



Mosaic

Multicultural
Student Services

Volume 1, Issue 1
August 2001

Welcome to the College of Education

by Dr. David H. Monk, Dean of the College of Education

I am writing to welcome you to the Penn State College of Education. Whether you are a newcomer or a returning student, we are pleased to count you among the students who have gained admission to the College. It has been a busy and productive summer as we have worked to get ready for the next academic year. Our searches for new faculty members have been wonderfully successful and we will be welcoming seven new professors within the next year.

These new faculty members will enrich the diversity of the College and come to us from leading universities from around the world. They will

join a faculty that prides itself on the quality of its teaching and scholarship, and I am confident that you will enjoy the interactions that lie ahead.



Dr. David H. Monk
Dean of the
College of Education

We are also working hard to recruit students of color and to provide the support services that all of our students need to

succeed and thrive in the College.

I encourage you to take advantage of the student services that are available from our Advising Center and to pay particular attention to the services that are available through the Office of Multicultural Student Services. We are interested in your thoughts about how to meet the needs of students, and I hope that you will become actively involved with these offices.

Again, welcome to the College, and keep your eyes open for a happy announcement that I expect to make soon about a new Student Lounge in Chambers Building.



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Creating Our Pleasant Place

by Maria J. Schmidt, Director of Multicultural Student Services

*"Education is making one's mind a pleasant place to spend the rest of your life."
Sydney J. Harris*

Beginnings, as we know, are always overflowed with enthusiasm and excitement for the possibilities ahead. But frequently, as we settle in our daily routine, we let apathy and frustration take room, making the path to walk so much more challenging. Although there is no magical recipe for boosting motivation, it might help to remember that we are here for much more than to secure a future job. We are here because we know we

have a responsibility to ourselves: a responsibility to expand our minds and explore our souls; the responsibility of our self-realization. Then, when feeling tired and doubting the purpose of anything and everything, let's think of the above quotation, because only WE can create that *pleasant place to spend the rest of our lives*.

To all: ¡BIENVENIDOS!

P.S. Thanks to our Dean,

Dr. David H. Monk, Dr. Keith B. Wilson, Jacob Easley, and Bridgette Turner for their contributions to our first newsletter. Very special thanks to Sandra Rodriguez who worked all summer in the development of this newsletter and the soon-to-be-available website.



Ms. Maria J. Schmidt,
Director of
Multicultural
Student Services

Special Points of Interest

- ☺ Our Dean welcomes you!
- ☺ Words of encouragement from Maria.
- ☺ Why Mosaic?
- ☺ How does it feel to be part of the College of Education? (Written from different points of view)
- ☺ An SROP scholar writes about her experience.

When I was given the task of putting together a newsletter for the students that receive the services of the Office of Multicultural Student Services in the College of Education, I had to accept that I was scared. Moreover, I am still scared. The most difficult part was looking for a title that could describe the audience of this newsletter. But, suddenly I remembered a word that captured my attention when I was reading a chapter of the book *Education Reform and Social Change* (Walsh, 1996).

In this book, Dr. Peter J. Negroni uses the word "mosaic" to refer to the United

States society. He says that the United States is made of different races and cultures with diverse values and perspectives on life; furthermore, with the arrival of new immigrant groups, "the United States is experiencing an increasing mosaic rather than the melting process that is often spoken of in the literature (p.213)." He adds to this description the role of education in this process, "This makes education for all more difficult than in homogeneous societies. Yet this difference may be our biggest asset (p.213)."

As soon as I remembered this beautiful

concept, I thought it was perfect for this newsletter.

Therefore, I decided to contact Dr. Negroni and ask him if I could use his idea of the mosaic of cultures as the title of this newsletter. When I received his answer, I was pleased to know that he had accepted my request. He also felt that it was a great honor for him.

Finally, the title of this newsletter describes you and me, and all the multicultural people that are part of the College of Education. It is our duty to make of the College of Education a unique **Mosaic**.

Do Racial and Ethnic Minority Faculty Make a Difference in the Lives of Students in the College of Education?

by Keith B. Wilson, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Rehabilitation Education

Let me enthusiastically welcome all students, particularly the racial and ethnic minority students to The Pennsylvania State University. Please take advantage of the many services that are offered to assist you with your transition within the College of Education and within the larger university. I am sure you will have a most productive and enlightened experience during your tenure at Penn State. I would also like to extend a friendly hand if you would like to personally come by my office (308 CEDAR Building) and introduce yourself to me. Again, welcome to one of the best, academically well-respected universities in the world!

I have been a faculty member in the College of Education going for five years. Since that time, I have been involved in several projects that involved racial and ethnic minority students within the College of Education. Within this context, I teach both graduate and undergraduate classes within the Department of Counselor Education, Counseling Psychology, and Rehabilitation Services at the university. Based on the many conversations I have had with both graduate and undergraduate students in and outside my department, my presence and assistance are important here at The Pennsylvania State University, College of Education because:

1) Students report that I tend to

VALIDATE their experiences of being racial and/or ethnic minority;

- 2) Students report that it's good to see someone who looks like they do in front of a class;
- 3) Students report that it's good to REALLY talk to a racial or ethnic minority faculty member who can relate not only to their experiences, but can also provide a context in which they must operate at The Pennsylvania State University;
- 4) Students also report that they talk about things with me that they cannot talk about with White American faculty members (comments usually come from African American students I supervise in practicum).

Because many of the students I teach have never had a person of color teach them, I also see teaching at Penn State as an opportunity to expand not only the experiences of racial and ethnic minority students, but also the experiences that White American students have with teachers of color. Many of the thank you cards (letters) I have received from students over the last four years have been from my White American students (four or five a year). Below is a card from one of my White American undergraduate students:

Dear Dr. Wilson,

"As I reflect back on my Penn

State career, I wanted to thank you for making a difference. I really enjoyed taking my Introduction to Vocational Rehabilitation course with you last summer. I feel this course will come in handy as I enter the work force as a special education teacher. You were an incredible professor. One who not only cared about the taught material but your students as well. It made a huge impression!

As I look forward to my future autistic support classroom, I hope that I can follow in your footsteps and be a teacher who makes a difference."

Again, the presence of racial and ethnic minority faculty members on campus are good for the entire student body, not only for racial and ethnically diverse students within the College of Education. We all must be open to the possibility of giving and learning from those who may look and/or talk differently than ourselves. This is also our continued challenge within the context of the large society.

Personal Experience as a Faculty Member of Color

Because I have taught at large, small, predominately White American, and predominately African American universities and colleges, my experiences have been both comprehensive and intense.

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The Race Experience of Graduate School

by Jacob Easley II

So, what effects has my ethnicity, as an African American, had on my experiences here at Penn State University? How fitting is this question, particularly following last semester's protest against hate by African American students and their allies? By arranging these two questions as compliments, I am taken back to my search for graduate programs in education. As such, I have become keenly aware of race/ethnicity as a variable in my decision to attend Penn State and how race has contributed to my experiences as a graduate student.

Race/ethnicity, however, has played an important role both in my decision to attend Penn State as well as in some of the professional opportunities that the university has afforded to me. A vital factor in attending Penn State was funding. Not to downplay my own intellectual and academic worth, but my worry over funding was eased by a special fellowship offered to minority students. Besides the warm reception, the promise of academic rigor and the opportunity to build my own area of specialty (with the support of well informed faculty members), the fellowship was a strong factor in my decision to attend Penn State versus another well-known and reputable university in the

northeast. I do not for a second suggest that only minority students receive graduate funding nor that all minority students apply financial assistance at the graduate level. However, my racial identity has indeed not only opened the door, but has made walking through the door (graduate matriculation) easier.

"As the racial dynamics of America's classrooms continue to change, so must we leaders prepare ourselves for the gift of working outside of our comfort zones of traditional ways of thinking about race and ethnicity, ..."

While I am accustomed to being the only or one of the few minorities on the job and in the classroom, I can strongly speculate that a new minority student without a similar background could face severe culture shock by attending Penn State. To do so, one must be secure within his/her racial/ethnic identity and not expect the larger population to always think nor see things in the same manner. In my department, for example, race is a topic that rarely surfaces. However, I must applaud the effort of many faculty members for inviting critical discussions

about the inclusion of women in American society. Diversity is the buzzword, yet there is no immediate need to develop a consciousness that supports the notion of diversity. This point can be supported by making a quick scan of the campus and State College. While people are polite, there still exists a lack of understanding of ethnic diversity on the part of many fellow scholars outside a smorgasbord of culinary pleasures. As one of the limited number of American born minorities in my department, I have sat in on several classroom discussions in which fellow classmates found it uncomfortable, awkward, or troubling to talk about race in America. This must be of concern when considering that my colleagues and I are and will continue to be the leaders in the American educational systems. As the racial dynamics of America's classrooms continue to change, so must we leaders prepare ourselves for the gift of working outside of your comfort zones of traditional ways of thinking about race and ethnicity. I do, however, pose the question as to what extent universities should play a role in such preparation.

Jacob Easley, II is a second year Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, and a Holmes-Puksar/Bunton-Waller Scholar. Mr. Easley is specializing in Professional Development with an emphasis in Urban Education Leadership.

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As a minority faculty member, I have received a tremendous amount of support not only in my department and college, but also at the university level. Because Penn State is a microcosm of the larger society in which racial and ethnic minorities must function, I do run into cultural barriers that, at times, make communicating with some of my White American peers a challenge (notwithstanding personalities). In my opinion, it is these cultural barriers that affect the retention of many racial and ethnic minorities not only at Penn State, but most predominantly White American universities where you have racial and ethnic minorities on the faculty and staff. These culture barriers are not totally new to racial and ethnic minority faculty members at predominately White American universities, a common refrain. My

(our) experiences in the State College community (outside the university) are even more tenuous. Because I truly believe that most people are not mean spirited, many pockets of the university make me and my family feel truly welcomed and honored to be at University Park.



*Keith B. Wilson, Ph.D., CRC, NCC
E-mail: kbw4@psu.edu*

SROP Experience

by Bridgette Turner, SROP Scholar

My experience here as a SROP scholar has been outstanding to say the least. Words cannot express the gratitude that I feel about having the opportunity to come here, do research, and gain an abundance of knowledge and experience.

I decided to come to Penn State because I wanted a unique type of exposure before graduating. I wanted more exposure in my field than what was offered to me. I also wanted to challenge myself. My experience has convinced me that this is the place to be. I aspire to come here in the spring to begin my master's in youth and family education. After completion of my master's I would like to begin working on my doctorate degree to become closer to my goal of opening an academy. Last, but not least, this experience has taught me what it means to be disciplined and the importance of networking. I would like to give thanks to everyone in the SROP program for making this a wonderful experience. One that I will never forget. Again, thank you all!

Bridgette Turner is a senior at the University of Georgia, and was an SROP scholar in the College of Education this Summer under the mentorship of Dr. Jamie M. Myers.



Multicultural Student Services
College of Education

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Mosaic News

Do you want to submit articles, ideas or express your opinion?
Just send an E-mail to Sandra at: sqr107@psu.edu.

Are you a new multicultural student at the College of Education?
Send us your e-mail, local address, and telephone number as soon as possible.

The Office of Multicultural Student Services has two mailing lists:
L-MSSUG- Undergraduate Students
L-MSSGR- Graduate Students

This is our way of communicating with you and sending you important information. If you are not on one of these lists, and would like to be added to it, send Sandra an E-mail at : sqr107@psu.edu.

The **New Student Reception** for the students of the College of Education will be held at the Nittany Lion Inn (Alumni Fireside Lounge) at 4:00 p.m. on September 5th, 2001.



August 2001



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18 *Arrival Weekend *Arrival Day for New Students
19*Arrival Weekend *Graduate School Convocation	20 *Student Registration Deadline *Leave of absence deadline *MRC Orientation	21 *Classes begin for the Fall Semester 2001 *Late registration and drop/add period begins	22	23	24	25 *Graduate Retention Conference
26	27	28	29	30*Late registration and drop/add period ends	31	