

2018

## Diversity and Cultural Competence in the LIS Classroom: A Curriculum Audit

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### Recommended Citation

Cooke, N. A., & Jacobs, J. A. (2018). Diversity and Cultural Competence in the LIS Classroom: A Curriculum Audit. *Urban Library Journal*, 24 (1). Retrieved from <https://academicworks.cuny.edu/ulj/vol24/iss1/2>

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## **Cover Page Footnote**

The authors would like to thank the University of Illinois' Teaching Advancement Board and the Provost's Office for the funding that made this project possible.

# Diversity and Cultural Competence in the LIS Classroom: A Curriculum Audit

Nicole A. Cooke and Jennifer A. Jacobs

## Abstract

In a case study examining a library and information science graduate curriculum, 18 graduate students engaged in a comprehensive diversity audit of the School of Information Sciences curriculum. The diversity audit was a student-generated review of 108 syllabi and permitted students to engage in an action-learning project that benefited the school and allowed them, and the school's faculty, to see first-hand why diversity and cultural competence are important facets of library and information science curricula.

Keywords: diversity; cultural competence; curriculum; LIS education; professional education

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Bio: Jennifer Margolis Jacobs is an Information Specialist at Avon Center Elementary School (Round Lake Beach, Community Consolidated School District 46 in Illinois). A 2016 graduate from the Masters of Library and Information Science program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, she strives to incorporate diversity and social justice into her practice as a school librarian.

## Introduction

In the fall of 2015, the School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois engaged in a comprehensive diversity audit of its curriculum, conducted by 18 students in the class *Information Services to Diverse Populations*. The course, created and taught by the first author, introduces future information professionals to the wide variety of diverse groups they may encounter in their professional practice and encourages them to be critical, empathetic, and culturally competent in their delivery of services. The diversity audit was a student-generated review of course content that permitted students to engage in an action-learning project that

would benefit their school and allow them to see first-hand why diversity and cultural competence are important facets of their training as aspiring information professionals.

The graduate assistant and project coordinator (the second author) for the course led the class in the diversity audit and worked with online students to evaluate 108 syllabi from across the school's curriculum, according to specially developed templates (see appendices). The template evaluations directed students to produce and compile articles, videos, podcasts, lesson plans, and other materials that can be infused into a wide variety of School of Information Sciences courses. The recommendations were meant to accommodate different learning styles and give instructors an opportunity to consider the most appropriate cultural competence resources for their classes. Completing the audit provided students with valuable hands-on expertise related to cultural competence, and their recommendations will improve the program's curriculum and benefit the overall community and organizational climate.

## **Literature Review**

### **Diversity Audits**

Audits are longstanding assessment tools and have often been used to evaluate curricula in any number of disciplines. Curriculum audits can focus on many factors and/or aspects of strength and weakness in a given program. Diversity is the topic of examination in this research, and in other case studies throughout the literature. Diversity audits "are evaluations based on qualitative and quantitative information about the status of diversity within the organization" (Harvey, 2005, p. 328). Within an educational organization, syllabi that represent a program of higher learning can be considered a representative part of a larger organization. Such audits are common and are used to measure the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of training, recruitment, and other such efforts. "These audits reveal whether a gap exists between what is being done and what the organization should do in terms of diversity, and are used as a basis for action planning" (p. 328). In the case of a curriculum, gaps can represent deficits in academic content with regards to diversity, social justice, and related topics, or gaps in teaching personnel (this could be a combination of a lack of instructors who themselves are diverse, and/or faculty who are willing and able to teach diverse content in their courses).

Other accounts in the literature discuss culture audits (Freiberg, 1998; Peterson & Deal, 1998; Wagner & Madsen-Copas, 2002). Culture audits, much like the concept of a climate survey, investigate how diverse cultural perspectives are reflected in the overall organizational or school culture (National Center for Cultural Competence, 2005), which in turn is reflected in and trickles down to the

curriculum. In addition to identifying gaps and strengths, both culture and diversity audits (specific to curricula) can spotlight procedures and practices that can inform strategic plans and overall institutional change and growth. Audit results can lead to more diverse hiring or personnel training in areas of diversity, and can result in other initiatives that will better incorporate the perspectives and needs of diverse stakeholders and benefit the school / organization and those being served. Students that pursue college and university degrees are increasingly diverse (diversity can encompass race, ethnicity, religion, physical ability, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic factors, and a host of other characteristics), and curricula should reflect this diversity. For this reason, the auditing of organizations and curricula is crucial (Cooke 2016a and in press; Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2003) and should be done on some type of regular basis.

Hayes, Carpenter, and Rodgers (2013) concur by emphasizing that diversity audits are advantageous because they afford the opportunity to recognize and appreciate the diversity and culture that may already exist in an organization or curriculum, which enhances learning; it raises awareness about diversity and encourages conversation about diversity and its resultant issues and implications; it encourages the development of more diverse curriculum content that reflects and speaks to diverse students; and, it normalizes content and topics that may otherwise be excluded, fetishized, or considered taboo (pp. 103-104). Diversity audits enable a curriculum's ability to better teach diverse content and better engage with diversity.

Diversity audits can be conducted in many ways that include interviews, observations, surveys, checklists, and document analysis (such as course syllabi) (Wagner & Madsen-Copas, 2002). The analysis of syllabi is a valuable and hands-on approach to conducting a diversity audit. The use of templates is helpful when evaluating syllabi (Anson, Smith, & Rust, 2008; iSchool Diversity, n.d.; R2D2 Center, 2009). Templates promote consistency and standardization among those working to evaluate the documents, they encourage additional research and information gathering, and they are easily shared with various stakeholders interested in the audit's results.

### **Diversity and Social Justice in the LIS Curricula**

For almost 100 years, librarianship in the United States has been a profession characterized by women, specifically white women (the field was previously dominated by white men) (Keer & Carlos, 2015). The field continues to not reflect, and perhaps not fully understand, the diverse and dynamic communities it serves. "Our communities are increasingly pluralistic and intersectional," (Apple, 2006, pp. 61-62) yet these communities are still considered the "other" and not served in the manner they deserve, with staff and resources that look like them and represent their experiences and information needs. There are at least two significant problems here: the library and information science (LIS) workforce is not diverse

enough, nor are the curricula and graduate programs that produce these (mostly white) information professionals. The workforce issue is perhaps a more complicated phenomenon that involves issues of recruitment, retention, low wages, and competition for professional positions. Curricula are another dimension of the problem as it may not be reflective of changing society, and is therefore not attractive to potential librarians who don't see themselves reflected in the profession (which is part of the larger recruitment and retention problem).

The curricula in LIS programs have been slower to reflect issues of diversity and social justice. The call to critically examine LIS (Olson 1998, 2000; Bishop et al. 1999, 2003; Patterson 2000; Jimerson 2006; Lonetree 2006; Pawley 2006; Boast 2010; Gilliland 2011) and diversify librarianship and its graduate curricula (Chu 1999, 2013; Josey 1994, 1993; Winston 1998, 2001; Gollop 1999; Totten 2000; Josey and Abdullahi 2002; Turock 2003; Adkins and Espinal 2004; Honma 2005; Lance 2005; Kim & Sin, 2006, 2008; Morris, 2007; Pawley, 2006; Neely & Peterson, 2007; Peterson, 1995, 1996, 1999; Subramaniam and Jaeger 2010; Totten, 1977; Wheeler 2005), are ongoing discussions that represents entrenched, cyclical, and pernicious problems in the field. It's important to have these diversity, social justice, and related issues consistently reflected in LIS graduate courses, particularly when they give students opportunities to think critically and learn how to efficiently and compassionately serve diverse populations (Cooke, 2016a).

## **Conceptual Framework**

The goal of this project was to consider the role cultural competence can have on LIS graduate education. The goal of cultural competence is to apply a set of actions that will empower service providers to engage in more compassionate and culturally responsive service. An interdisciplinary concept with roots in the literatures of the applied health sciences, ethnology, student affairs, child and family welfare, law enforcement, education, and social work (Cross, et al. 1989; Jeffreys, 2006; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis 1992), cultural competence describes the "ability of professionals to understand the needs of diverse populations" (Overall, 2009, 176).

Cultural competence requires that practitioners be willing and able to work with and for clients and patrons of diverse backgrounds and cultures. Different than cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity, cultural competence compels service professionals to act and not just be cognizant of people's differences (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). In the case of a curriculum in a graduate professional program, instructors and administration should be actively collecting materials representative of the populations being taught (and of the diverse populations to be served by future librarians), and then incorporating them into course content accordingly. Information professionals should be trained and poised to continuously learn about the cultures, customs, behaviors, and information needs of the varied

user groups using their libraries (Cooke, 2016b; Cooke, Sweeney, & Noble 2016; El Turk, 2003).

Cultural competence is a complex, dynamic, and ongoing process (Campinha-Bacote, 2002) that incorporates 1) critical self-reflection (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998, p. 118), 2) active acquisition of new cultural knowledge, and, 3) interaction with actual diverse populations, whose cultural differences are understood, respected, and integrated. Culturally competent professionals are able to “understand and respect [students’] cultural differences and to address issues of disparity among diverse populations competently” (Overall, 2009, 176).

The diversity audit project followed these three characteristics of cultural competence—critical self-reflection, active acquisition of new cultural knowledge, and interaction with actual diverse populations—to examine the School of Information Sciences’ curriculum and make suggestions as to how cultural competence can be better infused into and implemented within said curriculum.

## Methods and Research Questions

Eighteen supervised students in an online iteration of the *Information Services to Diverse Populations* (Cooke, 2016b) course conducted the curriculum diversity audit. They engaged in document analysis and responded to four open-ended questions that required them to reflect on their activities.

### Document Analysis

Students examined course syllabi and completed two templates (see appendices) based on their examination. Template completion required the research and compilation of resources that were representative of the academic content in the syllabus and demonstrated some form of cultural competence. The examination of course syllabi is a form of document analysis (Prior, 2008). The syllabi served as conduits of meaningful information between the instructors and the readers of the documents (p. 231), allowing the readers to examine the content contained within the document. Syllabi also allow readers to make sense of the proposed learning process and schedule intended by the instructor. Close examination of a syllabus can identify the inclusion (or lack thereof) of culturally relevant content, which in turn provides examiners an opportunity to make suggestions of new, culturally competent materials to be included in the course document.

### Open Ended Questioning

Approximately halfway through the semester long auditing process, student evaluators were asked four questions. The questions asked for their opinions about

the curriculum and their thoughts about how the diversity audit templates should be used by instructors. The questions, which assumed their growing expertise about the curriculum, provided the opportunity for the student evaluators to “choose the terms with which to construct their descriptions and highlight the topics that are meaningful to them” (Roulston, 2008, p.583).

Questions included:

1. What did you learn about the curriculum? Is it better or worse than you thought, and why?
2. What do you hope will be the outcome(s) of this project? What are your hopes / expectations for the School of Information Sciences curriculum?
3. What are your recommendations for how instructors should utilize these resources?
4. For those instructors reluctant to acknowledge and use these resources, what is your elevator pitch to them - what would you say to try and convince them?

## Project Stages

The authors planned this collaborative project and used the University of Maryland’s iSchool Diversity curriculum development project site (n.d.) as a model. The project development began by reviewing the “Recent Course Syllabi Page” located on the School of Information Sciences’ website. A list of courses was generated, drawn from courses and sections offered in the previous 2-3 years. The list was reviewed to determine which courses were still being offered. In situations where several instructors and teaching assistants teach the same course, but in multiple sections, each course page was searched within the school’s internal learning management system (LMS). Syllabi were pulled and collected for 108 courses.

Syllabi ranged significantly in format, as did the amount of diversity-related resources and topics already included in courses. When available, syllabi were retrieved and saved as PDF or Word documents. Many Word documents were spell-checked in order to improve readability for student reviewers. Additionally, in cases where the actual syllabi were not included in the LMS, information from the course page (e.g., instructor information) was copied into a Word document, and in courses where information was sparse, additional information such as a course reading list, may have been saved. The collected syllabi were uploaded to a shared Dropbox folder entitled “Syllabi.”

After determining which syllabi would be audited,<sup>1</sup> the assignment description and the evaluation templates were created. The templates, an audit template and a

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<sup>1</sup> Several courses were eliminated from the process because of their age and because they had only been taught on one occasion.



suggestion template, were used in evaluating each included course (Anson, Smith, & Rust, 2008; Research Design and Disability (R2D2) Center, 2009, and n.d.). The audit template required students to analyze the course syllabi for features such as accessibility, inclusion of diverse resources (readings and interactive), and readability. After analyzing, they could provide suggestions for enhancing the syllabi. The suggestion template allows for sharing of ideas, such as talking points for discussion and diversity-related readings and interactive resources. Students could also provide suggestions for making the syllabus more user-friendly, such as providing ideas for improving accessibility and readability. To provide the students with context for the assignment, they were provided with an article titled, “Educating Culturally Competent Clinicians: Using Multiple Perspectives to Review Curriculum Content” (Halvorson-Bourgeois, Zipse, & Haynes, 2013).

Eighteen students in the course were divided into groups of 6 by alphabetical order and each group was provided with a list of courses (17-18), spanned the School of Information Sciences curriculum to audit. Students were provided with a link to the syllabi Dropbox folder. Students could ask questions via email, office hours, and/or group workspaces created in the LMS, and the workspaces were regularly monitored for questions.

Students were provided discussion spaces within the LMS course shell to facilitate their communication. It was not required that they utilize these spaces (some groups interacted offline), but these spaces made it easier for the authors to see if there were questions or problems that need to be addressed. Some groups made little use of the discussion spaces (i.e., group six posted 8 times, group 3 posted 21 times), two groups made reasonable use of the forum space (i.e., group five posted 36 times and group two posted 49 times), and two groups did the bulk of their work in this space (i.e., group 4 posted 64 times and group one posted 88 times). Posts were procedural and were used to direct tasks and update group members on project progress.

By mid-semester each student group was required to turn in templates for 8 courses (16 total) for review. Feedback was provided to each group and they were asked to make improvements, such as aligning their answers and correcting grammatical and spelling errors. Encouragement, thanks, and content suggestions were also provided. Subsequently, a discussion and question and answer session occurred during a class meeting. Additional feedback was provided, pertaining to analysis, editing, resource suggestions, and group teamwork. All completed templates—converted to PDF format, and without names for anonymity purposes—were turned in at the conclusion of the semester. Templates were then uploaded to an internal website, which will be used to share the audit results with the school’s faculty, administrators, and adjunct instructors.

## Results and Discussion

### Instructor Reflections

Both authors, themselves instructors with significant face-to-face and online teaching experience, were frustrated with the lack of consistency and standardization found among the syllabi. Most did not include diversity/inclusion statements or disability statements, despite the fact that the school has a syllabus template for use by all instructors that includes both of these items. Other syllabi were essentially shells, presumably with instructions and other information distributed in class, and many of the LMS course shells for face-to-face classes were sparse and serving only as a placeholder and online space to collect assignments. Evaluation of LMS course shells is a phenomenon worthy of its own study. The lack of consistency and basic course information made the auditing process more difficult.

Of the 108 syllabi examined, 50 (46%) of them were deemed inadequate in regards to containing diverse content. The remaining syllabi were thought to contain diverse content (23 syllabi; 21%) or “some” diverse content (35 syllabi; 32%). The courses containing any level of diverse content varied significantly. For classes with multiple sections, it was often a matter of who was teaching the section and what diverse content they choose to include. Diversity content also ranged from the inclusion of a diversity/inclusion and/or disability statement; to personalized instructor statements<sup>2</sup>; to the inclusion of readings *about* or *written by* diverse communities/authors; to a class session or content unit dedicated to issues of diversity; to entire classes dedicated to issues of diversity and social justice. Student auditors also made the distinction between content about international students/issues and content about race, ethnicity, and related issues. It is evident that the definitions of diversity and diversity related content will require internal standardization before a curriculum can be deemed adequately diverse.

Another observation involves the amount of effort such a project requires; it was assumed that a dedicated coordinator and a healthy number of students working on the project would be required, but the project could have benefited from many more student evaluators and more than one semester to complete the work. The project was designed in such a way that students would compile recommended resources for instructors, and also create supplementary resources, such as bibliographies and short videos. The ambitious plan could not be accomplished in one semester; a second, and perhaps even a third semester, would have been necessary for students to actually create original resources for use in the curriculum. A diversity audit is a worthwhile endeavor, but should not be entered into lightly, or without planning,

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<sup>2</sup> One syllabus included an “etiquette” section that explicitly denounced sexism, ageism, racism, homophobia, and disrespect toward religion.

resources, or sufficient time.

### **Student Reflections**

Overall, the student reviewers demonstrated enthusiasm for the diversity audit project, or the “humanity project” as one student renamed it, because incorporating cultural competence and diversity into the curriculum is not just about improving the curriculum, it is about making us all better human beings. They also gained new awareness and understanding of the profession and different LIS specialties of practice. There were periods of frustration, primarily due to lack of subject knowledge and not knowing where to look for new resources and/or not finding enough culturally relevant resources, but that gave way to the realization that their efforts would have long lasting effects on the curriculum. When asked the aforementioned open-ended questions, the student evaluators expressed a variety of insightful thoughts and opinions.

When asked, *What did you learn about the curriculum? Is it better or worse than you thought, and why?* the observations of the student reviewers in many ways mirrored those of the instructors. There were numerous comments about the lack of diversity and accessibility statements, the lack of uniformity in the syllabi, in regards to the teaching and learning approach, and the depth of content coverage in the syllabi. Most students said that the curriculum was about what they expected it to be based on their experiences in previous classes and knowledge of the field, although some expressed that they had expected to find more diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence throughout the curriculum. Students expressed surprise in several instances, saying they found diversity in unexpected places and from unexpected instructors. They also noted that syllabi are not always indicative of an instructor’s sensibilities and approach to issues in the actual classroom. One student commented, “there are definite areas of improvement in regards to acknowledging underrepresented user groups in the classroom and within the curriculum,” and another concurred by stating “there is a certain element of colorblindness (or general diversity blindness?) in the curriculum.” Yet another student made an important distinction between domestic and international diversity by pointing out that the syllabi they reviewed “tend to look at diversity primarily through an international perspective rather than obviously addressing the needs of diverse people within our country.” This has been a consistent criticism of LIS curriculum around the country, not just at the University of Illinois.

Several particularly salient comments (by different students) indicated that students realized that of course a lack of diversity is a larger societal and higher education problem. However, with that said, their expectations of LIS faculty are high and they expect that instructors have implicit and explicit commitments to serving diverse and otherwise marginalized populations. They also expect the curriculum to reflect and empathize with the communities they will soon be serving,

and they expect to engage with important topics in a significant way. One student stated:

I know it can be difficult to get administration to officially sanction a diversity -focused approach to curriculum, but I expected more professors to have read about the lack of diversity in libraries and be trying to remedy these problems in the classroom before sending new professionals into the world. The resources about our diversity problem are numerous; how can so many professors have missed the memo?

When asked, *What do you hope will be the outcome(s) of this project? What are your hopes / expectations for the School of Information Sciences curriculum?* students again mentioned the issue of syllabus standardization and expressed hope that this project would encourage changes in that regard. They also expressed hope that this audit would inspire more awareness and realization that diversity applies to every aspect and subject covered in the curriculum. One student commented, “I hope that the diversity audits serve as a wake-up call for those professors who still seem to be living in the 1950's. I hope that it makes professors realize that they can't simply ignore race, class, gender, disability, etc.”

Student reviewers also said that they hope faculty will take this work seriously and make use of the recommended resources. Other students went a step further, looking at this issue holistically and with an eye towards long-term change, and said that they hope this project will spur the administration to make the implementation of culturally competent content part of faculty training and review. “I also think that it's essential for the School of Information Sciences to offer diversity training for all instructors as to how to approach planning a discussion about diversity rather than expecting instructors to feel confident and just dive in.” Students challenged their instructors to think about the communities that librarians serve, and to think about them as students and consider their needs in the classroom. Another student expressed their hopes for the outcome of the diversity audit by stating:

My hope for this project is to illuminate places for improvement in our curriculum. We have amazing instructors and resources available to learn from—but we need a solid foundation of cultural competency, tolerance, and empathy to work from. I believe that can start in our syllabi. By thinking critically about whose voices are listened to, the discussions being facilitated, and learners we are accommodating, we can make Illinois a destination for progress and outreach in our field.

When asked, *What are your recommendations for how instructors should utilize these resources?* student auditors expressed the desire to see new lessons created that thoughtfully incorporate diversity and demonstrate cultural competence. Their

recommended resources could easily augment many of the lessons. One student said, “do not slap these resources on as bookends to discussions, or as standalone discussion questions. Integrate them seamlessly, or as much as possible, so that they become something that is naturally discussed, rather than simply commented on once and forgotten.” Another student commented “the suggestions and recommendations were made with an eye toward supporting diverse learning styles, the inclusion of all voices, and facilitating difficult, authentic and empathetic discussions. I implore instructors to use this framework in reflecting on their courses.” And yet another student wrote:

I also think that it is important to make these resources—at least some of them—required readings, rather than elective or additional resources. By doing so, it will demonstrate to students that these resources are critical to the class and the week’s topic.

Student auditors also emphasized the need to integrate cultural competence throughout classes; diversity issues should not be tokenized, rather they should be introduced early and often. Diversity, social justice, and cultural competence should not be relegated to one week of a 16-week semester.

I would also suggest that instructors use diversity related resources throughout the 16 weeks (or 8 weeks, whichever) of a class and not just have one week be the token diversity week. I hope that by seeing what we've chosen, they realize there is a lot of material out there that touches on diversity issues in all subjects and it is not an impossible task to think of humanity on a larger, more complex scale.

Finally, students were asked: *For those instructors reluctant to acknowledge and use these resources, what is your elevator pitch to them? What would you say to try and convince them?* This was perhaps the most important open-ended question asked of the students as it assumes their expertise and elicited the pride they felt in having participated in this project. Responses included both simple statements of fact and more intricate challenges for the school to do better. Overall, these responses indicate students’ pride for their school, which demonstrates their commitment to the program and curriculum. One student appealed to instructors by stating:

While it may not be readily apparent, especially during an online discussion, courses at Illinois are made up of a number of remarkable individuals from unique backgrounds and life experiences. Further, these individuals are going to enter into institutions that serve a range of equally diverse communities. It is your responsibility, as instructors, to prepare them for what they might face in future places of employment.

And another student wanted instructors to know that incorporating cultural competence into the curriculum is a joint responsibility and endeavor, one that should squarely include student perspectives and experiences. They stated:

If you don't think that these specific resources are appropriate for your class, that is fine. However, if you think that this is the last time you are going to hear about diversity at Illinois, then you are wrong. We are holding ourselves accountable for the homogenized culture of librarianship. So, I would look at the resources offered in your class and ask yourself if this is a course that bears up to this kind of scrutiny.

### Limitations of the Project

While the project was ultimately successful, the process did have its challenges. Group work in a classroom environment, particularly in an online classroom, can be a taxing experience for students; consistent check-ins with the students were necessary to keep the audit work on track. This project may have turned out differently if completed in a face-to-face classroom. Collaboration appeared to have a big impact on student work; groups who communicated more, shared ideas, and edited each other's work produced better templates and content suggestions. In instances where teamwork appeared to be an issue, the work was of lower quality, which made editing more time-consuming than anticipated by the authors. Perhaps, if a rubric based on teamwork had been presented to students (those who were more reluctant to participate and collaborate), they would have taken the project more seriously and produced better work. While the authors were able to monitor group work from the student's workspaces, that process is much different than direct observation in a classroom.

This project lasted for one semester, but could have easily encompassed two or more semesters. Students were able to successfully compile resources to recommend to other classes, but lacked the time needed to *create* any resources for the repository, which was part of the original project plan.

Additionally, it took some time for the students to find their rhythm and to be comfortable and confident to evaluate syllabi created by faculty and instructors they might have known personally or those whose classes they might enroll in, in the future. It needed to be stressed multiple times that their task was to suggest diverse and culturally competent resources for the courses in question, not to criticize an existing course or instructor. Finally, other limitations of the project were the varied backgrounds and interests of the students conducting the audits (for example, students with interest in children's literature had difficulty evaluating a class about text mining), and the difficulty of conceptualizing how to infuse cultural competence and diversity into more technical and data based courses. With

this in mind, the resources recommended for such courses were fewer than for classes addressing library services.

## Implications of the Project

Such a project, one that relied on student-generated content, is valuable at all levels of the organization, and have relevance to other comparable graduate LIS programs. The completed audit templates are valuable sources of information for faculty and administration, and the project gave students a sense of agency and ownership towards the curriculum to which they are so inextricably involved. And of paramount importance, the depth of work and engagement with the concepts of cultural competence and diversity will remain with these students post-graduation and influence their professional practice.

As described in the aforementioned “student reflections” section, students were able to gain insight into their curriculum and get a fuller sense of how programs are executed, in regards to the complexities of looking at a curriculum as a whole and understanding how courses vary by topic and instructor expertise. This participatory exercise also enabled students to apply language and content from the *Information Services to Diverse Populations* class to the curriculum and gain an enhanced sense of their own intellectual strengths and weaknesses in terms of diversity, social justice, and cultural competence in LIS. This project also facilitated student understanding of the LIS profession and the need for graduate programs to proactively prepare aspiring professionals to serve diverse communities and stakeholders.

Since this project was completed the School of Information Sciences has recognized the need for additional and continuous training and conversations around diversity and related topics. The need for faculty and staff training (in terms of diverse content and culturally competent behavior and pedagogy) has resulted in trainings to address racial microaggressions, and to introduce and encourage culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies. The school’s diversity committee attempts to continue these conversations between explicit training sessions. Proactive discussions and workshops about cultural competence have also been incorporated into all new student orientations.

Furthermore, the project described and templates provided in this article can serve as a model for other departments and programs to examine themselves and their course offerings (Cooke, in press). Audit results can pinpoint the need to revisit and revise curriculum content, organizational strategic planning, and recruitment and retention efforts of students and instructors.

## Conclusions

An internal website was created in order to share the audit and suggestions templates, along with lists of suggested interactive / multimedia sources, with the School of Information Sciences' community. Most of the resources can be utilized in multiple classes and content areas, not just for the specific class for which they were recommended. It is hoped that this project will serve as a valuable resource for instructors, and serve as an inspiration to other graduate LIS programs that endeavor to improve cultural competence and diversity in their own curricula.

Among the most important points to emerge from this project is the need for the curriculum to infuse cultural competence and diversity throughout (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1991; Stockman, Boulton, & Robinson, 2008). Dedicated diversity related courses, such as the course that facilitated this project, are vitally important to LIS curricula. Equally important is finding a way to normalize these topics throughout curricula. Diversity is not trendy and should be a consistent part of the education of culturally competent information professionals. Instructors should be intentionally integrating culturally competent perspectives and diverse content to enhance overall course content. As one student said, "Not every course needs to be a diversity course, but all courses can do more to discuss topics of diversity."

Infusing cultural competence and diversity into any curriculum is an iterative process, one that requires faculty, staff, and student training, and it requires resources and long-term commitment. This infusion process requires systemic changes in curricula, textbooks, instructors, and ultimately the larger educational (organization) culture. These changes are ultimately beneficial and will result in more employable information professionals, information professionals who are culturally competent and who are just better human beings prepared to engage with and advocate for their diverse communities. As one student so aptly wrote:

My vision is that School of Information Sciences instructors will come together to make diversity an ongoing discussion among themselves, and discuss how to integrate diverse themes into their syllabi. Since I started at Illinois, the events of Ferguson unfolded, and several young African American men have been killed by police officers. This past week, the president of a college resigned as a result of his indifferent response to the concerns of students of color who were made to feel unwelcome and unsafe at their school. Eventually, the media will move on from focusing on issues of race; with many issues that fall out of the media spotlight, there is a risk that a topic that is no longer trending does not require further discussion. [The school's] leadership and all of its instructors have an opportunity to lead other schools in creating an environment where diversity is openly discussed on an ongoing basis.



## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the University of Illinois' Teaching Advancement Board and the Provost's Office for the funding that made this project possible.

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## Appendix A – School of Information Sciences’ Syllabus Audit Template

**Group members:**

**Course name and #:**

**Instructor(s) \*if available:**

1. Is contact information for instructor(s) provided?
2. Easily accessible syllabus? Printable copy provided?
3. Readability of syllabus (e.g., font size and type, word choice, well organized):
4. Is it written with culturally sensitive and respectful language?
5. Includes readings (e.g., articles, books, magazines, newspapers, and periodicals) relevant to promoting diversity and inclusion of underrepresented groups?
6. Are interactive and online resources, such as LibGuides, podcasts, videos, and website links listed in the syllabus?
7. Does the syllabus include talking points for discussion?
8. Do the assignments incorporate different learning styles, literacies and multiple intelligences, or are they primarily writing based?
9. Is there a statement of inclusion or directions for students requiring accommodations? How about a diversity statement?
10. If more than one instructor teaches this course, did you notice any differences between this syllabus and those written by other instructors?
11. Personal thoughts, reactions & reflections:

## Appendix B – School of Information Sciences Syllabus Suggestions Template

**Group members:**

**Course name and #:**

**Instructor(s) \*if available:**

1. Contact ideas, such as including availability, name, and office hours on syllabus:
2. Suggestions for readability (e.g., text font and size, organization, word choice):
3. How could this syllabus be more accessible for students with special needs? Is there an accessibility statement and/or a diversity statement?
4. Any ideas regarding incorporating different learning styles, multiple literacies, and/or multiple intelligences into the course assignments?
5. Please include 3-5 talking points, which can be used in class discussions (bullet points):
6. Reading recommendations on diversity related topics (3-5)—please include a short 1-3 sentence annotation for each and use APA format for all citations.
7. Additional interactive/online resource (e.g., LibGuides, podcasts, videos, website links) suggestions (5-7). Please specify the resource type, and include a short diversity related annotation and include citations.
8. If you reviewed more than one syllabus for this course, (i.e., multiple sections of one course), were the instructors consistent in course content and the organization of their syllabus? Were readings and additional resources similar or different? How did you feel about the differences if there were any?
9. Is there anything else you would like to add (feedback and/or reflections)?

### Resources Consulted for Template Creation

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