

Behind the Story A Look Back at September 11

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One of my seven Resident Assistants put on a program that focused on September 11 and was a debate between students, the Chaplain of the University and a Muslim Professor. The program started out with the Chaplain giving his viewpoint from a religious stance and the events surrounding September 11. He explained the idea behind "Jihad" and what that had to do with the event. After this, residents had a chance to debate and dispute their ideas and whether or not they agreed or disagreed with the idea behind "Jihad." Then, the Muslim Professor talked about the history of Islam and what he believed to be the viewpoint behind the attacks. He went into depth about Islam and the Muslim faith and told residents what the faith entailed. The residents then debated this point. The program ended with residents debating but getting their views across in civil ways. Each resident had the chance to speak about his or her beliefs and it was a very productive program.

Multicultural Program: "Hot Salsa: Latin Dinner & Dancing"

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Students were invited to attend an authentic Caribbean meal (Caribbean Barbecue Ribs, Caribbean salad, Jamaican Chicken Fried Rice, Jamaican Coleslaw, Caribbean vegetable curry (vegetarian dish), Mexican Couscous, Tropical pudding, & Jamaican chocolate cake) and stay for an hour and a half of Merengue and Salsa dancing lessons presented by the Hispanic American Student Association and Omega Delta Phi Fraternity. We had 35 students sign-up for the program (Limited space was available due to logistics of the restaurant where it was held) and all but five students participated in the dance lessons for the entire time allotted.

The In Crowd

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This program explores the class differences that are inherent, but sometimes hidden, in American society. Cliques and popularity in high school are often related to economic class but most people fail to realize this. Having an overt discussion about class can turn many students off. By relating this subject to an area that is more relevant to their lives (i.e. the recent experience of high school), students have an easier time making connections and drawing conclusions about the role that class play in our society.

Mid-Autumn Festival Dinner

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To celebrate the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival, we held a dinner at the restaurant run by our cafeteria. The cuisine was traditional Chinese food. One professor spoke about the history and customs of the festival, as well as other lesser-known Chinese festivals. Another professor showed the basic idea behind writing the Chinese language. Those who attended were allowed to write their name on a bookmark and decorate it. A few days later it was returned to them with their name written in Chinese on it.

Queer Thanksgiving

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Many LGBTQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning] students find the prospect of heading home for the holidays somewhat troubling. Students who have chosen to come out to parents and siblings can experience those relationships with their families, while students who have not yet disclosed their sexual identity may find the dichotomy between being out at school and closeted at home unsettling and unpleasant. Furthermore, heading home can also mean leaving behind a critical peer support network as well as significant others. We decided to sponsor a "Queer Thanksgiving" dinner a week in advance of the actual day, to allow students to celebrate the holiday and enjoy the tradition with supportive friends. We chose a comfortable room with a great stereo system, and invited students to bring their own music. We also asked students to bring a dish to share, while we supplied the turkey (both real and meatless!) and all the trimmings. Our turnout was double what we expected, and the program lasted three hours. Students requested afterward that we plan to make this a yearly event!

Safezoneforall

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This program directly addresses the issues surrounding student development, multiple cultural group identity, student success, and most of all successful social interaction (reducing expressions of violence motivated by hate). It also explores the interpersonal development of professional staff as it relates to multiculturalism. This all inclusive Ally Safe Zone Program is currently being implemented at Indiana University, Purdue University, and Stony Brook Universities. This program has already been successfully presented at many professional conferences (ACPA, NASPA, ACUHO-1, and NEACUHO). For a more detailed look at our program please visit: <http://www.safezoneforall.com>

Day of Silence

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(WRC) presented The Day of Silence at the University at Albany. Participants were able to sign up and pledge to a vow of silence in the four days preceding the event. Volunteers from the WRC staffed a table in the Campus Center to advertise the program, and simultaneously register participants and give them supplies. Each participant agreed to be silent from 8:00 am to 8:00 p.m., outside of any critical communications, which we defined as class-related or work-related. In essence, that meant that there was no "shooting the breeze" or "casual conversation", no shouting "Hey, what's up!?" or planning what they would do that evening or over the weekend. Each student, faculty and staff member who signed up received a badge, which was strung with yarn that said "I Support! Day of Silence, October 25, 2001" and a stack of quarter-sheets which explained the purpose for the day. Each quarter sheet said, "In honor of all of those whose voices are silenced by discrimination, racism, poverty, wealth, and domination, I pledge my solidarity through this day of silence. In particular, we honor...people with disabilities, women of color, Third World people, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender people, single moms, recovering alcoholics and other addicts, veterans of war..." and the list went on. When fellow students were perplexed about why they weren't talking, they could hand out a quarter-flyer and explain the program. All participants were invited to a "Break the Silence" celebration in the Women's Resource Center that evening at 8:00 p.m., where they enjoyed cake, fruit platter, pastries, and other refreshments. This served the dual purpose of recognizing their effort and congratulating them, while introducing people to the Women's Resource Center and our extensive 500-volume library. The program was hugely successful. Even though only 60 people participated, the "buzz" that it created rippled across campus. For a first-time attempt, the objectives were achieved and surpassed. For future years, we will invite groups/clubs to participate, and encourage them to act in solidarity with a group of their own choice, or to use our "global" quarter sheets.

Celebrating Women Week/Women's History Month

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As part of National Women's History Month, we are presenting a jam-packed week of activities entitled "Celebrating Women Week", which will occur during the week of March 18-22 of this year. The Women's Resource Center, as the primary sponsor and coordinator of the event, will present four programs. The most ambitious is a free concert for the campus community by local singer/songwriter/community activist Ruth Pelham, which will kick off the week. She will conduct a smaller workshop entitled "Carrying on the Hope", designed to help students and faculty deal with emotions such as feeling detached, being overwhelmed, or fearful when working for positive change in their sociopolitical niche. Three additional programs have been planned, which include a forum on Women's Health Issues, where we will cover a broad range of topics including: HIV/STD info especially vital for women, cancer prevention, diet and

nutrition, osteoporosis, and physical safety. A panel of representatives, including members from the Health Center, University Police, and community agencies will present these topics. Second, we will host a "Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder" program, where we examine cross-cultural images of race/ethnicity/region/religion) and globally across many countries and continents. Finally, we will host a yoga/relaxation/meditation seminar, which will be facilitated by a trained professional. We have invited various agencies on campus to participate and hope to receive at least 2 programs hosted by various student/professional groups (Fuerza Latina has expressed interest in doing a program on the courageous Dominican Maribál sisters for example). We will assemble a program of events and circulate it widely throughout campus, which should help to promote the visibility of the Women's Resource Center on campus. In conjunction with this weeklong intensive programming marathon, we have assembled a montage of photographs and brief biographies of notable women throughout history. Fifteen of these women, representing multiple cultures, time periods, and areas of influence (business, Arts, science, education, politics) form this college (which measures 10 feet long by 5 feet wide), entitled "Trailblazers: Women Making Strides." This display will rotate for one week at a time through all five of our campus quadrangles (each housing about 1,000 students) so that we can educate and raise awareness through this passive programming tool. On a nearby easel, we will place our "Celebrating Women Week" programs and other information pertinent to the operation of the Women's Resource Center.

Eyes Wide Shut

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The Resident Assistants of FIU's Biscayne Bay Campus organized a diversity program entitled "Eyes Wide Shut." Prior to the program RA's posted racial slurs and stereotypes on walls. Residents were blindfolded as they entered the room and were placed in a chair. For the next five minutes the RA's walked throughout the room whispering racial epithets in residents' ears and called them racially motivated names. A number of news articles, poems and stories dealing with racially motivated hate-crimes and experiences were read. A group discussion about the power of words followed as well as what a person can do to combat racism.

Come See A Wedding

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In response to residents drawing homophobic graffiti on a gay RA's dry-erase board, a same sex wedding was performed to address the issue of homophobia. The RA staff role-played a same sex wedding in the residence halls followed by a showing of the MTV documentary, Flipped on homophobia and weight discrimination. A discussion followed after the presentation.

You Said, I Thought (2000-2001)

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"You Said, I thought" is an interactive program that draws energy and insight from participants' values, perceptions, and experiences regarding dating issues. It can be used to facilitate open discussion about personal dating beliefs and behaviors as well as encourage students to reflect on gender differences in communication. Its value lies in demonstrating how communication cues in dating are interpreted differently by men and women and often result in misunderstanding. The most unique feature of the program is the 'separate-sex' information-gathering component that allows for male and female views to be recorded on a "Progressive Intimacy Chart" which is later shared.

Active Learners Involved Via Experience (2000-2001)

Melissa Kiner, Donna Denoncourt
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A.L.I.V.E. (Active Learners Involved Via Experience) was a series of three programs targeted mainly at first and second year students who may not have realized the range of opportunities available to them on their college campus. The focus was on experiential education or "learning by doing", and the idea that not all learning has to take place within the classroom walls. Students were encouraged to actively attend and participate in each of the three programs. At each individual program, the other two were mentioned to inform the students about what had already taken place and what was yet to come. Each program was held in the same place, at the same time, every two weeks. This upheld the continuity of the series.

What's Your Flavor? Celebrating Diversity Over Coffee (2000-2001)

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The Department of Housing Diversity Committee, which consists of housing graduate students, facilitated round-table discussions on diversity. This program brought a number of students and faculty together from across campus identifying concerns of students in terms of diversity. Finding out what students are talking about, what students are not talking about, any hot topics, and what they would like to see discussed on campus to facilitate conversation in a seamless learning environment, while also gaining direction in terms of the topics that were to be focused on. Areas addressed included disability,

race, religion, gender, sexuality, age, and socioeconomic status. Coffee was served with the option of "choosing your own flavor!"

African-American Collegiate Trivia Bowl & "Soul Bowl" (2000-2001)

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This program is aimed at increasing student awareness and appreciation of the contributions of African-Americans in American society. The program is set-up like a collegiate bowl and a program moderator facilitates the program by asking questions to which each team responds by being the first to buzz in on a lighted buzzer system. The winning team, consisting of four individuals wins a prize.

Holocaust Remembrance Week (2000-2001)

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Holocaust Remembrance Week is a program which was presented at UCSD. It was a 3-day educational programming series consisting of a viewing of the film Schindler's List with a discussion following, a slide presentation which included slides from past and present Auschwitz and Dachau, and a talk with Mr. David Faber who is a survivor of eight concentration camps. This programming series was planned and implemented in recognition of Holocaust Remembrance (traditionally in April). Four Resident Advisors planned this series with the help of the UCSD and San Diego community. This program was presented with the hopes of educating people about the Holocaust.

Leaders Living on Laird (2000-2001)

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I pursued a project to celebrate Black History Month representing the Laird/North Central Area. I felt it was important to actively promote and appreciate positive students and programs. I believed that I had an opportunity to publicly and visibly recognize student leaders within the Laird/North Central residence hall and the University of Delaware while adding to the celebration of Black History Month.

Warner Week (1998)

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Warner Residence Hall is the last remaining all-female residence hall on University of Delaware's campus. It is also one of the original Buildings from the women's college. Thus it is a building rich in history and tradition. Each year, the students and Residence Life staff of Warner plan a week-long celebration of the hall, its history, and its residents. Warner Week 1998 was a wonderfully planned event that offered a variety of celebrative, educational, and entertaining programs for the residents of the building and the campus community.