

Call for Participation and Applications to the 2009 Multicultural Curricular Transformation Institute

The Office of the Provost and the Committee on Multicultural Curriculum Transformation announced today that NIU's next [Multicultural Curriculum Transformation Institute](#) will be May 11-15, 2009, at the Holmes Student Center. Full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty, instructors, and supportive professional staff are invited to participate in the institute, which assists participants in incorporating multicultural perspectives and content into their courses, improving communication with students, and preparing alumni to participate in a diverse workplace and society.

Raymond W. Alden, III, Executive Vice President and Provost, invited all qualified faculty and instructional staff to apply. The deadline for applications is **December 18, 2008**, and all applications should be submitted electronically to mcti@niu.edu. In addition, \$1,000 [stipends](#) will be awarded to support transforming existing courses or developing new classes that address multiculturalism.

The institute features plenary sessions by prominent specialists, focused thematic discussions by NIU faculty and students, syllabi critiques, video presentations, and small group discussions. Approximately 220 individuals have participated in the institute since its inception, and they have made a significant impact on NIU's programs at all levels across all colleges.



Michael Gonzales, professor of history and director of the Center for Latino and Latin American Studies, has attended every Institute since its inception. He recently discussed the value of attending the MCTI.

"Faculty can become better teachers, and open new lines of communication with peers at NIU that they otherwise would be unlikely to meet," he said. "At the Institute, they can engage in frank discussions about sensitive topics in a safe environment. Participants know that within this venue, they aren't being evaluated or judged. The resulting free

exchange of ideas allows them to focus on the classroom and the benefits of an inclusive curriculum on student learning. The conversations can also serve as a catalyst for greater self-awareness.

"This introspection about race, class, gender, and related issues, serves as preparation for delivering a more inclusive curriculum.

Referring to his own experience as a Latin American historian, Dr. Gonzales noted that Latin America is composed of persons from European, indigenous, African, and Asian backgrounds, and serves as a laboratory for studying the interaction of different racial and cultural groups.

"Faculty in all disciplines can benefit from attending the Institute, because all classrooms represent a diverse audience. Successful instructors realize that students with different backgrounds process the materials in different ways. An inclusive curriculum reaches out to help all students become better learners."

Questions regarding the institute should be directed to the Graduate Assistant, Charles Stapleton, at 753-8557 or email mcti@niu.edu.

The National Association for Multicultural Education

Most faculty and staff would probably agree that diversity plays an important role in our educational institutions. However, the concept of multicultural education frequently inspires questions such as “What is it?” and “Why is it important?”

NAME, the [National Association for Multicultural Education](#), offers this answer:

“Multicultural education is a philosophical concept built on the ideals of freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity as acknowledged in various documents, such as the U.S. Declaration of Independence, constitutions of South Africa and the United States, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations. It affirms our need to prepare student for their responsibilities in an interdependent world. It recognizes the role schools can play in developing the attitudes and values necessary for a democratic society. It values cultural differences and affirms the pluralism that students, their communities, and teachers reflect. It challenges all forms of discrimination in schools and society through the promotion of democratic principles of social justice.

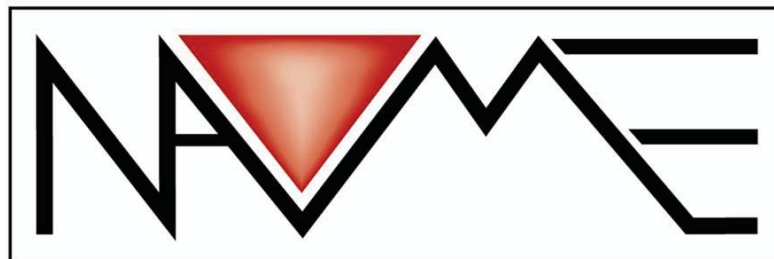
“Multicultural education is a process that permeates all aspects of school practices, policies and organization as a means to ensure the highest levels of academic achievement for all students. It helps students develop a positive self-concept by providing knowledge about the histories, cultures, and contributions of diverse groups. It prepares all students to work actively toward structural equality in organizations and institutions by providing the knowledge, dispositions, and skills for the redistribution of power and income among diverse groups. Thus, school curriculum must directly address issues of racism, sexism, classism, linguisticism, ablism, ageism, heterosexism, religious intolerance, and xenophobia.

“Multicultural education advocates the belief that students and their life histories and experiences should be placed at the center of the teaching and learning process and that pedagogy should

occur in a context that is familiar to students and that addresses multiple ways of thinking. In addition, teachers and students must critically analyze oppression and power relations in their communities, society and the world.

“To accomplish these goals, multicultural education demands a school staff that is culturally competent, and to the greatest extent possible racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse. Staff must be multiculturally literate and capable of including and embracing families and communities to create an environment that is supportive of multiple perspectives, experiences, and democracy. Multicultural education requires comprehensive school reform as multicultural education must pervade all aspects of the school community and organization.

“Recognizing that equality and equity are not the same thing, multicultural education attempts to offer all students an equitable educational opportunity, while at the same time, encouraging students to critique society in the interest of social justice.”



NAME's 2008 [International Conference](#) is set for November 12-16 in New Orleans. [Register online](#) or read the [brochure](#).

Peer Experience: Bill Goldenberg

Dr. William Goldenberg, Professor of piano and director of the Collaborative Piano program, shares his thoughts about how teaching music can be a rich multicultural experience.

"I encourage students to learn and perform non-traditional repertoire from a variety of cultures- Black, Hispanic, Asian, or any interests they have (without excluding old, white, dead males like Bach and Beethoven either!). Also, a few years ago we commissioned Wang Jian Zhong, a Professor of Composition at the Shanghai Conservatory to compose a piano solo work (called 'Evening Song of a Fishing Boat,' based on a traditional Chinese melody) for both me and my students to perform. I have since performed it in a number of concerts around the world and my students have worked on it and performed it as well.

"My students and I were invited to perform at the Chicago Cultural Center in a large

multicultural concert. We performed 2-piano arrangements of gamelan (Indonesian orchestra) music there. We have also performed many times at the World Music concerts here. And one of my former piano student graduates from Taiwan, Wang Jui-Ching, just received her doctorate and is teaching

"I am sensitive to multicultural influences in all music I teach; an obvious example would be the Asian influence in the music of Debussy and Ravel. I also seek students from a wide variety of cultures throughout the world who interact in many ways. At my regular performance classes, we get together to play our music for each other, but also to share food and conversation after – we create lots of interaction. When music from a particular culture is played, students can give authentic comments, sometimes about tunes they have known all their lives- like the Fishing Boat melody- known by all Chinese.

"I often ask my students to 'give me a lesson' – which allows them to learn to teach as well as help me! And I model behaviour students should have by my own actions. When the School of Music received a generous donation to purchase a new concert grand piano, I performed music by Black, Hispanic, Chinese, and Japanese composers at the dedication concert."



received World Music.

NIU Earns Recognition for Multicultural Resources

NIU is in the company of some of the nation's top colleges and universities when it comes to encouraging and fostering diversity.

[Minority Access Inc.](#), a non-profit organization that identifies, honors and publicizes institutions committed to diversity, recently honored 36 colleges and universities at the National Role Models Conference in Arlington, Va.

Multiple efforts at NIU helped to earn the recognition. Among them is NIU's "Dialog on Diversity" program. Over the next three to five years, more than 250 student organizations will be involved. About 30 sessions are planned each year, where students from the various groups will talk frankly about issues of race, gender, sexual orientation and more.

James Brunson, assistant vice president for diversity and equity in Student Affairs said, "We're helping to prepare these students for a global community. No institution in the country is doing anything remotely similar to this."

Selfless Saturdays a Multicultural Experience

Undergraduate senior Patrice Rounsaville is on her third semester of directing the Selfless Saturdays program. On the second Saturday of each month, members of the NIU community are invited to partner with a DeKalb organization for “a little dose of do-goody-ness.” The Women’s Resource Center supplies refreshments and transportation; participants need only bring a positive attitude and willingness to help. Volunteers might find themselves doing crafts, putting up decorations, or even getting some housecleaning done for those who have difficulty doing such things.

Patrice emphasizes that the Selfless Saturdays project isn’t limited to a certain population of people: “We’re open to everyone. A few of the organizations we’ve worked with are Huskies Paws for a Cause, Hope Haven, Connexion Comunidad, and the DeKalb County Youth Services Bureau. Volunteers learn that there are a wide variety of agencies working for the betterment of the community.”

Perhaps not coincidentally, Patrice recently took a multicultural class from Dr. Sherry Fang in Family, Consumer and Nutrition Sciences, whom [The Multiculturalist](#) interviewed in [fall 2007](#). Dr. Fang “quickly dispelled myths about what it means to be Asian-American. She asked the class to talk about the stereotypes. It was an eye-opening experience.”

Dr. Fang also assigned each student to interview someone from a different culture than their own. Patrice interviewed a woman not from the United States, thus directly engaging with someone whose perceptions of American culture are very different. The undergraduate came away from the experience with a heightened awareness of diverse viewpoints, and an affirmation that community service work cuts across race, class, and other assumptions about social standing.

“College students get so used to the university community that we sometimes forget that it is not the ‘real world,’” she says. “The Selfless Saturdays program is a small dose of reality. Participants begin to see the world differently and appreciate people for who they are. Allowing oneself

to be open to new experiences makes a major difference in one’s own life as well as the lives of others.

“We live in an individualistic society, sometimes becoming so selfish that we ignore the needs of others. At one point in time, you have had to rely on someone for something. Wouldn’t you like to be that person that someone else can rely on?”

Patrice is a sociology major with an interest in criminology. After graduation, she hopes to become a juvenile probation officer for Cook County. Readers can learn more about the Selfless Saturdays program by contacting Patrice at 815-753-0320.



Featured Journal: MultiCultural Review

[MultiCultural Review](#) is a quarterly journal for teachers at all levels, college professors, librarians, administrators, and anyone else interested in learning about new developments and trends in the field of cultural diversity.

The journal features reviews of print and non-profit resources, and articles that explore current issues. In addition, regular columns keep readers up to date on news, provide useful bibliographies, and much more.

Multicultural Resources in Founders' Library

Covered Girls (2002). A look at the lives of Muslim-American teenage girls living in post-9/11 New York City.

Battle of City Springs (2007). A year in the life of City Springs, a failing Baltimore elementary school serving a poor African-American community. Given one year to upgrade test scores or be closed, City Springs decides to introduce a radical curriculum called Direct instruction.

Compensation (1999). The life of a deaf African American woman in the early 1900's parallels with another living in the 1990's.

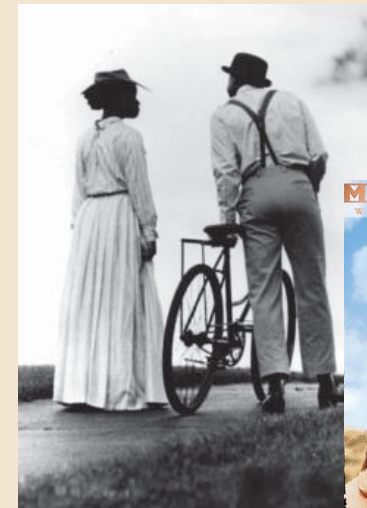
Whale Rider (2002). A contemporary story of love, rejection and triumph as a young Maori girl fights to fulfill a destiny her grandfather refuses to recognize.

Crash (2005). A rich, intelligent, and moving exploration of the interlocking lives of a dozen Los Angeles residents--black, white, latino, Asian, and Persian.

Smoke Signals (2000). The first feature made by a Native American crew and creative team, the film concerns two young Idaho men with radically different memories of a former resident of the reservation who split years before and has just died in Phoenix.

Snow Falling On Cedars (2000). A Japanese American war hero stands accused of murdering a white fisherman in the years following World War II.

Edge of Each Other's Battles (2002). Documents the translation of poet Audre Lorde's social vision into a transnational conference where 1200 women and men and activist youth from 23 countries used Lorde's work to address transcultural understandings of race, gender, sexuality, and class.



Contact Us

Published twice yearly, **THE MULTICULTURALIST** is brought to you by the **Office of the Provost**. We'd love to hear from you! Send in your multicultural methodology or success story to editor-in-chief **Donna Askins**. Interviews can be arranged. For all questions related to the Multicultural Curriculum Transformation Institute, contact mcti@niu.edu or call 815.753.8557.