Greetings All,
As the former Assistant Director of OMSA, I learned early how fortunate I was to be in a positive environment to offer educational and enlightening services to students. When I was appointed Interim Director of the office, OMSA’s passion to share programs and offer services to the VCU community became even more evident.

As a Student Affairs professional, I spend many evenings on campus and for more reasons than “it’s a my job”. I truly have a passion to work with students and assist them in any way to achieve their very best. I enjoy helping them see that the best way to grow is through self-reflection, learning from their mistakes and from others, and appreciating other cultures.

The purpose of our office is to increase diversity, understanding and to open the mind of others by creating and promoting quality educational programs and services. We encourage dialogue through our formal and informal settings, creating an environment that is open, fun and creative for all to share his or her views.

Thus far, it has been a successful year. We welcomed the Afghan Student Association, a new student organization, into the supportive arms of OMSA and sponsored several students to attend the National Black Student Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C. In addition, we collaborated with University Counseling Services and the Office of Health Promotions for a new Health and Wellness Series. We also offered support to two major university programs during Black History Month such as the “For Africa Benefit” which raises funds for children of Ghana, and “Generation Dream” that high-lighted the life and work of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

As we wrap up our Women’s History Month activities during March, we prepare for our Appreciation Program on April 9. This program will highlight our work and advised student organizations. We will follow it with the Student Leaders Transitional Conference that will discuss the significance of leadership and its responsibilities. We will be offering great prizes for the most member attendance of an individual student organization! Register today at www.omsa.vcu.edu.

Of course, we can’t continue on our path without the support of a hardworking and dedicated staff. They are always receptive and interested in the students’ needs and we all have open door policies that go above and beyond what is required. During the summer of 2007, we were fortunate to have Ms. Faith Wilkerson join us as the Interim Assistant Director. She is an alumnus of VCU, earning both her undergraduate and master’s degree from the university. Ms. Wilkerson has a wealth of knowledge about the student organization and program development areas as she is the former Programs Coordinator of the University Student Commons and Activities – Program Office. Feel free to contact Ms. Wilkerson at fawilker@vcu.edu.

These are all of the reasons I enjoy working at OMSA so very much! Stop by the office in the University Student Commons, Room 215, to feel the energy we have to share!

Well Wishes to All,
Beverly Walker
Mentor Program

The mentoring program is designed to better serve the academic, professional and cultural needs of ethnic and racially diverse students at Virginia Commonwealth University. OMSA will match students with staff, faculty and alumni with similar interests. The program offers benefits to the participating individuals and allows them to share experiences. Most importantly, they can learn from each other while building a supportive and hopefully lasting relationship.

OMSA accepts applications for both mentor and mentees year round. If you are interested in joining this program, please contact the OMSA office at 828-6672 or email omsa@vcu.edu.

This process has been good for my personal and professional development. Mentoring a student outside of my specific department has created a sense of unity and connection within our large university. I feel this program has been a very worthwhile process for both mentor and mentee.

– Ferell Justice, Assistant Professor
Department of Radiation Sciences

LGBT Discussion Group

This fall has been a busy time for OMSA’s LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) programs. Between watching films on transgender issues, discussing how politics impacts the lives of LGBT people and sharing personal stories, our students have had a very engaging semester. In fact, our average attendance at our weekly Monday night discussion group has increased ten-fold from last year. We have had outreach through Welcome Week activities, MOSAIC Week activities and have begun outreach projects on the MCV campus.

We are planning more LGBT programs for OMSA Week this spring! They will include several films, discussions and speakers. You can join our LGBT Social Discussion Group on Monday or our Advanced LGBT Discussion Group Thursday evenings. The Monday group meets at 5 p.m. in the OMSA office and the Thursday group meets at 4:30 p.m. in the Commons Shockoe Room. Stop by our office to learn more about OMSA’s LGBT programming and services.

Salsa on the Plaza

Salsa on the Plaza has become a huge staple for the OMSA office. This annual event incorporates Latin flavor blended with diverse foods and cultures. In 2007 we again invited DJ Steve Green in addition to several dance instructors to teach quick Salsa lessons to the students. It is always a pleasure for our staff to see students interacting on a social and cultural level outside of the classroom.

Mosaic Week

During the first week in September, the office presented the campus with a bigger than ever Mosaic Week.

We presented our programs and services as well as VCU’s multicultural organizations to new and returning students. Each day, they were able to meet and greet Hispanic, African, African-American and Asian organizations.

Black History Month

February is a very important month because OMSA is instrumental in the Black History Month events on campus. This year we were thrilled to have Jeffrey Johnson from Black Entertainment Television (BET) lead a discussion on the future and importance of Black Student Leadership on College Campuses.

OMSA Health & Wellness

OMSA is also excited about a new collaboration with the Office of Health Promotions (OHP) and University Counseling Services (UCS). This spring, we will introduce a new series of health awareness programs encouraging healthier living for today’s college student. All monthly sessions will be facilitated by OHP and UCS.

In the Community

This semester we will begin several outreach initiatives within Richmond and its surrounding areas. Many of our organizations for example, have already begun ‘adopting’ various elementary and middle schools and helping with after school programs. We are committed and dedicated to serving the youth and future VCU students of the surrounding community and want to continue giving our support.
student organization corner

- African Student Union
- Afghan Student Association
- Black Caucus
- Caribbean Student Union
- Chinese Student Association
- Ethiopian Student Union
- Filipino Americans Coming Together
- Intercultural Festival Planning Board
- NAACP at VCU
- Latino Student Association
- Vietnamese Student Association

More information and descriptions of these programs can be found at www.omsa.vcu.edu

continued success

Volunteer Team

Our Volunteer Team is participating in a variety of community outreach opportunities this spring. Black History Month for instance is one of the most active times of year not only for the OMSA office but the Volunteer Team as well.

We also look forward to participating in the VCU Relay for Life on April 19, 2008 in the fight against cancer. If you are interested in becoming a part of the Volunteer Team, you can do so by filling out an application at www.omsa.vcu.edu.

Dollars & Sense

The OMSA Dollars and Sense Personal Finance Series consists of seminars that 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 important life skills.

Brown Bag Discussions

OMSA Brown Bag Luncheons are bi-monthly forums that provided stimulating discussions about ethnic and cultural diversity. These forums, designed as educational discussion groups, provided opportunities to casually interact through social discourse. In the fall, University staff, graduate and undergraduate students facilitated discussions about:

- Racist symbols and imagery on college campuses
- Study abroad opportunities for students of color
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender politics and concerns
- Breaking down the language barrier for ESL students

This spring, Brown Bag Luncheons will continue discussing issues relevant to diversity and multiculturalism bi-monthly.

In their Perspective

Initially, when I applied to become a student worker OMSA, I had no idea what the office was about, nor what they had to offer. However, the word multicultural grabbed me. I am so glad I have had the opportunity to work here. Through different events and programs, I have been able to connect with other students, learn about the various buildings and activities on campus and smoothly transition into life as a freshman at VCU. What I love most about OMSA is its accessibility to students of every culture and its promotion of diversity throughout the campus community.

– Candice Hardy
OMSA Student Worker

Before coming to VCU I had no idea of how diverse the campus really was. The high school I attended was not diverse. Being able to come to a college where I immediately found groups that represented my background as a Latino made the transition from high school to college so much easier. I have met many people from different ethnic backgrounds, religious backgrounds, and different sexual orientations, all of whom have been very friendly and welcoming.

– Javier Cruz
OMSA Student Worker

If there are any activities or collaborations that you would like to see OMSA offer or participate in, please contact Beverly Walker at bwalker@vcu.edu.
spring events

Brown Bag Luncheons
12 p.m. – 1 p.m., OMSA, Commons, Room 215

Diversity Film Series
3 p.m. – 5 p.m., OMSA, Commons, Room 215

Dollars & Sense
Personal Finance Series
3 p.m. – 5 p.m., Commons, Forum Room

LGBT Advanced Discussion Group
4:30 p.m. – 6 p.m., Commons, Shockoe Room

LGBT Social Network Group
5 p.m. – 6 p.m., OMSA, Commons, Room 215

Men of Color Discussion Group
4 p.m. – 5:30 p.m., OMSA, Commons, Room 215

Multicultural Speaker Series
3 p.m. – 5 p.m., Commons

OMSA Dialogue Series
7 p.m. – 8 p.m., Cabaniss Hall

OMSA Health & Wellness series
4 p.m. – 5 p.m., OMSA, Commons, Room 215

Women of Color Discussion Group
4 p.m. – 5:30 p.m., Commons, Shockoe Room

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Other OMSA events:
April 7 – 13 ICF Week
April 22 PACME Awards: 3 – 4:30 p.m. Richmond Salons

staff information

Beverly A. Walker, M.Ed
Interim Director

Faith A. Wilkerson, M.Ed
Interim Assistant Director

Ijuanzee I. Isom, BS
Education Support Specialist

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