

## student affairs diversity council 2010-2011 overview

The Student Affairs Diversity Council was created in 2009 to help promote the understanding and embracing of differences with our students and within our staff. That first year was spent coming together as a team—working in the area of diversity requires trust of each other and of the process and a shared commitment to making a difference. So, that was 2009-2010. But the outcome was well worth that initial year of time investment because last year, the Diversity Council made a difference.

A team chaired by Cathy Martinez from the LGBT Resource Center focused on developing a Mission Statement

for the Council: “The Student Affairs Diversity Council (SADC) strives to cultivate an environment that embraces and promotes broad scope of diversity within the division”. With each new initiative, we check to see that the proposed idea fits within our mission. The monthly Diversity Newsletter was inaugurated in August 2010 under the capable editor, Nicole Miranda with the exceptional artistic talents of Holly Coleman, both from Student Recruitment. Each month, Student Affairs staff can discover more about their colleagues in the “Its Hard to Hate Someone Whose Story You Know: Stories of Growth and

## mission statement

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Change” feature, as well as learn about upcoming diversity-related events. Short facts on campus, local, state or national issues are

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## it's hard to hate someone whose story you know: stories of growth and change

*This column features stories by Student Affairs professionals and students who are willing to share an experience (event, book, speaker, etc) which promoted growth, a change in perspective, an awareness of another, or when some knowledge that was previously missing slipped into place.*

### being the other

#### Holly M. Coleman

I nearly choked on my own laughter when first approached to write this. What useful thing could a middle-class, heterosexual,

white, Mormon-in-Utah woman have to say about diversity? Heavens! Even reading that now makes me wince just a tad.

But, as I duly began to think about how diversity (or the lack thereof) has molded my own life, I recalled my experiences teaching the “Gender, Race & Class in the Media” course as adjunct faculty at BYU. As you may well imagine, it’s a touchy subject in a tricky setting.

I made it a goal in the course to help open the minds

of my students by talking about “being the other”. You know what I mean—that time in your life—perhaps for an hour, perhaps for a decade—when you were on the outside, looking in. When, whether due to the color of your skin, your socio-economic standing, your language, your gender or relationship status, culture, religion, size, weight, whatever—you did not fit in. Really stop to think about it. You know that queasy sensation—

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calendar

*being the other, con't*

we've all felt it.

As a six foot, two inch woman, I have officially "stuck out" my entire life. It was awkward as a child being taller than my sisters, my parents, my teachers, (EVERYONE). Growing too fast meant I had all the grace and coordination of a giraffe on ice skates, and with a tendency to bookishness, I didn't fit in well anywhere. But for all those years of being different, it was a moment on the "outside" as an adult that has really stuck with me.

I finished my undergraduate studies with an internship in Washington, DC. Early in the semester, I missed my usual ride home and instead boarded the bus for the nearest metro station. I sat down, looked up and realized I was the sole white person on that busy, rush-hour bus.

For a girl raised in Utah, this was an utterly new, wholly fascinating, somewhat troubling sensation.

It was at the moment I truly realized there was an entire world outside of my experience. A world of which I knew nothing, populated by people—lots of them—I would probably never understand.

And—at that moment and for that reason—I was sad.

And I was "the other".

In the time (and

experience) of years since, I have learned those moments "outside"—uncomfortable as they are—can serve a purpose.

In her book *Media Messages*, Linda Holtzman discusses the concept of "cultural competency". On the far end of the continuum, being culturally incompetent means you do not understand the culture of others and generally wreak havoc by means of your wanton ignorance

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or purposeful bias. In the center of the scale is cultural neutrality— what, I fear, too many of us see as the ultimate goal. By paying no attention to another's culture or heritage, we treat everyone the same.

Unfortunately, sameness and equality are not synonymous. In reality, this erasure of background is not a solution because each of us carries things in our culture and our heritage of which we are proud.

According to Holtzman, the true solution is cultural competency—a recognition of the events, the culture, and the heritage that have molded a person. As Holtzman puts it, "a culturally competent individual is actively committed to understanding other cultures by reading, studying, asking questions, attending cultural events, and interacting. This

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**The September Project:  
Civility in American Politics  
Tuesday, Sept 13, 12:15-2:30p.m.**

Join Bob Bennet, Karen Morgan, and Ralph Becker for a discussion of politics locally and nationally.

**Kronos Quartet, "Awakening"  
Tuesday, Sept 13, 7:30p.m.**

Enjoy this musical meditation on the 10th anniversary of 9/11.

**Understanding Diversity Seminar: Demographic Transformation: Who Are Our Future Students?**

**Sept 21, 12:00 pm -1:30pm  
Union West Ballroom**

Pam Perlich, Senior Research Economist at The Bureau of Economic & Business Research discusses Utah's changing demographics.

**University Farmers Market  
Aug 18 - October 6, 2011**

Enjoy fresh local produce and unique arts and crafts at the on-campus Farmers Market every Thursday morning.

**Free Public Star Party  
August 10 - December 14, 2011**

Join the Dept of Physics & Astronomy at the observatory after dark.

### *being the other, con't*

individual ... does not assume that one interaction makes him or her an expert. ... [s/he] is not required to know everything about other cultures, but rather to have an openness and a commitment to learn.” (23)

Notice that Holtzman does not suggest we must fully understand in order to be culturally competent; merely that we must TRY to understand. One afternoon spent with you will not teach me everything I need to know. But it is a drop in the bucket of acceptance—one step on the path to respecting something or someone who used to frighten me.



Towards the end of the semester at BYU, I lined my 40 students up on the lawn and played “How Much Did I Have”—an exercise on class differences I

found online and modified for my classroom. I read off a series of statements, and each time a student could answer “yes”, s/he took a step forward. After about 40 statements like “My father earned a college degree”, “Growing up, we had more than 500 books in our home”, “I had my own TV in my room”, and “Our family had a butler, maid, gardener or nanny”, the line of students was spread broadly across the grass. It was particularly stunning to the students to visually recognize the broad spread of advantage in their own ranks—inside the classroom, they assumed they

were all alike. But even in this generally homogenous group, the differences were clear. In class discussion after the exercise, the student who had taken the fewest steps began to cry—“I knew I didn’t have a lot, but I didn’t know I had so little”. Her longtime peer in the program and one of the students at the front of the pack hung his head in embarrassment, “After a while, I stopped wanting to take steps forward, and I made them smaller.” He paused, glancing at the other student and answered, “I didn’t know I had so much.”

The truth is, we often don’t understand the background and experiences that have shaped the people we know well, much less those with whom we

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graphically presented.

The “Understanding Diversity Seminar Series” was a huge hit and, after the first seminar, we realized we needed to change to a larger room! We averaged over 50 attendees each month on a wide variety of topics. The Series continues this year on the third Wednesday of each month from 12:00noon to 1:30pm. The first speaker of the 2011-2012 academic year will be Pam Perlich, University of Utah faculty and state demographer who will speak on the changing face of Utah. This year’s series will be co-chaired by Scott Jensen from HRE and Carol McNicholl from Disability Services.

Several activities focusing on assessing the Division’s views and experiences in the area of diversity were conducted over the year by an MBA class and by the Council’s Educational Leadership and Policy Intern, Richard Dias. For results from these assessments, contact Kari Ellingson.

On the training front, the Council was very active in co-planning the Student Affairs Exempt Staff Retreat in December, with a theme of diversity and social justice. Several successful dialogues were held

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## diversity dialogues

If your office, class or organization finds it challenging to discuss issues such as race, sexual orientation, power and privilege, religion or a host of other difficult topics, the SADC would like you to know that there is help. There is a trained group of facilitators who would be glad to assist you. You can contact Debra Daniels (ddaniels@sa.utah.edu) or Kari Ellingson (kellingson@sa.utah.edu) for more information.



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have not interacted. We cannot safely make assumptions or judgments—instead, we should seek common ground. It may be my naïveté, or my hope that the world is still populated by good people, but I would suggest that most people we meet are kind at heart. Unaware perhaps, but ultimately well-meaning. And I suggest that—if we each take a moment to really tap into our own experience of being “the other” on the “outside”—we can all act to invite everyone around us “in”. And eventually, there won’t be an “in” or an “out” or an “other” left to worry about.

Holtzman, Linda. 2000. *Media Messages: What film, television, and popular music teach us about race, class, gender and sexual orientation.* M.E. Sharpe, New York.

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with staff both within and outside of Student Affairs. Any office interested in exploring training for their staff, please contact Debra Daniels in the Women’s Resource Center. The Council also began participating in the Student Affairs New Employee Orientation during the last training of the year. For the coming year, a new stand-alone session will be added to this training for all new employees. Our hope is that current employees will also be able to participate in the near future.



So, that’s last year--what’s up for 2011-2012? Well, the Newsletter and Seminar Series will continue as well as our on-going training offerings. In addition, we will be introducing the Council’s website, under the guidance of Council member, Claudia Snow. We will also be developing a Speaker’s Bureau, an initiative headed by

Karen Cone-Uemura from the Counseling Center. One major focus for this year will be helping offices increase their outreach to and recruitment of diverse candidates during the search process for vacancies. Currently,

diverse representation within our division is not representative of our students and far from representative of the communities from which they come.

This overview is a way of letting you know that the Council is here, we’re excited about the progress we’ve made and the plans for the future. If you have ideas, suggestions, comments or concerns, please contact us. Each office has a representative on the Council or you may contact the co-chairs. A list of Council members is located below.

## student affairs diversity council

Debra Daniels, Co-chair	Women’s Resource Center	Suzanne Jones	Registrar’s Office
Kari Ellingson, Co-chair	Student Affairs, Student Development	Carol MacNicholl	Center for Disability Services
Maria Baldwin	Educational Opportunity Programs	Cathy Martinez	LGBT Center
Kajsa Berlin-Kaufusi	Office of International Education	Susan Miller	Campus Recreation
Michael Bard	Registrar’s Office	Nicole Miranda	Office of Student Recruitment
Arlyn Bradshaw	Dean of Students Office	Sana Muller	ASUU
Holly M. Coleman	Office of Student Recruitment	Cynthia Powell	Student Health Center
Karen Cone-Uemura	Counseling Center	Erica Rojas	Financial Aid & Scholarships
Branden Dalley	Union	Nick Rothacher	Bennion Center
Christoph Dressler	International Center	Claudia Snow	Network Support
Gwen Fears	Orientation/Leadership Development	Nancy Trevino	Admissions Office
Adrienne Howell	Educational Opportunity Programs	Jim White	Career Services
Scott Jensen	Housing & Residential Education		