creating an inclusive campus is achieved. This is the first year of the DAP’s implementation, and departments such as kinesiology, communication and others have already started developing individual plans to increase engagement in diversity.
One personal goal Butts has for the University is “reframing” the way diversity is viewed and discussed, she said.

“A lot of times when we talk about it, we talk about it in the context of a problem, something that we have to fix or solve,” Butts said. “We very rarely talk about it as something that is advantageous to everyone on campus.”

The DAP defines diversity in-line with this positive outlook and states it “encompasses the richness of differences among people.”

Diversity can be difficult to define, and the DAP acknowledges that diversity is dynamic and the definition will evolve with community understanding. Butts echoed this sentiment and said it’s a common misconception that diversity only means one thing.

“Sometimes when people hear the word, the first thing they hear—and sometimes the only thing they hear—is racial or ethnic diversity, and they don’t think about diversity in its many forms,” Butts said.

These forms may be social, cultural or intellectual diversity, she said. Other factors listed in the DAP include ability, age, gender identity, sexuality, political affiliation, religion and socio-economic background.

In addition to these various aspects of diversity, the DAP outlines four dimensions of diversity to evaluate the campus success: access and success, education and scholarship, intergroup relations and campus climate, and institutional vitality and viability. Each of these dimensions features two priorities the campus will focus its efforts toward. These priorities range from increasing access for under-represented groups to creating a system of accountability and recognition regarding diversity efforts.

The role of chief diversity officer entails monitoring the progress toward these priorities and goals. Butts’ job will involve creating evaluation systems and redesigning programs to be more inclusive.

In addition to her professional experience, Butts’ personal experience has given her an understanding of the importance of diversity. She knows firsthand what it is like to be a minority on campus. Virginia Tech was a predominantly white university, and Butts enrolled without ever visiting the school.

She recalls arriving in Blacksburg, Va., and driving past cows in rolling pastures. “It was kind of a shock,” she said.

When she arrived in 1988, Virginia Tech had about 21,000 students, and only about 1,000 were black, Butts said.

As far back as junior high school, it wasn’t uncommon for Butts to be the only black girl in a class, she said. This pattern carried out through high school, and it came to a peak in college.

“It got to a point when I went to Virginia Tech, all of my classes were like that,” she said.

This experience is similar to that of students coming to Chico for the first time, she said. Located in isolated, rural communities, Virginia Tech and Chico State have faced some of the same obstacles in the path toward creating more diverse campuses. Students coming from more urban areas may face the same sense of shock when coming to Chico that Butts felt in Blacksburg, Va.

“For some of them, this is the first time that they’re finding themselves in the situation where they’re the only person who looks like they do in the class,” she said.

The DAP aims to create a more inclusive environment that fosters equal opportunities for success, but students may also find their own ways to become active in diversity efforts.

The Cross-Cultural Learning Center is one resource that students can use to get involved in activities like the Diversity Summit, Butts said. The CCLC organizes events every semester to engage students in diversity-related efforts.

The ultimate goal, Butts said, is to reach a point where everyone on campus is engaging in diversity-related efforts on an everyday basis.
working to promote diversity, and one of our core purposes is to prepare teachers to teach diverse populations of students,” Schulte said. “We define diversity broadly—language, culture, ability, socioeconomic status and sexual orientation.”

Most teachers at the elementary level are middle-class white women who might not understand students with a different background from them, Schulte said. “Many children have been poorly served by schools,” Schulte said. “We are trying to help these future teachers see that all children can bring something to the classroom, and we want to help them understand the historical context of why kids might not be served by the system.”

To prepare these teachers, the department brings speakers from all different backgrounds to discuss their language, customs and practices. Future teachers are also required to study different cultural norms.

Not only has the department focused on educating future teachers, but also on enrolling students of color in the program. “We are collaborating with EOP, Upward Bound and other programs focused on diversity to attempt to recruit these students into teacher education,” Schulte said.

EOP, or Educational Opportunity Program, and Upward Bound are programs that focus on providing access and support services to low-income and first-generation Chico State students.

Al Schademan, an assistant professor of secondary pedagogy specializing in science education, has partnered with Maria Moreno, director of Upward Bound, and have received a grant to bring students of color, specifically Hmong students, to teacher education at Chico State and Butte College.

Funded by former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, the main goals of Shademan and Moreno’s grant, the Chico Rural Teacher Pathway grant, are to “address the youth employment crisis, connect young people to meaningful jobs and careers and to diversify the teaching workforce in California.”

Applying “Treat others as they need to be treated” to teacher preparation programs will ultimately create schools where equity and inclusion thrive and where teachers will better serve kids who are different from them.

Al Schademan and Maria Moreno are co-directors for the Chico Rural Teacher Pathway, a program that helps low-income students attain their teaching credential.

**Diversity Conference Shatters Barriers Between Students and Staff**

*By Skylar Young*

Tears filled the eyes of students, faculty and staff as they openly discussed defining moments in their lives that made them the people they are today. This was only one session of a long, enlightening day for the 80 people in attendance at the first Through the Looking Glass conference hosted by the Cross-Cultural Leadership Center.

“This event allowed students and faculty to come together, to break down barriers, and to look at each other without a looking glass,” said Bianka Perez, logistics coordinator for the CCLC.

Through the Looking Glass was started by sophomore Egypt Howard, a paraprofessional for the CCLC. She was inspired to create an open discussion with staff and students that included team-building activities and group presentations that aimed to bring a more inclusive

Attendees at the conference engage in “Slice n’ Dice,” a game aimed to build trust among participants.
Diversity Conference Shatters Barriers... continued

atmosphere to campus.

President Zingg was in attendance and during his speech he made it known that those in the room cared about the future of the university.

“The reason that you have come here today is to move this community forward,” Zingg said. “The work will be hard, but the outcome will be magnificent.”

Instead of focusing on people's differences, the conference focused on how people, students and faculty are connected by the human experience. Each session showed that everyone has a story, everyone has a past and everyone can have a more inclusive future.

“This conference is a way to network with faculty and staff,” Perez said. “It is really intimidating to talk to the president, vice provost or Mayor Ann Schwab, but here you can put down your guard.”

During the “Reality Check” session, senior Krystle Tonga asked the faculty in attendance what they could do to make a more inviting environment for their students and how they can build a more personal relationship with them.

Professor Lee Altier from the agriculture department encouraged students to connect with their professors and visit them during their office hours.

“We want to know you as individuals,” Altier said.

To build more personal relationships, teams were formed with students, staff and faculty. They were asked by the conference facilitators to come up with a university course, club or program that could be implemented to decrease segregation and increase inclusiveness.

One team came up with a freshman-level course called “Dive into Diversity” that would motivate students to accept and promote diversity around campus through lectures, activities and group assignments. The class’s goal would be to get other students who were not enrolled in this particular class to be involved with diversity efforts at Chico State.

“I hope people follow through with the program they came up with,” Howard said. “These programs are not just for black people, white people, Greeks or Latinos, but for everyone.”

The conference also involved outdoor team-building activities. “Slice 'N Dice,” a game aimed to build trust among everyone, involved people running through a line of people's arms. Participants would pull their arms up once the runner was close. The second time around, people were running, skipping, dancing and even leap-frogging though the line.

By the end of the conference, it was apparent that a more inclusive environment was already being built. Students were giving faculty and staff hugs, and office-hour appointments were already being scheduled.

“This conference was to bring staff and students together because one can’t exist without the other,” said Aaron Rodriguez, a student facilitator for the conference. “We learn from each other.”

City Council Backs Plan for Progressive Chico Future

By Melissa Duralia

Changes are coming to the city of Chico. Mayor Ann Schwab and the City Council are currently working to enact the City of Chico Diversity Action Plan. The plan’s goal is to eliminate barriers stemming from diversity issues that people face in the Chico community.

The DAP began its formation in June 2010, when Schwab requested authorization from the Chico City Council for the creation of the plan and a committee to draft it. Since the disbanding of the Chico Human Resource Commission, which used to handle areas of diversity awareness in the community, there has been a significant lag in diversity awareness, Schwab said.

By enacting the DAP, the council hopes to gain more community involvement in the city's government, because members think the government works best when more people are involved. The steps being taken aim to involve more individuals in the community decision-making processes by encouraging people to sit on community boards and councils. The City Council also seeks to eliminate communication barriers people face when going to city hall and to promote training on diversity awareness and sensitivity.

The council hopes to convey through the plan that Chico is consciously working to implement diversity when
constructing public works projects, when delegating funding and when creating art. “I know the DAP will be successful because it is a plan with actions for achieving success, not just a statement without measurable goals,” Schwab said.

When finalized, the plan will include a mission statement, new standards in areas such as hiring practices and accessibility to interpreters, and outreach plans in the community to measure progress. Upon approval of the DAP by the Chico city attorney, implementation of the plan will be in the hands of the Chico Sustainability Task Force.

Actions associated with the implementation of the plan will be “actively improving the quality of life for all community members,” Schwab said.

As of February 2011, the DAP’s ad hoc committee had finished conducting surveys regarding diversity awareness in the Chico community and will now proceed to analyze the results. The ad hoc committee is made up of 10 individuals who represent diverse stakeholders in the community, including former members of the Chico Human Resource Commission.

A draft of the City of Chico Diversity Action Plan is expected to be available for the city attorney’s approval by spring 2011.

Mayor Ann Schwab considers the Chico hands sculpture a symbol of progressiveness for the Chico community.

NEW PROGRAM FORMALIZES CROSS-CAMPUS CONNECTIONS FOR FOSTER YOUTH

By Kristina Richmann

Children who grow up in foster care often drop out of high school, and even fewer earn a college degree. Getting into college is already an obstacle and, once foster youth arrive, it can seem like they simply become a number, exhausting available programs and falling through the cracks.

Chico State’s newly founded Foster Youth Program identifies those in foster care to provide them with the same resources as students coming from traditional families. It is a service to the foster youth of Northern California to provide education for those not otherwise receiving it.

Looking to recruit first-generation college students, the program facilitates collaboration between various campus resources to make college more accessible. It helps students apply for financial aid that can help pay for tuition as well as many living expenses, such as rent and transportation. It also works with other campus programs designed to assist students with
Jayme Jones

Jayme Jones, 22, came to Chico State with the idea that she wanted to learn to fight crime.

Growing up in Oakland, Jones recognized many problems with the city, from the crime rate to the quality of the school districts. She knew that she wanted to help create change, and she realized fighting crime could come in many forms.

“Over time I see that just being educated may be a tool to battle some of the things that go on in inner cities,” Jones said.

As a first-generation college student, Jones’ family doesn’t always know how to support her through college, so she relies on support networks at Chico State.

Programs on campus like the Educational Opportunity Program have provided her with information about different resources on campus, introduced her to other students and set her up with a paraprofessional adviser who she could turn to for help.

“I think building that support network set a good foundation for me,” Jones said.

From that solid foundation, Jones built many successes. She is a paraprofessional adviser for EOP, is vice president of the political science honors society, Pi Sigma Alpha, and she has been a consistent recipient of the Dream Keepers award, which recognizes African-American students with a GPA of 3.5 or higher.

After graduation in May, Jones will attend graduate school to study higher education student affairs programs. She wants to work at a university where she can help underrepresented students achieve their goals.

Tyler Smith

It’s not always easy being the new guy, but when Tyler Smith, 23, transferred to Chico State, he felt right at home.

“It was a very easy transition to come to Chico and feel like you were part of a family,” he said.

Smith’s second family is Chico State’s Phi Kappa Tau fraternity, where he is president.

“I definitely have learned to become a better leader, and in that, a better listener, and trying to figure out people’s needs and wants,” he said.

The fraternity has helped Smith become involved in the community, supporting organizations and causes such as the Boys & Girls Clubs, the Association of Hole in the Wall Camps and Susan G. Komen for the Cure.

Many of the organizations the fraternity supports are chosen because they have special meaning to one of the members, Smith said.

In addition to helping people through community service, Smith became a peer educator to help people with anything from drug and alcohol problems to personal or family issues.

“It gives us tools to enable us to help them while being their friend,” he said.

Smith’s experience at Chico State has helped him gain the skills, both educationally and socially, to be prepared for what comes next.

“Chico students know how to network and know how to make friends,” Smith said. “And that’s something that I think will help us all when we leave here and go out into the real world.”

Slande Erole

Even though she has lived all over the world, from Haiti to France, Slande Erole, 24, considers Chico to be one of her favorite places.

Erole came to Chico State as a freshman to study business and she fell in love with the school and the city. After obtaining her bachelor’s degree she decided to stay to pursue her master’s.

“I decided to stay an extra two years, because I just wasn’t ready to leave,” she said.

Erole’s family moved to California from Haiti when she was 11 years old, and she has taken advantage of every learning opportunity since.

As an undergraduate, Erole became involved in many campus organizations, such as Students in Free Enterprise, CAVE and the Collegiate Entrepreneurial Association.

Erole also took the opportunity to learn about other cultures by studying abroad in Pau, France.

When it came time to graduate, Erole knew that she didn’t want to stop learning, so she earned her master’s in political science.

“I grew a lot and I just wanted to continue that process of learning about what is happening around the world,” she said.

Since graduating in December, Erole found out her thesis on internationalization and educational freedom won the Outstanding Thesis Award for the Behavioral and Social Sciences Department.

Now, after gaining a world of knowledge, Erole will share her wisdom with others as the graduate speaker during the commencement ceremony in May.
NEW PROGRAM FORMALIZES... continued

educational goals.

Since the Foster Youth Program does not have a budget, it coordinates with campus offices that already provide services and refers former foster youth to those programs.

An informal network of various student services already exists on campus. Faculty and members of the Wellness Center, admissions, registration, financial aid and housing departments unofficially implement this program. This network works until someone leaves the school. The Foster Youth Program aims to formalize the process so the cross-campus connections will not be lost.

“The problem with the informal network is that it’s like life jackets—they’re just floating, not drowning,” said Jon Caudill, Foster Youth Program faculty representative. “Right now it’s just crisis intervention and not preparing for potential problems.”

The program takes a holistic approach by incorporating various student services on campus. It differs from other similar programs in that it is a grassroots effort comprised of a committee that pulls together resources to facilitate foster youth’s entry to and success at Chico State. It is a network of people who genuinely value what is important about foster care.

For example, if the committee knows a foster youth student does not have housing for the summer, it can contact university housing to provide summer living to keep them from sleeping in their car or couch surfing.

The committee also decides how to incorporate community resources. Previously, there has been no efficient use of community resources, such as being able to collect donations or set up foster youth scholarships. The committee wants to provide the foster youth with a sense of belonging and highlight them as an essential part of the Chico community.

“Since foster youth jump more hurdles, it’s preparing them to be good citizens, and Chico State wants to supply Northern California with qualified employees,” Caudill said.

Not only does the Foster Youth Program offer financial assistance, it offers other types of support as well. After the first year, the committee plans to implement a mentor program where foster youth students of Chico State would help foster youth at Butte College gain entry to Chico State. The first step is to build the culture of the Foster Youth Program at Chico State, which will then spread to Butte College, Caudill said.

The Foster Youth Program is trying to reduce situations that lead to dropping out of school. Many foster youths do not know they qualify for aid and need to learn what resources are available to them, Caudill said.

“The Foster Youth Program fits perfectly under the new Diversity Action Plan umbrella because it’s more about experiences and bringing those diverse students and their unique experiences into the classroom,” Caudill said.

FORMER CHICO STATE FOOTBALL STAR MENTORS ATHLETES

By Kristina Richmann

In the summer of 1984, Dwight Lewis packed his bags and took an 18-hour Greyhound bus ride from 74 degrees in San Diego to a scorching 101 degrees in Chico. The next morning he was off to double days.

“I’ll never forget that,” the 1988 Chico State alumnus said.

An athlete since he was 5 years old, Lewis always wanted to know more than his opponents, and playing football at Chico State gave him the opportunity to gain an in-depth knowledge of college sports.

Twenty-three years later, Lewis is now the associate athletic director at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, N.C. Lewis supervises men’s and women’s cross-country/track and field, field hockey, women’s tennis, and all teams’ strength and conditioning. In addition to athletics, he also academically supervises sports medicine, media relations and student athlete affairs.

Lewis also serves as vice chair of the Atlantic Coast Conference track and field committee and as the athletic department’s liaison to the counseling center, Office of Multicultural Affairs’ career services and student life. He represents the WFU athletic department at speaking events, local school boards and community agencies and conferences.

Between Chico State and WFU, Lewis worked for the University of Oregon as director of academic support for student athletes. Lewis described working there as “one of the best experiences, and I will always hold the Ducks close to my heart.”

Landing a job at WFU in 2001, Lewis was attracted to its rich tradition in scholarship, culture and athletics. He knew he wanted to continue working at a Division I institution that was respected for its academic integrity and athletic excellence.

Desiring to continue performing his job Dwight Lewis attended Chico State from 1984-1988 and is now the athletic director at Wake Forest University in North Carolina.
The Congregational Church of Chico has 13 doors, all of which are open to everyone. This historic church welcomes anyone who seeks an informed, vibrant and growing relationship with God and the community.

Being a liberal church, the Congregational Church of Chico is also open to new ideas and welcomes diverse ways of thinking about God, life and faith. Pastor Jim Peck encourages his congregation to embrace new patterns of thought for Christianity and the world. He tells his congregation to engage in what is being taught, even when they may not initially agree with it. Peck believes a Christian’s study of the Bible is a journey on which he or she should not walk alone; the congregation is advised to walk together in search of knowledge and understanding.

Stemming from the church’s commitment to welcoming any person who wants to attend a service, the Congregational Church of Chico is one of the community’s only churches that has described itself as open and affirming. The church believes every person, regardless of sexual orientation, is a child of God and is thus welcome at the church.

One Small Church, Big Community Steps

By Melissa Duralia

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Some people argue that the text of the Bible says gay and lesbian relationships are abominations to God, but Peck asserts that the words of the Bible should not always be taken literally. He thinks people must look at how the text was written and then look at how the text applies today. The progressive side of Christianity takes into consideration knowledge from current events, history and modern science.

Peck speaks a message based on hope. “We do not want to exclude, when God wants to include,” he said.

As the Bible states, the body of Christ began with 12 men known as the 12 disciples. The body then expanded its circle to include women and children, and Peck said it is not the church’s right to prevent the circle’s expansion of inclusion.

The Congregational Church of Chico’s body may be small in number, amounting to 60 people on a busy Sunday, but it’s a body that is active in the Chico community. Almost every member of the church dedicates time to a program or organization that works to make a positive difference in the community, Peck said.

Every Sunday afternoon, members of the Congregational Church of Chico donate their time to volunteer at the Shalom Free Clinic. The church co-sponsors the operation of the clinic, which was founded by the Chico Havurah, a Jewish congregation. Both the Congregational Church of Chico and the Chico Havurah saw the need for basic free health care in the community, Peck said, and they have developed a strong passion for the Shalom Free Clinic.

Peck believes God desires for all people to be understanding of each other and to welcome differing viewpoints. Peck doesn’t want his congregation to fear thoughts that are different from its own. The church is also a member of the Chico Area Interfaith Council, a network of faith communities, including druids, Muslims and Christians. The council works together to help the Chico community and the world.

Lynn Haskell has been a member of the Congregational Church of Chico for the past 20 years. She said the reason she found a home with this church is because it’s “creating a community that is just and actively seeks to live the golden rule.”

The body of the Congregational Church of Chico may be small in number, but it keeps all doors open in order to make the largest impact possible on the Chico community.