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Equity & Inclusion Matters - Issue 2

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EQUITY & INCLUSION MATTERS

Otterbein's Office of Social Justice & Activism: Making the Invisible Visible



OTTERBEIN LAUNCHES NEW EQUITY & INCLUSION WEBSITE

Otterbein has a long-standing commitment to equity and inclusion that dates back to its founding. However, students have asked the community to remember there is always room and a need to continue to learn and to grow. In a reflection of Otterbein's on-going commitment to the people and events that help shape shared experience and values, a brand new Equity and Inclusion website has been launched.

This site offers resources, insight, education and events related to the university's mission of equity and Inclusion all in one place. In it, one can find:

- A letter from Diversity and Inclusion Committee Chair Bob Gatti addressing the need for this important endeavor and how we as a community can come together;
- UnderSTAND section dedicated to continuing education of all the Otterbein community with a new

focus every other month, with articles, videos and insights from national and local experts;

- Diversity and Inclusion committee meeting minutes, discussions and members' contact information;
- Student expectations from the spring 2016 rally and how Otterbein is responding to them; Advocates and Resources bringing together people, student organizations, university programs and more to reach out to when needed;
- The new Equity and Inclusion Matters newsletter, helping to "make the invisible, visible" with student written articles and photos each semester.

Visit otterbein.edu/Equity to access this new site and learn more about Otterbein's continuous dedication to Equity and Inclusion issues and values.

CALENDAR

February 16

Poetry Slam (in collaboration with CAB)
7 p.m. in Riley Auditorium

March 8

In the Work Place: Navigating the Professional World while Holding a Marginalized Identity (in collaboration with CCPD)
11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
in Campus Center Rooms 1 & 2

April 12

Vernon L. Pack Scholar in Residence Public Lecture
Bryonn Bain, UCLA Department of African American Studies
Life After Lockdown: The Abolition of the Punishment Paradigm
7 p.m. in Cowan Hall

April 21

Noble Transitions
7 p.m. in Riley Auditorium

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Greetings:

As we embark on another semester, we find ourselves at a pivotal point. This world has experienced several critical points in its existence. What makes the most immense difference is how we handle those points. At a time where our nation seems to be more divided than ever, a variety of thoughts and emotions surface. Some of us are fearful and unsure of what lies ahead. Others may feel where we are as a country is no big deal.

Regardless, it is very easy for us to get so embedded in our own bubbles, that we do not recognize or prioritize what's around us. As a result, some perceive citizens speaking up for themselves and others as complaining. Consequently, when we engage with each other, it becomes more of an argument rather than a conversation. Emotions are not to be omitted. Emotions are always going to be present in matters that impact human rights. It is when we fail to listen to each other that disagreements become destructive.

When this happens it plagues us within our families, friendships, partnerships and beyond. We've seen too much of this happening around us. Hence, we stand at the aforementioned pivotal point. The choices lie before us to either disregard the experiences and realities of others or acknowledge that we have something to learn from each other.

It is with those thoughts at heart that the Office of Diversity has become the Office of Social Justice & Activism. With this name change also comes a two-fold mission. The first piece is to create platforms that encourage all of us to constructively engage with others, listen as much as we speak and spend some time in daily self-reflection. In addition, we will be making an intentional

effort to better involve our campus community in the greater community. College campuses have long been an integral part of bringing change to the world.

Our students reminded us last year that Otterbein should be no exception. Though in an ideal world there would be no need for rallies and protests, the beauty of our student rally was that there was a wide array of identities represented in solidarity. We all have a role in this ever important work. Sometimes you may not know exactly what your role entails and that is quite alright. That will become clearer in time.

However, it takes your initiative to gain that clarity. Therefore, I invite you to ask questions, attend programs and work with us as we continue to move our community forward.

Sincerely,



James Prysock



MLK DAY ACTIVITIES HIGHLIGHTED SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ACTIVISM



Otterbein University students embraced Martin Luther King Jr.'s spirit of service this month, as they participated in a day of service and a public convocation.

The annual Martin Luther King Jr. Convocation, featuring student reflections on the topic of Social Justice and Activism, was held on Jan. 18. Winners of the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Peace and Justice Awards include: Faculty winner, Wendy Sherman Heckler; Student winners, April Rally Leaders; Organization winner, COELEC Grant Team.

After the convocation, students participated in the Pack the Mac service project in the Campus Center. Volunteers packaged macaroni "soup-in-a-jar" for local area organizations.

"The food packaging efforts were part of a national effort to honor Dr. King's legacy of service," said Dr. Melissa Gilbert, director of Otterbein's Center for Student Engagement and associate dean for experiential learning. "This was a unique opportunity for students and local volunteers to work together to make a positive impact on our community."

AFRICAN AMERICAN ALUMNI NETWORK RENEWS COMMITMENT TO OTTERBEIN STUDENTS, ALUMNI

When Kim Aikens '99 was a student at Otterbein, she benefited from the advice and mentorship from some of those in the business world. The business/marketing major, now an analyst at Abbott Nutrition, joined the Otterbein Alumni Council in 2015, and noticed that African American alumni had only a small presence with students on campus. Aikens decided her personal mission would be to resurrect the African American Alumni Network, to provide a forum for African American alumni and students of color to engage in personal and professional growth.

"While there was virtually no network in 2015, by last year we wanted something to identify us: to get face time, reconnect with alumni, and let students know we are here for you," Aikens said. "I've been there as a student and understand the African American experience on campus. I wanted to give career or personal advice, or just provide an ear to current students of color." Aiken's three-prong effort hopes to

provide a system for alumni to identify with students, to increase alumni to alumni connections, and to give back to the Otterbein community. She successfully petitioned the Alumni Council to recognize the African American Alumni Network.



"The Network has grown to include all different races, majors and skin tones," Aikens said. "So many different things bring us together. We're slowly growing—Rome wasn't built in a day and neither was this Network."

Yet momentum is growing as the Network initially focused on student

activities. Aikens was surprised at the rainbow of faces that were involved with the Noble Transitions program last spring.

She and other Network members are now conducting benchmarking to see how other African American alumni associations at similar university functions are organized. "I'm constantly asking, 'what are other universities doing successfully that we could be doing?'" said Aikens. "I want to bring synergies to get our best bang for the buck." The ultimate goal is to create a Network that will accelerate diversity on campus, enriching all students in the process. Otterbein African Americans and other graduates that support the Network's vision, including instructors and administrators, are welcome to join the Network.

For more information, contact the Otterbein Alumni Council.

OTTERBEIN WELL REPRESENTED AT WOMEN'S MARCH

Members of the Otterbein community, faculty, staff and students, traveled to Washington, D.C., for the Women's March on Washington on Jan. 21, 2017.



Multiple conversations are taking place on campus to explore matters of creating a safe space for students, recruiting a diverse student body, and covering social justice, diversity, and inclusion matters.



NEW RACE AND ETHNIC STUDIES MINOR AIMS TO INCREASE CAMPUS CONVERSATIONS

By Courtney Kilmer '17, PR major

A new minor was passed through Senate and many professors and students are buzzing about it. Race and Ethnic Studies will be an interdisciplinary program concentrating on historical and contemporary aspects of race and ethnicity. The program hopes to open doors to conversations about race and ethnicity issues both in the United States as well as across the world.

Associate professor of English Phyllis Burns is the director of the new program, although she insists that it's a collaborative effort that spans across

six multiple departments, ranging from English and communication to religion and philosophy.

"We come from different cultural backgrounds and different experiences," said Burns. "We have this idea that this minor allows you to not be isolated in your studies."

Claudia Owusu, a sophomore creative writing major, was the first person to officially sign up for the minor. She thinks it's a very important move for Otterbein to make, showing that the institution truly is an inclusive

community and is striving to improve. She also believes that it's crucial for students to try to take part in the program for the benefit of their own educational growth.

The new minor demonstrates Otterbein's effort to continue being progressive.

"Otterbein holds itself as an institution that is progressive, inclusive and forward thinking," said Burns. "We know race and ethnic studies will help solidify that objective."

BY THE NUMBERS

23% increase in percentage of admitted African American students for Fall 2017.

28% increase in percentage of admitted Hispanic students for Fall 2017.

18% overall increase in percentage of admitted students of color for Fall 2017.

87.2% retention rate for students of color. The retention rate for all first-year students is 83.1%.