

Talking Drum



Volume V, Issue I

INSIDE:

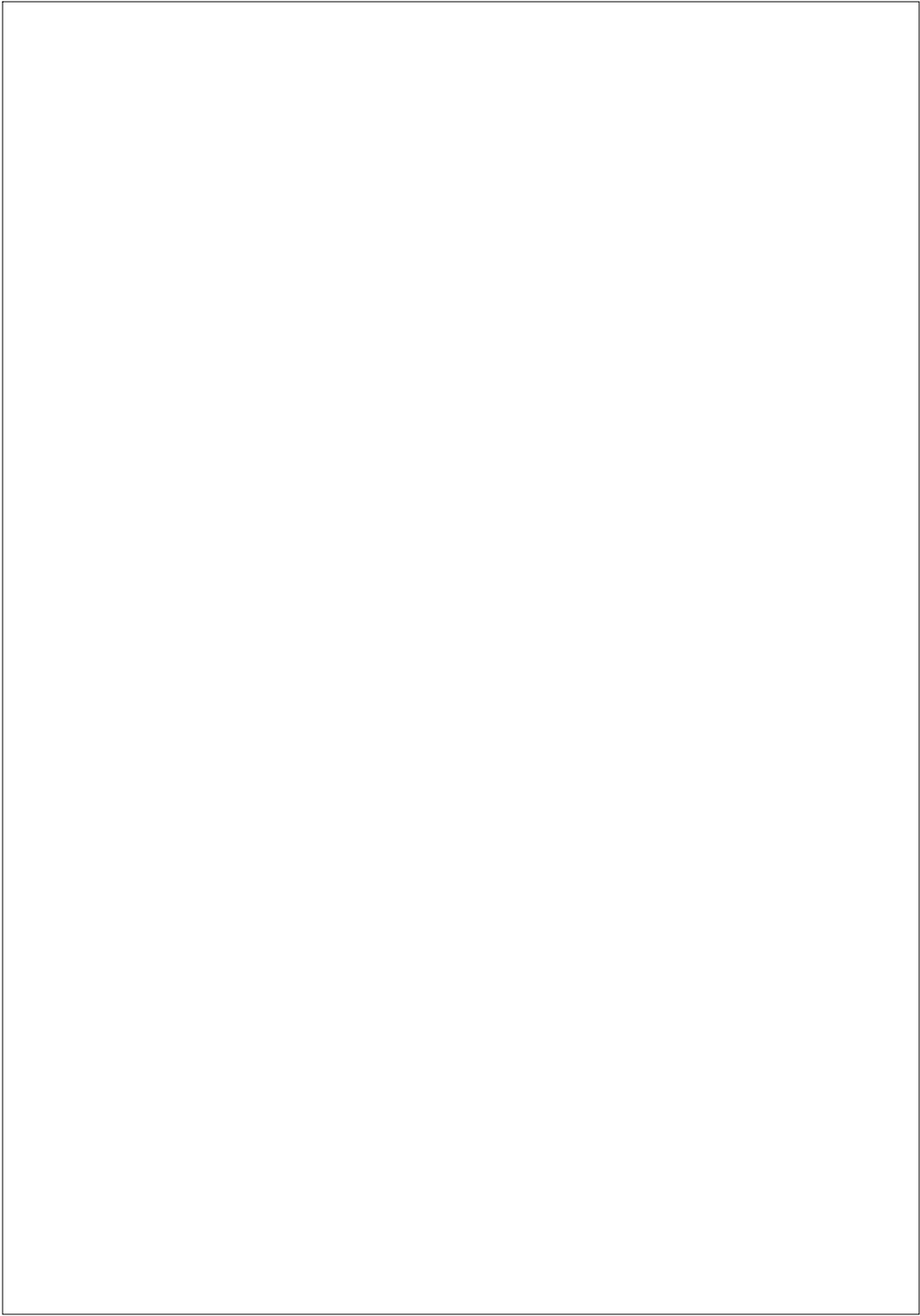
What do you
want your
Duke to be?

Plus:

- **Campus Cultural Initiative
- **Community Service
- **Maximize your Duke Experience
- **Freshmen Chronicles

And MUCH more!!

A Publication of the Black Student Alliance



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The Talking Drum is the official publication of the Black Student Alliance of Duke University. Contents of the Talking Drum are not necessarily the views, or endorsed by the Black Student Alliance. We reserve the right to be selective and edit submissions for grammar, style, and clarity.

From the Editor...



Dear Talking Drum Reader,

As we emerge from this homecoming weekend, we should be inspired by the abundance of successful Duke graduates. We can value a Duke education not only for what it offers while

we are here, but for what it can yield in the future as well.

This first issue of Talking Drum is dedicated to asking the question: "What do you want *your* Duke to be?" Defining *our* Duke will allow us to take advantage of all the University has to offer and maximize upon these opportunities.

As we embark upon this new school year, I would challenge us all to think about the kind of university we would be proud to call our own...and work toward making Duke embody that vision. The Talking Drum is a way to communicate and express your thoughts, concerns, visions and goals. This is one of the many avenues on campus that helps us define *our* Duke.

I hope you enjoy!

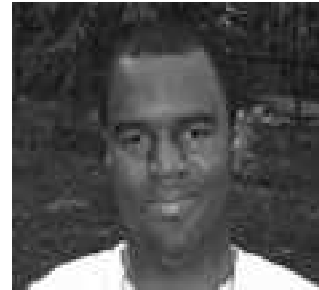
Be Blessed,

Blayne Alexander
Talking Drum Editor

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From the Desk of the BSA President



Greetings!

Since 1963, the struggles and successes of Black students have been documented in the annals of Duke history. The Black Student Alliance has been, and will continue to be there every step of the way, staying true to our mission of supporting and advocating on behalf of Black students in order to enhance Duke academically, culturally, and socially.

For the 2006-2007 academic year our mission is Cultivating Consciousness: Restoring Confidence to the Black Community. Consciousness is defined as an awareness of one's own existence, thoughts and feelings, collectively, of an individual or an aggregate of people. Synonyms include concern, interest, or acute awareness. This definition should inspire Black students at Duke to take an active role our society. It is our *hope* that the BSA will help you in becoming more fully self aware; we are *committed* to aiding you in acting on that awareness in ways that not only benefit the Black community, but also the greater Duke community at large. View the Black Student Alliance as a support system, a conduit, by which we all can build off of our collective strength in order to refine our individual areas of weakness. The culmination of which would allow us to have the *confidence* to mold this university into something we would be proud to call *home*. In light of recent university events, what better time than now to take up the challenge and in the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "Be the change you want to see in the world." It is only by leading thorough example that the campus culture can be changed.

The *Talking Drum* serves as the voice of the Black Student Alliance; within this publication you will find a host of talented writers, poets, and reporters, who bring to light aspects of Black culture, which may not be apparent to the casual observer. We encourage you to use this publication as a sounding board to express your concerns, showcase your talent, and to keep yourself abreast of the activities of the Black Student Alliance.

It is our hope that this year serves as the establishment of a foundation in which we can reconnect ourselves to our history, demonstrate academic excellence in our studies, cultivate a greater sense of community, and take full advantage of the opportunities which Duke has to offer. We encourage all individuals who feel passionate about taking an active role in the organization to send an email to contactbsa@duke.edu. Come join us as we mark 40 years of "Strengthening the Tradition of Excellence."

Yours in the Struggle,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Malik Burnett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Malik Burnett



Campus Cultural Initiative: A Call to ACTION!

By Danae Plattenburg

Somewhere, someone is talking about what they want *your* Duke to be.

In fact, in the wake of last springs events, Robert Thompson, Dean of Trinity College, is leading a group of faculty, staff, and students in an initiative, the Campus Culture Initiative, to find some answers to DSG President Elliott Wolf's question - "So, what do you want Duke to be?" The steering committee has asked to take the measure of campus culture and see where it could be improved. The Initiative will follow the pattern of other initiatives and studies which have spurred a number of university supported programs. The committee is, in a sense, charged with investigating your daily life and interactions from academics to athletics, from serving the community to socializing, and everything in between.

Before the committee can release findings, change programs or enact policies, it must make some attempt to collect your opinions. To do so, the Campus Culture Initiative has launched a website for students to fill out a survey, submit comments and schedule conversations with members of the committee. Not matter what your (lack of) contributions to the Campus Culture Initiative resemble, the findings that come form this report will have an impact on your university. Although Black Enterprise ranked Duke the number ten school for African Americans last year, and the number 14 school this year, each of us can find room for improvement. The only way to ensure this is to contribute to the conversation. If you have ever felt as if Duke in 2006 is not your Duke, now is the time to voice your comments and concerns. After the findings are compiled and the section on Black student life is written, there will less of an opportunity for you to share your ideas about your education, your investment. If the section is not written with you in mind, you can rest assured that the programs and policies that follow will not have you in mind either.

Your time, money, and energy spent at Duke University are an investment. The time money and energy expended by future Duke students will be an investment as well. It is up to us to maximize our returns.

To voice your opinion and for more information, please visit [http:// www.campuscultureinitiative.duke.edu/](http://www.campuscultureinitiative.duke.edu/)



A few weeks into fall semester seemed like a good time to do our first check in with a few freshmen. The goal was to gauge Duke's current impact on their young and impressionable psyches.

Coming from the St. Maarten (the Dutch side of the island of St. Martin, so you can stay up on your geography) you would expect a certain amount of upheaval for Javelle Wynter. She said the brochures sold her on the "Gothic Wonderland," and she was willing to overcome the changes brought on by the move to the states. Despite leaving behind the personal attention of a graduating class of 10, she feels the change was worth it. Being from Baltimore, Kevin Tolson had less of an adjustment and says he "hasn't regretted his decision yet."



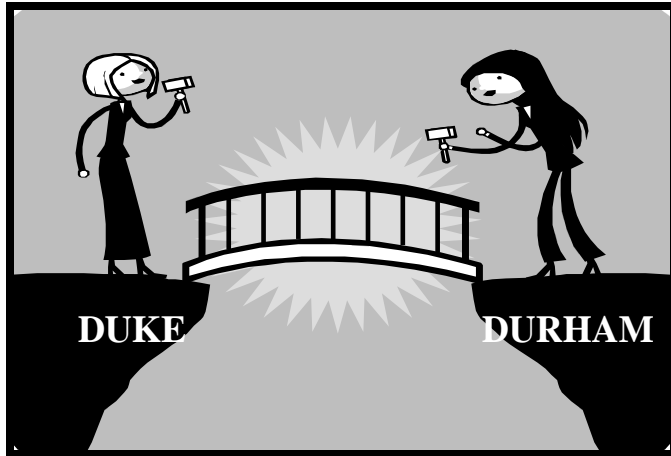
By Samantha Griffin

Both agree that the Black Student Alliance Invitational (BSAI) helped to clinch their decision. Despite having been a little misled by BSAI's activity and the sheer volume of people who participated, Kevin feels that many things were accurately portrayed. He appreciates the way that the small black population creates a "close-knit family feeling." Javelle agrees, saying that her biggest surprise when coming to Duke was not "being treated like a freshman... The upperclassmen accepted us so readily." Kevin has noticed the biggest downside of all this already, noting that "everyone knows everything." Welcome to Black Duke. But, despite the lack of privacy, both Kevin and Javelle have jumped right into the social scene, and seem to be getting along swimmingly.

Academics, predictably, have been more of an adjustment. Javelle, a possible chemistry major on the pre-med track, had a slight shock with the numerous readings and the lack of structure compared to high school. But after the initial bumps, she is just about caught up. Since she's taking Econ and Chem23L, I think she can be forgiven the initial difficulties. Kevin, who plans on majoring in Cultural Anthropology and African and African American Studies, has had the fortune of fewer than 30 people in each of his classes, and feels as though he can approach his professors easily.

Both are completing the trifecta with community involvements. Javelle is a soprano in United in Praise Gospel Choir and applying to be a mentor with the Boys and Girls Club. And in a valiant effort to prove Duke girls aren't the only ones who tend to overextend, Kevin is juggling intramural football, dodgeball and soccer, a mentor for B-more, and a work-study job in the Center for Documentary Studies.

If these two are any indication, it seems like '010 will be just fine. No unfortunate events so far, classes are under control, and there's even been time for some shambulation. Javelle, for instance, took a study break to run across a four lane highway for Chinese food one night. Kevin, on the other hand, prefers spend free time keeping his room clean for the friends who are forever invading it. Sounds like balance to me.



Community

Bridging the Gap:

Between world class academics and rigorous athletics, Duke students are used to competing and winning in every walk of life. Give us a fifteen page term paper to write and in a few hours we'll give you an "A" paper, all in time to go to our evening meetings and make it to Cameron to cheer on our beloved Blue Devils. We generally like to pride ourselves on theoretically being Harvard's fun, but just as intelligent, little brother.

But with everything that's going on in our busy lives, something typically gets a little lost. Between the tests, the papers, the games, and the clubs, it's easy to forget that Durham consists of more than the Duke campus and the path to Cookout. While most students are very involved on campus, few take the opportunity to venture off campus and help out in the community.

While, according to some, Duke students are more active in community service than their peers at other universities, "involved in the community" is not something that applies to as many Duke students as it should. While I'm sure that nearly every one of us was able to claim community service as one of the qualities that got us into Duke, it is a shame that only a small percentage can say that it is now a part of our collegiate experience... and I would hate to think that social consciousness was something we adopted merely as a ticket into college....

The Princeton Review ranks Duke number 4 on the list for colleges with poor "town-gown" relations. Translation:

we have a bad relationship with the Durham community, a relationship that was thrust into the spotlight last spring when the Duke lacrosse incident magnified the tensions between our campus and our city. I can't help but think that this relationship would be improved if there was more of a positive Duke force in Durham.

We are also ranked number 6 for schools with little race and/or class interaction. Although this standing refers to interactions within the student body, it is simply another symptom of the same problem: a reluctance to reach out of our comfort zones.

The Community Service Center, located on East Campus, offers a variety of programs to students interested in bridging the gap between different groups. Perhaps the most famous program of the CSC is America Reads/America Counts, a volunteer program that allows students to tutor local schoolchildren in English and math.

The America Reads/America Counts program is a nationwide effort, aimed at improving the education of children in low-income neighborhoods

through the help of college students. To help in this effort, federal work study students are given a stipend of \$12.75 per hour (\$15.75 per hour for graduate students) for 6-8 hours of work each week. For students who do not have work study, there is the option of volunteering for 2 hours a week.

The America Reads/America Counts program is an important program because it allows Duke students to get to know Durham, while providing Durham students the chance to learn and grow, and perhaps one day attend a university like Duke. Similar to the America Reads/America Counts opportunity is ProjectCHILD. ProjectCHILD, as it is often called, is targeted towards incoming freshman. Participants are assigned to work in Durham schools and community centers, tutoring one child per volunteer hour, and typically working with the same student(s) week after week to monitor progress.

Although there are many great things to be said for helping children in the community, Marcus Switzer, class of 2009, urges people to have the right attitude. As a tutoring tip, he offers, "it's easy to think of it as you doing the kids a favor and get wrapped up in thinking of it as

"People have such a misconception of Durham...we're so isolated that we don't even realize what Durham has to offer."

Corner

By Aisha Turner

Getting Involved in the Durham Community

Community Service Center:

Phone Number: 919-684-4377

Located on East Campus
Behind Wilson dormitory

Contact: Pat Nobles
pnobles@duke.edu

charity. It's better to just focus on helping the kids learn."

Switzer has an excellent point: volunteering should not be thought of as a chore, but as an opportunity to make a difference. As much as I would like to encourage Duke students to get involved off campus, volunteering should not be used to build one's ego or thought of as one more thing to slap onto one's resume.

More popular than ProjectCHILD is another volunteer program than begins freshman year: ProjectBUILD. ProjectBUILD is a week long pre-orientation program that takes place right before school starts in August. Participants are put into groups, or "crews," and perform several hours of service a day, visiting numerous places in Durham.

Switzer, who also participated in ProjectBUILD his freshman year and then returned this year as a crew leader, praised ProjectBUILD's roots in the community. "It's nice to go places that you normally wouldn't think twice about," he said. Service sites include TROSA, retirement homes, homeless shelters, and overlooked stores around town. Because none of the ProjectBUILD service is done on campus students get the opportunity to explore and help their new home of Durham.

There are also more creative ways to get involved. The Durham Schools of the Arts brings people together over a love of art. Members of the community are brought together to

promote artistic expression.

Babylonia Aviaz, class of 2009 and a candidate for Community Service Quad Representative, found out about

this program through a friend who works at the Nasher Museum of Art. She is one of only two students that participate as a docent.

"I think that art needs to be promoted to the Duke community.

People have such a misconception of Durham. It's more cultured than most would imagine. We're so isolated that we don't even realize what Durham has to offer," she said. One of the biggest documentary film festivals in the world, Full Frame Documentary, is held in the Carolina Theater and most students have probably never heard of it.

Aviaz questions whether more promotion for off campus opportunities could help the poor relationship between Duke and Durham. She said, "It's

possible but everybody's probably going to be too bloody busy going to a Deke party."



Students volunteer at SEEDS, a local community gardening center.

Ultimately it is up to every student to decide whether get involved in Durham. Duke is very much a bubble, and it can be easy to get comfortable with simply complaining about what's wrong with the community than doing anything to improve upon it. Change cannot come about as the result of only one person; it is our responsibility as a collective human and student body to "be the change we wish to see in the community."

A Challenge:



The class of 1970 was Duke's third group of racially desegregated undergraduates. They entered in the fall of 1966

with 20 black students, 5 of them women, and by the end of the first year there were 10, with gender split down the middle. Dr. Brenda Armstrong was one of women who decided to stick it out. The students faced what was then known as a Southern gentleman's college, and Dr. Armstrong remembers the students being "extraordinarily socially isolated". Despite the "pockets of moderate and liberal students," the students dealt with unabashed racism, from the community at large.

Because of these pressures, the students formed a special bond. The Afro-American Society was founded because there was nothing "even remotely inclusive" for the fledgling black community. The students attended athletic and social activities together, and supported each other on both a personal and cultural level.

The height of the Society's activities was Black Culture Week in February, when the Black students took over the radio and cafeteria and featured artistic performances and political speakers. According to Dr. Armstrong, the goal of the week was to "reinfuse ourselves with our own culture."

Beyond the social and personal support the Society provided, it was politically active as well. Members took part in the Silent Vigil in April of 1968, which made demands for Civil Rights and on behalf of Duke's non-academic staff. Students of all colors and creeds had been touched by the death of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., bringing truly diverse group to the cause. Dr. Armstrong said it was the first time the Black students saw firm evidence that their classmates were "decent and would support" them.

Support was a little harder to come by for other issues, however. Prior to this display in 1967, students had fought a lonely battle for university organizations to stop hosting events at the segregated Hope Valley Country Club. After a study-in, the university acquiesced. However, other demands were still unmet. Dr. Armstrong explained that the students realized that

Blazing the Black Trail at Duke

By Samantha Griffin

the administration was aware of a key factor: "Students are transient." The students needed urgency in order to improve their quality of life. The black community needed faculty, administrative support, financial aid, and acknowledgement of contributions made by people of color.

In October of 1968, they stopped talking and decided that urgency meant action. Months of planning culminated in the Allen Building takeover, two days after that year's Black Culture Week. The students occupied the building for less than 24 hours and left peacefully, despite police violence on the crowd of mostly white students gathered outside.

This incident, however brief, is the most memorable protest in Duke's history. And, because it put the administration on alert, it may have been the most effective. Dr. Armstrong traces most of the initiatives with regard to black students such as the African and African-American Studies Department the President's Council on Black Affairs and the Reginaldo Howard Scholarship program, back to the the Takeover. Whether direct or indirect, these programs were made possible because the administration took the black student body seri-

ously.

The actions of the students also began a real discourse on diversity. This is what Dr. Armstrong feels is the missing link in today's undergraduate experience. The events of the late 1960s "gave Duke back its soul," and brought to light issues that need to be dealt with. In Dr. Armstrong's view, "The fact that we haven't resolved them is why 'Lacrosse' happened." Her advice to undergraduates is to find ways to re-open the discourse. She acknowledges that it is partly an issue of admissions and faculty recruitment, since multiple perspectives must be present to effectively discuss an issue with multiple views. However, Dr. Armstrong challenges the undergraduates to demand accountability about the new members of our community. "The most vibrant part of the University is its undergraduates. You need a critical mass of difference" in order to keep that vibrancy thriving. Using the graduate community as an example, Dr. Armstrong points out that in a truly diverse community, no one dominates, and hard questions are dealt with constantly, realistically and honestly. She dares us to found such a community as undergraduates.



MAXIMIZE
YOUR
EXPERIENCE:

Ways to make the most of your four years at Duke

By Nastassja Marshall

It's sometimes easy to forget the wealth of resources that we as Duke students have at our fingertips. Or perhaps we get too busy with our exams, papers and assignments to remember to take a step back and explore options that could enhance our Duke experience. The Office of Students Affairs website is a great place to start if you are interested in maximizing your overall Duke experience.

Have you ever thought about starting a Duke Conversation? The Duke Conversations program provides undergraduate students with an opportunity to invite an individual that they find interesting or inspiring to have an intimate conversation over a meal or in a small-group setting. Duke University will pay for the individual's travel and lodging expenses as long as the individual does not request an honorarium.

What if you're interested in leadership but lack experience? The Office of Student Affairs provides workshops, retreats and online resources which can help you get the training you need to be a campus leader. Are you interested in doing research? You can apply for fellowships, grants and scholarships through Duke which will get you the funding you need to further pursue your interests.

The Career Center is also another resource which is often underused by students. Career counselors are available to help you improve your résumé and to help you practice for interviews. Are you interested in giving back to the Duke community? The Community Service Center is an organization that is committed to getting Duke students involved with the Durham community and will be happy to assist you with your own ideas and plans.

Although it will be gratifying to look back on our Duke career and see our high GPA's and the many honors and awards that we have accumulated while here, wouldn't it also be nice to be able to look back and see that we gave back to the Duke and Durham community?

Homecoming Events

Friday, September 29, 2006

12:00 PM to 10:00 PM
Registration – Bryan Center

1:15 PM to 2:15 PM
Campus Culture Panel and Discussion

8:00 PM to 11:00 PM
NPHC Step Show – Page Auditorium

11:00 PM to 3:00 AM
Step Show After Party

Saturday, September 30, 2006

12:00 PM
Homecoming Football Game vs. Virginia – Wallace Wade Football Stadium

3:30 PM to 7:00 PM
BSA Homecoming BBQ – Main Quad

7:30 PM to 9:30 PM
DUBAC 20th Anniversary Celebration – Von Canon Room, Bryan Center

9:30 PM to 1:00 AM
President's Homecoming Dance – Wilson Recreation Center

Sunday, October 1, 2006

12:00 PM to 2:00 PM
DUBAC Brunch Conversation with Undergraduates:
"Life at Duke and Beyond" – Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture

Spotlight On...

A product of the BSA Public
Affairs Committee

Kelly Akhiemokhali



At Duke: junior, English Major

Hometown: Houston, Texas

Favorite High School Teacher:
My geography teacher Mr.
Brockington because he opened
my eyes to a lot of human rights
issues.

Biggest Accomplishment:
Learning to be comfortable
with myself.

Favorite Superhero: Storm from
X-Men...she was crunk and
could change the weather!

Favorite Thing About Duke: The
opportunities here are endless.

Charisma Nelson



At Duke: sophomore, Interna-
tional Comparative Studies
Major

Hometown: Portland, Oregon/
Charlotte, North Carolina

Favorite Childhood Memories:
Family Reunions

Biggest Accomplishment: Mak-
ing it through freshman year
and getting on the Dean's List.

Person Most Want to Meet:
Jesus Christ...and Oprah.

Biggest Obstacle to Overcome:
Finding myself as an individual

Favorite 90's TV Show: A Differ-
ent World

Favorite Thing About Duke: I
love the Class of 2009. Your col-
lege experience is made or bro-
ken by the people you surround
yourself with.

Daniel Vincent



At Duke: junior, Public Policy Major

Hometown: Winter Springs, Florida

Looking Forward to in the Future: Getting paid

Favorite Childhood Memory: Going to Disney World

Biggest Inspiration: My mom, because she's sacrificed so much of herself and she's the reason I'm here.

Biggest Accomplishment: Being a published author, I wrote a chapter in a book entitled "Work Smart, Play Hard."

Favorite Legal Addiction: The Simpsons. I've seen every episode, I can quote all of the lines too.

Favorite Thing About Duke: The people

Kamaria Campbell



At Duke: junior, Computer Science Major

Hometown: Tampa, Florida

Favorite Food: Mad Hatters

Childhood Role Model: My older sister, not necessarily as a role model, but because she's my big sister.

Favorite Legal Addiction: carrying my laptop with her everywhere I goes

Favorite Superhero: Batman, because he has all the gadgets

Free Time: Planning, making lists, organizing, eliminating clutter, strategizing, problem solving

Favorite Thing About Duke: All of the resources available

Faculty Profile:

Professor Karla FC Holloway

By Kimberly Hubbard

In a rush before her law class, I had the pleasure of talking to Professor Karla FC Holloway. Her caring and warmhearted manner does not seem to mesh with a woman who has accomplished so much. She is the William R. Kenan Professor of English and African and African American studies, Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, has an appointment in the Law school, and an appointment in the Women Studies department. All of those are merely the positions she holds at Duke, not to mention all of her books, publications, and awards.

This semester she is co-teaching a class entitled "The Language of Constitutional Law" with H. Jefferson Powell. She said she enjoys it because she can ask the students why they think that certain phrases were chosen and engage them as to who "all" was referring to when the Constitution was written. She is also teaching a Graduate Women Studies class entitled "Interdisciplinary Debates" that deals with current debates in feminist studies. Even with all of her positions at Duke, I feel like she is still a hidden treasure to most of the undergraduate students.

No matter how many commitments she has, she still finds time to engage with her students on levels that most professors cannot even fathom. She has been known to invite her students over for brunch at the end of a semester (which is fabulous) and give graduating seniors the gift of poetry and guidance. Her advice for future scholars: "read widely, deeply, thoroughly and without restraint." I have never met or heard about a student who has met Professor Holloway and does not appreciate her and her influence on his or her life.

In our conversation, we discussed why she is a scholar and continues to be one. She said that grappling new ideas and working them out constantly amazes her. She stated that, "it's seductive" to have a career that allows you to think, analyze, and dissect.

When asked what she wants her legacy to be, she simply stated: "that she was mindful." It was such a loaded statement that I had to ask her specific meaning. She said she wants people to remember that she "took the time to consider the complex space of people, issues, and ideas."

Professor Holloway is the author of six books, including:

Passed On: African-American Mourning Stories

Codes of Conduct: Race, Ethics and the Color of Our Character

Moorings and Metaphors: Figures of Culture and Gender in Black Women's Literature

Bookmarks: Reacing in Black And White, a Memoir

New Dimensions of Spirituality: A Bi-Racial and Bi-Cultural Reading of the Novels of Toni Morrison

The Character of the Word: The Texts of Zora Neale Hurston





What's BSA doing this semester?

September

- 8 Student Activities Fair (BC Plaza 4p-6p)
- 9 Team Mary Lou Mixer (GA Down Under, 2p-3p)
- 13 First General Body Meeting (White Lecture Hall, 7:30p-8:30p)
- 25-27 Duke Voter Registration Drive (BC Plaza 1-4p, Marketplace 5:30-7:30p)
- 30 Talking Drum Released
- 30 Homecoming Barbeque (Main West CI Quad 3:30p-6:30p)

October

- 1 DUBAC Luncheon (Mary Lou Williams Center, 12p-2p)
- 14 Adopt-a-Park Clean Up (Crest St. Park, 2p-5p)
- 21 Apopt-a-Park Celebration (Crest St. Park, 2p-5p)
- 23 This Is Not the Aftermath: Lacrosse Dialogue (Mary Lou Williams Center, 6:30p-8:30p)
- 27 Halloween Fest
- 28 Heritage and Hope Dinner (Von Canon, 7p)
- 30-Nov 3 Sudan Relief T-shirt Sale

November

- 5 GPA and Race in the 21st Century (Richard White Lecture Hall, 7p-8:30p)
- 7-17 Thanksgiving Basket Drive (12-4pm BC Plaza)
- 12 Thanksgiving Dinner (Mary Lou Williams Center, 7p)
- 15 BSA/Native American Students Association "Edge of America" Movie and Discussion (Visit our website for further info)

December

- 1-8 Santa into the City Toys Donations Drive
- 3 BSA Study Break (Bryan Center Meeting Room A, 3-6p)
- 10 The Audacity of Hope Book Club Kick-off

For more information, please visit our website at www.duke.edu/web/bsa or email us at contactbsa@duke.edu.

What Do You Want Your Duke to Be?

On April 25, Robert Thompson, Dean of Trinity College, launched the work of the Campus Culture Initiative. The steering committee meeting that day centered on the events of last March, but the small group began a process to answer, as DSG President Elliott Wolf recently put it, "So, what do you want Duke to be?"

On April 20, the President's Council on Black Affairs was briefed on "The Campus Life and Learning Project: A Report on the First Two College Years." Begun years before President Brodhead and Dean Thompson crafted the Campus Culture Initiative, the Campus Life and Learning Project (CLL) "aim[ed] to investigate the quality of educational experiences for students from different racial and ethnic groups from Duke University." The report studied the first two years at Duke for members of the graduating classes of 2005 and 2006.

"The academic performance differences are to the advantage of Asian students, and to the disadvantage of Latino and Black students, with White and Bi-Multiracial students intermediate to these groups."

Here is the breakdown of fourth semester GPAs, by racial ethnic group:

Asian: 3.39
White: 3.30
BI-Multiracial: 3.24
Latino: 3.14
Black: 2.97

Here are the same fourth semester GPAs, when adjustments are made for pre-college differences and test scores:

Asian: 3.28
White: 3.26
BI-Multiracial: 3.24
Latino: 3.19
Black: 3.12

Of course, GPAs don't tell the whole story.

In the first year, here are the approximate numbers for students who reported that Duke instructors "treated them badly because of their race/ethnicity":

Black: One in Seven
Asian: One in Ten
BI-Multiracial: One in Twelve
(Other groups were less)

Here are the percentages of students who reported discrimination during their second year (first year not available), whether in the classroom, in the residence hall, or at another on-campus location:

An Open Letter by Samson Mesele



"If we use a simple 'snapshot' metric of grading the university, with 90-100 equaling an A, then the university context for discrimination for Asian, Latinos and Whites would receive a solid B+. For Black students, the university receives a poor if not failing grade."

Black: 44%
BI-Multiracial: 28%
Asian and Latino: 19%
White: 11%

The creators of the report studied trends of racial discrimination in the classroom: "If we use a simple 'snapshot' metric of grading the university, with 90-100 equaling an A, then the university context for discrimination for Asians, Latinos and Whites would receive a solid B+. For Black students, the university receives a poor if not failing grade."

On entering Duke, I never would have guessed the last statistic, and considering that Black Enterprise ranked Duke the number ten school for African Americans last year, and the number 14 school this year, I suppose I am receiving mixed signals.

This Monday, I had lunch with Provost Peter Lange to look for some answers. He echoed university administrators across the country in saying that lower black GPAs, across the board, are in fact a national phenomenon. He added that a study was being conducted at Duke to combat the problem of consistent group underperformance. One potential remedy he suggested was group study. I don't disagree. The Academic Affairs committee of the Black Student Alliance is teaming up with the Africana Mentoring Program to provide more opportunities for group study, put an e-print station in the Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture, and pair up each black freshman with a black mentor among the upperclassmen - these among a set of other strategies to be implemented this year.

Somebody, please point me out if I ever pivot toward a national trend to justify a problem that can be addressed locally. Though we are called "minority" students across the country, we will not accept taking a minority role on this campus. We are charged, as President Brodhead loves to say, to make this our Duke. This Duke-the one described in this report-will not be the one I leave. It is not my Duke.

This letter was originally published in the Robertson Scholars Weekly Newsletter. Samson Mesele is a Duke sophomore and chairperson of the Black Student Alliance Academic Committee.

Poetry Café



By Nastassja Marshall

Sometimes Dreams are Truer than Waking

Last night I dreamt of being in his kitchen:
Chatting in Spanglish with his mom, learning how to
make pico de gallo.

She was like my mother, a rubber band around her wrist,
safety pin on her apron and soft around her middle.
She called me "pumpkin" and I belonged.

He came out of the living room to see how I was doing.
Wiggled his finger in the sauce and proclaimed it just
right.

We headed up to the roof.
It was almost time.

Soon the moon disappeared and the sky was ebony
blue.
He lit a cigarette and I watched the tip sizzle.

In the darkness I felt so sure;
There was nothing else but this.

Sunday Mornings

One day out of every week,
I am unattached.
Nothing to be done, no one to be seen.

I spend these mornings alone,
Cuddled by velvety cotton.
Revisiting the womb.

There are no intruding dreams.
My mind is boarded up and nailed
shut.

The house murmurs;
Even it reveres these mornings.
Minutes slither down the window
panes. Hours tiptoe past my door.

A clamor from beyond pierces
Into my sanctuary.
I go in search of the culprit:
Find evening sitting on my doorstep.



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