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Do I Belong Here? (In)Visibility in the Curriculum

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Do I Belong Here?

(In)Visibility in
the Curriculum

Stephen Thompson

Overview

Methods

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Student Experiences

Conclusion

Methods

General Education Requirements

Group X - Cultural & International Diversity

- 51 total courses listed in Group X
- 35 Syllabi available
- Course Descriptions & Objectives
 - Geographical Region
 - Identity
 - Historical Context
 - Inequality

Findings

Students at the University of Montana do not receive adequate education on issues of diversity and inclusion.

Many marginalized groups are largely underrepresented or completely excluded from Group X course curricula.

Lack of visibility in the classroom causes students of marginalized communities to feel devalued by the university.

There is little guarantee that students will receive *any* diversity education from the courses required by the University of Montana's General Education Requirements.

Upon graduation, students are likely unprepared to join the workforce of a diverse and globalized society.

What does Group X claim to teach students?

Demonstrate an understanding of the diverse ways humans structure their social, political, and cultural lives;

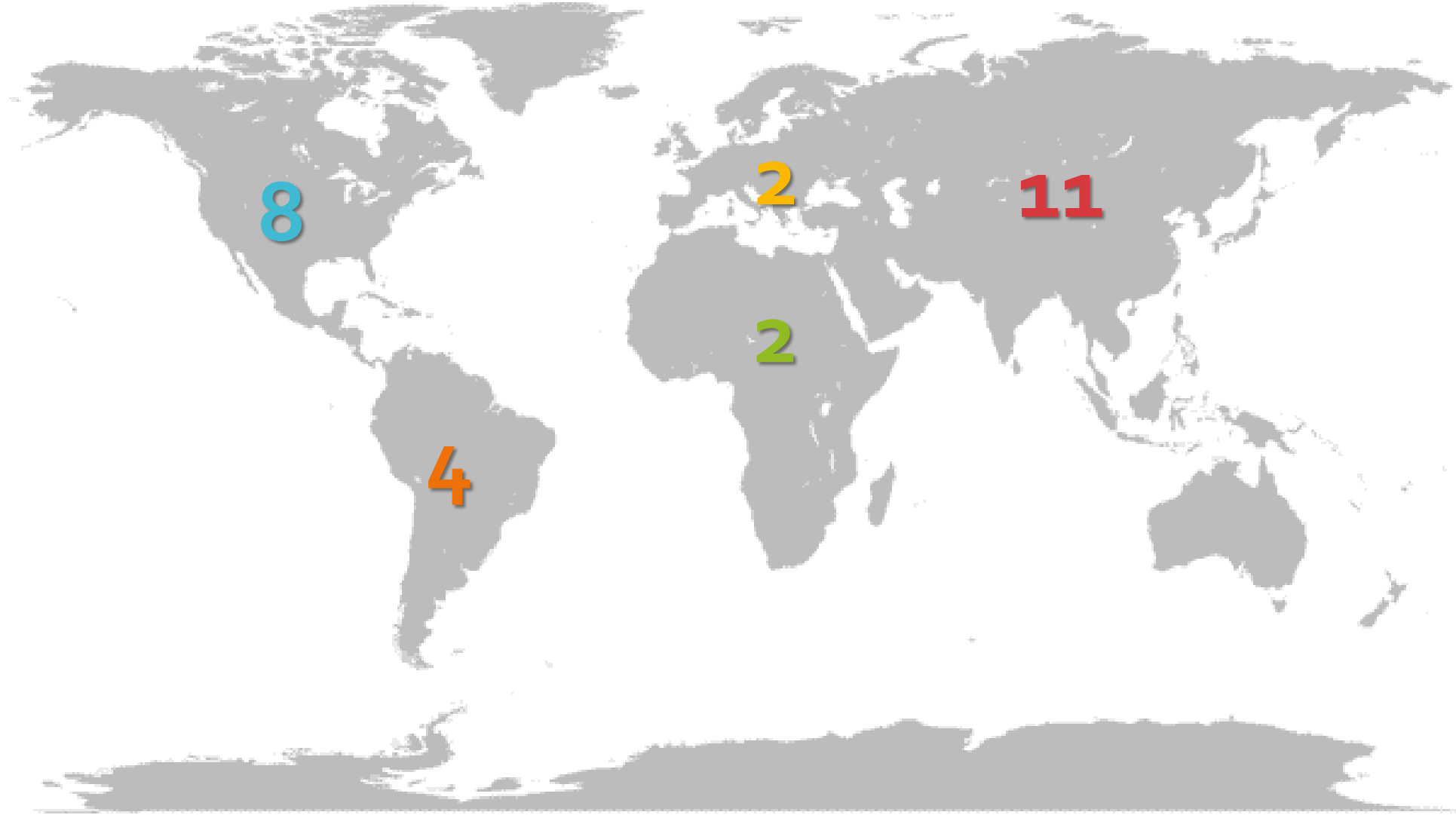
Interpret human activities, ideas, and institutions with reference to diverse cultural, historical and geo-political perspectives and physical environments; and

Recognize the complexities of inter-cultural and international communications and collaborative endeavors, and relate this to the complex challenges of the 21st century.

Each student is only required to fulfill three credits—just one course—from Group X.

Findings

*Geographical
Region*



Findings

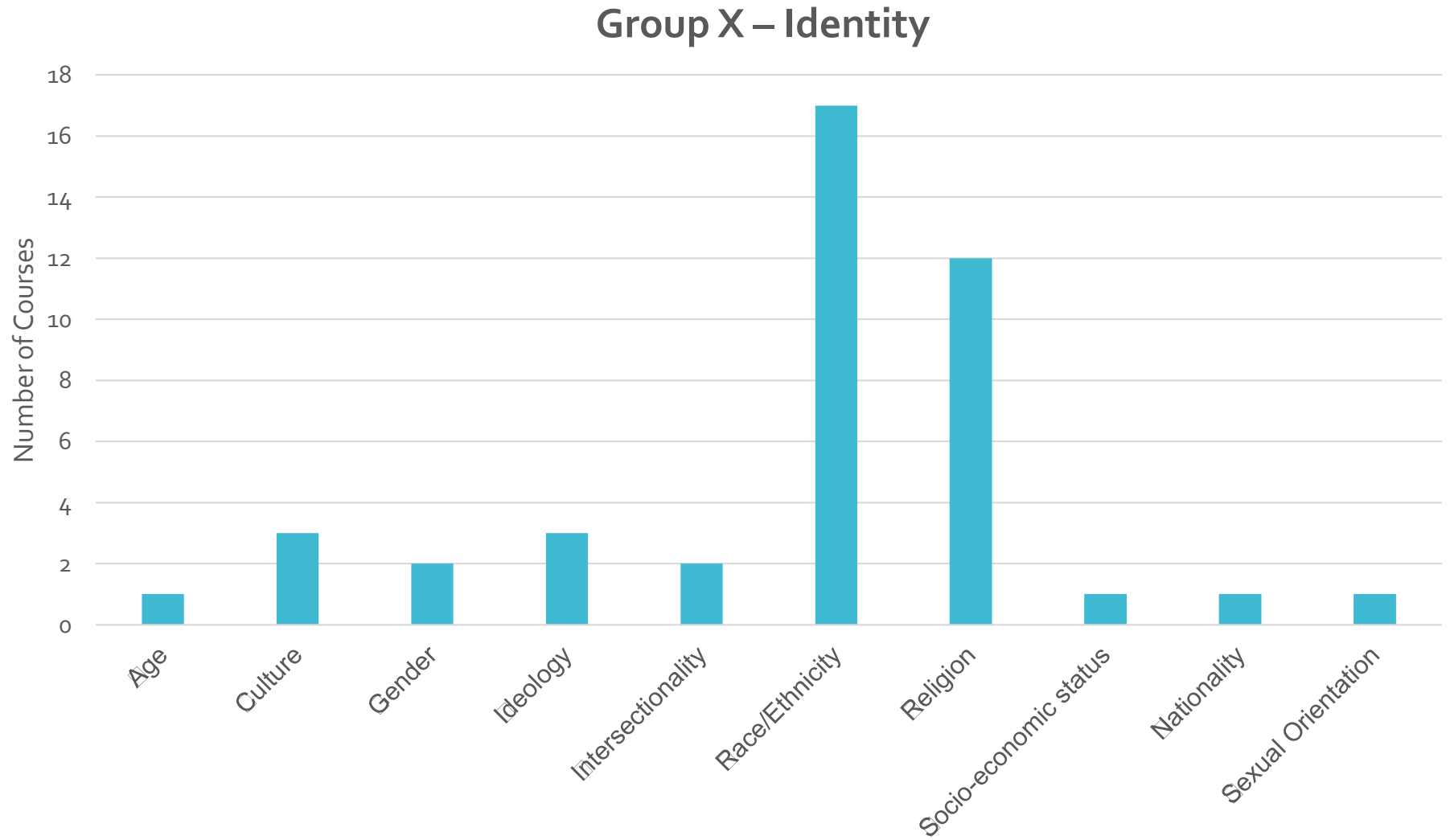
Identity

Identities in North America:

- Of the eight courses focusing on people in North America, seven look at Native American populations.
 - Of these seven courses, only **two** describe people who lived within the last 100 years.
 - Just one of these courses has been offered in the last year.
- The eighth course discusses the African-American experience.

Findings

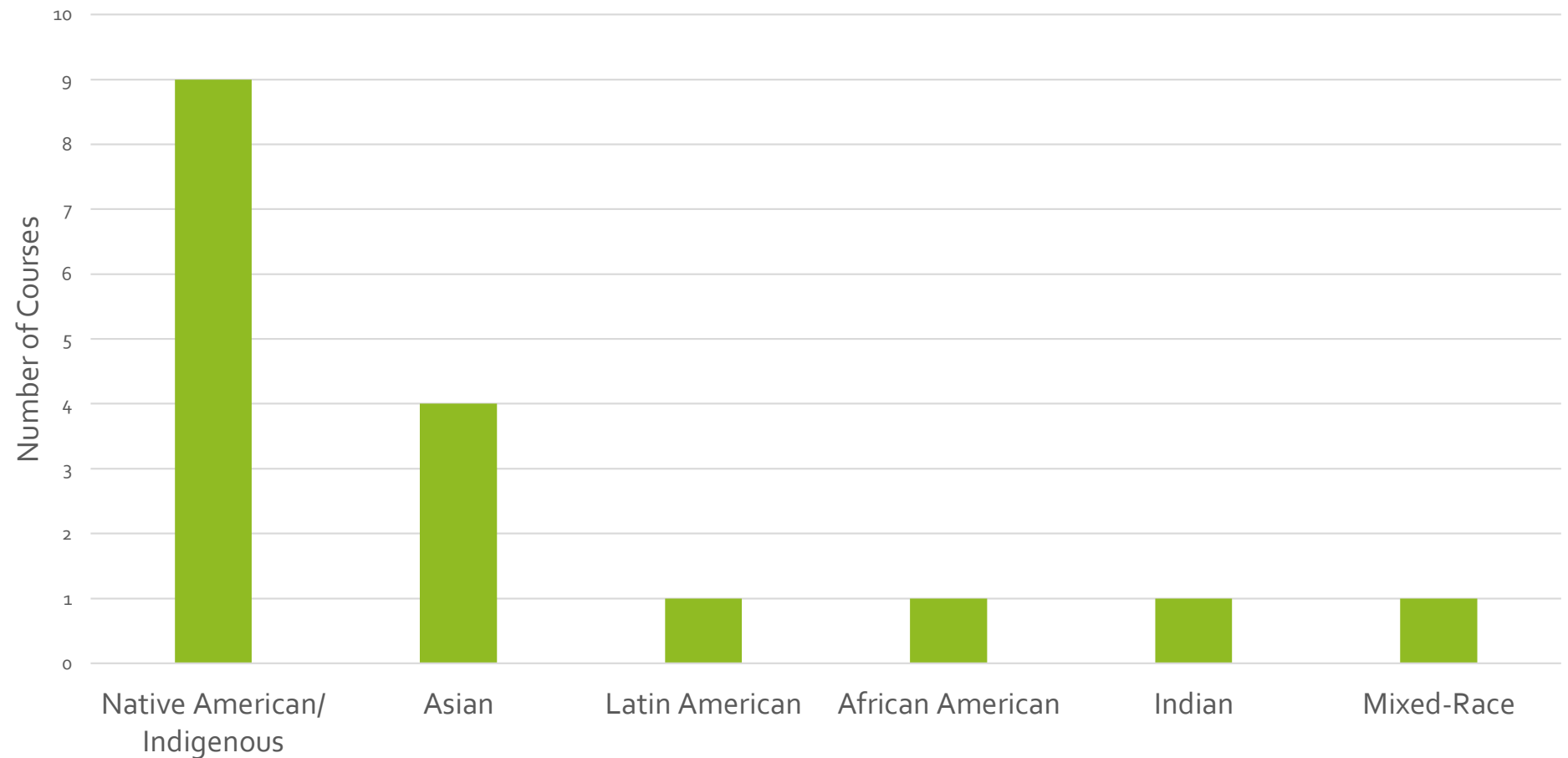
Identity



Findings

Racial Identity

Group X - Racial Identity

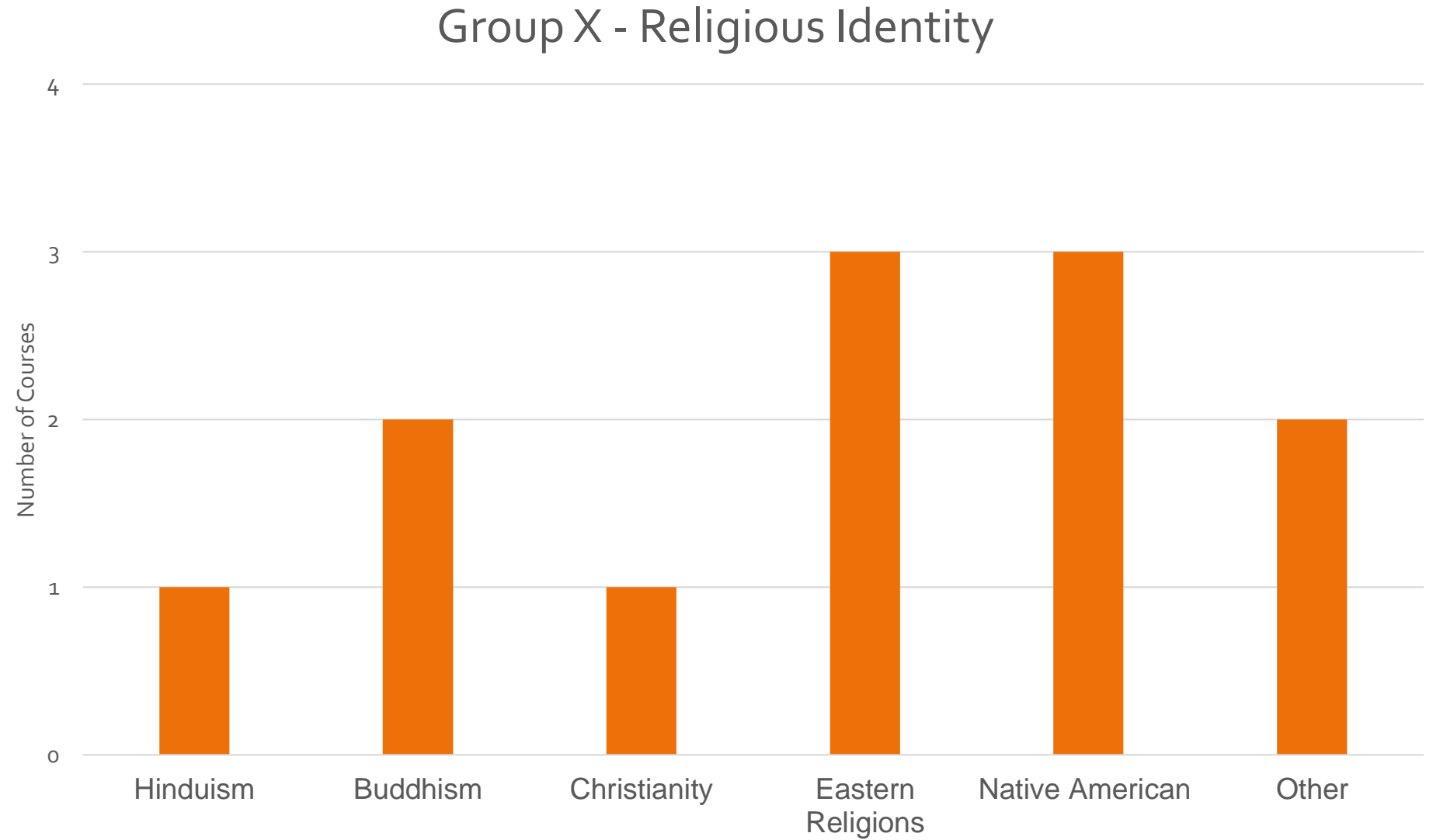


"Diversity in curricula is about more than just teaching a full view of history; it is proven to empower students of color."

– Samantha Washington

Findings

Religious Identity



Who is missing?

Identity Groups Completely Missing From the Curriculum:

- Gender Identity
- Gender Expression
- Ability

Unrepresented Religious Identities:

- Muslim
- Jewish
- Atheist/Agnostic

Unrepresented Racial & Ethnic Identities:

- Middle-Eastern
- White

Underrepresented Identities

Who are students not learning about?

2 courses discuss topics about gender

1 course discusses sexual orientation

2 courses discuss intersectionality

1 course discusses aging populations

1 course discusses socio-economic status

No courses discuss immigration

Only 4 courses discuss issues of inequality

Student Experiences

Fall 2017 – Diversity, Inclusivity & Equity at the University of Montana research study

data analysis by Emily Gillispie

- 61 student interviews
 - Lack of visibility in curriculum negatively impacts student performance, causing students from marginalized groups feel alienated.
 - Students of diverse communities are often tokenized in the classroom, being burdened with obligatory representation of their culture.

Student Experiences

Quotes From
Student Interviews

“Being talked at as if you know my kind, and being isolated and alienated when I don't fit that mold of what you think I am. I am criminalized as if I am going to steal something.”

“It's tough being on the asexual spectrum.. I had a nurse practitioner at Curry tell me my asexuality will pass.”

Student Experiences

"In the fight for racial equity in the classroom, we must stress the importance of students learning from a curriculum which reinforces that their own histories, and, by extension, their own identities, matter."

– Samantha Washington

Student Experiences

Student Interviews

- Celebrations and events intended to educate the campus community about diverse cultures were seen as foreign, resulting in low student involvement.
- Student experiences indicate a negative and uncomfortable campus climate.

Student Experiences

“The findings suggest that well-intentioned attempts to create a more inclusive campus may unwittingly reinforce practices that support exclusion and inequity.”

— Susan VanDeventer Iverson

Student Body Diversity

Fall 2017

Full-time Undergraduate Students

	<u>Headcount</u>	<u>Percentage of Total</u>
All Full-time Undergraduates		
Male	3,358	45%
Female	4,086	55%
Total	7,444	100%
By Race/Ethnicity:		
Caucasian	5,864	79%
All Ethnic Minorities	1,075	14%
African American	81	1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	82	1%
Hispanic	330	4%
American Indian/Alaska Native	232	3%
Two or more races	333	4%
Native Hawaiian	17	0%
Nonresident Alien	167	2%
Not Reported	338	5%
Recipients of a Federal Pell Grant	2,703	36%

Successful Completers

Fall 2011 Cohort

First-time, Full-time Bachelor Degree-seeking Students



Fall 2018 CENSUS Enrollment Report

Census Day 9/19/2018

	Fall 2018	Fall 2017	% of 2018 Total	% of 2017 Total	% of Change
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STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Mountain Campus

Veterans	436	456	4.6%	4.5%	-4.4%
Students with Disabilities*	1018	979	10.6%	9.7%	4.0%
Native Americans	469	561	4.9%	5.6%	-16.4%
First Generation ¹	2790	2788	40.4%	36.9%	0.1%
PELL Offered ¹	2242	2509	32.5%	33.2%	-10.6%

Missoula College

Veterans	69	98	4.9%	5.5%	-29.6%
Students with Disabilities*	177	201	12.7%	11.3%	-11.9%
Native Americans	108	114	7.7%	6.4%	-5.3%
First Generation	645	748	46.2%	42.2%	-13.8%
PELL Offered	627	758	44.9%	42.8%	-17.3%

*The current term counts are snapshots of Banner near census day and these numbers will increase as the term elapses.

¹ Undergraduate students only

Conclusion

How should the university improve upon its diversity education requirements?

- Review course curriculum to ensure it meets Group X standards.
 - Remove outdated courses.
 - Include more courses that qualify under Group X requirements.

"We have been trying get [one of my classes] added to Group X for a few years now, but there's a complicated process for that."

— University of Montana Faculty Member

- Require more than one course in diversity education for all students.
- Train faculty and university staff on strategies to create a more inclusive campus environment.
- Listen to students' experiences of exclusion and marginalization on campus, then take aggressive action to address these issues.

Conclusion

Quotes From Student Interviews

“There should a be well balanced way to encourage students to perform the type of critical thinking that allows you to talk to others outside of your own religion and ethnicity.”

“The university does try but, they don't do it in a manner that works, they need to change their strategy to something more successful... Maybe they should have something where there are more talks on different types of minorities.”

“I think it would be good to along with alcohol education that students would have to take an Ally Training.”

“A lot of different flowers
make a bouquet.”

— *Muslim Origin*

Research Team

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