

"OMSA Update" is a biyearly publication that highlights programming and other events at OMSA.



Office of Multicultural Student Affairs

OMSA UPDATE

{ SPRING 2007

Cultural Connection

director's Message

Dear Students,

The staff at the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs hope you are rejuvenated after the holiday break!

Last semester, the OMSA had a busy schedule. The number of students attending our programs and visiting our office increased significantly. We were able to actively engage those students and others who visited the office in a meaningful and productive way.

If you haven't participated in our programs or visited the office, we encourage you to do so. One way to get involved is through our Volunteer Program. This program will help you to learn more about what we do while developing your collaboration, program management, and interpersonal communication skills. You can also participate through our Brown Bag Lunches, Cultural Café's, Cultural Exploration Series and other programs that we offer.

Remember, this semester the Black History Month activities will be held in February and the Intercultural Festival will be held on Sunday, April 15. Information about both of these programs can be accessed at our website www.omsa.vcu.edu or by coming to the office.

Please come by our office and participate. Also, continue to study and do well. We hope that you will enjoy this edition of the *Update*.



Napoleon L. Peoples, PhD
Director, OMSA

what's New?

OMSA is pleased to introduce new staff member Mr. Zachary Annen from Seattle, Washington, enrolled in VCU's Master of Social Work Program. Zach is the new Graduate Assistant for the LGBT & Women's Resources. The LGBT & Women's Resources is a new initiative for the office and Zach is just the person to create the energy needed! Students are able to peruse the office's limited, but growing collection of LGBT books, movies and magazines. The office will also have information on local and national organizations, providing a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment to diverse students. Please be sure read more about Zach under the 'Student's Perspective' section.

Student's Perspective

Nicole Jackson, Freshman
OMSA Program Assistant

Overwhelmed, terrified and nervous: these were some of the emotions that raced through my body as I scanned the perimeter of VCU. The campus was overflowing with thousands of people as they transported their belongings into the dorms. After taking a deep breath and finally calming down, I remember thinking that I would use this opportunity to begin a new chapter in my life and just be myself. Of course that tactic was not as easy as I originally thought. I became so terrified to come out of my shell that I began to feel invisible, and perhaps no one could see or hear me.

My life as a college student began to change when I became a student worker for OMSA. Working here has really helped to expand my interest in communications and learning about other ethnic groups. I soon acquainted myself with current students who participate in organizations, employers from other departments and prospective students. At first, it was difficult to simply be myself and greet people, however, on one occasion I spoke to several prospective VCU students which really allowed me to come out of my shell. That was a great new experience for me!

Not only has working with OMSA helped build my communication skills, it also helped me learn more and more about the buildings and activities handled on the Monroe Park Campus. Working in the Office of Multicultural Students Affairs has therefore become a great asset to me here at VCU. I am becoming more comfortable being on campus and meeting new people everyday. Without the help of my co-workers, I would still be that invisible shadow unseen and unheard.

Leslie Stork, Junior
OMSA Program Assistant

Since September 2006, I have had the pleasure of working at the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs as a student worker. I was first informed of the office by Jahnissi Tirado, a fellow Latina, who encouraged me to apply for the position. Looking back, I never thought any job could be as enriching or rewarding until I started at OMSA and the entire staff was extremely supportive to helping me adjust. I quickly learned that multicultural issues and diversity were not the only things OMSA has to offer. Aspects the office has to offer include meeting student members of the twelve OMSA-advised organizations such as the NAACP at VCU, Black and Latino Student Alliance and the Intercultural Festival Planning Board. They have all shown me the significance of reaching out to cultural frameworks other than my own. The accessible resources about other distinct cultures has made a difference in my everyday exchanges, an option available to all VCU students. The best overall aspect of the office are the individuals interested in stepping outside their own culture where anyone is welcome to visit at their convenience.

Please check out our schedule of events and services at www.omsa.vcu.edu.

One OMSA event with a major impact on my cultural diversity interests were the Brown Bag Luncheons. These discussions are held multiple times during the semester and are open to all interested in sharing opinions or just listening to cultural issues/topics. I chose to facilitate a discussion on *Interracial Dating – Does Color Really Matter*. Considering Virginia Commonwealth University's diverse student population, I felt many students would relate to the topic. Some of the main points to lead the discussion included:

- How do you feel about interracial dating?
- Have you ever dated someone from a different color, race or ethnicity?
- How would you feel if you were looked down upon for dating someone a different color than your own?

The discussion was complimented by student opinions on perceived racial differences, and how these perception affects relationships and an interracial couple pdescribed both the challenges and societal acceptance that exist when dating outside your race. The discussion generated a high attendance, including the school newspaper. To me, it was rewarding to have students enjoying the Brown Bag Luncheon, and active participation by relating their individual life experiences about interracial dating with others. Overall, a sense of belonging was established between the individuals all who attended.

Additionally, I am given the opportunity to interact with and gain knowledge about the diverse backgrounds of individuals. The office not only promotes the prospect of learning about other people around the world, but more importantly, *yourself*.

I can honestly say being part of the OMSA team as a Latino student is an accomplishment in itself. The different ethnicities and backgrounds of people who enter the office on a daily basis give the office the reputation it has earned, and will keep for many years to come.

blackHistory Month

OMSA coordinates the annual calendar of events for the month long celebration of African-American accomplishments. The series of university activities offered by students, faculty and staff includes workshops, lectures and performances. The following events are sponsored or co-sponsored by OMSA. Please visit www.omsa.vcu.edu for the full listing of events.

- 2/5 3 p.m. – Pan-African Social
University Student Commons, Room 215 – OMSA
- 2/7 7 p.m. – Event: National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
University Student Commons, Room 215 – OMSA
- 2/8 3 p.m. – Diversity Film Series: "This Far by Faith: African-American Spiritual Journeys"
University Student Commons, Room 215 – OMSA
- 2/8 7 p.m. – Whispers from the Dust
University Student Commons, Commonwealth Ballroom B
- 2/9 6 p.m. – Speaker: Elaine Brown
University Student Commons, Commons Theater
- 2/12 4 p.m. – Speaker: Bruce Twyman
University Student Commons, Virginia Rooms C-D
- 2/13 1 p.m. – "HIV/AIDS in the Black Community"
University Student Commons, Room 215 – OMSA
- 2/13 7 p.m. – Black History in the Making Awards
Grace Street Theater
- 2/16 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. – How Hollywood Stages Civil Rights: A Comparison of the films "Nothing But A Man" and "Mississippi Burning," moderated by Jack White, journalist, social critic and educator
University Student Commons, Richmond Salon II
- 2/19 7 – 9 p.m. – Discussion and Film: An Evening with Lost Boys of Sudan: Implications for America
University Student Commons, Richmond Salons III – IV
- 2/20 1 p.m. – Living the Dream Remix: Conversation with New and Upcoming Poet, Author, Dreamkeeper Jackie Young
University Student Commons, Room 215 – OMSA
- 2/22 3 p.m. – Film: "Roots of Rhythm"
University Student Commons, Room 215 - OMSA
- 2/22 7 – 9 p.m. – Lecture: "The Langston Hughes Project – Ask Your Mama: 12 Moods for Jazz"
W. E. Singleton Center of the Performing Arts
- 2/26 7 – 9 p.m. – Soul Food Café, featuring Queen Sheba and Open Mic -University Student Commons - Commonwealth Ballrooms A-B
- 2/28 8 p.m. – Speaker: Samuel Taylor "Segregation Between the African American Black and the African Black"
University Student Commons, Commons Theater

Zachary Annen, Graduate Student
LGBT & Women's Resources

Early this fall, I remember walking from a coffee shop with a friend and she turned to me and said, "I saw this email about a position here on campus and thought, 'This would be perfect for Zach.'" I went right home and read the email about the available position as a graduate assistant for OMSA's newly created LGBT/Women's Services program.

Since first walking in the office door, I could feel the positive energy. Ms. Walker and I talked about everything under the stars for about half an hour as tropical storm Ernesto raged outside. I left knowing I wanted to work with this group of people.

I hail from the rainy city of Seattle and my adjustment to graduate school, a new city and the East coast have been both new and exciting. My on campus involvement through the OMSA office has made my transition much easier.

The position was created in order to meet the needs of LGBT and female students and help coordinate speakers, forums, programs and other activities that would support personal growth, foster understanding and make VCU a better place for all students. I can think of no better office on campus to host such an initiative than OMSA. With their strong history of programming for underrepresented students, welcoming and inclusive atmosphere and mission, I have felt immediately at home.

There are a whole host of exciting and engaging programs for the spring semester that draw both from an existing format of excellent OMSA programming and looking at new methods for student involvement. Some of these opportunities of involvement include:

- Brown Bag Discussions about Women's and LGBT issues
- LGBT student weekly discussion/support groups
- Cultural Café and Cultural Exploration
- Book groups
- Guest speakers
- Campus wide cultural events
- Conference opportunities
- Service projects

The programs for LGBT students and women are just beginning and we would love to have you involved. We are always looking at new programs, areas of focus and ideas. If any of these topics sound appealing to you, please stop and say hello. My office drop-in hours are 3:30-5 p.m. daily. You may also contact me by email at annenza@vcu.edu. I look forward to hearing from and seeing you for our exciting lineup of programs that are already underway.

Jabnissi Tirado, Senior
OMSA Program Assistant
Salsa on the Plaza

This year's Salsa in the Plaza was the last major event that I coordinated for OMSA, making it bittersweet, but memorable. I had to make sure that this year's event stood out compared to last, since I have a habit of raising the bar each year and this event was no different. Last year we used a Stephen Green, a professional dancer from Richmond, and this year I found a group called Salsa Magic from northern Virginia. This duo did a fabulous job in keeping the crowd going - even getting the men to actually dance. By the end of the event, we had our own professionals ourselves tearing up the floor in the Plaza.

Looking back I realize that VCU gave me more than I could ever imagine. Salsa on the Plaza was the first VCU event I attended freshman year and for the last three years, I have been coordinating it and bringing in an assortment of flavors. In addition, it has given me the opportunity to express my Latina heritage. It is always great to see the unity and curiosity of the student body come together the first day of school. I smile remembering how close acquaintances and friends came out to enjoy themselves and volunteer to work the event.

If OMSA was asked what is one of their most successful events, they would answer Salsa on the Plaza. Though I have had a hand in planning this event, I truly believe that it opens the school year with flavor.

diversityFilm Series

Ijuanzee I. Isom

OMSA Multicultural Program Specialist

The Diversity Film Series is designed to offer films that reflect the full spectrum of issues related multiculturalism, i.e. race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc. The purpose of this series is to allow for creative discussions about diversity from past and current socio-political values in America and throughout the world. Through the series, participants gained a broader understanding of their worldview and a clearer focus on issues that affect our society. The films we viewed this semester included topics on:

- the Latino image in Hollywood
- the Aetas, original inhabitants of the Philippines
- the Illusion of race throughout the world
- the History of Chinese Immigrants in America

Students enjoyed the opportunity to view and discuss the films with a diverse group of students. This Spring, the Film Series will continue to view and discuss films that illustrate multiculturalism monthly on Thursdays at 3 p.m., beginning January 25.

organization's Highlights

Intercultural Festival Planning Board News



The Intercultural Festival (ICF) is once again putting together an unforgettable day of music, family fun, and multicultural festivities! ICF is a VCU tradition organized by students to bring together VCU, Richmond communities, and visitors from around the world. This year it will be held on April 15, so mark your calendars!

Leading to the ICF Day is a week full of multicultural events for all to enjoy. Included in these events are cultural movies from around the world, speakers, crafts, cultural foods and a concert to benefit a charity. During the spring semester, an ICF Social will be held where students and interested volunteers can stop by to learn more about helping and to enjoy the performances of student organizations.

This year, the ICF Planning Board is expanding its reach to schools in the surrounding community. An Outreach Program has been implemented to expose students to different cultures to allow them to connect to their own heritages and those of their fellow classmates. Our programs will introduce cultures through puppet shows, crafts, music, food and more, and promises to become a great tradition with local schools in the coming years.

The ICF Planning Board is always looking for interested students willing to volunteer to help throughout the year as well as perform or participate on the day of the Festival. If you or anyone you know has a great talent to display, feel free to let us know – our door is always open!

For information about ICF, contact Christopher Burnette, ICF Director, or Samantha Weinheimer, ICF Assistant Director at vcuicf@gmail.com, or stop by our office in the Commons, Room 229D.

NAACP News

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People at VCU was able to host and co-sponsor many excellent events during the Fall 2006 semester.

At the beginning of the school year, the NAACP at VCU sponsored the 2006 "Back-2-School with NAACP" Week.

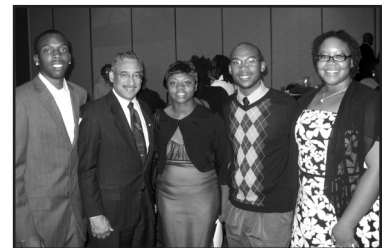
During this week, NAACP hosted informational tables, where students interested in the organization were able to talk to executive board members and gain more information on the activities and purpose of the NAACP.

To benefit the community, the organization sponsored a variety of community service projects. For example, the organization collected and donated school supplies to Second Baptist Church in Richmond, and sponsored a field trip for a 3rd grade class at Maymont Elementary School to visit The Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia. The children of Ms. Potter's third grade class explored the *'Barnstormin': The Negro Leagues: 1920–1960* exhibition, chronicling the Negro Baseball Leagues. Other programs included a winter clothes drive to benefit the Richmond YMCA, participation in the Angel Tree Program and volunteering at the Salvation Army.

In September, along with the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, NAACP hosted a "Black Student Meet & Greet." At this event, African Americans students at the university enjoyed food, music, poetry, dancing by VCU's own 4-The-Streetz choreography troupe and met fellow students and organizations, including the Association of Black Social Workers, the Activities Programming Board, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.

The organization has held a number of co-sponsored events. Examples include partnering with VOX@VCU, the VCU Black Caucus and the VCU Women's Leadership Forum. With VOX@VCU, the NAACP co-sponsored the "Women in Public Policy" at the W.E. Singleton Center. Forum included special guests such as political activist Vanessa Kerry; Virginia Secretary of Administration Viola Baskerville; Representative of the 71st District of Virginia, Delegate Jennifer McClellan; and Virginia Senator Margaret Whipple. The panelists discussed the importance of young women being involved in politics, both locally and nationally. During Hispanic Heritage Month, the NAACP teamed up with the Latino Student Association to sponsor a lecture by Tanya M. Gonzalez, the manager of the City of Richmond Hispanic Liaison Officer. Ms. Gonzalez spoke on "Nuestra Cultura: Breathing In Richmond's Multicultural Society." To round out events for the fall, the organization teamed with Kappa Alpha Psi, Phi Beta Sigma and Swing Phi Swing to co-sponsor an AIDS/HIV Lecture with Health Educator Deidre Johnson. The NAACP also co-sponsored the Caribbean Student Organization Free AIDS Testing Day, where students were able to take free tests provided by the Fan Free Clinic.

In October, members of the organization attended the 71st Annual Virginia State Conference NAACP Convention in Hampton, Virginia. The attendees gathered information about the organization, including its vision, goals and strategies to continue to ensure equality for all in the future. While attending the Convention Banquet, the group met some of today's most influential black leaders like Congressman Robert C. Scott. The NAACP at VCU was recognized by the Virginia State Conference NAACP as being the most outstanding college chapter for the 2005-2006 school year. This was the organization's first award received from the state conference.



With the help of its members, the NAACP and Virginia Blood Services held a very successful blood drive. The organization also held a thought provoking meeting with Dr. Linda Hancock, Assistant Director of VCU Health Promotions. Dr. Hancock discussed practicing safe sex and how AIDS are affecting minorities and women today.

Our most spectacular event was the November 1, 2006 "Politics Matters" Forum. Panelists for the evening included Virginia State Conference NAACP Executive Director, King Salim Khalfani; Secretary Baskerville, Delegate McClellan; and VCU African American Studies Department Chair, Dr. Njeri Jackson. They discussed the importance for youth and minorities to play an active role in politics and encouraged members to vote in the November 2006 elections.

With the help of its dedicated members and fellow student organizations, the NAACP will be sure to sponsor many memorable moments. For more information on this organization, please contact the NAACP at VCU via email at NAACP@vcu.edu.

ongoing *Events*

BROWN BAG DISCUSSIONS

(Meets in the OMSA office)

* denotes 12 p.m. – 1 p.m.

** denotes 1 p.m. – 2 p.m.

A bimonthly forum takes place to provide stimulating discussions around topics related to ethnic and cultural diversity. This forum, designed as an educational discussion group, provides an opportunity for students to casually interact through social discourse.

- 1/31 – *Faces: How We Fit Into The World
- 2/13 – **HIV/AIDS in the Black Community
- 2/20 – **Living the Dream Remix: Conversation with New and Upcoming Poet, Author, Dreamkeeper - Jackie Young
- 2/21 – *Civil Rights and LGBT People
- 2/27 – **Culture of Consumption with J. B. Bryan, Financial Advisor
- 3/7 – Queer Allies: Building Bridges
- 3/27 – **Interracial Dating, Part 2
- 4/9 – *Affirmative Action
- 4/18 – **Cultural Labeling

DOLLARS AND SENSE

(Location Varies, 4 p.m. – 6 p.m.)

This program will consist of seminar-type programs designed to offer students an opportunity to dialogue with professionals about entering the job market, credit card debt, mortgages, financing automobiles, purchasing health, disability and life insurance, investing and other life skills necessary for life.

- 1/31 – Learning to Stretch Your Paycheck
- 2/21 – Financing Large Expenditures
- 3/21 – Insurance – Covering Your Assets
- 4/18 – Personal Investing – Not Just the Big Buck

DISCUSSION GROUPS

(All meetings held in the University Student Commons – Room 215.)

Discussion Groups for women and men of color will be offered beginning in September. The groups are designed to discuss current issues related to them. The focus will be places on exploring racial, social, cultural issues and educational and career goals.

The Women of Color Discussion Group will be held every Thursday at 5 PM. The Men of Color Discussion Group will be held every Thursday at 5 PM. LGBT Discussion Group will be held every Tuesday at 5 p.m.

MULTICULTURAL SPEAKER SERIES

(Location Varies, 4 PM – 6 PM)

This series offers students an opportunity to learn how to become successful in a multicultural world. Successful multicultural community leaders will be asked to discuss their rise to responsible leadership positions, the issues they faced, the lessons learned, and the skills they developed to become a success.

- 2/12 – Bruce Twyman
- 3/19 – Lee Brazzell
- 4/9 – Arnold Henderson

omsa-advised *Organizations*

African Student Union
Black & Latino Student Alliance
Black Caucus
Caribbean Student Union
Chinese Student Association
Ethiopian Student Union
Filipino Americans Coming Together
Intercultural Festival Planning Board
Kuwaiti Student Organization
NAACP at VCU
Latino Student Association
Vietnamese Student Association

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Office of Multicultural Student Affairs // Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services

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