

Dear Potsdam College Community,

Many of our community members have been a part of conversations about race and ethnicity on this campus, conversations which have addressed some of the issues and problems that people of color are experiencing. These issues are serious ones that touch on identity, relationships, educational climate, and a whole host of other factors that affect one's ability to learn. When people feel "less than," feel afraid of being targeted every day, or feel their voices are easily mischaracterized, they are facing challenges that they should not have to experience as students in our institution of learning. We are proud of the recent voices of dissent and support regarding the campus's handling of race and ethnicity, and we want to assure these students that we have heard their voices.

The Diversity in Action Coalition (DIAC) is a committee appointed by the college President, and we are working on a number of programs. Some were started early last fall, and others are in direct response to the requests made by students at the Campus Forum on Race in November and the MLK Day of Reflection in January. We are responding to these major requests/demands from students: training for faculty to respond effectively to discussions of race in classroom; expansion of CFD; create ways for white students to learn more about racism and how to be an ally; assess and improve campus climate in general for students of color.

Calendar: CFD keeps a wall calendar of campus events relevant to diversity. With the help of Public Affairs, DIAC is creating a web-based calendar, to be active by fall semester. There we'll post events sponsored by DIAC and CFD as well as other campus and community events relevant to diversity. Please send event information to Dr. Jennifer Mitchell, DIAC Coordinating Committee Chair, at mitchejk@potsgdam.edu.

DIAC subcommittees: DIAC will be restructuring around four subcommittees: Bias Response, Diversity Programming, Community Outreach, Professional Development, and Coordinating Committee.

Review of previous Campus Task Force on Diversity Reports from 2004 and 2006.

Campus Climate Survey: Sean Partridge, a DIAC member, and Dr. Kelly Bonnar, the principal investigator of the Campus Climate Survey, worked with other DIAC members and the Dean of Students Chip Morris to develop a survey that would help to determine how welcome, respected, and well-served various parties on campus feel. The results are currently being analyzed.

CFD: Director Sheila Marshall retires at the end of August 2015. A Transitional Advisory Committee will clarify CFD mission and goals before a search begins for a new Director. President Esterberg has expressed her desire to strengthen and expand CFD and to support a smooth transition at CFD. Dean of Students Chip Morris will be invited to CFD student groups' meetings to provide updates.

Student ambassadors to DIAC: At the November Campus Forum on Race, a number of students expressed interest in serving as representatives to DIAC. DIAC Vice-Chair for Student Initiatives Jully Gomez is working to convene those who have accepted their appointments.

Diversity Programming: DIAC is sponsoring three events this semester: Film and discussion on race, racism, and white privilege 3/11 at 7pm in Kellas 103; Diversity in Action Workshop 3/24 at 7pm in Knowles MPR; and Speaker Dr. Margaret Bass on 4/10 at 1pm in Kellas106.

Focus Groups: To complement the Campus Climate Survey, we plan to interview students of color in order to understand better their daily experiences on campus. This plan is awaiting IRB approval.

Training Grant: Members of DIAC are part of a group convened by the Provost to seek a \$10,000 SUNY grant to fund faculty, staff, and student training to improve campus climate for students of color. Even if the grant is not awarded to Potsdam, DIAC would be part of efforts to hold an ongoing series of trainings and discussion groups.

Racial harassment and incident handbook: DIAC, with Dr. Stebbins, Special Assistant to President on Diversity, will design a handbook on how to respond to and report incidents of racial harassment on campus.

In addition to addressing race and ethnicity, DIAC is continuing to work on other forms of diversity on campus, including gender, sexuality, and disabilities.

Students are the catalyst for these discussions. You have an important voice that our campus needs to hear and one that will challenge faculty, staff, and administrators to actively engage in the discussion and assist in “being the change we all wish to see” at SUNY Potsdam and in the broader community. Please continue to share your concerns, needs, and experiences. Any member of DIAC is available to hear what you have to say. The members of DIAC are listed below.

Sincerely,

SUNY Potsdam’s Diversity in Action Coalition (DIAC)

Tim Ashley, Member
Kelly Bonnar, Member
Latesha Fussell, Coord. Comm. Member
Francois Germain, Member
Bethany Goeke, Member
Sharon House, Member
Sheila Marshall, Member
Jennifer Mitchell, Coord. Comm. Chair
Gena Nelson, Member
Tom Nesbitt, Member
Sean Patridge, Member
Annette Robbins, Member
Jenica Rogers, Member
Oscar Sarmiento, Coord. Comm. Member
Shaili Singh, Member
Susan Stebbins, Member

Lonel Woods, Member
John Youngblood, Chair

Students:
Jully Gomez, Vice-Chair for Student Initiatives
Shantel Clothier, Member
Narise Connor, Member
Darel Diaz, Member
Jean Huallanca, Member
Aryol Prater, Member
Nya Starr, Member
Shadie Thompson, Member
Elisah White, Member