

# Higher Ground

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diversity center newsletter



## *at the center*

with **Virgil Jones**

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### **Diversity Center**

C. Charles Jackson  
Campus Center  
Phone: 507-933-7449  
[gustavus.edu/diversity](http://gustavus.edu/diversity)

### **Virgil Jones**

Director  
[vjones@gustavus.edu](mailto:vjones@gustavus.edu)

### **Cheryl Hastings**

Administrative Assistant  
[chasting@gustavus.edu](mailto:chasting@gustavus.edu)

**GUSTAVUS**   
GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS COLLEGE

Extraordinary People. Extraordinary Place.

**I can point** to more and more diversity success at Gustavus and this month I would like to highlight the work of the Admission Office. Admission has retooled its staff and effectively executed its plan to recruit a more culturally and intellectually diverse student body. While staffing in the Admission Office is close to mirroring the state demographic picture, we can all agree that the incoming students should also be similarly representative. The task of recruiting a group of ambitious prospective first-year students is a collective responsibility.

Since last January, Eric Coleman, Lindsey Weis, and True Xiong have joined the Admission team. Along with veteran members of Admission, they are actively recruiting in a wide range of places to discover the best and brightest high school seniors.

It is not hard to see that as the Admission staff has become more diverse, the college's student body has grown more diverse as well. Students, staff, and faculty have been consistently commenting on the depth of conversations that are taking place in our community due to the increase of new people who are challenging, changing, and expanding the scope of the conversations happening inside and outside the classroom. It is the pursuit of experiential knowledge, partnered with research, that creates true academic understanding.

With greater diversity, we can tie the bond of the common experiences between members of the greater Gustavus community. Our willingness to share those experiences contributes to a welcoming and familiar campus climate for all our students. Climate also has a direct impact on prospective students who are intrigued by the different perspectives that are represented here.

In my eyes, our Admissions success is being molded, shaped and adapted in other departments around campus. The beauty of it is that it is finally happening. It all stems from the acknowledgement that we need to recruit students who can be empowered to change the world. We needed to re-evaluate the concept of what is a "Gustie." Is it defined only by race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation, or one's gender? If we find this to be true, does it have to be that way? Excellence seems to be the thing that we can all support. We need to engage students who believe they can change their own individual lives . . . and, eventually, these students will believe they can change the world.

Although some of my perspective originates from my time spent in Admission prior to working in the Diversity Center, most of it comes from exemplary proof: a group of people were able to achieve success regardless of race, age, ethnicity, politics, relationships, religion, class, or gender. We wanted to make a difference in the lives of those who chose to venture out and experience opportunities that await them here on the hill. It's just that simple. ■

*“Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.”*

– Mahatma Gandhi

## GLBT Rights/Movement

### National Coming Out Week *coming events*

**The GLBT** National Coming Out Week is October 5–12. It is commonly understood to be a week in which gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual people celebrate the richness of their culture. It is a time when they let others know it is okay to be gay. Coming Out Week is a week devoted to understanding, acceptance, support, and visibility. Clothes belong in the closet, not people. Therefore, it is a time when the GLBT community reaches out to people who have not come out of the closet, to gain the courage to do so. Coming out takes courage and this week is meant to inspire.

Coming Out Week is also a time for allies to support the GLBT community. Allies of the GLBT

community have an instrumental role in the push for equal rights. Therefore, the GLBT community and its allies use this week as a time to make an extra push for equality concerning controversial rights that members of the GLBT community do not now receive, such as marriage and parenting and partner benefits.

Coming Out Week has grown significantly from 1987 to now and has received a great amount of support from many colleges. Although homophobia still exists, GLBT communities have received an increasing amount of support nationally.

It's about acceptance. It's about understanding. It's about love. ■

## Lillie Hollingsworth *student profile*

**My name** is Lillie Hollingsworth. I am a history major with minors in theatre and peace studies. I came to Gustavus not knowing what to expect: I had never seen snow, eaten lutefisk, or been to a hockey game. I was a Texan thrown into a Scandinavian-Lutheran world. This world has now embraced me, it is my home.

As a senior at Jersey Village High School in Houston, Texas, I knew that college was going to be a great learning experience. I would have never imagined the ways in which Gustavus has shaped me to be the person I am today. The past three and a half years at Gustavus have truly been filled with extraordinary experiences.

I have been involved in many different organizations throughout my time here, including College Democrats, Chi Kappa Chi sorority, Crossroads, Summer Servant Leadership Program, various Gustavus theatre productions, and “I Am...We Are.” My involvement with “I Am...We Are” has been the most fulfilling journey I have had at Gustavus. “I Am...We Are”

has given me the opportunity to use my passions for theatre and social justice and apply them to one medium.

It was due to some of the previous members of “I Am...We Are” that last fall I chose to study abroad on the *Social Justice, Peace and Development: A Semester in India* program. My semester abroad has a daily impact life at Gustavus. My experience enabled me to become an action-oriented global citizen. I expected to come back defeated and confused about my place in the world, but I came back with the awareness that could use my skills to leave the world a little better than it was when I came into it. Although I feel I am ready to step off of the hill and do great things, I will miss Gustavus immensely. This journey has taught me the importance of being a person with integrity in and out of the classroom. I truly could not have asked for a better college experience. ■



*“This journey has taught me the importance of being a person with integrity in and out of the classroom.”*

– Lillie Hollingsworth

## The Writing Center and You

Maybe you haven't stopped by the Writing Center lately. It's tucked away over in Confer 232, hiding just around the corner to your right when you come in the main doors. But if you're a science writer, or a music writer, or an economics/history/political science writer, you may have forgotten that it's even there, hiding, waiting to be discovered by writers across the campus who want to know what their professors are looking for based on the writing prompts, or who are trying to come up with just the right topic, or who are trying to get that first draft down, or who are revising their paper and want some feedback, or who can't decipher their professor's handwriting, or writers who just generally want to make themselves better writers.

Those are all good reasons to visit the Writing Center! If you don't often make it over to Confer-Vickner, there are also Writing Center

tutors available in the Diversity Center on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings. Don't feel like you have to wait until your paper is finished, either! In fact, if you bring in the prompt, you can come before you've written anything, just to do some topic brainstorming.

One of the latest things the Writing Center has added to help you improve your writing skills is a graduate assistant who is finishing a master's degree in teaching English as a second language. Laura Stelter is a Gustavus graduate who has returned to work primarily with students for whom English is a second language—though she is happy and willing to work with anyone! Her schedule can be found online at <http://www.rich17.com/gustavus>, which is the Writing Center website (you will need to register to view it). Stop by and visit! ■

## "I Am...We Are" *organization focus*

The lights go out. Suddenly you are surrounded by voices, hoarsely whispering racial epithets, derogatory slang, hate speech of every kind: all the anger-laden, hurtful words we use in our lives and never think about. These, your own words, are unexpectedly slung back at you from the faceless, screaming people in the dark.

While it is possible you've just died, the more likely (and hopeful) explanation of your current situation is this: you are experiencing the powerful ending of one of "I Am...We Are's" performances intended to make you think about the way your life affects others.

"I Am...We Are," a student group presenting issues of social justice through theatre, has been performing shows and holding workshops on campus for more than a decade. The company was formed in 1995 by professor-in-residence Vanita Vactor to address issues of racial inequality and stereotypes. Through the years, "I Am...We Are" has taken on a greater range of issues, including gender issues, assault/abuse, sexuality, depression, and hate speech among many others.

"I Am...We Are's" performances are created from the personal experiences and shared stories of the group's members. Each performance is a unique, student-written exploration. The group is co-sponsored by the Department of Theatre

and Dance and the Diversity Center. As such, it is concerned with questioning the problems that affect our community and posing those issues to the campus without providing specific, one-sided solutions. Each year, the group performs a number of times. The most frequent shows include "E Pluribus Gustavus," "E Pluribus 2.0" (Nov. 17), and "Building Bridges" (Spring 2008), as well as other workshops and small performances throughout the year.

The Thambo Project, a student-founded, non-profit organization, works in conjunction with "I Am...We Are" to bring the power of social justice theater and workshops to schools and colleges outside Gustavus. For further information on Thambo, "I Am...We Are" encourages you to visit the website at [www.thambo.org](http://www.thambo.org).

Building on the effectiveness and power of "I Am...We Are," the Department of Theatre and Dance is launching a new curricular focus in social justice. With new scholarships, courses, and mainstage productions dealing with issues of justice, the department is founding a training ground for artists and activists to train.

Students interested in joining "I Am...We Are" are welcomed and encouraged to do so. New member workshops are held once a semester and will be advertised around campus. ■



**"I Am...We Are"**  
social justice theatre  
troupe

## Diversity Events

October 13  
**Family Weekend Open House**  
in Diversity Center

October 14  
**Family Weekend Dinner**  
(RSVP only)

October 17  
**Ramadan Banquet in Three**  
**Crowns Banquet Room**

## College Calendar

October 12  
**Homecoming Coronation**

October 12  
**Fall Festival Scarecrow Judging**

October 13  
**Homecoming**

October 16  
**Lolita's Mug**

October 16  
**INROADS Presentation**

October 16  
**Meditation**

October 16  
**Proclaim**

October 23  
**Meditation**

October 25  
**Opening of *columbinus***

October 29  
**BP/LP Halloween Party**

October 30  
**Meditation**

October 30  
**Proclaim**

## Student Organization Meeting Schedules

**Diversity Leadership Council**  
WEDNESDAY : 4:45 p.m. : Leadholm

**Asian Cultures Club**  
WEDNESDAY : 7 p.m. : Walker House

**College Democrats**  
TUESDAY : 8:30 p.m.

**College Republicans**  
2nd & 4th THURSDAYS : 7:30 p.m. :  
Faculty/Staff Lounge

**Crossroads Exec Board**  
e/o SUNDAY : 8:30 p.m. : IC Lounge

**I Am We Are**  
THURSDAY : 10-Midnight : Black Box  
Theatre

**Interfaith Forum**  
e/o THURSDAY : 4:30 p.m. : Old Main 103

**International Cultures Club (ICC)**  
THURSDAY : 6 p.m. : International  
Ed Office

**OLAS**  
TUESDAY : 7:30 p.m. : Gustie Den

**Pan Afrikan Student Organization**  
TUESDAY : 5 p.m. : Board Room

**Peer Assistants**  
SUNDAY : 9 p.m. : PA Office

**Queers & Allies**  
WEDNESDAY : 9:15 p.m. : Faculty/Staff  
Lounge

**SOFA**  
\*TUESDAY : 9 p.m. : Diversity Center

**Womyn's Awareness**  
WEDNESDAY : 8 p.m. : WAC

\*Tentative  
e/o = every other

**World Watch and Cultural Connections** are brought to you by *Crossroads*. The members of *Crossroads* share an interest in world cultures, languages, and contemporary global issues. Through their interest, members work to develop a broader understanding of the world in which they live and contribute to the education of the College community as a whole.

## World Watch

**YANGON, Myanmar (Asia): Crackdown on protests**—Soldiers clubbed and dragged away activists while firing tear gas and warning shots to break up demonstrations Friday before they could grow, and the government cut Internet access, raising fears that a deadly crackdown was set to intensify. Daily protests began last month and had grown into the stiffest challenge to Myanmar's ruling junta in decades. Though Myanmar is rich in natural resources, 90 percent of its 54 million people live on less than \$1 a day.

**Yemen: Female Education**—Education for girls in Yemen is a rising issue; 67 percent of all women are illiterate. The illiteracy is due to the fact that their culture is such that the women are expected to stay at home and do housekeeping. Parents of the children do not want to send their daughters to schools with mixed genders and are struggling to find schools with female teachers. In addition Yemen has one of the largest gender inequalities in education worldwide. Cultural barriers along with economic problems are the main culprits for Yemen's failing system of education.

## Cultural Connections

**October 22—Abu Simbel Festival (Egyptian):** A festival marking the phenomena in which the tomb of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel is illuminated in the innermost rooms by sunlight. This illumination happens twice a year, once in February and once in October, marking respectively Ramesses' rise to the throne and his birthday.