

**Engaging the Campus in Civil Conversation  
Facets from the OEM Town Hall Meeting  
March 10, 2010  
1:30 to 2:45 p.m.  
Whittenberger Auditorium**

Approximately 65 Office of Enrollment Management Staff participated in a town hall meeting with a 5 member student panel. Daniel W. Murphy, Assistant Director, Office of First Year Experience Programs, served as the moderator.

Panelists were:

**Chineze Onwuta** , Major: Finance, International Business, a Freshman from St. Charles, Illinois,

**César Escovar**, Major: Political Science, Economics, Spanish, a Senior from Elkhart, Indiana;

**Rebecca Goldstein**, Major: Environmental Science, a Junior from St. Louis, Missouri

**Aaron Slinker**, Major: Exercise Science, a Senior from Indianapolis, Indiana

**Tarlise Townsend**, Major: Germanic Studies, Neuroscience, a Sophomore from Bloomington, IN

Some of the points made during the meeting and discussion included the following:

IU is more than you can define. Everything is here to explore: heritage, culture, different perspectives and it is always changing with the next individual that you meet.

You can't really define diversity. It is always changing and transforming. The administrators or Office of Admissions might have one way of defining it but it isn't really how we as students define it.

It is easy to segregate oneself. You find a cluster of individuals with whom you are comfortable and they become your core friends. It then doesn't become necessary to reach out anymore.

I never expected to be so engaged in the life of Indiana University and to know so many people. Opportunities such as being a resident assistant and/or an orientation leader gave me an opportunity to make connections and then each connection leads to another.

One of my first insights into diversity at Indiana University was learning about how many majors the students on my floor had and I never imagined there could be so many possibilities.

Although Indiana University doesn't have a significant Afro-American community, I still found a close community here and it was enough for me.

Playing recreational sports such as basketball is the great equalizer. It doesn't make any difference what your culture or heritage is when you are playing basketball, your friends evolve from that activity. I've made some wonderful and unexpected friends.

Our parents don't really worry about the diversity conversation; they want us to be successful in the ways that our family expects. That might mean finding the right marriage partner, the right career, and, certainly, finding the right job after college. Most of our parents are more concerned that we go to class, complete our studies and graduate rather than how many extracurricular activities and or leadership positions we hold.

Conversations about college and diversity may be more relevant as we talk to younger sisters and brothers as they make their plans to go to college.

It's easy to get burned out on the "diversity" conversation because in some of our schools it was part of school events since we were in kindergarten. At some point, it's easy to just turn it off.

Meeting people and really talking to them and learning their story is what is so intriguing. The Freshman Intensive Seminar, Living Learning Centers, and our time together as residents in resident halls all provide opportunities to have those spontaneous (often middle of the night) conversations about issues and perspectives that we would never have expected to have.

None of us start our day thinking about how we are different. Perhaps someone or something brings something to our attention that reminds us of the differences among us. Otherwise, being different isn't, typically, the focus of any given day. Sometimes, perhaps, we make too much of it.

It's surprising how many students have double and triple majors and what diverse thinking that requires to be interested and successful in multiple disciplines. The diversity of academic opportunities definitely shapes the diversity of thinking. The variability and versatility of thinking is so energizing.

Getting involved and getting to know people on the campus whether they are administrators and/or in the resident halls sets an important chain reaction of opportunities in motion. Making these connections to faculty and administrators has made such a difference.

I've always felt welcomed no matter where I went on the campus and even if I went somewhere where I was the only "one", I came away having been welcomed and I left with new energy.

It's intriguing as to what will offend one person but not another. It's only when you start exploring why someone was offended or reacted the way they did, that you gain understanding into their perspective. This takes time and having the opportunity to do it and civil conversation requires patience and being willing to listen.

What does diversity mean to me? Whose perspective? The answer will differ depending on who you ask...diversity just is....it happens.

In advance of the event, posters were distributed to campus offices. Bookmarks announcing the event with diversity statements were also distributed.

A cross-functional committee of representatives from the Office of Enrollment Management sponsored the event. Contributors included: Dr. David B. Johnson, Associate Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, Mary Turner, Associate Director for Diversity Programs, Office of Admissions, Ann Lawson Smith, Admissions Specialist, Office of Admissions, Lauren Rochefort, Assistant Director, Office of Admissions, Chris Franke, Federal Work Study Coordinator, Office of Student Financial Assistance, Roy Durnal, Senior Associate Director, Office of Student Financial Assistance, Becky Mullen, Manager, Business Affairs, Office of First Year Experience Programs, Lituo Huang, Office Services Assistant, Office of First Year Experience, Daniel W. Murphy, Assistant Director, Office of First Year Experience Programs, April Lupo, Assistant Director, Office of Scholarships, Karen Livingston, Accounting Associate, Office of the Registrar, Mercedes Randall, Executive Director for Administration, Office of the Registrar, Shirley Boardman, Associate Director for Resource Planning, Office of Enrollment Management and Misty Pursley, Executive Assistant and Accounting Associate, Office of Enrollment Management.