

Spring 1991

Focus on Student Affairs- Spring 1991

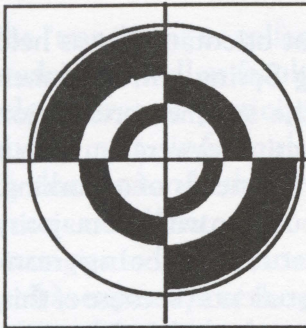
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FOCUS

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Advising Campus Activities Board

by Anton Courier, Program Associate

Historically colleges and universities have been a training ground for student leadership through out-of-classroom learning student involvement in student organizations. A commitment to provide this learning opportunity gives the university an obligation to provide the training programs, role models, and mentors to allow the students to maximize the learning. This is even more important at a university like Northeastern which is non-residential and has an extremely high percentage of students who also work to support their education.

On most campuses a programming or activities board composed of students, faculty and staff is responsible for providing campus-wide programming. Programming organizations require greater assistance and training than special interest clubs for a number of reasons. Among these reasons are the details and planning required to insure that a program is successfully selected and presented. More importantly, the negotiation of contracts is often an arduous and time-consuming process, frustrating students who may lack sufficient skills in business management.

As is the case with most universities, one student organization is responsible for campuswide programming. The Commuter Center Activities Board (CCAB) is Northeastern's version of a program board providing social, cultural, educational, and recreational programs.

The Student Activities Office recognizing the problems of student involvement and expertise has hired a part-time Program Associate, funded from Student Fees, to provide programming advice, training and consultation. The Program Associate serves as a general resource on programming as well as provides specific assistance in development of materials to be used in program planning and implementation.

A series of programming workshops have been developed. They will be offered again during the upcoming academic year. Topics include: Planning and Implementing Programs, Advertising and Promotion of Programs, Membership Recruitment and Retention, and Negotiating Contracts with Artists.

In the Fall of 1989, CCAB made a goal to re-evaluate its overall programming efforts to insure that it was meeting its chartered purpose and that the programs developed reflected the diverse population of the campus. The results of this year-long effort included:

1. Establishment of a Research and Development Committee. This committee has developed a major survey which assesses programming desires of Northeastern students. The survey will be conducted during Fall Term 1990.

See Advising, Page 3

Racism: Undermining Higher Education

by Melvin C. Terrell, Ph.D.

Within the last two years there has been a resurgence of overt and covert racially motivated acts against blacks and other minorities at the nation's colleges and universities. The problem appears to be peculiar to predominantly white institutions, since there have been no such incidents reported at black universities. The National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence, based in Baltimore, has reported racial incidents at more than 40 campuses in the past few years alone, ranging from painting racial slurs on buildings to cross burning and outright violence.

At Aurora University, for example, the letters KKK and other racist statements were written on the walls of the gymnasium and other buildings. In an incident at the University of Massachusetts two years ago, white students attacked a group of blacks celebrating the New York Mets' World Series victory over the Boston Red Sox. School officials reported one of the black students seriously injured. Just recently, at the same university, about six whites attacked and beat up two black students who had left a party with a white female. At Columbia University in New York, one night last March groups of black and white students clashed on campus; each accused the other of initiating the attack.

See Racism, Page 4

Orientation Programs Enhance Campus Life

Freshman Orientation

by Barbara Bales, Assistant Professor

In 1988 a group of faculty, administrators and students convened as a committee to redesign the Orientation program for entering freshmen. The following were major goals, cited by the Committee for an orientation program that would assist and prepare students for campus life at Northeastern:

1. to develop a sense of belonging
2. to assist in meeting other new students
3. to provide an understanding of services to assist students
4. to develop an awareness of "differences" between high school and college from a developmental as well as academic perspective
5. to assist in learning campus locations
6. to develop an awareness, understanding and respect for the cultural diversity of the campus

The committee also suggested that orientation should be utilized to develop skills, i.e. assertiveness, problem-solving, listening, and that activities during orientation should emphasize a number of these skills.

During the summer of 1989, the full day orientation recommended by the committee was piloted. The program excluded the advisement and registration components of previous years and included 2 1/2 hours of small group experiential learning activities led by trained student orientation leaders, a cross cultural awareness presentation, a faculty/student panel, a student

acted/produced video about advisement, and a "scavenger" hunt to learn about campus locations. In addition, luncheon presentations were given by faculty and administrators explaining programs and services. 286 students, out of a possible 582 students, attended with 89.5% indicating the day was worth attending (Compared to the previous year when advisement and registration was a major component and 323 students out of a possible 536 students attended and only 78.6% indicating the day worth attending).

After pilot testing, the program was evaluated and based on all participant input (students, orientation leaders, presenters, etc.) changes were made. These included some different activities, increased student participation during the cultural awareness presentation, deletion of the panel and video, and the addition of topical concurrent workshops that students (based on their own needs) self selected to attend. One major change however, was based on economic need and that was the inclusion of a \$10.00 fee with waivers for financial need.

In 1990, 315 students signed up to attend and 83% of this number attended. An additional 45 students admitted after the last scheduled orientation attended a first time offering of a modified half-day no-fee program. Satisfaction level remained the same as the previous year for the full day participants and the half day program was also successful. With minor modifications the half day program will be offered again this year.

Additionally, during December of

1989, a pilot orientation was held for entering Spring term freshmen based on the summer orientation program. Activities were similar but focused on the needs of a working, over-25 population with the majority of these students being non-traditional students (because of this, Women's Services and the Returning Adult Program played a significant role). An advisement workshop was also included since advisement is not available for these students in the same manner as it is for fall freshmen. This orientation was repeated during December 1990 and will continue to be offered at the end of the Fall semester.

Although the committee that redesigned the Orientation program did not specifically cite retention as a major goal, it is interesting to note that national research indicates participation in Orientation programming helps to increase retention rates. At Northeastern, our own research supports this: of the 1989 Orientation participants, 63.4% were still enrolled one year later compared to an enrollment of 51% on non participants.

Parents Orientation

Over the past several years, a program has been offered to parents, guardians and other adult family members of entering fall freshmen. Evening programs during the late summer/early fall have provided information and dialogue concerning expectations and changes that effect students, parents, and families during

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Michael Wilson, Editor

the "transition" to college. Current students as well as faculty, staff and administrators participate in this lively yet informal program. Evaluations and other feedback has been excellent. At this time strategies to attract more parents as well as expansion of the program are being discussed along with the planning of this summer's programs.

New Student Week

One of the expressed concerns of the 1988 Orientation Committee and others involved with Orientation is that orientation should be a process rather than a one day event. New Student Week, although not the "solution", is a start in this direction by offering a series of informational events for new students.

The pilot 1989 week consisted of a reception, several workshops and the Student Organization Fair. After evaluating the week's programs, the 1990 week was planned with more student involvement, added an Information Day focusing on services for students, a "Late-Nighter" recreation program that included a barbecue, and more topical workshops. Attendance and participation was greater and response from students very positive.

Plans are under way for the 1991 week with the inclusion of a dance and a Welcome to Campus for all students - new and returning.

Transfer Student Orientation Program

by Santos Rivera, Assistant Dean of Students

The orientation for transfer students helps structure programs that will provide the adjustment to, and encourages participation in university life.

The program includes:

(a) focusing on available services that will respond to "what students need to know;"

(b) providing detailed information that will allow transfers to make a smooth transition to our university;

(c) connecting academic concerns and vocational implications through relevant information sessions co-sponsored by both the student's academic major and the Career Placement Office;

(d) acclimating transfers to the campus and fostering a feeling of belonging to a learning community;

(e) providing the opportunity to resolve financial aid difficulties as early as possible;

(f) emphasizing continuing availability of assistance throughout a student's academic career;

(g) providing transfers the opportunity to maximize their interaction with the university community by establishing a strong university-wide commitment, support, and participation;

(h) addressing the developmental needs and issues of this heterogeneous transfer group by reinforcing and promoting the ongoing orientation opportunities such as workshops, seminars, and courses that are provided by the New Directions Program, Academic Advisement, BGU, Counseling Center, Office of the Dean of Students, Placement Office, and the three undergraduate colleges.

Advising cont'd

2. Establishment of two new programming committees to broaden the types of programs offered. The Coffeehouse Committee has been charged with the development and presentation of smaller, more intimate programs that will generally be presented in the Unicorn. Among the programs planned for the 1990-91 academic year are folk singers, comedians, a television game show, and a talent show. The Reality 101/Lectures Committee was established to provide a series of "educational" programs. Among the topics that will be covered during the coming year are Date Rape, Domestic Violence, Gay and Lesbian Issues, and a number of other issues that may be either campus interest or problems facing society in general.

3. Development of an annual budget for the 1990-91 academic year with all committees contributing specific program plans for review by the entire Board. This permitted a much broader review of the overall programming efforts of the organization to insure a balance in the diversity of programs.

As a commuter institution in a major urban market, Northeastern's student-run programming board can provide the kinds of campus programming that would appeal to the greater metropolitan community. The Spike Lee and Jean-Michel Cousteau lectures are two important examples of programs which not only enhance diversity of campus life but also serve to promote the university within the larger community.

Assisting the students in recognizing and realizing the opportunities which exist in programming at Northeastern is the primary goal of the Student Activities Office.

Identifying students who have the vision and industry to work within established guidelines on behalf of the community is the critical challenge facing CCAB and the university.

Racism cont'd

It is imperative that the higher education community address the problem of racism at colleges and universities immediately. As the pool of traditional students decreases, institutions of higher learning must focus on the needs of Afro-Americans, Hispanics, and American Indians. Some studies project a tremendous increase in college age minorities by the year 2000. It is vital to the nation at large, and the higher education community in particular, that minority students find America's campuses conducive to learning and good fellowship rather than hostile, racist environments.

Student affairs professionals can take the lead in promoting racial harmony on campuses by encouraging their institutions to make a firm commitment to cultural diversity. Colleges and universities need to promote recognition, understanding, and appreciation of other cultures through student, faculty, and staff programs that highlight cultural diversity issues. Traditional human relations programs should also take on a broader focus. Citizenship, ethics, and morals should be emphasized when developing programs designed to assist individuals and groups in the university community to work effectively in multicultural, pluralistic environments.

Instead of a defensive posture toward racial problems, colleges and universities need to go on the offensive by incorporating race relations as a major concern into all future planning efforts. A *proactive*, rather than reactive, stance would do much to alleviate the negative impact of racism, which can devastate the hopes, dreams and lives of many minority students. In terms of wasted national resources, the cost of this devastation is incalculable and cannot be afforded. Student affairs professionals can move to the forefront in the war against racism by helping to build the bridges needed to reinforce the overall mission of postsecondary education. They can do this by encouraging student groups to collaborate in planning cross-cultural activities.

Of course, a great deal of creativity and hard work will be needed to formulate and implement strategies to increase cognitive and affective sensitivity to similarities and differences among groups of people. Any effective strategy must include: (a) recognition by higher education administrators that racism exists on campus; (b) adoption by administrators of clear policy statements ensuring a broad cross-section of racial and ethnic diversity on campus; (c) hiring of more blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians for mainstream faculty and staff positions; and (d) encouragement of minority

students in leadership roles on campus.

In order to change the values and attitudes that perpetuate racism, problems such as personal prejudice, misinformation, institutional racism, and other forms of systematic oppression must be identified. For instance, former Kentucky governor A.B. Chandler, a member of the University of Kentucky's Board of Trustees was reported to have said, "You know Zimbabwe is all nigger now. There aren't any whites." About 40 students marched the next day, demanding Chandler's apology or resignation from the Board. This incident is just one of many reflecting the archaic attitudes of some people in key positions who promote racism intentionally or unintentionally.

Techniques to combat any problem must necessarily be tailored to the individual problem. Among the techniques that might be used to fight racism are didactic information, problem-solving, role play exercises, communication skills training, assertiveness training, and trust-building. Institutions of higher learning committed to increasing recruitment and retention of minorities must challenge themselves to use methods appropriate to their campuses to develop new options for solving old, yet ongoing, race-related problems.

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