

FILLING IN THE GAPS:
PROVIDING INTERSECTIONAL SUPPORT &
INTERCULTURAL ENGAGEMENT AT A LIBERAL ARTS
COLLEGE

Williams College

The Davis Center

Gail Newman, justin adkins & Taj Smith

History of Multicultural Centers

- Overview of MCCs
- Williams College



Mission & Structure of the Davis Center

Mission

- The mission & its changes
 - Things remained
 - Things got added & integrated

- General structure
 - Where are we officially located?
 - Campus influence
 - Staffing & roles

The Davis Center serves as the intercultural, identity development and social justice hub on campus.

The Center contributes to the advancement of diverse social identities, particularly those defined by race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, and sexual orientation.

Through programming, mentoring, supporting academic research and course offerings, the Center reinforces critical thinking, awareness of one's social development and precipitates multilateral exchange.

Advising Multiple & Intersecting Identities

- How do we personally and collectively navigate working with a diverse group of students?
- MinCo & activist groups
 - Minority Coalition Steering Committee
 - 13 MinCo subgroup student organizations
 - 7 Activist student organizations
- Support groups
 - Anything But Straight (ABS) & Allies

Intercultural & Intersectional Programming

- How do we encourage our student groups to work in collaboration and in coalition with one another?
 - Fun, food & festivities
 - Teaching Dining Staff Home Recipes
 - BSU-WCJA Jazz Night
 - Speakers
 - Mia McKenzie
 - Angela Davis
 - Discussions & projects
 - Asian & Black Relationships
 - The Wall

Diversity & Inclusive Practices Trainings



- Residential advisor facilitation & diversity awareness trainings
- Staff professional development (3 phases)
- LGBTQ cultural competency workshops

Academic Integration

- Teaching & research initiatives for faculty & students
 - Developing critical and inclusive pedagogy
 - Crossing Borders
 - Funding for Conferences
- Relationships with academic departments
- Cycle of Socialization course

Student Reflection Quotes

- **“Intersectionality was a word I had never heard before.** It is now an integral part of my discourse when discussing issues of social identity. I may have had some idea that my identities were connected in a way, but without a term to describe that connection, the idea remained abstract.” (Bi-Racial, Latino-Asian, Rising Senior)
- “The general idea of ‘privilege’ takes on the belief that you are white/male/rich/heterosexual. That you don’t know the struggle so goodbye type of argument. I like how you [Taj] went on from that to say, “It does not have to be asked for or desired”, and “It doesn’t mean your family or you haven’t worked hard.” I think less people would feel alienated if it was a more common knowledge that privilege isn’t synonymous with bad. A lot of the **misconceptions about privilege** are because people learn about it more by word-of-mouth than in an educational setting.” (Latina Rising Sophomore)
- “He described an **experience similar to mine** in that he was told by others that he was not Mexican enough because he didn’t speak Spanish or fit the mold (stereotype) that others have set for him.” (Black Man-Identified Rising Senior)
- **“I would often assume** that all the white students in the class lived privileged lives while all the ethnic minorities in the class dealt with multiple oppressions. Never once did it cross my mind that there could be racial minorities in my class that were economically and socially privileged and white peers that experienced social oppression.” (Native American Man-Identified Recent Graduate)

Student Reflection Quotes

- “What I didn’t notice until we discussed in small groups is **how insidious heteronormativity is**. In hospitals, bathrooms, stores, schools, jobs. People go on and on about how difficult coming out can be, or dealing with people’s opinions in general, but there are so many other, less obvious, ways for a queer person to feel alienated. Heterosexism reaches so much farther than I knew.” (Latina Heterosexual Rising Senior)
- “We often have these **conversations in our own separated groups** and are unable to hear the perspective of other groups. In this class, I was able to talk about sexism with a male who possessed a sexist mentality. Although at times these were frustrating situations, I felt like I was challenged and at times had to reflect on what were my core principles regarding the subject. It allowed me to at least understand that he too faced difficulties. I also appreciated his honesty, and how even when he came across as sexist, he would ask students (especially women) questions that helped him expand his perspective.” (Latina Recent Graduate)
- “Most of the students after class migrated to Paresky for lunch. The conversations I had with these students on walks from Greylock to Paresky were always **a continuation of the class discussion**. However, without the confines of a classroom students were more open and honest. The greatest impact this course provided me with was connections with fellow peers.” (Black Woman Identified Rising Senior)

Collaborations

- Environmental Center
 - co-advising environmental activist groups & Root orientation program
- Community for Learning in Action
 - co-advising activist groups & co-tabling
- Chaplains' Office
 - co-advising religious groups & quarterly lunch meetings
- Williams College Museum of Art
 - culturally relevant programming with collection or short-term projects
- Deans Office Meeting
 - Information gathering & First-Gen/International student programming

Assessment Research

- DART
 - How does this speak to informing our intercultural & intersectional work? Are we looking at the intersections in our research?
- Trainings and program-specific assessment still needed
 - Program Management Model

Questions & Discussion

- Your general thoughts/clarifying questions
- Can you imagine incorporating any of our best practices on your campus? What might be the benefits? What might be the challenges?
- What program assessment measures do you use?
- [Our emails: gnewman@williams.edu,](mailto:gnewman@williams.edu)
[ila1@williams.edu,](mailto:ila1@williams.edu) tps2@williams.edu