Working for diversity – and building community

Discrimination exists at the University of Dayton. Black students are less satisfied with their social life than other groups are. And they are less likely to recommend UD to others.

These are among the findings of The ‘Climate Survey’ of Undergraduate Students at the University of Dayton, the first of three major surveys commissioned by the President’s Task Force on Diversity and Community.

More than 25 percent of UD’s African-American undergraduates would “definitely” or “probably” not recommend UD to a sibling or friend. The proportion of white students who would not is less than one in 10.

The primary predictor of these satisfaction levels, according to an analysis of the results of the survey conducted by UD’s Center for Family and Community Research, differs among groups at UD.

For white, Hispanic and Asian-American students, the primary predictor is the quality of on-campus friendships.

For African-Americans, however, the survey found the primary predictor of satisfaction to be “having faculty members who act as positive role models in creating a climate of diversity.”

Among other findings: Forty-four percent of students of color surveyed indicated that, during the previous school year, they had experienced incidents of discrimination.

White students were asked if they had observed such situations. In some cases, the perceptions of the two groups were similar. For example, 19 percent of each group reported “seeing cartoons or graffiti that are unkind or unsympathetic toward minorities.” In some cases, perceptions varied significantly. For example, 19 percent of students of color answered yes to “feeling that your ideas or suggestions were ignored.” Only five percent of white students observed that.

The President’s Task Force on Diversity and Community is led by John Geiger, provost, and Vernellia Randall, professor of law. The student climate survey is being followed by one of faculty and staff, the results of which are now being compiled, and one of the external community, which will be administered this spring.

The University’s president, Brother Raymond L. Fitz, S.M., is urging a campus commitment to diversity that goes beyond tolerance, a diversity not only of ethnicity, race and gender but also of “ideas, civility and hospitality that we offer to ideas.” He stressed that the task force is on “diversity and community” and both are important.

“You can have diversity and no common mission” Fitz said. “You can also have a kind of unity in community that destroys diversity. We believe we can have both.”

Pointing to a society that has lost civility and respect for differences, Fitz said it’s important for UD students to “get out there and be leaders in changing that.”

—Thomas M. Columbus
W.S. McIntosh:

A leader gave a life of service

Civil rights protesters of the 1950s and '60s refer to W.S. McIntosh as Dayton's Martin Luther King Jr. McIntosh's life of service perhaps began in anger on a day he went to court with his lawyer-grandfather and saw blacks mistreated by white officials. He spent his life fighting against racial discrimination and hatred.

Soon after moving to Dayton in 1941, McIntosh picketed white-owned markets to force them to hire blacks into visible positions such as cashiers. Early successes led him to organize the West Side Citizens Council, Dayton's chapter of the Congress on Racial Equality, the Non-Violent Direct Action Committee and the Ohio Freedom Movement. McIntosh drew attention to the racial tension in Dayton when he organized a protest against the hiring practices of the Rike-Kumler Co. (now Lazarus). Protesters spent months picketing the store without results until McIntosh persuaded large numbers of blacks and whites to pay off their charge accounts and boycott the store. Sales plunged and policies changed.

During the 1966 riots in Dayton, McIntosh's spirit shone through the violence as he walked the streets urging people to put down their weapons. Friends told him to get out of the way of the shooting and rock throwing, but he stayed in the streets.

McIntosh died on March 4, 1974, trying to prevent the robbery of the jewelry store next door to his son's shop.

The University of Dayton and the city of Dayton jointly established the W.S. McIntosh Leadership Award in 1987 to reward local students who carry on McIntosh's mission of improving the community through service and example.

Dean Lovelace '72, Dayton city commissioner and program manager of the Institute for Neighborhood and Community Leadership at the University of Dayton (INCLUD), met McIntosh when he was in his late teens.

Lovelace remembers: "Mac always said, 'It's your world. It's your turn to make a difference'."

—Johanna Braciak '98

Wednesday Forest: The McIntosh Leadership Award gives her the opportunity to realize the vision of one of Dayton's leaders.

Wednesday Forest, recipient of the 1998 W.S. McIntosh Memorial Leadership Award, started paying back the city of Dayton before she decided what to pack for her first year of college. The award, offered jointly by UD and the city of Dayton, commemorates the vision and values of community leader and activist W.S. McIntosh. It includes a scholarship that covers Forest's tuition, fees, room and board for four years and a four-year paid internship with the city of Dayton.

Forest started her internship in June by spending some time in each of the city's offices to help her decide where she would like to work during the next four years.

She chose to work in the city manager's office this year to get business, management and writing experience. During the next three years, she hopes to also work in the airport, environmental department, water department and the forensics division of the Dayton police.

At UD, Forest participates in Black Action Through Unity and the National Society of Black Engineers; she plans to join Student Government Association next year. As a student at Chaminade-Julienne High School, Forest was a National Honor Society president and sophomore class president. She also was a tutor and an office aide and did community service at Children's Medical Center and the Boys and Girls Club.

A chemistry major, Forest finds her university classes more challenging than her classes in high school. She says she puts her studies first. "The job comes second," she says.

After she graduates from UD, Forest plans to attend graduate school and get her master's in business management. Career options she has considered include medicinal chemistry, forensics and physical chemistry.

—Johanna Braciak '98
Law welcomes new leaders

It's the year of the woman at the UD School of Law.

Not only did this year's first-year class post the highest percentage of female enrollment ever — 48 percent — but, for the first time in the school's history, every major student organization is being led by a woman. In addition, minority students are playing a larger role than ever in student leadership.

The diverse group of student leaders at UDSL this year says a lot about the school and the changing face of the legal profession, said law professor Vernellia Randall. "The fact that the leadership is so diverse signifies some very incredible changes in the mindsets of our students," said Randall. "They are more open to the idea of being led by a diverse group of people. If you think of law school as a training ground for future leaders of the United States, and I think that's true, then for the most part lawyers have gone through that training without seeing women and minorities in these roles. [Having women and minorities in leadership roles] reconditions our students' views and sends a message about the importance of diversity."

"Basically, it says we're interested in having the best person do the job," said Heather Duffey, editor in chief of the UDSL Law Review.

The change in student leadership has been accompanied by a quiet change in style. "The first thing I noticed was that on the first day of school this year, Susie [Branstetter, president of the Student Bar Association] had bagels out on a table for everyone, just to kind of welcome people back," said Duffey, who earned her undergraduate degree at UD in 1996. "I think we've tried to do more to show students that we appreciate what they do."

Stephanie Crosse, chief justice of UDSL's moot court, sees more of an emphasis on working together and communication among student leaders. "It wasn't planned this way or anything."

Randall has noticed a change, too. "I think [this year's student leaders] are more inclusive of others. And they strive to not do things just because it was always done before. I see more questioning of tradition. I think that's a result of being members of groups that have been excluded."

The women running law student organizations this year, however, say they don't feel gender has been a major factor in their roles as leaders or their nominations and elections to their roles. For Branstetter, who came to UDSL from Huntington Beach, Calif., finding her way at UDSL has had more to do with her identity as a Latina than as a woman. "Coming from California, you're used to diversity," she said. "It's not something you think about. When I first got here, there were maybe three Hispanic students. Now there's a slew of them. We have a pretty big Hispanic Law Society. It's nice to have that outlet — you're able to connect culturally with people who will know exactly what you're talking about."

A record number of minority students enrolled at UDSL this year, an achievement that many credit to UDSL's "environment of opportunity," as Branstetter called it. "What most impressed me when I first visited UD was the open atmosphere," Branstetter said. "It felt like you had a chance to succeed. They made everyone feel really welcome."

—Melinda Myers Vaughn
BING DAVIS

Famed artist-in-residence

After nearly 40 years of teaching art to children and college students, Bing Davis was close to some uninterrupted time in his home studio, creating the masks, paintings and sculpture that made him one of the country's premier African-American artists.

But for Davis, a year of retirement is a small price to pay for the chance to expose young teachers and administrators to the benefits of art in education. This year, Davis is serving as an artist-in-residence for the University's School of Education.

Davis helps teachers-in-training incorporate the arts as well as a clearer understanding of African-American culture into their teaching. Davis visits professors' classrooms to make presentations on using the arts to enhance education and on understanding creativity.

"It's important for all students to have interaction with art and to have an understanding of the unique experiences art can provide," said Davis, who retired as chair of the Central State University art department last year. "It's unique for a school of education to have an artist-in-residence. But the arts provide the opportunity for young people to explore basic skills they need to be successful in any field — critical thinking, problem solving, analytical thinking. Teaching a child art is teaching a child to learn."

Take Davis' own experience. Since 1973, when he made the first of about 10 trips to Africa, his multimedia work has been an exploration of the culture, geography and history that have influenced his life and the lives of his friends and ancestors. His work is evidence of his effort to make connections between himself and his world.

"Art is a reflection of someone's social and spiritual values," he said. "I can read volumes about a people, but if I hear their music and see their dance, I know them," Davis said.

SHAUNTEY JAMES

Teaching society

"You never really know what road you'll end up on," says Shauntey James.

She should know. James, an assistant professor of sociology, started with a bachelor's in psychology. She also has strong interests in criminology and feminist theory; her doctoral dissertation discusses black female homicide offenders.

James credits this diversity to her experiences, especially what she has learned from the jobs she has held to support herself and her education. For instance, her research interest in sexual assault stems from her work as a YWCA counselor and victim advocate in 1995.

Besides, James says, "I've always had a sense of giving back to the community." As an educator, she does this by teaching students about how gender and race issues continue to affect society.

In "Dirt Poor," a social stratification exercise she developed, she attempts to help students understand these issues through experience. In the exercise, James tells students to place themselves in the social class where they think they belong, with a range from rich to "dirt poor." Then she reverses the classes.

For a little while, the students experience life from the opposite position.

Whether used in the classroom or in a criminal setting, the program "takes your view of society and challenges it." Students learn how people change when given a different position in society, and many learn the hard way how much negative labels and treatment can hurt a person. Often, according to James, the students treat each other differently afterward.

If they do, James has met her goal.

—Johanna Braciak '98

—Melinda Myers Vaughn
Messay Kebede

Not leaving the past behind

Messay Kebede, an assistant professor of philosophy who started at UD this fall, was born in a country run by an imperial regime that refused to change. Why should they? They owned much of the land and had much of the money.

"Many of us were convinced that the solution was in some kind of socialist revolution, the equal distribution of land," Kebede said.

When revolution came to Ethiopia, it brought a military government that was socialist in name and dictatorial in practice.

Luckily for Kebede and his colleagues in the philosophy department at Addis Ababa University, the new regime was interested in educational reform. Though the sole purpose of this reform was to produce Marxist cadres and teachers, it did give Kebede the opportunity to institute a philosophy bachelor's degree program.

Unfortunately, the faculty had little freedom in its research and curriculum, during the 1980s. The philosophy department was making some progress in diversifying the curriculum, and classes were offered in areas other than Marxist philosophy, but it was hard to teach with someone looking over his shoulder.

The greatest challenge Kebede faced in Ethiopia came after he and 39 other teachers were dismissed from the university in March 1993 when a new regime came into power. At the time, he was working on a book, Meaning and Development (Rodopi, 1994), that attempted to explain why Marxism had failed in Third World countries.

After Kebede's dismissal, he extended his research to the particular case of Ethiopia in Survival and Modernization: Ethiopia's Enigmatic Present (Red Sea Press, 1998). No longer a faculty member, he was banned from using the university's library.

"In these books, I am trying to figure out what happened, what went wrong."

—Johanna Braciak '98

Linda Quinn

Making plans

Linda Quinn, psychology resident in UD's counseling center, did not enter college planning to earn her doctorate and become a psychologist.

"When I graduated from high school in the '70s, I was one of very few minority students in my high school going on to college. ... Students of color were not encouraged to pursue higher education," she said.

Entering her junior year in college, Quinn decided to take a year off from school when she was offered a full-time job as a clerical worker at a local television station. Approximately 10 years later, she went back to complete her bachelor's in behavioral science. But she found that degree and a paralegal degree did not lead to a career she wanted. On the advice of a friend she returned to school for a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling and earned her master's and doctorate from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

"If I'd had career counseling and guidance, it wouldn't have taken me so long to get to where I am today."

In addition to her providing personal and career counseling for any UD student, Quinn's is UD's only certified rehabilitation counselor, an asset in counseling students with disabilities.

So far, she says her greatest impact has been in the increasing number of students of color utilizing the counseling center. She believes they feel more comfortable coming in knowing that someone who has shared their experiences is there.

—Johanna Braciak '98
ALVIN BRIDGES ’48, M.D.

A desire to be somebody

Dr. Alvin Bridges is compassionate, but he isn’t interested in making handouts. He wants to help those who work hard to make something of themselves.

“This is a ghetto kid speaking,” the retired family physician said to applause during Reunion Weekend.

Bridges, who served as his class’s reunion gift chair, said he would often walk from his West Dayton home to campus, because “many a day I didn’t have the nickel car fare. Many a day I didn’t eat anything. But I had a burning desire to be somebody.”

His teachers at Dunbar High School and the Marianists at UD recognized that desire and encouraged him, said Bridges, a Buffalo Soldier from the 92nd Division who returned to UD in 1946 determined to make up for lost time, hold a full-time job, earn the best grades in his class and get into medical school.

Brother Thomas Poitras, S.M., his languages professor, “said I was shooting for the stars. He helped me get there.”

Not that the Marianists were giving away college educations for free. But “they were friends who were willing to work with me,” Bridges said, remembering that he was never made to feel uncomfortable when he would stop by the business office and pay his tuition bill, $5 or $10 a week at a time. “I appreciated their attitude,” Bridges said.

Bridges saw that same spirit of acceptance practiced in his parents’ home, which was always open to relatives from the South making their way north.

“It was pretty common to sleep on the floor because some relative had arrived,” he said.

His parents shared what they had with others and gave what they could to the church. “And my father always said there was nothing wrong with honest work,” said Bridges, who did yard work in Oakwood, helped move furniture and shoveled ashes from basement coal bins.

That philosophy was reinforced in Catholic grade schools, whose lessons about giving and productivity continued to shape his thinking as he ran the largest medical practice in Anderson, Ind.

Bridges, the founding president of UD’s chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, downplays any mistreatment or obstacles he encountered during his education or medical career. He has always been able to prescribe the cure: “Just prove to them you’re going to be somebody.”

—Deborah McCarty Smith

KEITH COSBY ’78 ’88

Defining excellence

With 20 years of experience as a physical education teacher and an ever-lengthening list of awards and accolades from professional organizations, schools and students, Keith Cosby ’78 ’88 knows what it means to be an “accomplished” teacher.

That may be the reason he’s been appointed to serve on a committee that will define physical education teaching standards for certification with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

The board offers voluntary certification for K-12 teachers who meet rigorous standards for teaching excellence in a variety of areas. Certification, which involves in-class evaluation, a portfolio evaluation and interviews, can be difficult, but Cosby said teachers appreciate the opportunity to earn recognition for hard work.

Cosby, a physical education teacher at Valerie Elementary in Dayton, was one of 15 teachers selected from across the nation to serve on the physical education committee. The committee will take three years to create standards for measuring a teacher’s commitment to students, knowledge of subject matter, professional experience and professional development.

“It’s a pretty big undertaking when you try and look at the entire United States and what an accomplished phys ed teacher should know” while considering the economic and geographic factors that impact teaching, Cosby said. Some common ground, he said, may be found in examining how teachers structure their classes to show a student’s progression from one year to the next and how teachers measure student success.

Cosby, a physical
Karen Holland Parchment ’81

Ensuring opportunity

As the debate over affirmative action continues across the country, Karen Parchment ’81 is quietly doing her part to ensure that young minority students have opportunities to succeed.

Parchment is a manager for the Greater Cincinnati/Dayton affiliate of INROADS. Founded in 1970 by Chicago businessman Father Frank Carr, INROADS is a nonprofit career development organization that recruits and places talented minority college students in internships and prepares them for corporate and community leadership.

INROADS selects a pool of minority students who meet high academic standards and arranges interviews between the students and the organization’s corporate clients. Interns who are selected by participating corporations work for the company each summer throughout college and, if all goes well, are offered full-time jobs with the company upon graduation.

“When INROADS began, minority students were not getting a fair share as far as climbing the corporate ladder,” Parchment said. “Father Carr talked with some corporations and got them sold on bringing in minority youth and grooming them over a certain number of years for management jobs. This helps them get a foot in the door.”

INROADS has placed more than 8,700 minority students in leadership positions and currently has 6,600 students working in internships with more than 930 corporate clients. But INROADS does more than just place students in internships, Parchment said. INROADS students participate in career development seminars on building business communication and management skills, valuing diversity in the workplace, becoming community leaders and succeeding in school.

Parchment coordinated a three-day leadership seminar this past summer at UD for nearly 500 minority students from Ohio, Indiana and Michigan.

“It’s fulfilling to help develop and mentor students,” said Parchment, who joined INROADS two years ago after working in management at Deluxe Corp. for 11 years — a job she obtained during an on-campus interview during her senior year at UD. “I knew I needed to give back. With INROADS, I can use my business background to help youth succeed.”

—Melinda Myers Vaughn

Black alumni sweatshirt sale

The black alumni association, in starting a scholarship fund, is selling sweatshirts. The price is $50, $10 of which will go to the fund.

For more information, call the Alumni House, (888) UD-ALUMS.
JANUARY 19

Hall to speak at breakfast

U.S. Rep. Tony P. Hall, D-Dayton, will be the featured speaker at the Martin Luther King Jr. prayer breakfast, Tuesday, Jan. 19, 7:30 a.m. in the Kennedy Union Ballroom.

Hall last year received the Joseph Cinqué Social Justice Award from UD's Black Law Student Association for his efforts to fight worldwide hunger and for his proposal that Congress apologize to African-Americans for slavery.

For ticket information, call (937) 229-3634. In recent years, the event has been sold out.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH EVENTS

■ Feb. 17 — Lecture by Patricia Raybon, author of My First White Friend: Confessions on Race, Love and Forgiveness, 8:00 p.m., Kennedy Union Ballroom.

■ Feb. 21 — First day of “The Road to Birmingham,” a weeklong series of social justice programs culminating in a student immersion program in Alabama.

■ Feb. 25 — "Sacred Music in a Jazz Mode: The Religious Music of Mary Lou Williams," sponsored by the Catholic Intellectual Tradition cluster, 3 p.m., Sears Recital Hall in the Jesse Philips Humanities Center. The composer Mary Lou Williams was an African-American Catholic.