INTERCULTURAL LEADERSHIP AWARD RECIPIENTS

Sarah Akinwale
As an intercultural leader, I have thus far enjoyed my time and involvement in the BSU (Black Student Union), Events Assistant for Diversity in Admissions, as well as my involvement with the Orientation Team at the beginning of this year. Each area has allowed me to face and tackle new challenges in the areas of leadership, service, integrity, faith, and learning. I have grown in a lot of ways, spiritually, emotionally, and mentally. I have marveled from when I first started my journey here at Westmont College my Freshman year. I have participated in multicultural leadership conferences, Intercultural Leadership retreats and meetings, Supper Clubs and in the student leadership retreat at the beginning of the school year with leaders of WSM and WNC. These activities have taken me out of my comfort zone, and forced me to cultivate my mind and every part of my being as I’ve entered into meaningful dialogue and interaction. I wouldn’t trade my experience and all its hardships and successes for anything in the world. I truly feel that God has been showing me personally how, when one learns with me to share and enlighten others as well as use throughout the course of my life.

Laurena Marcelle Gaoige
As an intercultural leader, my vision was to facilitate dialogue between people as a means to ameliorate prejudice and disintegrate the edge of homogeneity which appear at the doorstep of differences. I saw that such communication could be facilitated by allowing students to share from their lenses in which our differences could be discussed and laid on the table. I believe that such an arena can only be created if we prepare our hearts and minds to welcome new and probably controversial ideas and assess them through the lens of true community which encompasses love and perseverance. Yet, it was important for me to keep in mind that such communication should not seek homogeneity as an end, but tend to explain differences and render them rich and unique. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity being one of the intercultural leadership awardees, for it gave me the opportunity to voice my concerns for this campus on a larger scale. I trust that Westmont will achieve its goals for diversity one day, and I pray that God will grant our institution the perseverance and passion for the hard work ahead. The challenges I have come across as a leader this year have certainly made me grow in various ways. I struggled with the lack of knowledge or interest on world issues that students have, and instead invited students on various occasions to look at the world under a different lens. The progress has been slow but holds a lot of promise. May Westmont continue to warmly welcome students from diverse backgrounds as it has welcomed me. Lysuvaherkamakh et labi.

DIVERSITY COMMITTEE
2004-2005
Jane Higa, Chair
Mellisa Burns
Thomas Jaramiliano
Krista Calabrese
Adam Shangraw
Chris Cell
Sara Shemakina
Tony Cooper
Heather Sprig
Julissa Delgado
Reggie Williams
Bob Dushin
Paul Willis
Jadyn Grant
Elena Yee

ON THE WEB!
Check out what you can access via Westmont’s Web page on diversity:
http://www.westmont.edu/_academics/pages/diversity/
• Current and past issues of Across Cultures
• Diversity-related excerpts from the Long Range Plan
• The 2003-2004 Report on Diversity
• Information about Intercultural Programs
• Members of the campus Diversity Committee
• Diversity in Evangelical Higher Education
• Links to diversity in higher education Web sites.

THE SUPPER CLUB—and Other Hopeful Signs in Our Community
by Provost Shirley Mullen

The past several weeks have again brought diversity issues to the forefront of our community life. In some ways, it could seem like another round of the same old thing. First, feelings were hurt—in this case as a result of something said in a chapel message, (one that was meant, ironically, to celebrate the richness of diversity within the Kingdom of God) but perhaps even more so by the apparent response of the audience to what was said. Second, the initial response to the hurt was that it was not remedied. Third, as evidenced in the pages of the Horizon over the course of several weeks, the community took sides behind either those whose feelings were hurt, or behind those who are protesting that they did not intend anything hurtful. Lots of people ended up very discouraged, wondering if Westmont had made any progress at all in becoming a truly welcoming community where all of us are “we” and no one is a “they.”

That is the bad news.

The good news is that this season did not, in fact, end up being another round of the same old thing. Several things were different this time.

First of all, lots of people, especially many students of color, were willing to take the time to engage in many conversations—some one-on-one, some in groups—to help our community become more aware of why what happened could, quite understandably, be hurtful to our community to the point of provoking a public response. These people risking being misunderstood, in order to help us become the community that we believe we are called to be in Christ. These conversations were among students, between students and administrators, between students and the campus pastor, between faculty and students, among the faculty, etc.

Second, lots of people were willing to listen and learn. Ben Patterson set a great example when he shared in a subsequent chapel message what he had learned about our community as a result of the conversations following the first chapel message. He modeled what it means to bring together an appreciation for the role of intent in our actions, but also the humbling realization that, no matter what our intent, we can sometimes be an agent of hurt in others. In short, in this situation, there was a critical mass of people in our community who were determined to “stay at the table”—people who believe that we can, by the grace of God, become a community where everyone truly feels “at home.”

“A Town Meeting” was held Wednesday evening, February 23, in Page Hall to hear continued under Supper Club, page 2

From Long Range Plan Excerpts

Some Reflections on the Recent Campus Conversation by President Stan Gade

What began as a misunderstanding, and then quickly escalated to hurt and sharp words, eventually produced an extraordinary outpouring of understanding. Call it education. It is a part of helping students (and staff) come to terms with real diversity in our community. Nothing easy about the process, but all told, an important step on the way to being the kind of community we want to be.

Ben Patterson modeled, in an incredibly vivid way, what it means to be a learner and, in chapel, talked to the entire community about this being “our” issue, not “their” issue. Through it all, Shirley Mullen and Jane Higa gave wonderful leadership, pulling people together and encouraging frank but gracious conversation. This task was made more difficult, however, because those who were initially hurt neither harbored their wounds nor escaped to isolation. Rather, they sought out others, graciously bearing their souls but also intent upon listening and learning. In the end, I think this was one of the best “across the campus” conversations about diversity that I’ve ever seen. Not easy. But few good things are. I’m extremely proud of these good folks who deeply love our students, and model what it means to be a follower of Christ in the midst of our misunderstandings. I’m grateful.
from members of the Supper Club—group of seven students who have been working this year to be agents of redemptive community at Westmont—particularly around the issues of diversity. That is, they have worked to create enough trust among themselves that they have the courage to talk about the hard issues associated with diversity.

The Supper Club began when one group of students wondered why Westmont as a college puts so much emphasis on diversity. These students agreed to meet with another college puts so much emphasis on diversity. And finally, we are still talking about diversity. And yet this seems like a land of laughter and joy, of peace and unity, of love and sharing.

Lord God, we thank You For calling us into the company Of those who trust in Christ And seek to obey His will.

May Your Spirit guide and strengthen us In our endeavors in the world For we are strangers no longer But pilgrims together on the way to Your Kingdom.

The Pilgrim Prayer
The Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland

The National Survey of Student Engagement was administered to first- year and senior Westmont students in 2001 and 2004. Disaggregated data from items involving students’ relationships with the faculty, administration and other students, as well as general perceptions of the college were examined. Broad generalizations are difficult, given the small number of respondents in the non-White categories. Nevertheless, the following observations seem warranted:

1. On the general question regarding “quality of relationship with faculty members,” students of all ethnic groups report that faculty are quite helpful and available. However, there appear to be some differences as to which students seek out specific contact with faculty. Non- white students are less likely to discuss the grade received on an assignment with the instructor. In the classroom, Asian/ Pacific Islander students report asking fewer questions and participate less in class discussions than most other students.

2. Although student relationships with administration and staff were not described quite as positively as relationships with the faculty, these relationships were generally rated as helpful and considerate by students of all ethnic backgrounds.

3. Students’ relationships with other students were described as friendly and supportive. In the 2001 survey results, few differences have a voice that cries out to the stars. Here in Mexico, History marches right through the most holy of doors in the land, and pays homage at the feet of the Present. I would like to say that we treat History in the same way in the United States, but the Future has taken its place—only, we are still waiting for it to show up. So now I am standing here appreciating this place—with a new set of eyes. Thank you Lord, for them. Help me to use them to see things as you do, to love what you love, and hate what you hate. I want you to find in a new way here. Take my old eyes away. Those eyes saw things only in black and white, but colors being life.