

A Publication of the Office of Multicultural Affairs
Grand Valley State University

Dean's Corner



Happy New Year from the Office of
Multicultural Affairs (OMA)!

This semester, OMA will continue to provide exceptional intercultural programs to our internal and external communities. To kick off the semester, please join OMA in the annual march for U.S. History, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration scheduled for Monday, January 21, 2008. The march will begin at 1:45 p.m. at the front steps of Zumberge Library and conclude with a program in the Fieldhouse Arena featuring Minnijean Brown Trickey who is a member of the historic Little Rock Nine. Also performing as a part of the celebration will be "Voices of GVSU."

Please "save the dates," January 31, February 13, and March 12, 2008, for OMA's Professionals of Color Lecture Series featuring Dr. Julianne Malveaux, Betty Nguyen, and Bill Shannon. Visit OMA's Web site at www.edu/oma for event information.

In December 2007, OMA welcomed a new assistant director, Jermale Eddie. Prior to joining the staff, Jermale worked for Calvin College in Multicultural Student Development. Jermale is a graduate of Grand Valley State University. Another new staff member is Sarah Flinders. Sarah serves as the database coordinator. Please join us in welcoming our two newest team members.

Furthermore, OMA would like to extend a warm and hearty welcome to Dr. Jeanne Arnold, vice president for Inclusion and Equity. OMA looks forward to working with Dr. Arnold.

In my everyday communication with members of the campus community, I discuss the importance of diversity as it pertains to the OMA and the university's core missions. With the university's support, OMA will continue to focus on the challenge of bringing an economically and socially diverse student body to the university, creating an inviting multicultural curriculum and community, and embracing difference as part of our discovery ethos.

Like many of you, I am deeply concerned about children who grow up in economically disadvantaged households and are not able to use education to create opportunity. The university has a vital role to play in helping students prepare for and succeed in college. Programs such as the OMA GEAR UP/College Day program, for example, which brings selected middle school students to campus for extended visits, aim to increase low-income and first-generation admissions to Grand Valley. However, we must also think more broadly about how we encourage students.

We must ask, "Are we providing an environment that is inviting and supportive? Is there a sense of community in which the individual feels that he or she belongs? Does our curriculum include material and examples that provide connections to the diverse cultures and histories of our students?" These questions are important for all students. While some programming development, policy making and intercultural training has helped infuse broader cultural awareness into the university, the goal should be to treat multicultural issues as part of, and not apart from, the "regular" system.

As these examples demonstrate, much progress has been made to address diversity at the university. We should celebrate these gains. However, we are far short of our goal to be the institution that changes the world by changing ourselves. There are no easy answers. With commitment, perseverance, and creativity, we can become that institution.

In closing, I continue to invite your full participation in helping us build a campus community that better understands, appreciates and celebrates commonalities and differences. It is my sincere hope that you will help us continue to foster an environment where civility and caring for each other are valued and affirmed.

Wishing each of you a prosperous academic semester.

Warmest Regards,

— Oliver Wilson, Ph.D.
Dean, Office of Multicultural Affairs

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GEAR UP/College Day Program Works With Local Middle Schools

In fall 2006, the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) was awarded funds by the United States Department of Education and the State of Michigan's Department of Labor and Economic Growth to implement the GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs). The GEAR UP/College Day Program's mission is to provide an opportunity for underrepresented students to discover the potential of a college education and to expose students to the information, knowledge and skills they need to complete high school and adequately prepare for college admission and success.

Grand Valley State University's GEAR UP/College Day Program provides tutoring,

mentoring, college preparation workshops and scholarship opportunities to seventh grade students at the following schools: Grand Rapids Public Schools, Alger Middle,



Bobby Springer,
GEAR UP/ICD Coordinator

Burton Middle, Riverside Middle and Westwood Middle. During the 2006–2007 academic year, OMA invited 631 students to the Grand Valley Allendale Campus for a one-day college tour. Students had the opportunity to engage in a physics lab experiment facilitated by a college professor, listen to presentations about admission procedures and financial aid opportunities, enjoy lunch at the Fresh Food Company and tour the beautiful campus buildings. In addition, 117 students participated in a three-day summer program on our campus.

The following are testimonials from the schools' representatives:

Alger Middle – “The bi-weekly visits provided an opportunity for students to experience college life and to gain an early awareness for college preparation. Participating in the physics class with Dr. Gipson and meeting with the Admissions assistant directors provided our students with the out of classroom learning.” Mary Ann Harris, counselor.

Burton Middle – “The students learn to set educational goals for the future and experience college life early on. This exposure helps students to gain an

awareness of the importance of education. Students know that there is an opportunity to attend college, receive support, and be successful.” Pamela Hamilton-Hull, counselor and Juana Correa, social worker.

Riverside Middle – “The program coordinator, Mr. Bobby Springer, met with approximately 200 seventh grade students during the 2006–2007 academic year. Our students developed greater career awareness and valued the importance of a post-secondary education. All students visited Grand Valley's campus and 30 students were hand selected to attend an intensive summer college preparation and exploratory camp. These students and their teachers were grateful for the opportunity provided by Mr. Springer.” Bill Ross, assistant principal.

Westwood Middle – “The program has helped students to realize the importance of punctuality, organization, and team work. Some of our students spent three days at Grand Valley this past summer. They stayed in the dorms, enjoyed college food and experienced a real college life. The teachers believe that this program has helped our students better prepared for their futures.” Kristin Bauer, teacher.

WELCOME!

Please join the Office of Multicultural Affairs in extending our warmest welcome to Sarah Flinders, database coordinator and Jermale Eddie, assistant director



Sarah Flinders

I was born and raised in Bellflower, California. After high school, I attended Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa where I received my bachelor's degree in English. I then continued to Oakland University where I earned my master's degree in English while working for the Michigan Cancer Institute. After

graduation, I married, moved to Kansas and worked for three years as an assistant coordinator with the Jones Institute for Educational Excellence at Emporia State University. From Emporia State, we moved to Grand Rapids where I worked for two years as a client service representative at Founders Bank & Trust. When I am not at work, I enjoy spending time with my son and my husband, Bob Flinders, who works for Grand Valley's Housing and Residential Life. I also enjoy reading and experimenting with new food in the kitchen.



Jermale Eddie

I was born and raised in Berrien Springs, Michigan and married in 2006. I received a bachelor's degree in Social Studies in 2003 from Grand Valley State University and a master's degree in Family Studies in 2006 from Spring Arbor University. Before coming to Grand Valley, I served as the program

coordinator for the Multicultural Student Development Office at Calvin College. In 2007, I received the Equity in Higher Education Award from the Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers for the Tapestry Leadership Program, a retention program for students of color.

I am a family life educator and practitioner. I am devoted to providing urban students and their families with the resources that they need to be successful during their life after high school (in what ever that may be) by providing resources and the understanding of those resources. My other interests include spending time with my wife, listening to live blues and jazz, spoken word, watching plays and musicals, and traveling.

The Muslim Student Association

By Petra Alsoofy, President of the Muslim Student Association, Executive board, Multicultural Teacher Education Cohort

The Muslim Students Association (MSA) exists to raise awareness about Islam as a religion of peace. During the fall semester, MSA hosted a total of seven events to reflect the organization's mission. On Monday, October 1, 2007, MSA held the first "Annual Ramadan Fast-A-Thon" where students pledged to fast for one day, from sunrise to sunset. One hundred and forty students pledged to fast and raised \$320 for God's Kitchen in Grand Rapids. This event received numerous sponsorships from the Grand Valley community and local business organizations. The other event sponsored by MSA was the "Miracles of the Qur'an." Dr. Ramzi Mohammad,

Professor of Medicine at Wayne State University, presented on topic. At the Intercultural Festival, MSA invited Dawud Walid, executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations-Michigan to talk about "Five Misconceptions about Islam: Status of Women in Islam, The God We Worship, Jesus in Islam, Diversity in Islam, and Wahhabi Muslims."

As an executive board member of the Multicultural Teacher Education Cohort Program, I have developed a set of skills such as leadership, communication, team work and planning. Now, in my



Petra Alsoofy, left, with some members of the Muslim Student Association

new role as the president of MSA, I am applying these skills to help me to step up and take charge in leading the MSA to achieve our mission.

An Interview with Shingi Mavima

By Latoria Thomas-Lee

Blessing Shingi Mavima, better known as Shingi, serves as an executive board member of OMA's Multicultural Higher Education Cohort (MHEC) and is currently the events coordinator for the African Student Council. He originates from Zimbabwe where he completed his high school education. In fall 2006, Shingi joined Grand Valley State University with a major in International Relations. Shingi already made plans to attend graduate school and pursue philanthropic work and, possibly, motivational speaking.

As a member of the MHEC program, Shingi continues to develop skills outside

of the classroom that include intercultural competency, leadership, citizenship and community service. Serving as an executive board, Shingi has had the opportunity to help organizing workshops and presentations, select award and recognition opportunities for outstanding participants, and serve as the chair of the intercultural development committee.

Shingi also serves as the events chairman for the African Student Council (ASC). Shingi admits that he is attracted to diverse cultures. Shingi says, "I am used to fighting other people's battles, but I saw my involvement with ASC as a way to fight my own battles." He also saw his participation in this organization as a way to "bond with other students and build a network."

While speaking with Shingi, he expressed how shocked he was to find that most people he has come in contact with view Africa as a land of starvation and underdeveloped areas, a view perpetuated by media. It is his goal not only to educate others about the diversity in Africa, but to encourage other Africans not to play into stereotypes and the overwhelming feelings of despair. Shingi proclaims, "We are smart, progressive people, it's time for Americans and Africans to know that."

Left photo: African Student Council executive board members. Shingi is the 3rd person from the left

Middle photo: African drums

Below: African Student Council fashion show participants





Office of Multicultural Affairs • Winter 2008 Programs and Events

- January 21** **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. March and Celebration**
Location: Zumberge Library main entrance, Allendale
March begins at 1:45 p.m., and concludes with a program at the Fieldhouse Arena featuring Minnijean Brown Trickey, Member of Little Rock Nine
- January 31** **Professional of Color Lecture Series**
Dr. Julianne Malveaux, Economist and President of Bennett College for Women
Wall Street, Main Street, and the Side Street: How Do We Fare in the New Economy?
Location: Eberhard Center, 2nd floor
Time: 6:00–7:30 p.m.
- January 31 through February 29** **Black History Month Celebration**
Visit the OMA web site at www.gvsu.edu/oma for a complete list of events
- February 11 through February 14** **Asian Pacific American Heritage Celebration**
Visit the OMA web site at www.gvsu.edu/oma for a complete list of events
- February 13** **Professionals of Color Lecture Series**
Betty Nguyen, CNN Anchor
Humanitarian Work-It Will Change Your Life
Location: Grand River Room, Kirkhof Center
Time: 4:00–5:30 p.m.
- March 12** **Professionals of Color Lecture Series**
Bill Shannon, Crutch Master
Location: Cook-Dewitt Center
Time: 4:00–6:00 p.m.
- March 31 through April 5** **César E. Chávez Celebration Week**
Visit the OMA web site at www.gvsu.edu/oma for a complete list of events
- March 22** **R.I.C.E. Conference**
Realizing and addressing Issues in our Culture and Education
Location: Pew Campus
Time: 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.



OMA MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) is to serve as the flagship for diversity initiatives with institution-wide cooperation for developing policies, practices and programs that fosters a climate of inclusiveness. OMA promotes a welcoming environment for faculty, staff, students and community partnerships.

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Jermale Eddie, Assistant Director
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Coreen Pelton, Multicultural Affairs Assistant
Sarah Flinders, Database Coordinator
Goldie Pritchard, Graduate Assistant

VISION

To promote acceptance and appreciation of an inclusive campus community that values the diversity of people, backgrounds and perspectives of each individual.

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OMA News is a bi-yearly publication of the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

Project Manager/Editor: Connie Dang

Design and Production:
Ruth Oldenburg, Rainstick Studio

For the latest news and events, check us out on the Web!

www.gvsu.edu/oma

Archived copies of the OMA's newsletters can be accessed through our Web site address above.

