

Black Student Initiative (BSI)
One year ago

An update on progress from the Division of Student Life at IUPUI

Nicole Y. Oglesby
Director of Campus Community Programs
Division of Student Life

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On November 2, 2006 approximately 50 or more primarily African American student civilly took over a town hall meeting on diversity lead by Vice Chancellor Karen Whitney. During this protest, three students, 2 African American males & 1 African American female shared parts of a document they authored entitled “Through Our Eyes”. In this document the students pinpointed specific areas of the University where they perceived institutional racism, prejudice, discrimination, and an unwelcoming environment toward African American students was rampant.

The student leaders named this activist movement the Black Student Initiative or more commonly referred to as the BSI. The BSI brought several grievances against the Division of Student Life and specific units under that authority. The Division of Student Life would like to mark the one year anniversary of the BSI by highlighting some action items that were developed or implemented to address the student concerns.

This list is representative of both division wide and departmental actions that have positively impacted the campus community around issues of diversity and inclusion. This is synopsis of large scale impact items such as:

- Increased communication among the SL Management team as the meeting schedule was changed from bi-monthly to weekly for remainder of last fall and the entire spring semester.
- The external review of the student activity fee allocation process was organized by VC Karen Whitney and involved several units such as Campus & Community Life, Assistant VC of Student Life and Learning, and Fiscal Affairs contributing documentation, input, and guidance into the creation of a new allocation process for Student Activity Fees that is more inclusive of all campus constituencies.
- SL professional staff members were appointed by the Chancellor to committees such as the multicultural center concept committee and the search and screen committee for the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- The creation of the Mary Cable Social Justice Center along with Social Justice advocates that primarily work in with on-campus residents.
- SL professional staff led workshops and facilitated discussions around power & privilege, free speech vs. hate speech and other various topics. In addition, there was leadership by SL professional staff to re-institute the Black Student Resource Guide
- Division wide retreats held in the spring and fall of 2007 focused on the topic of diversity with consultant Dr. Jaime Washington. In addition, the spring 2007 retreat consisted of student panel that shared their experiences as students of color at IUPUI.
- The Professional Development committee within the Division created a calendar of offerings on diverse topics with a policy mandate that all staff must attend two events or programs per semester.
- Increased levels of student engagement opportunities for historically underrepresented students in such areas as employment, committee membership, programming input, mentoring, advising, and community building

The student activism led by the BSI has had a tremendous effect not only on the Division of Student Life, but also on the campus as a whole. Last year's historical protest has had and will continue to have a lasting impact on the Division of Student Life and will help shape the future for this campus community.

The Division of Student Life will continue to advance work in diversity through realizing the objectives its new strategic plan. To achieve this plan, the Division of Student Life commits itself to excellence in community building, excellence in student engagement, and excellence in professional practice.

The Division of Student Life strategic plan may be found in its entirety at:

<http://www.iupui.edu/~sldweb/info/plan.html>.

Additionally, the Diversity Council for the Division of Student Life has identified and addressed the campus diversity goals through our Division's diversity plan. These goals include: (1) Recruitment, academic achievement, persistence and graduation of a diverse student body; (2) Recruiting, retaining, advancing, recognizing, and promoting a diverse faculty, staff and administration while creating a campus-wide community that celebrates its own diversity as one of its strengths and as a means of shaping IUPUI's identity as a university, and (3) Making diversity a strategic priority touching all aspects of the campus mission.

The Division of Student Life diversity plan may be found in its entirety at:

http://www.iupui.edu/diversity/docs/07_diversity_plan_sld.pdf.