

## **Seven University of Rochester Employees complete the United Way's Leadership Development Programs**

The **United Way's African American and Latino Leadership Development Programs** are unique development programs that identify, train, and promote the placement of members of the community in policy and decision making positions in community organizations in the greater Rochester area. The Curriculum topics include: communication, leadership, decision-making, conflict resolution, and board membership responsibilities.

As the University of Rochester continues to deepen its commitment to the Rochester community, it is paramount that as *the number one employer* we foster and cultivate community leaders from our very own diverse staff. The support of individuals attending such leadership programs lays a strong foundation for a deeper understanding of the challenges related to the health care disparities, poverty and other social and socio-economic factors facing the Greater Rochester Community.

The employees who participated in this year's Programs are all members of either the or the African-American Network @UR or the Latino Professional Alliance @UR.

### **African American Leadership Development Program (AALDP) Class of 2007 Reflections**

*By Venessa M. Mitchell*

My experience of attending the African American Leadership Development Program (AALDP) was very exhilarating. I heard many dynamics speakers discuss different ways to be a better leader both on my job and in the community. The experience level of the speakers spanned across various businesses and they were able to provide perspectives from finance, education, not-for-profit organizations and more. I developed new relationships with other professionals that will enable me to make changes in the Rochester community. Not only did I feel strongly encouraged to go out and make a difference but it was demonstrated how higher education can catapult us to new heights. It was impressive to see that of the 43 participants in the program, 40% had college degrees at a Master's level and higher. This *Class of Destiny*, as we referred to ourselves, was already on the road to success.

I developed a leadership plan and was able to participate in a simulation of being on an executive board of directors. Our group interacted with the Latino Leadership Development Program (LLDP) on several occasions and was able to discuss how our goals are very similar even though we have different cultural backgrounds. We also found that many of our experiences in life were very

much the same. During these interactions it was agreed that we need to be all inclusive between AALDP and LLDP in order to make a positive change come about in business and the community. We teamed up with LLDP and visited several not-for-profit organizations to find out what they have to offer and where we could make a difference.

As a result of this training program, I am more energized and want to do more not only in my current position as a HR Liaison/Admin Assistant in the Center for Neural Development and Disease but throughout the University of Rochester. One of my interests has been to help and guide young people achieve their goals. I am encouraged that I will be in a better position to direct more students from under represented groups regarding the numerous opportunities that are available to them including attending the University of Rochester to further their education. I have already signed up to be a mentor at the American Red Cross as part of their Black Youth Leadership Development Program (BYLDP) and the Pillars of Hope.

As an exempt staff member I looked at this African American Leadership Development Program as another part of my professional development that could be used to enhance my work environment. This leadership program could benefit our center and the University as a whole.

The Pastor of my Church gave much recognition to my achievement and stressed how we all need to do what we can to make a difference in this society. Part of that definitely includes continuous learning from many different avenues and putting it in to action.

In closing, attending AALDP was a wonderful experience and I would highly recommend it to others and have already done so.

*By Michelle E. Thompson-Taylor*

I can truly describe my experience with the African American Leadership Development Program (AALDP) as eye-opening. Due to the fact that I am not a Rochester native, there was always a sense of detachment from the happenings and way of life here in Rochester. After ten days in this program, I have a much better sense of Rochester - from a socio-historical, economic and political perspective. AALDP could have been dubbed "Addressing the Leadership Challenges of Rochester". The presenters and facilitators brought years of experience and depths of research to us as participants. In some cases, it was like scales falling away from my eyes. In other cases, it was an affirmation of something I had already learned.

My supervisor was very supportive of my plans to apply to the program and very accommodating once I got accepted. Continuous learning has been an

encouraged activity in my department and staff have been encouraged to seek out traditional and non-traditional ways to engage in learning experiences. I heard about AALDP shortly after moving to Rochester in 2001 and it was always in the back of my mind as a program that I would like to participate in. Having been granted this opportunity, I was not disappointed. The program sought to address the many nuances of leadership while addressing the idiosyncrasies of individuals. It challenged my way of thinking about people, processes and programs. It helped me recognize that there are lots of people involved at the grass roots level in helping and uplifting the Rochester community. But more importantly, it caused me to assess my own situation and identify areas where I could get involved. I was not looking for a seat at the table, but I've been challenged to enter the room, pull up a chair and become engaged in the discussion and policy making that happens around the table.

My role in the Admissions Office at the University of Rochester involves relationship building and liaisons with various organizations. AALDP has benefited me in that aspect as well as on a personal level. The University of Rochester is important to the Rochester community. Not only is this institution the number one employer but it is a symbol - Meliora. The University of Rochester has to encourage and support employees who desire to better themselves and this community. It did just that for me by allowing me to share in this remarkable learning opportunity. I'm now fueled to impact the greater Rochester community as well as my experience as a University of Rochester employee.

### **Latino Leadership Development Program Class of 2007 Reflections**

*By Berlin Bermudez, Felicia Garcia, Jessica Guzman, Maricela Guzman, and Alvin Ruiz*

The Latino Leadership Development Program (LLDP) through the United Way had a significant impact on us. It enabled us to bridge our personal and professional life and helped us to understand how Latinos/as have impacted our local community. In addition, we have also learned how Latinos/as continue to create change through Leadership positions at the local, state and national levels. In addition, we have gained knowledge from a Latino point of view, which we have never experienced before in previous leadership courses, workshops and conferences.

Since participating in LLDP, we have seen a difference in our approach to work, interactions with colleagues and life related issues. Some of us have become more outspoken in our opinions and ideas and the results in general have been extremely positive. As a result of LLDP, some of us have been more involved with our communities and now have a clear vision of where we would like to be in the near future. LLDP has provided us with the knowledge, facts, ideas and

tools to confront situations in a more effective way in order to be more successful.

The interaction with other participants has also been instrumental in our development. There is no price on the value of this training and the powerful results that we have been able to experience. Upon completion of the Latino Leadership Development Program, we felt that as emerging leaders in the University of Rochester community, we have gained the skills to evolve in the areas that may include administrative, academic, and educational duties within the University. It has allowed us to embrace our similarities, while at the same time incorporating cultural differences in order to enhance our own learning capabilities to lead people. LLDP has provided Leadership tools by laying the foundation and allowing us to run with it. We have also learned that a critical skill for leaders is the ability to manage their own learning capabilities.

The importance of staff growth is to develop individuals who will enhance the overall productivity rate as well as the quality delivered to affiliates, clients and partners. As employees gain new skills and knowledge, it will be reflected in their work areas on how efficient they've become and it will support the University of Rochester's professional development initiative mission. As managers support staff on their growth and development, staff will feel that they are a valuable component in their organization, making the University of Rochester one of the best places to work.

It speaks volumes to be able to say that our managers not only encouraged us to attend the leadership training but were also excited for us. We all realize that missing six full days of work can be a challenge both for our managers, our units, and ourselves. However, our managers realized that this type of opportunity would benefit everyone involved in the long-term and looked past the short-term. Most of our managers purchased tickets to and were present at our graduation ceremony held on November 8, 2007. This support means a great deal to us but also shows what type of environment the University of Rochester should reflect, which is a place of learning that is inclusive of staff as well. These managers should serve as role models for others who may be struggling with these types of decisions. In sum, we highly recommend this leadership development experience to anyone interested in growing personally and professionally.

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