Reflective Essay
Opportunities For Intercultural Competence and Sensitivity

One of the primary missions of the university is to “Prepare men and women with the intercultural and leadership skills necessary to promote world peace and international brotherhood, to address world problems, and to be a righteous influence in families, professions, civic responsibilities, social affiliations, and in the church.” In the first instance we have worked toward the accomplishment of this by establishing an international student body where approximately fifty percent of the students comes from outside the United States. The BYUH campus is an international and intercultural laboratory where students have the opportunity to experience high levels of cultural difference in virtually ever dimension of their life on campus. There are a host of initiatives and institutional structures that are designed to advance the intercultural lives of students and the mission of the university. The purpose of this essay to review these.

1. The People and the Institutional History and Culture

A primary capacity BYUH has in achieving its intercultural mission is due to its people, history, and institutional culture. For over fifty years the university and its employees have had to improve their ability to coordinate and be coherent in everyday interactions involving cultural and linguistic diversity. As a result, its people and the organization have learned a multitude of subtle and not so subtle lessons and principles of intercultural living. These lessons take the form of stories, policies, and procedures that have been woven into the fabric of BYUH and guide us in navigating complex intercultural spaces. Our history has become a process where our intercultural failures have taught us important lessons and our memories of them have become effective mechanisms that inform the present and direct us in becoming an more effective international university. In sum we believe that our institutional history and culture provide a critical resource in achieving our intercultural mission.

2. Culture Clubs and Celebrations Sponsored by BYU Hawaii Student Life and Leadership

Throughout out history, BYUH has had a tradition of encouraging a variety of activities and organizations that advance intercultural living in student life. These are discussed below.

World Fest: a three-day festival in which students have the opportunity to sign up for various clubs. Clubs may decorate or arrange cultural displays or teach cultural games, crafts and/or dance. Clubs also have an opportunity to increase membership and receive matching funds from BYUHSA. BYUHSA also sponsors mid-day activities throughout the festival. It is sponsored by Student Activities and Leadership, and costs about $300. It is held three times per year. BYUHSA sponsors 45 clubs per semester; currently, 26 are Cultural
Clubs. $25,000 per year is distributed among the clubs, based on their membership. A greater share will go to Cultural Clubs (as compared to Academic or Special Interest or Service Clubs) to help pay for cultural costumes for Culture Night and Songfest.

**Food Fest** occurs every semester in which clubs have the opportunity to fundraise. Each club sells foods from their country or provides games, merchandise, or activities at a booth. Visitors sample foods from around the world in a family-oriented and enjoyable environment. This event costs between $1,000 and $2,000 per event. It has a longstanding tradition on campus and has recently become a part of the Homecoming Festivities in winter semester.

**Culture Night** is held once a year during fall semester. Clubs are given 5-7 minutes to perform a number from their country of origin according to the allocated theme. They do this on a stage in the Cannon Activities Center or the Polynesian Cultural Center and perform to an audience of over 2500 people. This is one of the largest attended performances on campus. Culture night costs from $1,000-$4,000 depending on whether it is held on campus or at the PCC.

**Song Fest** is also another annual event, which is performed during winter semester. An audience of over 2,500 people from around the island also attends this performance. This event is a performance of rich cultural music, which builds a feeling of pride in all cultures. This event costs around $500. Similarly, **Talent Show** includes a Tahitian Dance and **BYUH Idol** has songs in several languages.

In addition, BYUHSA sponsors the Student Alumni Association, which has student chapters for every Alumni Chapter around the world. The student chapters help students connect with alumni in their home countries/areas for help in finding jobs and relocating. These students have hosted government and church leaders from their countries. BYUHSA has made this a Vice President level position, complete with tuition scholarship and stipend. Academic credit is also available for those who sign up for the leadership class. The student Association has also allocated over $1000 plus time and energy to initiate "culture weeks" through out this past year (2004). These highlight one culture and include displays, music, food and lectures. Recent past featured cultures include: Hawaiian, Korean, Filipino, Tongan, and Latin. Student life and Leadership also sponsors **Intercultural Leadership Conferences** (budgeted at $3,000 each). Lastly, every new student has the opportunity to attend a guided tour of the PCC and the Night Show. This is a gift worth over $30 per student. With about 500 students going through each year, this is a $15,000-budget activity.
3. Service Leadership Internship 199R

The 199R Internship aims to combine practical work experience at various local agencies with an academic component that fosters intercultural communication skills and management competency in a culturally diverse community. It also provides a vehicle for students to have off-campus practical service learning experiences for credit through activities which may be associated with their majors in contrast to those more strictly focused capstone type experiences envisioned at the 399R level. Instead, this course carries 199R (1-3 credits) as course number with a departmental prefix, which allows students to use the course as university elective credits pertinent to their major’s goal and mission. This will reflect on the student’s transcript work experience that is service learning and intercultural communication and understanding in nature.

4. Culturally Oriented Academic Programs, Institutes, and Initiatives

In the last decade BYUH has begun a process of advancing curricular initiative to more fully orchestrate its intercultural mission. These include new major programs on campus, innovation in general education, and the establishment of new institutes. These are discussed below.

**Jonathan Napela Center for Hawaiian Language and Cultural Studies** was established in 1998 and is funded through a $2,500,000 endowment. The endowment funds two faculty positions, one full-time administrative staff position, and a number of adjunct faculty positions. The program is a small but vibrant one that is devoted to studies in Hawaiian language, history, culture, medicine, healing, art, music, hula, land and ocean stewardship, stewardship, family relationships, and genealogy. Hawaiian culture is the host culture for BYU Hawaii and also provides an important service in contributing during institutional celebrations and a variety of university gatherings.

In the Fall of 1997 the Hawaiian Studies Program received a W. K. Kellog Foundation grant for the purpose of carving a Hawaiian voyaging canoe named Iosepa. The grant total was __________. Also essential to the program is a garden that is planted, maintained, and harvested by Hawaiian studies faculty and students. Both of these provide the kahua or a foundation which connects the University with the Hawaiian Kupuna or ancestors of Laie and supports the cultural and intercultural goals of the university. An additional _________ has been donated to the university for the purpose of housing and maintaining the Iosepa.
Pacific Island Studies

The Pacific Island Studies Program was created in ___________. It is an interdisciplinary major that focuses on current issues of the lands and peoples of the Pacific Islands region. Like Hawaiian Studies it offers students the opportunity to learn the language, history, and culture the peoples of the Pacific Islands. Currently there are two core faculty for the program with several others who teach in the program to a lesser extent.

The Department of International Cultural Studies was established n 1998 as an interdisciplinary program that brings together the fields of cultural anthropology, communication and culture, and world humanities and culture. In addition to stressing a variety of contemporary cultural systems, cultural theories, and effective cross cultural communication, the major also includes a range of historical considerations concerning cultural forms and global social forces. ICS draws upon the expertise of six faculties across disciplines whose primary interests lie in the study of cultures in an international environment. In its brief history ICS has become one of the largest majors on campus with approximately 130 students currently enrolled. The program ties directly to the universities mission to “Prepare men and women with the intercultural and leadership skills necessary to promote world peace and international brotherhood, to address world problems…”

The Pacific Institute supports the university mission by providing cross-cultural dialogue through scholarly publications, cultural films, and Pacific research. In this way it helps expand Pacific ways of learning, forges friendships for BYUH and the church. The annual operating budget of the Pacific Institute is 327,579. The budget is used to underwrite research, sponsor or co-sponsor conferences, produce a limited number of documentary films and videos, and prepare collections of slides and photographs for the BYUH archives. The Pacific Institute maintains a Board of Fellows representing the BYUH Faculty and cultural experts from the Polynesian Cultural Center. The board assists in giving oversight to Pacific cultural exchanges, scholarships, and research activities.

Pacific Studies Journal is a quarterly research journal produced by the Pacific Institute and has served the research community since 1977. It is a multidisciplinary publication that has helped unite a geographically disparate group of scholars devoted to topics in Pacific Anthropology, Archeology, Art, History, Ethnomusicology, Folklore, Geography, History, Sociolinguistics, Political Science, and Sociology.

World Communities is a signature General Education course that draws interdisciplinary expertise from faculty within the college of arts and sciences (history, world humanities, geography, English, Chinese, Hawaiian studies, physical science, folklore/anthropology, political science and cultural studies). This course (History 202) differs from a traditional history class that assumes a
western-based, chronological perspective about the grand narrative of world history from 1500 to the present. The objective of this course is to increase intercultural understanding by introducing students to alternative (non-Western) perspectives from which different histories were written and interpreted and to broaden students’ worldview. It consists of weekly lectures delivered by different faculty members, each covering a specific culture of the world, and each lecture is followed by a discussion session. This course has a annual budget of $2,600 to bring in outside speakers/lecturers, $13,000 for student wages to support instructional assistance, $9,000 for course materials and supplies, $60,000 for special instructors (non-FTE part-time faculty), and $30,000 every three years for professional development trips attended by all who teach this course (past trips include Japan/China, 2001 and Mexico, 2004).

**Learning Communities** was adopted by the university in 2003. The program is made up of cadres of new freshman who take three courses in unison. Each learning community consists of 20 students half of which are international. In one version of Learning Communities, the central theme that ties all three classes together is cultural diversity. New freshman take Communication 110 (Introduction to Intercultural Communication), English 101 (Communicating in Writing, Speaking, and Reading), and Biology 110 (Introduction to Biology). All three courses take as their organizing principle the importance and value of diversity and help students to discover new and healthy ways of thinking about difference whether by considering concepts and ideas through intercultural interaction, literature, and biology. This course is deliberately designed to “lean” students in productive and positive directions as they encounter unusually high levels of diversity on campus.

**The McKay Center for Intercultural Understanding** was established in 2002 as a funding priority by the Board of Trustees. The McKay Center focuses on improving intercultural understanding among students and in advancing knowledge of intercultural problematics in a global setting and in regional conflicts. Building on the effects of the gospel in bringing diverse groups together with positive success, the center allows us to more purposefully formalize the study of intercultural interactions and create situations where understanding can be improved and knowledge disseminated to others.

The established endowment goal for the center is $1,000,000 of which $500,000 has already been secured through generous gifts and donations and approximately $50,000 are currently available for spending. The university is highly confident that the remaining $500,000 will be raised by the end of 2005. In its brief history the center has sponsored the following conferences and events:

**The Future of Religion in China** (March 18-20, 2004), a series of meetings with faculty from BYU Hawaii, BYU Provo, and the Institute of World Religions from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing.
5. Strategic Planning and Budgeting Task Force on the Internationalization of BYU Hawaii

During the 2001–2002 academic year, the campus-wide Strategic Planning and Budgeting Committee designated a task force to explore ways in which the university could further its international character. The task force worked over the course of two semesters and provided a host of recommendations chief of which was that more proactive measures should be taken to hire a more culturally and nationally diverse faculty. This along with other recommendations became an important part of the university strategic planning process.

6. Longitudinal Study on the Development of Intercultural Sensitivity Among BYU Hawaii Students

In the 2003-2004 academic year funds were requested to begin a longitudinal study of the development of intercultural sensitivity among BYUH students. In order to accomplish this, training and certification for using the Intercultural Development Inventory was necessary. Three faculty members were certified at a cost of approximately $9,000. Another $6,000 has been spent on the purchase of 900 Intercultural Development Inventories. During the 2004-2005 academic year the longitudinal study began by surveying well over half of the freshman class along with a sample of 180 graduating seniors. The initial data is now being analyzed and providing many important insights into the experiences of BYUH students and the process they go through in developing intercultural sensitivity.

7. New Faculty Orientation is conducted at the beginning of every academic year by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. This orientation program helps incoming faculty familiarize themselves with the unique cultural environment at BYUH and develop cultural sensitivity towards students from around the world.

These programs and initiatives are concrete ways in which BYUH attempts to allocate resources to effectively realize its intercultural mission. Intercultural and international issues are not new to this campus. From our point of view, the primary issue for us is in how we respond to cultural difference in every aspect of our organizational and curricular processes. As one of the most international undergraduate universities in the world, we along with others are navigating through an uncharted landscape as we construct what it means to be authentic international university. Though we have very far to go, we are satisfied that we are aligning institutional resources and initiatives to effectively achieve this aspect of our mission.