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May 7th, 2015

To: Senate Committee on Education
From: Tia Marie Gomez Zeller, Portland State University
RE: House Bill 3308, Cultural Competency

Chair Roblan, Vice Chair Knopp, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tia Marie Gomez Zeller and I would like to thank the committee for hearing this important bill. I am here to support HB 3308 for it has multiple significances for me as a student and as a Student Affairs professional.

I am graduate student pursuing a Master of Science in Education, Leadership and Policy, with a focus on Post-Secondary Adult Continued Education. In fact last Monday around this time I was turning in my 327 page final thesis titled "Bringing Cultural Competency to PSU: From Theory to Practice". As a graduate student and in my multiple roles in the PSU Student government, I had the opportunity to conduct a pilot study at PSU. In this study we analyzed more than 800 surveys and conducted 17 focus groups with 70 students. Through this study we were able to gain great insight into student's experiences and perception of cultural competency at PSU.

We found statistically significant differences among the percentage of the faculty and staff perceived by students as culturally competent. These differences fluctuate for faculty from a highest of 72% culturally competent as perceived by Caucasian students, and a lowest of 55% as perceived by Native American students. These percentages are even lower i when looking at gender and sexual minorities.

Also, we explored students experiences, and among those experiences, we found A)Discrimination, B) Assumptions & Stereotypes, C) Problematic Language , D) Lack of Support, E) Lack of understanding, knowledge and Openness, as well as, the important role that Identity Recognition, Support and Openness together with safe spaces play on traditionally marginalized students retention at the university. Furthermore, during the focus groups students expressed similar experiences, not only at PSU, but at some of the local community colleges.

Comment [MPM1]: I don't know what is attempting to be said here, I think its important however there aren't solid numbers or facts and

Observing, power difference relations, sexist and racist remarks, including calling students racial slurs; we summarized these results through the conclusion that of the percentages and experiences reported by non-traditional students, especially those who come from traditionally marginalize communities suggested the need for cultural competency continuing education at PSU.

Comment [MPM2]: I am not sure what this means.

As a result, ASPSU passed a Cultural Competency Resolution as a firm statement of commitment to bring cultural competency to PSU. This was then followed by an official



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endorsement by the Academic Leadership Team for a Cultural Competency Policy campus wide. The resolution led to the creation of the Policy Committee on Cultural Competency comprised of faculty, staff, university administrators and students. Together they have been developing a campus-wide policy that provides the necessary resources to develop the awareness, knowledge, attitude and skills necessary to host an environment of respect and effective interaction among people of diverse backgrounds while recognizing, affirming and valuing the worth of individuals, families, and marginalized communities, therefore, creating a more welcoming and safer community for everyone who is on campus.

HB 3308 continues the work students at PSU and across the state have started to increase safety and success of students on our campuses and is the right next step to ensure all of our public institutions of higher education have tools at their disposal to support all students.

Thank you for your time, and I am open to further questions about the study results and students experiences.