

Letter From the Dean



**Dean
Hughes Suffren**

Last October, we convened a Town Meeting to discuss past OBSA challenges and our goals for new directions. We clearly stated how others had done great work to establish OBSA as a permanent presence at The Claremont Colleges, and that part of our job is to take specific actions that would build OBSA into the academic fabric of The Claremont Colleges. Although there is a lot to share with you about our progress, there are two priority matters you should know about now—OBSA possibly relocating, and a possible repositioning of the ethnic centers. Let us first examine the context for OBSA possibly relocating.

Last year, the Claremont Graduate University and Claremont University Center separated, creating two organizations: Claremont Graduate University (CGU) and the Claremont University Consortium (CUC). For further clarity, CUC is an interdependent organization that governs the central services (i.e., library, bookstore, OBSA, etc.). This past summer, Steadman Upham, President of Claremont Graduate University (CGU), shared with me that CGU will “reclaim its buildings [that house]... CUC services.” Since OBSA leases its building from CGU, the department may be required to move. President Upham also stated, “OBSA will not have to move unless we find suitable space that you agree to, and the space must be comparable to what you now have or better.” Giving jurisdictional clarity to this matter, the decision to relocate OBSA to a CUC—the consortium that governs OBSA—property is the responsibility of Brenda Barham Hill, Chief Executive Officer of CUC. The role of President Upham in this matter is to determine whether a new lease may be signed, or the time frame in which OBSA must move from its current CGU-owned location.

The context for discussions surrounding a possible repositioning of the ethnic centers is more complex. There have been closed-door discussions around an informally reported plan to create a multicultural center. History has demonstrated that on predominantly white campuses the placing of services to all students of color in one building has meant the students’ receiving less service over time. When you look at the national picture where this has occurred, you see an evolutionary pattern of combining services: when staff members of the original configuration leave (and many leave disgruntled because they were not involved in the change process), institutional commitments also change. The vacated positions are “frozen”; the new model becomes *one* office for *all* ethnic minorities—African Americans, Asian Americans, Latino-Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans; and several separate and diverse offices become one for multicultural affairs. In short, restructuring often proceeds repositioning; and restructuring in this case may mean “eliminating.” Thus, repositioning the ethnic centers may place us on the proverbial slippery slope; it may be another example of how people of color are treated as afterthoughts. We should remember how the Intercollegiate Department of Black Studies came to occupy its current space. They were moved twice in two years; the lack of basic support was so severe in the latest move (in 2001) that its administrative assistant used her personal mobile telephone to conduct university business.

Most faculty and professional staff share with their cross-campus counterparts in the planning, governance, and administration of this academic system. The Claremont Colleges are structured to function this way; and so there are five-college committees for almost everything, because there must be an appreciation for ideas and recognition of human service system-wide. However, for most of last year the Dean/Director of the Chicano/Latino Student Affairs Center and I sat outside of our seven-institution Student Deans’ Committee (SDC) meetings waiting for the committee’s administrative assistant to beckon us in for participation in the portion of the meeting that the other Deans deemed appropriate. Picture that. Now picture us: two Deans standing outside, peering at others plan the future of the ethnic centers we direct. One of the decision-makers separately told each of us the possibility of such a move, and then mentioned the importance of not sharing this information.

The ANANSI Academic Development Program

Anansi is a character from West African, more specifically, Akan mythology. He is a spider that is often credited with wisdom and intellect. Often, tales of Anansi illustrate his ability to outsmart opponents that may appear stronger, faster, smarter, or able to access more resources. It is this quality that the Office of Black Student Affairs was most concerned with when developing its academic development program. Helping students to succeed academically by accessing their strengths and skills while also providing them with useful goal-achieving tools. Year round academic workshops, note-taking sessions, study skills advisement, and time management consultations are areas that we want to make sure students are strong in.



The **Anansi Academic Development Program** is a voluntary program that focuses on assessing the student's learning style, identifying the student's strengths, and assisting them with developing a clear and successful learning style. This program is a service to students of the Claremont Colleges, but particularly tailored to students of African descent, and is available upon request.

Student Organizations

PASA (the Pan-African Student Association) meets Tuesdays at 7pm in the Smith Center at Pomona College.

Pan-African Student Association by

PASA is a 5 college organization that through activism, leadership, community service, and social events celebrates diversity and promotes acceptance in an increasingly diverse environment. In conjunction with the Office Black Student Affairs, PASA seeks to educate students of African descent and the general college community about issues related to Pan-Africanism.

Pitzer Black Student Union by Maegen Rose

Pitzer's Black Student Union declares itself an organization committed to fostering a social, academic and supportive environment for students of African descent. BSU is working diligently to facilitate more opportunities for its members to become more involved with its Pitzer community, the rest of the 5C community and the Pan-African community beyond the Claremont Colleges via community service. BSU is open to all Pitzer students, but emphasizes issues that pertain to its Pan-African community.



Yuare Dance headpiece

Wanawake Weusu by Denice Wint

The purposes and objectives of Wanawake Weusi are to:

Promote social, political, emotional, educational, and cultural life as well as provide communal activities for undergraduate students and faculty at Scripps College (and other interested members of the Claremont College community).

Provide a space for students of African descent and faculty to meet and interact.

Promote deeper understanding and awareness of the life of people of African de-

Spike Guru head piece



Black Graduate Student Association by Tharon Smith

Founded in 1995, the Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA) is a student run organization dedicated to the support of the Pan-African student experience at Claremont Graduate University. Co-chaired by Hasan Johnson and Tharon Smith, the BGSA's vision for the coming year is to make the Black Graduate Student Association a reflection of YOU, the members and students. BGSA recognizes the importance of academic scholarship in graduate school, and Bridgette Cheeks, the academic chair, will empower students by creating opportunities in academic advancement. Ashanti Frank will be our social chair and hopes to bring enthusiasm and fun to the year. We are still looking for motivated individuals to fill the remaining positions: Finance, Historian, Public Relations, and Community Liaison. The BGSA is currently working on a partnership with the Minority Mentor Program to help in their annual Spring Conference, as well as be a part of the mentoring program. This year the Black Graduate Student Association plans to send representatives to the National BGSA conference, as well as develop relationships with other Graduate Student Organizations to enhance the outreach and membership of our most distinguished association. The Black Graduate Student Association, there is no other like it!

Check us out at <http://bgsa.cgu.edu>.

Cast Bomona Statue

The Verb Stick by Aquylah Walker

As some of you may know, more recently than not, I had the strong desire to transfer out of the Claremont Colleges. Not only was I dissatisfied with the lack of concern that the Pitzer administration has for its students of color, but I was also disappointed in the apathy of the Pan-African community. So let me ask this, which is more important; being a student or being a Pan-African student? Is there a difference? Yes, there is. The administration and your classmates will not let you forget you are a Pan-African student first. How often are you the only black face in your classes and looked upon to speak for your entire race? Don't get me wrong, an education is important...but aren't the issues that directly effect you just as important?

Last semester, an article was published in a CMC literary satire magazine stating that Fox was to release a new reality show entitled "Plantation Island." The contestants were to live on a plantation and be subjected to peeling potatoes and receiving lashes. The author stated that the article was just a joke, but where was the outcry from our community? Where was the protest that was to ensure nothing so offensive would appear from the colleges that we invest so much money? I do not encourage anyone to neglect their studies, but we do find time to procrastinate for our personal reasons. So why not put that energy into causes that will ultimately better our living environment and secure them from discrimination and offensive behavior? We are being educated in predominately white schools, so issues that will and should upset us will arise in the course of this semester and this academic school year. What will our response be? Trust that I will fight for my community, but will you join me?



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OBSA Events!

November 16th, 2001 Word of Mouth

November 7th, 2001 Social Lunch

December 13th, 2001 Kwanzaa Celebration

December 17th-21st, 2001 Stress Relief Week

Nicole Crigler has resigned from OBSA to pursue other interests. We wish her the best. Nenaji Jackson will be the Interim Coordinator of Leadership Programs and Student Development while we conduct a widespread search that will include on and off-campus applicants. Welcome Nenaji!!

“Dean’s Address”- Continued from Cover Page

But I know, the sharer of the information knows, and all who govern in academic and corporate worlds know that **professional protocol deems it routine to include in discussions concerning any change, the leaders who direct the respective services, as well as their constituencies.** The repositioning of OBSA/CLSA involves the question of “suitable space” and meeting the needs of students. Neither question is merely a logistical problem. Both are moral and ethical issues and call for collective judgment rather than operating in secrecy.

Moreover, physical space is one of the foundations on which OBSA stands, in addition to academic programming, cultural programming, personal wellness, and administration; OBSA supporters (students, staff, faculty, and community members) identify with an atmosphere—the aura that injects them with a spirit of Umoja (Unity). For some, the atmosphere in this building is light and fun; for others the house provides a let-your-guard-down-like comfort—relief from having to play the aggravating and cumbersome role of race representative; and for more than a few privacy is important because of the sensitive nature of their visit. Unfortunately, we still live and work in an environment that mirrors our larger society, where the rhetoric and platitudes that publicly embrace “diversity,” clash with the private realities of insensitivity, prejudice, racism and hate. While often unintentional, all are present in and out of our classrooms. These days it may be extreme for a student to take legal action against a perceived racist faculty member (or department), or unusual for a Black, female faculty member to be verbally and physically assaulted, but both recently happened. These public incidents are not widely known. Perhaps the difficulty of being a part of the silence is knowing the role it may play in creating an environment where individuals may think mistreatment, racism or violence is permissible.

While we are curious as to what will be lost by having multiple departments share one space, the more essential question—were we to have ideal workspace and resources—may be what is the range of possibilities for our ethnic centers?

African Americans requesting to be included in decision-making processes concerning the future of our community is no new concept to administrators in university systems. That we find ourselves making the request repeatedly, despite our being economic contributors, is problematic in its indication that “once again” we are being treated as outsiders rather than stakeholders.

But please be encouraged. We will achieve an amicable resolution to the possible relocation of OBSA, as well as any