At the Center

NENGHER N. VANG, Assistant Director of Multicultural Programs

On behalf of the staff in the Diversity Center, I want to welcome everyone—students, staff, and faculty—back for the Spring 2012 semester. I joined the Diversity Center last semester as its assistant director of multicultural programs after serving as a postdoctoral research fellow in Hmong studies with the Institute for Advanced Study and the Asian American Studies program at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities.

As the assistant director in the Diversity Center, I am delighted to have the opportunity to work with a marvelous staff. We are very fortunate to have many of our veteran student assistants—Elizabeth Coco, Jasmine Porter, Michael Patterson, Rachel Crowley, Tong Thao, and Kareen Getfield—join our staff for another year. Their veteran presence continues to be a beacon of light for our office. We are also grateful and thrilled to have added several new members to our student staff, including Pa Ngia Moua, Bushra Wahid, Mark Zorrilla, Abdi Umur, and Jourdan Stacey.

Each year, the Diversity Center is confronted with new challenges. We were, for example, confronted with a great challenge during the fall semester when we had more students than mentors signed up to participate in our Mentoring for Student Success program. But thanks to the wonderful community of faculty and staff that we have at Gustavus, we were able to use this challenge as an opportunity to recruit and add new mentors to the program. Our circle of potential mentors is now larger than ever. For the rest of the school year, we will continue to meet challenges with a spirit of optimism and transform them into opportunities. This semester, our office, in partnership with the Writing Center and the math and science departments, provides writing, math, biology, chemistry, and physics tutors. A number of faculty and staff are also kind enough to hold office hours in the Diversity Center. So stop in to meet and talk to our staff, tutors, faculty, and students. Finally, please check out our website at gustavus.edu/diversity/ for upcoming events from our office throughout the year. Hope to see you soon here in the Diversity Center!
Meet the Diversity Center Staff

Hi, I’m Virgil Jones. I’m an assistant dean of students and the director of multicultural programs in the Diversity Center and Office of Multicultural Programs. Working with students, interacting with them, and pointing them to resources on campus that they need to be successful academically at Gustavus are some of the most enjoyable aspects of my work here in the Diversity Center.

My name is Nengher N. Vang. I am the assistant director of multicultural programs in the Diversity Center. I enjoy learning new ideas, theories, or philosophies, and I am always open to seeing things from a different perspective. (Read more in the article on page 1.)

Hi, I’m Laura Shilling, the administrative assistant in the Diversity Center. This is my fourth year at Gustavus, and it’s crazy to consider that I have been here as long as the seniors! It’s an amazing year in the Diversity Center, and I hope you can be a part of it.

Hello my name is Abdi Umur. This is my first year attending Gustavus, and I am excited to meet new people in college. I am originally from Somalia, but I now live in Minneapolis. I wish to get a bachelor’s degree in biology, go to medical school, and become a doctor one day. There are many things that I love to do in life, but the thing I love the most is spending time with my friends and playing sports.

My name is Bushra Wahid, and I’m from Jammu and Kashmir, India. I’m a junior communications studies major and am considering philosophy as a second major. Gustavus has been a big change but a good big change for me. I absolutely love going to theatre productions and my favorite Gustie tradition has to be traying. I am currently involved in the Pan Afrikan Student Organization as well as the International Cultures Club.

Hello ya’ll! My name is Elizabeth Coco, and I am a senior religion and gender, women, and sexuality major with an English minor. This is my fourth year working in the D-Center. Every year I get super excited to meet new people! So . . . you better stop by and play some UNO with me!

Heyo! My name is Jasmine Porter, and I am a junior this year studying political science and geography. Aside from being a student worker in the Diversity Center, I am a member of the social justice theater troupe, I Am We Are, the Womyn’s Awareness Center, and Gustavus Ambassadors. I am also a Big Partner in the volunteer program Big Partner, Little Partner.

Hello! My name is Kareen Getfield and I am a senior history major with religion and peace studies minors. I come from Kingston, Jamaica, but I live in Queens, New York, now. This is my second year working in the Diversity Center, and I love it. The center is a comfortable place to meet new Gusties or just hang out. So, feel free to stop by.

Nyob zoo sawv dawv, my name is Tong Thao. I am a senior geography major hailing from St. Paul. I love being involved in anything that promotes unity through diversity. I love everything from video games to music. I will be in the Diversity Center a lot so stop by and please introduce yourself to me! Sib ntsib dua!
Hey my name is Mark Zorrilla II, and I am a first-year student. I come to Gustavus from Houston, Texas, hoping to earn my degree in either physics or chemistry. I have lots of interest in so many fields, and it would be impossible to name them all. However, I take a special interest in mixed martial arts, which I have done for about six years now. Working at the D-Center is one of my favorite things to do.

I’m Michael Patterson, and I am from Houston, Texas. I am a sophomore computer science major. I like to make video games, and I plan on becoming a video-game designer and finding work in California when I graduate. The Diversity Center became my home away from home when I realized just how much of a cultural melting pot this place really is, and I am grateful to be working here. I love talking to the students that come through here.

Bonjour mesdames et messieurs! My name is Pa Ngia Moua, and I am a sophomore communications studies major and peace studies minor. I am a Collegiate Fellow in the Carlson International Center. I am thrilled to be involved in M-Pact this year. I enjoy learning languages, painting, watching movies, getting to know people, helping others, and, most of all, relaxing! Au revoir!

Ahn nyung ha se yo! Hello! My name is Rachel Crowley. I am a senior Management major. My future plans are to explore all the possibilities of my degree from Gustavus. I am a very motivated spirit, and I love to follow my heart. This is evident in the various organizations of which I am part. I am involved in Delta Phi Omega Sorority, Lambda Alpha Nu Co-ed Business Fraternity, OLAS, and dance team. I have an internship with Roaring Lion Energy Drink. I work at the Diversity Center on campus and night managing at Econo Foods off campus. Over the past two years, I have learned a ton from working in the Diversity Center and met a many awesome people.

.Shortly before Fall Break, I headed up to the Minneapolis Public Library to hear a reading by Leslie Marmon Silko. Her novel Ceremony (1977) is one of the founding texts of contemporary Native American fiction, along with N. Scott Momaday’s The Way to Rainy Mountain (1969). The 225-seat auditorium in the library filled quickly and a hush fell over the gathered fans as Silko emerged on the stage, dressed in a beautiful red fabric jacket and turquoise jewelry. She was planning to read from her new book, The Turquoise Ledge: A Memoir. But she began by talking with us for quite a while. Writing a memoir had been hard for her, she confessed. She did not want to produce a book on “overcoming addiction,” the theme of so many memoirs recently. On the other hand, she did not really want to write about her family and early life either. “It’s terrible to have to write about the bald facts,” she opined. What she ended up writing was a lyrical book about rattlesnakes, the New Mexican desert, and spirituality; but The Turquoise Ledge is also a book about the Indian slave trade in the Southwest and the genocide of America’s indigenous people. Silko writes about hidden things: she writes for her people and for the rest of us, so we will know something of the history of American Indians. She writes for the same reason that I taught a course in January 2012, with Ben Leonard from the Treaty Site Museum, on the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. By inviting students to travel to the sites of battle right around us, to listen to Dakota and non-Dakota speakers on the topic, and by creating our own museum exhibit about the conflict that was raging as Gustavus opened its doors, Ben and I hoped to reveal some of this hidden history and raise the awareness of Gusties about the Dakota people today.

Leslie Marmon Silko: A Laguna Pueblo Novelist

ELIZABETH BAER, Professor of English
STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Zeta Chi Phi Multicultural Sorority
The Womyn’s Awareness Center (WAC)
Queers and Allies (Q&A)
Pan Afrikan Students Organization
Organization for Latin American & Mosaic
Meditation Student Organization
M-Pact (Mentoring Men for Lives of Japanese Culture Club (JCC)
International Culture Club (ICC)
I AM WE ARE (IAWA)
Hmong American Cultural Outreach
Diversity Leadership Council (DLC)
College Democrats
College Republicans
Chinese Culture Club
Building Bridges

During the 2011-2012 school year, the D-Center works with the following 18 on-campus diversity and inclusion student organizations to advocate for intellectual boost in these subject areas.

Student organizations to advocate for intellectual boost in these subject areas.

For more information, visit the D-Center’s website at: gustave.edu/diversity/D-center.php

CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

Focus: Asia

World Watch

Highlights of 2011

April 14 – The 23-year rule of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia collapsed after weeks of protest over unemployment, food prices and overall poor living conditions. He fled the country with members of his family and a large quantity of gold. The military council took power and promised elections.

January 14 – The 3-year rule of President Moammar Gadhafi’s 42-year reign over Libya came to an end when he was killed during an assault by opposition forces in the hometown of Sirte. On December 15, the United States ended its nine-year military mission in Iraq with a ceremony at the Baghdad Airport.

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April 21 – Earth Day International – Celebrated around the world, Earth Day commemorates the country’s first environmental awakening. In 1970, the festival is national to ask for the protection of the environment from depletion. It is an annual event that encourages people to take action to protect the planet.

May 1 – After a nine-and-a-half year manhunt, American commandos found and killed Osama Bin Laden in a compound north of Islamabad, Pakistan.

September 11 – Family members of 9/11’s approximately 3,000 victims, including 24 Canadians, finally saw the official memorial to New York City on the 10th anniversary of the terrorist attacks.

February 2 – Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak resigned after weeks of protests. A military council took power and promised elections.

March 11 – A massive 9.0-magnitude earthquake struck northern Japan, triggering a tsunami that devastated coastal areas and killing tens of thousands of people. The nuclear reactors were damaged, and the government declared a state of emergency.

March 2: World Day of Prayer – Held on the first Friday of March, it is a worldwide common day of prayer each year. It’s a movement initiated and carried out by women in more than 170 countries and regions bringing together women of various races, cultures, and traditions.

March 8: Butter Lamp Festival – In Tibet, the festival celebrates Shakyamuni’s victory over a non-Buddhist opponent in 1409. Lord Buddha, a symbol of peace, is formed to symbolize the victory of good over evil.

March 20: Shinto-Buddhist Day – A practice in Shinto, where ancestors are given reverence at home, and water is sprinkled on monks and women’s heads as a sign of respect.

April 2: Earth Day International – Celebrated around the world, Earth Day commemorates the country’s first environmental awakening. In 1970, the festival is national to ask for the protection of the environment from depletion. It is an annual event that encourages people to take action to protect the planet.

April 4: Ching Ming Festival – In China and Taiwan, the festival is national to ask for the blessing of the departed spirits.

May 1: After a nine-and-a-half year manhunt, American commandos found and killed Osama Bin Laden in a compound north of Islamabad, Pakistan.

World Watch and Cultural Connections are brought to you by the Crossroads Program. Through their shared interest in world cultures, languages, and contemporary global issues, members work to develop a broader understanding of the world in which they live and contribute to the education of the College community as a whole.

Think Globally. Act Locally.