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Multicultural Student Leadership Retreat will focus on issues of white privilege

Summary: About 50 students from the University of Minnesota, Morris will participate in the ninth annual Multicultural Student Leadership Retreat (MSLR) in late January. The retreat, which is coordinated through the Office of Student Activities at UMM, will be held January 26-28, 2007, at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center in Fergus Falls.

(December 13, 2006)-About 50 students from the University of Minnesota, Morris will participate in the ninth annual Multicultural Student Leadership Retreat (MSLR) in late January. The retreat, which is coordinated through the Office of Student Activities at UMM, will be held January 26-28, 2007, at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center in Fergus Falls.

The theme of the retreat this year is “Our time is now” and will focus more on issues of white privilege. The event, which promotes a deeper understanding of diversity, welcomes two large-group facilitators each year. Georgiana Torres-Reyes, the director of multicultural affairs at DePaul University and Art Muinn, the assistant dean of students at DePaul University, will join UMM students who attend the event in January. Students, staff and faculty from UMM are selected for a Vision Committee that plans the retreat. This year the committee is comprised of staff members Mike Miller, assistant director and coordinator of the Multi-Ethnic Student Program and TJ Ross, assistant director of residential life for facilities and operations students Molly Kuether and Blair Jasper and Assistant Professor of Chemistry Joseph Alia, along with Lily Opatz, MSLR intern, and Dave Swenson, director of student activities.

Miller, who also assists with academic advising and a variety of student organizations, has been on the Vision Committee eight of the nine years the retreat has been held and is a staff facilitator for the first time this year. Along with encouraging many students to attend the retreat, Miller said, “[The retreat] allows students who would probably never interact to come together.” Miller emphasized that this retreat is not only to explore diversity, but is also geared toward leadership, “I think leadership can be seen in the students just because they choose to go to this retreat. They’re taking a risk and learning new things. To me, that’s part of leadership.”

The MSLR retreat is a chance for students to explore diversity issues on a deeper level. By pulling the students away from the campus, Opatz believes the retreat center allows students to detach themselves from their familiar environment, creating a safer and more comfortable environment to address these issues. “This retreat is an excellent way to become more involved on campus. You meet a lot of interesting people,” said Opatz, who attended the MSLR in January 2006.

Swenson hopes that those who attend this year will be able to bring more of what is learned back to the campus. The retreat will offer a variety of interactive programs and an atmosphere that promotes a deeper understanding of diversity.

To learn more about the retreat contact Dave Swenson in Student Activities at (320) 589-6080 or Mike Miller, Multi-Ethnic Student Program, (320) 589-6094.

Photo by Bob Pearl Photography: Students “chill” in Turtle Mountain Café in the campus Student Center.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.