Opening Your Eyes to Diversity

Before coming to UCF, I had minimal interactions with diverse populations. I first began learning about diversity while participating in the LEAD Scholars program. It continued on during my time with O-Team as I went through diversity training and learned to work with incoming students from backgrounds and cultures different than my own. It was important to me to keep an open mind while learning about different cultures, races, ethnicities, and sexualities.

Keeping an open mind proved to be very beneficial to me. It helped me to learn the information presented in classes I took towards my psychology degree, such as Cross Cultural Psychology and Intercultural Communications. Absorbing information from both my professors and peers allowed me to gain knowledge about different cultures I previously had no knowledge of and draw upon that information later on. Being open to diverse cultures allows me to explore other people’s backgrounds in a respectful manner and learn from their experiences. It also allowed me to participate in activities I would not have otherwise. For example, when my friend asked me to participate in a performance set up by Sangam, an Indian student organization, to celebrate Diwali, I did not hesitate to agree. By participating I got to learn about the celebration of Diwali, meet some very nice students outside of my classes and usual social groups, and learn a very fun Indian dance.

Understanding diversity continues to be useful to me as I pursue my master’s degree in social work. As I work with clients by leading groups and completing assessments, I have come to realize that no two people have had the same life experiences or even react to the same situations in similar ways. Achieving cultural competence is important in order for me to understand the different dimensions of the people I interact with, helping me to better assess their needs and how I can help effectively. Drawing upon what I have learned in the past, I refrain from making assumptions about an individual and wait for them to tell me about their lifestyle and experiences. Achieving cultural competence is a continuous process. I never stop learning from others, whether it’s from my professors, peers, coworkers, mentors, or clients. I value my ability to listen to others with an open mind, absorbing what they have to say and learning about anything they have experienced that I have not.

by Jennifer Hayes
Graduate Student,
Masters in Social Work Program
Diversity is a popular word today. You see it on television, you hear about it on the radio, and you experience it in your daily life at UCF. But what exactly is diversity? Often one thinks about visual aspects . . . another person's skin color or facial features that display differences from our own. Ethnicity is certainly one aspect of diversity that is usually easy to recognize. However, there are many more aspects to diversity that you may not have considered.

UCF is currently one of the largest universities in the United States, with more than 58,000 students in attendance. As one of those students, you are being exposed to a variety of people who come from all 50 states of our own country and 141 other countries around the world. Diversity is present in our student body, faculty, and staff. UCF is committed to promoting a diverse and inclusive environment ("About UCF," n.d.). In fact, President John C. Hitt has made the goal of becoming more inclusive and diverse one of his top five goals for UCF (Hitt, 2011, p. 2). As a result, each of your years at the University will expose you to more and more diversity. For this reason, you will benefit greatly from being able to recognize and understand diversity. Once you have done this, you will be able to appreciate the value that diversity will add to your life and educational experience.

This chapter will introduce you to the three levels of diversity. After we have a better understanding of what diversity is, we will examine the demographics of UCF to better understand how our campus reflects this level of diversity. By the end of the chapter, you will have a better understanding of the diversity that surrounds you every day at UCF and the world beyond.

What Is Diversity?

The answer to this question may be broader than you think. According to Brydon and Scott (2008), diversity is composed of three levels: cultural, demographic, and individual. Each level has detailed characteristics that explain the elements that work together to make each individual person unique. Figure 12.1 shows us the three levels in a pyramid format. This visual aid is helpful in understanding how the three levels of diversity build upon one another. Cultural elements are the foundation for diversity. Next, demographic elements begin to sort out groups or type of people within cultures that share certain characteristics. Finally, individual elements recognize
that people cannot be fully grouped according to stereotypes. We must acknowledge that each person has unique aspects that make them an individual. Next, we will look at these three levels of diversity in detail.

Cultural Diversity

According to Dutch management researcher Geert Hofstede, there are five dimensions that describe the values that cultures have. These dimensions are Power Distance, Collectivism vs. Individualism, Femininity vs. Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Long-term vs. Short-term orientation (Jandt, 2010, p. 163). People are often highly influenced by the culture in which they grew up. Therefore, it is important to recognize how these five dimensions provide the foundation for diversity amongst people.

STUDENT SPEAKS OUT

You’re in Orlando, a big city full of new opportunities, take advantage of that and get out of your comfort zone. You’ll be glad you did and will make unforgettable memories.

Jaewon Lim
Power Distance refers to how a culture views inequalities in society. Does the culture accept that some people are born to be leaders and others followers? Or does the culture expect equality for its members? Power is decentralized in low power distance cultures, and power, wealth and prestige are accessible to various members of the society (p. 177). What differences might be evident when a person from a low power distance culture interacts with an individual from a high power distance culture?

How do people view themselves and their interactions with those around them? Individualism is characterized by looser social attachments. Members of individualistic cultures focus on their own accomplishments and believe that they have the inherent right to live their life the way that they want to. Certainly they also have loving relationships and may enjoy belonging to certain groups. However, the overall thought pattern is highly individual. Collectivism describes a culture with the opposite orientation. Collectivistic cultures put aside individual desires in order to support the group’s goals and welfare (p. 165).

Imagine how a communication interaction between individualistic and collectivistic people might occur. How would this element of cultural diversity make it more difficult to understand one another?

Masculinity and Femininity refer to cultures as a whole, not just the men and women within those cultures. Masculine cultures value traits like assertiveness, competition, and materialism. These cultures tend to have rigid gender roles. Feminine cultures value relationships, quality of life, and nurturing (pp. 175–177). Do you think that the culture you grew up in as a child is more masculine or feminine?

Uncertainty Avoidance is characterized by the degree to which the members of a culture fear unknown situations. Are you a risk-taker? If so, then you are probably from a low uncertainty avoidance culture. You may also be accepting of instructors and professors who openly admit to not knowing all of the answers. If you are a member of a high uncertainty avoidance culture, then your society probably has more written rules and strict cultural codes of behavioral conduct. In other words, there are specific ways that you should behave in specific situations. The United States tends to tolerate uncertainty; whereas, Greece, Portugal and Guatemala tend to avoid it (p. 181).

The final dimension is Long-term versus Short-term Orientation. Cultures with a long-term orientation encourage their members to be thrifty, to save their money, to persevere with a goal until they achieve the desired results, and to deny oneself in support of a larger purpose. Short-term orientation cultures instead spend to keep up with other members of the culture, save less money, prefer quick results to perseverance, and take a great deal of pride in maintaining a good impression (p. 180). Based on this description, do you think that the United States is a
Demographic Diversity

Once you examine cultural diversity, you can begin to focus on the next level: demographic diversity. Demographics are basic, important data used to describe a population. These data include age, gender/sex/sexual orientation, ethnicity, geographic origin, socioeconomic status, occupation, religion, and language (Brydon and Scott, 2008). People in a particular culture may be grouped together based on these elements. Stereotypes may develop from these groupings. Stereotypes are judgments made about individuals based on assumed membership with one of these groups (Jandt, 2010, p. 86). Stereotypes can be either negative or positive judgments that diminish the value of an individual by ignoring their uniqueness. Later in this chapter, we will explore aspects of demographic diversity present on our UCF campus. What does each of these data represent exactly in regards to diversity?

- Age, of course, is a count of how many years someone has been alive. How do you think age influences the way that people think? Do you see the world in the same way that a five-year-old or a fifty-year-old does?
- Sex refers to whether someone is born on or acts upon being female, male, intersex or transsexual. An intersex individual is born with characteristics of both the male and female sexes (Brannon, 2008, p. 90). Some of the characteristics may not be completely formed. Some intersex individuals may choose to have surgery, while others may not. A transsexual takes on the physical, behavioral characteristics and social identity of the other sex. A transsexual will live as a member of that other sex. “Such persons frequently say they feel as though they are trapped inside the wrong body” (McKee and Stone, 2007, p. 92).
- Gender, “describes the traits and behaviors that are regarded by the culture as appropriate to women and men” (Brannon, 2008, p. 15). It is important to understand that gender is not automatically connected with biological sex. Instead, it is taught, learned and performed. Gender is always influenced by culture and time periods. For example, think about how the definition of femininity has evolved in the last century. Therefore, males, females, transsexuals and intersex individuals can be masculine, feminine or androgynous (a blending of the desirable characteristics of masculinity and femininity) regardless of their sexual orientations, which we will discuss next (p. 73).
- Sexual orientation describes sexual attraction toward members of the other sex, the same sex, both sexes, or neither sex (Floyd, 2009, p. 63). Heterosexual people find members of the other sex attractive. Homosexual people are sexually interested in members of their own sex. Bisexual people find both men and women sexually attractive. Asexual people are characterized by a general lack of interest in sex (pp. 61-63).

- Ethnicity and Race are similar, yet still very different. Race is often thought of in terms of being black or white, for example. Ethnicity is often thought of as being associated with culture. (Adelman, 2003). New York University Dean of Social Sciences and Professor Dalton Conley explains the differences between ethnicity and race:

  While race and ethnicity share an ideology of common ancestry, they differ in several ways. First of all, race is primarily unitary. You can only have one race, while you can claim multiple ethnic affiliations. You can identify ethnically as Irish and Polish, but you have to be essentially either black or white. The fundamental difference is that race is socially imposed and hierarchical. There is an inequality built into the system. Furthermore, you have no control over your race; it's how you're perceived by others. For example, I have a friend who was born in Korea to Korean parents, but as an infant, she was adopted by an Italian family in Italy. Ethnically, she feels Italian: she eats Italian food, she speaks Italian, she knows Italian history and culture. She knows nothing about Korean history and culture. But when she comes to the United States, she's treated racially as Asian. (Adelman, 2003)

- Geographic origin describes the area of the world where someone is from. The person can be considered a citizen of the nation. This is an important element because it recognizes that people can experience life differently when they are from various areas of the world.

- Socioeconomic status groups people according to social grouping and economic status. This element can describe the types of life opportunities that people in the various groupings may have access to.

- Occupation refers to the type of work that people do for a living. How might blue-collar and white-collar workers experience things differently? Do you think an employee of a corporation has the same mindset as an entrepreneur or someone who is self-employed?

- Religion describes a person's belief system. There are many religions practiced around the world. Some of the most common ones are Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. Religion guides morals and values. Differences in religious beliefs have been
a source of conflict throughout world history. Respecting religious diversity is important for maintaining peace.

- Language is an element that transcends some of the other demographic features we have been discussing so far. For example, native speakers of the English language may be from the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada or Australia to name a few places. How do you think the language that one speaks contributes to their overall individual diversity?

### Individual Diversity

The third and final level of diversity examines the individual. At this level, you must take into account each person's own unique personality characteristics that make them who they are. Stereotypes should not be applied at this level since they often deal with demographic variables. Stereotypes, by definition, categorize individuals according to the group, ignoring each person's individuality. Individual diversity variables include beliefs, values, motives, attitudes, knowledge, expectations and needs.

- Beliefs are declarations you make about the properties or qualities of an object (Brydon and Scott, 2008, p. 158). As you probably already know, people may hold different beliefs than you. Each person's unique character, personality and life experiences can influence his/her beliefs. How has your own character, personality and life experiences influenced your beliefs?
- Values are the most enduring beliefs that we have about what is right and wrong. Values can be very difficult to change since our basic system for judging right from wrong is most likely developed at a very young age (p. 161). Your family, friends, community, and culture all help to shape your values.
- Motives refer to what drives you. Your motivation in life may be very different or similar to other people around you. Consider what has motivated you to choose to study a particular major at UCF. Is it the prestige of the field of study or the potential to make a lot of money? Maybe it will be the work schedule or the opportunity to make significant contributions to society. Whatever motivates you is unique from your classmates. It is your own individual motivation.
- Attitudes are your ways of consistently responding, either positively or negatively, toward a given object (p. 160). Attitudes are learned. Where do we learn these attitudes? Again,
your life experience teaches you. What do you think has had the biggest impact on forming your attitudes?

- Knowledge considers what those around you may know in comparison to you. Your professors and instructors have a high level of knowledge for their areas of study. You may also have a good amount of knowledge with particular subject areas. It is not always easy to determine right away the amount of knowledge that someone has or does not have. What types of knowledge has your own unique identity helped you gain?

- Expectations refer to the way you think something should be or operate. They can easily differ from person to person. Your professors and instructors have expectations for you as a college student. For example, they expect you to have a certain level of proficiency with reading, writing and math. Expectations for ourselves and others can shift throughout our lifetime. What types of expectations did you have when you were 10 years old? What about now? What about when you are in your elderly years?

- Needs are the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual states that we work to attain so that we are satisfied (p. 163). Needs usually build upon one another. You must meet your basic physical needs of eating and sleeping before you can meet certain intellectual needs such as attending college. For example, if you barely have enough money to eat each day, you will be motivated to fulfill that need first before using any of your money to sign up for additional college classes. Each person differs on how they must fulfill their needs. Consider how much sleep you require each night compared to your friends. Is it more or less? Are you the type of person who can skip eating all day until you enjoy dinner or do you need to eat every few hours to maintain your energy? These questions highlight that each individual has different levels of needs.

Now that we have closely examined the three levels of diversity, we will apply the second level of demographic diversity to our campus community. The next section will illustrate how you can experience each demographic variable discussed earlier while at UCF.

**Demographic Diversity at UCF**

After reading this section, it will be easy to see how UCF is succeeding with President Hitt’s goal of becoming more diverse. In order to also make UCF inclusive, diversity must continue to
be understood and celebrated. The section will also suggest how you can embrace the diversity surrounding your college experience by offering you access to on-campus resources and organizations. The statistics and tables presented are for Fall 2010 and can be found at UCF’s website, (“Facts about UCF,” n.d.).

- Age. There is a wide age distribution present in our campus community. The following table shows the average age for undergraduate and graduate student population. After reviewing this table, think about the diversity within the life experiences of a 19 year-old (average freshman age) in comparison to a 25 year-old (average senior age).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Freshman</th>
<th>19 years old</th>
<th>Master’s</th>
<th>30 years old</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>20 years old</td>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>29 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>23 years old</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>33 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>25 years old</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>25 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent over age 25: 23%</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>23 years old</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Average Age</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>31 years old</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Sex. UCF has gathered data measuring the numbers of males and females enrolled. The following table shows the sex of undergraduate, graduate, medical and university-wide totals for the student population. Based on the numbers presented in the table, UCF's student population is 55% female and 45% male. How do you think being male or female influences your life experience? How would being an intersex or transsexual individual influence it as well?

The Male Privilege Checklist
An Unabashed Imitation of an Article by Peggy McIntosh

For the full original article, go to

In 1990, Wellesley College professor Peggy McIntosh wrote an essay called “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”. McIntosh observes that whites in the U.S. are “taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group.” To illustrate these invisible systems, McIntosh wrote a list of 26 invisible privileges whites benefit from.

As McIntosh points out, men also tend to be unaware of their own privileges as men. In the spirit of McIntosh's essay, I thought I'd compile a list similar to McIntosh's, focusing on the invisible privileges benefitting men.

Pointing out that men are privileged in no way denies that bad things happen to men. Being privileged does not mean men are given everything in life for free; being privileged does not mean that men do not work hard, do not suffer. In many cases—from a boy being bullied in
school, to a soldier dying in war—the sexist society that maintains male privilege also does great harm to individual boys and men.

In the end, however, it is men and not women who make the most money; men and not women who dominate the government and the corporate boards; men and not women who dominate virtually all of the most powerful positions of society. And it is women and not men who suffer the most from intimate violence and rape; who are the most likely to be poor; who are, on the whole, given the short end of patriarchy’s stick.

The Male Privilege Checklist

- My odds of being hired for a job, when competing against female applicants, are probably skewed in my favor. The more prestigious the job, the larger the odds are skewed.
- If I am never promoted, it’s not because of my sex.
- I am far less likely to face sexual harassment at work than my female co-workers are.
- I am not taught to fear walking alone after dark in average public spaces.
- If I choose not to have children, my masculinity will not be called into question.
- If I have children but do not provide primary care for them, my masculinity will not be called into question.
- If I have children and provide primary care for them, I’ll be praised for extraordinary parenting if I’m even marginally competent.
- If I have children and pursue a career, no one will think I’m selfish for not staying at home.
- I can be somewhat sure that if I ask to see “the person in charge,” I will face a person of my own sex. The higher-up in the organization the person is, the surer I can be.
- As a child, chances are I was encouraged to be more active and outgoing than my sisters.
- As a child, chances are I got more teacher attention than girls who raised their hands just as often.
- If I’m careless with my driving it won’t be attributed to my sex.
- My wardrobe and grooming are relatively cheap and consume little time.
- If I buy a new car, chances are I’ll be offered a better price than a woman buying the same car.
- If I’m not conventionally attractive, the disadvantages are relatively small and easy to ignore.
- I can be confident that the ordinary language of day-to-day existence will always include my sex. “All men are created equal,” mailman, chairman, freshman, he.
- I will never be expected to change my name upon marriage or questioned if I don’t change my name.
- Every major religion in the world is led primarily by people of my own sex. Even God, in most major religions, is usually pictured as being male.
- On average, I am not interrupted by women as often as women are interrupted by men.
- I have the privilege of being unaware of my male privilege.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
<th>Medical</th>
<th>University Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21,751</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25,901</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5031</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Gender.** The diversity becomes understandable when you realize that anyone can be any gender. A heterosexual male may be androgynous in gender. A homosexual female can be feminine in gender. A bisexual male could be masculine in gender. And an asexual female could also be masculine in gender. Therefore, gender is not automatically linked to sex or sexual orientation. Instead, these three variables can combine in various ways to describe each individual person.

- **Sexual orientation.** It is important for you to recognize that the students around you may be very diverse in this demographic variable. Consider how you can be more sensitive to other’s sexual orientation. The LGBTQ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer and Ally community is incredibly diverse within itself. There are many stereotypes and pre-conceived notions about what it means to be LGBTQ. Some LGBTQ individuals like rainbows; others like football; some are in fraternities and sororities; others are drag queens; some are scientists; some are artists; some are preachers and some are politicians. Some LGBTQ individuals are people of color, some are white. Some are immigrants, some are citizens. Some are butch and some are femme. Some are out and some are in the closet. Some are all of the above. Most are still trying to figure out who they are and what they want out of life in order to be happy. (“About LGBTQ Services,” n.d.)

**The Advantages of Being Heterosexual**

We live in a society where being heterosexual or perceived as heterosexual carries advantages and entitlements. Many of these benefits are most often invisible and provide financial, emotional, and safety entitlements. Some of these advantages include:

I don’t have to consider my safety when walking with my partner.

I can walk hand-in-hand with my partner with no regard to the comments, looks of horror, or safety.

I can go to any restaurant I wish to celebrate my anniversary and love with my significant other without regard to safety concerns.

I can be reasonably assured that the police will respond to my call for help regarding a domestic dispute.

I am never asked to explain the heterosexual “experience.”

I am never asked to explain how I got this way regarding my sexual orientation.

I can use the appropriate pronouns, when asked about my relationship, without fearing people will judge or reject me.
When my significant other is in the hospital, I am assured of being allowed to visit them, because I am considered family.

My sexual orientation will not be used to deny me the opportunity to rent an apartment, or obtain a job or promotion.

I do not have to consider whether I will find accommodation when planning a vacation which will welcome my significant other and me.

I can openly display pictures and personal items which celebrate my relationship.

If I choose, my sexual orientation will not prevent me from the child adopting process.

I never have to hear, “what a waste,” when people find out my sexual orientation.

I never have to answer “who plays the man and who plays the woman?”

I am free to choose the job or profession I wish without regards to the appropriateness of my sexual orientation.

I don’t have to seek validation of my sexual orientation and me as a person through the collective studies by the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Medical Association, other scientific studies, or my book of worship.

I don’t have to think about my sexual orientation at all.


- Ethnicity/Race, Language and Geographic Origin. The following table displays UCF’s student population categorized by the dimension of ethnicity/race. When collecting the data for this dimension, the University included non-resident Alien as a category. We may also be able to infer information about the variety of languages spoken and the areas of geographic origin represented by the UCF student population. However, we must still be careful not to stereotype and instead allow for individual diversity.

The Multicultural Student Center (MSC), located in the Student Union, has a lot of services catered towards many ethnic, language and geographic origin interests that you can access as a UCF student. MSC, “promotes an environment that acknowledges, respects, enhances, and celebrates all aspects of culture” (“About MSC,” n.d.). To find out more information, visit their website at www.msc.sdes.ucf.edu. There are many registered student organizations (RSOs) that celebrate UCF’s ethnic/racial, language & geographic origin diversity. The table below lists the RSOs (updated 10-20-11) that you can check out on campus. To see a full list of organizations with additional information for each group, go to www.GetInvolved-UCF.com/rso.
- Socioeconomic status. UCF students come from many socioeconomic backgrounds. Some students are wealthy, some are middle class, and others may be living paycheck to paycheck. Some students have access to housing, while others may be considered as homeless. Some students attended high schools that were privileged to have the latest technology, small class sizes and access to other resources that can enhance an educational experience. Other students attended high schools that did not have this same access to these types of resources. How do you think attending the financially privileged high school would influence your college experiences? How would attending the high school without access to the same resources as the financially privileged high school influence your college experiences?

- Occupation. Our student population has a great deal of diversity in this area. Some students have never worked at a job. Some work part-time on or off campus, others work full-time. Some students perform physical labor while others may mostly do professional work. Students may work indoors or outdoors, alone or in groups, in an office or from home, day shifts or evening shifts, or with adults or children. These are just some of the many ways in which one student’s work may differ from his or her classmates. How does your job influence your life experience?

**RELIGIOUS/MULTICULTURAL GROUPS**

- African American Student Union (AASU)
- African Students Organization
- Asian Student Association (ASA)
- Chinese American Student Association
- Colombian Student Association
- Filipino Student Association (FSA)
- German Club
- Hispanic American Student Association (HASA)
- International Student Association (ISA)
- Iranian Student Organization (ISO)
- Italian Club
- Knights for Kibera
- Korean Student Association
- Latin Rhythm
- Pulso Caribe
- Sangam—The Indian Student Association
- Spanish Graduate Association (SAGA)
- Vietnamese American Student Association (VASA)
Religion. There are several registered student organizations (RSOs) that celebrate UCF's religious diversity. The table below lists the RSOs (updated 10-20-11) that you can check out on campus. To see the most current list of organizations, go to www.GetInvolvedUCF.com/rso.

Baha'i Club
Baptist Collegiate Ministries (BCM)
Bhakti Yoga Club
Campus Advent Ministries
Campus Crusade for Christ
Central Florida Wesley Foundation
Chabad Jewish Student Group
Chi Alpha Christian Fellowship
Fellowship of Christian Graduate Students
Gospel and Cultural Choir
Hillel
IgKnight
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF)
Knights For Christ
 Latter-day Saints Student Association
Muslim Student Association (MSA)
Reformed University Fellowship
Shift
Sigma Phi Lambda
University Christian Fellowship
Way Campus Fellowship, The
Womens Prayer Band

Now that we have examined the level of demographic diversity at UCF, are there any categories of diversity that you feel are still missing? The concept of diversity is so broad and inclusive that it can be difficult to recognize the many ways that we are both different from and the same as those around us. An important demographic variable that was not presented in the Brydon and Scott (2008) model discussed is People with Physical, Mental and Emotional Disabilities. We must consider the needs and value of this type of diversity too.

UCF supports students with physical, mental and emotional disabilities.

Student Disability Services (SDS) is committed to providing qualified students with disabilities academic accommodations to ensure equal accessibility to educational opportunities offered at all UCF campuses. Academic accommodations may include, but are not limited to, assistance with classroom accommodations (including examination accommodations), assistance with course registration, and information and referral to campus and community services for students with disabilities. (“Student Disability Services,” n.d.)
Additional information about SDS is available at their website: http://sds.sdes.ucf.edu/.

Mental health is the way your thoughts, feelings and behaviors affect your life. Good mental health leads to positive self-image and in turn, satisfying relationships with friends and others. Unfortunately, many college students do not seek treatment or utilize the counseling services available to them when they are struggling with a problem. For some, it may be the stigma associated with mental health counseling and psychological treatment. This stigma can limit your opportunities for overall health and wellness, increase feelings of unhappiness, impair the ability to form relationships, and create feelings of fear and shame causing unnecessary pain and confusion. ("Counseling Center," n.d.)

**STUDENT SPEAKS OUT**

There is nothing more genuine than breaking away from the chorus to learn the sound of your own voice.

SLS Peer Mentor

**Tips for using inclusive communication to relate to people with disabilities:**

- Do not automatically view people with disabilities as sick or having a disease. Disabilities may be the result of traumas, injuries or diseases that occurred much earlier in life.
- Use the word disability when referring to a person or people with disabilities. Do not use the term handicap. A disabling condition may or may not be handicapping. For instance, someone who uses a wheel chair has a physical disability. This person is handicapped when faced with a set of stairs, and there is no ramp.
- Use the term *people without disabilities* rather than normal or able-bodied when the context calls for a discussion of people with and without disabilities. Normal implies that by comparison, people with disabilities are abnormal; able-bodied suggests that all people with disabilities are unable to compensate for their disabilities.
- Put people first, not their disabilities.
- Omit, if possible, any mention of someone’s disability if it is not pertinent to the topic.
- Do not label individuals as disabled, epileptic, post-polio or with other names of conditions; people are not conditions. Instead, refer to them as a person with cerebral palsy or someone who has epilepsy.
- Avoid words like invalid, which means not valid or patient which connotes sickness or a person passively waiting to be served. Most people with disabilities are no sicker than others (University of Central Florida Office of Diversity Initiatives, n.d., p. 13).
UCF clearly states its commitment to the study of diversity through the following section of the 2011–2012 undergraduate catalog. “The University recognizes that communities are comprised of, and enriched by, people of diverse backgrounds. The study of diversity is encouraged to promote an understanding of the needs of individuals, the University, and society. Thus, all students completing their first bachelor’s degree from UCF must complete at least one course that explores the diverse backgrounds and characteristics found among humans, including:

- race/ethnicity
- gender
- social class/caste
- religion
- age
- sexual orientation
- and level of physical ability

The requirement is satisfied by the successful completion of a diversity course selected from the list given in our online UCF Undergraduate Catalog. Additional courses may be approved subsequently by the General Education Oversight Committee, so students should consult their departmental advisor for the most current listing” (University of Central Florida, 2011, pp. 70–71).

In addition to formal academic classes, the University’s Office of Diversity Initiatives offers workshops on topics such as:

- ABCs of Diversity
- Communicating Across Cultures
- Diversity Certificate Series
- DOTS—Understanding Your “Hidden” Biases
- Interrupting Bigotry
- The Illusion of Inclusion
- Understanding Power and Privilege

To view additional information, visit their website at: http://aa.ucf.edu/diversity/

Finally, you may consider a study abroad program to further your understanding of culture and diversity. The study abroad office (www.studyabroad.ucf.edu) has a number of programs for either short-term or exchange. Their website lists the various countries and areas of study available to students. A link for study abroad scholarships is also available at the website.
Diversity and Inclusiveness

Now that you have a better understanding of diversity, how can you become more accepting and inclusive of it? The University of Central Florida Office of Diversity Initiatives presents in their brochure the importance of not only recognizing the diversity around us, but also being open, accepting, and nurturing towards it. As we have learned throughout this chapter, diversity describes the, “unique human characteristics that make us different, as well as the many universal qualities that make us the same.” Inclusion is the, “process of creating environments of acceptance and respect where diverse individuals are present and thriving at all levels” (2009–2010, p. 2).

President John C. Hitt established the UCF goal of becoming more inclusive and diverse and shared his perspective on diversity and inclusiveness as follows:

The difference between diversity and inclusiveness is that diversity is a fact—we would be just as diverse if we all hated each other—it involves factual things like race, ethnicity, religion, gender, etc. But, inclusiveness is more of a subjective state of mind where people feel valued, respected, and appreciated. They have a sense of their own identity within the university and feel that the university is theirs. They are “of it as well as in it.” There is a sense of belonging and ownership. Related to this is that learning can occur nearly anywhere, but the real development of people occurs in a more nurturing environment. (p. 2)

TIPS FOR RELATING TO DIVERSE “OTHERS”

- Recognize your own prejudices and stereotypes
- Be sensitive to the impact you have on others
- Communicate in an open and honest manner
- Use language and other forms of communication that do not demean, exclude, or offend anyone
- Respect the dignity, values, beliefs, and feelings of others
- Display a willingness to trust
- Care about the other individual
- Learn about and build relationships with those different from you
- Embrace diversity and become an advocate for fully utilizing the talents and abilities of everyone (University of Central Florida Office of Diversity Initiatives, n.d., p. 9).
The information presented in this chapter has introduced you to the concept of diversity categorized by three levels: cultural, demographic and individual. Next, we took a deeper look into the second level of diversity to see how UCF currently looks demographically. Then we explored several ways that you can expand your understanding of diversity while at UCF. Finally, we examined the need to move beyond a mere understanding of diversity towards creating a more inclusive and nurturing environment. As you continue your academic career, continue to seek out opportunities to learn and grow from exposure to diversity.

About the Author of This Chapter

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His research interests mainly focus on intercultural communication, Italian studies, gender and identity construction, and hegemony. Mr. Perrotte is an active UCF ALLY and proud supporter of LGBT initiatives at UCF and beyond. His personal hobbies include travel, foreign languages, and Italian culture. He is the program faculty leader for the UCF Italian study abroad program entitled, “Applied Intercultural Communication: An Italian Perspective.”