

**The University of Minnesota, Morris
Minority Student Program**

2002-2003 Annual Report



**Pareena G. Lawrence
Interim Director**

Minority Resource Center
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Introduction

The Minority Student Program (MSP) is dedicated to working with student affairs and academic offices to meet the special concerns and needs for U.S. ethnic minority students. MSP was instituted as a response to the educational and socio-economic problems fostered by racism and prejudice in our society. MSP works to ensure a stable, strong, and supportive environment for minority students by providing academic assistance and other quality student support services designed to improve the opportunities for minority students to participate fully in the life of the university and to successfully transition from college to career.

Staff members who carry out the mission of MSP include:

Dr. Pareena G. Lawrence, Interim Director
Ms. Shezwee Fleming, Interim Assistant Director and Educational/Gateway Coordinator
Ms. Anitra Cottledge, Assistant Educational Coordinator
Mr. Michael Miller, Coordinator of Cultural Programs
Mr. Walter Fisher, Diversity Community Outreach Program Coordinator
Ms. Bonnie Tipcke, Principal Administrative Specialist

Responsibilities of the Office:

1. Assist Admissions with the recruitment of talented students of color.
2. Assist in the adjustment process of students of color to the university through the summer component of the Gateway Program and with special orientation sessions for incoming students of color.
3. Academically advise first year students of color.
4. Monitor the academic progress of all students of color, intervening and making referrals when needed.
5. Collaborate with the Academic Assistance Center, the Academic Advising office, Retention Task Force and others on designing and implementing retention strategies for students of color.
6. Design workshops to encourage exceptional students of color to apply for National Scholarships.
7. Collaborate with Center for International Programs to encourage students of color to Study Abroad.
8. Plan and coordinate the Gateway Program.
9. Design and implement cultural and educational activities such as the World Touch Cultural Heritage Week.
10. In conjunction with the Career Center, assist students of color with career planning, internships, and graduate school information.
11. Advise and assist student of color organizations with programming and other needs.
12. Collaborate with other offices to insure that students of color are considered for key student leadership positions on campus (RAs, OGLs, etc.).

13. Develop policies and procedures for the Minority Student Program and the use of Minority Resource Center.
14. Serve as a resource to the campus on student of color issues.
15. Assist the Alumni Office with the coordination of the Minority Student Program Alumni Association.
16. Connect our students with the local community to improve communication and dialogue between the two.

Evaluation of MSP Office

The MSP Staff began the year by reviewing the MSP mission and vision statements for the office. Changes were made to that statement to reflect our proactive approach to student of color success at UMM. We discussed which programs and initiatives had worked well in the past and which areas needed improvement or restructuring. Our mission and vision statements reminded us of our purpose and the direction in which we needed to be going. This was a somewhat atypical year for our office as there was an Interim Director on board and a national search for a Permanent Director was on. Thus we decided to continue operating under the previous year's office priorities and made no major changes to them. However, some new initiatives were undertaken and Office Priorities were rearranged in order of importance. In addition to the office priorities each staff member set goals and priorities for their individual positions. We continue to examine our purpose as an office and to think about our contributions to campus life.

The MSP staff established the following as their goals and priorities for the year:

A. Outreach

1. connect with students
2. collaborate with other campus offices
3. outreach to the community
4. networking with other institutions
5. create and/or improve MSP and Gateway brochures and website

B. Admissions

1. work with the Admissions office to develop a comprehensive recruitment plan
2. work to increase all student of color populations, with special emphasis on Latino and Asian American populations
3. encourage equal representation in the Gateway Program

C. Increase interaction between the minority student organizations as well as between MSP and the student organizations

D. Development

1. find ways to provide professional and staff development
2. look for ways to develop the Minority Resource Center
 - physical organization (space issues)
3. search out potential external funding opportunities

The past year in many ways was a blur. Because we were understaffed for a while, each of us had to take on additional duties. Even after we had new staff in place it was decided that some tasks would be continued by the individuals who picked them up. We did not want to disrupt students any more than we had to. Now that we have time to reflect back on the year, we realize that the year was truly a productive one for MSP.

As always our most important priority was connecting with students. We successfully met that priority. Evidence of that was the constant student traffic in our office. Our efforts begin even before students arrive at UMM. Often students of color who have decided to attend the institution will call us to ask questions about the campus and local community. During these conversations we let the students know about our services and how we can assist them. Another opportunity we take to connect with students is during the Gateway summer program. Because of the small size of the program the staff has the opportunity to really get to know individual students. We spend a great deal of time talking to the students about what they can expect once classes start in the fall. Another opportunity we capitalize on is advising sessions. The director, educational coordinator, and the counselor are academic advisors to first year minority students. We believe in holistic advising, so we use advising as a way to further reach out and connect with students. In addition, all of the MSP staff were very visible at organizational meetings, campus events and activities sponsored by student organizations.

An area where we were not as productive as we have been in the past few years was collaborating with other campus offices to provide students with services. This was due to being short staffed and having to shift some duties around. Because of this some of the things that we had established with other areas in the past few years had to be put on hold. Even so we still did some collaborative things. Examples of collaboration this year are the leadership workshops co-sponsored with Student Activities and the "Getting Back on Track" flyers created by an Academic Assistance Center staff member and the MSP educational coordinator and distributed on Pizza Ranch pizza boxes.

Our outreach efforts to the larger Morris community are weak at best. This continues to be a sore point for MSP. Much of it has to do with time limitations. Because of the demands on our time on campus, the staff has not had the opportunity to do the kind of outreach to the community that we would like. This will change in the next few years. MSP received a three-year grant from the Otto Bremer Foundation to establish a Diversity Community Outreach Program. With this funding, we were able to hire a program coordinator who will be a University-Community liaison. The coordinator will oversee some community outreach programs as well as be available to provide tailored diversity training.

Staff members continue to do some individual things to reach out or address issues in the community. Some individual efforts: Mike Miller is on the Morris Human Rights Commission; Rickey Hall co-presented a workshop session for law enforcement officers; and Hall and Sandy Olson-Loy, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, continue to meet periodically with the mayor and the City Manager in an attempt to be proactive.

We understand that most students of color do not separate their experiences on campus from off campus. That's why community outreach is so very important to us. If we are to be more effective retaining students of color, we have to make sure that they feel welcome in the larger

Morris community. We are extremely excited to now have a point person for our community outreach efforts.

Networking with other institutions is an area where we fell short. We conducted two national searches this year and had other things come up that took priority, so we were unable to do all that we had hoped to do in connecting with colleagues on similar-sized liberal arts campuses. Even so, the director was able to make some connections. The director made a visit to one similar-sized liberal arts college and the director there made a visit to UMM. The director and the coordinator for cultural programs worked with colleagues in INROADS on a special project for American Indian students. The director also made a visit to the TRIO office on the Twin Cities campus. In addition the director corresponded with many of the multicultural/minority student affairs professionals through the Minnesota College Personnel Association's Professionals of Color Commission. In the future it will be important for MSP staff to foster current connections and to establish new connections with professionals who do similar work on small campuses. This type of networking will help MSP stay abreast of best or promising practices in multicultural/minority student affairs.

Our office marketing efforts were mixed. The office web page seriously needs to be updated. For a variety of reasons this did not happen. This is something that has to be a high priority in the fall. On the other hand, one of the office assistants developed a general office brochure. The brochure is ready to be printed in the fall. Our effort in this area will be ongoing.

Regarding Admissions, the MSP staff remains committed to supporting their efforts to recruit talented students of color. We continue to emphasize the need to increase all student of color populations, with special emphasis on Latino and Asian American populations. Appropriate MSP staff will continue to assist Admissions by going out on the road a few times a year.

The MSP staff continues to try to increase interaction among the minority student organizations. We began our efforts this past year by holding a half-day retreat for the executive officers of the organizations. At the retreat, we talked to the officers about interacting more and about the benefits of them collaborating on programs. The minority student organizations often give financial co-sponsorship to other minority student organization events. This is good. Now we want them to work on joint programming. We will stress this in our work with students next year.

Our development efforts were strong again this year. Each of our professional staff attended at least one conference this year and the administrative assistant took a course on campus. In addition, for staff development we did a variety of things. Each staff member was assigned a staff meeting to facilitate. Each staff member set the agenda for their meeting. The director also provides staff development opportunities to the staff. He encouraged each staff member to go through the "FISH" customer service training. Moreover, the director had the staff read the book Let Your Life Speak by Parker Palmer and led a discussion on how the book could be instructional to us in our work.

In an attempt to address space needs and to better use the MRC, the staff discussed long-term wishes and things that needed to happen in the short term. Because of the addition of a new staff member, we needed another office space. We have decided to turn MRC 115 into an office and training space for the diversity community outreach program coordinator and move the computers into the lounge for an internet café feel. In the long term we hope to be able to utilize MRC 10 as the computer and student of color organization space.

Lastly, as was mentioned above, MSP received a three-year grant from the Otto Bremer Foundation to establish the Diversity Community Outreach Program. We will continue to search out potential external funding opportunities for key office and campus initiatives.

There were many challenges for MSP this past year. We met the challenges head on and managed to be productive. In many ways we are a stronger office because of it. There, too, will be challenges in the future, but we are confident we will meet them and continue to meet the needs of the students we serve.

Plans for 2003 - 2004

Plans for MSP in the upcoming year include the following:

1. Facilitate a seamless transition Conduct national search to fill director's position.
2. Integrate the Diversity Community Outreach Program into general Office functions.
3. Update the web page and keep it current.
4. Work with Admissions to improve our population of students of color.
5. Work with Financial Aid Office to better service our students.
6. Improve the classroom climate at UMM for students of color.