The mission of the Office of Minority Student Affairs (OMSA), which celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2009, is to provide support services to 600 students, including participants in the Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) and the Early Connection Opportunity (ECO) program, by creating an environment that ensures the achievement of their academic, personal, and career goals. To support this mission, OMSA provides counseling, disseminates information, initiates programs, and serves as a liaison with other departments and divisions of the University. Since 1969, the College and the New York State Education Department have jointly sponsored HEOP to help students with low socioeconomic and educational status from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds to succeed. The program currently serves 113 students and has a HEOP graduation rate of 90 percent.

OMSA also manages the ECO program, a four-week, tuition-free academic and residential prefreshman summer enrichment program that assists students in the transition from high school to college. More than 200 students currently enrolled have participated in ECO and have transitioned effectively into the University community, a process that is crucial for academic success.

OMSA proactively supports the University’s efforts to build diversity awareness by promoting an inclusive community for students, faculty, and staff. OMSA celebrates diversity and its students with numerous events, initiatives, and programs such as Enrichment and Enhancement Studios, Freshman Welcome Reception, Academic Achievement Reception, Emerging Leaders Program, the OMSA Chronicle and Abstract, and the Senior Dinner Commencement Celebration. Through these initiatives and more, as well as numerous cosponsorships and collaborations with student groups and University departments, OMSA prides itself on supporting and retaining students as they navigate their undergraduate careers.

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Spotlight on Diversity

Reverend Dr. Joseph Lowery delivers Martin Luther King Address

President Barack Obama has only awarded sixteen people—sixteen civilians, people among you and me—with a Presidential Medal of Freedom. The Presidential Medal of Freedom honors civilians who have significantly contributed to the security or national interest of the United States, world peace, cultural or other pivotal public or private endeavors. It is not often that one may claim to have had an opportunity to hear a Medal of Freedom recipient speak in person. Yet, as a junior at the University of Rochester, I not only had the opportunity to hear one speak, but also the chance to meet, greet, and chat with him.

On January 22, the Honorable Reverend Dr. Joseph Lowery addressed an audience full of community members, faculty, staff and University of Rochester and surrounding college students in Strong Auditorium for the University’s annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Address. In a 45-minute speech that was mixed with serious tones and humorous pop culture references, Lowery was able to engage the audience in ways that other public speakers could only admire. In one instance, Lowery would praise King for his transcendence from Black-American civil rights to civil rights for Vietnam, while in the next breath he would make reference to American Idol’s “The General,” whose rap “pants on the ground, you look like a fool” earned him a presence on Youtube.

In a speech that constantly shifted from tones of seriousness to tones of comedy, Lowery’s down-to-earth persona was met with numerous standing ovations and hearty amens. He concluded his speech with a decree for citizens to sincerely take action in honor of King. “Our celebration must move from charity to love,” he said, “if we are serious about honoring Martin Luther King and the march to justice, ceremony is insufficient to lead us to a new level of stewardship.”

If Reverend Lowery’s visit to the University were to be compressed into a one-line theme, it would be fair characterize it as an attempt to encourage today’s youth to actively engage the future of our nation. Although he clearly addressed the youth in his public speech, it was hardly as special and heart-to-heart as the intimate Student Leaders Dialogue with twelve students in the Gandhi Reading Room of Rush Rhees Library prior to the commemorative address. I am still highly thankful that I had the opportunity to be .
Kudos 2009-2010

Ashawmima Wright ’10 will be attending Columbia University to pursue a Ph.D in Developmental Psychology!

Renea Fualknor ’10 will be attending Rutgers University to pursue a Ph.D in Biomedical Engineering!

Danielle Jones ’10 will be attending the Chicago School of Professional Psychology for her Psy.D!

Marisa Lester ’10 will be pursuing her MA in Criminal Justice at Penn State!

Candice Frazer ’10 was accepted at Hofstra University to pursue a M.S.Ed in Educational Leadership & Policy Studies with a concentration in Higher Education!

Allison Reiman ’11 was accepted as 3-2 MBA candidate to William E. Simon Graduate School of Business ’12. She is also a 2010 Alice DeSimon Award Recipient and an intern with the Boeing Company: Contracts Department.

Rainie M. Spiva ’10 obtained a position as Community Assistant for the Rochester Center for Community Leadership. She will be working with the Urban Fellows Program and Planning Wilson Day!

2010 Early Connection Opportunity Program Assistants

Bickford, Christopher ’12
Gaeta, Alma ’12
Lorenzo, Stephanie ’12
Dick, Benjamin ’13
Dualeh, Shukri ’13
Oladoyin, Oladearu ’13

Xerox Class of 2012

Archer, Steven
Barbash, Daniel

Kearns Scholars

Class of 2013

Ade-Brown, Chandra
Ballard, Diamonique
Children, Karlyssa
Chowdury, Ripa
De La Cruz, Diego
Francis, Zoey
Lynch, Ashanna
Marozas, Ian
Nicholas, Tyler
Obi, Tagbo
Ogunbior, Tolulope
Oladearu, Oladoyin
Parker, Taureen
Santiago, Felipe
Tejada, Omaira
Unes, Chizoba

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OMSA CHRONICLE MISSION

To provide students with timely information about opportunities and events that support the mission of OMSA; to serve as a forum for students to present ideas, issues and solutions to problems and or issues that exist in our community; to act as an on-going communication resource for students, faculty and staff alike.
Senior Spotlight: Lashonda Brenson

What do you do in your spare time? When I’m not studying, I love to spend time with my family and friends, reading and listening to music.

What is your favorite inspirational quotation? “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?” -Marianne Williamson

What is your fondest memory at the University of Rochester? My fondest memory of University of Rochester are the countless discussions that I help to plan, develop and attend on the diversification and inclusion of faculty and students.

What are your future plans? Next fall, I will be enrolled in a political science Ph.D. program where I plan to study the role that race and gender play in legislative politics. By studying institutions in terms of the race, gender and the intersection of the two, I hope to offer a better understanding of how institutional dynamics affect the selection of minority representatives to legislate. Upon earning my doctorate, I hope to become a political science professor.

Who is your role model? Dr. Valeria Sinclair-Chapman and my mother, Ella Brenson, are very influential in my life. Dr. Sinclair-Chapman has served as both my professor and my advisor. I know that I can always count on her to be there for me with her warm smile and encouraging words. My mother is by far the strongest person I know and she often believes in me even when I don’t believe in myself.

Hometown: Rochester, NY
Major(s): Mathematics and Political Science

Women’s Leadership Awards

2010 Susan B. Anthony Scholarship
Sponsored by the Women's Club of the University of Rochester, this scholarship is awarded to two undergraduate women who are of junior status and who have demonstrated outstanding leadership and commitment in co-curricular activities and academic achievement. This need-based scholarship is applied to the recipient’s senior-year financial aid package; applications will only be sent to students with financial need as determined by the financial aid office.

Recipient: Yaneve Fonge ('11)

2010 Fannie Bigelow Prize
This prize is presented to an undergraduate upperclassmen chosen on the basis of her individuality and ability to form and express fearlessly, with conviction and sound judgment, her own opinions on vital topics. She also participates in extra-curricular activities because she sincerely believes in their value to the college community beyond their purely social worth.

Recipient: Nadine S. Nicholson ('10)

OMSA Family Pillar Award
by Robert Duran

Cynthia German is my guardian. She is my foundation, she is my sister. I’ve had a lot of things happen in my life, a lot of hardships, but there has always been one thing which has been unbreakable, unbreakable; her love and dedication to me and my future.

Cynthia German is my oldest sister and sibling, she is 14 years my elder, but in my eyes can never be anything but a second mother, similar to how in her eyes I can never be anything but her baby brother (no matter how annoying the baby brother thing is…). You see, Cynthia has been my legal guardian since I was 8 years old. It was at this time in my life where my mother Norma had passed on due to a heart attack. This was also the time where the family I had known for those eight years crumbled. My father decided to move to the Dominican Republic, giving me the decision of whether or not to stay in the US or move with him. I stayed.

I stayed knowing who I would live with. Was it to be my grandmother, with her 1 bedroom apartment, two kids and a dog? In addition to this what was going to happen to my other sister who was 12 years my elder? My father abandoned us for a family he had started in the Dominican Republic, a family he had before he met my mother. This was the “storm” of hard times I alluded to previously. Luckily for me, I had Cynthia. I always had a sense that what Cynthia was doing, becoming my guardian, was an act that that I could never repay and I was grateful. But it isn’t until now, as I get closer to my 22 birthday, the same age at which she assumed the responsibility of raising me, her baby brother, that I understand the weight of the decision.

What’s ironic is that her daughter, my niece, is the same age I was when my sister took to raising me. Recently I tried to imagine what raising my niece, an eight year old, would be like. Then I realized something important, I owe Cynthia my life, I always believed that for my sister taking on the responsibility was hard. But I cannot imagine the stress, financial and emotionally, that was placed on a 22 year old, by taking on, willingly, the role of mother to her 8 year old brother. For this reason I know, that without my sister’s strength, my foundation, I would not be here today.

Throughout my life she has never made me feel as though I was a burden. I can not remember a time when she didn’t stress the importance of an education. I can not recall a time where she didn’t teach me the value of hard work, of honesty, and most importantly compassion. Everything that I have, that I’ve gained, I owe to her. Even in college she kept me grounded and focused, informing of the happenings in the family and letting me know that she loved me and believed in me. Cynthia, I love you with all of my heart and I hope that this award goes to you because there is no one that has sacrificed and continues to sacrifice more for their family than you, at least in my eyes.

Robert Duran ’09 was the 2009 winner of the OMSA Family Pillar Award Essay Contest.

The Family Pillar award is an award given in honor of the significant contributions, sacrifices and support that family members make in the lives of University of Rochester students supported by OMSA.

**All OMSA Supported graduating seniors (ONLY) may enter the contest**

About the essay: Author Gail Lumet Buckley wrote, “Family faces are like magic mirrors. Looking at people who belong to us, we see the past, present and future.” Using this quote as a guide, please explain how your parent, grandparent, or other family member has positively influenced your past and present. Share how this influence has contributed to your personal growth and academic success at the University of Rochester and how you plan to use this influence as you look toward your future. The family member referenced in your essay will be nominated to receive this year’s Family Pillar Award.

All nominees receive a congratulatory letter and a copy of the essay submission. Recognition of the winning essay and the award recipient(s) will occur during the Office of Minority Student Affairs 37th Annual Student Dinner on Saturday, May 15, 2010. The student who wrote the winning essay will be presented with a UR Alumni gift basket and the winner(s) of the Family Pillar Award will be presented with a plaque. The winning student will also be highlighted in the OMSA Chronicle.
Student Lobby Day

College students put their words into action on Student Advocacy Day in Albany, which took place on Tuesday, Feb. 9.

Approximately 850 students from 55 different college campuses from across New York State gathered to voice their opinions and concerns about higher education funds to state legislators.

The event allowed students to take part in the legislative process concerning higher education. They specifically wished to address New York State Governor David Paterson’s proposed budget plan.

OSMachinery welcomes new counselor

Carmela Barbagallo

The Office of Minority Student Affairs would like to introduce you to Ms. Carmela Barbagallo, our newest OMSA and HEOP Counselor.

Carmela earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Marketing from the State University of New York at Oswego. Carmela obtained minors in Spanish and Economics and completed study abroad programs in Mazatlan, Mexico and Grado, Italy. Carmela is currently taking graduate courses in The Warner School and plans to apply to pursue her Masters in Higher Education.

As an undergraduate student, Carmela was a Resident Assistant and Admissions Tour Guide. Later, she was employed as a Residence Director at The College for the Business of Fashion in Manhattan and, most recently, at St. John Fisher College in Rochester.

Prior to her work in the Higher Education field, Carmela spent seven years working in Corporate America for Citigroup. She held positions in Project Management, Software Implementations, Travel Procurement, Event Marketing, and Operations. Carmela completed Citigroup Business Services Leadership Development program. During her tenure at Citigroup, Carmela performed extensive international travel, including an assignment in Sydney, Australia.

Carmela is really excited to meet OMSA students and talk about study abroad, academic planning, and career opportunities. Currently, Carmela is enjoying coordinating the OMSA Senior Dinner and working with the Senior Dinner Committee to make the event a memorable occasion. Please stop by OMSA and meet Carmela. You can also contact her via email cbarbaga@admin.rochester.edu or phone at (585) 275-3157.

Harold Ford Jr. Lecture Addresses Civil Rights in the 21st Century

by Jessica Guzman

Harold Ford Jr. spoke about civil rights, the importance of volunteerism, making a difference from a student’s perspective, and how to prepare students for the challenge of leadership to the University of Rochester community on Thursday, February 18, 2010 in the Interfaith Chapel. The event was sponsored by the Black Students’ Union.

Ford Jr. is a Democratic Party member of the United States House of Representatives from Tennessee’s 9th congressional district; chairman of the Democratic Leadership Council; visiting professor at New York University Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service; and news analyst for NBC and MSNBC.

Ford serves on the Transformation Advisory Group, an assembly of current and former military commanders, political figures, academics, and business leaders who advise the Pentagon on how to modernize our armed forces to meet and defeat 21st century threats. He is also an overseer on the board at the International Rescue Committee and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. From 1998-2008, Ford served as a U.S. Congressman from Tennessee on the financial services and budget committees. He received a bachelor’s degree in American history from the University of Pennsylvania and a doctorate of law degree from the University of Michigan Law School.

While in Rochester, Ford stopped at Nick Tahou’s for a cheeseburger garbage plate and received a t-shirt from owner Alex Tahou. “I read before coming here that I had to come here and have a hamburger, cheeseburger, garbage plate, which has me a little full,” Ford said.

Pictured: Melika Butcher ’12, Rashiana Bowleg ’12, Kashawmna Wright ’10, Jan Fuertado ’12, Charlene Cooper ’12, Schae-Akeem Simpson ’11, Harold Ford Jr., Renea Faulknor ’10, Marisa Lester ’10, Danielle Jones ’10, Dayanna Davis ’12.
MLK Address

From the Bottom of the Bottom to the Top of the Top
by Nigel Phillip

I will never forget the day that I first stepped foot onto the campus of the University of Rochester. It was a beautiful Wednesday morning in July and I had recently graduated from high school not more than three weeks prior. I felt as if I could conquer the world and I was filled with enough determination and drive to seize it twice. As I arrived on campus that morning I was overwhelmed with a myriad of emotions ranging from nervousness to joyous anticipation. I finally found Hoeing Hall which was the dormitory that I was assigned to for the remainder of the summer. As I entered Hoeing Hall I was approached by two residential advisors for the HEOP program and almost instantaneously all of my fears, concerns, and doubts where taken away. They were both smiling from ear to ear to brimming with a warm welcoming energy that let me know at that very moment that everything was going to be alright.

The next six weeks were phenomenal and changed my life in a manner that I would have never imagined. I met the greatest counselors, the best of friends, and the food was not all that bad. I was surrounded by individuals that were actually genuinely concerned with not only my academic well being, but me as well and that made a world of difference. HEOP gave me an opportunity to be successful by not only providing me an opportunity to try, but by providing one of the strongest, caring, knowledgeable support networks one could ever expect. They helped me get off of a stronger academic start and continued to provide the support I needed when the need was there. No matter how I struggled, no matter how I succeeded, HEOP was there. They were never there to tear down or to judge, but rather to build up and to motivate.

After my Junior year at the University of Rochester I had to withdraw from school and working with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to organize the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Dr. King also had the honor of delivering the benediction at our graduation ceremony. I always remember, as he jokes, ‘I came to give, but you have all given me so much more than I could ever hope for.’

Although I am not a church-going girl, I found myself saying “Amen” along with the audience as I was hearing his powerful words and thoughts. The room was filled with amens, laughter, and applause, as people were hugging on to Rev. Dr. Lowery’s message that “justice delayed is justice denied”.

I felt this event was definitely a Minority event. Open to the public, Strong Auditorium was filled with a diverse crowd, but in celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. the minority became the majority. To me this meant a lot. However, I find myself often not doing anything to promote change. Seeing all the diverse faces made me think of Rev. Dr. Lowery’s statement, “All has change and nothing has changed.” I am happy that we were all able to come together to celebrate a black man but is that the only thing we should come together to do for one day or month out of a year? Other University of Rochester events lack minorities and minority interest, and that’s where there is a need for change. Furthermore, what am I doing to help change this? Rev. Dr. Lowery urges us to reevaluate what we have done lately to promote change.

I feel fortunate to have been witness to this address. Rev. Dr. Lowery is a great person and has brought a lot to the black community. Although he may be seen as an “agitator”—another term for a washing machine—as the woman in one of his many anecdotes explains: an agitator separates the dirty from the clean. That’s what we need in this world.

This excerpt was taken from a reflection for a course entitled Diversity and Equity in Higher Education. Candice Frazer is a member of the Class of 2010.
Presidential Diversity Awards

Awarded by the President’s Office, the University Presidential Diversity Awards were created in 2009 to acknowledge “exemplary contributions to the University’s diversity and inclusion efforts”. Each Presidential Diversity Award includes a $2,500 prize; individual award winners will receive half and will designate half to support the budget of a program or department of the winner’s choice. Team award winners will designate the entire $2,500 prize to the program or department of the team’s choice.

On March 15, the College Diversity Roundtable (CDR) launched its second Campus Climate Survey. Sent to undergraduates at the College and at the Eastman School of Music, the anonymous survey aims to evaluate undergraduate students’ past and current experiences with issues of diversity including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and disability. The biennial survey was first implemented in 2008, representing the first formal measurement of the campus climate since 1982.

Since its inception in 2000, the CDR has served as a place for dialogue surrounding both campus climate and the quality of student life at Rochester. As a student-centered task force, undergraduates meet monthly with faculty and staff to discuss issues or concerns. Under the helm of current chair Norman Burnett, director of the Office of Minority Student Affairs, and Beth Olivares, director of the Kearns Center and chair of the Campus Climate Survey committee, the CDR has implemented several initiatives, including increased programming for culture events like the annual Martin Luther King Commemorative Address.

In addition to its programming efforts, the CDR administered the Survey to collect both qualitative and quantitative data describing the social and educational experiences students have on campus. It serves an important tool as the CDR meets its charge of fostering a more inclusive college experience for undergraduates.

In the fall, the CDR hopes to present results from the survey to the campus community through a variety of forums and panel discussions. For more about the CDR visit http://www.rochester.edu/college/roundtable/

Kodak Moments from the Campus Climate Survey Finale

- 1,229 college students, 24.3% of the undergraduate population completed the survey in March of this year.
- In 2008, 30.4% of the student population, or 1,251 undergraduates, responded.

Members of the CDR motivated undergraduate students to complete the Campus Climate Survey on the last day of the two-week period with a Finale Party in ITS.