

**DEPARTMENT OF MULTICULTURAL LIFE**  
**ONE YEAR PLAN**  
**2002-2003**  
(Submitted by Joi D. Lewis, Dean of Multicultural Life, Fall 2002)

This plan provides an overview of what the Macalester College community can expect from the newly formed Department of Multicultural Life in the first year. This one year plan will serve as a blueprint for guiding our work during the 2002-2003 academic year. It is a precursor to the five year strategic plan for multiculturalism at Macalester which will be developed in concert with the Dean of Multicultural Studies, who is scheduled to begin Fall of 2003.

Although the Department of Multicultural Life in its existing form is new, the work of multiculturalism at Macalester has a long history, dating back as far as 1961. In recent years, the college has spent a great deal of time and energy grappling with both the challenges and opportunities that accompany developing a structure and implementing policies that pertain to advancing the multicultural agenda of the College. The Department of Multicultural Life will continue to expand the work of so many others who have provided the direction needed in this area as outlined by the former Council of Multicultural Affairs (CMA), which was grounded in the work done by two President's Council Task Forces, Macalester College Student Government focus groups and survey data, and the "CMA Report: Recruiting Students of Color." As stated in President McPherson's April 2002 letter to the Macalester community, "Multiculturalism for us is deeply interconnected with the other defining values of the College - academic excellence, internationalism and service." To that end, we are committed to continuing and creating more opportunities in all aspects of the Macalester community for people to not only be a part of this inclusive model but to also "commit to engage, both intellectually and personally, with that diversity, to learn from it and to come to grips with the tremendous opportunities and considerable challenges that life in a genuinely multicultural society brings." In an effort to begin actualizing our mission for the Department of Multicultural Life within the first year, it is important to concentrate our efforts in an intentional manner to ensure clear purpose and progress within the first year, with a careful eye towards laying the foundation for future work.

Questions have been raised, such as: "Is the Department of Multicultural Life for students of color?" "Is multiculturalism about race?" "Is the Department for everyone?" The answers to these provocative questions are all yes. Guinier and Torres (2002) state:

"Race, for us, is like the miner's canary. Miners often carried a canary into the mine alongside them. The canary's more fragile respiratory system would cause it to collapse from noxious gases long before humans were affected, thus alerting the miners to danger. The canary's distress signaled that it was time to get out of the mine because the air was becoming too poisonous to breathe. Those who are racially marginalized are like the miners canary: their distress is the first sign of a danger that threatens us all" (p. 11).

We use this analogy to ground our work in the Department of Multicultural Life. We recognize that multiculturalism is not limited to issues of racism and people of color, but rather, racism and people of color are in fact our “miner’s canary.” Guinier and Torres (2002) state:

“One might say that the canary is diagnostic, signaling the need for more systemic critique... The miner’s canary metaphor helps us understand why and how race continues to be salient. Racialized communities signal problems with the ways we have structured power and privilege. These pathologies are not located in the canary. Indeed, we reject the incrementalist approach that locates complex social and political problems in the individual. Such an approach would solve the problems of the mines by outfitting the canary with a tiny gas mask to withstand the toxic atmosphere” (p. 12).

We intend to take notice of the early warning signs that have shown us that marginalizing people of color, whether intentionally or not, affects us all. To that end, it is important that the Department of Multicultural Life is inclusive of all multiple identities, regardless of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities and other multiple identities, while still giving particular attention to people of color and others who have been historically underrepresented. We recognize that identity is not linear, but a compilation of many identities. To approach this work in any other way would be limiting and would not allow for the intersection of these multiple identities. The warning signals are most salient for many students of color who espouse feeling left out of the fabric of the college, being left to their own devices to struggle through the bureaucracy of Macalester and to take on the responsibility of educating the masses about their culture and history. Whereas these students are certainly affected by such an environment, it actually hurts us all. Oppression in all of its various forms produces great personal costs for us as individuals and even greater costs as an institution (Tatum, 1999). There is no doubt that Macalester College is committed to provide the best experience for all of its members.

It is important to note that while the Department of Multicultural Life, in collaboration with the Dean of Multicultural Studies, will take leadership in advancing the College’s multicultural agenda, it will only be actualized with partnership from the entire Macalester community. Whereas we hope to build a broad range of partnerships over time, it is particularly important that we collaborate strongly with the Division of Student Affairs, Human Resources, International Studies and the International Center, the Office of the Provost, the Center for Scholarship and Teaching, the Macalester College Student Government, and the four critical departments that are named later in this document. We will concentrate our efforts within the first year on three areas:

- 1. Identity development of the Department of Multicultural Life.**
- 2. Assessment and development of multicultural core competencies.**
- 3. Assessment of programs and services related to multiculturalism.**

## **Identity Development of the Department of Multicultural Life**

Multiculturalism at Macalester has undergone many personnel and structural changes in recent years. It is imperative that careful time and energy is allotted to developing a clear understanding of the breadth and depth of the scope of the Department of Multicultural Life.

The framework for the Department of Multicultural Life at Macalester is grounded in the recognition that given the diversity of the Macalester community, members from distinctly different backgrounds often encounter intense cultural conflicts within the context of the larger society. To be true to Macalester's stated purpose "to prepare people to become intellectually vital and productive citizen leaders in a world that includes a multiplicity of cultures, perspectives, and needs," it is imperative that members of Macalester demonstrate a commitment to multiculturalism by approaching the work of the college with intention, inclusion and integrity.

The mission of the Department of Multicultural Life is to integrate the values and ethos of historically under-represented peoples, discourses, thoughts and ideas as a catalyst for transforming the traditional ways of doing the work of the College into a more inclusive model. The goals of the Department of Multicultural Life are to:

- Identify and assess multicultural core competencies for the campus community.
- Create partnerships with academic and administrative departments to infuse multiculturalism throughout all aspects of campus life.
- Foster and promote an inclusive physical environment that welcomes the entire College community, particularly those who have been historically under-represented.

It is important that the community is aware that the structure of the Department of Multicultural Life is both centralized and decentralized, involving individuals and departments across campus. The centralized structure includes Joi D. Lewis, Dean of Multicultural Life; Karla Benson, Director of the Lealtad-Suzuki Center; and a Department Coordinator. The decentralized structure includes dotted line reports to the Dean from Anita Doddi, Assistant Director of Campus Programs for Multicultural Affairs; Sedric McClure, Multicultural Counselor in the Macalester Academic Excellence (MAX) Center; Niccole Coggins and Jessie Zapata, Admissions Officers; and the new Associate Director of Alumni Relations, Celine Clark .

The work of the Department of Multicultural Life cannot be achieved in isolation. We are also developing a Multicultural Advisory Committee (MAC) on a temporary basis to provide overall direction for the efforts outlined in this one year plan. This Advisory Committee will give broad advice to the Department of Multicultural Life as we develop the foundation within the first year and will replace the former Council for Multicultural Affairs (CMA). The format and make-up of the committee will be in place on a one year ad hoc basis until the new Dean of Multicultural Studies begins in the Fall

of 2003. The committee will be comprised of a small group of faculty, staff, students, and alumni appointed by the Dean of Multicultural Life. This committee's charge will be to advise the Department of Multicultural Life as we develop the foundation within the first year. The committee will also monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the Department's work as outlined in this plan. Again, the work of the Department of Multicultural Life will not be implemented simply by the staff of the Department and the advisory committee, but rather by many partners throughout the Macalester Community, particularly the four departments highlighted in this document (see Assessment of Programs and Services Related to Multiculturalism, p. 6).

An extensive year-long campaign dedicated to articulating the mission and goals of the Department of Multicultural Life has begun. This campaign will inform the community about the work of the Department and provide clear information about how to access our staff and services. The campaign will include various marketing materials, (i.e., web site, posters, information sheets, bookmarks, table tents, etc.). There was a Dedication Celebration on September 19, 2002, that officially introduced the Department of Multicultural Life and opened the Lealtad-Suzuki Center to the Macalester community. There will also be a newsletter updating the community about our work. In addition, the centralized staff (the Dean and Director) are meeting with various Macalester College community members in an effort to ensure the community knows who we are and what services we provide. We are particularly concerned that Macalester students know how to access our programs and services. To that end, informing the entire community will ensure appropriate connections for students.

#### *Outcome of Identity Development*

- The Macalester community will be clear about the mission and goals of the Department of Multicultural Life and will know how to access the programs and services offered.

This outcome will be measured by:

- Use of services by various constituencies from the Macalaster community.
- Increase in attendance by a variety of community members at events sponsored by the Department.
- Referrals and consultations to the Department of Multicultural Life from various administrative and academic departments.

#### **Assessment and Development of Multicultural Core Competencies**

A great deal of time and attention will be devoted to developing multicultural core competencies for faculty, staff, and students, as well as for administrative and academic offices and departments. The core competencies will indicate the demonstrated knowledge, skills, and abilities one should have as a contributing member of a multicultural community. It is important that we concentrate our efforts in this way.

There has been much research conducted in this area from colleagues at the University of Vermont, Western Michigan University, and various other colleges and universities (Talbot, 1996; Pope, 1993; Stage & Manning, 1993; Manning & Coleman-Boatwright, 1991). It is our intent to review this research and adapt competencies that will help actualize the mission and goals for the Macalester community. After reviewing the history of multiculturalism at Macalester, we have not found sufficient evidence to indicate that clear goals or markers have been developed in this area. It is imperative that we are intentional about this important work demonstrated through the expectation that all members of the Macalester community strive to become multiculturally competent. We are not simply interested in naming these competencies, but we are also interested in developing and implementing a training and development curriculum that will assist community members, administrative offices, and academic departments in reaching these expectations.

Administrative assessments will be conducted after clear guidelines are developed in consultation with the Multicultural Advisory Committee and in partnership with the departments identified in the previous section. We will particularly work closely with the directors of these departments to ensure a collaborative approach to the process. The identification of the multicultural core competencies will serve as a framework for conducting the administrative assessments. The assessments will identify areas in which departments meet the recommended standards and where they may fall short in meeting the recommended standards. The administrative assessments are not intended to be punitive but rather as a tool to assist us in realizing the college's goals in the area of multiculturalism. Recommendations will be shared with departments after completion of the administrative assessments.

### *Training and Development*

The Department is in the process of creating a training and development curriculum that will serve as a vehicle to address the fulfillment of the multicultural core competencies. Several community members across campus have agreed to be Center Associates (faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members) and participate in our "Train the Trainer" program, which recently began in October 2002. The training is being developed with a careful eye to determine what will work well in our environment. Although participation in this training is critical in moving our institution forward, it is voluntary.

Center Associates who participate in the "Train the Trainer" program will be in partnership with the Lealtad-Suzuki Center. Upon completion of their training, Center Associates will train additional faculty, staff, and students that they work with in an effort to shift the campus climate by building skills and abilities pertaining to multiculturalism across campus. The training will be grounded in looking at individual and institutional power and privilege through the lens of multiple identities and their intersections, and how these factors impact the work of the College. Some Center Associates will serve as facilitators to our student collectives (Men of Color, Women of Color, and White Identity

Collectives). The collectives are an extension of a successful initiative created in Fall of 2001, the Black Women of the Diaspora Collective.

We believe that by building partnerships with many individuals from the Macalester community, we can begin to reach the goals of multiculturalism at Macalester College by making multiculturalism become the responsibility of everyone. The Department of Multicultural Life, as mentioned, is both centralized and decentralized, and therefore does not have the human resources to train the entire campus community. These partnerships, however, will allow us to share this responsibility with others. Again, the work of the Department of Multicultural Life cannot be achieved in isolation.

#### *Outcome of Assessment & Development of Multicultural Core Competencies*

- List of multicultural competencies reported.
- Assessment guidelines completed.
- Training at least 15 faculty, staff, and students as Center Associates.

These outcomes will be measured by:

- Recommendations outlined from competencies reported.
- Number of individuals trained and additional training offered.

#### **Assessment of Programs and Services Related to Multiculturalism**

The Department of Multicultural Life is interested in assessing the programs and services that support the multicultural agenda of the college in order to identify potential gaps in these services and to streamline these efforts when appropriate. Discussions and collaboration with four key campus offices that have designated “multicultural initiatives” in their areas has begun. The Department of Multicultural Life will work with the directors of the following four offices to provide guidance and assistance in establishing the most effective programs possible. The four departments identified are: **Admissions Office, Campus Programs, the Macalester Academic Excellence (MAX) Center, and Alumni Relations.** Each of these departments have staff that have a dotted line report to the Dean of Multicultural Life. Below, you will find highlighted programs in each of these areas that focus on multiculturalism. However, to approach this work by simply assessing these programs in isolation would be counter to assisting us in shifting the way we do the work of the College. Therefore, the multicultural programs and services will be assessed only in the context of evaluating the departments in which they are housed. Therefore, although careful attention will be given to the highlighted programs listed below, the entire department will be assessed.

The Multicultural Sampler Program and the Multicultural Admissions Student Advisory Board (MASAB) will be assessed in the **Admissions Office**. We will review the mission and goals of these programs and services to determine their correlation to our current yield of domestic students of color. This will also be reviewed in connection to

the report given by the former Council of Multicultural Affairs (CMA). By first evaluating what we already do, it is our hope that the ultimate goal of increasing the numbers of domestic students of color will be improved. At the same time, we will evaluate how these programs intersect with the entire mission of the Admissions Office.

The programs, services, and physical space of the Cultural House will be examined in **Campus Programs**. We will also assess to what extent the student cultural organizations are reaching their goals and how we can help improve their overall success. It is our hope that we will gather more information about spaces and places where students feel supported. Also, we will evaluate how these programs and services intersect with the entire mission and goals of Campus Programs.

The highlighted programs in the **Macalester Academic Excellence (MAX) Center** are the Student Allies for Academic Success (SAAS) and MACCESS, a summer bridge program that introduces youth from the Twin Cities to college life. It is important to review and examine the mission and goals of these programs and their effect on recruitment, retention and academic success of domestic students of color. We will also evaluate how these programs intersect with the entire mission and goals of the MAX Center.

There is a strong interest from alumni of color for **Alumni Relations** to develop a host family program for students of color. We will review the possibilities of such a program with the Alumni Office to determine if it is feasible to launch the program in Fall of 2003. This new initiative will be examined in the context of Alumni Relation's overall mission and goals and how they intersect with multiculturalism.

During the first few months of this new department, we have already discovered many opportunities for collaboration on programs and initiatives that will prove to enhance the services we provide in support of the student experience, particularly those who have been historically under-represented. There is no doubt that assessment in these areas will continue to move us forward in reaching the college's goals in this area. We firmly assert that by improving the experience of current students, particularly those who have been historically under-represented, we will:

1. Increase retention and graduation rates.
2. Increase the yield of potential students.
3. Increase participation in alumni involvement and giving.

*Outcome of Assessment of Programs & Services:*

- Completed assessment of services and recommendations made by June 2003

This outcome will be measured by:

- Recommendations and strategies outlined for increased positive effect on the student experience, particularly those who have been historically under-represented.

### **New Initiatives and Future Assessments**

There are new initiatives created out of the **Lealtad-Suzuki Center**. The Lealtad-Suzuki Center's goals are to:

- Provide ongoing training and development surrounding issues of diversity and multiculturalism;
- Coordinate and synchronize multicultural programming and services on campus; and
- Provide multicultural education through mediums such as literature, video, audio, and art.

The Director of the Lealtad-Suzuki Center is also available for personal consultation concerning areas such as program planning, diversity training workshops, cross-cultural communication, and identity development. The Center will create a number of programmatic initiatives for the Macalester College community during the 2002-2003 academic year that will address these goals. In addition to the Center Associates initiative discussed earlier, the Center will design and implement a number of student collectives to provide students of color the opportunity to engage in discussions with their peers about issues impacting them at Macalester, and there will also be a white identity student collective to provide white students the opportunity to discuss issues of power and privilege. The Center has started a lunch discussion series entitled "Soup and Substance," which is open to the entire campus community to celebrate the various heritage months throughout the year. The Center is creating a Safe Zone Program that will give faculty, staff, and students the opportunity to become allies and create safe spaces for others regardless of sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, religion, age, or ability. All of these programmatic initiatives and the Center's goals speak directly to the mission of the Department of Multicultural Life by providing a voice to and integrating the ethos and values of historically under-represented groups, thoughts, and ideas into the fabric of the Macalester community. These initiatives are administered by Karla Benson, Director of the Lealtad-Suzuki Center.

Outside of the Department of Multicultural Life, there are several initiatives that support Macalester's multicultural agenda. In the future, we will assess these programs and services in partnership with those who are responsible for administering them. Academic programs include the Hughes Summer Science Institute, the Mellon Minority Undergraduate Fellowship Program (MMUFP), and Faculty Development in partnership with the Center for Scholarship and Teaching. Administrative staff initiatives include the Affirmative Action Plan and Policy administered by Human Resources. Student Affairs

initiatives include: Floor Dialogues, administered by Residential Life, GLBT and Alumni of Color workshops administered by Career Development, Interfaith Initiatives in partnership with the Chaplain Office and the Council for Religious Understanding, Project Pericles administered by Community Service and CST, and AIDS and Diabetes Education about communities of color and the community administered by Health Services. Student initiatives include cultural organization programming and the Multiculturalism Task Force administered by Macalester College Student Government. This is not an exhaustive list, however it highlights specific initiatives that have been identified for future collaborative assessments.

Finally, we are certain that Macalester College has the potential to be a leading institution in the organization of multiculturalism at colleges and universities in the United States. We plan to host a Multicultural Summit in the near future to bring together leading scholars and practitioners in this area to closely examine the opportunities and implications that our multicultural world has on the work that we do in higher education.

### **Conclusion**

Again, we firmly assert that we cannot do this work from the edge in isolation. We can only do this work from the center with likely and unlikely allies across campus. As a community, we must be willing to venture to unknown spaces of ambiguity. Guinier and Torres state:

“An individual in isolation cannot constitute or define the meaning of a political space. Only when individuals freely join together to resist and transform the forces of conventional power which named them as a part of a group in the first place can the possibilities emerge for generating new forms of collective and democratic struggle” (p. 18).

This struggle calls for new ways of being and for new language that gives meaning to terms such as “people of color,” “queer,” “people with disabilities,” and so on. This new language needs to be more than just symbolic and simply objectify certain groups of people. Instead, a new language must cause us to more closely examine the complexity of these identities and expand their definitions. The call to attention of those who have been historically under-represented is not to suggest that we lower our standards, but that we instead increase our efforts. This approach will ensure that all members of the Macalester community have unlimited opportunities to pursue the full benefits of this outstanding institution. We ask that the entire Macalester community join with the Department of Multicultural Life as we move toward a new level of collectivism and realize true multiculturalism in all of the work of Macalester College.

## References

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