This month I write of mixed reflections. With millions of others I share a heavy heart as I see the violence and pain in the U.S. and around the world. On campuses as well, expressions of anger and hurt turn our attention to issues of biases and the “chilly” cultures that students experience across the country. Here at Allegheny, students held a peaceful protest on Nov. 21 to advocate for change. Our students provide a good reminder of the work ahead. Planning for the future requires recognizing the past. We have made progress in a number of areas including the following:

- **Title IX Training**
- **Safe Zone Training**
- **Campus Safety and Security**
- **Counseling Center**
- **Community Diversity and Inclusion Training**
- **Curricular Reform**
- **Reducing Textbook Costs**

For details visit [http://sites.allegheny.edu/diversity/action-plan-for-diversity-and-inclusion-phase-1/](http://sites.allegheny.edu/diversity/action-plan-for-diversity-and-inclusion-phase-1/)

For upcoming plans, stay tuned for the January bulletin.

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**Did you know?**

In these weeks when darkness sets in early, many religious holidays focus on candles and other lights. While Christmas lights are strung throughout town, Hindus marked Diwali (Nov. 11) with candle-lighting and a visit to a Hindu temple in Pittsburgh. Dec. 6 was the first night of Hanukkah, when Jews light the eight candles of the menorah to celebrate one day’s oil that miraculously burned for eight days during the Maccabean revolt. Kwanzaa (Dec. 26 - Jan. 1), a celebration of African-American culture, includes lighting seven candles for the festival’s seven core principles. Pagans mark the winter solstice (Dec. 21) with the burning of a Yule log.

How does an inclusive community do justice to such a varied lineup of holidays? Our campus advocates a balanced approach by creating space for individuals to practice rituals that are important to them and making sure that holiday displays in public spaces reflect the diversity of practices on campus.

But holiday decorations are just the tip of the iceberg. Even more important, we should not assume that everyone shares the same beliefs or practices. Chaplain Jane Ellen Nickell suggests, “Ask what someone likes best about this time of year.” You may discover something about an entirely different faith or culture. Wishing someone “Happy Holidays” does not diminish any religion but acknowledges the diversity of celebrations that light up these long winter days.

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**Diversity Innovation Fund recipients and projects for spring 2016**

The Diversity Innovation Fund supports initiatives from across the college to improve our campus climate and advance an inclusive Allegheny. Winners for funding for spring 2016 are listed below. Full details can be found at [http://sites.allegheny.edu/diversity/diversity-innovation-funds/](http://sites.allegheny.edu/diversity/diversity-innovation-funds/).

Proposals for initiatives for fall 2016 will be due in February.

- **Dr. Herbert Niles ’59 Speaker Series**, proposed by Connor Racine and CIASS staff. This pilot will showcase student scholarship and academic talks on a variety of issues including daily transgender people’s experiences, race in athletics, and more.

- **Rainbow-Research Celebration**, proposed by Hope Sims-Medley and Professor Ryan Pickering. A symposium will feature research on gender, sexual orientation, social norms, inclusivity, allyship, heteronormativity/heterosexism, and homonormativity and social justice. The event will highlight the LGBTQ community’s research and create a dialogue.

- **Student trip to see the play Detroit ’67**, proposed by Professor Mark Cosdon. Students will travel to Cleveland’s Karamu House, the oldest African-American theatre in the United States. They will study and see a production of Dominique Morisseau’s *Detroit ’67*. This is a story of the city’s most dramatic year, set against a backdrop of riots, an escalating war in Vietnam, and the criminal justice system. Students will return to campus to stimulate conversations about social history and current events.
Spotlight on “Gators” making Allegheny inclusive:

Meet Jocelyne Serafin, Class of 2017. Jocelyne is a Political Science and Communication Arts double major, serves on the Panhellenic Judicial Board, and handles publicity for the International Club. She is also Vice President of Annual Events with Gator Activities Programming, an assistant in the Office of Student Involvement, and an Allegheny Ambassador. We asked her the following questions:

Q: What do you think Allegheny does well in regard to Diversity and Inclusion?

A: We have seen an increasing number of not only international students, but of students of difference. Although, to some, this might not be a dramatic change, given that we are a small school, changes like these can create a more diverse and inclusive environment. There are support groups and organizations that foster inclusion, and I think they are trying to educate and make Allegheny a safe space for everyone. From Gator Safe Zone training to responding to Bias Reports, all of these are ways that Allegheny is slowly trying to make changes. I think Allegheny is not perfect, but as a community we must acknowledge that there have been things done about diversity and inclusion that have benefited students.

Q: What could Allegheny do better?

A: I think that Allegheny could provide facilitated forums where students, staff, and administrators feel free and safe to provide their opinions. From these forums, we must move as a community to understand that not everything can be solved at once, but what can happen is that administration and students can have a respectful dialogue to come to a solution for certain problems. Allegheny can try to provide resources for all students to feel they are able to express their concerns without attacking and disrespecting others’ opinions. I have often heard that students want more transparency and a quick response to the conflicts that rise at Allegheny and I think it would help if students slowly noticed that they do matter and that Allegheny is listening to what we ask of them. At the end of the day, I think Allegheny is slowly making progressive changes, but I think there must be a more respectful and clearer communication between our community.

Q: What will you do personally this year to make Allegheny more inclusive?

A: Students come from different places to be part of Allegheny, and we should all try to provide a safe space for everyone. As a student of color, being part of this community implies that my job is not only to be a student but to acknowledge that our campus has its ups and downs and I should try to have a productive conversation about issues that affect me and others. I want to make sure students feel this is their home. I know we cannot change everything, but if I and other students try to listen and understand people’s struggles in a productive way, I think that as a community we can move forward and change the culture of Allegheny into a more inclusive and diverse environment.

Recent Happenings:

Last month Allegheny College celebrated International Education Week. Events ranged from an International Dinner to a Chinese Ribbon Dance performance to Vietnamese song.

Upcoming Happenings:

To learn more, please visit the websites of the following offices: CIASS, International Education, the Center for Political Participation, and the Allegheny Gateway.

The Sustained Dialogue Institute will return to campus to provide a series of workshops for members of the Allegheny community. The focus will be on strengthening intercultural competencies and developing skills for use inside and outside the classroom. They will hold six workshops: AEC on 1/13, two staff workshops on “Thriving in a Changing Workplace” on 1/14, an all-day “Faculty as Skilled Facilitator” workshop on 1/15, a student leader workshop on 1/16, and a workshop at the “Emerging Leaders Retreat” on 1/17. In total, the institute has the capacity of providing professional development to 242 members of the Allegheny community. Sharing a common vocabulary and a desire for strong community will strengthen an inclusive Allegheny. Who knows where this may lead?

Registration can be found here: http://sites.allegheny.edu/diversity/professional-development-workshops

Questions? Contact adiaz@allegheny.edu or lhigby@allegheny.edu.

Martin Luther King Day is Jan. 18 - a week to commemorate the life and teaching of Rev. King. Programs range from speakers to trainings for student leaders to faculty and student panels and discussions. Our community will also celebrate the themes of faith and service to others. Watch “My Allegheny” for details!

Full inclusion does not happen overnight. It is created in small ways every day. Be part of the movement. Visit Diversity & Inclusion and get involved.