

Diversity Matters!

A Quarterly Newsletter



Produced by:
The Inclusive Excellence Committee
The Multicultural Interest Group (MIG)

In this issue:

- p. 2** **The 12th Annual Diversity Summit**
Author: Kerry Gagnon
- p. 3** **Faculty Spotlight: Tim Sweeney**
Author: Patee Zarolia
- p. 4** **CO-LEADS Conference**
Author: Lane L. Nesbitt
- p. 5** **Helping International Students Succeed at DU**
Author: Pilyoung Kim
- p. 6** **Dissertation Project:**
Author: Shelby Scott

A Letter from Your Editors:

Welcome to the 3rd edition of Diversity Matters and our first newsletter of the 2013-14 academic year!



Diversity Matters! is a collaborative effort between the Inclusive Excellence Committee and the Multicultural Interest Group (MIG) within the department. The goal of our quarterly newsletter is to highlight some of the multicultural work being conducted by our community members. In addition we want to enhance the ways in which our department members connect and collaborate with one another.

In this edition we bring to you an overview of some recent conferences at which some of our members participated, as well as achievements and perspectives of our colleagues relevant to diversity in our department and beyond. We hope this newsletter encourages and inspires you to further engage and appreciate multiculturalism both professionally, as well as personally.

Kerry Gagnon, Child Clinical Psychology Graduate Student
Howard Markman, Psychology Faculty

The 12th Annual Diversity Summit

Written by Kerry Gagnon

The 12th annual University of Denver Diversity Summit, held on May 11th, 2013, was again a success! The Diversity Summit celebrates the success of DU's commitment to inclusive excellence (IE) as well as the contributions of leaders in promoting diversity inside and outside the DU community. The department had a strong presence at this year's Diversity Summit, with four workshops lead by several graduate students in the department. Below are brief summaries of each workshop. The workshops were on various topics, each uniquely highlighting our department's ongoing commitment to increasing awareness and competency in multicultural issues.

Grassroots Diversity Organization Development

Presenters: Lisa McFadyen-Ketchum, Rachel Lynn Miller, and Aleja Parsons

The workshop included a panel, composed of leaders of grassroots diversity groups both on campus and in the community. Panel members discussed their personal experiences and offered expertise in forming grassroots organizations focused on promoting diversity. Discussion topics included: the impetus for the group's inception, individual group's goals and mission statement, common and unique barriers to group formation and maintenance, as well as, ideas for increasing membership and group participation. The overall goal of the session was to provide a variety of perspectives on the establishment of grassroots organizations, as well as to provide practical startup tools and techniques, build local connections, and motivate participants to initiate groups focused on diversity within their communities.

Privilege in Distress: Religion in Different Contexts

Presenters: Larissa D'Abreu, Kerry Gagnon, Kayla Knopp, and Shelby Scott

The workshop used examples of religious privilege in the United States to introduce the concept of distressed privilege. Through highlighting regent challenges to Christian privilege in mental health treatment, public education, and government, the group discussed the difference between distressed privilege and discrimination, and provided a framework for understanding the experiences of both privileged and non-privileged groups in a changing world.

Tools to Establish a Safe Environment to Discuss Sensitive Issues

Presenters: Patee Zarolia, Charlene Collibee, Eliana Hurwich-Reiss, Marina Mendoza, and Jessica Technow

This workshop presented participants with tools to create a safe environment in which to discuss sensitive issues. Through small group discussions, participants learned about ways to establish plans and strategies to deal with challenges that may arise, and how to effectively implement those strategies.

(The Diversity Summit, Continued)



When Well-Intended Diversity Education Fails to Deliver and How to Ensure its Success

Presenters: Ana Draghici and Heidi Blocker

Diversity education is a popular approach to promoting equity, in the corporate world as well as in university settings. Most often, this comes in the form of workshops for employees/students and diversity training for management. Despite their popularity, however, these measures reportedly failed to reduce bias over the past 30 years since they started being implemented, and routinely backfire. Instead of the “one-size-fits-all” approach to diversity education, programs should carefully analyze the needs for promoting diversity in their specific organization, and carefully design their interventions based on that. This workshop provided examples of good (and bad) practices and offered participants practical tools to design impactful diversity education programs.



Faculty Spotlight: Tim Sweeny

Written by Parea Zarolia

Our newest faculty member, Dr. Tim Sweeny, brings his fascinating research and his commitment to inclusive excellence to our department. His research aims to understand how neural and cognitive mechanisms shape what we see and hear, and how perceptual processes guide our social and emotional behaviors. Using his background in vision science, Dr. Sweeny is implementing a community outreach program that brings hands-on demonstrations of vision science to students from under-represented groups. Geared towards high-school and middle-school students, the program begins with a demonstration of color-blindness, allowing students to actually experience this phenomenon. After this powerful and memorable activity, students divide into groups to explore other facets of vision science and gain hands-on experience, learning that science can be fun! Through this program, Dr. Sweeny aims to encourage students to tap into their own curiosity, and to show students, even those who are science averse, that their intuitions are scientific in nature.

Dr. Sweeny is currently gathering materials and forming connections with local schools to get the program off the ground. He plans to spend the winter quarter putting together the various demonstrations and rehearsing with members of the department who are interested in participating. If you are interested in helping with any portion of the program or have any questions contact Dr. Tim Sweeny at Timothy.Sweeny@du.edu.

CO-LEADS Conference

Written by Lane L. Nesbitt

I recently attended The Colorado Leadership for Equity, Advocacy, and Discovering Social Justice (CO-LEADS), which is an annual summit that encourages college students to discuss social justice, activism, and social change. The conference focused on addressing privilege, which is the source of oppression (i.e., as some groups obtain privilege, other groups become oppressed). This year's keynote address was given by representatives from the Brown Boi Project, which is an organization committed to addressing and transforming the privilege of masculinity, gender, and race in order to achieve racial and gender justice. The Brown Boi representatives explained that, although we are hesitant to acknowledge our own privilege, it is important to do so.

The conference also focused on privilege as a spectrum—we all have some privilege, and we all experience some level of oppression. During one of the workshops that I attended, participants completed the Privilege Beads Exercise, developed by Dr. Brenda Allen, which involved reading statements about privilege in several categories and taking a bead for every statement of privilege that applied to them. There were eight categories (gender, race, religious, nationality, sexuality, class, ability, cis-gender) with eight statements each (e.g., “I do not have to think about the message my wardrobe sends about my sexual availability,” “When I ask to see the person in charge, odds are I will face a person of my race”). Everyone in the room took at least one bead, and no one took all 64 beads. I found that this exercise showed that, rather than thinking of oneself categorically (e.g., as a wealthy, Asian, able-bodied, majority-religion man), it is more useful to actively deconstruct the privileges that we all have in many categories (e.g., what privileges we accept on a daily basis, and how those privileges are denied to others).



One of the Brown Boi's current projects focuses on the ways in which intersections of race and gender push boys of color out of the classroom and into systems such as prison. While boys of color experience a lot of gender privilege, they also experience oppression on the basis of race and on the basis of the interaction between gender, race, and other identities. The Brown Boi representatives spoke about the importance of “not cosigning” injustice (i.e., failing to speak out against injustice communicates to others that we functionally support the injustice), but also forgiving oneself and others when harms occur. A balance between the two is difficult to reach, and requires us to have conversations about privilege together and to hold one another accountable. This conference had a positive impact on me both personally and professionally, as it encouraged me to develop an awareness of privilege and take steps to minimize the oppression that I and others encounter on a daily basis.

Helping International Students Succeed at DU

Written by Pilyoung Kim

At DU, there has been a significant increase in the size of international undergraduate and graduate student body. In 2013, 7% of all freshmen were international and across the campus there are currently more than 1400 international students from 89 countries. However, as indicated in the Campus Climate Report by Center for Multicultural Excellence (CME) in 2013, the DU community expresses mixed feelings toward international students. A survey on 3747 participants reports “a majority of undergraduate and graduate students disagree that international students are underrepresented” and, “qualitative data illustrated a distinct angst regarding international students.” The specific information on how international students perceived a campus climate was not yet available in the report.

However, in my anecdotes of interacting with students, international undergraduate and graduate students are likely to experience a less than welcoming climate toward them on campus. Typically, as soon as arriving on the campus, international students face significant language difficulties and high pressure of adapting to a new culture. In addition to these overwhelming challenges, the ambivalent or not highly welcoming campus climate is likely to make them more vulnerable to limited academic success and negative experience at DU. Therefore, targeted efforts to support transition to the DU for international students and to improve understanding of international students on campus are increasingly important.

Aligned with the efforts, I have been interested in supporting the international students for their transition to the DU campus. First, working with the director of the English Language Center (ELC) and Dr. Eleanor McNees, an Associate Dean of AHSS, I have given a lecture on cultural psychology to international students of the ELC’s highest level class. The students were about to transition to regular classes at DU, so my lecture was a part of the efforts to provide them with an opportunity to be in a lecture of typical regular classes and more information on acculturation processes. Second, as a part of DU’s international week, I participated in a panel consisting of international faculty members in AHSS to advise international students on challenges they were experiencing such as overcoming cultural differences in interacting with peers and faculty members at DU. Third, working with Psi Chi and Psychology Club and other faculty members, I am currently organizing a mentoring program for international undergraduate students who are interested in majoring in psychology.

There are many other ideas and possibilities to support international students across the campus and to improve campus climates toward international students, and I look forward to working with students, faculty and staff members in the department and the DU campus.

Dissertation Project: The Impact of Communication and Gay-Related Stressors on Relationship Functioning



Written by Shelby Scott

I received the 2013 Roy Scrivner Memorial Grant from the American Psychology Foundation for my dissertation project that focuses on how communication and gay-related stressors relate to relationship functioning in female same-sex couples. My project involves recruiting over 100 lesbian couples to come to DU for in-depth research sessions in which they fill out questionnaires about their relationships and participate in videotaped problem discussions and support talks. Since July, we have completed over 50% of our targeted recruitment goal and hope to complete data collection by next May. I hope this research will help inform clinicians and relationship education leaders about female same-sex couples in order to be more competent and sensitive to their needs.

In addition, I have also been collaborating with Dr. Sarah Whitton from the University of Cincinnati regarding a relationship education program specifically for female same-sex couples. This project will require recruiting 12 couples in Denver and 12 couples in Cincinnati to participate in the pilot study. This project is funded by the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association and will test specific modules for female same-sex couples that are not traditionally included in relationship education programs (e.g., relationship disclosure, facing gay-related discrimination). We hope this project will serve as a first step in creating relationship education programs specifically designed to meet the needs of LGBT couples.

Next Issue!

We will produce the next issue (Vol. 3, No. 2, Winter Quarter 2014) of *Diversity Matters!* in the next few months. If you would like to contribute in any way, please contact Kerry Gagnon (kerrygagnon@gmail.com). We look forward to hearing your feedback and to introducing two new co-editors for the Winter 2014 newsletter!

American Psychological Association Minority Fellowship Program: Call for Fellowship Applications

MFP Fellows receive much more than financial support; they join a community committed to their success. Fellows are mentored by leading ethnic minority psychologists and become part of a lifetime network of professional psychologists interested in ethnic minority behavioral health issues.

Fellowship Opportunities:

- **Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Predoctoral Fellowship**

This fellowship is aimed at those pursuing doctoral degrees in clinical, counseling, and school psychology, as well as other behavioral health services or policy areas.

- **Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Postdoctoral Fellowship**

This fellowship is aimed at early career doctoral recipients who are interested in developing a career in behavioral health services or policy.

About the Minority Fellowship Program

The APA MFP is an innovative, comprehensive, and coordinated training and career development program that promotes psychological and behavioral outcomes of ethnic minority communities. MFP is committed to increasing the number of ethnic minority professionals in the field and enhancing our understanding of the life experiences of ethnic minority communities.

The application deadline is January 15, 2014

**For more information or to apply, please visit our web site at
www.apa.org/pi/mfp**