ENGR 498C
PEERs Seminar:
Leadership Development to Promote Equity in Engineering Relationships

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Course Description: The seminar enlists engineering students’ energy, creativity, social conscience, and on-the-ground perspectives in improving the diversity environment in the UW College of Engineering. Students explore topics such as diversity in science and engineering, impact of unconscious bias, community engagement, leadership, etc. The seminar culminates in student-developed short presentations. Students who successfully complete the seminar can be appointed as PEERs Leaders.

Promoting Equity in Engineering Relationships

The PEERs program seeks to improve the climate in engineering by developing a cadre of student leaders who will act as change agents in the University of Washington College of Engineering. The PEERs program advocates for creating a more positive and inclusive environment so that all students, particularly women, minorities, and people with disabilities, can succeed in engineering.
WHY IS DIVERSITY IMPORTANT? (HYMAN & JACOBS, 2009)

DIVERSITY:
• EXPANDS WORLDLINESS
• ENHANCES SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
• PREPARES STUDENTS FOR FUTURE CAREER SUCCESS
• PREPARES STUDENTS TO WORK IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY
• PROMOTES CREATIVE THINKING
• ENHANCES SELF-AWARENESS
• ENRICHES MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

INTERACTIONS WITH PEOPLE DIFFERENT FROM OURSELVES INCREASES OUR KNOWLEDGE.

What is the PEERs model?
CONNECTING STUDENTS TO INFORMATION ON IMPROVING THE CLIMATE IN ENGINEERING

PEERs: A three-step model:

Step 1. INFORM AND EDUCATE
• Create an environment conducive to discussions of research-based studies on diversity in engineering.
• Outcome: Students gain first-hand exposure to a variety of in-depth research on diversity in engineering.
• UW Version: Annual 1-credit PEERs Seminar.

Step 2. CREATE EXPERTS
• Designate participants from Step 1 to share the research with other students.
• Outcome: Student experts begin to own the research and become the mechanisms for disseminating the research.
• UW Version: Students appointed as PEERs Leaders.

Step 3. DEVELOP STUDENTS CHANGE AGENTS
• Student experts from Step 2 engage other engineering students with the research.
• Outcome: Students not involved with Step 1 are exposed to research and conversations on diversity in engineering.
• UW Version: PEERs Leaders Activities.

SAMPLE PEERs ACTIVITIES
♦ INTERACTIVE EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATIONS. Sample audiences include: the WiSE (Women in Science and Engineering) Conference, the UW STEM Summer Bridge Program, Seattle MESA (Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement), local community colleges, and College of Engineering classes.
♦ COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING DISCOVERY DAYS BOOTH. Hands-on educational activities on diversity in engineering for children and adults.
♦ ANNUAL LEADERSHIP RETREAT. UW College of Engineering CSWES (Community of Minority and Women Engineering Societies) Event.

WHY DOES THE PEERs PROGRAM WORK?

“Engineering students like facts and PEERs is centered on research and data. People can't just say 'Oh someone's just saying that.' I like that PEERs is based off of studies.”
- Megan, PEERs Leader

“In reality, everybody knows that we are having this conversation about diversity in engineering, but few people explicitly acknowledge this conversation. The PEERs program works because they have provided a forum for that conversation.”
-Nuvala, PEERs Leader

“PEERs is designed to raise awareness of issues of diversity. PEERs brings those issues to the forefront and gets students thinking about diversity and bias, making them more aware of their actions and the actions of their peers and faculty around them.”
-Priti, Director of Evaluation for PEERs

Learn More: http://www.engr.washington.edu/peers/