**AALANA Watch**

**SUNY ONEONTA**

**Issue No. 4 - Fall 2010**

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**The AALANA Mentor Program**

The AALANA Mentor Program is a peer mentorship program that assists first year and transfer students with the transition to college life.

The program strives to build community among African American, Latino, Asian, and Native American students in order to foster academic and social group success.

**Program Coordination**

Bernadette Tiapo
Director, Office of Multicultural Student Affairs

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**AALANA Watch is produced by** the AALANA Mentor Program Advisory Committee. This issue presents the activities of AALANA mentors and mentees in fall 2010. It also features the opinions of AALANA mentors and mentees on their campus involvement and their visions for the program in the years ahead.

**AALANA Mentor Program Advisory Committee**

Jasmine Smith - Chair
Jennifer Nally – Secretary
Joel Díaz - vice Chair
Patrice Bailey – Coordinator

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**AALANA Welcome Week – Thursday, 8/24 through Sunday, 8/29**

AALANA mentors and mentees participated in activities marking the AALANA Welcome Week – a joint effort of the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs (OMSA), Africana & Latino Studies (ALS) Department, the Center for Multicultural Experience (CME), Resident Life, and the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP).

AALANA Welcome Week is a community-building initiative for SUNY Oneonta AALANA students at the start of a new academic year. New students attending the activities for the week were introduced to different campus resources by returning students. New and transfer students who had signed up to be mentees of the AALANA Mentor Program got to meet and interact with their mentors. Other activities that took place in the course of the week include: AALANA Mentor/Mentee Orientation, a Multicultural Expo, presentations by students on the importance of creating a welcoming campus community, a cookout, and a Solidarity Walk from the Mills Dinning Services to the CME.

**Club Expo and Open House**

The AALANA Mentor Program was represented at the Club Expos and different sessions of the College Open House. AALANA Mentors provided information about the program to both students and their parents. Many new mentees signed up for the program during the Club Expos. Most parents of AALANA students in attendance at the Open House were appreciative of the existence of programs such as the AALANA Mentor Program dedicated to assisting their children through the transition phase and adjustment on campus.
Community Building Activities

AALANA students were involved in a number of social/community building activities to foster relationships among mentors/mentees as well as with other students on campus. These activities were open to all SUNY Oneonta students, and led to high participations at the Community Get Together, Skating, Bowling, and Halloween activities.

Academic Support Activities
Midterm Madness & Finals Finale

Each semester, the AALANA Mentor Program hosts study sessions to assist students prepare for their upcoming midterms and finals. This semester, Midterm Madness was organized on 10/10/10 while Finals Finale was organized on 12/12/10. The study sessions provided opportunities for students to study, get tutored by upper-class students, and work with peers.

Spring 2011 Activities will include:

- AALANA Olympics
- Harry Potter Quid Ditch (Dodge Ball)
- Midterm madness
- Finals Finale
- Spring Social
Poem
By Mary Anne Rojas

Your mouth is a straight jacket the way your accent struggles
Restrained in your windpipe just like the last time
You remember speaking your native language
I hear the Quechua trying to come out of your throat, but
All the American you have eaten has strangled the Mestizo that is
Hiding somewhere in between your diaphragm and your father’s mustache
I feel the sound of your grandmother’s voice in the deep ocean of your echo
“tra-ti-cional”
How it rolls out of your tongue
Boiling the little Spanish you have left
As if Ecuador is veiled behind your tonsil
Keep talking loudly love
America is not ready for the tremble stitched on your lips
Let your accent smack the side of my ear like the last leaf that touched your face in South America
Bring me South America
Today you make Ecuador a state
I want to learn your voice
There is nothing more beautiful than the way your mouth moves
America as if your family’s dinner table is trying to balance your tongue during class.

“Mary Anne Rojas is an unrestrained warrior, decent, with a restless tongue and reckless hand. Only a transfer from another realm, she succeeded to come in second place in The Big O Poetry Slam, landing a position in the 2010-2011 Poetry Slam Team. This year she will participate in the poetry slam regional’s at New Paltz and at CUPSI at the University of Michigan, competing against other astonishing poets. Mary Anne is not only an exceptional performer and writer, she is also a constant voice and activist on campus. She is e-board for Sistah2Sistah, a table of healthy, enduring, and sold women shooting for the skin of women. She is a mentor to students on campus and will always ask fellow students, “How are you doing in your classes?” Mary Anne volunteers for Mother of Preschoolers, an organization for children who need social and verbal attention while the mothers are in workshops to better their lives. She is a tutor for GED students and for Job Corp students. During the winter break, Mary Anne will be departing for Ghana, Africa, along with other classmates to help build a clinic and instruct poetry workshops to children in need. Those who know her or do not know her should wait for her, she says. She is coming Big! Mary Anne believes that the world will always be bigger than her; therefore, her heart should be a small door, a small space for those who think they are slipping. She can slip, fall, get up, and fall again, but understands this is all part of her plan.”

“After participating in the EOP summer academy where I got acquainted with the campus, joining the AALANA Mentor Program has given me an added advantage as I have become more involved in campus activities. The transition to college, as a freshman, has been relatively less difficult for me. My mentor, Giselle, and I meet on a regular basis and our friendship has grown steadily. We go to the library more often and have little study groups with other students. Giselle tries to keep each one of her mentees informed about different activities that are taking place on campus and she is helping me in my quest for membership into Voices of Serenity. I appreciate Giselle’s reassuring smile and hugs and counsel. Having a mentor that is there for you whenever you need to talk to someone is a big comfort in college. I’ll be sad when Giselle graduates in December, but I will also be happy because I will like to follow in her footsteps.”

“Joining the AALANA Mentor Program has been a great experience for me. I have learned a lot from my mentor, Jasmine Smith, the AALANA Mentor Program Supervisor, Bernadette Tiapo, and from other students in the program. I’ve learned time management skills which have been invaluable for me in the course of the semester, especially in making and keeping up with a study plan. By keeping up with my study schedule, I was able to realize I have a lot of free time in between classes and after dinner. With encouragement from my mentor, I have joined other clubs on campus like the ISO and CUAC. I have learned about many different cultures from ISO. CUAC has also introduced me to all the fun events that are run on campus. What I like best about SUNY Oneonta are all the friendly and helpful people that are there to direct you in the right direction.”
“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead

Amy Angelone

“Since joining the ALAANA Mentor Program this fall, I have been enriched in numerous ways. Being a freshman, I was unsure, for instance, of what clubs to join. When my friend, Mena Haile, invited me to an ALAANA Brunch, I was interested yet unsure. I wondered if I would have fun and feel welcome in the Program – which turned out to be the case. I made the decision to join the ALAANA Mentor Program, and I was also driven by the fact that I am from a small town that has little diversity. I have always been interested in other cultures and after participating in the ALAANA Brunch, where we got to learn salsa and other Latin dances, I instantly felt that the ALAANA Mentor Program was a great opportunity for me.

I have participated in all the organized activities this semester. I have made acquaintances with new peers and become closer with friends already in the program. I appreciate the fact that the ALAANA Mentor Program does not only offer fun activities and programs, but also provides a forum for mutual assistance in academic issues. My mentor, Jasmine Smith, over the past three months, has become both a mentor and a personal friend. Jasmine is a role model on campus for all her mentees.

I also appreciate the fact that the ALAANA Mentor Program encourages mentors and mentees to seek out interests and clubs on campus and take up leadership roles. I am also a member of Knit Wits, C.H.O.I.C.E.S., Open Minded Unity, and I also volunteer at the Gender and Sexuality Resource Center. The ALAANA Mentor Program has helped to guide me toward the values that SUNY Oneonta wants its students to strive for: to succeed in academics, to succeed socially, and to involve oneself in his or her hobbies or to try something completely different.”

AALANA Mentor Program Advisory Committee Chair
Jasmine Smith

“The ALAANA Mentor Program is a very unique program here at the SUNY Oneonta campus. It is a great way for incoming freshman and transfer students to become immediately involved on campus. The program helps to foster diversity, multicultural awareness and inclusion within the college. It also focuses on assisting new students succeed in their academics endeavors by gaining the support and assistance from upper-class students – ALAANA Mentors.

As Chair of the Advisory Committee, I am very proud to see mentors and mentees working together to create a rewarding and influential environment that is appealing to all within and outside the program. The advisory committee is in charge of planning the different program activities, such as our recent Halloween Party at the CME, study sessions, and the trips for roller skating and bowling. The committee also ensures that plans for activities for the upcoming semester, as well as students’ potential involvement, are consolidated before students go on vacation at the end of the fall semester.

This program is capable of so many great things which the committee is aware of and is determined to see those capabilities come to fruition. Encouraging fellow students to be more involved in activities is a great way to bring people together and foster a progressive multicultural and diverse campus community. Meeting new people helps students to be more open-minded because of the new perspectives different people bring to conversations. This process helps one to become more accepting of people different from oneself and helps to create a more tolerant and rewarding community.

The ALAANA Mentor Program Advisory Committee’s future goals are to continue to work with the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs to organize activities which are open to ALAANA students and to the wider campus community.”

Community Building Activities cont. from page 2

Students at Interskate 88 in Oneonta on 9/7/10

Copies of the newsletter are available in pdf format at the following link: http://www.oneonta.edu/development/multicultural/newsletter/fall10.pdf