



Freshman Academy Program Named in Honor of Dr. Oliver Wilson

Grand Valley's Freshman Academy, a support program administered by the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Advising Resources and Special Programs, has been named the Oliver Wilson Freshman Academy Program.

President Thomas J. Haas made this announcement on October 2, during a memorial service for Wilson, dean of Multicultural Affairs, who died on August 31 at age 44.

Juanita Davis, Freshman Academy coordinator, said that Wilson was the driving force behind the creation of the academy. "The Freshman Academy is a program that inspires hope and courage, while providing transitional support for students. It embodies all of the characteristics of Oliver and is a fitting tribute to a dynamic and inspirational leader."

Jalana Brantley, a sophomore from Southfield, participated in the Freshman Academy during the 2008–09 year. "The Freshman Academy program is the reason I am still at Grand Valley. I felt connected to the staff at Grand Valley and knew I could get the support and encouragement that I needed," Brantley said.

Wilson joined Grand Valley's Admissions Office in 1997 as associate director of minority recruitment. He was named dean of the Office of Multicultural Affairs in 2003. Wilson earned a master's degree in public administration and a bachelor's degree in business education, both from the University of Wyoming. While attending college, Wilson, a native of Chicago, played basketball for the Cowboys. He also earned a doctoral degree in educational leadership from Western Michigan University.

"It is my sincere hope that you will help us continue to foster an environment where civility and caring for each other are valued and affirmed."

—Dr. Oliver Wilson, 2008

1st Annual Cancer Awareness Football Jam In Memory of Dean Oliver Wilson

Leaders of the group IMPACT (Inspired Men of Purpose, Amendment, Conduct, and Truth) wanted to do something to honor the life and legacy of dean Oliver Wilson.

President Gregory Copeland and Vice President Samuel Jones organized a flag football tournament to raise money and awareness for the American Cancer Society.

The 1st Annual Cancer Awareness Football Jam was held on November 20 in the Laker Turf Building. Twelve teams

participated and more than 100 people attended the tournament. The event was a great success; organizers raised more than \$300.

IMPACT is hoping to make this an annual event to honor Wilson and the positive impact he made on student lives at Grand Valley.



Members of the group IMPACT pose with Bobby Springer, OMA associate director, at the 1st Annual Cancer Awareness Football Jam.

Empowering Leadership

Connie Dang, director



GVSU's students, alumni and Connie Dang met with Governor Granholm at the Asian Leadership Summit

Effective leadership is an essential ingredient of student learning and development. As such, leadership is one of the fundamental learning outcomes embedded in the framework of the Multicultural Cohort Programs and other programs administered by the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA).

Leadership holds the key to transforming and "educating students to shape their lives,

their professions, and their societies." It is the role of higher education to create leaders for a diverse and global society. Providing opportunities for students to gain a fuller appreciation of their own leadership capacities is central to the work of the OMA.

Last October, the OMA sponsored 18 GVSU students who attended the Statewide Asian American Pacific Leadership Summit in Novi. At this summit, students met and listened to Governor Jennifer Granholm, who addressed the economic challenge facing the state and discussed the role of leaders in transforming challenges into opportunities to re-invent Michigan.

At the breakout sessions, two Grand Valley undergraduates, Bee Yang and Bilquis Alsoofy, and alumnus Scott Sweatman served on a panel discussion facilitated by Connie Dang, director of OMA. The workshop explored a model of OMA's peer mentoring program, Students Promoting



GVSU's students and alumni attending the Asian Leadership Summit

Diversity and Leadership (SPDL), which aims at training and developing student leaders and ambassadors. The panelists shared their leadership progression through the program from being a mentee, then a mentor and an executive board member.

"SPDL was my first stone to building a stronger foundation for my leadership skills. It gave me an opportunity to step out of my comfort zone and take on roles that now help me deal with challenges strategically," said Alsoofy, former treasurer and vice president of SPDL Peer Mentoring Program. "And to be a panelist at a statewide conference is proof how one little step at a time gets one to their destination, regardless of how long it takes."

"The task of the leader is to get the people from where they are to where they have not been." —Henry Kissinger

Connecting with our Community

Gricelda Estrada, assistant director

Those of us that have the privilege of working in higher education have the opportunity to change the world one student at a time. Cesar E. Chavez said, "We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community... Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own."

As assistant director for the Office of Multicultural Affairs, I work in our local community and have brought multiple groups of students from underrepresented backgrounds to experience what Grand Valley State University has to offer. I work closely with other GVSU staff and faculty members to create powerful learning opportunities. These high school visitors can take part in college visits that incorporate educational and social components, and provide them with opportunities to create and develop

relationships with faculty and staff members, and students at GVSU.

In the Grand Rapids area, I worked with the Hispanic Center of Western Michigan to bring 40 students for a visit of the Kirkhof College of Nursing labs and the Recreation Center. They also met with students from multicultural organizations, including Latino Student Union, Sigma Lambda Gamma National Sorority, Sigma Lambda Beta Fraternity, and Sabrosissimo. Coordinator Stacy Stout, a GVSU alumna, said that this "college visit received the highest praise from our youth since I began in 2005!"

In the Muskegon community, 48 middle school students joined us for one of our Hispanic Heritage Programs, El Dia de



Hispanic Center students

los Muertos. They experienced a cultural program and met students from various GVSU multicultural organizations.

We are connecting with the youth in our communities and providing them with a vision of what the future can bring and an understanding of the power of education.

I also would like to thank Angela Caruso from the Kirkhof College of Nursing, and Ron Perkins from the Simulation Center for making the tour a possibility.

MBEC Alumni Spotlight

Kristie Scanlon, assistant director

Edwin S. Darrell, '96 and '98, is impacting the lives of college students just as his life was positively impacted by faculty and staff members at Grand Valley State University.

Darrell, a Detroit native, enrolled at Grand Valley and participated in the Multicultural Business Education Cohort (MBEC); he knew right away that he was part of something unique. “The MBEC program helped me to connect right away with other business students with similar backgrounds,” he said. “It provided immediate leadership and social opportunities. I am still great friends with the people I met through MBEC.”

Darrell received a bachelor's degree in business management in 1996. He credits Grand Valley and his relationships with staff members for helping him to reach his career goals. He said: “Through my relationship with the Office of Multicultural Affairs and



Dean (Don) Williams, I was given the opportunity to meet and work with dynamic leaders including Bart Merkle, Andy Beachnau and Jay Cooper. They all played a critical role in my development as a student, a leader, and a professional.”

After graduating with a master's degree in higher education in 1998, Darrell went on to work as a housing director at

Western Illinois University. He has also held positions at University of Tampa and Michigan State University. Darrell is currently working for DePaul University as assistant director for Student Success and Outreach.

“I work every day to help students be successful in their life, in their relationships and in their careers,” he said. “I was lucky enough to have that support at Grand Valley, and I am happy to keep the work moving forward.”

Darrell currently lives in Chicago and will complete a second master's degree in multicultural and organizational communication in May from DePaul University.

Ghana

Linda Rettig, database coordinator

Standing on the beach in August 2009, I thought to myself, “I am on the edge of Africa. This is so amazing.” I visited the University of Cape Coast (UCC) in Ghana, Africa, and it was an experience I will never forget. I applied and received a Padnos International Center Faculty/Staff Exchange Grant to see the role of multiculturalism at UCC.

This was the first time I had left the continent and the first time I had ever become a member of the minority population. After arriving, my orientation was shorter than what the international exchange students receive, but it was helpful to know more about the locale. I experienced the slave trade castle, traversed a canopy walk in the rain forest, and took a river boat in the Volta region.

The people I worked with were phenomenal. Ghanaian people are all about networking and relationships. They



made me feel at home from day one. The people are very industrious and work long hours. One of the first questions I was asked was how I liked the country.

Ghana is a developing country. Being from America, I had difficulty with the lack of food choices, stores, transportation, and other conveniences that we take for granted. The cost of living was much cheaper and my money went further; however, the level of poverty was high. Dress was very similar to ours, except you saw very few people wearing jeans.



Linda Rettig, OMA staff member, and her son, Noah, visit with staff at the Centre for International Education at UCC.

When I think back to my trip I remember being on sensory overload. Everywhere I went there were many sights, sounds, and smells that were new to me. I learned so much and even met the Grand Valley student who is studying at UCC. I am very thankful for this experience and hope to travel to other places in the future.

Office of Multicultural Affairs Winter 2010 Programs and Events

January 18

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration
Visit www.gvsu.edu/oma for complete event listings

January 21

Diversity Brownbag Series
Film and Discussion, “King: Montgomery to Memphis”
OMA, 1240 Kirkhof Center
Noon–1 p.m.

February 1
through February 28

Black History Month
Visit www.gvsu.edu/oma for complete event listings

February 9
through February 23

Asian Pacific American Heritage Celebration
Visit www.gvsu.edu/oma for complete event listings

February 10

Professionals of Color Lecture Series
Phoebe Eng, “Walking the Talk of Diversity”
Cook DeWitt Auditorium
4–6 p.m.

February 23

Diversity Brownbag Series
“Marriage Equality and LGBT”
OMA, 1240 Kirkhof Center
Noon–1 p.m.

March 3

Professionals of Color Lecture Series
Naomi Tutu, “Truth and Reconciliation: Peacemaking”
Cook DeWitt Auditorium
4–6 p.m.

March 15
through March 31

Cesar Chavez Celebration
Visit www.gvsu.edu/oma for complete event listings

March 15

Diversity Brownbag Series
Film and Discussion, “Sal de la Tierra (Salt of the Earth)”
OMA, 1240 Kirkhof Center
Noon–1 p.m.

March 27

R.I.C.E.
(Realizing and addressing Issues in our Culture and Education) Conference
Pew Campus, Grand Rapids
8 a.m.–5 p.m.
Visit www2.gvsu.edu/~asu/rice/RICE.html for more information



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For the latest news and events, check us out on the Web www.gvsu.edu/oma

Archived copies of the OMA's newsletters can be accessed through our Web site address above.

About Us
The Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) fosters a respect for and an appreciation of the history, tradition, and culture of different ethnic groups and empowers ethnic minority students to be active participants in Grand Valley's community through programs that promote academic, social, and cultural development for students.

OMA's vision is to promote acceptance and appreciation of an inclusive campus community that values the diversity of people, backgrounds, and perspectives of each individual.

- Guiding Principles:**
- Fosters a campus climate that respects and appreciates the history, culture, and traditions of various ethnic groups.
 - Empowers students to be active participants in the Grand Valley community.
 - Stimulates and encourages intercultural awareness and dialogue among university members.
 - Takes an active role in promoting academic, social, cultural, leadership and professional development for students.

The OMA staff serves as a resource for students, faculty, and staff on issues of inclusion, diversity, multiculturalism, and interculturalism.

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