

The Multicultural Resource Center NEWS

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MRC Welcomes You to the New Millennium

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FOR A MORE MEANINGFUL COLLEGE EXPERIENCE: GET INVOLVED AND BECOME A LEADER!

When most people think of college, they think primarily of the classroom experience. However, so much learning occurs outside the classroom, especially during participation in extracurricular activities. I encourage all MRC students to get involved in one or more of the hundreds of organizations and activities available at Penn State. By taking advantage of these opportunities, you can complement your coursework learning, expand your interests, meet new people, develop new skills, and make a difference in the Penn State community.

I especially encourage you to gain leadership experience in your chosen student organization. Most students who join a group spend their initial time learning the objectives of the group, meeting other members, and participating in some of the activities. Some students never go beyond this involvement. However, other students begin to think about taking on leadership responsibilities. They become committee chairpersons and eventually officers. The University offers individual workshops, as well as seminar series to help students develop leadership skills. Take advantage of them. The benefits of becoming a student leader are numerous. For instance, you will continuously improve your skills in time management, goal setting, social situations, communication, and interpersonal relationships. You probably will also learn to value cultural diversity, career and life planning, recreation, and philanthropic activities.

As a student leader, you will feel a greater sense of belonging to the University and its tradition of public service. You will also better prepare yourself to enter the work force, because you will have a greater understanding of balancing work, community activities, and relaxation. Hopefully you will work toward becoming the kind of leader that Sam Ervin, the famous senator who presided over the infamous Watergate Hearings in the 1970s, envisioned when he said, "A leader is someone who helps improve the lives of other people or improve the system they live under."

If you are interested in discussing how to become involved in extracurricular activities or how to develop leadership skills, come talk with your MRC counselor. Call 865-1773 and schedule an appointment today.

MRC Students Present and Past

offerings which focus on LGBT topics, and help in awareness of issues pertinent to the LGBT community.

Get Involved in "A Touch of Africa"

"A Touch of Africa" is a yearly event held in February and planned by the members of the African Student Association (ASA). Planning for this event starts early in the fall semester. This was my first time participating as I had recently transferred from Berks campus. I joined the ASA when I arrived at University Park to get to know students whose background was African as I am originally from Ghana.

On the day of the celebration, which was held at The Penn State Conference Center Hotel, I went to the kitchen to help cook the food for the dinner. More than twenty different kinds of dishes were prepared from all parts of Africa. The prepared food included Jollof Rice (rice and stew cooked together) from Ghana and Nigeria; Amada (yellow plantains fried in hot oil); Gali Foto (casava and other ingredients) and fried fish, all from Ghana and Togo. I also participated in the evening program; I was in the fashion show. Each part of the fashion show had a theme of a country such as Uganda, Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana. The Ghanaian portion involved a king and his wife, the queen mother, and their constituents who were dancers, sweepers, and linguists (a person who speaks for the chief). I was one of the dancers and wore a colorful cloth of orange, white, and black wrapped around my body with a white cloth tied around my waist. I also was in a dance from Zaire. In that skit, the chief was looking for a wife and would pick the best dancer. I danced and so did another student. The chief, unfortunately, chose the other dancer.

My involvement in the ASA and "A Touch of Africa" helped me have an easier transition to University Park than what I expected. I was able to meet new friends and help share the African culture with the Penn State community. The ASA is open to anyone who has an interest in African culture. Everyone is welcome and I encourage you to join.

Sylvia Fumey, College of Health and Human Development

LAMBDA STUDENT ALLIANCE AND ITS FIRST MULTICULTURAL DIRECTOR

As a first-year student living in Pennypacker Hall, *Sydell Payne* remembers feeling comfortable in the ethnically diverse residence hall. However, it wasn't long before she realized that the community outside her dormitory was largely ignorant of the issues related to race and even more so of issues facing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) people. "I always felt like I could blend in anywhere," said Sydell. However, she found blending in at Penn State more difficult. "I didn't fit in the gay community because I wasn't white, and I didn't fit in the black community because I was gay."

Sydell became involved in the *Lambda Student Alliance (LSA)*. LSA works to fight heterosexism and homophobia in the Penn State community through educational, political, and social activities. After three years of Sydell's continuous involvement, a new position was created, and she became the first Multicultural Director of the Alliance. Sydell hopes to send the message to students of color that "there is a place for them within LSA. I want to let minority students know there is a place for them in the LGBT movement here at Penn State."

The Lambda Student Alliance is currently involved in helping to recruit more LGBT faculty and staff, enlarging the number of course

Interested students can contact Sydell Payne (skp119@psu.edu) or visit the LSA Web site at <http://www.clubs.psu.edu/lambda/>.

YOU ASKED FOR IT - in the MRC questionnaire last spring students requested that MRC students who have graduated write about their life after Penn State. Here's the first in a new series of articles.

I Could Be Doing Other Things With My Life

I could be doing other things with my life right now, I thought to myself last year as I was battling my way through a sea of adolescents to my next class. Even after the ring of the bell, I still was shuffling through my bag, through my many folders, looking for the day's lesson plan and worksheets I had copied that morning. As I was doing this, my students were milling about the classroom talking and laughing, throwing pens, pencils, and erasers at each other. Then I remembered that I left that big pile of copies on top of my filing cabinet back in my room. So, I had no choice but to try to teach the lesson off the top of my head. I knew the material, but coming up with meaningful examples was the hard part. "All right," I bellowed at the top of my voice, "everybody sit down and get your homework out!" After calling to the few students who were always slow to get settled, the class finally got quiet. I struggled through the lesson, balking at a few questions students asked, and picked a few homework problems out of the book for students to work on as the bell rang. My head was pulsating as I walked to lunch.

I had days like this frequently during my first year of teaching. Needless to say, I sometimes thought to myself, *I could be doing other things with my life right now*. True, I could have been doing other things with my life. But what I realize now is that starting the first year of anything is hard. No matter what I could have been doing that first year out of college, I still would have dealt with the headaches that come with starting something new. Remember how hard it was studying for your first few exams, making friends, finding your way around in your first or transfer year at Penn State? Now, remember how much better and fun things got after your first year. Doing so will give you something to look forward to as you struggle through your first year of professional employment or graduate school.

After a month into my second year of teaching, I can say that this year is already going smoother than last year. I wake up every day looking forward to going to teach at my school. This is a job that lets me walk around all day from room to room talking with different people every day. Daily, I hear my students say something I find interesting. They say things that make me laugh, shake my head in wonder or confusion, or wish I were selectively deaf.

Had I not stood my ground, bit the bullet, and fought against every urge to give up and find something new, I wouldn't feel this way about teaching, which I find both enjoyable and very meaningful.

*Lawrence Lee, B.S. Secondary
Education, Mathematics Option*

Melissa Landrau-Rodriguez

¡Hola! My name is Melissa Landrau-Rodríguez and I'm originally from San Juan, Puerto Rico. I'm married to my own personal computer genius (too bad he doesn't make Gates' salary!). *Soy bilingüe*; so if you get tired of speaking in English, feel free to stop by and practice your *español*.

Hui Hawai'i Brings Hawaiian Culture to Penn State

In the fall of 1998, an enthusiastic group of Penn State students founded a support group for students from Hawai'i. Known as ***Hui Hawai'i*** (literally, Hawai'i Club), the organization presently includes students from five of the eight major Hawaiian islands, as well as members from the "mainland," or contiguous U.S. states.

The primary goal of *Hui Hawai'i* is to promote Hawaiian cultural awareness within the Penn State community. "Da Hui," as members know it, also provides social activities and strives to create a nurturing

*Minor in Anthropology
Graduated May 1998*

MRC's Newest Counselor

During my undergraduate years, I transferred from the University of Puerto Rico to Iowa State University where I was a super senior and tried majors in almost every college. Eventually, I graduated with a B.S. in Sociology and then earned a M.S. in Human Development & Family Studies.

At Iowa State, I had the opportunity to work in several areas of student services, including minority student affairs, Upward Bound, residence life, and the international students' office. I also enjoyed working with student organizations (even more than schoolwork – I confess).

Three years ago, I arrived at Penn State to pursue a Ph.D. in higher education. Presently, I need only to finish my dissertation (fun!) to become a Y2K "doctor." I'm currently the adviser to Sigma Lambda Gamma Sorority at Penn State, as well as the national V. P. for Program Development.

I am very excited to be a counselor at MRC and once again work directly with students. I can relate to the experience of moving to a new place, where people don't share your own cultural values and where you have to learn, not only what is written on the books, but also how things *really* work. I believe it is *your* responsibility to accept this challenge and seize every opportunity to get the most out of your experience at Penn State. I hope you know, however, that I'm here to make your road to success a bit easier. *¡Cuidense!* (Take Care!)

environment for students who are so far away from home.

Last spring ***Hui Hawai'i*** hosted the first annual Penn State Hawaiian Lu'au to a sold-out crowd at the Paul Robeson Cultural Center. Participants enjoyed many traditional Hawaiian foods, as well as a mixture of Asian-Pacific cuisine. The menu included ***kalua***

pua`a (roast pork); teriyaki beef; chicken long rice (chicken and Asian noodles); ***lomilomi i`a*** (Hawaiian seafood salad made with salmon); steamed white rice; fresh sliced pineapple (flown in from the island of Maui); ***haupia*** (coconut pudding); ***poi*** (a Hawaiian staple); and beverages like Kona coffee.

The after-dinner entertainment was provided by Polynesian Island Magic from Pittsburgh. The ensemble performed the music and dances of the islands of Polynesia. The audience participation was a special treat. It was a night of *ono* (delicious) food and great entertainment.

If you weren't able to get a ticket last year, plan to attend the Second Annual Penn State Hawaiian Lu`au this semester.

To contact *Hui Hawai'i*, please e-mail club president, Clifton Tay <cwt104@psu.edu>. For information about *Hawai'iana* (Hawaiian culture), e-mail club adviser, Dana P. Aina <dpa2@psu.edu>.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION: IN SEARCH OF FACULTY AND STAFF

Help! *It states on this education abroad application that I need a letter of recommendation.*

Help! *It states on this scholarship form that I need two letters of recommendation.*

Help! *It states on this graduate school application that I need three letters of recommendation.*

WHAT DO I DO?

1. ANTICIPATE THIS NEED AND ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS

Most students at one time or another during their college career will need letters of recommendation. This is one of the many reasons why it is imperative to get to know your adviser, counselor, and instructors starting your very first semester.

2. USE THE RECOMMENDATION FORM TO HELP DETERMINE THE BEST PERSON TO WRITE THE LETTER

Often there will be a required form, and it will state who the letter writer should be. For instance, law school applications may specifically ask for faculty recommendations. In addition, there may be a list of topics on which to write. Choose the person who can answer these questions concerning your ability, performance, and/or character the best.

3. REQUEST RECOMMENDATIONS AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE

Faculty and staff are usually very busy people and if asked too near the deadline for the recommendation, they may refuse your request. So, as soon as you know that you need a recommendation, request it from your proposed letter writer and do so during a scheduled private meeting.

4. PROVIDE HELPFUL MATERIALS TO THE LETTER WRITER

Give the letter writer any materials that you think would be helpful under the circumstances such as a transcript, résumé, writing sample, or draft of an application essay. Also ask if there is any further information that the letter writer would like from you.

5. SUPPLY THE LETTER WRITER WITH A FIRM DEADLINE AND A STAMPED ADDRESSED ENVELOPE

In order to ensure that your recommendation arrives in a timely fashion, inform the letter writer of the precise deadline. Check prior to the deadline to make sure that the recommendation has gone out and that the letter writer has no last minute questions concerning the process. Also provide a stamped addressed envelope for each recommendation as a courtesy.

For a more in-depth discussion of the art of getting the best recommendations, see your MRC counselor or a Career Services counselor.

A Student's Mini Guide to Coping with Stress

One typical characteristic of today's college student is that she or he is stressed out. Indeed, the findings of some recent studies have shown that today's students deal with more stress than previously. So, you say, what else is new. You already know this from first hand experience. **The bigger issue for you is, "What can I do to alleviate this stress from my life?"**

Actually a little stress is not a such a bad thing. Having some stress gets your adrenaline going and often helps you accomplish a lot. Having too much stress, unfortunately, often times makes you feel awful and shuts down your productivity. Using the analogy of a rubber band, positive stress is just the right amount of stress needed to stretch the band and make it useful. Negative stress snaps the band

What can you do so the rubber band won't snap?

Short-term ways to handle stress

Relax and take breaks. Schedule time to relax your mind and body. Perhaps for you this means exercising, daydreaming, watching a silly TV show or just taking some deep cleansing breaths.

Ask yourself whether it's worth being upset over the situation. You can choose to stay calm and ignore it. If the issue is important, confront it directly, talk it out with a sympathetic friend, or write it out in a letter that you don't send.

List all the things you think you need to do right away. Then prioritize the list and do only the top few. The rest can be first priority tomorrow.

Long-term ways to handle stress

Keep your expectations realistic. Don't expect perfection from yourself or others.

Think positively. Your mind sends signals to your body so make sure they're positive ones.

Make decisions. You can learn to live with the consequences or change your mind. In general, any decision, even consciously deciding to do nothing, is better than no decision.

Accept what you cannot change. If a problem is beyond your control, you're better off accepting it than spinning your wheels.

Live in the present. Learn from the past and move on. Become part of a support system. Let friends help you when you are under too much stress. Likewise, help them when they are overloaded.

Manage your time. Prioritizing and planning can keep the demands of college life from becoming overwhelming. Take care of your health. Exercise regularly, eat a balanced diet, and get enough sleep.

Take time for yourself. Make yourself your priority. Find time to relax—even if only for a few minutes—every day. Keep your sense of humor. Laughter helps relieve tension.

Another Valuable Resource at Penn State:

The OFFICE FOR DISABILITY SERVICES

The Office for Disability Services (ODS) is responsible for all disability-related concerns of Penn State students and employees. The staff serves as liaisons and referral sources between students and employees and other areas of the University. The ODS consists of a director, two disability specialist counselors, a counseling intern, an interpreter, an exam coordinator and two staff assistants. So how does ODS help students? Below are a few specific examples.

Jerome is a student with a documented learning disability. Though he excels in his academic field, he has difficulty writing. The ODS assisted him by arranging an accommodation to type his exams on a computer rather than hand write them.

Thea is a blind student. The ODS helped her obtain alternate format textbooks which may be in Braille, taped, or on computer disks.

Margaret and Craig are working on a group report about women with disabilities for their Women's Studies class. The ODS staff provided them with the information they needed to complete their report.

To learn more about ODS and its services contact the staff at (814) 863-1807 (voice or TTY) or visit their website at www.lions.psu.edu/ODS/text/ods.html.

Tutoring at MRC
Spring 2000

MRC is offering group tutoring for selected courses in the Student Resource Room, 122 Grange Building. This semester, tutoring will be offered for the following courses: Econ 2 & 4, Phys 215, and BiSci 4. Stop by to sign up for a group, or for information on other tutoring available on campus.

Are you interested in helping other students learn?

Why not become a tutor?

Come to 122 Grange or 220 Boucke for more information.

Tutoring at MRC is coordinated by the University Learning Resource Center.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!
**Come Join Our Student Advisory
Board**

The Student Advisory Board hard at work.

The Student Advisory Board (SAB) is the eyes and ears of the MRC, filtering back to the staff our students' experiences and concerns at Penn State. The Board also makes suggestions on how MRC can improve its services. For example, last semester the Board members brainstormed on ways to encourage our students to use our web page and its useful links. One of their ideas, a Student of the Month feature, is being put into place now (see the recruitment ad on the back of this newsletter). In addition, the Board helps out with our student events. For example, this semester the members

will help with our Annual Student, Staff, and Faculty Awards Reception.

If you wish to join or have further questions concerning the SAB, contact Andrea Commaker at the Center. The first meeting of the SAB in the spring will be held Wednesday, January 26, 2000. SEE YOU THEN!

Multicultural Resource Center (MRC)

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ASC1

DGF1

ATN1

MJS125

MXL256

DPA2

Students with last names

(B-F)

(G-J)

(K-M)

(N-R)

(S-W)

(A, X-Z)

COMING TO THE MRC WEB PAGE

<http://www.lions.psu.edu/mrc/>

A NEW FEATURE

MRC Student of the Month

Do you want your photograph on our web page?

Are you willing to share

your interesting background,
your worthwhile participation in community service,
your fabulous internship, job, educational experience, or
your fantastic plans for the future?

Do you have time to write a few paragraphs about it?

If so, WE WANT YOU as our student of the month.

Contact your MRC counselor for details.

This newsletter is available in alternative media on request.

The Multicultural Resource Center is a unit of the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity. The Pennsylvania State University is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. The Pennsylvania State University does not discriminate against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to the Affirmative Action Director, The Pennsylvania State University, 201 Willard Building, University Park PA 16802-2801; tel. (814) 865-4700/V; (814) 863-1150/TTY. U.Ed. OVP 00-20

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