Diversity Is Smart Business

• The most profitable businesses are able to design and market products to a diverse group of consumers.

• Successful organizations need employees who can thrive in an inclusive work setting. They seek qualified candidates who understand the value of diversity and can interact effectively with people from different backgrounds.

• Work teams composed of people with varying perspectives, talents, and problem-solving strategies are capable of seeing the full complexity of an issue. They can produce solutions that are broadly based and sensitive to diverse groups of people.

• Embracing diversity demonstrates respect. By valuing each unique individual, organizations become a desirable workplace where people feel a sense of belonging.
Diversity: Workplace Competencies

Employers are looking for: candidates who are able to demonstrate respect for people from diverse backgrounds. In other words: learn about and develop an appreciation for other cultures, backgrounds, and experiences.

Suggested Action Items:

- Attend events that focus on the interests, traditions or religions of different cultural groups.
- Choose to live with someone from a background that is different from your own.
- Get involved in a community service project that involves different cultural or socioeconomic groups. A good place to start is Student Community Services.
- Study abroad or explore another part of the United States. Check out International Education and Programs, iep.calpoly.edu.
- Take an international cooking class that includes local customs and family traditions.
- Take a course from the Women’s and Gender Studies or Ethnic Studies Department.
- Enjoy a campus sponsored evening of foreign film and discussion.
- Listen to international news or read overseas newspapers: CNN China, BBC, Al Jazeera.
- Get involved with programs coordinated by the Gender Equity Center, Pride Center or Multicultural Center.
- Participate in a disability awareness activity or apply to be a note taker or reader for a student with a disability. Visit the Disability Resource Center.

Employers are looking for: candidates who not only keep their own biases in-check, but who seek out and value differences. In other words: choose to accept new ideas and opinions and intentionally withhold judgment of people who are different from you.

Suggested Action Items:

- Participate in Diversity Advocate training through the Multicultural Center sponsored by Student Life and Leadership.
- Meet with a counselor from Counseling Services to become aware of your personal biases and deepen your appreciation of those who are different from you.
- Try debating a political or social issue from your opponent’s point of view.
- Participate in Ally Training through the Pride Center.
Employers are looking for: candidates who are able to function effectively as part of a diverse work group. In other words: be able to collaborate effectively with colleagues who have very different perspectives, problem solving strategies and working styles.

Suggested Action Items:

- Seek out project team members with varying perspectives and diversity of thought.
- Collaborate on a project with a student from a university abroad using tools like Skype.
- Find internship opportunities that will allow you to collaborate with people from all levels within the organization, entry level to executive management.
- Participate in a service project in a different country or region of the United States where you will interact with members of the local community. Start with idealist.org or volunteermatch.org.

Employers are looking for: candidates who are able to communicate effectively, demonstrating professionalism in a variety of cultural contexts. In other words: become aware that although a gesture, word or response may mean one thing to you, it may mean something totally different to someone with another world view.

Suggested Action Items:

- Enroll in a course focusing on intergroup communication like COMS 416 Intercultural Communication or JOUR 219 Multicultural Society and the Mass Media.
- Participate in or help plan Multicultural Center programs such as Cross-Cultural Meetings and Another Type of Groove.
- Learn a foreign language. It can be as simple as listening to audio books while you are driving or working out.
- Have a friend ask you interview questions regarding diversity while videoing you on your smartphone. Take notes on how you look and sound. For example, “How would you define workplace diversity?”
- Develop an understanding of how communication may differ depending on level of education, generation, gender identity, etc.
- Notice how individuals prefer to communicate. Be mindful of those who favor text messages, emails, phone calls or meeting in person.