

Diversity Circles

Dialogue, Action, Change

February 2006

UW-Parkside Students Take Part in M3C Fellowship

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M3C Fellow Aaron Slocum takes some time out to enjoy a little sun.

This year at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, two students are working hard with the Diversity Circles program after being selected to take part in the Midwest Campus Compact Citizen-Scholar (M3C) Fellows Program. Aaron Slocum, a prospective 2009 graduate majoring in Sports Management, and Jakia

Johnson, a graduate of 2008 majoring in psychology, have both taken a course on community-based learning at UW-P and participated in Diversity Circles, and as a result, they decided to apply for the fellowship which would allow them to be more actively involved with the program.

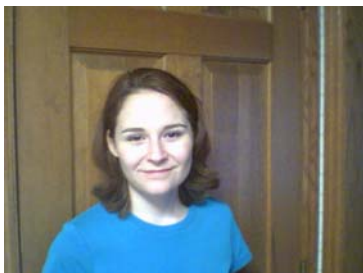
The M3C Fellowship program was set up by a number of campuses located in the Midwest that are known as the "Campus Compact." The Campus Compact is committed to promoting community service, and with the program, students receive a stipend to help further their education

in exchange for putting in service hours. They are required to log 300 hours each year, and in return, they are given \$1,000 to put towards future semesters at school.

In order to meet their service requirements, Slocum and Johnson are facilitating a Diversity Circle with weekly sessions at Burlington High School and taking part in circles that are held on the UW-P campus. They also help the Diversity Circles Director, Roseann Mason, with various other activities that take place on campus, and both have completed a ten-hour training session that showed them what it takes to be

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Diversity Circle Newsletters Get New Writer



New writer Lindsey Hartman

Hello, Everyone! As the new writer and editor of the Diversity Circle newsletter, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Lindsey Hartman, and I am a senior at UW-Parkside. When I graduate in May, I will have com-

pleted majors in both English and Spanish, and I would like to use these degrees to become a translator at a hospital in either the Milwaukee or Chicago areas. I enjoy helping people immensely, and I truly feel that

translating would be a valuable use of my time.

In addition to attending class at UW-Parkside, I also work in the English and Humanities Office on campus (CART 235) every morning. In the office, I

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good facilitators.

All these activities may seem like a lot for the average student to take on, but the M3C Fellowship coordinator, Anne Statham, knows that Slocum and Johnson are up for the task.

“Both of them are leaders,” she says. “They’re motivated, concerned with community issues, responsible, hard-working, and wanting to improve themselves.”

In addition, both Johnson and Slocum seem happy with their choice to take part in the program. Slocum admits that at first he only got involved with Diversity Circles because of a need for community service hours, but now his heart is really in it, and he knows these experiences will help him in the future.

“I plan on being a coach,” he explains. “People have problems, and by being a facilitator, I’ll get a broader [perspective] on how to approach [their problems.]”

Adds Johnson, “I am making a difference in what people perceive, and [personally] I’ve learned to keep an open mind.”

Slocum and Johnson continue to meet with a program assistant weekly to plan for upcoming sessions and to reflect on the role their services play in their lives, and both can be content in knowing that they are working hard for a very good cause.

“It’s an important program,” says Statham. “[Racism] is the unspoken problem in our society.”

The students plan to con-

tinue their work with the program after their fellowships have ended, and it is clear that they will remain committed to helping their communities in the years to come.



Diversity Circle Started at Burlington H.S.

February 20th marked the official start date of the first Diversity Circle to be held at Burlington High School in Racine County. The circle is coordinated by faculty member Robbie Twohig and facilitated by senior Alyssa Rodriguez, 18, and junior Kyle McKinney, 17, and the sessions are being held during the students’ third block of study hall on Monday afternoons.

While all three of these people work hard each week to have sessions go smoothly, they have decided it would be best for the students if Twohig did not directly participate in each meeting.

“I am just the housekeeper of the whole thing,” laughs Twohig. “Honestly, they’re a little more candid when there aren’t adults around.”

However, two students

involved in community-based learning do come from UW-Parkside each week to help out Rodriguez and McKinney. Jakia Johnson and Aaron Slocum have both taken part in Diversity Circles in the past, and so far it seems that they are close enough in age to the student facilitators that the participants have not been shy about talking with them.

Claims Johnson, “The students are opening up and...the sessions have been going very well so far.”

Since the circle is still in its exploratory phase, there are only twelve students involved right now, but in the future, Twohig hopes they may be able to take students out of their regular classes so that they can participate in the important

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help professors with their individual needs, such as grading papers, making copies, typing up letters, etc, and help keep the office up and running. I really enjoy my time in the office because I get the opportunity to meet and interact with so many different people. If in the area, please feel free to stop by and see me!

Because my background

includes some Native American ancestry, I am very excited to be working with the Diversity Circles, and I am also anxious to observe what goes on within their fascinating sessions. I am extremely proud of my Native American heritage, and I like that the Diversity Circles celebrate everyone's differences. We are not all the same; why should we pretend that we are? I firmly

believe that my background is one of the things that makes me stand out, and I think it will help me to do a better job when creating these newsletters. I hope you all enjoy reading them!

Racine Diversity Circle Holds Final Session

On Saturday, March 11th, the fifth and final session of a local Diversity Circle was held at the United Way building in Racine County. The circle was comprised of seven members who met on several occasions to discuss how they could help improve the Racine community. At this meeting, it was time for the members to decide what their plan of action should be. Throughout the course of the sessions, many suggestions were made as to what the group's main

focus should be, and at this last meeting, it was decided that helping to end racism in schools would become their main objective because eliminating racism in schools could in turn lead to the elimination of racism in many other institutions.

Said member Ellen Nuechterlein, "...The biggest issue in our community...is the institutional racism which under girds every system we work in. No matter what we

talk about: education, poverty, jobs, housing, etc.—it can be broken down showing racial disparities."

Added member Ruth Foley, "The biggest issue in our community, in my opinion, is the education of [all the] young people beginning with kindergarten."

While their plan was an extremely large task to undertake, the majority of the

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"...The biggest issue in our community...is the institutional racism which under girds every system we work in..."
-Diversity Circle member Ellen Nuechterlein

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discussions.

"Kids need a venue where they can interact and listen to others about topics that are hot [because] students at this age are impressionable," she says.

Indeed, more participation is a major goal, and suggestions such as better advertisements

for the circles and offering credits to participating students have been proposed. Nevertheless, so far, the Circles have proven to be a great experience for everyone involved.

"Personally, what I'm getting out of it," says Rodriguez, "is [hearing] others' thoughts and

ideas on diversity, racism, sexism, homophobia, and other such topics."

Adds Johnson, "Basically, we're opening people's eyes and letting them see [beyond] color."

Sessions will be held until

the week of finals, and another Diversity Circle is planned to start in the fall.

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members seemed confident in the group's ability to make a difference. It was noted that more individual planning had to be done, but in the end, they could see some wonderful results.

Said member Ron Thomas, "I am very excited about the direction [in which] this entire program is going. Those of us involved in the sessions are activists in the community and...most of us [have] already gone through previous workshops...All of this should add up to having [an] impact on our community."

Although most members seemed to have a positive attitude towards their efforts and were eager to get started, one

concern that was expressed involved the need for more financial sponsorship. It was generally agreed that everyone would do their best, but without some monetary assistance, their plan would only get so far.

Said Foley, "I am hopeful that our group will accomplish a great deal, but...unless we get funding for a director, I fear we will not be able to achieve our great purpose..."

Nevertheless, so far the group members' plan of action seems to be on the right track, and they are working hard to decrease the amount of racism in Racine County by helping people look at it in a new light.

According to Nuechterlein, the community does not need "a

voyeuristic look at racism with People of Color reliving their pain and White Folks sitting back shaking their heads with a 'Wow, that's too bad' response...White people need to be able to look at how racism affects them also and [to] begin to peel back the layers of white privilege."

Through their attempt to abolish racism in neighborhood schools, the group is doing a great service for the Racine community. Each member plans to continue helping the community in various ways even after this project has ended, and for that, the Racine community will be forever indebted to them.