2013-14 Northwestern University Program Review

Multicultural Student Affairs

External and Internal Review Team Joint Report

June 2014

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Acknowledgements

The review team thanks all the staff, administrators, students, faculty, and alumni who provided us with documents, responded to our inquiries, and met with us to share their perspectives and experiences. We are hopeful that with your passion for excellence and dedication to student engagement, Northwestern University will become the preferred and most recommended university for under-represented students – and a national leader in the area of diversity and inclusion in higher education.
Introduction

Northwestern University's history of dealing with issues of student racial diversity and inclusion is perceived by many as primarily reactive in the face of robust campus activism. The most seminal incident creating this perception occurred in 1968 when African-American students took over the Bursar's Office. The administration ended the standoff by entering into an agreement with the students that, among other things, resulted in the University's establishment of the Department of African American Student Affairs. In the late 1990s, as activism rose within the Hispanic/Latino student community, Hispanic/Latino Student Outreach, which became Hispanic/Latino Student Affairs in 2000, was founded. One year later, stemming from student protests in the 1990s, Asian/Asian American Student Affairs opened its doors. Most recently, through the collaboration of the Safe Space Ally Workshop and the LGBT Support Network, the LGBT Resource Center was created in 2004.

In the same year, Northwestern created the Multicultural Student Affairs (MSA) Office to bring African American Student Affairs, Hispanic/Latino Student Affairs, and Asian/Asian American Student Affairs under one organizational umbrella. In 2012, the LGBT Resource Center was re-aligned to become part of Multicultural Student Affairs.

Over the last five years, the undergraduate student population at Northwestern has become increasingly diverse. The incoming class of 2018 will be the most diverse in the school's history with approximately 9 percent African American, 14 percent Hispanic/Latino, 18.5 percent Asian American, and 9 percent from outside the United States. But, beyond numbers of under-represented students or compositional diversity is the critical element of leadership commitment to creating a campus climate for diversity
and inclusion. President Morton Schapiro has affirmed that commitment to diversity and inclusion is a top priority, as did the University’s 2011 Strategic Plan.

This review of the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs (MSA) was conducted as a part of the fourth cycle program review 2013-2014 for Northwestern University. MSA was last reviewed in 2008-2009.

According to the Multicultural Student Affairs’ self-study, the mission of MSA is to:

> Provide quality services and programs that support and enhance the collegiate experience, particularly for under-served students. [MSA] seek[s] to foster a learning environment that enriches the cultural, educational, professional, and social lives of students, providing opportunities for holistic development. Through advising, advocacy, and outreach, MSA is dedicated to an inclusive and diverse community and helps students excel individually and collectively.

To achieve the mission and best serve students, MSA focuses on three primary areas of student development. Students who participate in the programs, activities and services offered by MSA will:

- Celebrate the intersectionality of their individual identities and how they contribute to personal success.
- Utilize university and community resources to help navigate the Northwestern experience.
- Develop empathy, understanding, and acceptance of cultural differences to create a more socially just campus community.

In order to assess the degree to which the efforts of MSA are reflecting its stated mission, the review team interviewed close to 40 stakeholders, including MSA staff, students, administrators, faculty, and alumni. The review team also received written input via e-mail.
Findings

The review team found that the senior leadership in the Division of Student Affairs expressed a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion, and they all acknowledged the importance of the work of MSA.

Areas of Strength

The team recognized that MSA had many areas of strength:

- The directors and staff of MSA were extraordinarily dedicated, passionate, and hard working. They genuinely cared about students, and they have made the two houses at 1914 and 1936 Sheridan Road so welcoming that the students expressed the sentiment that these spaces feel like their “home away from home.” In addition to their day-to-day work of programming and advising, the staff attend as many student events as possible, including in the evenings and on the weekends.

- MSA directors and staff appeared poised and ready for change. In light of the recent departure of the MSA Executive Director, the staff members have been meeting regularly and have begun discussions on a new vision for MSA. Some of their recent initiatives include Town Hall meetings to solicit feedback from students, new collaborative programming such as the Latino Men’s Gathering, facilitated by MSA staff for Hispanic/Latino students, and the Comadres Latina Group, facilitated by Religious Life staff. These facilitated gatherings bring students together and create safe spaces for dialogues.

- In 2014, each unit within MSA surveyed its respective community. The focus of these surveys was on student satisfaction with Northwestern and the services provided by MSA. The data provided an overview of the number of students who
participated or attended programs and took advantage of MSA services. This information was important and relevant for MSA planning.

- MSA, as a whole, has earned wide recognition from various campus partners, including the Center for Student Involvement, Undergraduate Admissions, The Graduate School, the Women’s Center, and the Academic Advising Center as well as faculty and alumni. Students and administrators have expressed confidence and hopefulness in the leadership of the new Executive Director of Campus Inclusion and Community.

**Areas of Concern**

The review team found that the following areas are of concern:

- As it is common among many colleges and universities, the development of student learning outcomes and the assessment of the efficacy of programs and services to address learning outcomes are in the early stages in MSA. The Division of Student Affairs is ahead of many institutions in that it has an ongoing assessment program. However, MSA is in the nascent stages of developing learning outcomes that address the intentionality of its programming efforts, the effectiveness of its advising, and the quality of its services as they relate to what MSA hopes students would learn or gain in skills as a result of participation.

- Students and campus partners both expressed concerns that MSA staff are overextended, and there is a widespread perception that the unit is understaffed. In this same vein, the staff expressed frustration with lack of time for planning and reflection. The review team’s research on select COFHE institutions showed that
other universities had professional staffs of comparable numbers dedicated to similar offices. (See Appendix I)

- Students characterized the staff as reactive rather than proactive. Some student group leaders expressed feelings that MSA directors worked hard, but did not advocate strongly enough for their causes publicly. Students and faculty, however, commented that MSA staff seem to operate out of fear, particularly under the prior Executive Director, and hence may not feel emboldened to serve as student advocates.

- Perhaps because there is confusion about the mission of MSA, there are many and varied expectations of MSA by a broad range of stakeholders. Some of the confusion could also be because the most appropriate organizational structure is yet to be determined.

- Some MSA staff identified an urgent need to provide programming, training, and individual student support around the issues of sexual assault and mental health. However, current organizational advising and support expectations, including the emphasis on what has become traditional cultural programming, do not allow sufficient time for these priorities.

- While expectations are positive, many stakeholders with whom the review team met expressed concern and were apprehensive about whether or not the Executive Director of Campus Inclusion and Community would receive sufficient resources to accomplish what is expected of that role.

- One of the most troubling concerns the review team found was the continuing reports and survey results of low satisfaction among African American, Asian
American, and Hispanic/Latino students. The Spring 2012 Focus Groups survey on “Students’ Perceptions of Racial/Ethnic Campus Climate” quoted from the Diversity Work Group associated with the strategic planning process concluded that “Northwestern is not particularly welcoming” and “NU was not seen as particularly welcoming even though it was acknowledged it could be in certain circumstances.” (Campus Climate, pp. 13-14)

- Some faculty members interviewed for this review described MSA as a “top-down, hierarchical unit” protecting the University’s interests more than those of the students. They see MSA’s focus on cultural programming and lack of student advocacy as reflective of the University’s effort to “manage” diversity, rather than to seek dialogue and change. Moreover, faculty expressed dismay with the University’s perceived unwillingness to acknowledge what some view as a persistent culture of racism at the institution.

**Recommendations**

The review team recommends a restructuring of the responsibilities of the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs. We propose a model that is focused on building intercultural competency and leadership skills as well as helping students develop skills in understanding their multiple and intersecting identities, inter-personal relationships, and collaboration across differences and across different groups. We also recommend retaining space that is uniquely designed for under-represented groups of students to gather, study, socialize, and find comfort in an environment that feels like a “home away from home.”

In early discussions, the review team was planning to recommend that the Office change its name from “Multicultural Student Affairs” to “Intercultural Education and...
Student Leadership” to reflect the needs of increasingly diverse student populations and to transparently define the work of MSA. Upon further discussion, we recommend retaining the brand name of “Multicultural Student Affairs” while organizing roles and responsibilities of the MSA directors to reflect a focus on intercultural competence and leadership skills training.

In order to facilitate collaboration across units within MSA, the review team recommends that MSA senior director, directors, and assistant director be together in one location, possibly in the newly renovated Norris Center. As for the two existing locations at 1914 Sheridan Road and 1936 Sheridan Road, we recommend, with appropriate supervision for safety and to maintain the “home” atmosphere, that they remain programming and student organization spaces. This structural change would preserve the historical significance of the Black House and the legacy of student activism for existing groups. In addition, it would encourage increased cross-group collaboration among the staff.

The review team further recommends that the LGBT Resource Center become a free-standing unit in the Norris Center, with the Director reporting to the Executive Director of Campus Inclusion and Community. Despite students’ often parallel experiences with systematic oppression or hate, the LBGT Resource Center has found it difficult to focus fully on LGBT issues at times as MSA has traditionally focused on race and ethnicity issues.

These recommendations, based on interviews and written materials, reflect our best thinking about re-organizing staff by areas of knowledge and skills. Such a re-organization has the potential for further empowering students and for creating community within and across groups under the “Student Engagement” umbrella in the Division of Student Affairs.
In order to accomplish this new emphasis -- on organizing around skills and knowledge -- staff will need professional development in areas such as student leadership development, strategies for inclusiveness and community building, inter-group dialogue facilitation, advocacy defined broadly, and intercultural and social justice approaches to student engagement and enrichment. There are several specialists in these areas including the following consultants:

*Dr. Kathy Obear, “an organizational development consultant and trainer specializing in creating inclusive, team and organizational effectiveness, conflict resolution, and change management.”*

*Dr. Shaun Harper, Executive Director for the Study of Race and Equity in Education at the University of Pennsylvania. His research focus is on Black and Latino male success.*

*Dr. Hazel Symonette, Program Development and Assessment Specialist at the University of Wisconsin. Her focus is on assessment and evaluation of “authentically inclusive and vibrantly responsive teaching, learning, living and working environments that are conducive to success for all. Her “approach draws on social justice and systemic change research to create meaningful and life-changing interactions among students, faculty, staff and administrators.”*

Furthermore, MSA staff could benefit from professional development on how to support students facing mental health challenges and/or who report that they have been the victims of sexual assault. We heard that demographically under-represented students are numerically over-represented in terms of reporting these types of problems; it is unclear whether or not MSA staff are prepared to meet these urgent needs.

The review team suggests that the process for student group recognition be centralized through the Center for Student Involvement and/or Associated Student
Government. MSA would retain its programming funds, in order to use them more intentionally as incentives to reward groups that collaborate with other groups across racial and ethnic boundaries. In addition, the MSA staff should limit the number of groups they advise by establishing criteria for advising by MSA and criteria for advising by the Center for Student Involvement. A reduction in advising responsibilities would allow MSA staff an opportunity to better carry out the new initiatives related to educational and leadership training.

Faculty interviewed expressed a desire for stronger partnerships with MSA. Therefore, MSA staff should continue building relations with faculty members who have expertise in Ethnic Studies. MSA should also find ways to involve faculty in advising and programming as they clearly care about the success and support of under-represented students. Getting academic departments and faculty more involved could also have the added benefit of easing the workload for MSA staff.

The University-wide focus on diversity and inclusion coupled with the restructuring of MSA is a propitious time to intentionally target the majority student population and the broader community to promote awareness and respect for racial/ethnic/gender/and sexual diversity by fostering cross-cultural dialogue and interaction. One consideration suggested by several individuals interviewed, including students and faculty, would be to make a curricular requirement for all students to study at least one course in diversity, inequality, inclusion, or critical race theory. In recommending this, the review team understands that such a recommendation is beyond the scope of the program review of MSA, but for the MSA to succeed in its mission, a broader University effort will be needed to reach and teach all students, faculty, and staff in cross-cultural dialogue and diversity-
inclusion in order to prepare the way for increased understanding of these issues. Interviewees strongly suggested that more faculty would need to be hired to accomplish this.

**Addressing Key Issues and Questions**

Following are key issues and questions raised by MSA staff and the review team’s analysis and recommendations:

1. *How should NU approach the dual challenge of supporting identity development and expression, and creating community across and within groups – including the education and involvement of majority student populations?*

   The expectations for MSA are too broad, according to feedback the review team received from all the stakeholders. With re-structuring, there will be other units, such as "Campus Inclusion and Community," that can address some issues of involvement of the majority student population. MSA can partner with other departments under the "Engagement" umbrella and assist them in incorporating cultural competency training in their programs.

   The review team found a widespread perception that student activism has been a driving force for change at Northwestern. Therefore, student initiatives within MSA should have a high probability of sustaining success. Students have already demonstrated a desire to come together across group organizational boundaries. One example is the recent gatherings of Hispanic/Latino students. These gatherings and discussions of broad issues are facilitated by MSA with Latino men and by the Campus Ministry with Latina women. This is a model that could be used by the staff in MSA as a first step before intentional formal leadership training for cultural competency. Supporting the gatherings of such
groups to address topics of their choice, including arranging safe spaces for dialogue beyond just the Sheridan Road houses, is one way MSA staff and the institution could help motivate students to learn broader University values and goals, foster identity, and spark interest in intercultural competency training.

2. Should MSA be viewed as a “safe haven” for students of color from the rest of Northwestern?

Language is important. Referring to the houses as "safe havens" for students of color might imply that the larger campus is unsafe for them, though some interviewees expressed the opinion that all University spaces should be – but are not – safe places for all students. The term “safe havens” may be replaced with positive terms that reflect culture and heritage. Students the review team interviewed in regard to “1914 Sheridan Road” referred to the house as a “home away from home.” This is a place where they can relax and be assured that there will be others in the space who have something in common with them, and this understanding can serve as a foundation for dialogue and friendship while also providing opportunities for students to work towards common social goals.

Furthermore, the review team strongly believes that it is essential to use inclusive language. The term “students of color” is outdated for many undergraduates who come to Northwestern, including international students, who do not relate to the term. A good exercise across units might be on how students, today, prefer to be referenced, if at all.

3. Should MSA be a one-stop services provider and resource point for students of color on campus?

Resources for under-represented groups should be available throughout the campus
as they are for majority students. It is not only unreasonable and marginalizing for all services for particular groups to be separate, but it is also not practical for the small MSA staff to have the skills, knowledge, and time to address all the needs of students who might seek assistance. The entire Northwestern community needs to be responsive to the needs of its students. The student body should be encouraged to seek and to utilize all available services throughout the campus.

The review team found that students have many points of access to meet their varying needs. For example, in addition to MSA, the proposed Student Enrichment Services and the Assistant Provost for Diversity and Inclusion’s work in transition programs will target first-generation students and students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

However, many of the units and committees working on various aspects of diversity and inclusion are not fully aware of each other’s work and progress, and faculty in particular expressed frustration with what is seen as a lack of institutional progress despite these varied efforts. The review team encourages more intentional and deliberate communication among all involved and frequent updates to the entire University community.

4. Is MSA’s purpose to support and advocate for students of color, or should it have a responsibility to engage and educate the larger (majority) community around issues that impact students of color?

The review team does not see this question as an either/or question. The first step in determining whether or not MSA should advocate for students is to define what the unit means by advocacy. In the job description prepared by MSA staff and administrators for the Senior Director of MSA, advocacy is clearly connected to “inclusiveness and community
building,” and a part of this advocacy is to “communicate with constituent groups and key stakeholders about the needs of students, the work of MSA, and issues related to inclusion and diversity.” This interpretation of advocating for students needs to be clearly and frequently articulated and demonstrated to students and the larger university community.

Most importantly, educating the campus-at-large cannot be done well by the MSA staff alone. The staff must collaborate with other units in the training of trainers to help in the dissemination of information and to develop skills among the entire community to develop awareness and sensitivity toward under-served or under-represented students. One example of capacity building for the University is the success of Sustained Dialogues, now being facilitated by Campus Inclusion and Community and led by trained student moderators, in which over 300 students, many of them identified with the major groups, have taken part. The review team encourages such efforts to continue, though we are mindful of the observation that the burden of educating the community should not unfairly rest on under-represented students.

5. Where should greater priority be placed – on the individual students groups and communities, or cross-cultural and/or intersection points of identity?

Currently, the emphasis for MSA appears to be on advising student groups and coordinating events, with little time left for supporting individual students or training about intersection points of identity and leadership skills. The review team suggests re-structuring the office in a manner that will allow particular or specified MSA staff to have, for example, primary responsibility for developing MSA training programs, in conjunction with other units, while other staff might spend more time in advising student groups in a manner that helps students become more self-sufficient each subsequent quarter. At the
present time, MSA seems overwhelmed by its responsibilities to assist in programming, particularly for events that have become traditions at Northwestern. MSA’s time commitment to cultural programming (including MSA staff attending after-hours events) prevents MSA staff from having time or resources to focus on student support and training and to address emergent needs such as mental health concerns.

6. **What is the most appropriate role for an LGBTQA unit within a department that has historically focused on issues of race/ethnicity/culture rather than issues of difference and inclusion?**

   The review team recommends that LGBTQA Resource Center be removed from MSA and allowed to change its name according to the staff’s understanding of what is most appropriate in the current context. The team also suggests that the LGBTQA Resource Center becomes a free-standing unit in Norris Center, but it remains under Campus Inclusion and Community with the LGBTQA Director reporting to the Executive Director of Campus Inclusion and Community.

7. **Is the title Multicultural Student Affairs still the best or most appropriate for this area of work? Are titles such as Inter-cultural or Multi-Ethnic more appropriate?**

   A common theme among the stakeholders is confusion about the role of MSA because the name does not transparently reflect the work of the Office. Despite this concern, after several discussions, the review team recommends that MSA retain its name because it is difficult to rebrand with a new name after so many years. Instead, the review team recommends that MSA administrators and staff, under the leadership of the Executive Director of Campus Inclusion and Community and the new Senior Director of MSA, in
future strategic planning should be careful to distinguish between terms such as “race,” “culture,” and “ethnicity” in creating the mission, goals, and objectives of Multicultural Student Affairs. The review team highly recommends that in the future planning process staff structuring should clearly demonstrate that MSA works primarily with unique student groups and serves in an advocacy role for these students. Importantly, new roles should demonstrate that MSA collaborates with other departments, offices, and units to build capacity for cultural competency throughout the University.

8. Does the current construct of having staff to support four broad areas of identity mesh with the goals of inclusivity and intersectionality articulated in the department’s mission? Is this existing structure too limited to support the needs of multiracial students, or for students who have many aspects of their identity – some of which do not fall easily into these four categories (e.g. Turkish students, Polish Students, and Muslim students)?

As student populations at Northwestern become increasingly diverse and their identities more complex, it is not feasible for MSA to pinpoint and accommodate all the groups of under-represented students. For example, under the current MSA structure, the needs of Native American, bi-racial and multi-racial students are not specifically addressed. There needs to be a bigger “umbrella” under which all identities can be welcomed and served; Campus Inclusion and Community can serve this role through building inclusive communities across the University. Thus, MSA should retain its racial/ethnic-identified offices, but with the responsibilities of MSA organized and defined according to the learning outcomes the unit will help students achieve. The outcomes of intercultural competency and leadership apply to all students. The intention in working with under-represented students, including students from outside the United States, is to also provide
opportunities for focused discussions on the impact of multiple and intersecting identities in working across differences in a world that is not race neutral.

In regard to students from outside the U.S. or international students, the review team raised questions about the adequacy of welcoming resources and spaces for these students to feel as if they have a “home away from home.” Perhaps MSA can reach out to international students in a more intentional and concerted manner.

9. What should be some of the primary objectives for the currently vacant Senior Director of MSA position, tasked with oversight of the MSA area?

The review team recommends the primary objective for the incoming Senior Director of MSA should be to work with the Directors and staff of MSA to create a new mission statement that aligns with the University Strategic Plan (both the ‘connect’ pillar: diversity and inclusion, and the ‘engage’ the world pillar) as well as the Division of Student Affairs’ priorities (educate, engage, and enhance). The students who are traditionally dissatisfied need to be served better, but the existing organizational structure of MSA is preventing the staff from achieving this goal.

The Senior Director should move the office toward the direction of motivating and training staff and students to acquire, develop, and apply skills in interpersonal and intercultural competency. To achieve this, the Senior Director should implement the recommendations in this report. To help implement these changes, the Senior Director should re-establish an advisory council consisting of current students, alumni, faculty, and administrators whose participation will help shape new programs. Because people support what they create, being part of an advisory council that is helping implement
change will develop a sense of pride and ownership among stakeholders who can be relied on to support MSA.

The review team believes that there is a need to create a new model and structural re-alignment that will promote and increase collaboration and sharing of responsibilities across the different units within MSA. The team proposes a new structure for MSA as reflected in the organizational chart in Table 1 (Page 22).

10. How should MSA support the differing needs of international students (e.g., Chinese or Korean nationals) and those students who identify as African or Caribbean, as opposed to African American?

The review team acknowledges that international students have unique needs, some of which are not being met by the current structure. A major benefit of the proposed model of intercultural education and leadership development will be the new focus on intercultural skill building. As many international students are graduate students, there also needs to be coordination with and programming from The International Office and The Graduate School to better meet the needs of these students. The review team was pleased to learn that the Graduate School hired a new Director of Diversity and Inclusion, which should help in creating connections between the offices.

11. How to balance the goal of empowerment and enfranchisement for under-represented/minority students with an attitude of entitlement, where students expect to be 'served' by staff, and consulted on administrative decisions?

Student characteristics of entitlement and lobbying for a place at the table for decision-making provide interesting challenges for higher education nationally, and in fact,
internationally. If MSA provides education and training in a developmental manner, students will have an opportunity to learn skills related to accepting personal responsibility, and these experiences will increase their critical thinking and adaptation skills.

**Summary and Conclusion**

After examining a variety of reports and conducting interviews with close to 40 stakeholders, the program review team believes that MSA needs to undergo a re-organization and re-structuring in its mission and approach. Specifically, it should:

- Create a new mission statement, under the direction of the new Senior Director, together with the Directors and staff, that aligns with the University Strategic Plan (both the ‘connect’ pillar: diversity and inclusion, and the ‘engage’ the world pillar) as well as the Division of Student Affairs’ priorities (educate, engage, and enhance).
- Organize roles and responsibilities of the MSA Directors and staff by areas of knowledge and skills to reflect a focus on intercultural competence and leadership skills training according to learning outcomes for students.
- Clearly define the role of the Assistant Director of MSA. The role, in partnership with the Directors, could fill an important need of intercultural leadership development across all groups.
- Develop metrics, under the direction of the MSA Senior Director and unit Directors and staff, which assess the effectiveness of MSA’s programs and activities.
- Relocate the Senior Director, the Directors, Assistant Director, and some student employees to a new space, possibly the newly renovated Norris Center, where they are together in one location. The houses at 1914 Sheridan Road and 1936 Sheridan
Road remain spaces for programming and student organizations, staffed by the two current house staffers (Program Assistant and Staff Assistant) and by student employees.

- Re-establish an advisory council consisting of current students, administrators, staff, faculty, and alumni to help implement changes and to develop a sense of pride and ownership among the stakeholders.

- Allow the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender Resource Center to become a free-standing unit in Norris Center, but have the Director report to the Executive Director of Campus Inclusion and Community and remain under the “Engagement” umbrella.

- Give the MSA Directors and staff professional development in areas such as leadership development, strategies for inclusiveness and community building, intergroup dialogue training, advocacy, and intercultural and social justice approaches to student engagement and enrichment.

- Make it a strategic priority for the Division of Student Affairs staff to continue to develop their knowledge and skills in cultural competency.

- Centralize the process of student group recognition through the Center for Student Engagement and/or Associated Student Government. MSA retains its programming funds, but uses them more intentionally to reward student groups that collaborate with one another.

- Give serious consideration to creating a curricular requirement for all students, perhaps even a freshman seminar, that exposes students to diversity, inclusion, ethnic studies, critical race theory and cross-cultural dialogue and interaction.
The review team recognizes that our recommendations include suggested changes in mission and approach that may require substantial rethinking and some additional professional development for staff and the core group of stakeholders of Multicultural Student Affairs. Our goal is to recommend that serious consideration be given to restructuring the office’s role and responsibilities so that MSA will play an instrumental part in advancing both the University’s Strategic Plan and the Division of Student Affairs’ priorities in creating a diverse and inclusive community for all.
Table 1: Revised Organizational Chart

Assistant/Associate Director
Campus Inclusion and Community

Executive Director
Campus Inclusion and Community

Director
Student Enriched Services

Director
LGBT Resource Center

Senior Director
Multicultural Student Affairs

Assistant Director
Multicultural Student Affairs

Program Assistant

Administrative Assistant

Director
African-American Student Affairs

Director
Asian/Asian-American Student Affairs

Director
Hispanic/Latino Student Affairs
Appendix I: Multicultural Affairs (Student) Centers in Selected COFHE Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Undergraduate FTE</th>
<th>Multicultural/Minority/Intercultural Affairs Staff FTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duke University</td>
<td>6,495</td>
<td>4.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgetown Univ.</td>
<td>7,552</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Hopkins Univ.</td>
<td>5,192</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern Univ.</td>
<td>8,459</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Rice University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Univ. of Pennsylvania</td>
<td>10,319</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Univ. of Rochester</td>
<td>5,837</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The mission of Multicultural Student Affairs (MSA) is to provide quality services and programs that support and enhance the collegiate experience, particularly for underserved students. We seek to foster a learning environment that enriches the cultural, educational, professional, and social lives of students, providing opportunities for holistic development. Through advising, advocacy, and outreach, MSA is dedicated to an inclusive and diverse community and helps students excel individually and collectively. To achieve our mission and best serve students, Multicultural Student Affairs focuses on three primary areas of student development. Students who participate in the programs, activities and services offered by Multicultural Student Affairs will:

- Celebrate the intersectionality of their individual identities and how they contribute to personal success.
- Utilize university and community resources to help navigate the Northwestern experience.
- Develop empathy, understanding, and acceptance of cultural differences to create a more socially just campus community.

Our Advising Philosophy

Multicultural Student Affairs advises from a developmental perspective that focuses on the individual needs of each student. An advising relationship is established with an emphasis on helping students identify and accomplish life goals. We believe that by assisting students holistically, we take into account students intersecting identities and life experiences to aid in providing a positive learning experience at Northwestern University.

Below is a list of key issues presented for Multicultural Student Affairs. There are also issues that reflect concerns for the unit and its affiliated program areas as well.

Organizational Operating Structure

The current operating structure needs to be reviewed and modified to fit the vision of where Multicultural Student Affairs should be at Northwestern and how we position this office for the coming decade. How should NU approach the dual challenge of supporting identity development and expression, and creating community across and within groups – including the education and involvement of majority student populations?

In May 2014, MSA was shifted under the umbrella of the department of Campus Inclusion and Community (CIC). Multicultural Student Affairs has begun a review its internal policies, procedures and staff operations to meet the desired outcomes of this reorganization. Additionally, since the individual offices in Multicultural Student Affairs currently focus on their respective populations (African American, Asian/Asian American, Latina/o and LGBTQ+ identified students), this current structure invites programs to be produced that meet individual community needs of these four units, but do not account for the needs of culturally based student programs that fall outside or in between the four identified areas. There is a desire to bring different communities together as programs
produced by MSA are open to the entire campus community.

Analysis of Issue:

The recent structural change which places Multicultural Student Affairs under the aegis of Campus Inclusion and Community – along with the soon-to-be-created office of Student Enrichment Services, and existing CIC office has caused some confusion for the staff about what exactly their roles should be, since the divisional approach to engaging with issues of diversity and inclusion may be shifting. This confusion has been exacerbated by the sudden mid-year departure of the Executive Director of MSA, who had a more narrowly defined (and arguably outdated) vision of what the role of MSA should be within the Northwestern community.

Stakeholders (students, staff, faculty and some alumni) have varying visions for diversity at NU, but all generally hope that Northwestern is seen as a place that honors the unique cultural identities of all students. Students describe diversity in broad ways, often outside traditional categories (e.g., first generation, low socioeconomic status, multiracial, Native Indigenous, etc.). How can the current structure and approach of MSA be modified to account for the broadened approach and goals of CIC, yet still support the individual or primary identities of many students and student groups? In fact, students report that while interacting with diverse peers is of high value, many students are unsure if they are truly welcome at campus events focusing on identity groups different from their own — even when advertised “everyone welcome.”

The opportunity to collaborate more intentionally with the other areas is one that provides an opportunity for change and growth. Currently, Multicultural Student Affairs has operated in ways that have attempted to meet the needs of student’s various identities. However, with recent modifications throughout MSA and Student Affairs, the opportunity to redefine and conceptualize MSA is apparent.

External Influences

Since the formation of Multicultural Student Affairs in 2004, there have been questions raised about the purpose and objectives of the office. Should MSA be viewed as a “safe haven” for students of color from the rest of Northwestern? Should MSA be a one-stop services provider and resource point for students of color on the campus? Is MSA’s purpose to support and advocate for students of color, or should it have a responsibility to engage and educate the larger (majority) community around issues that impact students of color?

The impact of the various populations - students, faculty and alumni, has over the past decade, caused MSA to adjust its foci to align with the wishes of the most vocal of these stakeholders at any given time. In recent years, the office has been particularly responsive to the expressed interests of students and alumni (particularly Black alumni), along with faculty, as these groups were seen to be largely responsible for the ouster of the previous Executive Director. Efforts were made to meet the needs and interests of these groups, to rebuild partnerships and trust, and to avoid criticism or revolt.
The role of alumni and faculty have grown in the experience of undergraduates, as students are influenced by their organizational or cultural history, and the pedagogical influence of their course work. Staff of MSA are seen as supporters, advisers/counselors, budget providers, "advocates", and service providers to students

Analysis of Issue:

MSA was created in 2004, through the expansion of African American Student Affairs into the broader definition of Multicultural Student Affairs. This expansion of focus was viewed both critically and hopefully by members of the community. Students of color held a perception that their respective cultural group identities might be diminished under the umbrella of Multicultural Student Affairs – particularly those of Black students, who had historically been the first and most visible population of underrepresented ethnic students at NU. In fact, the physical space that houses African American Student Affairs (1914 Sheridan rd.) came as a result of student protest in 1968, and is known among many students and most Black alumni as “The Black House”. Any change to the space or its purpose is perceived by alumni, faculty or students, as a loss, or weakening of the university’s commitment to diversity, and to Black student enrollment.

The change to MSA was also viewed hopefully, as the expansion to Multicultural Student Affairs would bring attention to the needs of emerging and expanding cultural populations on campus - including Asian Pacific Island students, who currently represent more than 20% of the campus population, but aren’t often factored into the calculations of the university’s minority student population.

The influence of alumni from culturally identified populations (e.g. NUBAA – Northwestern University Black Alumni Association, LaNU – Latino Alumni Association) has been significant. Students have often felt wedded to the traditions, goals and objectives of their predecessors, and have had challenges in setting their own agendas for the current cohort, for fear of drifting too far from the group’s original purpose. The desire for greater connection with culturally identifiable adults and allies has been exacerbated by the reality of the limited number of diverse faculty and staff at the university as a whole. Thus, when alumni interact with students, students quickly identify with them, and give heavy credence to their input.

This has presented a challenge to some campus groups that do not have the 40 + year legacy of our Black student group (For Members Only) whose history was forged during a time when Northwestern was viewed, by some, as a less welcoming campus community. Students are influenced by the strength of this alumni community, many of whom came to the university during periods of social change and have passed their experiences on to current students as a model of how they should exist at Northwestern and effect change.

Students have also turned to university faculty as mentors and advisers – particularly towards those faculty members affiliated with the departments of Gender & Sexuality Studies, and African American Studies. As students explore issues of identity,
history, and social change the influence of these individuals and pedagogy have also played a significant factor in how students have shaped their expectations of MSA as an office, and how they will interact on campus.

For the Multicultural Student Affairs staff, this has presented a challenge, because there remains a lingering sentiment that the campus climate is one that is not safe, welcoming or inclusive after the first blush of orientation has faded. This has been somewhat less true for staff of the LGBT resource center, as the experience LGBT+ students has been less monolithic (and largely more positive). The result is that the MSA staff has felt pulled in various directions, both by students and other campus community members, to take a stand and serve as vocal advocates, and have had difficulty ’setting the agenda’ and being intentional about the student learning experience.

Community-Building

The demographics of Northwestern students have changed significantly over the years – with rising numbers of Asian and Latino students, and varying numbers of Black students, MSA has attempted to address this expanding need by creating an environment that assists students from underrepresented or ethnic minority populations by meeting their organizational and personal needs. However, as the campus population has changed, MSA has been challenged by the need to support the various individual identities of campus cultural and ethnic groups, while attempting to create a supportive combined identity for students within and across the MSA community.

With the addition of the LGBT Resource Center, to MSA in 2012, the department has been challenged to look at identity slightly differently, and use a more expansive frame on difference than just race/ethnicity/ or culture.

Analysis of Issue:

Within these communities on campus, there is a strong sense of identity and this often creates a sense of healthy (and sometimes unhealthy) competition among and between students groups. (This is particularly at issue for programs related to African-American students groups, who were the first to establish at NU, but now represent a smaller portion of the student body than other cultural groups.)

Many students have expressed the need for expanded programming that increases community-building. Questions have been raised as to which programs are the best use of departmental financial and/or human resources, and where the greater priority should be placed – on the individual students groups and communities, or cross-cultural and/or intersection points of identity?

Students feel great pressure to select which aspect of their identity they will put forward, and support with their involvement. Student organizations reflect this pressure, and seek deeper and exclusive commitment to their organizations, so that they may sustain the legacy established by their predecessors.
LGBT Resource Center’s fit within Multicultural Student Affairs

As part of the divisional reorganization, the LGBT Resource Center reporting lines shifted from the Center for Student Involvement to Multicultural Student Affairs in 2012. Since this time, MSA has struggled to understand the most appropriate role for an LGBTQA unit within a department that has historically focused on issues race/ethnicity/culture rather than issues of difference and inclusion.

Questions have been raised, by staff, that the existing structure focuses more on issues of race/ethnicity/culture and minimizes the visibility and impact of the LGBT Resource Center. There are also concerns about what the appropriate balance should be, in terms of staff time and effort for the LGBT Resource Center and what portion of time should be dedicated to the broader needs and initiatives of Multicultural Student Affairs.

One additional concern is regard to the space allotted for the LGBT Resource Center, although plans are underway to expand the existing center this summer (2014), to create additional space in the Norris University Center to better support the needs of LGBTQA students and center staff.

Analysis of Issue:

In some university models, the LGBTQA center is affiliated, with multicultural student affairs, offices of pluralism, or even a free-standing unit. As a member of the MSA staff, the LGBT Resource Center director is required to be a full member of the MSA staff – which includes attending meetings, helping advise the First-Year Activities Board, contribute to the staffing and training of students involved with the Summer Academic Workshop and other MSA duties as assigned (creating MSA flyers, coordinate MSA events, etc.), as well as, fulfill the duties of the job description of the LGBT Resource Center director.

Many of the current MSA projects do not impact LGBTQA students’ needs directly as reported in surveys and casual conversations, as much of the LGBTQA population are not members of underrepresented ethnically identified minority groups. An example: the Summer Academic Workshop does not directly support the needs the LGBTQA community, as there are no special means of bringing more LGBTQA identified students into the program, as the population is less easily identified than ethnic minority students (or tracked by the offices of Admission or the Registrar,) also considering the sensitive nature of this aspect of identity development. The structure of having three race/ethnic/cultural units and one gender/sexuality unit also sets up a dynamic where the visibility and impact of gender/sexuality may be minimized.

Lastly, the LGBT Resource Center needs more space to fulfill its mission. It currently operates out of two small rooms with no storage space, limited graduate/student worker work space, and no exclusive collaborative space.

Space Allocation and Building Use

As the multicultural student community grows, the three separate spaces have
become increasingly used by the constituent groups and others who use the space for meeting, events, and other related functions. The designs of the three facilities (2 large Victorian homes, and two small office spaces within the Norris University Center) have place limits on which needs can be met, as they are used for office space for staff and student groups, programming space, and lounges for students. Additionally, by having the units exist in three separate facilities, this sends a message to students that MSA is a divided entity rather than a unified department.

Analysis of Issue:

The current space of Multicultural Student Affairs exists in three spaces. By most campus standards (even at Northwestern) MSA staff and students have a generous amount of space. While in relative close proximity to each other, these separate spaces still foster a sense of isolation, rather than existing as inclusive community. Perceptions exist that although Multicultural Student Affairs is one unit, it functions as four individual entities in part, because of the various spaces.

The buildings have been a home (and to some, a safe haven) to more than 60 student organizations, so there is a sense of competition for meeting and event space, in addition to the needs of the staff to have functional office space for staff and student groups. The building that houses African American Student Affairs is a cultural icon to many African American students, faculty and alumni and changes to the structure are often met with resistance. The building itself was opened during the student activist movements of the late 60’s and early 70’s, so it stands a symbol of cultural recognition for their community.

Given that the staff and operational functions are spread out into three distinct spaces across campus, this presents a challenge for managing the area, and operating as a single unit. Thus, any consolidation of particular space would require open dialogue about the change. However, with the changing demographic, student needs, organizational structure and staffing issues, this emerges as one of the top issues for Multicultural Student Affairs.

Staffing and Staff Responsibilities

The current number of staff is perceived to be insufficient - given the needs and range of services/supports provided to minority and LGBT students and groups who arguably represent 35% - 45% of the student population.

This combined with the reality that the majority of staff in MSA are ethnic minorities themselves, many students see them as some of the few people on campus ‘who will understand’, be an ally or an advocate. Some students have become overly reliant upon the staff of MSA and view staff as their sole contact for campus needs, resources and advising. Understandably, the effort to meet this expectation has proved to be very draining for the staff, as they are frequently called upon staff to counsel students on issues better served by other staff and faculty within the university.
Analysis of Issue:

There are 6 professional staff (2 support staff, 5 Graduate Assistants) in the department charge with supporting/meeting the needs of a diverse population of students. Each of the program units is staffed by one professional staff member, which places a heavy burden on that individual – particularly when they may have responsibility for the support of 7-20% of the undergraduate population.

The MSA staff are often called upon to assume a number of roles (e.g., individual appointments/personal advising, student group advising, large and small scale programming, presentations/ trainings, faculty/alumni initiatives, website management, consultations, facility maintenance, etc.). Additionally, as students take on leadership roles that bring them into greater contact with MSA staff, their lives as students (academics, personal relationships, micro-aggressions etc.) collide, and frequently leaves the staff guiding them through certain developmental issues that the larger student community doesn’t always face.

Also, with 60+ student groups of Northwestern's 400+ groups being advised by Multicultural Student Affairs staff, it is a challenge to meet the needs of all the groups and events being held by throughout the year. Staff burnout is experienced due to the considerable evening/weekend expectations for MSA staff to attend events as mentors, advisors, and supporters while also addressing their other community and professional needs.

Questions for the review team to consider:

Is the title Multicultural Student Affairs still the best or most appropriate for this area of work? Are titles such as Inter-cultural or Multi-Ethnic more appropriate?

Does the current construct of having staff to support four broad areas of identity mesh with the goals of inclusivity and intersectionality articulated in the department’s mission? Is this existing structure too limited to support the needs of multiracial students, or for students who have many aspects of their identity – some of which do not fall easily into these four categories (e.g. Turkish students, Polish Students, Muslim students?)?

Does the title LGBT Resource Center accurately capture the goals and objectives of this expanding field, or does a title such as 'Gender and Sexuality' more accurately describe the broad range of issues and identities staff are likely to encounter? Are there pros and cons to changes in nomenclature?

What should be some of the primary of objectives for the currently vacant Senior Director of MSA position, tasked with oversight of the MSA area?

How should MSA support the differing needs of international students of color (e.g. Chinese or Korean nationals) and those students who identify as African, Caribbean, as opposed to African-American?
How to balance the goal of empowerment and enfranchisement for underrepresented/ minority students with an attitude of entitlement, where students expect to be 'served' by staff, and consulted on administrative decisions?