

inDEPTH

DIVERSITY

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Students share their feelings on clubs, programs

Saint Mary's students have a variety of opinions about diversity

by **Tony Vala-Haynes**

Staff Writer

Diversity clubs and programs are an important and visible part of our campus. But what do students really think about their impact? Several students offered their opinions.

"It's good for a private, Catholic college," said John Zabala '06 about the student demographics. "It's okay for California...it could improve." He also commented on the loss of football at SMC.

"First off, we shouldn't bring back football period. Bringing back something for the sake of something else as a secondary reason is never the answer to solving the problem. What people need to do is develop programs and student activities that will attract students of diverse backgrounds."

Some students expressed concern that a white diversity club would not be accepted on

campus, and others said they felt that diversity clubs isolate themselves on campus.

"I think they [isolate themselves] to an extent, but under the operations of them they kind of open it up to other people. But it is still a club for certain people," said Will Lipincott '06.

Students also voiced opinions on the coalition between BSU, APASA, and LASA. While some felt that the coalition is just another way the diversity clubs isolate themselves, Elaine Abelaye '04, president of APASA, sought to dispel some myths about the coalition.

"The reason why there is a coalition built between LASA, APASA, and BSU is because, historically, Latinos, Blacks and Asian/Pacific Americans have undergone very similar struggles."

"The coalition is a way of providing support for students of color as a whole so that we can all communicate with each other,



Lisette Garcia/COLLEGIAN

Delphine Lounge is the location of many diversity events, but how do students really feel about this issue?

and more importantly, so that when issues come up that face either the Black, Latino or Asian/Pacific American community, we can all join together and support one another," said Abelaye.

However, these three organizations are not the only

diversity clubs on campus. Eire Og, (Irish Heritage), the Dante club (Italian Heritage), GALA (Gay and Lesbian Association) and the Portuguese Heritage Club are all present on campus.

When asked about diversity on campus, Kelley Kimlinger responded, "What diversity?"

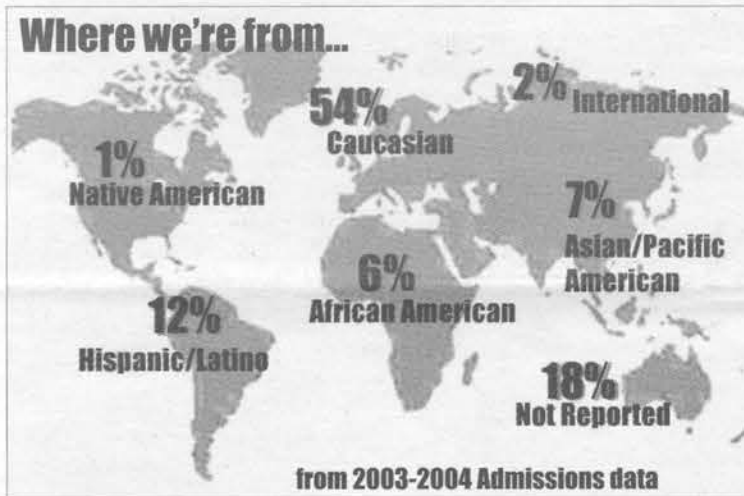
But she also commented on diversity clubs, saying, "I think they're good just for the little diversity that we have so people feel like they have a place where they can go."

Lisette Garcia '06 agreed that the clubs provide an atmosphere of community for students.

"I think cultural clubs are good because people of the same ethnicity will feel comfortable being around people of their same ethnicity. But they do kind of segregate themselves," said Garcia.

A variety of feelings float through campus. While some students feel that Saint Mary's still struggles to create a welcoming environment where all opinions are heard and accepted, others see the diversity programs and clubs as a way of celebrating the diversity we do have. Just as we have many types of students at Saint Mary's, there are many different opinions on diversity.

In-Depth editor Jonathan Morales and Editor-in-Chief Andrea Camarena also contributed to this story.



Academic Advising programs 'facilitate student success'

by **Chris Mateo**

Editor-in-Chief

The first floor of De La Salle Hall is home to the office of Academic Advising and Achievement. The entrance to this area is on the north side of the building. When entering this office, one can read the words next to "Academic Advising and Achievement." These words say "Special Programs" and are followed by "Asian Pacific American Student Programs, Black Student Programs, Latino Student Programs, International Student Programs, and Studies for International Students."

The office of Academic Advising is home not only to advisors, but also to the coordinators of the Asian Pacific American, Black, and Latino Student Programs - Kim Wesolowski, Brian Stanley, and Norma Lopez, respectively.

With only the perspective of diversity clubs, some students may not see the presence of these resources on campus. These resources are meant to serve the ethnic minorities of Saint Mary's College - not just the diversity clubs.

"I serve the Black students of SMC in a couple of ways," said Stanley. "I advocate for their

needs, I ensure that we're trying to create a space on campus where they feel welcomed, validated and recognized. Black student programs serves as one of the places where their cultural needs are met by, for one, preparing students for post-graduate decisions. We've had workshops as well as one-on-one academic advising. I find referrals, resources and collaborate with other campus departments - just becoming a facilitator of student success."

Stanley continued to explain the difference between his positions of advisor and coordinator. "In regards to a distinction between being an academic advisor and the coordinator for Black student programs, there is one and there isn't one" said Stanley.



Lisette Garcia/COLLEGIAN

"Academic advising is a part of the campus student support services - which includes both academic advising and the ethnic-specific services that we provide here. Both services are focused on how do we help students deal with issues they're having so that way they can achieve higher levels of academic, personal, and professional success. The individual, one-on-one, case management work that I do with Black students take into account those who have specific challenges here and how I can help them."

Norma Lopez integrated the mission of the Lasallian order in her duty as an advisor/coordinator. "I see my role here as a means of retention for a specific population," said Lopez. "I see my role directly connected to the Lasallian mission. This mission, in so many words, is to help those who come from difficult backgrounds. Ethnic minorities are definitely found in that population. In this country, being an ethnic minority in college automatically places you at-risk for dropout; this includes the Latino population. So what I do here for students is support that population by providing them with the necessary tools to help them achieve their goals of graduating college, and, in essence, putting a stop to the cycle of poverty that many students come from. By graduating from college, students get an opportunity in this world that many people do not have."

Creating a diverse family

High Potential program brings diversity to campus, gives students a chance

by **Tina McAfee**

Staff Writer

Transitional periods are tough times for everyone, even for those who enjoy change. But what if you come from a family, environment, background, etc. that does not provide the amount of support and assistance needed to make that transition into college?

The High Potential (HP) Program is geared to help minority students make that transition. Dr. John Dennis has been the Director of this program for several years and feels that its goal is to "assist HP students in becoming full-fledged Gaels" academically and through extracurricular involvement. The program is designed to create a sense of "home" on the campus by providing a family atmosphere. The importance of the program is to make the students feel comfortable, fostering greater retention, which ultimately leads to more prevalent cultural diversity.

The Program's staff also consists of the coordinators of the Latino, Black and Asian Pacific American Student Programs and other staff and faculty. Over a dozen former HP students return as Peer Advisors to mentor the new students as they adjust. The program begins early August, allowing the students to move in early and acquaint themselves with the campus before school commences. Icebreakers and fieldtrips help unite the program's attendees, but it is not all fun and games. Much of the day is spent in seminars, lectures and workshops, requiring a fair amount of reading, all in preparation of the reality of the college workload.

The High Potential Program is very beneficial to Saint Mary's in

that it, according to Dr. Dennis, "keeps true to the Lasallian tradition." He believes HP helps diversify the college, by providing "multiple venues for cultural enrichment for the community at large... It respects the truth that each of us brings ourselves to the table and we are best served when cultural differences are honored, respected and shared."

Dr. Dennis will not return as the High Potential Program Director this summer but will still have an unspecified level of involvement. He will, instead, return to his original calling as a professor.

"Saint Mary's students by their very nature feed my soul and my intellect, a manna that I do need to continue my professional journey," said Dr. Dennis.

Dr. Dennis maintains that he is committed to supporting, honoring and celebrating the classes of '05, '06 and '07 as well as the prospective graduates. "Students ironically give me life and I trust I give them spirit."



Tina McAfee/COLLEGIAN

This is Dr. Dennis's last year as director of the HP program.

What's diverse enough?

Growing up white, and still a minority

When I hear students at Saint Mary's complain that our campus is not diverse enough I start to think about how diverse any school is. I grew up outside California, and I guess you could say that even though I am Caucasian, I was part of the minority. I know you are all thinking, that's impossible, being white automatically makes you part of the majority. Well not in New Mexico.

I never thought of it as an issue though, until I moved to California. Growing up in such a diverse atmosphere we all learned to be "color blind." I didn't recall how diverse my high school was until I actually pulled out my old yearbooks and glanced through them looking at all the faces. Perhaps it is because we all grew up in that environment we never thought about being diverse, we just were. Until three years ago I never thought the color of my skin mattered to anyone.

My first class freshman year I was met with utter misunderstanding. We all know the drill: first day of class, say your name, where you're from, and why you're here. Ok, "so I am Amy Kelly, I am from Santa Fe, and I want to study Psychology." Then it came, that point where you enter an awkward silence, faces turn, and my reality check hit, "you don't look Mexican." I was



Amy Beth Kelly

stunned, all I could think was this person is very observant. It was followed by the suggestion I must be at least part Mexican, or part of my family was, after all, I could speak the language and I could cook the food. Ok, so yes, parts of my family are of other ethnicities, Mexican included, but did it matter? Apparently yes.

I was naive in thinking that Saint Mary's was diverse enough to get over what ethnicity a person is. I mean honestly, why did it matter if I was white, I never had people back home ask what ethnicity I belonged to. I understood in these moments (which by the way still occur) that SMC didn't offer a diverse community that was prepared to believe that regardless of a person's ethnicity they could be from any background, socio-economic status, or cultural influence. I'll agree that Saint Mary's, for whatever reasons, has a primarily Caucasian population, and that greater diversity would be beneficial. Until then, we need to get over the predisposition to label a person by their ethnicity and perhaps get to know them and label them with that knowledge instead.

Recruiting diversity Taking a national approach

by **Chris Swain**
Managing Editor

For admissions and recruiting, diversity is a much larger concept than just ethnic/racial diversity.

Saint Mary's has increased its efforts in recent years to enhance the college's diverse make-up, both ethnic/racially, geographically and academically. One way it has done this is national recruiting.

"The last several years we've been working to increase our reputation nationally and attract students from across the country," said Dorothy Jones, dean of admissions.

Besides selecting a national group in looking at sophomore and junior PSAT scores, college recruiters travel nationally to Texas, Chicago, Minneapolis and Maryland.

"Something that is helpful in recruiting a diverse student population is having a critical mass of diverse students, so when other students come, prospectives, they can see it for themselves," said Jones, who believes Saint Mary's as of a few years ago has arrived at a critical mass.

"I've seen the diversity of this campus grow...I think in some ways though people see Saint Mary's as a really white country

club that doesn't have diversity. It isn't that way at all," said Jones. Another stereotype people need to move beyond according to Jones is that the college is isolated.

"I think once people get over the stereotype of this place...that it is isolated...students tend to like the location," said Jones.

College surveys show students who enroll find the campus to be beautiful, those that don't enroll find it to be isolated.

"So much of it is your own perception and perspective on where the campus is located," said Jones.

"People from the Latino community, Asian American community, African American community feel more comfortable going to school where there is a local community to which they can connect. Our location doesn't provide that," said Michael Beseda, vice provost of enrollment. According to Beseda, research shows that a diverse student population enhances the learning environment and educational benefits.

"It's beneficial for students who are going to live in a diverse world to also learn in that environment because it enhances their learning and prepares them to be leaders in a diverse world," said Beseda.



Jo-Ann Arquillano

Being True to Both Sides

In high school, one of my good friends once told me that he never saw me as a member of a minority; that I had always seemed to fit in so perfectly with all of our other friends that he sometimes forgot I was any different. I know that he didn't mean to cause any offense; that he was simply attempting to emphasize my complete inclusion in our social circle, but he had no idea what kind of impact his little statement would have on me. For the first time in my life, I worried about my ethnic "authenticity." I wondered if not being able to speak my parents' dialect made me less of a Filipino, if being born and raised in California and adopting its trends diminished my connection with my culture.

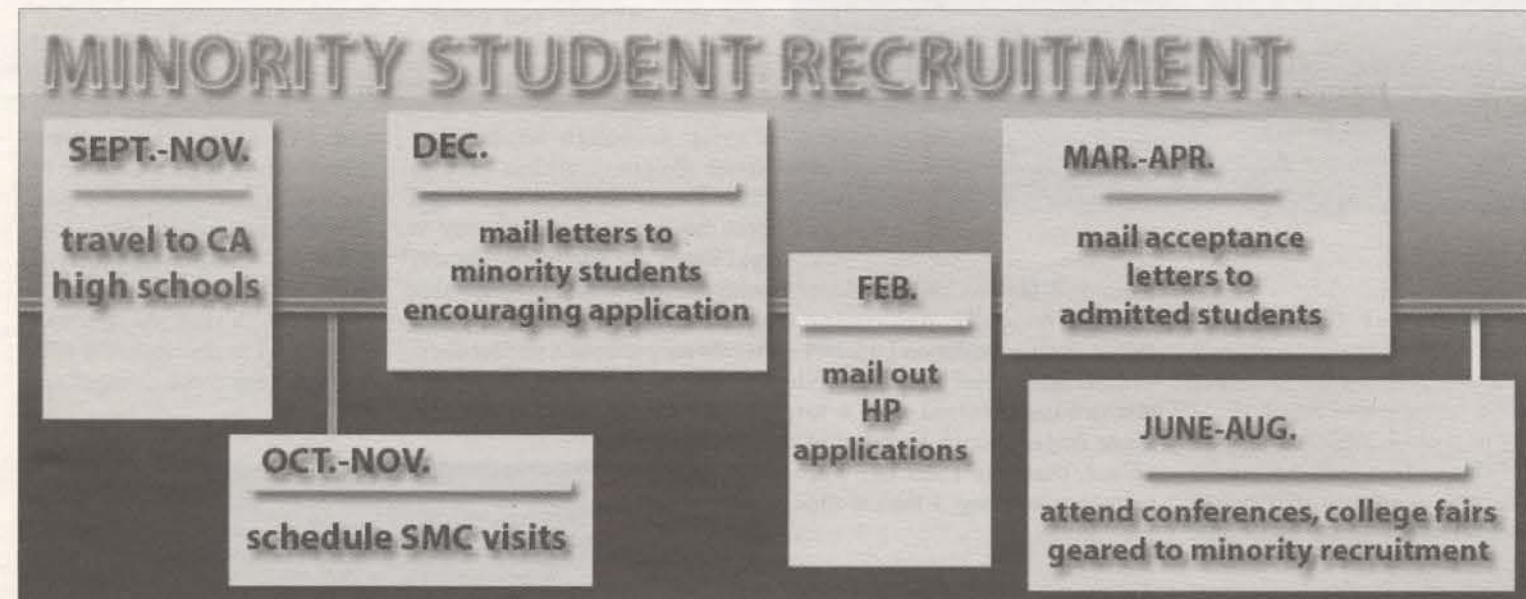
Growing up, I had never really thought much about being a minority. Sure, I'd get a few comments about my lunch "smelling funny" when I'd bring Tupperware of the previous night's dinner to school, or when my mom would pack me some shrimp chips for a snack. But I never had to explain myself and I never thought to. It was just my way of life, the only thing I had ever known.

I never worked at trying to be an American. I never tried to hide my family or our background, but similarly, I never believed I would ever have to make an effort to defend or preserve my culture.

As I got older, a distinct rift between my home and my social life began to develop. Life at home was generally the same as always. The strong smells of cooking permeated the rooms, the sounds of my parents speaking in and out of English could be heard through the thin walls, and a large shipping box slowly accumulating clothes, canned foods and other various treats to be sent "back home" was ever present in the living room.

But suddenly, my identity was being threatened, and I was terrified. In succeeding so well in doing what I simply deemed "adapting," I had completely impacted how my peers viewed me, and I suddenly felt as if I had failed to uphold the part of me that meant more than anything else. I couldn't fathom how so many of my close friends knew absolutely nothing about the side of me that I had always considered the most dominant.

Today, though the majority of my friends are much more aware of how my background is a part of me, it's still sometimes difficult for me to reconcile this difference between being Filipino and American, and I continue to struggle with being true to both sides.



Why Saint Mary's needs diversity clubs

One SMC student shares her positive diversity club experiences

I was at Latino Cultural Night a few weeks ago and as I sat in the room filled with the faces of so many different ethnicities, I was astonished by how the event really brought together the SMC community. The audience was there that night to have some delicious food and great entertainment; but more importantly, to celebrate a culture that doesn't quite receive the recognition it deserves here at Saint Mary's.

Unfortunately, people usually miss the positive influence that diversity clubs have on the college and the individual students. Clubs like APASA, LASA, and BSU incorrectly get stereotyped as very social and exclusive clubs. What most people don't see is how these clubs help retention rates, offer leadership opportunities, and most importantly: educate the entire school about diversity.



Jessica Lee

Ok, so I'll admit that when I first came here, I was a little hesitant to join a minority club. I didn't want to be considered merely "Azn." But joining APASA was perhaps one of the best things I could have ever done. I have finally found a place where I feel like I fit in and can really make my opinions heard. That's a tough thing to do at a cliquy school like Saint Mary's. Now don't get me wrong, I don't hang out with only Asian people. It's just that APASA is one more place for me to make friends.

More than just clubs for socializing, diversity organizations

work incredibly hard to educate students about different cultures. Since St. Mary's is predominantly Caucasian, the college caters to the majority and doesn't pay nearly enough attention to other cultures. While there is a massive amount of western European focused classes, if students want to learn about something else, they have to go elsewhere.

Diversity clubs have taken the first step to addressing this problem by going to great lengths to organize discussions, fairs, events, etc., to help St. Mary's students see the world from a different perspective. This is so vital because once students leave college and enter the real world, if they can't understand people who are ethnically different from them, then how are they going to be able to successfully work with others?

The diversity clubs and organizations that I became involved in had such a huge influence on my freshman year. The friends I

made truly helped me through this difficult transition and encouraged me to not only succeed academically but also learn more about my culture. This has inspired me to really make a huge effort to become involved in the community in every way possible. There are so many other students, of all different races, striving to make a difference and hopefully they realize the significance of what they are participating in.

As Novico MacAllister '07 said, "I realized that it was something bigger than myself, and APASA was a part of that greater whole. This is something that I really wanted to be a part of."

37% of students identify themselves as students of color

from 2003-2004 Admissions data

Students and staff discuss diversity issues



Phylis Martinelli Sociology Dept. **Mary Ho** Student Activities **Anton Taruc** Student **Esther Lopez** Admissions Office **Emma Arellano** LASA **Lindsey Rosellini** GALA **Amy Hammond** APASA **Juan Zaragoza** LASA/HP

Last Wednesday May 5th, a roundtable Discussion was held in Delphine Multicultural Lounge on the issue of diversity. The following are excerpts from that discussion.

Lindsay: I think for GALA it definitely serves as a place for support for the LGBT community. A place for them to come to, especially being on a Catholic campus.

Anton: For me being an international student, I think it helps me a lot in understanding different cultures, especially in the States where it's such a melting pot. Most of my roommates are Mexican...I was just talking to my roommate earlier today about Cinco de Mayo and what it meant to him. It raises questions on my part, I feel.

Phylis: As a faculty member I find that the events often support the curriculum in terms of our teaching. Whenever possible, I require my students to attend outside events.

Esther: As someone who recruits students, I meet students that are in high school and they are just learning about Saint Mary's and may have never been on this campus...and so when I talk about Saint Mary's I talk about the institutional commitment to diversity, not just my mission or my vision of recruiting diverse students. For me to see students getting involved in clubs and events and support services that are provided though academic advising, it helps me feel good about my own job.

Mary: For the diversity organizations...they are very inclusive, they recruit anybody who wants to join in and be part of that community.

Amy: A lot of what we learn at Saint Mary's is based on European-based knowledge...so to have an ethnic studies program would allow other students to explore other cultures. To have an outside source of something different would be an eye-opening experience.



Liz Hearst/COLLEGIAN

Phylis: I think the diversity courses are essential to prepare all students for the world they're going to be entering. I think they're critical. And ethnic studies I think offers both a place for students of ethnic or diverse backgrounds to spend more time learning about such backgrounds, but it also is essential for students in the majority to broaden their own horizons.

Esther: I think it's significant that the diversity requirement was a student initiative. It just shows how much students really value learning about diversity.

Lindsey: Personally, coming onto this campus, I feel very welcomed on this campus in finding GALA. I have not had any problems personally at all with anyone on campus. I look around campus and I see a lot of diversity.

Emma: I feel as though Saint Mary's is really welcoming. When I was a freshman I felt welcomed. But I think the clubs and just getting involved...it's a lot more important to become involved, that way I feel like I belong to something. I have a support group.

Anton: For someone who flew halfway around the world, I remember the first day I got here I was just at home. I think just the very nature of our campus makes for a sense of community.

Phylis: The administration thinks this is a very important issue. One of the things we're going to be instituting here at Saint Mary's is a campus climate in terms of diversity; because I'm hearing positive comments from those students who have chosen to speak out right now, but having been here for 15 years, students' feelings about the climate change over time.

Emma: I think you have to take the initiative to join a club, or do something to feel involved or feel like you have a support group.

Amy: I have to agree with that. The reason why I think I feel so welcomed on campus is because of APASA, and the fact that I took that initiative to join the club.

Juan: I came from a high school that was all Mexican, practically,

so it was a new experience for me. But as time goes on your try to open up, go to clubs, get out there and meet people.

Esther: I think students love Saint Mary's and when they're here they're very happy about Saint Mary's, but I think there's still issues of inclusion. There's still this feeling that it's not diverse enough. I don't know if statistics really make diversity, and who's definition of diversity it's coming from.

Lindsey: I know one problem that I've gone through, because I just became co-president of the club, one thing that's hard I think for anyone is reaching out to students on campus and saying to them, "Here's our club, feel free to come. Anyone's welcome." They feel that because I club has a certain label they can't come to it. It's hard to get through to them and say, "Anyone can come." You don't have to be a label to come.

Phylis: Although we do have more diversity within faculty than five or six years ago, I still feel that we have a long way to go. There are supportive faculty who are white, but I do know that students often feel an affinity towards people from a similar background and we just don't have enough faculty to provide that.



Liz Hearst/COLLEGIAN

Phylis: I'd like to ask two questions of the students. What can you as students do to reach out to students who are more apathetic and haven't joined clubs? The second is what can we as faculty be doing to be more supportive?

Juan: I think you have to get the students from the get-go.

Amy: Try and make them feel the same feeling that you feel, being welcome and accepted.

Lindsey: I think just talking about it to people, when you see

people, start a conversation. It's hard to get more people involved. I don't know how faculty generally is, but it seems like some faculty aren't really involved with clubs on campus.

Amy: When the faculty doesn't seem interested in diversity or they don't put it into their curriculum, it kind of distances them.

Anton: I think if the faculty get to know different groups...I think that would be one good way of you helping us.

Amy: I think it's a lot easier to get a personal invitation from someone and go with them to a culture club, as opposed to seeing a sign on the wall and thinking "Maybe if I have time I'll go by myself and see what happens."

Emma: Also sometimes students feel that it's too late to join a club.

Phylis: I've been here 15 years and I've seen a tremendous change. The campus, as far as the student population, is far more diverse. One concern that I have is will we be able to keep up high levels of diversity? I've seen in 15 years a lot of positive changes...I'm also aware it takes effort to keep those changes up.



Liz Hearst/COLLEGIAN

Thanks to all who participated and attended In-Depth Roundtable Discussions this year.