

OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL PROGRAMS AND RETENTION



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 1st Multicultural Newsletter!

The Office of Multicultural Programs and Retention is dedicated towards creating an environment that celebrates the cultural diversity of Salve Regina students by sponsoring social events and creating space for meaningful discussion. This newsletter was created to provide an overview of those events.

If you have any questions about past or future programs, email rose.albert@salve.edu.

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THE "I BELIEVE I CAN" MENTORSHIP

The "I Believe I Can" Mentorship program was established in 2015 as an informal program to help first year students with transitioning to academic and social life at Salve Regina University. Freshmen are paired with upperclassmen based on their majors or personal background. They are encouraged to ask any kind of questions to their mentors, such as how to register for classes, or about their favorite professors and housing options for next year.

Mary Melo-Severino, a freshman who is studying administration of justice, signed up for the "I Believe I Can" Mentorship program while at a social event hosted by the Office of Multicultural Programs. She was paired with a junior. While they don't have classes together, they talk to each other at least once a month whenever running into each other on campus.

"I already feel a lot of support with the [Multicultural] office and having a mentor reinforces that feeling," Melo-Severino said. "It's a great opportunity for students to make connections if they aren't already involved."

Melo-Severino is interested in potentially becoming a mentor for the incoming freshman class since she understands the difficulties of college life and the need for that extra support to make a successful adjustment.





MULTICULTURAL LEADERSHIP RETREAT

The Office of Multicultural Programs and Retention sponsored its annual Multicultural Leadership Retreat from January 31 – February 2 at Camp Canonicus in Exeter, Rhode Island. The event has taken place in previous years during the fall semester as the last weekend before Thanksgiving break.

This retreat provided 30 students with an opportunity to build a sense of community among their fellow classmates, develop leadership skills in the context of multiculturalism, and de-stress from their university obligations.

Gilberto Grave, a freshman from East Providence, learned about the retreat as a work-study student at the Office of Multicultural Programs and Retention and later helped with planning the event before attending.

While at Camp Canonicus, Grave shared a room with three other students. They ate Caribbean food from the Hummingbird restaurant on Broadway as their first meal, enjoying tacos and lasagna later in the weekend.

Their daytime activities involved raising awareness to contemporary problems that greatly effect multicultural communities. Words, such as “immigrant” and “Salve”, were placed on the walls as a way to evoke the immediate thoughts of students who wrote them down in ten seconds.

Many of these results were stereotypes that were later discussed and acknowledged as being harmful to everybody. Students felt as if they were becoming better leaders after these exercises since they were placed in unfamiliar situations but given space to figure out how to handle these problems.

These activities were usually finished by dinnertime, allowing students to spend the rest of their nights hanging out with each other outside of an academic setting.

“My favorite part of the retreat was getting to know new people at Salve that I’ve seen on campus but never spoken with,” Grave said. “I found more in common with them than I realized.”

Grave plans on attending the retreat again during his later years at Salve Regina University.

INCLUSIVE READING CLUB

The Inclusive Reading Club was established by the Office of Multicultural Programs and Retention and McKillop Library. Student representatives from different clubs are recruited to participate in these monthly talks.

The official mission of the Inclusive Reading Club is to engage members of the Salve Regina community in exploring diversity through short readings and discussions. The IRC provides an inclusive environment that encourages participants to develop a greater understanding and appreciation of different identities, cultures, and communities.

Rose Albert originally came up with the idea of the Inclusive Reading Club during New Employee Orientation in 2019. She noticed that McKillop Library hosted themed displays and wanted to use those resources to create an environment with meaningful discussion.

“[We were] just trying to find a very creative and innovative way of bringing the community together...” Albert explained in a conversation with Salve Today.

The first meeting was on October 17 and involved readings about LGBT+ issues. November’s theme looked at Native American identity through writers who explored combating stereotypes and traveling through their ancestral land. The Inclusive Reading Club ended the fall semester of 2019 with inspiration from the 1619 Project by discussing specifically about how slavery laid out the foundations of capitalism in America.

February’s readings were centered around Angie Thomas’s *The Hate U Give* which details the experiences of a black teenager who witnesses a police shooting of her childhood friend. A screening of its film adaptation was shown in O’Hare on February 20 at 7 p.m. Excerpts from *Race Matters* by Dr. Cornel West were also included to create discussion before he visited campus for Multicultural Education Week.

Readings can be found online or picked up from the Office of Multicultural Programs and Retention or McKillop Library. People who cannot attend the meetings are still able to share their thoughts through online bulletin boards at <https://padlet.com/salvelibrarian/irc>





MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION WEEK

Monday, February 24, 2020

Matthew Shenoda, the Associate Provost for Social Equity at Rhode Island School of Design, lectured from 7-9 p.m. at Bazarsky Lecture Hall. He spoke about diversity and systematic frameworks in higher education through his own experiences.

Tuesday, February 25, 2020

Dr. Cornel West spoke with the University President Dr. Kelli Armstrong from 7-9 p.m. at Bazarsky Lecture Hall. He is currently the Professor of Public Philosophy at Harvard University and has earned the title of professor emeritus from Princeton University. Dr. West has previously taught at Union Theological Seminary, Yale University, and the University of Paris.

Dr. West has written twenty books, remaining best known for *Race Matters* and *Democracy Matters*. His latest book, *Black Prophetic Fire*, provides a fresh analysis of historical figures such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Martin Luther King Jr., Frederick Douglass, and Ella Baker. Dr. West has become a frequent guest on CNN, and Democracy Now.

"I was interested in seeing Dr. West because he's a very holistic thinker. He has a remarkable ability of looking at things in a historical and contemporary perspective," Chase Mulvaney, a junior who is studying political science and philosophy major, said. "I'm glad that he talked about the flaws in our current economic and political environment."

Wednesday, February 26, 2020

The Multicultural Coffee House took place from 4-6 p.m. at Angelus Hall. The event showcased sample coffees and pastries such as hamantash, choreg, eclairs, baklava, and cannolis. Students were encouraged to attend the event as a way to relax and socialize away from their university obligations. Live music was performed by Christina MacArthur, Bradley Simpson, Nat Reid, and many other students.

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION WEEK

Thursday, February 27, 2020

The discussion panel *A Day in My Shoes: Life as a Minority in the United States* was held from 7-9 p.m. at Bazarsky Lecture Hall. This opportunity allowed current students, along with professors and alumni, to talk about their difficulties that they have faced specifically because of their race, ethnicity, and sexual identities in the current social and political climate. Audience members provided their support by listening and acknowledging these experiences to reinforce their part as a Mercy community.

Friday, February 28, 2020

The Multicultural Festival ended Multicultural Education Week from 7 p.m.-midnight at Ochre Court. This event started off with student representatives and poster presentations about an overview of countries such as Nigeria, Afghanistan, Italy, Cambodia, and the Dominican Republic. A raffle for Amazon gift cards, flight vouchers, an Apple Watch, and more was offered to attendants as well. University community members were encouraged to try foods from different cultures (such as crab rangoon, empanadas, and baklava) to step outside of their comfort zones.

"I like the inclusivity of the festival. It's such a welcoming environment," Brendan Ferrario, a freshman, said after attending the same event during the fall semester. "We're all different but we're celebrating each other."

The dancing show featured performers from the local community in the styles of Irish tap-dancing, belly dancing, hip-hop dancing, and more. This event was followed by the fashion show where students took pride in themselves while dressed in traditional costumes from Egypt, China, South Africa, Pakistan, Mexico and more.

"The festival is important to me for creating a fun environment for my friends and I to have fun." Naomi Cummings, a freshman, said. "I definitely plan on attending next year."



THURSDAY TALK WITH ROSE ALBERT

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, administrators at Salve Regina University ultimately decided to switch all classes to remote learning for the rest of the semester in order to minimize the face-to-face interactions among students, staff, and faculty. Many student communities and organizations have used this same technology to hold meetings and keep in touch with each other. The Office of Multicultural Programs and Retention is no exception.

Rose Albert, the Assistant Director, understood the uncertainty of the brave new world that this pandemic has created for students and decided to host informal video chats on Thursdays from 1-5 p.m. on Webex. Students were encouraged to join in between their classes or during their work breaks. These sessions were mostly attended by underclassmen, such as Randy Mata, Sierra Alston, and Naomi Cummings, who needed the extra support after still feeling unfamiliar with the college environment because they've only had one full semester of in-person classes until everything switched to remote learning. Upperclassmen who had never taken an online class through the university also attended these group calls to ask questions about this new format.

During the session on April 16, everybody wished Mary Melo-Severino a happy birthday and she talked about making the most of her celebration in the midst of quarantine. The conversation shifted towards discussing how a new degree, Creative Writing, and Publishing, is being offered during the fall semester of 2020. They later talked about next semester's classes, specifically what time they received for submitting their choices and which courses were popular enough to yield a waitlist. Albert then asked the participants what they missed about being a Salve Regina student.

"I miss my friends most of all," Shania Riviere answered. "I enjoyed the small things, like being able to go into Naomi's room and annoy her."

The transition towards remote learning was somewhat difficult for Riviere because she is the kind of person who needs "a routine to thrive academically" so she found a lack of motivation when completing any of her assignments. Many of the participants in the group call immediately agreed with her.

One participant talked fondly about preferring the traditional classroom instead of online classes and how Salve Regina provided him with the freedom to enjoy the beautiful campus and the Cliff Walk. He enjoys living with his family but needs that space in order to create the best work possible.

The session on April 16 concluded with Alexia Moreno providing updates about how the administrators at Salve Regina had officially approved the Hispanic and Latinx Student Organization to begin during the fall semester of 2020. Moreno and the e-board members plan on attending club rush to recruit more members.

Moreno summarized the ambitions of HSLO through this statement: "The goal of the Hispanic and Latinx Student Organization is to become a voice of Hispanic and/or Latinx community on Salve Regina's campus. We strive to educate Salve Regina's community members of the Hispanic and/or Latinx rich and diverse culture. This organization hopes to be able to discuss topics that affect the Hispanic/Latinx community politically, socially, and culturally in the United States, as well as throughout Latin America. As Salve Regina University's mission statement states, the Hispanic/Latinx Student Organization aspires to encourage students to work for a world that is harmonious, just and merciful both locally and overseas"

Anybody with further questions about HSLO can contact her at alexia.moreno@salve.edu.

MEET THE STAFF



DR. SAMI NASSIM

Dr. Sami Nassim has been the Director of the Office of Multicultural Programs and Retention since 2012 and the Assistant Vice President for Student Success since 2019. He attended Alexandria University in Egypt from 1992 - 1996 before earning his master's degree from Southern Connecticut State University in 2002. He received his Ed.D. from the University of Delaware in 2011.



ROSE ALBERT

Rose Albert has been the Assistant Director for the Office of Multicultural Programs and Retention since 2018. She came to Salve Regina University as a student from Port-au-Prince, Haiti and graduated in 2013. Albert attended the SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont and earned her M.A. in Intercultural Service, Leadership and Management in 2017.

To further engage with the Multicultural Office, you can follow their social media account and receive updates at

<https://www.instagram.com/salvemulticultural/>