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 Change” feature, as well as learn about upcoming diversity-related events. Short facts on campus, local, state or national issues are continued on page 3

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—continued on page 2
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 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
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
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
being the other, con’t

have not interacted. We cannot safely make assumptions or judgments—instead, we should seek common ground. It may be my naiveté, 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.


overview, con’t

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 ongoing 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.

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Debra Daniels, Co-chair  
Kari Ellingson, Co-chair  
Maria Baldwin  
Kajsa Berlin-Kaufusi  
Michael Bard  
Arlyn Bradshaw  
Holly M. Coleman  
Karen Cone-Uemura  
Branden Dalley  
Christoph Dressler  
Gwen Fears  
Adrienne Howell  
Scott Jensen  

Women’s Resource Center  
Student Affairs, Student Development  
Educational Opportunity Programs  
Office of International Education  
Registrar’s Office  
Dean of Students Office  
Office of Student Recruitment  
Counseling Center  
Union  
International Center  
Orientation/Leadership Development  
Educational Opportunity Programs  
Housing & Residential Education  

Suzanne Jones  
Carol MacNicholl  
Cathy Martinez  
Susan Miller  
Nicole Miranda  
Sana Muller  
Cynthia Powell  
Erica Rojas  
Nick Rothacher  
Claudia Snow  
Nancy Trevino  
Jim White  

Registrar’s Office  
Center for Disability Services  
LGBT Center  
Campus Recreation  
Office of Student Recruitment  
ASUU  
Student Health Center  
Financial Aid & Scholarships  
Bennion Center  
Network Support  
Admissions Office  
Career Services