People of WOU: A study of the perception of diversity at Western Oregon University

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People of WOU:

A study of the perception of diversity at Western Oregon University

By Nathan Tew

An Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for Graduation from the
Western Oregon University Honors Program

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Western Oregon University
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Abstract:

The purpose of my study is to address the perception of diversity on Western Oregon University’s campus. Many publications define the diversity of student populations using only visible attributes including race, age, and gender. With those types of definitions for diversity, Western Oregon University (WOU) could be seen as a predominately young, white and female university, since these groups make up the majority of the student population. However, there are many other ways diversity can be defined, looking at individuals based on invisible attributes, including sexual orientation, geographic origin and socioeconomic class, which cannot be seen on a surface level. Diversity is an essential and beneficial piece for any institution of higher education and provides people with different views that are varied from their own. Just like one cannot judge a book by its cover, it’s hard to truly describe an individual or a group if only specific visible attributes are used. It is important both visible and invisible attributes are used when defining an individual.

In order to determine the perception of diversity WOU has to offer, I interviewed 12 students attending Western Oregon University and asked them three questions: How would you describe a typical Western Oregon University student? How would you define diversity? Do you think Western Oregon University is a diverse university? These questions guided my exploration of the perception of the diversity among Western Oregon University’s students. I compared their responses and perceptions to the perception commonly shared by publications, in which diversity is primarily focused on visible attributes such as race, gender, and ethnicity. The student responses could be used to help determine strategies and ways to continue promoting diversity at WOU, which will benefit students in their pursuit of higher education for years to come.

Key words: diversity, visible attributes, invisible attributes
Chapter 1: Identifying the Problem of the Perception of Diversity

Western Oregon University is the oldest public university in the state of Oregon, founded in 1856. Throughout Western Oregon’s history a wide variety of diverse students have attended Western Oregon to pursue higher education. Diversity today is a very important topic in Western Oregon University’s (WOU) mission statement, which focuses on having a diverse campus community. WOU’s mission statement states:

Western Oregon University is a comprehensive public university, operating for the public good, which: provides effective learning opportunities that prepare students for a fulfilling life in a global society; supports an accessible and diverse campus community; and, improves continuously our educational, financial, and environmental sustainability (Office of Academic Affairs, 2016).

Demonstrating support for diversity, WOU maintains, is essential for a higher learning institution and for students’ personal and professional development. WOU’s diversity amongst its students is beneficial for the faculty and students. However, many times diversity is only defined at an external level, focusing on visible attributes such as race, ethnicity, age, or gender. While an individual’s gender, age, or ethnicity can tell a lot about the person, it is only a fraction of what makes the whole individual. There are still a lot of invisible attributes, rather than visible attributes, playing key roles as well. The invisible attributes cannot be seen from the outside and include
personal interests, religious beliefs, family background, sexual orientation, etc. Throughout this study the terms *visible attributes* and *invisible attributes* will be used to describe the perception of diversity for individuals.

**Visible attributes:**

Attributes typically seen from an external perspective that cannot be changed and include race or ethnicity, gender, and age.

**Invisible Attributes:**

Attributes not readily seen from an internal perspective and include (but are not limited to) religious preference, marital status, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or geographic locations.

These definitions come from the resource *What is Diversity? It’s More than Race or Gender* (University of Michigan Health Systems, 2002). Both types of attributes are important in determining how people perceive diversity. If someone only focuses on visible attributes of an individual, then they could potentially miss a large part of the individual. In order to get the best understanding of diversity and learn about the type of people a certain institution has, it is imperative both visible and invisible attributes are examined. Western Oregon University prides itself on diversity. However, when examining how WOU defines its students, students are commonly described only using visible attributes. There are multiple publications primarily only using visible attributes when describing the diversity of students at WOU.
These publications help create a perception that WOU is a predominantly homogenous university where the majority of the students are young, white, and female. As a current student I know this is not the case and each student at WOU is diverse and brings a unique perspective to the table.

It is important to determine how the perception of diversity is shaped in order to be able to showcase the wide variety of diversity WOU’s student body possesses. For people who see diversity at WOU at both a visible and invisible level, this study will support them by reinforcing the benefits people receive from being exposed to diverse institution. For people unaware of the diversity at WOU, this study will be a chance for them to be exposed to new experiences, ideas, and perspectives and a chance to see what looking at diversity at both a visible and invisible level has to offer.

**Western Oregon University and Diversity:**

WOU strives to be a diverse institution of higher education. There is even a Western Oregon University Diversity Committee tasked with inclusivity and promotion of diversity efforts on WOU's campus. In its diversity statement the Diversity Committee states, “Western Oregon University emphasizes diversity as a matter of institutional priority and an integral component of academic success” (University Diversity Committee, 2016). In order to understand and commit to making diversity a priority at
Western Oregon, the Diversity Committee has many goals they strive to achieve. These include:

- Create respect for and appreciation of all persons and ideas as a key characteristic of our campus community.
- Increase the diversity of all parts of our university community through commitment to diversity in our recruitment and retention efforts.
- Promote active engagement among all members of our campus and surrounding communities.
- Foster a campus environment that is inclusive and accessible to students, faculty, staff and administration across the campus community.

These goals help promote diversity and allows for a safe and welcoming campus environment for any background from which one comes.

There are multiple steps the Diversity Committee recommends in order to achieve these goals. These steps include:

- Sustain a safe and welcoming environment that supports diversity.
- Support full and equitable educational access.
- Increase our efforts to recruit and retain a diverse campus community.
- Prepare effective citizen-leaders for a pluralistic world.
- Confront and resolve institutional barriers to social justice.
- Challenge instances of prejudice, bias and discrimination.
- Enhance current and create new systems of support for the success of the university.
- Dedicate resources to the diversity initiatives.

There are wide ranges of efforts put forth at Western Oregon to make diversity a priority and to promote it amongst its students. The WOU Diversity Committee does its best to try to assure these goals are achieved.

Many publications, including College Factual, State University, and Oregon University System, discuss diversity at higher educational institutions
primarily focused on the visible attributes of race, ethnicity, gender, or age to describe the amount of diversity an institution possesses. I maintain that focusing only on visible attributes can be a deterrent in retaining a diverse campus community and making diversity a priority at WOU. There needs to be a shift to include more demographic information with invisible attributes in order to strengthen the perception of diversity at WOU and to continue to achieve the goals set forth by the Diversity Committee and the university.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Definition of Diversity:

The definition of diversity itself is very broad and varies widely. There are multiple definitions and approaches to describe diversity. It can be defined differently depending on the individual or group defining it.

In *What is Diversity? It’s More than Race or Gender* by University of Michigan Health Systems, states their definition of diversity is, “[diversity] refers to human attributes that are different from your own and from those of groups to which you belong” (2002, p.1). In other words, this statement means that diversity is the difference between individuals and organizations they are a part of in terms of different attributes or human characteristics, which includes a wide variety of traits from gender, race, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, etc.”

In addition to this definition the publication further explores how people see diversity when they look at images of people. Most of the time people observe the race, ethnicity or the age of people. Commonly when people observe one another, they notice visible attributes about individuals, observations known as “visible diversity”. “Visible diversity is generally those things we cannot change and are external, such as such as age, race, ethnicity, gender, and physical attributes” (2002, p.1). In short, this means many people
focus predominantly on what is seen versus what is unseen. People are quick to judge individuals and primarily focus on outside characteristics.

Diversity goes beyond just these visible attributes. Diversity also includes “invisible” diversity. “Invisible diversity includes those attributes not readily seen, such as work experience, marital status, educational background, parental status, income, religious beliefs and affiliations, geographic location, or socioeconomic status” (2002, p.1). This statement illustrates how using invisible attributes to define individuals helps to give a more accurate picture of the people involved than merely focusing on visible attributes.

The “combination of diversity attributes, both visible and invisible, is what defines an individual’s ‘personal’ diversity “(2002,p.1). These two different definitions of “visible” and “invisible” diversity will be used in the study in order to determine what kinds of attributes publications use, in order to define diversity and describe people. Using both of these attributes to will help universities and other institutions provide the most accurate picture for defining diversity and describing individuals.

Most colleges and universities value diversity and have their own definition of what diversity means to them. One college who values diversity is Queensborough Community College in New York, which has an in-depth definition of diversity. One way Queensborough Community College defines
diversity is:

The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual (Queensborough Community College).

This definition of diversity includes both visible (race, ethnicity, gender, age, physical abilities) and invisible (sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religious beliefs, political beliefs, other ideologies) attributes. Diversity is very important to Queensborough Community College and stressing diversity means more than just acknowledging and/or tolerating differences. To the college, diversity is a set of conscious practices involving:

- Understanding and appreciating interdependence of humanity, cultures, and the natural environment.
- Practicing mutual respect for qualities and experiences that are different from our own.
- Understanding that diversity includes not only ways of being but also ways of knowing;
- Recognizing that personal, cultural and institutionalized discrimination creates and sustains privileges for some while creating and sustaining disadvantages for others;
• Building alliances across differences so that we can work together to eradicate all forms of discrimination.

Just like WOU, Queensborough Community College has a diversity committee as well as multiple groups and organizations promoting diversity. The above-recommended practices are an example of how a college is working to have a more inclusive and safe environment for each and every member of its community.

Some only consider diversity to be a difference amongst race or ethnic groups; others look at diversity culturally or geographically, some religiously. None of these definitions or views of diversity is wrong. However, it is important to change the perception that diversity is based off of only visible attributes and realize there is a lot more to make an individual diverse, which includes invisible attributes.

**Benefits of Diversity:**

WOU is filled with diversity and there are many benefits associated with being a diverse learning institution. It is important to have diversity at a higher learning institution. For example, the board of directors of the American Council on Education (ACE) published *On the Importance of Diversity in Higher Education*. This publication discussed how diversity enriches the educational experience, promotes personal growth and a healthy

Diversity is important to the success of a university by allowing for people to be exposed to different ways of thinking and ideas. The American Council on Education concludes there needs to be, “a conscious effort to build healthy and diverse learning environments [and] the success of higher education and the strength of democracy depend on it” (American Council on Education, 2012, P.2). In other words, diversity is a key piece of creating a successful learning environment. Without diversity in education, people would not be exposed to different ideas and ways of thinking. The American Council on Education is very supportive of diversity and encourages it amongst United States universities.

If diversity is beneficial for universities, then it is important for colleges and universities such as WOU to be able to show the amount and level of diversity they possess. It is also important that colleges and universities look at multiple approaches of diversity using both visible and invisible attributes. If universities do not promote diversity, or if there is the perception that there is a lack of diversity, then the students attending the university may not be receiving the benefits of being exposed to diverse individuals and ideas.
There are multiple benefits for colleges and universities if they have a large amount of invisible diversity; Dr. Tori Haring-Smith concluded that her small college in Pennsylvania, Washington and Jefferson, “does a remarkable job, I would maintain, in preparing students to be active participants in a diverse and democratic society because we have considerable invisible diversity” (p.5). In other words, since there is a large amount of invisible diversity, their school is able to prepare students to be engaged, qualified, and successful members in the world, where they understand how to work with different people since they have experience coming from a diverse school. According to Haring-Smith, diversity is generally looked at through visible attributes such as race and ethnicity. Haring-Smith discussed that while Washington and Jefferson College students may look very homogenous from the outside since only 17 percent of the student population are students of color, there is still a lot of invisible diversity at their college. Haring-Smith states that there are dimensions of diversity, including socioeconomic class and political ideology, are invisible attributes, which are rarely pointed out regarding the population of Washington and Jefferson College. Additionally, she described the benefits of ideological differences at Washington and Jefferson College and how it enhances their students’ learning. “Some colleges must stage ‘difficult dialogues’ in order to get students talking. On this campus, difficult dialogues happen every day” (p.7). This statement
means that in some schools discussions between people who have different views on politics or religion are not encouraged or do not take place naturally, maybe because most people believe the same way as one another. Even when these conversations occur the students may be forced to take part in them, yet these conversations are occurring every day in some schools, such as Washington and Jefferson. These difficult dialogues allow for people from different backgrounds, whether they are rich or poor, or conservative or liberal, to have conversations with one another. These dialogues allow people to learn from one another and gain new perspectives.

In order for these dialogues to take place, which allow for the promotion of diversity and inclusivity on college campuses, Haring-Smith suggests, “admissions processes must consider not only race and ethnicity, but also class and ideology” (p.7). It is important both visible and invisible attributes are used during the admission process of higher education. Haring-Smith concluded, “We need to celebrate both the visible and the invisible diversity of our campuses so we can prepare future citizens to engage in productive, respectful civic discourse with those who disagree with them” (p.8). In short, having invisible diversity is essential for colleges and universities in order for students to benefit from learning and growing with people who are diverse from each other. It is important individuals from multiple groups are not just accepted, but that everyone feels safe, welcome,
and comfortable to share their voice.

A common characteristic amongst each college or university throughout the United States of America is the belief that “diversity in their student bodies, faculties, and staff is important for them to fulfill their primary mission: proving a high-quality education” (American Council on Education, 2012, P.1). Quality education is one of the most important resources a country can have and if having a diverse school is an important key for unlocking the path to high-quality education, then colleges and universities need to continue to implement diversity through programs, events, clubs, and other organizations in order to continue to see results of high level of education.

As stated previously, WOU’s mission statement includes, “[Western Oregon University] supports an accessible and diverse campus community.” WOU also has a diversity statement, which states, “Western Oregon University emphasizes diversity as a matter of institutional priority and an integral component of academic success.” A way WOU supports this part of the mission statement is through its Diversity Committee, which oversees and strives to increase the university’s understanding and commitment to diversity. As well as the Diversity Committee, WOU also has a wide variety of departments and organizations promoting diversity. These include:

- Multicultural Student Services and Programs
- Student Enrichment Program
- Veteran’s services
- International Student and Scholar Affairs
- Academic Advising and Learning Center
- Human Resources and Affirmative Action Office
- Campus Public Safety
- University Housing
- Office of Disability Services
- Safe Zone
- Admissions
- Student Leadership and Activities
- Student Health and Counseling Center
- Western Oregon University Provost’s Office
- Vice President for Student Affairs
- Student Affairs Committee on Inclusion

These listed departments and organizations are just a few of the many supporting diversity efforts at the university. Having a wide variety of departments and organizations promoting diversity is important for WOU to continue to promote diversity. Although there is a wide range of clubs and organizations that support diversity efforts, there still may be a perception that WOU is homogenous, since many times only visible attributes are used such as race and gender to describe students. This means that WOU would be predominantly seen as a homogenous institution with predominantly white and female students.

The promotion of diversity can only help a college or university. Diversity challenges stereotypes and preconceptions, promotes critical thinking, prepares students to become good citizens, fosters mutual respect and teamwork, and helps people learn from those whose experiences, beliefs,
and perspectives are different from their own (American Council on Education, 2012, p.1). The American Council on Education highlights multiple benefits for diversity, and if people are not exposed to diversity, they are then missing out on a chance to become a better individual and citizen in the world.

Other scholars support the importance of diversity and the importance of universities including diversity and inclusion in their mission statements. In the study Institutional Barriers to Diversity Change Work in Higher Education it identified discrepancies between concepts and practice of diversity at a multidisciplinary health sciences university (Elliot et al., 2013). The results of the study indicated “participants experienced inclusion along a range of engagement. Hispanic/Latino students, faculty, and staff as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students and staff experienced disparaging behavior on a regular basis at the University, which contributed to fear” (Elliot et al., 2013, p.1). This study is important because it shows it is one matter for a university to say they support diversity but it is equally as important to implement those ideas. It is up to the university to make every student feel welcomed and they should not feel fear for being themselves or for speaking their minds.

Elliot et al. concluded that in order to make individuals welcome and included at a school the collaboration is needed between faculty, staff, and
students to discuss “how best to infuse the curricula with diversity and inclusion so it is consistent, apparent, and relevant, and it contributes to the learning outcomes for each course” (Elliot et al., 2013 p.9). In short, this means diversity needs to be a part of the school’s curriculum and should be a goal for every class. This goal is accomplished through the collaboration with everyone in the school from the president of the university to the students. This collaboration is important for universities to continue to be as diverse and inclusive as possible. Having a college or university where everyone feels comfortable participating benefits everyone who is involved at the institution.

It is important then for WOU to continue its efforts to promote diversity amongst students, faculty, and staff so members of the WOU community feel safe and comfortable to speak their own mind. In order for this to take place the way diversity is perceived or defined could be altered in order to continue to help showcase the level of diversity present at WOU.

Western Oregon’s Demographics:

There is limited information regarding invisible attributes for student demographics at WOU. There needs to be a change to include invisible attributes such as statistics on religious preference, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, etc. This change will allow for people to have a better understanding of the wide variety of diverse students attending WOU.
Currently there are multiple publications primarily focusing on visible
attributes when profiling student demographics at higher levels of education.

The next section looks at several of these publications.

**Oregon University Systems.** One of these publications is the Oregon
University Systems (OUS) profile of WOU students (Profile of Western Oregon
University, 2013). In the OUS profile the majority of statistics primarily
focuses on ethnicity, which is considered a visible attribute. They used the
following information to describe the demographics of Western Oregon’s
Students:

**Students 2012**

- Fall 2012 Headcount: 6,187
- Total FTE Enrollment: 5,106
- Undergraduate Headcount: 5,387
- Percent 25 or Older: 19%
- Percent Part-time (<12 hours): 14%
- Graduate/Professional Headcount: 800
- Masters, Post baccalaureate Non-admit: 800
- Doctoral, First-professional: 0
- New Community College Transfers: 374
- Student to Full-time Faculty Ratio: 25.2
- First time Freshman Year Retention Rate (Fall 2011 to Fall 2012): 25.2
- Graduation Rate (2012-13): 51.2%
- Average High School GPA of Entering Freshmen: 3.20
- Average SAT Math Score: 478
- Average SAT Verbal Score: 471
- Total Annual Unduplicated Headcount (2012-13): 7,780
- Total from Oregon: 5,133 (82.9%)
- Total Outside Oregon: 1,054 (17.1%)

**Headcount by Ethnicity**

- American Indian/Alaska Native: 111
- Asian: 158
- Pacific Islander: 138
- Black Non-Hispanic: 205
- Hispanic: 601
- White Non-Hispanic: 4,440
- Nonresident Alien: 286
- Two or More Races: 56
- Unknown: 192

The OUS information provides a general look at the type of students attending WOU. If using a definition of diversity based only on race or ethnicity, then WOU would be considered moderately diverse. There are a lot of different ethnic groups (nine in total being represented), but the overwhelming majority of students are white and non-Hispanic.

This data provided by the Oregon University System also includes
statistics based on invisible attributes such as GPA, SAT scores, where the students are from, amount of community college transfer students, and what degree they are studying. The OUS profile of WOU predominantly focuses on ethnicity as a way to show the differences amongst students. Although OUS includes some invisible attributes, more statistics and information based on invisible attributes such as religion or sexual orientation could be beneficial in order to give a clearer picture of the true diversity found at WOU.

Ethnic demographics are commonly used to determine whether an institution is diverse or not. These statistics show the majority of Western Oregon students are white, non-Hispanic undergraduates from Oregon the pieces of statistical data provided in the Oregon University's profile does a very superficial job summarizing WOU as a whole, and does not provide much exploration of the invisible attributes of the students.

**State University.** Another source primarily focusing on visible attributes is State University, a website that gathers data from a variety of sources so people can conveniently research schools. When describing WOU students the only categories they have statistics on are ethnicity and gender (State University). They have a section on financial aid and academics, providing information about financial aid detail for students and the most popular field of study. But when specifically describing students they only use these two attributes, gender and race/ethnicity, which are both visible attributes.
Just like the Oregon University System of WOU, the main focus of their student demographic section includes only visible attributes. Each publication lacks invisible attributes such as religious preferences or sexual orientation, which could benefit students and prospective students by showcasing a wider range of diversity WOU has to offer. Providing information on invisible attributes represented at WOU could be beneficial in improving the perception of diversity at the university.

**Western Oregon University Website.** WOU’s own website includes a section about the student body on their quick fact page, providing the following information about students:

- Number of undergraduates: 5,266
- Number of graduate students: 922
- Average High School GPA: 3.2
- Geographic Origins of undergraduate students: In-state (80%), Out-of-state (14%), International (6%)
- Gender Distribution: Women (58%), Men (42%)
- Students of color: 22%
Western Oregon University's website uses 4 invisible attributes (number of undergraduates, number of graduates, GPA, and geographic origin) or 66% and uses 2 visible attributes (gender distribution and race) or 33% to highlight the diversity found at the school. Compared to the other publications, so far the Western Oregon University website has provided the best ratio for having invisible characteristics compared to visible attributes.

**College Factual.** In order to define and determine diversity, the website College Factual uses four categories: ethnicity, gender, age, and geographic. However, age is not used as a factor when comparing diversity at WOU to other universities. College Factual uses ethnicity, gender, and geographic statistics about diversity to rank and compare WOU in terms of diversity. WOU is ranked 773 out of 1655 colleges for overall diversity. The chart below shows how WOU compared to the national average for diversity. A score of 100 would indicate excellent diversity and a score of 1 would indicate poor diversity. WOU’s overall diversity score was a 53.
Besides the geographic category the other categories of ethnicity, gender, and age used to determine diversity were visible attributes. There is again a lack of invisible attributes used in this publication as well as the previous publications to show the amount of diversity WOU students possess.

**Comparison of the Four Publications.** For the four publications examined, (Oregon University System, State University, WOU Website, and College Factual), there were a total of 29 different attributes and statistics used to describe and define diversity for WOU students. Out of these 29 attributes, 17 were visible, while only 12 were invisible attributes.

The invisible attributes used for Oregon University System were: percent part-time, graduate/professional headcount, masters/post baccalaureate/non-admit head count, new community college transfers, average high school GPA, average SAT math score and average SAT verbal score. These are considered invisible attributes because they are not attributes easily identified from an external perspective. The visible attributes used were percent 25 or older, total headcount of ethnic groups included American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Pacific Islander, Black Non-Hispanic, Hispanic, White Non-Hispanic, Nonresident Alien, Two or more races and Unknown.
The Website State University only used two attributes to describe the students at WOU. Both of these were visible attributes and were gender of students and race/ethnicity of the students.

On WOU’s Website the information provided about students included a total of six attributes. Four of these attributes (number of undergraduates, number of graduates, average high school GPA, and geographic origins) are invisible because they could not be determined just by examining students from an external perspective. Two of these attributes (students of color and gender distribution) would be considered visible attributes.

The last publication I examined was the website College Factual. This website defined student diversity using only four categories, which were gender, age, geographic, and ethnicity. Out of these four, only one would be considered an invisible attribute, which would be geographical diversity. The other three, gender, age, and ethnicity would be considered visible attributes.
The table below shows the number of invisible and visible attributes for each of the publications as well as a total of all four.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publication</th>
<th># Of Attributes</th>
<th>Invisible</th>
<th>Visible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oregon University System</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State University</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Oregon University Website</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Factual</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overwhelming majority of publications that were analyzed in this study, primarily focused on visible attributes. Visible attributes are important to use to define diversity, but invisible attributes are equally important.

The following graph illustrates the percentage of invisible vs. visible attributes that were used to define and describe the diversity of WOU's student population. The majority of attributes used by the four publications were visible attributes (17 out of 29), compared to invisible attributes (12 out of 29).
The fact that publications primarily use visible attributes is why a study on the perception of diversity at WOU is so important because these publications can create the perception WOU is not very diverse when diversity is predominantly measured with visible attributes. In order to determine how help people see diversity at WOU, I conducted a study of students to compare their perception of diversity compared to diversity as presented in these publications.

Currently the common approach to describe student diversity for publications is to predominantly use visible attributes such as race, ethnicity or gender to describe students. When discussing diversity and the description of students with WOU’s own students, they predominantly use invisible
attributes to define diversity and describe students. If there is a shift to using more invisible attributes than visible attributes, then there can be a shift in the perception of diversity at a university.

Other Approaches:

Another approach used to look at how different and diverse individuals are uses the concept of self-identity. Everyone is unique and has a story to tell. Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum analyzes self-identity and discusses how “the concept of identity is a complex one, shaped by individual attributes, family, dynamics, historical factors, and social and political contexts” (2000, p. 1). In other words, since there is so much going into the creation of one’s self, it is complex. For example a white male born in the city may have dramatically different views than a white male living in the country. There are multiple attributes that can play a role in shaping one’s self. Self-identity is complex because individuals are constantly having new experiences and it is hard to integrate someone’s past, present, and future self in a cohesive and unified self (2000, p.2). Understanding that people may have more than one identity is an important factor when discussing diversity, because if an individual is solely judged on an identity such as race, then there is so much more which potentially can be missed about an individual. While an individual may strongly identify with their race or ethical background, there are many other characteristics about them that define who they are.
Tatum also discusses the parts of individuals’ identities, which capture people’s attention and other people notice. These aspects Tatum says set people apart as exceptional or being an “other”. Tatum counts at least seven categories of otherness people are commonly defined by in United States society. These categories of otherness are: Race or ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, and physical or mental ability (Tatum, 2000, p.2).

These categories of otherness still may use visible attributes such as race, ethnicity, gender, or age but they also use invisible attributes such as religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and physical/mental ability. Tatum reveals the individual is a complex being and these seven categories can help reveal a self-identity that is constantly changing. Using these seven categories can help universities and other institutions provide the clearest and most accurate picture to describe students or define diversity.
Chapter 3: Methods

In order to determine the perception of diversity on WOU’s campus, I conducted a study which included the questions a) How would you describe a typical Western Oregon University student? b) How would you define diversity? c) Do you think Western Oregon University is a diverse university? A copy of the interview questions can be found in the appendix under Form #5.

**Institutional Review Board.** Since people were being used in the study, it was necessary to receive permission through the Institutional Review Board. The application for the study *People of WOU* can be found under Form #1 in the appendix. Once the application was processed and approved the study could begin. The letter of approval from the Institutional Review Board can be found under Form #2 in the appendix.

**Participants.** In order to gather participants for my study, I used random sampling, which allowed for every student of WOU an equal chance of being selected to participate in the study. In order to gain as many participants as possible, I would sit inside the Werner University Center on campus where students meet to eat, study, hang out, etc. It is the main hub for activity at WOU.
In order to gather participants I was there for approximately one hour to one and a half hours at a time during three different days. I would ask every student who would walk by if they would like to participate in my study. If a member of the deaf or deaf/blind community wanted to participate in the study, I had a copy of the questions where they could write down their responses. There were no members of this community who participated in the study, but I was prepared to accommodate any student’s needs in order to allow them to participate. A copy of the sheet used for deaf and deaf/blind participants can be found in the appendix under Form #6. By the end I had twelve total participants for the study. Since I am very involved at WOU, there were many people I knew taking part in my study, since they would come up to me when they saw I was there. This could possibly impact the results of my study, if people responded to the questions how they thought I wanted them to, instead of sharing the initial response that came to their mind.

Study. When a participant would agree to take part in my study, I would give them a copy of the informational summary for People of WOU for them to read over. This form is a summary of the goal and the procedures of the study and can be found in the appendix under Form #3. Once the participant would read it over, I would give them a copy of the informed consent form for them to sign agreeing to participate in the study. This form
can be found in the appendix under **Form #4**. Once these two forms were passed out, the interviews would begin.

In order to keep a record of what the participants said, I recorded the interview using the software GarageBand. During the interviews I would ask the participants three questions, to determine the perception of diversity Western Oregon Students had. The interviews will only be stored for six months before they will be deleted from my computer. The participants in the study will be anonymous, in order to try to eliminate as much bias as possible. The responses from the interviews were transcribed into text and analyzed in order to determine the perception of diversity at WOU.
Chapter 4: Results

Question #1:

In order to determine how WOU students would describe each other the participants in the study were asked how they would define a typical Western Oregon University student. The goal of this question was to determine if students attending WOU use visible or invisible attributes to describe a typical WOU student. Below is a compilation of the 12 interviewees’ responses to the question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Number</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #1</td>
<td>I would say a typical Western Oregon University student is hardworking, involved in many areas, and friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #2</td>
<td>Friendly, I feel they are friendly people and much more welcoming. I feel if you were to come to Western’s campus and if you were a guest to Western, people tend to be friendly. They will smile and wave and won’t go out of their way to be rude. I feel I have been to other campuses and they don’t give you a second thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #3</td>
<td>Driven, small-school-oriented, wants to learn in an environment where the student-to-teacher ratio is low so they actually get to talk to the teacher and get to learn stuff, more one-on-one, they enjoy this fact because they have smaller classes so they can get to know their classmates and actually have an environment of learning and not just be a number in a giant school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #4</td>
<td>I would describe them as, at least in my interactions, students who are devoted to their...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #5</td>
<td>On Western Oregon University’s campus I see a lot of students who care about their academics, I would say I see more female students in my classes as I am pursuing my degree in education. I see active students who spend a lot of time outdoors when the weather is nice but also take their academics seriously and study in the library.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #6</td>
<td>Friendly, somewhat easy going, looking to have some fun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #7</td>
<td>I think a typical Western Oregon University student would have a variety of experiences, interests, and backgrounds. I think most people I’ve met are very motivated and they love Western.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #8</td>
<td>I think it is really hard to describe a typical Western Oregon University student because every student is unique in his or her own way. I feel with Western Oregon University there is a unique atmosphere making every student unique.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #9</td>
<td>I would describe a typical Western Oregon University student by most students here are female, outgoing, and trying to learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #10</td>
<td>I don’t think there is any way to describe a typical Western Oregon University student just because everyone here has their unique attributes and personalities and they are all different individuals and I don’t think you can put a label on a typical Western Oregon University student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #11</td>
<td>There are a lot of different people here, so it is very difficult to state an exact person. I meet a lot of crazy people and a lot of serious people. There are definitely a lot of serious people who want to learn here but also a bunch of fun loving people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There were common themes throughout the participant’s responses including the focus on academics, friendliness, and having a variety of experiences. There were also four participants who found it hard to describe a typical Western Oregon University. For example, the individual in interview #10 stated, “I don’t think there is any way to describe a typical Western Oregon University student just because everyone here has their unique attributes and personalities and they are all different individuals and I don’t think you can put a label on a typical Western Oregon University student.” In other words, Western Oregon students cannot be grouped together as a single type of student. The individual in interview #12 stated, “It is hard to tell what is a typical Western Oregon University student, because we have very different types of students here on campus.” Even though some students had difficulty being able to describe what types of students attend WOU, other students were able to use a wide variety of attributes to describe WOU students.
The chart below shows the compilation of responses as well as if they fell under the category of being an invisible or visible attribute.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Compilations</th>
<th>Invisible Attribute</th>
<th>Visible Attribute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hardworking/Driven/Motivated (3)</td>
<td>☐ x 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>x 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>x 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small school oriented</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wants to learn/academic</td>
<td></td>
<td>x 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>focused/devoted and serious to their studies (7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open minded</td>
<td></td>
<td>x 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy going and looking to have fun/”crazy” (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>x 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of experiences, interests, and backgrounds/different/unique (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>x 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loves Western Oregon University</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard/difficult to describe a typical Western Oregon University (4)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outgoing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First generation college students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total:** 27 2

The overwhelming majority of responses used invisible attributes rather than visible attributes to describe a typical WOU student. Compared to how the four previously mentioned publications (Oregon University Systems, State University, Western Oregon University Website, College Factual), WOU students described students using invisible attributes 93% of the time, while the four publications used them 41.40% of the time. This shows that without
being prompted WOU students describe their fellow students with attributes not visible.

![Visible vs. Invisible Attributes Used to Describe a Western Oregon University Student]

The most common invisible attribute used to describe WOU students, was the category “wants to learn/academic focused/devoted and serious to their studies”. There were seven total students who responded using one of these attributes. This shows WOU students believe that their fellow classmates are focused on their academic and studies. In contrast their were 2 responded which individuals described WOU students as “easy going and looking to have fun/crazy”, this shows that WOU students have a wide range of perceptions of the student population. The second most common invisible attribute used along with students who had difficulty describing WOU students was the category of “variety of experiences, interests, and
People of WOU

backgrounds/different/unique”, there were four individuals who used these attributes to describe WOU students. The students who responded to this categories, shows that students are aware individual students at WOU are different and unique. These realizations allow for students to be exposed to different ideas and background, which is a benefit of diversity. Students are able to converse, discuss, and learn with one another. Students primarily used invisible attributes to describe WOU students, however there were individuals who used visible attributes.

Individuals in interviews #5 and #9, who used the visible attribute of female to describe typical WOU students. Even though they used a visible attribute, they also used invisible attributes to describe students. Besides using female to describe a typical WOU student, the individual in interview #5 also said, “I see a lot of students who care about their academics, [...] I see active students who spend a lot of time outdoors when the weather is nice but also take their academics seriously and study in the library.” The individual in interview #9 also said that students are, “outgoing and trying to learn.” Overall, students primarily used invisible attributes to describe WOU students and surprisingly there were not any students who only used visible attributes to describe students.
Question #2:

The 12 WOU students interviewed were asked how they would define diversity. The goal of this question was to see how students defined diversity and whether or not they used visible or invisible attributes in their definition. Below is a compilation of the 12 interviewees’ response to the question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Number</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #1</td>
<td>I would define diversity as how people differ from each other, physically in terms of phenotype but also in terms of beliefs and different things they identify and participate in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #2</td>
<td>Diversity, I feel you always think of it as gender and race and things you mark check boxes off on a form would be what people look for in diversity. I feel it is so much more but it is who you are as a person. Cause those are things you are assigned to you at birth, you don’t choose those things. Diversity is more made up of the things you choose. Your values, beliefs, religion you might have, education, those things are ones you chosen. Diversity would be having a variety of those.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #3</td>
<td>Multiple people of different backgrounds, different social classes, different history, different class, race, basically differences of everything so they do not have the exact same background or answers as others. For example, last term I had a classmate who grew up in the slums of California in a police community class with a bunch of middle class people. So there was difference in opinion on why the cops would do something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #4</td>
<td>I would define diversity, as a person who exhibits differences such as race, sexual orientation, or any other differences may be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview #</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesi Interview #5</td>
<td>Diversity is accepting others for who they are and it goes deeper than what we can see on the outside, instead of just looking at the things we can see when looking at the average person it’s what we can learn about them by getting to know them better. Such as their religion or other attributes make up who they are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesi Interview #6</td>
<td>I would define diversity as you have individuals bringing different things to the table. We have on a racial level it could be racially but can even be more than just people are significantly different by bringing everything together. It helps things to work, if everyone was the same it would not work out very well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesi Interview #7</td>
<td>I would describe diversity as having a variety of experiences, backgrounds, interests, and just being open to new ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesi Interview #8</td>
<td>Diversity, I think is a big part here at Western, the thing I really like is there a lot of diverse and inclusive clubs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesi Interview #9</td>
<td>Diversity is different cultures and perspectives working together, for the common good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesi Interview #10</td>
<td>I think diversity is just a way to name the differences between each person, I don't think it necessarily has to do with your ethnicity or race but it’s just the fact one person might be different from each other and each person is unique.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesi Interview #11</td>
<td>I think diversity is a blanket term to group people together of different types. So diversity is just different people and variety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesi Interview #12</td>
<td>Diversity is when you have different people with different social backgrounds.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were many different definitions and attributes used to define diversity. Instead of primarily focusing only on visible attributes to define
diversity, a large number of individuals used invisible attributes to define diversity. Below is a chart, which has a compilation of the responses, comparing whether individuals used invisible attributes or visible attributes when defining diversity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compilation of Responses</th>
<th>Invisible Attributes</th>
<th>Visible attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Different beliefs/religion (2)</td>
<td>x 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different phenotypes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different identities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different social classes/background (3)</td>
<td>x 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different history/backgrounds/experiences (4)</td>
<td>x 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different sexual orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different ethnic/racial background (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>x 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different than what people classify as normal</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting others for who they are</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goes deeper than what we can see on the outside</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What we can learn from someone from getting to know them better</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being open to new ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different cultures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different perspectives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity is different cultures and perspectives working together, for the common good</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences amongst people (2)</td>
<td>x 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different People/variety of people (4)</td>
<td>x 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The three most common categories that individuals used to define diversity, were “different history/backgrounds/experiences”, “different ethnic/racial background” and “different People/variety of people”. Individuals recognized students come from different backgrounds from each other and had variety. Overall students’ defined diversity using differences amongst individuals. Students used both visible and invisible attributes to define diversity, because using both is important when defining diversity. Recognizing differences amongst one another, whether it is race or an individual’s background, is important in order to be able to learn from one another. The individual in Interview #6 stated,

I would define diversity as you have individuals bringing different things to the table. We have on a racial level it could be racially but can even be more than just people are significantly different by bringing everything together. It helps things to work, if everyone was the same it would not work out very well.

This individual recognizes diversity is differences amongst other people and that it helps things work. If everyone had the same ideas, it would limit creativity and put everyone into a box. Being exposed to people with different idea, beliefs, and ideologies benefits individuals so they are able to learn how to work with people who are different from one another. Differences amongst individuals range from visible to invisible attributes and these all can play a part in defining diversity within an individual.
The majority of the students’ primarily defined diversity using invisible attributes. Other publications primarily used visible attributes 58.60% of the time, while WOU students only used visible attributes 20.70% of the time to define diversity.

There were also two categories “accepting others for who they are” and “different than what people classify as normal” which, were labeled as n/a since they could not be defined as a invisible or visible attribute. Definitions of diversity are varied from each individual. Individuals have different definitions from one another because every individual has a different background or story to tell. It is important to recognize that diversity is complex and includes both visible and invisible attributes. It is useful in
defining diversity that people use both these types of attributes in order to have the clearest and most accurate definition of diversity.

Question 3:

Participants in the study were asked the question: Do you think Western Oregon University is a diverse university? The goal of this question was to determine if students perceived WOU as being a diverse university or not. Below is a compilation of the 12 interviewers response to the question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you think Western Oregon University is a diverse university?</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview Number:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #1</td>
<td>Yes I do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #2</td>
<td>I think so, I think any time you put a thousand plus people in any location you’re going to get a lot of different type of people who come from different backgrounds. There is the fact it is a regional school, so you tend to get more local students. Based on the region they are going to be very similar, come from similar backgrounds, because of social class, race, ethnicity, age groups, family sizes, those will be very similar from the local population but you are still going to get international students, out of state students, people come from different types of life, so yeah I would say Western Oregon University is diverse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #3</td>
<td>Yes, very diverse. It has lots of different clubs, backgrounds, and different things for basically everyone. We have one of the most diverse populations in Oregon if memory serves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #4</td>
<td>I feel Western Oregon is a diverse place because there are people from many states, or people from different countries. There are a lot of minorities here that make it different or unique.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #5</td>
<td>I think they are making leaps and bounds and they are trying to be diverse. It is part of their website right now, there is this thing about being a diverse school but with that there are a lot of ways we can improve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #6</td>
<td>I would say Western Oregon University is somewhat diverse but not hugely diverse. If you go to Portland State University or other places I’ve been to I feel like they have more diversity. At the same time Western Oregon has it no doubt but it’s not as great, you still have the people from smaller towns more country and people from cities so it definitely has diversity but not as of large of a scale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #7</td>
<td>I do I think there are many different types of clubs, organizations, and opportunities here at Western and I do see a variety of different people with different interests and I think it is very unique.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #8</td>
<td>I think so, looking at different universities, I think Western is a very diverse university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #9</td>
<td>Yes it is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #10</td>
<td>I think it definitely is, you see different people, interact with different people, you learn from each an every different person you encounter. There are so many individualized people here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #11</td>
<td>I think so, I feel Western Oregon University works very hard to accommodate. Just about anyone who potentially could walk through the campus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Interview #12</td>
<td>I want to say yes but from my experience I have not seen much diversity. It may be because of my experience as a graduate student and I only go to classes and do not interact with many students. But from what I’ve seen, I haven’t seen much diversity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of the 12 individuals interviewed in the study 9 out of the 12 (75%) felt WOU was diverse, 1 (8.33%) individual felt WOU Diverse was not
People of WOU

diverse, and 2 (16.66\%) individuals felt WOU was somewhat diverse. This shows the majority of students feel WOU is diverse. Since students feel that WOU is diverse, they are better able to reap the benefits of being a part of a diverse university. For those who did not feel WOU was diverse.

The individual in interview #12 did not feel that WOU was very diverse, they stated “I want to say yes but from my experience I have not seen much diversity,” the individual discusses how it may because they are a graduate student and do not interact much with students. Either way this individual does not believe WOU is diverse. There are most likely other students that share their opinion and views as well. Even though the majority of individuals interviewed believed WOU is diverse. There are still students who do not think it is diverse or it is only somewhat diverse as it was for the
individuals in interview #5 and #6. The individual in interview #5 believes that WOU is making leaps and bounds in diversity but there can still be a lot of improvement. The individual in interview #6 believes WOU is somewhat diverse because, “I would say Western Oregon University is somewhat diverse but not hugely diverse. If you go to Portland State University or other places. In comparison to other universities WOU may not be considered diverse to individuals.” Students who have the perception there university is diverse are able to receive the benefits diversity has to offers.

The students who believe WOU is diverse are able to better realize the benefits they receive from going to a diverse university. If students do not think the university is diverse or it is only somewhat diverse, then WOU may need to do a better job of promoting diversity in order to benefit every student who attends their university.
Chapter 5: Discussion

When comparing how WOU students described each other and defined diversity to the four publications, it is clear invisible attributes appeared more often with WOU students than the publications. This information can be used to benefit institutions in the future. Instead of publications predominantly using visible attributes, I would suggest for them to use invisible attributes as well. In order to get a clear picture of the individuals a college or university has, I suggest they use information from Daniel Tatum’s categories of otherness, which includes race or ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, and physical or mental ability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7 Categories of Otherness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.) Race or Ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.) Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.) Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.) Sexual Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.) Socioeconomic Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.) Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.) Physical or Mental Ability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Universities could use these categories in the future in order to provide more information about student demographics instead of just using the predominately visible attributes of race, ethnicity and gender. Publications could also use information based on religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and even physical or mental ability. Using information
about the amount of students who fall under these categories will help show a better representation of the diversity a university has to offer.

For example, a student who may be gay or lesbian may feel uncomfortable or nervous attending a college or a university. Universities want to avoid what researchers found in the study *Institutional Barriers to Diversity Change Work in Higher Education*, where “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students and staff experienced disparaging behavior on a regular basis at the University, which contributed to fear” (Elliot et al., 2013). In other words, students who were part of the LGBTQ community at times felt judged or not welcomed. Perhaps if there were information about the number of students who were part of the LGBTQ community, more students who are part of this community would feel more safe and comfortable and would not feel the fear students felt in the study.

Another example would be if a student practices a religion such as Christianity or Islam. If an institution has information about the percent of students who practice a certain religion, then students may feel more welcomed knowing there are other people who come from similar faith backgrounds.

Using as much information and statistics as possible helps paint a clearer picture of the type of students attending a given university. If someone were painting a picture of a rainbow, they would not just use the
color orange. In order to paint the clearest picture possible they would also use the colors red, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet, just like a university should share as much information regarding its students as it can in order to paint the clearest picture possible of its student population. Obviously a university or college cannot provide details about every aspect of each student’s life, but the more information regarding different identities, both visible and invisible, the better.

Moving forward, this study could be used across schools to determine how students perceive diversity on their campus. Schools can benefit from this information so they can further improve and work towards having a diverse institution. The sample size for this study only included 12 individuals; this number could be increased in order to have a wider range of results and a better representation of what the perception of diversity is at the university.

As a future teacher, I plan on teaching in a diverse and inclusive classroom. Recognizing every student has a unique background, will be important in order to teach every student. Instead of only focusing on visible attributes of my students, I will remember each student’s identity is complex and includes invisible attributes as well. Being aware of my students’ diversity will allow me to differentiate my students and support their learning.
Using both invisible and visible attributes in describing individual and diversity is essential for improving the perception of diversity. If only one of these kinds of attributes is used, then it does not give a fair representation of the individuals exist in an institution. In the future, it would be beneficial for schools such as WOU to use information and statistics based equally on invisible and visible attributes. Using invisible attributes as well as visible attributes will help change the perception of diversity at WOU. This change will show the people of WOU are not homogenous, but rather each one is different with a unique story to tell.
Appendix:

Form 1:  
Institutional Review Board Application

![Image of Form 1: Institutional Review Board Application]
**Ethics and Compliance Training:** All Principal Investigators and research team members, including *Faculty Advisors* involved in this project/study must receive training in the ethical use of human participants in research. WOU supports this federal training requirement and has identified an online training program offered through the National Institute of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research to meet this requisite. The NIH public access course in the Responsible Conduct of Research is available to the WOU community free of charge.

The NIH training is available at [http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php](http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php)

IRB applications must have **NIH Certificate of Completion attached** to them unless certificates were previously submitted and are on file with the IRB.

**B. IRB APPLICATION DIRECTIONS**

a. Type your responses to each question. DO NOT leave a question blank. Throughout the application, if a question does not apply to your protocol, write "n/a".

b. Review your application for grammar, spelling, thoroughness, and comprehensive information. Applications with errors such as these will be returned.

c. Have the IRB representative from your College or Department review your application before submitting it to the IRB Chair.

d. Student applications must be signed by a Faculty member. The faculty member’s signature indicates s/he has read and approved the application.

e. Please have one original and appropriate copies of your application depending on the level of review. Exempt and Expedited reviews require one original and two copies. Full Board requires one original and seven copies.

f. Submit your application to the IRB via campus mail. If you have questions that are not answered on the website or in this application, you may contact the IRB by phone at 503.838.9200.

g. The signature page must be mailed to the IRB or scanned and sent via email as a PDF before final review will begin.

**C. ANTICIPATED LEVEL OF REVIEW**

Investigator Prediction of Type of Review

*See Level of Review Categories to determine your research – please select one level and category number.*

- [x] Exempt  Provide category # (1-6)  
- [ ] Expedited  Provide category # (1-7)  
- [ ] Full Board

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INITIAL APPLICATION

D. PURPOSE & DESIGN (Complete in a Word document & submit with this application).

PURPOSE: Describe the purpose of the study.

DESIGN: Describe the research design and procedures. Clearly specify what the participants will do.

E. DATA COLLECTION

Estimated data completion date: 06-11-2015

IRB Approvals are good for one full year from date of approval. Renewal applications are required if data collection is to continue after one year.

1. Check (X) the methods to be used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey, administered by</th>
<th>Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Investigator</td>
<td>□ One-on-One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Participant Self-report</td>
<td>□ Focus Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Mail</td>
<td>□ E-mail or Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Phone</td>
<td>□ Oral History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ In Person</td>
<td>□ Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Online</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: If you are using a survey or doing interviews, you must submit a copy of the survey items or interview questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation of Public Behavior</th>
<th>Examination of Archived Data or Records</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ In classroom</td>
<td>□ Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ At public meetings</td>
<td>□ Medical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Other</td>
<td>□ Legal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Form Revised February 2011
## INITIAL APPLICATION

### Taste/Sensory Evaluation
- **Food Tasting**
- **Olfactory**
- **Auditory**
- **Visual**
- **Examination of Tissue Specimens**

### Therapeutic
- **Biomedical**
- **Psychological**
- **Physical Therapy**

### Experimental
- **Biomedical**
- **Psychological**
- **Other**

`Other: Please describe.`

### 2. Data from Participants – select one (X)

- **Anonymous** – You will not ask for participant's name
- **Confidential** – You will ask for participants’ names, but will keep the names confidential. Readers of your research will be unable to tell the identity of the participants and there will be no way to connect particular participants with particular data.
- ☒ **Intentionally Identified**

If participants will be identified, describe how permission to use data in connection with participants’ identities is obtained. If anonymous or confidential, describe how anonymity or confidentiality will be maintained (e.g., coded to a master list and separated from data, locked cabinet, office, restricted computer, etc.). Indicate who will have access to the data.

Participants will sign a consent form for their interview to be used in the research paper. Participants will not be identified in the research paper. I will be the only one that will have access the interview data.

### 3. Will any of the following be recorded? Check to indicate Yes.

- Video tapes/recordings
- ☒ Audio tapes/recordings
- Photographs

If you answered YES for any of the above, where will tapes/recordings or photographs be stored? When will this material be destroyed (e.g., within 5 years of a published paper)? How will confidentiality be maintained? Describe below:

The audio recordings will be stored on my phone and computer, that are both password protected. The files will only be accessible by me. The material will be destroyed within 6 months of publication being released.
F. DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

1. Approximate number: N/A    Age Range (e.g., 18 to 24) N/A

2. How will participants be selected or recruited? (Attach Word document).

3. Will participants be compensated (include extra credit)? □ yes  ☒ no
   If yes, how much, when and how? Must they complete the project to be paid?

4. What form of consent will be obtained? In most situations a written informed consent is required. (See Frequently Asked Questions about the Consent process.)
   □ Implied (attach cover letter or describe terms)
   □ Verbal (attach consent script)
   ☒ Written – adult participants (attach adult consent form)
   □ Written – minor participants (attach youth assent form)
   □ Seeking Waiver of Consent (contact the IRB for further information)
   □ Consent Not Applicable (e.g., archival data.)
      Explain why consent is not applicable or necessary on a separate page.

5. Are any participants not legally competent to give consent? (e.g., those who are minors and/or under care of guardian). □ Yes  ☒ No
   If yes, please describe how consent will be obtained. Please Note: a parent or guardian must sign and return an informed consent form for participants who are under 18 years of age. In addition, it is recommended that you also obtain assent from minors if they are old enough to read and write.

6. Will any ethnic group or gender be excluded from the study pool? □ Yes  ☒ No
   If yes, justify the exclusion.
INITIAL APPLICATION

7. Is this study by design likely to involve any participants who are not fluent in English?
   ☐ Yes ☒ No

   If yes, submit both the English and translated versions of consent forms and surveys, if applicable. If research participants do not speak or read English well enough to understand information about the research study/project and the Informed Consent and/or Student Assent forms, these documents must be provided in the language of the participant(s). Qualified translators should be used and translated documents should be included with this application. You should give a full explanation of your procedures in this section.

8. Does this study involve participants located outside of the United States? ☐ yes ☒ no

   If yes, please explain exactly "who the participants are," and the identities (if possible) and responsibilities of any additional investigators.

G. DECEPTION

If the research protocol is designed to withhold complete information when consent is obtained, then some level of deception is involved. If deception is required for the validity of the research, explain why this is necessary. Include a description of when and how participants will be debriefed regarding the deception. If a participant objects to the deception and does not want his/her data included in the study, explain what you will do.
H. RISKS AND BENEFITS

1. Describe any potential risks to the participants, and describe how you will minimize these risks. These include stress, discomfort, social risks (e.g., embarrassment), legal risks, invasion of privacy, and side effects.

Potential risks include that participants when taking about themselves or diversity may trigger potential life events that could make them upset or experience trauma. In order to minimize this risk participants will be informed that they only need to share what they are comfortable with.

2. In the event that any of these potential risks occur, how will they be handled (e.g., compensation, counseling, etc.)?

If a potential risk occurs they will be advised to receive counseling.

3. Will this study interfere with participants’ normal routines (e.g., prevent them from going to class and/or work)? ☐ yes ☒ no

If yes, the participant needs to agree that the researcher is not liable for the disruption.

4. Describe the expected benefits to the individual participants and to members of society.

This research paper will showcase diversity on multiple levels. While participants will not be compensated monetarily, they may benefit from knowing that they are helping showcase the diversity of Western Oregon University by knowing that they helped. It will benefit society by showing that there is a lot of diverse people that attend Western Oregon University.

5. If blood or other biological specimens will be taken please address the following

a. Brief description of sampled tissue

b. Describe the personnel involved and procedure(s) for obtaining the specimen(s). Note that the IRB requires that only trained certified or licensed persons may draw blood. Contact the IRB for more details on this topic.
INITIAL APPLICATION

I. DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

1. Will any investigational new drug (IND) be used? □ yes ☒ no
2. Will any other drugs be used? □ yes ☒ no
3. Will alcohol be ingested by the participants? □ yes ☒ no

J. RESEARCH/PROJECT FUNDING

1. Is there, or will there be extramural funding that directly supports this research?
   □ yes ☒ no

   If yes, list the funding agency: _______________________________________
   List the PI(s) of the funded grant: _______________________________________

K. INVESTIGATOR’S ASSURANCES

This investigation involves the use of human participants. I understand the university’s policy concerning research involving human participants, and I agree:

1. To obtain voluntary and informed assent/consent of persons who will participate in this study, as required by the IRB.
2. To report to the IRB any adverse effects on participants which become apparent during the course of, or as a result of, the activities of the investigation.
3. To cooperate with members of the IRB charged with review of this project, and to give progress reports as required by the IRB.
4. To obtain prior approval from the IRB before amending or altering the project or before implementing changes in the approved consent form (i.e., changes that would alter what is required of the participant).
5. To not collect any data until full approval by the IRB has been acknowledged.
6. To maintain documentation of IRB approval, consent forms and/or procedures together with the data for at least three years after the project has been completed or paper has been published—whichever is later.
7. To treat participants in the humane manner specified on this form.

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INITIAL APPLICATION

Principal Investigators

By signing below, I certify that the information provided in this application is accurate and complete. I understand that research involving human participants, including the recruitment, may not begin until full approval has been granted by the IRB, and that the project will be conducted in accordance with the above assurances.

Signature ___________________________ Print Name ___________________________ Date: 03-01-2016

Signature ___________________________ Print Name ___________________________ Date: 

Signature ___________________________ Print Name ___________________________ Date: 

Faculty Sponsor (If PI is a student)

The information provided in this form is accurate and the project will be conducted in accordance with the above assurances.

Signature ___________________________ Print Name: Marcus Wenzel Date: 03-01-2016

Email address: wenzelm@wou.edu Phone: (503)-838-9125

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD: These assurances are acceptable and this project has adequate protections for participants. This project has been properly reviewed and filed, and is in compliance with federal, state, and university regulations.

Signature ___________________________ Print Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

IRB ONLY: This protocol has been reviewed and approved as:

________ Exempt __________ Expedited __________ Full Board

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Form 2:
IRB Approval Letter

April 6th, 2016

TO:  Nathan Tew

RE:  Project Title: People of WOU
     IRB #: 852
     Study approval period: 4/6/2016-4/6/2017

Dear Nathan,

On 4/6/16, the WOU Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the above project for the period indicated above. It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for exempt review based on the federal requirements for exempt category #2. This category is restricted to research with no risk of injury to participants that involves the use of educational tests, surveys, interviews, questionnaires or observation protocol that you submitted with your application packet.

It is your responsibility to report promptly to the WOU IRB any adverse events or unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others. Additionally, you must contact the WOU IRB prior to implementing any changes in your study which may have bearing on the rights and welfare of the research participants including change in design, population targeted, and/or consent process. Protocol modifications must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Finally, should your study exceed the study approval period noted above, your protocol must be reappproved. Please contact the IRB chair to facilitate this process.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at Western Oregon University and your continued commitment to human subject research protections. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact myself or any other member of the WOU IRB.

Good luck in your research activities.

Sincerely,

W. Jeffrey Armstrong, Ph.D.
Chair, WOU Institutional Review Board

Vice President for Academic Affairs
345 Monmouth Ave. N. • Monmouth, OR 97361 • 503.838.8271 • 503.838.8116 (fax) • wou.edu
Form 3: 
Informational Summary of Research “People of WOU”

You are invited to participate in a research study that will look into the perception that Western Oregon has limited amount of student diversity. I believe many people define diversity based solely on outward characteristics including race and gender. My goal is show the diverse population Western Oregon University has to offer. Diversity is an essential piece for any institution and provides people with different views. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a student of Western Oregon University. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Principal Investigator: 
This study is being conducted by: Nathan Tew, Western Oregon Honors Program

Procedures: 
If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to agree to participate in a 5-10 minute interview, which will be compiled into a research paper.

Confidentiality: 
You will not be identified in the research paper; you will be assigned a pseudonym that will be used throughout the paper. Interview records and audio files will be stored securely on my phone and computer, which are both password protected. The files will be deleted off my computer and within 6 months after publication. Only my advisor and I will have access to the records and files.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: 
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not effect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions: 
The researcher conducting this study is Nathan Tew and is advised by Marcus Wenzel You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact them. 
Nathan Tew: (503)-290-9011 or nlew11@wou.edu
Marcus Wenzel: (503)-838-9125 or wenzelm@wou.edu

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the Western Oregon University Institutional Review Board at rbg@wou.edu or 503.838.9200.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.
Form 4: Informed Consent for Research Involving Human Subjects

Western Oregon University
Honors Program
Informed Consent for Research Involving Human Subjects

People of WOU

Principal Investigator: Nathan Tew
Cell Phone: (503) 290-9011 e-mail: ntew11@wou.edu

Background:
The goal of this study is to explore the perception that Western Oregon University has a limited amount of diversity. This will be done by investigating how students of Western Oregon University perceive and define diversity themselves. I will accomplish this goal by interviewing Western Oregon University students and compile these interviews into a research paper.

Having a student body possessing different backgrounds and identities allows for more ideas and more views exposing to people there is diversity even in a relatively small community at Western Oregon University is essential. This research paper will benefit the students, faculty, and future students/faculty by showcasing the diversity of the students of Western Oregon University.

Methods:
I will conduct a 5-10 minute interview where the participant will answer a variety of questions about diversity. I will edit and use participant interviews in the final project.

Risks:
A possible risk to participants while participating in this study is talking about diversity or themselves can raise the possibility of triggering some unpleasant messages or thoughts. To reduce this risk I will inform participants to only share what they feel comfortable with.

It is important for you to understand that you may withdraw from the investigation at any time without prejudice or effect on your relationship to Western Oregon University.

Benefits:
While you will not be compensated monetarily, you may benefit from knowing that you are helping to showcase the diversity of Western Oregon University.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Western Oregon University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Should you have any questions or concerns throughout the course of the study, you may contact Dr. Researcher by phone or e-mail. If you have questions/concerns regarding your treatment as a subject, you may contact the Chair of the WOU Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 503-838-9200 or via e-mail at irb@wou.edu. You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your record.
WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY
Honors Program
Informed Consent for Research Involving Human Subjects

People of WOU

Principal Investigator: Nathan Tew
Cell Phone: (503) 290-9011   e-mail: ntew11@wou.edu

I, __________________________, hereby give my consent to participate in the research study entitled “People of WOU” details of which have been provided to me above, including anticipated benefits, risks, and potential complications.

I fully understand I may withdraw from this research project at any time without prejudice or effect on my college/athletic standing. I also understand that I am free to ask questions about any techniques or procedures that will be undertaken.

I understand in the unlikely event of physical injury resulting from research procedures that the investigators will assist the subjects in obtaining medical care; however, payment for the medical care will be the responsibility of the subject. Western Oregon University will not provide financial compensation for medical care.

Finally, I understand that the information about me obtained during the course of this study will be kept confidential unless I consent to its release. (Return signature page to researcher; keep remaining pages for your records.)

____________________________
Participants Signature

I hereby certify that I have given an explanation to the above individual of the contemplated study and its risks and potential complications.

____________________________
Principal Investigator
People of WOU Interview Questions

1. How would you describe a typical Western Oregon University student?
2. How would you define diversity?
3. Do you think Western Oregon University is a diverse university?
People of WOU Interview Questions

1. How would you describe a typical WOU student?

________________________________________________________________________
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2. How would you define diversity?

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3. Do you think Western Oregon is a diverse university?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
References


Profile of Western Oregon University (2013) Oregon University Systems

University of Michigan Health Systems. (2002). What is Diversity? It's More than Race or Gender


