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Cultural Diversity at CAU: Real or Imagined?

By Janice Liddell, Ph.D.

This may be a very delicate subject for many people to talk about or even to consider, but because it may affect a number of our students here at CAU, it probably needs to be pointedly addressed. Since I am the director of faculty development and this may well be considered, at least in part, a faculty development issue, I don't mind taking the flak for introducing this sensitive topic publicly. First, I am offering a message that unintentionally came to me over two years ago from a CAU faculty member, who will remain anonymous. This message not only gave me pause, but also caused me to wonder about the need for some diversity (and perhaps sensitivity) intervention among faculty at CAU:

"Here's an example of what I mean. I have NO IDEA what I've gotten myself into, or what I would be doing if I did get into it.

This is a brief breather in a ridiculously hectic day, with students hanging all over me and wanting me to hold their hands because they have tests this week, and wanting to make up tests and other assignments that they've already missed. I'm actually doing special help sessions for dullard students in the afternoon, and giving makeup tests at the same time. Also, there are individual students who suddenly want to talk about "private" problems. Actually, I've found out in advance that one of those is one of those "handicapped" students whose handicap is basically that they're mentally retarded, and we're expected to "accommodate" them in some way, although I've never understood how.

Oops -- another student now! "

As I indicated, this mistakenly routed note has deeply affected me since I received it. In fact, since receiving it, I often find myself wondering about the underlying feelings of faculty who teach our students—about how they approach the differences they might encounter. While many Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) are struggling with the diversity issues (and others) expressed in this message, many CAU faculty and students, in truth, seem not to recognize the cultural diversity issues that exist at our own institution and particularly we do not recognize the effect those issues potentially have on our teaching/learning environment. I am certainly not speaking only about racial and ethnic diversity, even though many of us look at CAU and see a primarily African-American population of students and believe we are culturally monolithic, when we're not. Also, more significantly even within the CAU so-called "African-American community," diversity extends in myriad directions. Regions of the country from which our students come, their religious beliefs and backgrounds (not all of our students are Christian), their economic status, family backgrounds, linguistic patterns—both written and verbal—their gender affiliations, and a host of other factors determine the diversity of our *predominantly* African-American students (we do have African, Caribbean and even some white students) When we consider all these student-related factors, we can easily see that CAU is not at all monolithic.

The Indiana University Center for Adolescent and Family Studies has conducted significant research in the area of diversity and the classroom and while much of their research pertains to primary and secondary schools, many of their conclusions are relevant to the college and university setting. They recognize that the instructor is one of the most important ingredients to the success of the teaching/learning environment. In fact the instructor must be the one who first understands the existence of diversity in his or her classroom and then how to use that diversity to best enhance student learning.

The Center has written that

*...to adequately attend to cultural diversity in the classroom, teachers must look first at their own cultural background and understand how their biases affect their interactions with students. Then, teachers can examine the backgrounds and needs of the student population and understand their students' cultural biases as well. Classroom instruction can be designed to connect the content of a course with students' backgrounds.**

This statement is an important one, because it also alludes specifically to the greatest area of cultural diversity at CAU and the one that is perhaps given the least attention in public discourse. This is the multicultural dimension of our faculty. As we all know, we have faculty from various regions of the United States, of various racial and ethnic origins; we have faculty from nearly every continent and from various countries from those represented continents. While we may think because we are all working in the same environment, our economic status is fairly similar to that of our colleagues; in fact, the economic backgrounds of faculty may be pretty diverse as well. There are probably "cultural" factors other than those enumerated here that also distinguish this august body. The point is from the highest administrative position to the most recent students to arrive at CAU, we have differences and distinctions that can and do impact our teaching and learning environment. And unless we as faculty address these differences and distinctions and the impact they may be having on teaching/learning, we will never be able to use them effectively to enhance our students' learning.

If we don't want to engage in a public discourse on this sensitive subject, I ask then that each of us assess what might be our own biases and determine whether those biases might affect our teaching and our students' learning. We just might be surprised at our *honest* responses. Read this issue of the CETL newsletters for the varied perspectives on cultural diversity as some people see it playing out at CAU. In addition to articles by faculty, we have articles, this time, by students and staff. We were even given permission to reprint a related article by the nationally recognized economist, author and commentator Julianne Malveaux, that appeared in the November issue of **Diverse Issues in Higher Education**. We think this is an important and provocative issue; we hope you will too.

(*<http://education.indiana.edu/cas/tt/v2i2/cultural.html>)



Teaching the Whole Student at CAU: A CETL Goal

Dr. Timothy Moore, Associate Professor
Department of Psychology

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) provides the unique and necessary opportunity to continue to learn and grow in the academic community. As a facilitator for CETL through its Scholarly Teaching Initiative and its UNCF Lester J. Rodney Faculty Development Program, I consider it a distinguished honor to provide a workshop for colleagues. When CETL began the Scholarly Teaching and Scholarship of Teaching Initiative, I was asked to develop a workshop called, Teaching the Whole Student: Cultural Identity and the Teaching Learning Process. There have been numerous comments from both faculty and administrators that the information shared was helpful, so this article is my perspective for why I find the workshop to be worthwhile in our teaching/learning environment.

First, I teach in the Department of Psychology. Along with federally-funded biomedical research, the primary courses I teach are Physiological Psychology and African-Centered Psychology. In the CETL workshop, I combine these courses to provide faculty with both a brain-based and a psychosocial approach to the teaching and learning process. As an educator who is continually learning and growing, I consider the workshop an opportunity for me to combine my teaching areas to design new pedagogical techniques.

Secondly, we do not know everything, so to work with and to teach colleagues information that will stimulate their growth are both exciting for me. We all receive satisfaction when we feel as though our students have learned something we have taught them. It is even more fascinating to see the consciousness of my colleagues change when I have attempted to enhance their knowledge base. Many of us are stuck in our old ways and we remain rigid with our old views and our outdated teaching styles. Change sometimes only occurs with a few people, so the few faculty members who attend the workshop will exponentially impact many students. As the workshop participants teach and reach the next generation, it is these youth who will truly institute change.

Thirdly, the world and society are constantly evolving and if we do not grow and change, we will eventually die. Many HBCUs are dying every day because some administrations may lack ingenuity and vision, and the views of the faculty remain stagnant. The workshop I conduct discusses who you are as an instructor, who your students are and what type of instructor you are. Are you ethnically and culturally sensitive to your students and are you willing to continue your own personal journey to learn? As a component of this workshop, the participants will need to use introspection to answer how they have been taught and how that past experience has impacted their teaching skills. If you teach the same way you were taught decades ago, then you may be in "the dinosaur age." Again, change is inevitable if growth is the goal.

Fourthly, CETL and this workshop are not new endeavors. Other institutions throughout the United States have instituted similar workshops, and this demonstrates the importance of providing new opportunities for faculty. CETL has encouraged me to "take the show on the road," and I have presented for both the Dallas Regional National Association of Black School Educators and The HBCU Faculty Development Network. Without CETL, there would be one less opportunity for faculty growth and development. It is encouraging to see others throughout the U.S. who share an interest in the content of this workshop. In fact, other institutions have instituted significant changes to ensure new faculty are provided with this type of information early in their teaching experience; unfortunately, that is not required of our new faculty at CAU.

Lastly, education has a significant role to play for both the teacher and the student. You might find this harsh but in many educational environments what we teach is basically propaganda. If you are teaching your students information that you were told to teach them, this is a good example of propaganda. We need to focus more on the learning styles of our students, cognitive differences that may impact the acquisition of information, and brain tips to enhance the teaching experience. We cannot lose sight that education has a role to play by conditioning people to think in a certain way. Those educators who are willing to go outside of the box to find new ways to expose and uncover information are truly revolutionary. If our students cannot develop critical thinking skills, they really have not learned. If we do not look at education as forced and imposed knowledge upon our students, we can begin the process of what education in a u-n-i-v-e-r-s-i-t-y should be about – to explore the UNIVERSE. Take the challenge to open your consciousness to conceptualize a new cosmological perspective, and you might enjoy this workshop as well as others offered by CETL.

Dr. Moore is the facilitator of CETL's perennial workshop, "Teaching the Whole Student". This workshop strives to encourage faculty to learn how best to teach the particular students that show up in our classroom rather than simply teaching material to whoever shows up in our classroom. Here Dr. Moore gives a brief summary of what can happen if we recognize who we are as faculty and who our students really are and how we can use even the differences inherent in that mix to our collective benefit.



IT IS THE LAW, YET ARE WE CHAMPIONS OF JUSTICE? *Do we fight the disability laws or embrace the reasonable accommodations?*

Gay-linn E. Gatewood-Jasho
Department for Students with Disabilities

Amber Denise Anderson and Shane William Davidson share similar stories. Both entered Clark Atlanta University like all other students. Both had their applications reviewed, their SAT or ACT scores appraised, their acceptance letters sent and placement tests evaluated—and both students have a disability. Yet that is where the similarities end. Amber's disability is physical; she uses a wheelchair for accessibility. She receives preferential consideration for admission. Because her disability is apparent, she is encouraged to register with the Department for Students with Disabilities and to avail herself of whatever resources CAU offers to such students. Shane, meanwhile, has a learning disability. He receives no preferential consideration in the admission process. No one encourages him to seek the University's resources. Shane wrestles with the questions of disclosure, the pain of the stigma he endured throughout his elementary and secondary education, and the possibility of being labeled for the remainder of his collegiate life. These fictitious sketches represent two types of students registered for disability services at CAU.

- At Clark Atlanta University, a “qualified person with a disability” is defined as one who “meets the academic and technical standards requisite to admission or participation in the educational program or activity.” Clark Atlanta, like any other institution in higher education, has the responsibility to adhere to the laws that protect students with disabilities.

So how does our community measure up? In the opening scenario, Shane feels uncomfortable about disclosing, but decides to register with the department. He initiates the application process within the Department for Student with Disabilities and provides recent documentation for his case. The department evaluates the documentation from a licensed professional(s) appropriate to assess Shane's particular disability and conducts an extensive interview with Shane. Once approved the department determines the nature of the reasonable accommodation and composes an official letter outlining each accommodation for that specific semester. With letters in hand including a faculty sign-off sheet that requires the signatures of each of his professors, Shane leaves the office with hope of a normal integration into collegiate life. Aware that he only has two weeks to return the faculty sign-off sheet, Shane returns to the office missing a signature. He explains that one of his professors refused to accept the letter until Shane revealed the nature of his disability.

Amber, on the other hand, returns with all signatures and all supporting documents in hand. Yet she faces a different type of challenge--accessibility. All her classes are in the Carl and Mary Ware classroom building, but the elevator is out frequently. Furthermore, on days when the elevator is working, she experiences rudeness from other students, who step over her and fill the elevator preventing her entrance.

She is excited about her biology class but in order to stay prepared, she needs tutoring in the Center for Academic Achievement located in Kresge Hall, a building that is totally inaccessible. -The staff will have to make arrangements to meet Amber at a separate location.

Again the questions surface, are we at Clark Atlanta a welcoming institution? Many of us are familiar with the laws, yet we do not champion justice for our students. Faculty members *do* have the right to request current documentation completed by an appropriate professional to verify the need for reasonable accommodation(s), academic adjustment(s) and/or auxiliary aid(s) and service(s). We *do not* have the right to ask a student to disclose the nature of his/her disability. It is up to the student to disclose or, in rare cases, with the student's permission; the director may share the impairment with a faculty member. Faculty members *do* have the right to verify the validity of the letter of reasonable accommodations; but *do not* have the right to question the accommodation. Yes, we all have the responsibility to hold our students with disabilities to our University's standards; but we must evaluate our students on their abilities and not their disabilities. During the 1960s, many of us fought for federal laws to protect African-Americans from discrimination. For us, the enforcement of these laws was a clear issue of justice. Is it so easy to deny that same justice to others? If our students are doing their part in meeting our terms of gaining acceptance to the University, are we doing our part in terms of offering them accommodations and accessibility?

CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY: A DISCRIMINATING CAMPUS

By Ebony Capshaw, CAU Student



Yes, ladies and gentlemen, it's true. Clark Atlanta University is a discriminating campus. CAU has minority students that are mistreated every day on campus by faculty and students. I have experienced mistreatment firsthand and I am writing this article for it to stop. Who am I and whom do I represent? My name is Ebony Capshaw, and I am a disabled student on campus. Every day I must rush to classes to beat other students to the elevator or reprimand peers for pushing other disabled students out of the way. I may not be in a wheelchair or have a “handicapped” symbol on my car, but **I am disabled.**

I have two hereditary diseases, mitral valve prolapse and vasal vagal syncope, and asthma. I wish I were normal and able to utilize the stairs, but I can't. Students and faculty need to be aware that some disabilities are not visible to the human eye. I am tired of people on the elevator making comments such as, “She should've taken the stairs” or “I am tired of students taking the elevator.” The last statement has been addressed to me by several faculty members on the elevator weekly. Every time, I inform each member that the elevator does not say “faculty only” and I will ride the elevator whenever I please. Why must I explain myself to these individuals day after day? It becomes tiring and stressful. All I ask for is a little consideration and understanding of my circumstances.

Once students understand my situation, apologies are made to me. However, I don't want everyone to feel sorry for me. I want people to treat me like a normal person. I am not a zoo exhibit for display. People rarely see the times when I pass out or have asthma attacks in school. I am thankful for the teachers who accept my circumstances and make accommodations to keep students unaware of my situation. I don't want everyone in my business, but I can no longer stand by and watch others get mistreated. I am proud to say that “My name is Ebony Capshaw, and I am a disabled student”. I hope that all members of the Clark Atlanta family become active in making our campus a “disability-friendly” environment. As Ms. Millin, administrative assistant for the Chemistry department, quoted to me about students on campus, “Each one, teach one.” I hope and pray a lesson has been learned today.

Hed: Dimensions of Diversity

By Julianne Malveaux

Most of the time, when people of color talk about diversity, we refer to race and gender. We want to see faculties and boardrooms that “look like America,” with representation that approximates population representation. In other words, we want to see some African-Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, American Indians and women sitting around the table. If about half the folks are women, and one is either African-American or Latino, we think folks are doing pretty well.

My recent experience in helping to develop the program at the Millions More Movement (Oct. 15, 2005) reminds me that such diversity simply scratches the surface.

It is often easy to ignore the diversity that exists within race and gender groups, but this is a diversity that we ignore to our detriment. What do I mean? As we slated speakers for the Millions More Movement, we were confronted with all kinds of diversity dilemmas. African-Americans are Christian and Muslim, but also atheist and agnostic. We are civil rights activists and nationalists, seniors and youth. Some of our young people attend college and their leadership is easily identifiable. More are neither attending college nor planning to, and their concerns are equally important. Most of us are heterosexual, but many are homosexual, bisexual or transgendered. Some of us are professionals, but far more are workers. Part of our effort in the Millions More Movement was to present a tapestry of unity among African-American people, and in large part we succeeded. Despite grouching and some criticism from individuals who were disgruntled that they were not included, no sector of our community (except perhaps Black conservatives, who had no interest in participating) was missing from the program.

Much of my work has focused on broad issues of diversity. I teach a class at Bennett College for women on diversity in the 21st century. I am all too familiar with the laws that mandate inclusion of African-Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, the differently abled population, those with religious differences and gay and lesbian people.

It is perhaps more challenging, though, to deal with issues of internal diversity in any community and to understand some of the tensions that may impede unity within communities.

In the Latino community, for example, Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Latin Americans have different histories, issues and concerns. In the African-American community, everyone with melanin in their skin isn't on the same page about public policy. Even when there is agreement about issues of oppression (and there often isn't), there are differences about the path one takes to close the racial economic gap. Some folks say, “Get over it and work hard,” others say the government should do more, and still others agitate for reparations. In some ways these are not mutually exclusive approaches (except for the “Get over it,” argument, which seems to ignore history). But among some, the fault lines of difference are starker than differences between African-Americans and Whites.

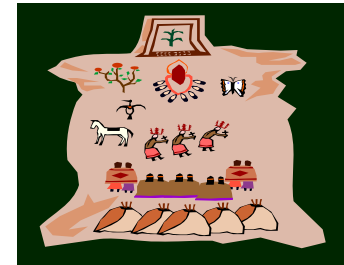
I'd love to know if the legendary “Willie Lynch” document is real or imaginative fiction. That document is purportedly the writing of a slave master who explains how to keep slaves divided as light and dark, house and field and such. In any case, a century and a half after emancipation, African-American economists will actually spend two sessions at a professional meeting this winter analyzing skin color difference among African-Americans.

While I was appalled at the notion that brilliant minds could be diverted to parse such trivia, perhaps my colleagues are quantifying the Willie Lynch syndrome. And the issues they deal with are, perhaps, real. A decade or so ago, an African-American employee sued the IRS because another African-American had allegedly discriminated against her on the basis of her skin color. That's another dimension of diversity that people allude to but don't much talk about. The sociologist Andrew Hacker called it “colorism” when he attempted to explain why Asian Americans are treated as “honorary Whites.” Of course, it would take a White sociologist to give Asians such an oxymoronic appellation.

Wayne State University Law School Dean Frank Wu has a more layered explanation for the Asian American experience in his book *Yellow*.

The diversity movement suggests that there is strength in our differences and that our differences enhance each other. At the same time, the movement insists that our differences should not have economic, social or political consequences. We are entitled to the same access to resources and opportunities regardless of our differences. Historically, this has certainly not been the case, although laws passed in the latter part of the 20th century certainly altered the legal landscape. But Hurricane Katrina is one of the more recent reminders that there is no level playing field, and that things like racial difference translate into differential access to resources.

Still, considering diversity broadly ignores some of the intragroup diversity issues that also need attention and consideration. I was reminded of these differences during the Millions More Movement, but also reminded that recognizing differences and understanding them has the potential to strengthen, not weaken, both our communities and our nation.



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On Culture and Education at Clark Atlanta University

By Jamie L Jenkins

She was only sixteen years old, scared, hopeless, and pregnant. With child, she fled home with a man who was eight years her senior; a man who would within a year impregnate her with another child, marry her and leave her. With two children and no support, she was forced to drop out of high school and work several jobs to care for her new family.

This is the story of my mother, and the same story that many in our society believe to be of the typical African-American woman. This American stereotype also includes using the terms, *ghetto*, helpless, ignorant, trouble-making *hood-rats* for children, who grow up to amount to nothing because the young black mother is thought to be incapable of raising educated, successful, upstanding adults.

I am a first-generation scholar birthed of a teenaged, single mother who dropped out of high school to care for me, but I definitely *am not* an ignorant "ghetto hood-rat." Better yet, I am a Provost Academic Scholar in my third year as a history major at Clark Atlanta University. As a Provost Academic Scholar, I am awarded a full academic scholarship and required to maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or better, which I have done for the past two years of my matriculation. Regardless of this, a sad truth is that many professors have biases for or pass judgments on certain students based upon their backgrounds and/or race. I have been a victim of such prejudice throughout my entire educational career in inner-city schools, predominantly white schools, and even at the HBCU that I attend.

Many people feel that Clark Atlanta University students, being Black Americans, are anti-intellectual and do not respect education. This stems from the deep-rooted racism in our society and the negative images of African-Americans perpetuated in the media. History shows us that for generations, people of other races believed that by scientific research, black people had been proven to be less intellectual than all other races. Even though this theory was later disregarded, several people continued to harbor resentment for people of African descent and to question their mental capability. Whites across the world were guilty of this sentiment, but a significant number of blacks were as well, and some still are today.

A particular area where this belief is evident in the black psyche is within the color spectrum of African-Americans: light-skinned verses dark-skinned. We are not that far removed from the years of segregation and Jim Crow; thus we still have people living who were affected by those periods and are passing the inferior mentality down to the youth of today. White has been associated with purity for centuries; black has been associated with darkness and evil. Therefore, the closer to white you are, it was (and sometimes still is) believed that the better you are. There are professors today who are guilty of possessing this mindset; I can think of a fair-skinned beauty that, today, never attends class, but maintains a passing grade and a great relationship with her professors. In the same respect, I can also think of a dark-skinned member of the same class that the professor addresses very coarsely for the same mishaps.

Furthermore, it is often believed that black males are hustlers and don't need to be in college, while black females are primarily concerned with their physical appearance and being temptresses. This is common among the faculty at Clark Atlanta University, or at least it appears to be by the way that several faculty and staff members address students. There have been various times when I have sat in a class or seminar listening to a professor rant about how young black men should stop trying to be hustlers and take their education seriously, or about how young black women need to cover themselves up and stop being a target for young hoodlums. After hearing this same sermon so many times in so many of my classes, I can't help but be annoyed. I have walked this campus for two and a half years now, and yes, there are some hustlers, and there are some scantily clad women, but they are not the majority, once again, and I would appreciate it if the faculty stopped making it such a major issue. HBCUs are not the only place where hustlers and underdressed women are found, for black people are not the only people who fall into this category. On CAU's campus, so many people are involved in clubs and Greek organizations or academic majors that demand a certain type of appearance, that it is more common to see students in suits and slacks than it is to see them in anything else. Besides this, hustlers or not, the men that I have come into contact with during my matriculation all agree that college is necessary for their future plans and has had a major impact on their personalities and outlook.

Many also support the view that CAU students are not as academically prepared as Morehouse and Spelman students and thus should not expect to be as successful. To this I say, look at our alumni and pay attention to how every year, someone or some group from Clark Atlanta University makes their way to the television screens and the articles of magazines. The Atlanta University Center is complete with some of the best HBCUs in the nation: Spelman College, Morehouse College and Clark Atlanta University. Spelman College and Morehouse College are known for esteeming their students with the charge that they are a success because they are a Spelmanite or a man of Morehouse. That is the same as saying that because I am a student at Harvard, I am a success, regardless of whether I make some type of impact on society. I think that what they are trying to do at those colleges for their students is beautiful, but I pride myself on attending a university that applauds our success as a student apart from itself. I am a successful person that was cultivated at Clark Atlanta University, but I am not a success *merely* because I attend Clark Atlanta University.

As a first-generation scholar, I feel obligated to address, also, the stigma that first-generation college students need special help. Please excuse me if I am a bit brash, but this is absolutely absurd and ridiculous! I am surrounded by first-generation students who are self-sufficient and independent. Personally, I am hundreds of miles away from home, and I do not depend on anyone. I maintain my grades on my own; I pay my bills on my own, and am very self-disciplined. The same is true of other students of similar backgrounds that I know, for we have to be strong and we have a lot expected of us. We don't want to let our families down and, more important, we don't want to let ourselves down. Therefore, we strive to be the greatest and usually are the best students. (At least, I know this is true of me and my friends.)

Just like on any college campus, HBCU or not, we do have some students who have yet to realize the value of education, but they are not the majority. Clark Atlanta University houses a student body that has great missions, beautiful ambitions and a strong determination to achieve. Anti-intellectualism at Clark Atlanta is a stigma that will continue to exist as long as stereotypes and race exist, but is also a stigma that we continuously disprove with our graduating classes each year. Beyond Clark Atlanta, race and stereotypes have been, and will continue to be, very detrimental to our society. This is something that I have grown to accept as a part of life . . . As long as race exists, racism will exist.

ESSAY ON DIFFERENCE AT HBCUS

By Daniel Omotosho Black

Most people find historically black colleges and universities monolithic because the institutions serve a majority African-American populace. However, not only are these campuses not monolithic, but they're also fertile ground for the study of difference. First, let's establish that race is NOT the only configuration of difference in America. When we make such an assumption, we empower white supremacy unknowingly because, once again, whites become the focal referent of every cultural comparison. To be sure, class, sexuality, and gender differences on black college campuses are so varied as to make the institutions a social researcher's heaven.

Since the days of integration—or, rather, forced desegregation—class differentiation at black colleges has morphed into a sociological phenomenon. Currently, CAU students, for example, range from children of the wealthy to children of crack mothers and incarcerated fathers. Some drive Mercedes and SUVs while others scrape hard to find enough change for weekly MARTA cards. These class differences surface when students get the opportunity to expose their personal value system. For instance, some fly home every other weekend, to places like Chicago and California, simply because they “got it like that.” They're used to such privilege, and they understand themselves to deserve it. Race consciousness is often minimal in black youth of this

social class and, indeed, many of them find discussions about race rather trite. On the other hand, poor black students still exist and often speak of having come to CAU precisely because they're looking for ways to change the condition of black people in America. These class differences often make CAU students appear not to be of the same racial community. In fact, at times, the only commonality is race, and the extent to which that gets diminished leaves students unaware of how divisive and oppressive class domination can be—within the same community.

Sexuality is the elephant in the corner which black colleges simply haven't found a way to talk about. Of course lesbian, gay, transgendered, and bisexual students, faculty, and administrators populate black college campuses, but since sexuality has always been the issue which unnerves black people, its discussion even in higher education usually doesn't happen. As a diversity issue, sexuality is undoubtedly the most volatile topic to introduce into black public space precisely because this manifestation of personal difference has never been affirmed in black cultural space. Said differently, since black folk can't seem to reconcile their religious convictions with their social allowances, they often opt for silence when sexuality questions surface. Unfortunately, as supposedly centers of critical interrogation, black

colleges are no exception. I suppose this proves that, in the end, the colleges are bound by the liberty of its attendees. Gender is almost as tricky as sexuality when it comes to black colleges, for while they are disproportionately female, they are unquestionably patriarchal and masculine-driven. Of course the first truth this exposes is that most women support patriarchal social models and that Americans, regardless of gender, seem to prefer male leadership. The extent to which black women have shouldered the responsibility of the black family appears not to matter because, essentially, black folk—including students and faculty--seem to agree that unless and until the black man is “salvaged” socially, the black community will continue to falter. So, yes, both genders populate black colleges, yet ideologically, the desire for black men to take the helm of the ship appears fairly unanimous. If Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Terrell, and Fannie Lou Hamer dwelled on black college campuses today, they would certainly wonder whether their efforts for gender equality had been in vain.

Finally, once America moves beyond race as the primary signifier of difference, these other issues can be addressed. The funny thing is that it might not be anything racial which, in the end, explains our demise.

By Anonymous

(CAU International Student from The Bahamas)

When I look back on my life as a young child growing up in Nassau, Bahamas, and my life now as an international student at Clark Atlanta University, I can't help but notice, compare, and contrast what I consider to be major cultural differences between the Bahamian and American way of life. Since setting foot on CAU's campus in August 2004, I have grown accustomed to fellow students referring to me as the Jamaican girl, the girl from Barbados, or some other Caribbean country. The fact of the matter is, however, that although I am a proud Bahamian, and I am not from either of the aforementioned countries, we (Caribbean natives) all fall under the same West Indian umbrella, and oftentimes because of our department and unique dialects, are categorized together or mistaken for one another.

But it was only after leaving the Bahamas and arriving at CAU that I realized how distinctly different the Bahamian culture and value system is when compared to the African-American way. I come from a country, or better yet a region, that instills in its youth from infancy, the significance of self-respect, respect for one's elders, and the value of working harder than everyone else to attain success. However, over the past year, my observations of students and some professors at CAU have led me to believe that things are not the same in this neck of the woods.

The self-respect factor here at CAU appears to be a major issue of concern. Many of the students on campus seem almost incapable of holding a conversation without profanity playing an intricate role. This is also apparent during class discussions. I have been in countless forums where students spew foul language as if it were second nature, but when asked to make a presentation before the class, they can barely speak Standard English. To make matters worse, I find it absolutely appalling that students are

not personally embarrassed about their behavior or having their professors witness this sort of conduct. Regardless of the fact that our professors are not our parents, the Bahamian way has always been to respect those that are older than we are, but this does not appear to be a ground rule for many CAU students. I have observed students aggressively challenging their professors, even to the extent of swearing and raising their voices to prove a point.

I often wonder if this is a reflection on their upbringing or lack thereof. I am also finding difficulty with the “get rich quick” and “by any means necessary” attitude of many students at CAU. I have always been taught that nothing worth attaining in life comes without dedication and hard work. However, so many students at CAU seem prepared to get whatever they want, regardless of the methodology. I find that this issue is particularly prevalent as it relates to academics. It is annoying when I enter a classroom setting during the first week of school, and students complain as though they have been wronged when professors assign work.

As far as I am concerned, we are paying a handsome sum to be here at CAU, and the objective of every student should be to walk away knowing and understanding more than we did before. But I have many classmates that would “come out of pocket in a heartbeat” for another student to complete their class assignments and projects for them. Then there are many others that simply do not care enough even to pay someone to do their work, but instead are satisfied with the almighty “C” or a lesser grade. For all they care, a “C” is a passing grade, and that's all that really matters. This absolutely pains me, because everyone seems to have lofty dreams and expectations for the future, but there is no substantial investment being made to secure that future.

As a Bahamian student, I am accustomed to being challenged academically, but I have come to realize that many CAU students are not being challenged enough academically.

This is a blame I place on the shoulders of some of our professors. While there are some lecturers who prove to students that their classes must be taken seriously, there are others that allow students to call the shots and dictate to them. This is something I have never witnessed in a classroom setting at home in the Bahamas.

I think it is even that more regretful, because at the University level, students should not come expecting to be spoon-fed and pampered. How will these people ever be able to stand on their own two feet if professors constantly wait on them hand and foot, and offer more extra credit than class work to help students avoid the poor grade they worked for all semester long? All in all, I have come to a conclusion; a conclusion that I hope will not create enemies for me, but instead will give some CAU students an indication as to how someone from a completely different cultural background views their behavior and way of life.

Certainly, I have made an abundance of friends since I arrived here, friends that I wouldn't trade in for the world. But outside of the many wonderful friendships, I have experienced the largest population of young black people that have very little regard for authority figures; no appreciation for the many opportunities afforded to them, and are bent on having success delivered to them in a hand basket.

No, I cannot honestly say that we do not have persons lacking in these capacities in the Bahamas, but at CAU, the lacking appears to be somewhat of an epidemic.

Analysis of the Faculty and Student Surveys on “Culture and Teaching/Learning at CAU”

by Timothy Moore, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Psychology

During the fall semester (2005) CETL conducted a survey for faculty and one for students to determine to what extent, if any, faculty and students believed that culture, in its broadest sense, affected the teaching and learning environment at Clark Atlanta University. Because of space restrictions in this issue of the newsletter, we are not able to publish the results of the survey, but these will be e-mailed directly to all faculty, staff and students. As well, they will be available upon request by writing to cetl@cau.edu.

There were a total of 79 respondents to the student survey; 83% were female and 17% were male. Geographically, there was an even spread of students throughout the country, but the highest percentage (32%) was from the South. Mass Communication, Business Administration and Psychology have the largest number of majors in the institution, and Mass Comm. (24.3%) and Business Admin. (23%) contained the largest number of respondents. As expected, the majority of respondents were African-American (85%). There was one white American/Caucasian, five other ethnic American, and three classified as other. There was an even distribution across the undergraduate rank with first-year students responding more than upper-class students. There were 66 undergraduate students and only 12 graduate students who responded. We will provide a synopsis of how students view culture and teaching/learning at CAU.

Although a large percentage of students (35%) responded that Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) may be a little more rigorous than HBCUs, there is pride and respect for both HBCUs and fellow students enrolled at CAU. The majority of students believe that students at PWIs are just as intelligent as students at HBCUs (63.3%) and the academic capabilities of students at CAU are just as valid as those of students at other AUC institutions (70.9%). Students from the South are well respected, and gender and skin color do not seem to be an issue with where students were from or the color of their skin. Most students were liberal-minded and 68.8% believe gay students should be given opportunities, rights and privileges equal to those of other students. There was considerable thoughtfulness to students with disabilities and for students who may need assistance with English.

In terms of academics, there was a definite yes (70.5%) for remedial assistance for students who have academic deficiencies. Although there appears to be acceptance for remedial courses, there is respect for fellow students. For example, 78.5% of the respondents believe that most students they know are capable of succeeding in college and passing their courses with a definite yes (76%).

The view of faculty was interesting. When comparing the academic preparation of faculty at HBCUs with that of faculty at PWIs, the majority of respondents (42%) believe faculty at HBCUs are generally just as prepared. Thirty three percent said a little less prepared. There is a positive view of African-American faculty because 72.7% of respondents believe African-American faculty were just as prepared as other faculty at CAU. There was no assumption that white instructors were any more superior in intelligence since 76% of respondents believed that white faculty at CAU were just as prepared as other faculty at CAU, compared to only 6.5% saying much more prepared.

There appeared to be no bias toward the competency of international faculty, but there was a serious concern about language, care and compassion. Only 8% of students stated that African-American faculty cared a little less about the academic success of students. On the other hand, there was a nearly threefold increase in the view that 23% of white faculty and 22.4% of international faculty generally care less about the academic success of students. Students believe that African-American faculty care considerably more about students than white and international faculty. For example, nearly 50% stated that African-American faculty cared more about student success compared to 6% for white faculty and 12.9% for international faculty.

In terms of diversity, 92% of students suggest that faculty should receive assistance in dealing with issues related to culture and cultural diversity. Moreover, 88% suggest that faculty should be engaged in activities focusing on culture and cultural diversity. Students appear to respect faculty, and 70.5% believe the student and faculty are responsible for student learning.

The two open-ended questions revealed valuable insight, and we will not overlook what students took the time to write concerning their views and perceptions on diversity and cultural issues at CAU. The first question was, “If a concern of yours related to culture and the CAU teaching/learning environment was not addressed in the survey, please express your concern here.” The second question was, “If you would like to expand on an issue raised in the survey, please feel free to do so.”

For question #1, the requirement for admissions was a concern, because students felt there were students who did not belong in college. According to one student, “This, in turn, creates an environment that does not seem to focus on academic achievement.” Another student wrote, “I believe that teachers in general at CAU make so many accommodations for their unproductive students that students are not encouraged to thrive and excel.” The student further goes on to state, “Students are overwhelmingly complacent, particularly compared to their peers at PWIs, and grow to expect their professors to make exceptions for them.”

A transfer student from a PWI was very clear about her disappointment with CAU. Here are the student’s abbreviated comments, “I transferred here last year and I hate that I did it. I have constantly been given the run around and I believe Clark [Atlanta] has many things to learn; especially how to treat people upon meeting them. Their people-relation skills are lacking heavily.” Her comments demonstrate that the proposed “student-centered” mission of the current administration is not being transmitted.

Many students had a concern about the language barrier in the classroom experience. It was suggested that international professors need English as a second language class, because it is hard to understand them. In this vein, some students then assume the instructor does not care for the student. In sum, the students complained about not understanding the teachers’ accents, and their methods of teaching are much different.

Overall, the survey provided a valuable perspective on how CAU students view cultural diversity issues in the academic setting. Our students are the main reason we are employed, and our mission should be to accommodate their requests. We hope the data from this survey can be used to modify our myopic view of culture and to enhance the teaching/learning experience at CAU.



National Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) for Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) Conference



January 15-17, 2006

The campus of Clark Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia

The purpose of this conference is to foster a collaborative approach to improving the educational environment of teaching and learning at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). Further it will provide opportunities for dialogue for faculty at these culturally-based institutions who are committed to scholarly work on teaching and learning.

The conference is being held in the historic "cradle of the Civil Rights Movement" to coincide with the 2006 Atlanta celebration of the Dr. Martin Luther King holiday. Attendees will tour the MLK Historic Site (including Freedom Hall, Eternal Flame, Crypt and Gravesite, Birth Home, Ebenezer Baptist Church, MLK National Park Visitor's Center)

This conference is supported by the Archibald Bush Foundation and Clark Atlanta University.

Speakers Include:

Dr. Barbara Cambridge

Senior Program Officer, National Council of Teachers of English;
President (incoming), International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Dr. Orlando Taylor

Vice Provost for Research and Dean, Howard University Graduate School

President Cheryl Crazy Bull

President, Northwest Indian College
President, American Indian Higher Education Consortium

"It seems to me that education has a two-fold function to perform in the life of man and in society; the one is utility and the other is culture. Education must enable a man to become more efficient, to achieve with increasing facility the legitimate goals of life."

*Martin Luther King, Jr. 1947
(as a student at Morehouse College)*

For details related to hotel accommodations and registration, contact:

Mrs. Alimah Maolud, Conference Coordinator at amaolud@cau.edu or call 404.880.8181.

Registration ends December 1, 2005