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University Reviews Affirmative Action Progress and Goals in Hiring Employees

By Ann Comer



Director Donnie Perkins

The Office of Affirmative Action and Diversity is currently assessing the progress of each college and administrative unit toward achieving the goals set forth in the University's affirmative action plan for hiring and employment.

"We review recruitment and hiring practices for each tenure, tenure-track and administrative search grade 15 and above on an annual basis. We are enhancing our efforts this year by asking departments to document their hiring progress, to identify the

challenges they face, and describe the strategies they will employ to diversify their workforce during the year," says Donnie Perkins, dean and director of the Office of Affirmative Action and Diversity.

According to President Richard Freeland, who asked Perkins and Associate Director Naomi Thompson to initiate this review: "Northeastern University is committed to ensuring equal employment opportunities for all. This goal has long been a focal point of our history, and I have re-affirmed that effort often during my presidency. Promoting equity, diversity and excellence at Northeastern University requires a strong, University-wide effort. All of us must do our part."

Perkins and Thompson will compile the information gathered from Northeastern's 18 academic and administrative units into a University-wide report in April. This report, according to Perkins, will document in a "systematic way our progress in hiring a diverse workforce that includes under-represented populations defined as African-American, Latino, Asian, and Native American into benefits-eligible positions."

Freeland adds: "While Northeastern University has

never wavered in its commitment to equal opportunity and affirmative action, most recently witnessed by our amicus curiae brief in the University of Michigan admissions litigation, we have always been willing to review our methods and procedures. I have been assured that our policy of creating hiring goals is both legal and appropriate, and I am committed to this endeavor. I am certain that we will receive the full cooperation of everyone in this effort."

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Donnie Perkins at d.perkins@neu.edu or Naomi Thompson at n.thompson@neu.edu, or call x2133.

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Northeastern University's Equal Opportunity Policy

Northeastern University is committed to providing equal opportunity to its students and employees, and to eliminating discrimination when it occurs.

Northeastern University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, religious creed, genetics, sex, sexual orientation, age, national origin, ancestry, veteran status or disability status. Moreover, the University will not ignore any form of discrimination or harassment, including sexual harassment. Nor will Northeastern condone any form of retaliatory activity against any person who brings a complaint of discrimination or harassment, or who cooperates in a complaint investigation.

Handbooks containing the University's nondiscrimination policies and its grievance procedures are available in the Office of Affirmative Action and Diversity, 424 Columbus Place.

If you have questions about the University's non-discrimination policies, please call x2133 or email d.perkins@neu.edu.

Terrance Gresham

Senior Assistant Director of Multicultural Admissions

By Christine Casatelli

If variety is the spice of life, then Terrance Gresham's job is to spice up the freshman class.

Gresham is the senior assistant director for multicultural recruitment in the Admissions Office, a position created last fall to increase diversity at Northeastern. In this multifaceted role, Gresham reaches out to talented recruits, shows them the possibilities that college can offer, and helps them navigate the admissions and financial aid process.

Many of Gresham's recruits are the first in their families to attend college. "Their parents are very intrigued with the idea of college for their children but most are overwhelmed by the process," he says.

That's where Gresham and others in the Admissions Office step in to help out. "These students certainly have the desire, and most have the grades, but not all of them are getting the services they need from their guidance counselors," he says.

Gresham should know what services students need to get into college. He's been helping low-income and immigrant students explore their options for higher education for most of his career—and even before his career.

As an undergraduate at Buffalo State College, Gresham worked for Upward Bound, a program that forges relationships between college students and low-income high school students to draw them toward advancing their education. Gresham graduated with a business degree in 1997 and worked in the mortgage division at Nations Bank, but he missed the impact he had and the connections he made with students at Upward Bound.

Sheila Mathieu

Tobin Scholar

Sheila Mathieu is a Tobin Scholar who is currently a middler in the College of Criminal Justice. She is a bright, articulate young woman who has taken full advantage of the opportunities that Northeastern University has provided. Prior to receiving the scholarship, Mathieu was not sure about the feasibility of a higher education. She knows now that her choice to attend Northeastern will open many doors for her future. Mathieu is enjoying her criminal justice classes and is currently on co-op at the Roxbury District Court House in the Probation Department. Upon graduation,

In 1999, Gresham reassessed his career goals and moved to Boston, taking a job at the Boston Public Library's Higher Education Information Center. A self-described "people person," Gresham knew he made the right choice.



"My job was to make connections with different groups of people to let them know what they could do to further their education," he says. "The outreach part required establishing relationships with different agencies—from adult learning centers to centers for pregnant teens."

While working at the library, Gresham enrolled at Northeastern's Bouvé Graduate School of Health Sciences to earn his master of science degree in college student development and counseling. After a stint as Emerson College's coordinator for multicultural recruitment, he is back at Northeastern.

Now immersed in admissions season, Gresham spends many late nights reading applications. The rewards, however, outweigh any lost sleep. "When you see the smiles on their faces—particularly if it's a student you met at a college fair—it gives you a good feeling," he says.

Attracting talented students from different cultures into the Northeastern community heightens the educational experience for everyone. "It really reflects the diversity of the city we're in," Gresham says. "It allows us at Northeastern to truly live our mission."

she intends to enroll in the police academy and pursue a career in law enforcement.

Under the leadership of John A. Curry, Northeastern University established the Tobin Scholars Program in 1991 by providing every student in the sixth grade class at the Maurice Tobin Middle School full academic scholarships. The offer was extended to the sixth grade classes of 1991, 1994 and 1997. All students must successfully complete high school and qualify for admission to any of the University's academic programs. As of October 2003, the program has a new assistant director, Desiree Walcott, and is currently overseen by Earl Stafford of the Balfour Academy.

What It Means to Be a LaCLA (La Comunidad Latina en Acción) Scholar

By Elisa Muñoz, Computer Engineering major
Class of 2005

There is an old saying, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder”, and if you think about that saying for a minute, it is quite true. Everything in life, in my opinion, has a purpose or some sort of outcome through life, whether that outcome is good or bad, but in the end that outcome in some form or another correlates to you, because of the way you perceive it.

For example a person might think an old antique table is garbage but another person might think it is a priceless piece of furniture. It's the way you look at it or the way you perceive things. You might not have all the luxuries in life but if you're happy with what you've got then you're happy no matter if you're rich or poor.

When someone asked me what does it mean to be a LaCLA scholar or what being a scholar means to me the answer was quite simple. I told them it means nobility. Meaning it's a privilege and honor for me to be given the opportunity to continue my education as a reward for my hard work but also because it is an opportunity for me to appreciate that reward in countless ways by helping the community and showing I am thankful for that award.

I never thought I would receive a reward such as this. I remember when I opened the LaCLA scholarship letter, my first thought, was that never in a million years would I get the scholarship, there is just too much competition. I was getting ready to console myself and start thinking positively about applying for next year because I knew that I wasn't going to get it. I told myself that I would get it if I keep working hard and trying my best.

But as I read through the contents of the letter, I couldn't believe what I was reading. I had actually been given a scholarship; it was one of the happiest days of my life. I jumped up and down for what seemed like an eternity, I must have read the letter more than twenty times just to verify that what I was seeing was true. I even had my roommate read it so she could tell me it wasn't a lie. It

was really a great feeling. I immediately called my parents and they were really happy for me. They couldn't believe it either. My parents must have asked me a million times if I was sure I was getting the scholarship. After I calmed down, I began to really think about what this scholarship meant.

This scholarship meant that not only would I have to work harder than before academically, I would be challenging myself to represent the meaning of hard work and be a role model to my peers and colleagues as a Latina. What this scholarship also meant to me was looking forward to giving my time and dedication to the community that I am so proud of every day: the Latino/a community.

Having the ability to contribute to the community is probably what means the most to me. For instance, having the opportunity to work in my own community and working with kids is probably what keeps me the most motivated to continue my education. Every week I get to volunteer at the church and help out with the religious education program. The gratification I get from seeing their faces and having the ability to interact and learn with them every week is what keeps me so motivated and challenged. Volunteering my time to help out the community is something that I take

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LaCLA Scholarship Requirements

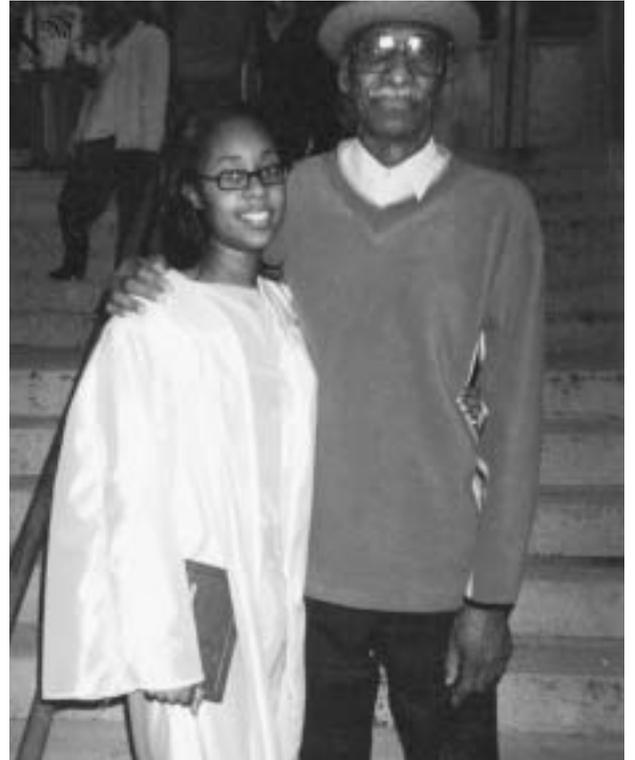
The La Comunidad Latina en Acción (LaCLA) Scholarship encourages Latino/a students to achieve academic excellence and provide community service to Greater Boston's Latino/a community. To be eligible, students must be enrolled at Northeastern University for at least three quarters (two semesters), have a minimum 3.0 GPA, participate in community service, be a US citizen or permanent resident, and of Latino descent. The scholarship, which covers full tuition, is granted to eight students each year. Awards are renewable annually for recipients who maintain a 2.75 GPA and satisfactorily complete the required 120 hours of community service.

Judith Clarke

Judith Clarke is a graduate of the Balfour Academy and a sophomore at Northeastern University. She grew up in Hyde Park and graduated from the Jeremiah Burke High School where she served as class president. Judith is majoring in Human Services and hopes to one day open an elementary school in Hyde Park.

Judith is a resident assistant and finds the job "challenging but extremely rewarding." She has fond memories of Balfour and has returned as a tutor. She sees a lot of herself in the students she tutors. "I love coming back and helping out." I'll always remember my tutor Jamila Hill (NU '00) and still keep in contact with her." She says that the "Academy was a door to my future success."

Judith, whose family is from Jamaica, loves to return to her homeland. She has been involved in many relief efforts that have gone on in Jamaica. Judith's role model is her grandfather who lives in Negril. She says of her grandfather: "He never went to college but he is the smartest man I know."



Betty Jasper

Betty Jasper is a third-year student at the Balfour Academy. She is a freshman at the John D. O'Bryant School of Mathematics and Science. Betty is 14 and lives with her parents and siblings in Hyde Park. Her favorite class at the O'Bryant is Chinese because it gives her "a chance to learn another language and learn about another culture." She also enjoys music class, where she plays the drums.

Betty feels that Balfour has helped her do better in school and become better organized. "Balfour is my second family and I can't wait until this summer," she says. Her tutor, Ashley Cummings (NU '08) calls Betty "an inspiration who is a hard worker with great enthusiasm. She is like a younger sister to me."

One of Betty's goals is to attend Northeastern and major in communications. Betty loves to discuss and debate numerous issues. She already feels like a Northeastern student and can't wait to take classes and "eat Chickin Lou's everyday." Betty also looks forward to returning to the program and becoming an instructional assistant.



Regine Hendrick '06

Presidential Scholar

By Christine Casatelli

The road to success is not easy. Presidential Scholar Regine Hendrick can attest to that.

Hendrick moved to the U.S. in September 2001, three days before terrorist attacks stunned the world. "I was in shock—I was nervous about my future in the States," she says. Far from her native Haiti but close to family in Brockton, Hendrick focused on her studies and decided that moving to the U.S. was the best choice for her future.

"Haiti is a poor country, and we don't have a good educational system," she says. In fact, Haiti ranks as the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, according to the World Bank, and has an average per capita income of about \$480 annually. And although two-thirds of Haitians live in rural areas, the World Bank says only 20 percent of resources go to those areas—leaving much of the rural population living in extreme poverty.

It was the destitution in Hendrick's country that motivated her to continue her education so that one day she could work to improve the lives of her fellow Haitians.

Hendrick followed the lead of her big brother Maxim, a senior economics major at Northeastern, and majored in economics and finance. It turned out to be a significant decision for her—the courses she took opened up a whole new world of possibilities. "I wanted to understand how a country can use its resources to grow, so majoring in Economics and Finance was a natural choice for me."

Among her favorite courses was "Poverty and Income Inequities," which focused on the extent of poverty in the United States, how it is measured, and how it can be reduced. "From that course, I could see how policy can be used to reduce poverty."

Hendrick learned about the nuts and bolts of the finance industry in her co-op, where she worked in the annuity department of Manulife Financial. "The group was dynamic, and very supportive in helping me understand the insurance business," says Hendrick, whose responsibilities included helping brokers establish accounts for clients.

Last June, she was one of 12 students named as a Presidential Scholar, an honor awarded to rising middle-class students who have achieved success in their liberal arts classes, professional studies, and co-op placements. To be eligible for the scholarship, students must have a cumulative grade-point average of at least 3.5 and have successfully completed a co-op placement.



Although she won't graduate until May 2006, Hendrick is already starting to narrow down her career possibilities. She wants to get a position in the U.S. government working in fiscal or monetary policy.

Then in 10 years, Hendrick says, she wants to return to Haiti and work for the government there to help lift the nation's economy. "I would like to see a country where every citizen has access to food and shelter and basic needs, where people are working and are self-sufficient," she said. "I think that every government has a role to play in directing economic growth and this is where I wish to step in."

Latino/a Banquet Set for April 17

The 14th Annual Latino/a Banquet will be held this year on April 17 at the Best Western Inn at Longwood Medical. This event celebrates the accomplishments and efforts of our graduating seniors and outstanding Latin American Student Organization students. To help us make this event possible a donation of \$35 per student, or a contribution of \$350 per table, or any other amount you would be able to contribute would be greatly appreciated. If you decide to sponsor the 14th Annual Senior Banquet please notify us by March 16. Make checks payable to: Northeastern University, with: LASO "Latino Banquet" in the memo section. Mail it to the Latino Student Cultural Center, 104 Forsyth Street, Northeastern University, 360 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA, 02115. If you have any questions, please, contact Janet Quinones or Alejandra Lombardo at x5845.

Major Challenges Face Northeastern in Areas of Diversity and Access

By Kwamina Panford

Associate Vice Provost for Academic Opportunity and Diversity



Kwamina Panford (right) joined the Provost's Office in July 2003

The Northeastern University community faces many challenges in ensuring diversity and access for under-represented students, especially minorities. These issues have become more pressing as Northeastern makes strides toward achieving top 100 research university status.

Northeastern has prided itself on its tradition of being the university of choice for students who could not afford the high tuition at other colleges. Years ago, co-op provided the opportunity for students to pay their way through Northeastern, but today, the salary of

even the highest-paying co-op job cannot cover a semester of full-time tuition and housing.

High cost of college

The escalating costs of tuition, housing and other related expenses threaten Northeastern's affordability for students from middle-class and working-class backgrounds. The high cost of college compels Northeastern to consider how we can live up to our long-standing tradition of attracting a truly diverse student body, including those whose families cannot cover the entire cost of tuition. Scholarships for minority and low-income students play a critical role in these areas.

In addition, the cost of campus housing is another financial hurdle for these students. As we become an increasingly residential college, several issues emerge. Will Northeastern become a university with fewer minority students in the residence halls? If so, what are the consequences?

Having more students reside on campus also poses challenges of affordability and access to typically under-represented students. Can Northeastern offer a comprehensive education without a diverse student body, especially in the residence halls? Can Northeastern become a top university if we neglect crucial ideals such as enhanced access for under-represented populations, and a truly diverse residential student experience and classroom education?

Rethinking admissions criteria

The percentage of African-American freshmen in the fall 2002 and 2003 entering classes were 7.7% and 7.5% respectively; the figures for Latino/a students were 4.9% in 2002 and 6.9% in 2003. These enrollment figures point to the concerted efforts that Northeastern needs to make in minority recruitment. We need additional investments to promote and sustain the recruitment of more minority students and others from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds.

Northeastern also needs to examine its admissions criteria and their connections to the complex issue of the so-called achievement gap between African-American and Latino/a students and their white and Asian counterparts. Because the lack of preparation in public elementary and high schools has a disparate impact on minority students, Northeastern needs to devise criteria that go beyond SATs, GPAs, AP classes and class ranks to select, admit and provide scholarships to students. For example, emphasis could be placed on new criteria including but not limited to student essays. The selection of new criteria for admissions should be done after a careful review of the impact of all these criteria.

Northeastern also must balance needs-based criteria with a newly emerging effort to recruit more full tuition-paying students. Can Northeastern ensure an admissions process that yields maximum diversity while admitting more full-tuition-paying students?

The retention and successful graduation of minority students largely revolve around the quality of their academic, student life and financial experiences as students at Northeastern. While many minority students feel compelled to withdraw due to inadequate finances, academic and social reasons play a part too. The quality of the academic and social experience of students, especially minority ones, can be linked to the adequate presence of minority faculty.

Minority faculty hiring

This leads to the broader issue of minority faculty hiring, promotion and success. With respect to African-American faculty, the modest advances Northeastern made in the 1980s to early 1990s have either been lost or at best stagnating. Hiring and retention of Latino/a faculty lags even further behind. Again, current trends indicate we all need to make the effort to increase the number of minority faculty.

We have that opportunity in the new academic investment plan, whereby the University plans to hire 100 new faculty over the next five years. Through this initiative, the University can demonstrate its commitment to not only academic/research excellence, but also to the ideal of helping society by training students in relevant job skills and equipping students, faculty and staff to thrive in a fully diversified environment. The hallmark of such an environment is more than the presence of a significant number of students from diverse backgrounds; it is where diversity is truly valued in all its policies and practices.

Northeastern can achieve this goal by ensuring that minority students feel welcome and realize their full academic and social potential. A diverse environment is not only beneficial for minority students but also for the majority student populations because it will make their education more complete. This is the time for Northeastern to achieve and maintain the ideals of an institution of higher learning that does the right moral and practical thing. We must ensure that more minority students are recruited, more minority faculty and staff are hired, and that all thrive here on our campus.

We cannot forget that the hiring of a fairly impressive number of African-American and Latino/a faculty in the 1980s and 1990s was the result of dedicated efforts by individuals and groups who were committed to the ideals of true diversity, especially across races. These individuals and groups sought to put their ideals into practice by forging ahead and working across the entire campus to hire more minorities. We now have another opportunity to replicate this success. This time, however, we will need to work harder at retaining minority faculty by enhancing their chances for success as teachers and scholars by providing them with adequate and relevant institutional support.

NU Among Top Schools Offering Black Studies Courses

Based on a survey of 254 colleges and universities with black studies programs, the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* ranked Northeastern University among the top 15% for the number of black studies courses that it offers. According to the survey, which was published in the journal's summer 2003 edition, Northeastern offers forty-five black studies courses, tying it for 39th with Grinnell College and the Universities of Arizona and Georgia. In addition, Northeastern is among only five schools in the country offering a course about blacks in science ("Blacks in Science and Medicine" AFR U422). Robert Hall, associate professor and head advisor for the African-American Studies Department, says: "Personally, I think the results of this survey are significant. They speak well of what we have been able to accomplish here."

NUPrime and MassPep Host Student Engineering Competitions on Campus

Last October, a partnership between NUPRIME (Northeastern University Program In Multicultural Engineering) and MassPEP (Massachusetts Pre-Engineering Program) was formally established, with the support and approval of the College of Engineering and the Provost's Office.



Fourteen middle schools participated in the Future City Competition

As part of the NUPRIME mission “to increase the number of traditionally under-represented students entering and succeeding in the study of engineering and technology at NU” along with MassPEP’s mission “to increase the number of African-American, Hispanic/Latino, Native American and female students entering and succeeding in science, mathematics, engineering and technology careers,” there was a mutually beneficial opportunity to strategically bring MassPEP onto the campus of NU and align it with the College of Engineering through NUPRIME.

As a result of the partnership between NUPRIME and MassPEP, the following competitions were held on the campus of Northeastern. The first competition was the Massachusetts Regional Future City Competition held on Saturday, January 24 in the Ell Center. This competition introduced teams of students to engineering through practical applications of math and science, and hands-on work with engineers. The teams designed a city on a computer using the SimCity 3000 software, donated by the Maxis computer software company and provided by MassPEP. The students then built a scale model of a city section. The students also were required to write an essay about their project and present it to a panel of judges.

Regional winners from around the U.S. advanced to the

national finals in Washington, DC during National Engineers Week in February. In the past, national prizes have included a trip to the U.S. Space Camp and additional scholarships for the school's technology program.

The second event and competition held at Northeastern, as a result of the partnership between NUPRIME and MassPEP, was the BSCES Model Bridge Competition held on Saturday, February 7 in the Raytheon Amphitheater.

The Boston Society of Civil Engineers Section (BSCES) Model Bridge Competition is one of the most anticipated events of the year for many students and their mentors. The event provides students with a better understanding of the engineering profession and attracts students to the engineering field. Every year model bridge building specifications are modified to introduce a new challenge for students. Twenty-three engineers volunteered as mentors for this year's competition. There were 53 teams of 143 students, with 26 bridges making it into the competition held in the Raytheon Amphitheater.

A team from Boston Latin School won first place in the load category with a bridge that weighed 441 grams and supported 180 pounds. A team from the John D. O'Bryant School won first place in the aesthetics category.



Winning teams pose next to their trophies and volunteer mentors after the Model Bridge Competition

Students Visit Great Blacks in Wax and Holocaust Museums, February 20–22

In celebration of Black History Month, the Office of Special Support Services/Legacy 2000 Mentoring Retention Program, along with the Council for University Programs (CUP) and the Resident Student Association (RSA) sponsored a trip to visit the Great Blacks in Wax Museum in Baltimore and the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC. Fifty-two students participated in the trip the weekend of Feb. 20–22.

The Great Blacks in Wax Museum is an educational institution that showcases over 100 wax figures and scenic displays depicting the struggles, achievements and contributions of African people worldwide. Each display is presented chronologically, highlighting ancient Africa, the Middle Passage, Atlantic Slave Trade, Ante-Bellum and Post-Bellum periods, Reconstruction, Lynchings, Harlem Renaissance, and the Civil Rights era to the present.

The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately 6 million Jewish people by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. “Holocaust” is a word of Greek origin meaning “sacrifice by fire.” The Nazis, who came to power in Germany in January 1933, believed that Germans were “racially superior” and that Jewish people, deemed “inferior” were “life unworthy of life.” During the era of the Holocaust, the Nazis also targeted other groups because of their perceived “racial inferiority”: Roma (Gypsies), the handicapped, and some of the Slavic peoples (Poles, Russians and others). Other groups were persecuted on political and behavioral grounds, among them communists, socialists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and homosexuals.

The visit to the museum was followed by a group discussion facilitated by Northeastern staff and faculty to compare and contrast the exhibits and to challenge students on race, race relations and identity. The facilitators directed the dialogue surrounding contributions and experiences of culture and history and what impact it has on students at Northeastern University.

Moreover, the intended impact was to bring a diverse student population together to reinforce the notion that racism is a destructive mechanism against any group of people.

NU Delegation Represents Zambia at National Model African Union

The Department of African-American Studies prepared six students to represent the African nation, Zambia at the National Model African Union (AU) March 2-7 in Washington DC. The AU Model, one of the few that are genuinely national in terms of the number of U.S. schools and colleges participating, is a simulation of African international relations and the proceedings of the newly formed African Union (AU), which has 53 member states.

The students were led by Mbosonge Mwenechanya, a PhD student and a graduate assistant to Professor Kwamina Panford for the Model AU course in the African-American Studies Department. Northeastern has participated in this National Model involving over 45 U.S. colleges and universities since 1989. This course which meets the department and College of Arts and Sciences’ experiential education requirement, prepares students for study abroad and employment internships in Africa and other regions of the world.

Highlights of the model included students receiving an official briefing by Zambian diplomats on Zambia, the AU’s positions on African and other international affairs. The students also visited the Embassy of Ghana in Washington to be part of Ghana’s official celebration of independence from Britain. This model offers students a unique opportunity to develop and hone their oral and written presentation skills and learn about real life international diplomacy. They earn course credits toward graduation. This Model AU course is offered every spring semester and is sponsored by the Office of the Provost, the College of Arts and Sciences and the African-American Studies Department. For details please contact the African-American Studies Department at x3148/4333.

Patricia Venter

Diversity Program Director for the Division of Cooperative Education

by Christine Casatelli

Patricia Venter has seen a multicultural explosion in the 25 years she's been working at Northeastern. In her current role as Diversity Program Director for the Division of Cooperative Education, she helps raise awareness about diversity in the workplace.



Patricia Venter received the 2001 President's Diversity Recognition Award

Venter got a hard-core lesson in diversity training at Freedom House working for desegregation activist Ellen Jackson during the time of court-ordered busing in Boston. When Northeastern President Kenneth Ryder hired Jackson in 1978 to head the University's Affirmative Action Office, Jackson asked Venter to join her staff as her administrative assistant.

"Affirmative action has set parameters for the way things have been done at Northeastern," Venter says. Northeastern University's Affirmative Action Office was created in 1975 in response to federal laws designed to encourage employment and educational equity at institutions throughout the country. As diversity grew in importance at Northeastern, so did Venter's role.

In the early 1980s, Office of Affirmative Action staff and other key figures at Northeastern conducted the first-ever campus survey showing that African-American students did not have enough resources. As a result, a minority liaison position was created in the Department of Cooperative Education. Six months after her predecessor left the University, Venter took that job. "I had a chance to make that position grow," she says. "I was given that opportunity, and I am grateful for that."

As Diversity Coordinator for the Division of Cooperative Education, Venter initiated a three-day Cultural Awareness, Train-the-Trainers Program, which

was initially created for faculty and staff in the division. A Diversity Team emanated from that program, and now, through Venter's hard work to enhance this initiative, other members of the Northeastern community can join the team. "Communicating in a Diverse Workplace" and "Managing Conflict Through Cross-Cultural Flexibility" are among the topics addressed. The goal of the program is to give attendees the skills and tools necessary to implement ongoing diversity training within their own units.

Now heading the Division of Cooperative Education's diversity program, she has created a whole slate of offerings for students from culturally diverse backgrounds, including the Ninth & Tenth Grade Outreach Program, the Co-op Mentoring Program, and the Student Advisory Committee.

Even as her program grows, Venter still spends much of her day educating people about diversity and acting as a resource to faculty members and employers. She also makes time to talk to students about careers and other relevant issues.

From Venter's perspective, it's all about people getting along. "What I like to do is bring people together and help them and enhance their relationships."

Library Hosts Reception for Activism Exhibit

Snell Library hosted a reception for a new exhibit, "We Raise Our Voices: Celebrating Activism for Equality and Pride in Boston's African American, Feminist, Gay and Lesbian, and Latino Communities," on February 11 in the Lower Level of Snell Library. It provided an opportunity for participants to view the exhibit, hear from represented community groups, and meet other activists committed to preserving Boston's diverse history. For more information please contact: archives@neu.edu or x2351. To see the exhibit on the web, go to <http://www.lib.neu.edu/archives/voices>.

Wall of Oppression Breaks Down Diversity

By Adrianna M. Campos

The "Wall of Oppression" was demolished in the Snell Library Quad to symbolize the breakdown of barriers. The act was the culmination of the "Writing on the Wall Project," an event that was part of Diversity Week. The student-run "Writing on the Wall Project" spearheaded Diversity Week this year, challenging students and faculty to confront issues of intolerance and discrimination in society and their lives.

On Friday, Oct. 17, six months worth of time and effort by a group of diversity-driven students culminated in the destruction of the "Wall of Oppression," an act meant to symbolize the breaking of barriers in society. From Oct. 6-9, 200 students and faculty members associated with various organizations attended six brick-painting sessions in the African-American Institute, the Snell Library Quad and Speare Cafeteria, where they decorated bricks to represent instances of intolerance in their lives or the lives of people they know.

Margot Ferencz, a freshman geology major, heard about the project through the Northeastern University Allied Student Coalition (NUASC) and volunteered to supervise the brick painting in Speare Cafeteria.

"When I heard about [the Wall of Oppression], I thought it was an absolutely great idea, so I decided to help," Ferencz said.

The project took on a more personal meaning for Ferencz, who is also involved in the Latin American Student Organization (LASO) and the Asian Student Union (ASU).

"I'm multi-racial and I think it's important that we learn to accept everybody, especially in the U.S.," she said.

Following speeches by President Richard Freeland and Donnie Perkins, dean and director of the office of affirmative action and diversity, during the Oct. 14 opening ceremony for the "Wall of Oppression," the first of 300 bricks were placed into position in the Snell

Library Quad. Freeland recalled witnessing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream Speech" in Washington, D.C. in 1963.

"We've learned a lot in the 40 years since that famous and wonderful March on Washington ... and so we gather here today ... as a journey on those principles continues," Freeland said.

Throughout the continuing week, as bricklayers continued to build the wall, students passing through the quad stopped to read the messages on the brick: "Dirty Mexican," "FOB," "God Hates Fags" and "Towel Head" were but a few of the insults covering the wall.

Freshman business administration major Jason Piette thought the wall carried a powerful message.

"A lot of these things we hear everyday and don't think about what they could mean to different types of people," said Piette, as he watched the wall being built on opening day. "It's definitely powerful."

On Friday, Oct. 17, the wall came down.

Students and faculty members gathered in the library quad to destroy the wall of hate. Following speeches by Kwamina Panford, the associate vice provost for academic opportunity and diversity and chair of the African American studies department, and Finessa Slater, a middler psychology major who spearheaded the project and acted as student adviser, onlookers were asked to grab onto 30 ropes extending from the wall.

As Slater counted down from 10, black, white, Hispanic, Indian and Asian participants, clad in business suits, designer clothes and tattered jeans, readied themselves to yank the ropes together, and as Slater yelled "Pull!" the bricks shattered at their feet.

After closing speeches by African American Studies Associate Professor Robin Chandler and Slater, spectators were encouraged to share their thoughts about diversity and oppression on stage. Doolie Wilkins, a senior theatre major advised the crowd to focus on the love people share rather than their differences.

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seriously because the kids depend on me and they look up to me. Kids need someone who will give them guidance for the long road ahead of them; it is my privilege to be able to help in any way I can, especially for the Latina/o community.

As a LaCLA scholar and as a Latina in the United States, it is not only my responsibility but it's an action that must come from every single one of us to do something for the community. Having said that, the LaCLA scholarship means more to me than just getting money, it means more than just getting good grades, it means being able to make a difference little by little. As I mentioned previously "its all in the eye of the beholder," having this privilege is a priceless reward that will always be with me, because it's the gratitude and experiences I gain from helping the community.

Wall of Oppression Breaks Down Diversity*continued page 11*

"I'm a man of color who has experience with racism and oppression in America," Wilkins said later. "When [the wall]

went down, I felt very emotional. There was this feeling in my stomach ... I just can't explain it."

Slater, who had been organizing and planning the project since attending an on-campus hate crime presentation in January, was also combating emotions after the deconstruction.

"I'm glad that the Northeastern community reacted so well and that they appreciated the symbolism behind it," said Slater, who, along with a team of student coordinators, used a \$2,000 grant from the Office of Affirmative Action and Diversity and donations from various campus organizations to fund the event. Slater said that she was initially worried about funding the event.

"Once I got the backing, I was just very persistent ... I was surprised by how much support I got from the school. At first we were worried that we wouldn't have enough money, but the support was overwhelming. For a Northeastern event, I'm very happy with the turnout; we had so many people pulling ropes," said Slater as she fought back tears. "I'm just beaming right now."

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**ACCESS PROGRAMS**

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