

THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO



Fedearia A. Nicholson

As we prepare for another exciting academic year, we must celebrate our most important stakeholders — the students we serve! At the heart of what we do in the Office of Multicultural Development (OMD), and through our programming and outreach, students are always at the forefront of our awareness.

OMD has many programs and services to help students adjust to a new college environment, build and strengthen their academics and to become leaders here on campus. Here are some of the programs offered:

ADVANCE, Our two-day orientation for multicultural students, Peer Mentoring Services, where we match students with a mentor to help with the academic and social adjustment to college life and our supplemental advising system, 4PAS.

Although UA currently offers more than 40 learning communities for first year students, OMD provides three year-long communities — each including approximately 25 students who take two to four classes together to promote the academic and social integration of multicultural students into the University. By participating, students get to know their classmates, establish relationships with their professors, receive personalized advising and have the opportunity to lease a laptop during their first academic year. OMD offers the following learning communities to incoming students:

Our Passage Learning Community, one of the first communities at The University of Akron, is thriving and aiding students in their academic and social integration of campus while equipping them with leadership training and providing them with service learning opportunities. This year our students met the three doctors who are authors of the bestseller, “The Pact.” In addition, they participated in Rethinking Race: Black, White and Beyond. The two-week celebration commemorates President Bill Clinton’s visit to campus nearly 12 years ago to host his first Town Hall Meeting on Race Relations.

PASSAGE participants also have the opportunity to be assigned a peer mentor, attend study tables and participate in a community service project that is connected to their Student Success Seminar course.

Students in any major — along with undecided students — are welcome to participate. After their first year in **PASSAGE**, students have completed nearly 70 percent of their general education requirements.

Students Advancing During New Student Orientation

During the summer months, the Office of Multicultural Development (OMD) eagerly awaits the arrival of the incoming class. In partnership with the Office of New Student Orientation, OMD hosts a supplemental orientation program called **ADVANCE**. This orientation is designed to meet the needs of first year multicultural students by connecting them to current students, faculty and staff.

Participating in **ADVANCE** helps students get a jumpstart and provides a smooth transition from high school to college life. During the **ADVANCE** day, students have the opportunity to choose from three different breakout sessions, including “How can I get Involved: Leadership Opportunities,” “Choosing a Major” and “Succeeding in College: One Decision at a Time.” These workshops are designed to provide an informative and interactive learning experience. The parents of prospective students attend a session titled “Helping My Student Succeed.” In this session, parents get helpful information on how to support their student during their first year in college and connect them to resources that will help them along the way.

Students participating in **ADVANCE** also have the unique opportunity to stay overnight and experience a glimpse of what it will be like to live in a residence hall. This has always been a special part of **ADVANCE**, since the overnight stay has been eliminated from the general UA orientation experience.

The **ADVANCE** orientation concludes with a meal in Martin University Center and a question-and-answer panel in which members of the campus community answer questions from the incoming students and their parents about such departments as Residence Life and Housing, Athletics, The University of Akron Police Department, Financial Aid, Student Judicial, Counseling Center and Testing Services.

One **ADVANCE** participant and first year student at UA, Regina Houston, was enthusiastic about the day.

“I thought I was going to struggle my freshman year until I attended **ADVANCE** Orientation and learned about all the wonderful programs and services OMD has to offer, including the learning communities and peer mentoring. After attending **ADVANCE**, I was confident my freshman year was going to be a success.”

AIESHA L. MILLER
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT



2009 WOMEN TRAILBLAZERS PANEL

Focus on Leadership and Mentoring

The Office of Multicultural Development held its third annual Women Trailblazers Panel on March 5 in Martin University Center. This highly anticipated event, which coincides with Women's History Month activities on campus, features female leaders from all over the country who are highly accomplished, professionally and personally.

This year's panel represented various cultures, careers and backgrounds, including two UA faculty members; Dr. Cynthia Flynn Capers, interim dean of the College of Education, and Dr. Helen Qammar, director for the Institute for Teaching and Learning and associate professor of chemical and biomolecular engineering. Other panelists were Theresa Carter, president of OMNOVA Solutions Foundation; Dr. Marigold Linton, director of the American Indian Outreach at The University of Kansas; and Lisa Vidacs, senior vice president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland. Panel moderator was Debra Adams Simmons, managing editor of the Cleveland Plain Dealer, who had prior experience, since she served on the panel last year as a trailblazer.

Adams Simmons began by asking panelists about their leadership style, mentors, balancing work and family life, and how each element, if any, played a role in their lives. The responses were varied and interesting.

The panelists often answered the questions in a lighthearted and candid manner as they spoke of the challenging experiences in their lives.

Theresa Carter pointed out that in her opinion, "Females are often seen as being either too hard or too soft in the business world."

Lisa Vidacs noted that, "Women are often asked if they can have it all, but you almost never hear that same question being posed to a male!"

The topic of mentoring was important to many of the panelists. Their role models ranged from a young inspiring mother to a male business associate. It was unanimously agreed that a mentor is a very important role and often makes a big difference personally and professionally. One panelist thanked her husband for his unwavering love and support over the years.

And their goals for the future?

"I have things planned all the way up to age 95," Marigold Linton responded.

"Who says you cannot?" asked Helen Qammar.

And finally, Cynthia Capers shared her motto, "Live to love, love to live."

MEGAN VANCE, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT
ARCHIVES OF THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGY
CO-SPONSOR OF THE WOMEN TRAILBLAZERS

Student Achievement Brunch — Celebrating Success

More than 215 multicultural students who have earned at least a 3.0 grade point average or higher and have completed more than 48 credit hours were honored at the annual Student Achievement brunch, held on April 18 in Quaker Station. Family, friends and loved ones were on hand to share in the celebration of their academic achievements. In addition, a wide representation of deans, faculty and staff from across campus were on hand to offer support and encouragement to the award recipients.

Keynote speaker for the event was Dr. David Baker, who is director of UA's Archives of the History of American Psychology, as well as interim senior vice president and provost, and chief operation officer.

Baker delivered a powerful presentation on the life and accomplishments of Dr. Inez Beverly Prosser, the first African American female to earn a doctorate degree. His message to the audience was one of inspiration and overcoming adversity. He also provided the audience with an opportunity to see her actual diploma and other memorabilia, which had been donated to the archives by her family.

The Office of Multicultural Development would like to encourage the continued growth and successes of students of color and congratulate all those honored at this year's Student Achievement Brunch!

RONDA WILLIAMS
COORDINATOR FOR CAREER PLANNING AND MARKETING
OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT



Top: College of Engineering student achievers and staff (l-r), Osama Elbuluk, Eileen Boyd, Antonio Samuel, and Dr. Julie Zhao, Visiting Assistant Professor, College of Engineering.
Bottom: Individuals attending the Academic Achievement Brunch look over the donated memorabilia of Dr. Inez Beverly Prosser.



Accomplishing Leadership Outside the Classroom

After successfully completing two years in economics and Spanish in the Honors College, I have found my campus experience to be thoroughly enjoyable. I met Nikki Giovanni, a famous civil rights poet, and have had the privilege of speaking to urban youth at a local elementary school. I have been involved in speech and debate, Residence Life and Housing and the Board of Trustees. My involvement has broadened my horizon, which will enable me to help others and achieve future career goals.

In speech and debate, I am a national qualifier in poetry, prose interpretation, dramatic interpretation and impromptu. My communication abilities have greatly improved since taking a Beginning Speech class my freshman year.

Through Residence Life and Housing, I have been growing in my leadership abilities as a resident assistant. I also received the Diversity Award for encouraging diversity throughout the residence halls. The Office of Multicultural Development and the Golden Key International Honour Society also recognized me as an outstanding sophomore.

All my campus experiences have enabled me to be better prepared for my position as one of two student trustees on The University of Akron Board of Trustees — to which I was appointed on Oct. 8, 2008, by Gov. Ted Strickland. I was excited to receive this appointment because the competition is keen. Ten applicants were selected for the interview process, and from there, five were forwarded for the governor to consider. He chose Joseph Rich and myself. Together, we represent the students' concerns to the rest of the Board. Being a Board member has been exciting and rewarding.

Another area that I am working in is research. My topic of study analyzes the effects of high school grade point averages and ACT scores on entering college freshmen, and predicts the probability of graduating from college within six years. It is a very interesting study and I hope to continue it at the University. My goal is to work with the University and find solutions that will increase the graduation and retention rates of students.

Overall, everything that I have been doing at the University has been preparing me for my future. My aspirations are to attend a competitive law school and eventually become a diplomatic leader. I have a strong desire to lead and to be a great leader. Already I am developing my communication, leadership and research skills to become an effective leader.

The past two years have been full of hard work, but a lot of fun. I feel that as long as I am able to stay persistent and enjoy what I am doing, I will have even more success in the future, and help others while I'm doing it.

MARCUS PHELPS, MANSFIELD, ECONOMICS MAJOR

SAAB Accentuates the Positive

Motto: "I am my brother's keeper, and together we will rise!"

On March 19, the board members of UA's Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB) arrived in Stony Brook, N.Y., for the first ever Northeast Regional SAAB Conference. This is the first step toward great things for the UA SAAB chapter. More than 20 chapters and 200 members came together for a weekend long conference to fellowship, brainstorm, and grow as men through brotherhood.

SAAB was founded in 1990 by Dr. Tyrone Bledsoe to increase the number of African American and Latino men graduating from colleges and universities by establishing a positive peer community based on a spirit of caring. SAAB operates through student-run chapters on college and high school campuses throughout the nation. Their members excel academically, socially, culturally, spiritually and in service to the community. SAAB has now grown to more than 185 chapters in 39 states throughout the United States.

On the first day, we were greeted by Bledsoe and many of his esteemed colleagues.

Throughout the conference we attended sessions that helped motivate us toward our own life goals. In addition to sharing our personal goals, we were able to hear other chapter members give short excerpts about their visions of success.

Other highlights of the conference included an evening banquet, a group photo with Bledsoe and inspirational individual workshops. After a full week of workshops, Bledsoe closed the conference by wishing each chapter the best of luck.

SAAB's national motto is "I am my brother's keeper, and together we will rise!" This conference embodied the spirit of this motto and was a great experience for the SAAB chapter at UA.

ZACHARY CHILDRESS, CHICAGO, HISTORY MAJOR



UA SAAB executive members with national founder, Dr. Tyrone Bledsoe, (second from left) during the Northeast Regional SAAB conference in Stony Brook, NY.

Peer mentors — Leading by Example

In fall 2009, the Office of Multicultural Development Office (OMD) launched a newly trained staff of 20 paraprofessional peer mentors. Throughout the academic year the staff mentored more than 140 students and led academic support programs and presentations across campus.

Through the mentoring process, the peer mentors have provided their mentees with tips and tools to help them succeed academically and socially at UA. However, the mentors have also taken away from the process valuable life lessons that will help them succeed in the future.

One peer mentor, Eddairis Morales, reflects upon her experience and OMD as she graduates from UA with a degree in nursing.



The Office of Multicultural Development has been a huge stepping-stone into the real world. This amazing journey of being a peer mentor has embedded in me a sense of completion of my time here at UA. My entire college experience began when I became a part of OMD my freshman year through the 4 Phase Advising System (4PAS). The office was a place where I shared my accomplishments and dreams. The OMD

staff helped me realize my dreams were attainable, which is what I have tried to offer to my mentees.

Being a peer mentor allowed me to reveal the potential each mentee has, by just acting as a role model and resource. I wanted them to discover what they have to offer and teach them to never give up when things get difficult. OMD has been a place where many success stories have arisen because of the support and guidance peer mentors and staff helped create.

My time at UA has now come to an end; however as a peer mentor I was able to complete my journey by working for the department that helped me achieve my dreams. As I leave this path and begin a new one, I challenge each student to give hope to others by leading by example. Students should never forget those who helped them and give back what was once given to them, a chance to fulfill dreams.

[EDDAIRIS MORALES, UA GRADUATE, NURSING](#)

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

OMD AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIP DINNER

Saturday, Sept. 26, 2009

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Sept. 15 - Oct. 15, 2009

HISPANIC HERITAGE DAY Hosted by the Admissions office

Wednesday, Sept. 30, 2009

DIVERSITY WEEK

Sept. 21-27, 2009

CARLOS ANDRES GOMEZ

Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2009

HOMECOMING EVENTS

Oct. 9-11, 2009



The End of Something New

I was finally settled in my residence hall, and that's when it hit me — high school was over and my first year of college had begun. I had fears of being a freshman. I had fears that I would not branch out. I had fears of not knowing anyone on the first day of class. I was just plain old "afraid" of college.

But before I knew it, I was getting really involved in various activities around campus. Throughout this year I have been an active member of Gospel Choir, Women of Excellence Bible Study and the PASSAGE learning community. In the fall, I will be a resident assistant. I had great experiences in all these groups, and I had a great time meeting a lot of new people. Every single person I met this year touched my life in a different way. I attribute my growth and new friendships to my involvement in on-campus activities.

The organization I focused on the most was Gospel Choir. I was offered the position of chaplain, which I accepted, and now I am on the choir's executive board. This position allowed me to see exactly how much work is put into a student organization. Through my participation in the choir, I learned that I could directly impact the lives of others.

I was also in the PASSAGE learning community — a community comprised mostly of African Americans. It was such a nice experience to see other people's perspectives, since I grew up in a community that was primarily white. PASSAGE broadened my horizons and helped me stay on track with my coursework. The second semester is structured so members have more classes away from the cohort of students they had classes with during their first semester, to encourage members to be more independent.

However, I still found my way back to the Office of Multicultural Development where my academic advisers are located. The OMD advisers are more than just academic support. I had a personal relationship with both of them, and I appreciated their time, work and care in helping us tackle our first year of college. In high school I had a spunky personality, and in PASSAGE I really had the opportunity to embrace that side of myself even more. I would highly recommend being involved in a learning community to any incoming freshman.

I also enjoyed being in Women of Excellence, which focuses on what females go through in everyday life. Through this organization I met a lot of amazing people. I also became a member of Victory Temple Church, and a lot of the students involved in Women of Excellence were also members of this church.

There wasn't one single event or person that made this year amazing, but all of them collectively made my first year a positive one. All of these experiences have really helped me grow as an individual. I look forward to becoming a resident assistant and facing a new set of obstacles and tackling a new set of fears.

[ANNA LEININGER, LORAIN, SPANISH MAJOR](#)

Continued from cover

The Interact Learning Community assists students who need to strengthen their academic skills, while providing them with an adviser in OMD and a peer mentor to guide them throughout their first academic year. In addition, they participate in numerous co-curricular experiences that foster their social and academic engagement. Students pursuing either a bachelor's or an associate degree on a full-time basis (any majors, including undecided students) are eligible to participate.

For nearly the past two years, several initiatives have been under way to increase the retention and graduation of African American males. Beginning fall 2009, the African American Male Learning Community will be launched. This is an experience targeting incoming first year male students through a yearlong experience focusing on leadership and academic achievement. By participating, students will get to know their classmates, establish relationships with their professors, receive personalized advising and be matched with a mentor from the campus and community. They also will attend events designed for the academic and social integration of African American males at UA and participate in service learning projects.

Throughout the many programs and activities provided by the Office of Multicultural Development, students continue to remain at the heart of what we do!

FEDEARIA NICHOLSON
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Pan AfricanCenter

NEWSLETTER

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Change Needs to Continue Beyond Historic Election

This past semester, we were privileged to hear Tim Wise speak to a packed Student Union Theatre as one of the keynote speakers for Rethinking Race: Black, White and Beyond.

Wise, one of the most prominent anti-racist writers and activists in the United States today, focused his talk on erasing the claim that, with the election of Barack Obama, we are now living in a post-racial America.

He started with some basic data. On the day before the election, more than three times as many black Americans were living in poverty as white Americans, and the average wealth owned by a white family in America was 12 times the average wealth owned by a black family. So, it does not seem reasonable that the day after the election we can persuasively claim that these problems have been solved and we have arrived in a post-racial America.

But most white Americans rarely acknowledge the uncomfortable truths about race in America," Wise observed. In 1963, two-thirds of white Americans said we had already achieved equal opportunity. While today we all recognize the inaccuracy of this claim, most of us still do not see racism at work, in school or in neighborhoods in 2009.

This is a characteristic of white privilege. As the dominant group, our success does not depend on seeing that our experiences are racialized or acknowledging the advantages we accrue on the basis of the color of our skin. White privilege includes the "luxury of living in a bubble of obliviousness" when it comes to race, Wise said. And this bubble may manifest itself in a potentially irrational exuberance about the election of Barack Obama.

While we ought to celebrate the election of America's first black president, noted Wise, there are at least three concerns to keep in mind.

First, as the election breaks down stereotypes it may build an archetype that does more harm by encouraging what Wise calls Racism 2.0 — encouraging white Americans to see Obama as "transcending race" and using this lens to amplify our preexisting tendency to see blackness as the problem (that he is transcending). Just as we would be inadvertently insulting a black friend if we tried to compliment him by saying, "I don't even think of you as black," seeing Obama as the model for the new black man may turn out to limit opportunities for many black men.

Second, to the degree that the election reinforces the myth that we already live in a meritocracy, contrary to the data Wise presented, then it may become more difficult to see the structural obstacles to equal opportunity that still attach to race in America.

Finally, even though Obama has continuously insisted that we (not he) are the agents of "change we can believe in," there is still a possibility that many of us will simply expect the president to be the change we want to see in the world, giving up our individual and collective agency to make change and advance social justice.



You can learn more about Tim Wise at: <http://www.timwise.org/>

DR. WILLIAM T. LYONS JR.
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, POLITICAL SCIENCE

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RETHINKING RACE: An Evening with Donna Brazile

On a cold February evening, we were warmed by a most enlightened conversation with CNN “Inside Politics” commentator, Donna Brazile. She was invited to our campus as part of UA’s annual Race Week Series.

My class of 45 students was able to join me and I was very touched by the papers they wrote reflecting on the evening. Many expected just another political operative who would go on and on about a personal agenda. However, much to their surprise, they found a person who communicated a much bigger picture.

As she told the audience, “We stand on the threshold of an extraordinary opportunity. We have just elected a black man president of the United States. This is a time to re-think our past ideas about race and move forward as a more tolerant, open and progressive society.”

During the course of the session, Brazile related much of her personal story, which she also shares in her book, “Cooking with Grease: Stirring the Pots in American Politics.” Raised in a family of nine children in New Orleans, she told the audience that she, “grew up on the wrong side of two sets of tracks: one black and the other poor.”

She also recalled her memories of segregation while taking her brothers to town on the bus. She told them not to look at anyone and to go to the back of the bus. Today, of course, she is one tough lady and would not be relegated to the back of any bus. As she said on a recent



YouTube video, “My black skin does not make me inferior, and being female does not make me dumb!”

Brazile got involved in politics at a very young age, while still in Louisiana. She rose to national prominence after working for the Rev. Jesse Jackson, and was the first African American to lead a major presidential campaign when she served as campaign manager to Al Gore in the 2000 presidential race. She has worked on countless other campaigns, including those of Michael Dukakis and Bill Clinton. In the 2002 midterm congressional elections, Brazile traveled to 29 states and 53 congressional districts to help train Democratic activists.

Currently, Brazile is chair of the Democratic National Committee’s Voting Rights Institute and an adjunct professor at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. She has taught as a senior lecturer at The University of Maryland and as a fellow at Harvard’s Institute of Government. She has also worked to rebuild New Orleans after the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, which destroyed her family home.

GAIL GARBRANDT, MANGER, INTERNSHIPS
RAY C. BLISS INSTITUTE OF APPLIED POLITICS
SENIOR LECTURER, POLITICAL SCIENCE