

Diversity - Why should we care?

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Since you have been in college you have no doubt heard the word "diversity" and ISU's efforts to increase it.

But what does it mean and why should you care about it? The dictionary defines diversity as "the condition of differing from one another" or "variety," but often when you hear about increasing diversity on a college campus, it translates to having more racial minorities on campus. While racial diversity is one aspect of diversity, it is by no means the only aspect that we should think about. Some other ways in which people differ are: language, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, age, learning ability, where they're from, even eating habits. There are infinite aspects of diversity.

So why is diversity such a common discussion on campus?

If you think about it, many students come to campus having been raised in a bubble. This bubble contains our culture, where we come from, and our set of individual beliefs. These are colored by family, friends, experiences, and geographic location. Our bubble is safe and comfy, but when you get to college you may begin to see that other bubbles don't look like yours. This may initially be somewhat daunting, but can provide a unique opportunity to explore the culture of other students that you may not come into contact with again outside of a college environment.

Imagine living in a dorm room, going to classes and eating meals with someone exactly like you. While this may be comfortable, it gives you no chance to learn about other possible ways to live. This is why diversity is so important. We can learn to see things differently by talking to someone with limited vision, understand what it might be like to grow up in Alaska, or even argue whether "soda" or "pop" more accurately captures the description of a Coca-Cola.

Increasing diversity on campus has the potential to expand our awareness of the world in which we live, and as a result also expand our awareness of ourselves and solidify our own beliefs and identity.

It does require courage to step outside of our bubble and talk to people who have experienced life differently, but you may be surprised by the rewards.

So how can you step outside of your bubble?

Get to know someone of a different religion, sexual orientation, race, age, or learning ability. Although you may not see eye to eye, you will get a glimpse outside your bubble and it may influence how you view life. You may learn that what you call an eggplant, someone from England may refer to as an aubergine. Education comes in many forms, and learning about others is just as important as what we learn in a classroom.