COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE

Program Review

Jacquie Hutchinson & Leigh Smith

(UWA Business School)
CCAR provides staff with an ‘opportunity to unpack their own unique racial story (linking it to the local, national and global context), understand the concept of race privilege and examine its influence. Participants can utilize the insights gained to develop a more meaningful and targeted response around race and culture in a University context.’ (CATL 2010a)
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Purpose of the Study

In 2010, the Equity and Diversity office, commissioned a study of the Courageous Conversations about Race (CCAR) program. The purpose of the study was to:

- Assess the effectiveness of the actual workshop delivery
- Explore the extent to which participants in the program believed the program had impacted their ideas and behaviours
- Explore the extent to which the program has been integrated into the organisation
- Identify future directions for the program.

While the CCAR program has been delivered to students, this study is focussed on its implementation as a staff centred approach to organisational change. This report presents the findings of this study.
Courageous Conversations about Race

In 2008, the University of Western Australia became the first Australian organisation to adapt and implement the Courageous Conversations about Race (CCAR) program. The CCAR workshop, originally developed in the United States of America by Singleton and Linton (2006), was designed to combat inequality in schools through the development of cultural competencies. Two features of the program distinguish it from many other, more common, diversity initiatives. First, it is focused on the individual and how the individual’s perceptions of race can affect their outlook. Second, it explores how the attitudes and behaviours of the individual contribute to the culture and daily practice of the organisation.

CCAR Program Objectives

1. To encourage participants to discuss race.
2. To make participants more comfortable with difference.
3. For participants to understand the difference between more traditional diversity-based initiatives and CCAR, which is based on cultural competency.
4. To encourage participants to explore their own racial background, and consider how it is impacting on their own lives and their workplace.

(CATL 2010a; Interview Data)
UWA Context

In recent decades, the University of Western Australia has placed an increasing emphasis on diversity. A useful starting point is the formation of the Leadership Development for Women program, first formed in 1994, and designed to increase the number of women in UWA’s management positions. The program is still operating today, with 539 female staff having completed the program (Leadership Development for Women 2010).

More recently, the early 2000s saw the development of the Ally program, which has been designed to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for GLBTI staff and students. Members of staff can become an “Ally,” who is someone that has developed their understanding of the issues facing GLBTI staff and students and is willing to discuss and advocate for any issues relating to sexuality, in a confidential environment (ALLY 2010).

In respect of disability, the University in recent years has made tangible steps to imbed access as a core value. This has included producing Building and Access Guidelines (University of Western Australia 2009) to inform all new constructions and refurbishments on campus as well as creating an on-line interactive Campus Access and Mobility map (available at: http://www.uwa.edu.au/campus-map). UniAccess provides a range of services for students with a disability or medical condition, including advocacy and management of adjustments that enable such students to experience their education on the same basis as a student without disability (Student Support Services 2010). The university has also incorporated elevators and access ramps for campus users with mobility constraint into a number of the major venues. This shows that UWA takes the issue of diversity seriously, and is committed to improving the experiences of its staff and students, regardless of their background or particular needs.
UWA Community

A total of 3895 staff:

- 1555 staff members were born overseas from 96 different countries of origin
- 1608 were born in Australia, representing a range of cultural heritages
- 33 were Indigenous Australians

(CATL 2010b)

A similar diversity was present in the 2009 student population:

- 8,907 were born overseas in 141 different countries of origin
- 11,736 were born in Australia
- 167 were Indigenous Australians
- 4,524 international students, representing 99 different countries of origin
- Within our student community 111 different languages were spoken
- 80 different languages were used by international students
- 88 different languages were used by Australian students

(CATL 2010b)

The Policy Framework

This campus diversity has led UWA to develop a strong policy framework, which underpins its diversity-based initiatives. Central to this framework is the notion of cultural literacy, which is defined in the University's Educational Principles as,

“The terms “cultural competence” and “cultural literacy” are often used interchangeably in the literature. Cultural competence has been defined as a “set of skills that allow individuals to increase their understanding of cultural difference within, among and between” diverse cultural groups, marked by respect for such diversity...The term is most often used with reference to diversity based on nationality, race and ethnicity, although it has also been used with reference to difference based on gender and sexuality.
The term “cultural literacy” used within this document builds on such definitions of generalized “competence.” It denotes the further development of skills to enable students to engage effectively with cultural diversity in more specific scholarly and/or professional context, as appropriate to their major area of study.’

(CATL 2009)

The University has also developed a Cultural Diversity and Inclusive Practice Toolkit (CATL 2010c) a resource for staff members, designed to assist them understand specific issues relating to cultural and ethnic diversity, with a focus on the university context.
Study Methodology

Sources of Data
This study drew on four sources of data.

1. CCAR workshop evaluations
2. Focus groups
3. Semi-structured interviews
4. Document analysis

Workshop Evaluations
This data was collected from CCAR workshop participants (late 2008 to mid-2010), by the Equity and Diversity Office, immediately after the workshop. The majority of these evaluations took the form of a Student Perception of Teaching Survey (SPOT), which is primarily quantitative in nature. An example SPOT survey is provided in Appendix A. SPOT surveys utilise a five point rating scale, which ranges from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), across a range of items (CATL 2011). While they do contain a qualitative component, it is the quantitative data that is of interest here.

To ensure the effective use of the data, a number of steps were taken, as set out below:

A. Each set of data (group of surveys) was grouped together.
B. Those sets that could be identified as relating to the CCAR program were kept, while the rest were discarded. This ensured the relevance of the data used.
C. All sets not containing quantitative data were discarded.
D. Concerns of duplication resulted in the discarding of an additional set. Both the report number and the means of each item were identical.
E. Of the eleven valid sets, eight were standard forms, and became the basis of the analysis. Composite questions (combining similar items) were developed where appropriate. As an example, the standard form had three items relating to the facilitator, which were combined into an item reflecting the overall effectiveness of the facilitator. Where non-standard forms had items that were identical or very similar to those in the standard form, these were included, accounting for the variation in responses across items.
From these data, five key items were identified. These are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>NUMBER OF RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisation of the workshop</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future usefulness of content</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement of intended outcomes</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of the facilitator</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation of workshop to others</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table shows, the CCAR workshop has been viewed favourably by the vast majority of participants.

There are a number of limitations to this data, suggesting a need for a more in-depth, qualitative analysis:

- Short term: The data is collected immediately after the workshop, and therefore cannot be used to trace the long-term impact of the workshop on the participant.
- SPOT surveys do not use recognised items, and therefore cannot be analysed using advanced statistical techniques.
- Limited qualitative component: A key aim of the CCAR program is to engage on a personal level with the participants; exploring the depth of this engagement is not possible with data of this nature.

**Focus Groups**

In July 2010, two focus groups were conducted, with 4 and 6 participants respectively. The participants were all UWA staff members, with the exception of one student in the latter group, and came from a range of central administration and faculty positions within the University.
**Semi-Structured Interviews**

Building upon the data collected in the focus groups, fourteen interviews were conducted, ranging from 20-50 minutes in length. One of these interviews involved two participants, at the request of the interviewee. Participants in the interviews came from two groups: seven were elite interviewees, that is, someone who had played a significant role in the development or implementation of the CCAR program. Some of the elite interviewees had also participated in the program. The remainder were staff members who had participated in the CCAR program.

The primary distinction between the two groups of interviewees was the focus of the questions asked during the interview. For elite interviewees, because of their position within the organisation, the questions focused on broader concerns, such as why race is viewed as such an important issue at UWA, and the importance of organisational leadership, as well as the CCAR program. When the elite interviewee had also participated in the CCAR workshop, they were asked about their experience. In contrast, the focus of the workshop participant interviews was the participant’s experience of the workshop, and how the CCAR workshop had impacted upon their day-to-day lives. An example of the two sets of questions can be found in Appendix B.

**Document Analysis**

A review of a range of documents provided an organisational context for this study of CCAR. This review included: the University’s Operational Priorities Plan (UWA Planning Services 2009), HR policies, such as the *Equity and Diversity Management Plan 2009-2011* (Equity and Diversity Office 2009), data relating to workforce demographics, and specific program initiatives.
Key Findings

Workshop Participation
From the start of 2009 to September 2010, 85 CCAR and race workshops were run by the Equity and Diversity Office, with approximately 613 staff members in attendance. These staff have been drawn from across the University organisation:

- Colleges
- Divisions
- Faculties & Library
- Student Services
- Teaching and Learning

Although outside the scope of this evaluation, it is noteworthy that many of the 85 workshops were held with student participants, with 1960 students having participated in the above timeframe. A further 290 staff and students attended ‘mixed’ sessions. In 2011, the program has continued to expand, with XXX staff and XXX students participating in a race or CCAR workshop so far this year. Most of the student CCAR workshops were conducted within the curriculum, and in some instances students could elect to undertake assignments as part of the assessment process that demonstrated their learning from these workshops. There has been particular interest from the professional faculties such as Law; Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences and Education in exposing students to this focused opportunity to extend their cultural competency. Similarly, UniMentor, one of UWA’s transition support programs has incorporated CCAR into its optional, advanced training for mentors.

Experience of the Workshop

- All of the interviewees expressed a positive view of the CCAR workshop. This was also the majority view expressed in the workshop feedback forms.
• The use of personal narratives in the workshops was considered to be a key strength.

‘I thought it was a really good way of getting people to...understand the concepts and the theories...[U]sing personal stories is a very good way to get people to see how that crossover of theory relates into the real world. It was really good to have a cross-section of perspectives...and I thought that it was really, really important to look at how different groups experience and react to issues of racism...It was very grounding, to have that, to have personal experiences.’

• The quality of the workshop facilitator was recognised as important for the success of the CCAR workshops. Participants identified the following facilitator attributes as critical:
  o Knowledge of the content, i.e. race.
  o Awareness of the complexity of race, and the sensitivity of the issue.
  o A high level of facilitation skills.
  o A willingness to be ‘open and honest.’

‘...He [the facilitator] has a personal zeal, he has integrity and he has a lot of knowledge. He is willing to go beyond his comfort zone and whilst he might have some fears and...apprehension about some of the communities that he’s entering into, I’m not aware of him ever pulling back.’
• There was a concern, particularly amongst the elite interviewees, related to the difficulty of finding other facilitators with a similar set of skills and characteristics, which are critical to the program’s success.

• Many of the participants believed that the workshop time frame was too short for the quality of content and the sensitive nature of the issues to be adequately explored and discussed. Others felt that the workshop could be broken up into different sessions.

• Workshop participants tended to be people who were already interested and committed to understanding more about race, culture and inclusion. They believed that the CCAR program was, to an extent, ‘preaching to the converted’ and there needed to be a broader range of employees engaging with the program.

Impact of the Workshop on Participant’s Working Lives

• The participants differed considerably in the extent to which they felt the CCAR workshop had impacted on their attitudes and/or behaviours back in their workplaces. For some, the changes were significant, resulting in a new perspective on race and diversity.

‘I was, all of a sudden, compelled to rethink why I was behaving like that or why I reacted like that and, it was quite a significant understanding of myself, from having...being made to think through, or recall, some things that I have been a part of because of the discussion that was brought out in the Courageous Conversations about Race workshop.’

• Those participants, who had a strong background in the areas of race and diversity, did not experience such a major transformation. However, many of these participants suggested that through the workshop they had developed a greater understanding of the theory behind race and culture, as well as a greater willingness to speak out against acts of racism, both in the workplace, and in their personal lives.

• The impact back in the workplace appears to be linked to the interest of the participant’s manager or supervisor in what the participant had learned. The ability
to be able to share their experiences of the CCAR workshop with colleagues is an important aspect of ongoing impact on an individual’s daily practice.

**Impact of the Workshop on the Organisation**

- Many participants believed that like the other diversity initiatives, while CCAR was championed by the University’s central administration, including the Vice Chancellor, and a number of other senior executives, there is limited engagement by the management of some faculties and departments.
- Some participants, particularly the elite interviewees, believed that there was more work required to ensure that the CCAR program was ‘embedded’ in the university. By embedded, participants suggested:
  - Teams/departments participating in the workshop
  - Integration into training and development as an essential requirement.
- As with the workshop’s impact on an individual’s attitudes and behaviours in the workplace, the organisational impact is also linked to the extent to which participants’ experiences are welcomed and able to be contributed within their department or team. Some study participants felt that there was little interest from managers in learning about the CCAR program. This lessened both the workshop participant’s experiences and the organisational impact.
- The example of the Law School’s broad approach to diversity was cited by a number of participants (both elite and general) as an example of where CCAR, and other diversity initiatives, have become ‘embedded.’ The Law School has an ongoing commitment to diversity through a number of staff and student activities, including an Equity and Diversity Committee, an annual diversity project that involves public debates and discussions on a wide range of diversity issues, and the incorporation of CCAR into an elective law school unit.

**Resources**

Since its implementation, CCAR has been funded by:

- Receipt of a UWA Teaching and Learning Fellowship that supported the recruitment of a Project Officer to assist with the development of workshop materials and the
organising of faculty and local area information sessions, as well as providing $2,000 towards the facilitator’s development through attending a relevant conference or other opportunity;

- The School of Indigenous Studies received a grant from Universities Australia in 2010 to develop and implement a pilot of an indigenous cultural competency staff development program at the University. The Indigenous Dialogues project was designed to build on the existing CCAR framework. The CCAR facilitator contributed to the delivery of the program on campus by conducting CCAR workshops as a precursor to participants having an ‘on country’ experiential activity as well as an interactive Indigenous Dialogues workshop conducted by a Nyungar Elder.

- Further funding was received in 2011 through the creation of a national collaboration with ten other Universities that has funded the production of a CCAR Facilitator Development Manual;

- Support has been provided by the Equity and Diversity office to enable the facilitator to spend a considerable amount of staff time delivering the CCAR workshop both within UWA and nationally.

**External Recognition**

The CCAR program has been recognised externally for its unique approach. In particular, other universities have engaged the Equity and Diversity group to assist in the implementation of the workshop program. External organisations that have organised workshops are:

- Curtin University of Technology
- Macquarie University
- Queensland University of Technology
- The University of Queensland
- The University of South Queensland
- The University of Technology Sydney
- Flinders University
- University of Technology Sydney

Another two workshops were conducted for the *Excellence for All: Social Inclusion in Higher Education* conference in 2009.
In 2011 additional universities joined as foundation partners in collaboration with UWA as the Lead Partner to develop a Facilitator’s Development Manual. Once the Manual is launched later in 2011 the collaboration will continue as an ongoing community of practice within the Australian higher education sector. In addition to those listed above, these universities include:

- The University of Melbourne
- The University of Tasmania

While this external activity has brought the University public acclaim and support for the CCAR program, the time spent by the one Equity & Diversity officer who is the lone CCAR facilitator, undertaking site visits and training of staff in other organisations, draws resources away from the University’s Equity and Diversity office and the CCAR program.

**Evaluation of the Program**

Evaluation of CCAR to date has been fragmented and largely focussed on participants’ reaction to the workshop organisation. While of some use, the major focus for evaluation needs to be the impact of the program on participants’ behaviours and attitudes and organisational change. This will require a much more sophisticated evaluation regime that will involve the development of a comprehensive set of performance indicators and the use of a range of methodologies over a longer time period. Further, the evaluation process needs to inform the nature of the CCAR program itself.
Going Forward – 3 Key Issues

It is clear from this study that the University has a strong commitment to ensuring equity and diversity for both staff and students. The CCAR program is an important and unique element of this commitment generally and in particular with regard to race and cultural issues. However, after two years of implementation, there are some key issues that need to be considered both in terms of the actual CCAR workshop program and its place with the University’s strategic planning strategy. Otherwise there is a danger that the CCAR may become a ‘one trick pony’ and be relegated to just another training program.

These issues focus on:

- Strengthening the CCAR project through University based research that is able to demonstrate the benefits to the University, its staff and students from being culturally competent and responsive;
- More fully incorporating indigenous learning into the CCAR cultural competence framework and ensuring that framework informs all key areas of the University’s mission;
- Embedding CCAR into the New Courses framework.

Positioning and Maximising CCAR

Currently the CCAR program is one workshop whose participants are self-nominating. Thought needs to be given to expanding CCAR to increase its impact on a broader range of academic and professional staff, managers, departments and teams. This could be done through:

- Targeted CCAR management programs focussed on leading in a culturally diverse environment
- Whole faculty, school, department, team focussed programs
- Greater integration into academic development programs, such as those delivered through the Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, to translate the learning of CCAR into curriculum development and teaching practice
- Development of a CCAR facilitator training program for both internal and external candidates. (Accreditation) A range of activities, development opportunities, networks for people who have ‘graduated’ from the initial CCAR workshop to keep them connected to a ‘community of practice’. See LDW model
- Capacity to document the lessons learnt from participants and to develop a CCAR Good Practice Guide that showcases examples of where participants have translated learning into practice in staff management and amended work practices as well as in the teaching and learning environment.

**Evaluation**

Within the literature on diversity and change, it is recognised that there is a need for systematic and long-term evaluation (Rosener 1997) that provides feedback on the operational aspects of the workshop program, as well as insights into the impact of CCAR on individual’s attitudes and behaviours as well as organisational outcomes. Evaluation should take many forms such as discrete research as well as integration with existing evaluation tools such as SURF, Working Life Survey, etc.

**Resourcing**

Resource constraints will not enable the CCAR program to grow and become embedded more globally in University activity. Most funding to date has been externally sourced, and with the use of a lone facilitator, some other elements of the University’s equity and diversity program have been ‘treading water’. The national community of practice currently in development will serve to better inform the CCAR practice but could also serve to dilute the focus on this University’s internal needs. The University’s cultural competence framework would be better supported through funded research and through more focussed resourcing that enabled a greater rollout of the CCAR and Indigenous Dialogues workshops.
Recommendations

That the Assistant Director Equity & Diversity prepare a 5 year strategy and implementation plan that addresses the three key issues...

1. The need to develop the skills set of a range of staff to deliver CCAR workshops in a variety of settings and addressing a range of development needs present in a university. Workshop facilitators should the capacity and credibility to be able to develop CCAR workshops that extend the skills of teaching and learning staff, staff in senior management, those developing policy and practice with respect to meeting student needs and those responsible for establishing student focussed policy, to ensure that University practice is informed by cultural competency and responsive to cultural diversity;

2. The Operational Priorities Plan identifies the encouragement of “a breadth of cultural competence among all students” as an implementation strategy under the Objective “To improve the University’s Courses” (UWA Planning Services 2009). The CCAR workshop and the Indigenous Dialogues program could be made more widely available across all faculties, with a particular focus in the New Courses structure on the professional disciplines, the BPhil (Hons) program and in Broadening Units to ensure that the University’s strategic objective is met and that cultural competence informs the leadership of tomorrow.

3. Capturing participant’s learning through more rigorous evaluation of an extended CCAR program and developing a set of resources that demonstrate examples of how the curriculum as well as staff and student practices, procedures and policies have benefited from a more culturally competent approach.
References


