

University**Academic pressures isolate black grads**

by Tunomukwathi Asino

The intensified pressure for minority graduate students at Penn State to excel academically leaves little time for students to interact with their cultural peers and people outside of their studies, and this increases the isolation these students already feel while attending a predominantly white university.

Kimeka Campbell, a doctoral candidate in the adult education program at Penn State, said, "The pressure to perform better than your peers is heavier. I believe that this is because of the amount of time graduate students spend in their respective departments containing a heavy concentration of students from the dominant cultural group."

She added that too much time spent away from reading and researching can have negative impacts on minority students.

"The lower amount of time spent taking advantage of some of the culturally inclusive aspects of PSU, coupled with the higher amounts of time graduate students are required to be studying creates a isolated environment for some graduate students of color," Campbell said.

As undergraduates, however, minority college students have more time to seek out their peers and people they can identify with.

"The environment is such that students may join different groups and associations that may not necessarily be connected to their majors programs of study. This allows undergraduate students of color to connect with folks who identify well with their race, their culture and their ways of understanding the world," Campbell said.

"I believe that this intense focus on our content areas, coupled with the age at which

some folks enter graduate school, yields a very different experience than that of a minority undergraduate student. The struggles are different, but in many cases similar, just under greater magnification," Campbell said.

W. Terrell Jones, vice provost of educational equity, said he feels the reason students are attracted to Penn State is because of "reasonable cost and good return on their investments."

Megan Alicia Rogers, an African-American and doctoral candidate in genetics at Penn State, has her own reasons for attending Penn State.

"I chose Penn State because they have a great adult education program, one of the best in the nation, and because of funding. While I don't feel that the price is reasonable, I do feel that they have accommodat-

ed me as a student, scholar and researcher," Campbell said.

Apart from isolation, minority students also deal with racism at Penn State.

"I have indeed experienced racist comments, behavior and attitudes," Rogers said. "I can honestly say that the majority of them are from the outside community."

She said, "I don't really run into as many issues at the graduate level, but I have colleagues in undergrad who have it rough."

Rogers also added, "Penn State has a lot of students from small towns that have never had any interaction with minorities. All of their knowledge is based off of what the media portrays about us, which is most-

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Politicians need courage to represent the peoples' views

by Jamie Campbell

Spring, the season where everything old becomes new. It seems that everything old is truly new again. We are having tea parties and harking back to the days of yesterday where poll taxes, literacy tests and questioning what makes someone an American is back in the forefront of conversation.

So in light of all these wonderful spring ideas, here is something old we should make new again: having the courage to stand up for what you believe in the face of opposition.

Over the past few weeks, we have seen several elected officials say they are not running for office, because they cannot work in the difficult "atmosphere" in Washington. Here is the problem with that,

when they were elected, they were elected to fight, stand up for a position and represent the people that put them in office. Not just say "No" to every idea put forth or give in every time another group holds up progress. Case in point, a senator was asked why he was no longer running for office. His reasoning was, while he loved to work for the people of his state, he could not work with the "mean" folks in Washington. It's politics, not rainbows and horseshoes! It is supposed to be tough and difficult work. The easy part was getting to the soft seat.



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Black Caucus Jazz Festival

Photo by Kelsey Stratton

Dancers Charles Brooks and BB Muré perform to the original jazz compositions of members of The Ector Group featuring Carl Ector on violin and Chris Byrne on sax, flute, accordion and vocals. Not pictured are Ronnie Burrage on percussion, vocals and keyboard, Arthur Goldstein on keyboard, Robert Gardner on bass and Andrew Jackson on percussion. The Black Caucus Jazz Festival on Feb. 20 was the finale for a week of Black History events and featured these premier jazz musicians and dancers plus a complete dinner. The free event was sponsored by a broad group of local and campus organizations and organized by students in the Black Caucus.

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ly bad.”

While at Penn State, people have also referred to her with derogatory racial names, she said.

“I have been called the N-word in State College, and it was on the day of the presidential election,” she said. “That was the first time in my life, and it made me more flabbergasted than upset. I couldn’t believe people still use that word.”

Campbell has also experienced racism at Penn State.

“I would not say that it is overt, but I have often been treated differently, and sometimes I can’t put my finger on it. After some incidents happen, I often wonder was it because of the color of my skin or my appearance?” Campbell said.

“At times being a small minority of many students on a predominantly white campus can be intimidating, especially when stu-

dents of color frequently are transferring from environments that have extremely different, and in most cases opposite, racial identities composite,” Campbell said.

Campbell said she has had an enriching experience as a minority student at Penn State. She said the university fosters an environment that allows her organization, The Black Graduate Student Association, to convene and act as a “social, academic, emotional, and psychological support for students who may be going through similar types of issues as a student of color at Penn State.”

She said Penn state has a plethora of offices and services for students of color.

“Penn State is willing to promote an atmosphere of respect for all of their students, and empower members of various groups to promote unity and dialogue concerning sensitive race issues on campus,” Campbell said. “With that said, we as a community still have much work to do.”

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Working for the people requires some sort of, well, for lack of a better word, a spine. If the members of Congress were voting to give themselves a raise, you would have to drag each and every one of them off the floor. I am positive that some type of agreement would be met in almost record time. People are always going to be at odds with anything that is said, no matter how correct the statement. When I cast my vote, I want to see my representative fight for my position in the face of the opposition, great and small. Sometimes courage simply means you know there is a good chance that you are going to lose, but you fight the good fight, because you just might win.

When I was small there used to be a great Duracell commercial. You might remember it. A guy walks out and dares somebody, anybody, to knock the battery off his shoulder. I always thought that was the coolest

commercial. Not because the batteries were so great, but because the guy was standing firm and willing to be challenged at moment’s notice. My point here is simple - keep the chip on the shoulder. As we grow more mature, we tend to let a lot of things go. The rationale is usually that we’re too old to be bothered by trivial matters. Get this, be bothered. The reason why so many people can’t talk, and don’t talk to each other is because they are more concerned about how the other person feels. I am not advocating being rude by any means, but I am saying it is paramount that you remember that you have feelings as well. Those feelings and instincts are yours and they are probably right for that particular moment. You should not ignore those feelings or instincts for the sake of being politically correct, but use them to state your case and give force to your position. If your challenger backs down, that is their problem, not yours. That chip on your shoulder might just keep you from being silenced.

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