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Multicultural Student Center 25th Anniversary Report

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Multicultural Student Center 25th Anniversary Report

Cultural Resource Centers, Portland State University

Multicultural Student Center 25th Anniversary Report
Cultural Resource Centers Diversity &
Multicultural Student Services Portland
State University
2018

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Portland State University students, faculty, staff, and community stakeholders

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Portland State
Multicultural Student Center



Diversity & Multicultural
Student Services

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Introduction

The Multicultural Student Center (MCC) at Portland State University (PSU) explores our intersectional identities and seeks to develop cultural competency through student engagement, programming, and meaningful dialogue. The MCC's origins are rooted in student activism. In 1991, the United Students Coalition circulated a petition and collected over 300 signatures in support of a space on campus that would facilitate academic, professional, social, and cultural growth. Since its opening on February 25th, 1993, the MCC has moved and grown to welcome all community members, facilitated the initiation and growth of other on-campus cultural spaces, and provided a model for student services used across PSU and beyond.

It is suggested in Tinto's (1993) separation stage, that a break from one's social home community is important for successful transition to college. However, Patton (2010) argues that when students of color do this, it further marginalizes them on-campus that historically have not welcomed them. Tierney (1999) also argued that students of color should be able to validate and maintain their cultural identities at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) rather than be put in a position where they question them.

Cultural centers at PWIs, like PSU's Multicultural Student Center, often work to address exclusionary practices within the legacy of higher education (Jones, Castellanos & Cole, 2002). Students outside of the dominant population, "look to cross-cultural centers as institutional support systems in which they develop academic and social networks, opportunities for campus involvement, and ultimately a haven that improves campus climate," (Jones, Castellanos & Cole, 2002, p. 22). These centers are often looked to as home spaces on-campus for students of color (Jones, Castellanos & Cole, 2002).

By creating counter spaces, students of color foster communities of resistance (Patton, 2010). These counter spaces emphasize their home communities and reject the idea that to be successful in college, they have to leave behind their cultural identities (Patton, 2010). Cultural centers support students of color as they navigate academia and university resources, while balancing the expectations and weight they carry for their families and communities to succeed (Patton, 2010).

The MCC serves as a hub for the five Cultural Resource Centers which include: the MCC, La Casa Latina Student Center, the Native American Student & Community Center, the Pacific Islander, Asian, and Asian American Student Center, and the Pan-African Commons. Cultural spaces offer locations on-campus for student involvement - a determining factor for student development and growth during college (Astin, 1984). With a diverse range of involvement platforms, the MCC provides engagement opportunities for all PSU students. As a student resource center/event space hybrid, the MCC offers resources including a computer lab, study/lounge space, microwave/hot water station, and office supplies as well as robust

programming that includes focuses on international students, multiracial identity, and the Middle Eastern, North African, and Southwest Asian (MENASA) student community.

History & Timeline

1991 - *The United Students Coalition proposes the idea for a MCC*

The coalition consisted of representatives from the following student groups: the Association of African Students, the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Alliance, Black Cultural Affairs Board, Women's Union, Hispanic Student Union, the Organization of International Students, and the United Indian Students in Higher Education. The coalition circulated a petition for the creation of a Multicultural Center and obtained over 300 signatures before presenting it to the administration.

April 28, 1992 - *PSU President approves the MCC proposal*

Under the direction of PSU President Judith Ramaley, the PSU Executive Committee approved the phase 1 plans ("the why and what") for a Multicultural Center by issuing a statement moving the Diversity Action Team, the United Students Coalition, and the MCC Work Group into phase 2. Phase 2 planning required an implementation plan, with the goal to have the center open by January 1993. The president designed a student-minority committee to work on this phase 2 implementation. Some students pushed back, frustrated with the high level of administrative control of the process.

November 1992 - *The MCC finds its first home in Smith Memorial Student Union Room 026*

The United Students Coalition were given two options for a location in SMSU. After much deliberation and the prioritization of accessibility, the Portland Room (SMSU 026), a faculty/staff dining area was chosen. After pushback from faculty on campus, the PSU Finance and Administration Committee went against the decision and committed to renovating the Wrapit Transit Cafeteria, SMSU Room 026 (located in the basement) to become the official site of the Multicultural Center. Once again, administrative goals are put before student voices.

February 25, 1993 - *The MCC opens*

After a year and a half of student organizing and advocacy, the Multicultural Center had its grand opening on the first floor of SMSU. A group of students boycotted the opening, arguing that administrative control altered their vision and implementation of the center.

July 29, 1993 - *The MCC publishes its first bylaws*

Students, faculty, staff, and administrators convened to draft the original bylaws for the Multicultural Center which were used as a guiding document for center programming and operations. These bylaws outlined the mission and vision for the center, with which the MCC Coordinator and Advisory Board would use as a job description and

October/November 1993 - *The campus community meets MCC Coordinator candidates*

Campus and community members were welcomed to the Multicultural Center for a series of meet-the-candidate sessions.

January 3, 1994 - *The MCC hires its first Coordinator*

Wanda Irving is chosen as the first Multicultural Center Coordinator. Her position was funded by the Office of Student Affairs for 20 hours per week.

June 1999 - *The MCC hosts its first Multicultural Graduation*

Students gathered in the Multicultural Center to celebrate their accomplishments and dedication to higher learning. The MCC hosted its first ever Multicultural Graduation ceremony where students, faculty, staff, and community were invited to congratulate graduates with a specific focus on the achievements of students of color.

Fall 2001 - *The MCC moves to SMSU Room 228*

After strong student advocacy, the Multicultural Center is moved from the basement of SMSU to the second floor (SMSU 228) where it currently resides.

2002 - *The MCC sees a transition in leadership*

After the Multicultural Center is moved to the second floor, Jon Joiner took over as the Interim Program Coordinator of the space. Joiner eventually transitioned to the position of MCC Director and remained in that position until 2012.

2005-2006 - *The MCC becomes student fee funded*

By the powers vested in the Oregon State legislature, the Student Fee Committee is charged with allocating the cumulative student fee dollars at Portland State. In 2005, the Multicultural Center transitioned to being a Fee Funded Area (FFA) with Sa'eed M. Haji as the Center's new assistant coordinator. Haji continues to work at the MCC until 2012.

2011 - *The MCC is folded into the Cultural Resource Centers*

After acting as its own PSU entity for almost two decades, the Multicultural Center was folded into the Cultural Resource Centers alongside La Casa Latina (opened in 2011) and the Native American Student and Community Center (opened in 2003). This transition unified the missions of these three centers and brought them together in collaboration under the office of Global Diversity and Inclusion.

2012 - *The CRCs and MCC transition in new leadership*

PSU alum Ryan Jumamil is appointed to work as the Program Coordinator of the Multicultural Center under newly hired PSU alum Cynthia Gómez who is brought on as Director of the Cultural Resource Centers.

2013 - *The CRCs take spatial ownership of the MCC from Conferences & Events*

In an effort to increase the autonomy of the space, the Cultural Resource Centers as an entity took spatial control over the Multicultural Center. This moved the space out from under the supervision of PSU Conferences and Events, and allowed the staff and students to use the space with more adherence to the MCC mission and values. The MCC begins using an electronic sign in system at the reception desk to collect center user assessment. The MCC also renovated its back room from a gutted kitchen to a workspace.

2014 - *The MCC implements new PR & Marketing and assessment systems for programming*

Using Google Suite, the MCC ushers in a new era of PR & Marketing and assessment for all events and programs. Stacie Taniguchi is hired as MCC Program Coordinator.

2015 - *The MCC adds to its programming, accessibility, and name*

A student committee hosts a series of events centered on the voices and experiences of the multiracial community. The Multicultural Center works closely with Facilities to custom build an ADA accessible reception desk. Also, the MCC changed its name from Multicultural Center to Multicultural Student Center to emphasize the student-center nature of the space. The CRCs successfully advocate for and hire a full time Office Manager, T. Lynn Simon, who works in the MCC but works with all three centers.

2016 - *The Student of Color Speak Out inspires a MCC mural*

Inspired by the [Student of Color Speak Out](#) in December 2015 (Cultural Resource Centers, 2017) that resulted in the opening of the Pacific Islander, Asian, and Asian American Student Center and the Pan-African Commons in late 2016, the Multicultural

Center worked with the Art Department to create a mural to honor the student activism and advocacy that the MCC and all PSU Cultural Resource Centers are rooted in. Professor Una Kim teaches a summer art course where PSU students created and completed the mural. As the CRCs expanded, the MCC Program Coordinator position changed to a dual role that included CRC Assistant Director duties. Andrew Morales is hired as the new Office Manager for the CRCs.

2017 - The MCC is renovated

With discretionary funds granted by the Student Fee Committee, the Multicultural Center undergoes renovations that include all new flooring (hardwood and rug) and new paint. The MCC also changes its visitor assessment system from a google form at reception to a “people counter” device on its doors to provide more accurate information.

2018 - The MCC honors its 25th Anniversary

With a student-majority committee (Abdullah “AJ” Al Rujuib, Michelle Marie Belden, Alex Herrera, Julia Liu, and Patty Miramontes) the MCC (Stacie Taniguchi) along with stakeholders in Diversity & Multicultural Student Services (Linda Liu, Program Director of TRiO Student Support Services) and Global Diversity & Inclusion (Mr. Ed Washington, Director of Community Outreach & Engagement) planned and hosted a celebration luncheon on February 20th, 2018 with the inclusion of a time capsule project to be opened in 10 years (2028).

Addenda

[Multicultural Student Center 25th Anniversary Video](#)

[Multicultural Student Center 25th Anniversary Picture slideshow](#)

[Multicultural Student Center 25th Anniversary Celebration Agenda](#)

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*Note: While the authors tried to include as much detail as possible, some archival information including personnel may be omitted from this document. Do you have some information we were unable to track down? Let us know at cultures@pdx.edu.