

FALL 2008 ISSUE Welcome to OMSA Spring Recap  
Presidents Spotlight Fall Initiatives Faculty Spotlight Student Spotlight



Office of Multicultural Student Affairs

# OMSA UPDATE

*Cultural Connection*

## WELCOME TO OMSA

Greetings!

Please accept OMSA's warm welcome to the university! Allow us to serve as your one stop shop to cultural resources and activities on campus. If we are unable to meet all of your needs, we will provide excellent customer service by working diligently to assist you in finding resources that best fit you. Our office is here for you to learn, network and share your creativity! The 2007-08 Academic Year was an awesome year for OMSA and the students that we serve and we are looking forward to a new year. The spring semester was very successful from our First Annual Student Leader Transition Conference, to students attending the National Black Student Leadership Conference, sponsoring the 'Black Student Leadership on a Predominately White College Campus, facilitated by Jeff 'Cousin Jeff' Johnson, to a number of programs and services provided.

College is a time when you are able to develop your own identity by meeting new people, creating new beginnings, making your own choices, and being responsible and accountable for your actions. Allow this experience to be a positive and a successful one, for this is a time in life when you have the opportunity to explore various perspectives, opinions, cultures, and backgrounds all in ONE place! Take advantage of this grand opportunity and make this year and experience an exciting one!

Stop by and allow our staff to help you get connected with the university and open your eyes to the world of unity!

Remember—one day your life will flash before your eyes. Make sure it's worth watching! Therefore, make this wonderful college experience a magnificent show!

Beverly A. Walker, M.Ed.  
Interim Director



# SPRING RECAP

## Multicultural Speaker Series

Multicultural community leaders will discuss their rise to responsible leadership positions, the issues they faced, the lessons learned and the skills they developed to become successful. Previous speakers have included Sindy Benavides, Director of Gubernatorial Appointments for the Secretary of the Commonwealth.



## OMSA Appreciation

The OMSA Appreciation Awards celebrated the vision and mission of OMSA and its services. The ceremony featured performances from Filipino Americans Coming Together (FACT) at VCU and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Honorees included the

Vietnamese Student Association at VCU for Most Spirited Organization, African Student Union (ASU) at VCU for Most Improved Organization, and NAACP at VCU's "State of the Black Union" for Best Program.

## Student Leader Transitional Conference

In April the OMSA office put on the first ever Student Leader Transitional Conference. The conference was designed to offer students a blueprint for leadership roles within their organizations. Students were able to attend several sessions that focused on recruitment, marketing, community service and fundraising. Keynote speaker, Mecca Marsh, Associate Director of Training and Programs at George Mason University, motivated the students to think outside the box and how students should always make their organization stronger from the inside out. The conference, open to all VCU organizations, is slated for April 18, 2009 in the University Student Commons. Registration will begin in the spring.



## ICF Festival

A tradition unique to VCU, ICF is a week long festival celebrating the diversity of VCU's students! The event brought in over 2,000 participants and more than 30 vendors and performers. The VCU Intercultural Festival celebrated multiculturalism by showcasing VCU and the City of Richmond's rich diversity. The festival offered an array of activities, such as unique performances, cultural displays and exhibits, VCU art student showcases, various cuisines from local restaurants, a fashion show and a parade. Next years festival is slated for April 5, 2009!

# FALL INITIATIVES

## Welcome Week

At the start of every academic year, OMSA kicks things off with several events to promote the wonderful diversity and multiculturalism on campus. OMSA hosted a Multicultural Student Mixer for students from various ethnic, racial and sexual orientations to mix and mingle. The



week wrapped up with OMSA's staple event, "Salsa on the Plaza" featuring DJ Steve. At this event students enjoyed free salsa lesson and food from several international eateries around the Richmond area.

## Mosaic Week

Mosaic Week is a series of events held annually during the first week of September, offering incoming multicultural students an opportunity to meet faculty, staff, and others in the university. Students also learned about multicultural organizations, OMSA and other university services that may be helpful to them. The events scheduled this year included Black Unity Fest, Latino Extravaganza, Asian Student Meet and Greet, LGBT Student Meet and Greet and more.

## Hispanic Heritage Month

The OMSA Office is proud to present Hispanic Heritage Month to the VCU community. Hispanic Heritage Month is a period to recognize the contributions of Hispanic Americans to the United States and to celebrate Hispanic heritage and culture. The month begins on September 15, the anniversary of independence for five Latin American countries—Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua and runs through October 15. We invite students to join OMSA, the Latino Student Association, Sigma Lambda Upsilon Sorority Inc. and Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity Inc. in a month long celebration of the contributions and rich cultural traditions of the Hispanic-American community.



## Multicultural Collaboration Council

MCC is comprised of student representatives from groups advised by OMSA and are interested in supporting the mission and goals of the office. This 'roundtable' is a time to bring all of the multicultural organizational leaders together for an exchange of ideas and to open the lines of communication. They are also posed with creating and collaborating on programs that promote the diversity and culture among VCU students. The group meets biweekly at 6 p.m. in the Shockoe room located in the University Student Commons.

## PACME Nominations (Presidential Awards for Community Multicultural Enrichment)

The PACME awards are bestowed by the President of VCU to members of the university community in recognition of a significant contribution toward the principles, goals and ideals of affirmative action or toward enhancing the institution's commitment to diversity. They were created to recognize and encourage such contributions that may include (but are not limited to) promoting civility, building community, establishing effective cross-cultural initiatives, advocating equity, and nurturing openness and inclusion within the university community. In addition to the award, recipients will receive \$500.



Last year's winners were: Dr. Ann Creighton-Zollar, Faculty Award, L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs; Karen

Bryant, Staff Award, Epidemiology & Community Health; and Ms. Sara Duke, Student and Riese-Melton Award, L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs.

Nomination forms for this year's PACME Awards (Wednesday, April 8, 2009, 3 p.m., in the University Student Commons, Richmond Salons) can be found online at [www.students.vcu.edu/pacme](http://www.students.vcu.edu/pacme).

## Dollars and Sense

Dollars and Sense—Understanding Basic Personal Finance consists of monthly seminars offering students an opportunity to consult with professionals about entering the job market, credit card debt, mortgages, financing automobiles, investing, and purchasing health, disability and life insurance. Each session will be held at 3 p.m. in the University Student Commons Forum Room on 9/17/08, 10/1/08, 11/12/08, 1/28/09, 2/11/09, 3/4/09, and 4/8/09.

# FACULTY SPOTLIGHT



## Larry Powell, Assistant Director of Alumni Relations

Our faculty spotlight this issue is Larry Powell, Assistant Director of Alumni Relations at Virginia Commonwealth University. His overall responsibilities include developing programs that help reinforce university

pride and encouraging alumni to remain active members of the VCU Community. The Alumni Relations Office has a number of different affinity groups including the Young Alumni Council, African-American Alumni Council (AAAC), and regional alumni chapters in the Northern Virginia/ Washington DC and Hampton Roads areas.

The primary benefit of joining either the VCU Alumni Association or the MCV Alumni Association of VCU is the opportunity to assist in the growth and development of the university. By supporting the university, alumni help strengthen the value of their degree and help to ensure the reputation of the VCU brand continues to gain national recognition. Mr. Powell also adds there are a number of more immediate benefits including low cost internet service, access to the Thalheimer Tennis Center, bookstore discounts and Legacy Scholarship Program eligibility for the children of Alumni Association members.

The office is currently working to develop programs that will encourage students to get involved in the Alumni Association from the first day they set foot on campus. Traditionally, the Associations scholarship programs have been one of the most significant means to facilitate that connection and recognize student achievement. The Alumni Association has always been involved in various university-wide activities (i.e. Homecoming, commencement) as well as working with the admissions office to identify alumni to assist with their student recruitment activities in various cities.

Currently, the AAAC is the only alumni association group focused on the interests of alumni of color. Mr. Powell's work over the years with the VCU AAAC has been a great source of pride for him. The AAAC has enjoyed a tremendous amount of growth during the 12 years he has worked in the Alumni Relations office and he is proud to have played a part in the organization's success during that span.

During the late 80s, a group of African-American alumni formed the AAAC primarily because they felt representation of the interests of African-American alumni was lacking and that university support from VCU African-American alumni needed to improve. The AAAC has played a major role in addressing both areas of concern and has become a respected fixture at VCU. Mr. Powell feels the AAAC has benefited the African American alumni of VCU and motivated hundreds of other alumni (who may not have done so otherwise) to become active in supporting their university, "I know that was the case for me," he says. If other groups wanted to create subsidiary associations the first step would be to contact the Alumni Office and discuss any ideas with one of their staff. They may already have a group in place that would address a person's specific area of interest.

"The future of the Alumni Association is a work in progress", says Powell. Gordon McDougall, the Assistant Vice President of University Alumni Relations, is in the process of evaluating all of their programs and activities to best determine the future direction of the Alumni Relations Office. In the coming months they will develop a comprehensive strategic plan outlining the step they will take to achieve the goals they want to establish.

If you would like more information about any of the Alumni Offices programs or services please visit their Web site at [www.vcu-mcvalumni.org](http://www.vcu-mcvalumni.org).

# PRESIDENT SPOTLIGHT

## Nana N. Owusu, President African Student Union



The role of president in any organization is to be the official overseer of all the organization's activities and duties. As president, I believe that you have to be a neutral person at heart. Neutral in the sense that you do not favor one board member over the other but allow each to

express their opinions. From time to time people will come to you with their experiences and their concerns, and you have to know how to deal with it effectively. Also, you have to be people-friendly, that is important for recruitment and keeping the people within the organization. It's not only about getting people into the organization but what can be done to keep them interested. You must ask yourself the following questions: What are the goals of the organization? What can we do with the resources that we have? How can we do better than those that came before us? Also, this is very important. Delegate tasks, and work effectively so that everything is done in a timely manner. Do not take the burden onto yourself, but also be ready in case one of your board members slips. Also, you must try to maintain a positive image where ever you go on campus.

## Gabrielle Pham, President Vietnamese Student Association



From my very first experience with the Vietnamese Student Association (VSA), I knew that I had found my niche. This organization has become a second home for me as well as where I invest a majority of my free time. While travelling through the hierarchy of the VSA, a feeling of duty was fostered within me. Our generation of Vietnamese Americans is a product of a war that we can never fully comprehend. Nonetheless, it is a part of our existence and should not be forgotten. I took on the position of President after being inspired by the leadership of Bao-Vinh Nguyen and Stephen Nguyen, the past presidents of 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, respectively. I love the VSA and there is so much that I have envisioned the organization to do and become. I have goals of expanding the membership base as well as focusing more on the customs and traditions of the Vietnamese culture. I know that by being a full time pre-medical student, my time is precious and that scheduling and organization are complete necessities in order to excel in both the classroom as well as extra curricular work. Having a normal life has been hard, but being constantly surrounded by friends who share the same beliefs as I do, such as my e-board, has made it easy to maintain "work" and play. Being a strong believer in "where there is a will, there is a way," I know that through my dedication to my school work as well as the organization, I can be successful in both.

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