

THEME ISSUE 4

BLACK AT YSU



(L-R): Sidney Watkins, I'Yonna Taylor-Smith and Davon Bonner sit outside their Africana studies class.

STORY: JUSTIN WIER & LIAM BOUQUET | THEJAMBAR@GMAIL.COM | PHOTO: GABBY FELLOWS

Sidney Watkins came to Youngstown State University from the Bahamas to study mechanical engineering. One day he went to a professor for help, and the professor said “a lot of you guys don’t make it in the engineering department.”

“I looked at him like, ‘what does that mean?’” Watkins said. “Are you expecting me to fail right now? I felt like I came to the wrong school. I felt like they weren’t interested in my education ... I really felt like, ‘Okay, this is for whites only.’”

Several black students across Youngstown State University report feeling a sense of alienation on campus and in the classroom, which could contribute to the university’s consistent struggle to retain and graduate minority students.

“A lot of times we don’t realize social exclusion plays an academic role,” Katie Morrison, a YSU student, said. “A lot of students I tutor in classes are black, and if you feel like you aren’t welcome here, you aren’t going to do well academically. Look at our minority graduation rate — not that great.”

YSU only graduates 8.5 percent of black students within six years of enrollment. It also struggles to retain black students, with only 54.3 percent of students enrolled in fall 2014 returning the following year. Both represent the lowest numbers among significant student populations tracked by the university.

Tiffany Anderson, director of YSU’s Africana studies program, referred to this sense of alienation as a form of segregation felt by black students and said the retention numbers reflect that.

BLACK SPACE, WHITE SPACE

“When [black] people come to campus, they are looking for black people,” Anderson said. “They are looking for black students, but they are also looking for black faculty, they are looking for black staff. They don’t find it, and they don’t feel like they have a space.”

Anderson said she speaks to students about the idea of white space and how all spaces are essentially white spaces. When black people enter white spaces, they carry with

them stereotypical ideas of blackness — the ghetto, the projects or the city of Youngstown.

“In order for a black person to exist in a white space, they feel the need to prove themselves different,” Anderson said. “It is easier to be around other black people — where you don’t have to explain yourself.”

During an interview with Anderson’s Africana studies students, Samantha Moore described feeling overly cautious when she speaks in the class because she is white.

“In how many classrooms do you go through the things that you say with such care?” Anderson asked.

“When I do speak in other classes, I am not so cautious about it because it just doesn’t come up,” Moore responded.

“That is the point,” Anderson said. “Your experience is the exact negative of the black student experience. For [others], this might be the only space where they feel comfortable, and in their other classes they feel that anxiety that you are speaking of.”

Caleb Carson, another student in the class, shared Moore’s sense of caution.

“Taking this class has made me feel, ‘is this how people feel all the time?’ ... It makes me a bit squirmy,” Carson said. “If I felt even 10 percent as uncomfortable as I do here in other classes ... I couldn’t imagine how it wouldn’t affect someone’s grade.”

Julian Jones, president of the Student Diversity Council, said because of his background, he is more easily accepted at the university, but he still feels uncomfortable being himself in certain situations because of his race.

“In my opinion, a white person doesn’t really have to fit in,” Jones said. “If I go to a formal, it is going to be more white people than black people, and I automatically have to fit into that environment because I can’t be the odd one ... [It] is sad that it comes to that, but that is just how it is.”

FAMILIAR FACES

Victoria Shaffer, YSU’s NAACP chapter president, said a lack of integration among faculty contributes to these feelings.

“Sometimes you want to see peo-

ple who look like you who are teaching,” Shaffer said. “We are a campus of 12,000 students, why do I only know five or six professors who look like me?”

Only 25 of the university’s full-time faculty, or 6.1 percent, are black.

Shaffer said the black community at YSU has created a support system in response to the problems caused by the university’s lack of diversity.

“If something happens to you, or you have a bad time with a professor, you are going to say, ‘Hey, don’t take this class with this professor, we have had this issue,’” Shaffer said. “It is the life that we live. When you are excluded from things, you have to stick together as one.”

This lack of diversity extends to support systems outside of the classroom. Davon Bonner, a student at YSU, said this has had an impact on his academic performance.

“I am hesitant to go to the Center for Student Progress because I am thinking in my mind, ‘What is this white person who is tutoring me thinking?’” Bonner said.

He said he questions whether he is fulfilling a stereotype or meeting expectations tutors might have of black students by seeking help.

“I have this inner pride and confidence that says, ‘I can do this by myself,’” Bonner said. “It isn’t that I can’t do it by myself — though it is a difficult class — but it hinders me from ... using these resources that can be helpful.”

OUTNUMBERED

I’Yonna Taylor-Smith, another YSU student, recognized the problem, but said she refuses to let these obstacles stop her from succeeding at the university.

“At the end of the day, nobody else is going to mess up what I got going for myself,” Taylor-Smith said.

Jones and Shaffer agreed that their desires for success outweigh the discomforts they may need to overcome along the way.

Shaffer said she is often the only black student in the class, and she accepts this.

“But sometimes that doesn’t work for everyone, especially if you have gone to an inner-city school that is mostly black kids,” Shaffer said.

“Then you go to a university, and now you are the minority.”

Though offering a minority opinion, third year student Paul Thompson felt unaffected by any racial inequality on campus.

“I have always felt welcome actually,” Thompson said. “I try to mingle with people of all color, instead of just mingling with people of my own color — that doesn’t feel right.”

Of black students enrolling at YSU in the fall of 2015, 44.3 percent graduated from the Youngstown City School District. The average black student in Youngstown attends a school that is 63.8 percent black; at YSU black students comprise only 11.7 percent of the student body.

Shienne Williams, an Africana studies major, said that in this environment, students and professors will unwittingly say things that are offensive to minority students.

“They just say it because they are so comfortable. They don’t know how what they say affects you,” she said. “You don’t want to tell them that it is offensive or racist ... because you don’t want to seem like the angry black person.”

She said classes that don’t focus on diversity often have only one or two students of color, which can exacerbate these feelings.

“When you are outnumbered, some people are kind of scared to say how they feel,” Williams said.

Certain programs isolate black students more than others. Black students comprise less than 2 percent of engineering majors, which created further problems for Sidney Watkins, whose experiences opened this story.

“I felt [my peers] were more stand-offish. When I would ask them a question, they would look at me for a second ... so it made me withdraw a little,” Watkins said. “I didn’t want to bother anyone, so I stayed in my little box, and I never said anything to anyone.”

Two years later, when they saw he was still in the program, they began to open up to him. He said there is a perception, underlined by his interaction with the professor, that black students struggle in engineering.

“I ask them, ‘Why? Why don’t they make it?’” Watkins said. “For me, the reason is that no one wants to give them a try.”



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UNDERREPRESENTED AND OVERSTRAINED



STORY: JUSTIN WIER | LIAM BOUQUET | THEJAMBAR@GMAIL.COM | PHOTO: BILLY LUDT

Programs designed to help increase integration on campus suffer because of insufficient resources, even though many students see this as a significant problem at Youngstown State University.

William Blake, director of the Office of Student Diversity, said he spoke to several of the students he works with about their campus experiences.

“In many instances, they felt social life at the university tended to be rather segregated,” he said.

Tiffany Anderson, director of the Africana studies program, said only certain types of black students are able to fully participate in campus life, contributing to this sense of segregation among others.

“Once they have proven themselves to be able to be in a white space, people then continue to want to be with them because ‘Oh, you are OK,’” she said.

Julian Jones, president of the Student Diversity Council and presidential mentor, agreed, adding that he is often the only black student on university committees.

“You just don’t find that many. It is kind of the same group. I could probably count on both hands all the people who are involved all the time and stay involved,” Jones said. “Some people are just scared to be engaged, because they feel like they are already eliminated, so they don’t want to try.”

Both Jones and Victoria Shaffer, YSU’s NAACP chapter president, said they felt overtaxed.

“Definitely, once I got involved it was, ‘Oh, I need you to go here. I need you to be a part of this committee.’ You get tired, and there are so many other students who are doing well. Use them as well,” Shaffer said.

Diverse student organizations — such as NAACP, Black Student Union and historically black Greek organizations — and diverse programming attempt to engage black students directly.

Both Anderson and Jones agree that the strength of diversity programming has increased over the years.

“I think the university does an awesome job in the Office of Student Diversity,” Anderson said. “If the university is wise, they will use [Blake] on a larger scale, because he could be very impactful in bringing diversity to YSU.”

Shaffer said these programs and groups are not always successful at engagement.

“Just being part of NAACP, I think a lot of people just like paying their money, and they don’t want to participate,” she said. “We will have forums and people will ask, ‘Why aren’t there enough black events?’ There are a ton, but you don’t come. You come when there is a party, so why don’t you come when there is a forum on Black Lives Matter?”

Eddie Howard, associate vice president of Student Experience, called upon students to make things happen for themselves. He said he sees a

variety of programs that support students of color.

“You can’t say nothing is going on here when you are not engaged,” Howard said. “If those opportunities don’t present themselves, then you need to be asking questions why. ‘Why am I not at the table?’ I try to encourage students who are in that situation to do that.”

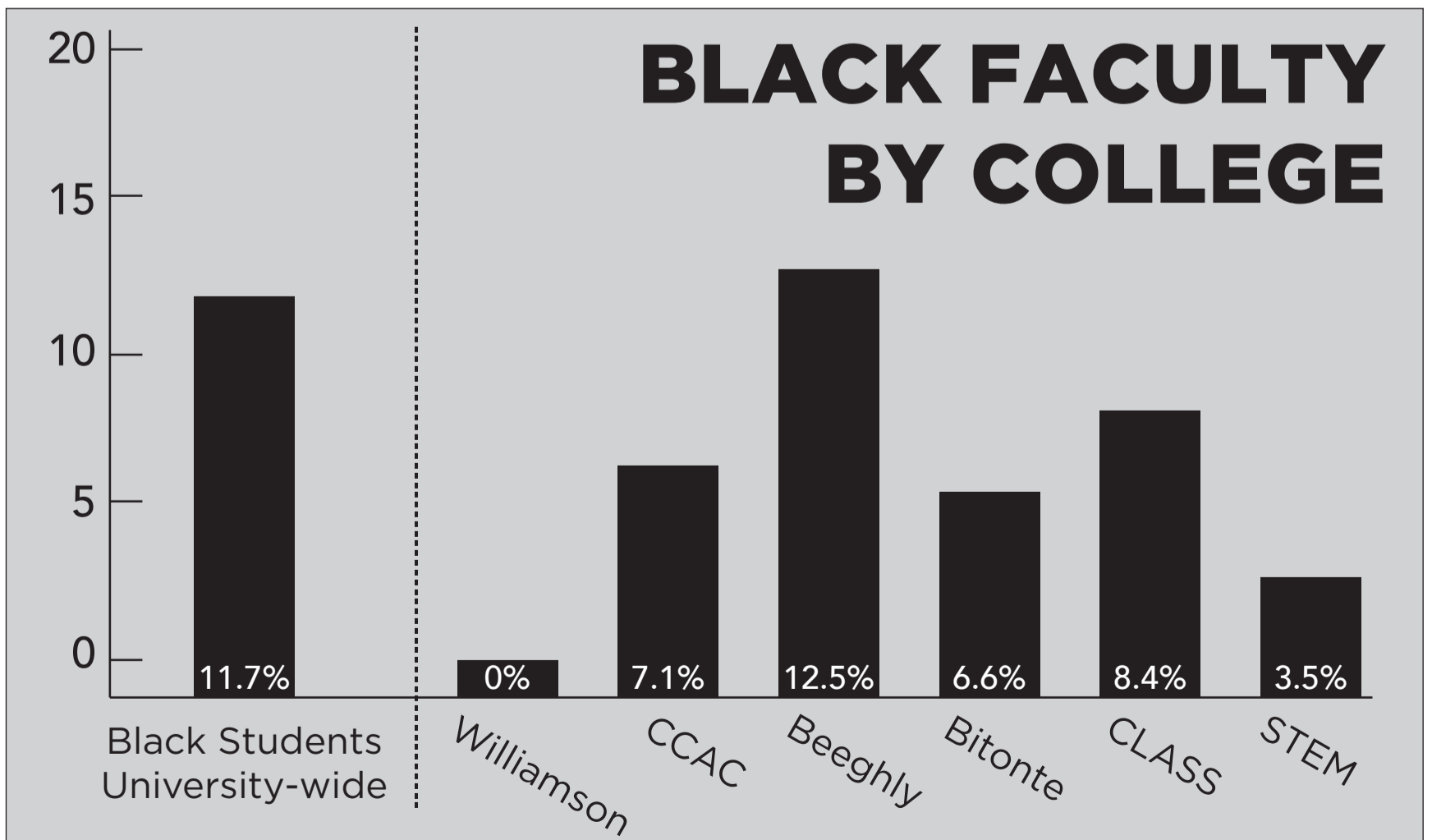
Howard said a contributing factor is the lack of an advising infrastructure support among minority organizations that allow groups like the Student Government Association to flourish.

“When you see an organization that thrives, it is because there is someone in there, an adviser, who is helping them from year to year to year to create a type of consistency,” Howard said. “When you leave a student organization to its own devices, you are only as good as the leader that you choose.”

Anderson, Jones and Shaffer agreed with Howard, though Jones said black faculty and staff experience the same fatigue as black students.

Shaffer said YSU’s commuter campus agitates the problem with engagement. Though more black students live on campus than white students, 82.7 percent of black students are commuters.

UNDERREPRESENTED
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Several students lamented a lack of black faculty at Youngstown State University. While nearly 12 percent of students are black, with the exception of the Beeghly College of Education, the number of black faculty can be represented by a single digit at any given college. In some cases, such as the Williamson College of Business Administration and the College of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, the difference is substantial.

EXTENDED THOUGHTS

REPORTING: JUSTIN WIER & CHRISTINA YOUNG & LIAM BOUQUET



TIFFANY ANDERSON

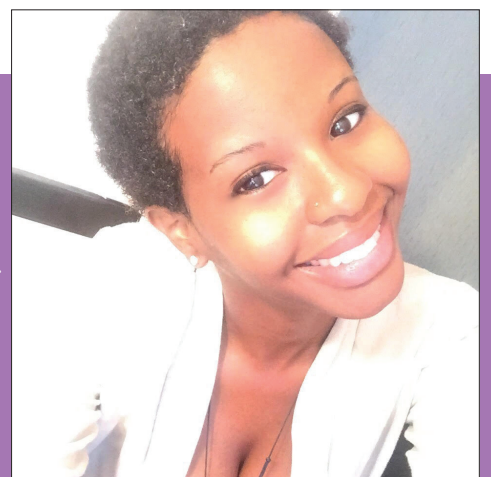
One student in my class last year said, 'I have been to five different universities, and this is the most racist university I have been to,' and I was like 'Whaa, how does that happen?' That we are in Ohio, and this is the most racist. And he went to Carolina.

DENIECE NANCE

I joined the National Collegiate Scholars last year. And there were only two black people out of 28, and it just made me feel weird, because I was belittling myself because of that, and then the people that were in it were engineering majors, and I was just majoring in dental hygiene. So, I did feel uncomfortable ... and then I felt good to prove that just because I'm black, I have the same grade point average as you guys.

LESTER B. BELL

A lot of people are afraid to say something because if they speak on it, they might be viewed as being racist.



SHELBY JOHNSON

I think socially, it is kind of awkward on campus at times. ... I had to sit in class and watch Birth of a Nation in my History of Motion Pictures and Film class. And the stares I would get from the other students with me being one of the two black people in there was really, really awkward. [Another time], my teacher found me and had me read this paper and peer review this paper written by another student in our class, which was talking about how black people don't deserve to be at white colleges, because our GPAs are lower. He found me out of all of the students in the classroom and had me read the paper ... I might act a certain way or be goofy at home or dance a little. When I'm in public I have to carry myself a certain way because I don't want to project a certain image, and I don't want to make anyone feel uncomfortable.

DIAMOND CATHEY

It's a little awkward sometimes because I still think I still get looked at like, 'Oh, she's a black person.' ... If you say something smart they're like, OK. But it's not like, 'Oh, I was expecting you to say something smart because you have intellectual capabilities.'

BLINDED BY THE WHITE

Several white professors and students contacted by The Jambar said they hadn't observed these problems on campus or in the classroom.

"Personally, [I haven't noticed it]," Matthew Evans, a chemistry major, said. "But I haven't had any good personal interactions with [black students]."

Michael Jerryson, associate professor of religious studies, said he has noticed a hesitation among his few students of color when discussions shift to race.

"That speaks to me about the fact that they may be on guard or concerned or hesitant prior to this happening, for what reasons I don't know other than the fact that we have systemic racism," he said.

He said it is common for members of the majority to remain unaware of the difficulties facing minorities, adding that he underwent a dramatic shift after taking a class focusing on race in graduate school.

"I don't have to think about the fact that I have two hands and two arms or two legs the whole time I walk around; I take it for granted," Jerryson said. "It takes effort for me to become aware of my privilege and how a disabled person might be feeling in the classroom."

Tiffany Anderson, director of the Africana studies program, said some people don't want to be confronted with privilege or put in the effort Jerryson talks about, because it can be uncomfortable.

"Once we create spaces for black students to feel comfortable, those spaces are now uncomfortable for white students," Anderson said. "If you have a space for black students, you are going to scare away white students. Is the university going to have that? Hell no."



JULIAN JONES

[On campus], if you do a LGBT rally, there is a lot of support, and then ... when you had the thing with the rock, everybody came together. If anything happens to black lives, we just shut down.

LEAH OBERSTAR

I feel like black students have the potential, but ... I don't feel like they have enough confidence just to come out. Because they feel like if they're surrounded by all just white students or international students, they don't really have anyone to back them up when they do try to speak. So that's why I feel like some black students just step down and let [others] take control, because they feel like no one will really take them seriously.



SGA Confronts its *Lack of Diversity*

STORY: JUSTIN WIER & LIAM BOUQUET | JCWIER@STUDENT.YSU.EDU | PHOTO: JUSTIN WIER

Youngstown State University students have criticized the Student Government Association's lack of diverse representation. Currently, there are no representatives of color on SGA.

Ashley Orr, the president of SGA, recognizes this problem.

"The body seemed to be pulling from a lot of the same student population," Orr said. "When we pass [a resolution] and we say the student body supports that, do we represent the student body when we say that?"

Orr said she believes they do a good job of representing students, but the body would like to see more underrepresented minorities involved in SGA.

"We absolutely do want someone to be involved. We want underrepresented minorities in the conversation," Orr said.

William Blake, director of the Office of Student Diversity, said SGA has been at the forefront of making campus more diverse, but the organization needs to diversify.

"I have seen several times when students have attempted to become more actively involved with student government, and many times they have been blocked because their association with student government hadn't been as engaged as many other students," Blake said. "Therefore, they weren't included in the decision making."

Victoria Shaffer, YSU's NAACP chapter president, praised Orr's commitment to improving the organization.

"Although the population isn't that big on campus, for race, I think that if you are going to have an organization for the students, you need to have a representation of students of different backgrounds," Shaffer said.

Shienne Williams, an Africana studies major, said she sees the problem existing on both sides of the divide.

"If you are a member of student government, you only know the people that come around, but if you don't have an interest in student government, they can't know you," Williams said. "Student government ... makes decisions regarding your campus life. You should be involved in that ... [but] people stick with what they know."

BRIDGING THE GAP

Orr decided to connect with student groups and telling them about the election process and what participating in SGA can do for them.

"My assessment is that [students] don't know enough about SGA to want to be on SGA," Orr said. "So that was the heart of the problem that I was trying to address."

She established a committee of seniors to create an institutional knowledge base and decided to use them to fulfill this purpose as well. One of the challenges has been getting in touch with organizations.

"We want to get them the information, but we're having difficulty disseminating it," Orr said. "How do we reach them to tell them we want them? And then how do we reach them to inform them of what we are, so they can tell us they want us?"

When Orr approached Sylvia Imler, executive director of Multicultural Affairs, with her observations, Imler questioned whether the cause was that underrepresented minorities don't feel welcome. Orr said there is a desire among the body to make those students welcome, they're just having trouble bridging the gap.

"I don't want to force underrepresented minorities to be on SGA," Orr said. "But if they want to be on SGA, I want to make sure they have equal access to it."

Orr said they met with the NAACP, and it confirmed her suspicion that a knowledge gap existed. But the majority of their members were seniors and not eligible to run for office next year.

"We are tapping into our underrepresented minority talent really late," Orr said. "We need to talk to underrepresented minority students when they're young and pull them into the leadership process."

Sidney Watkins, an engineering major, doubted a black student's ability to get elected to SGA.

"This school is predominantly white," Watkins said. "And basically, people are going to vote for people they associate with the most."

Williams said it is a problem of entrenched power.

"Are people willing to give up their

power with anything?" Williams asked. "Somebody has to be willing to give up their power for us to be able to do anything."

Orr wanted students on the committee of seniors to serve as mentors to help students run and win elections, but she said their outreach efforts weren't as successful as she had hoped. While there is a barrier to getting elected, she said she believes it's necessary.

"To win a representative election you probably need 100 [votes], and you probably have 100 friends that can vote, so that's not a big problem," Orr said. "Ultimately, if you don't have 100 people that you know on campus ... we want students to be involved [on campus], so I think it's fair that you would have to run in the election and receive votes."

Tiffany Anderson, director of the Africana studies program, suggested appointing diverse members.

"If your concern is diversity, why not appoint representatives from more diverse student organizations to serve on SGA?" Anderson said. "I would appoint someone every year from YSUnity, from Black Student Union and an international student. Think about how different that would be."

Jones said this might be a good way to jumpstart black student participation in the organization.

"I wouldn't like to see it there all the time because then once you get your quota you don't really have to worry about getting anybody in once you got your two," Jones said. "I do think we should do it to start because once people realize 'Oh, they are a good help to the organization,' then they can start bringing their friends in."

APPOINTMENTS IN ACTION

Earlier this year, SGA held an election for international students to appoint a nonvoting representative.

"It has gone really well," Orr said. "It has gone so well that it has further solidified the importance of diversity on our body."

But she said many representatives expressed concern that appointing one underrepresented group, such as black students, would lead to ap-

pointing Hispanic members, LGBTQ members, disabled members, members of underrepresented religions, etc.

"SGA needs to be a democratic body in order to have that democratic process and that dialogue and that debate," Orr said.

They do have non-voting members. The organization's governing documents permit four non-voting members, one of whom they used to establish the international representative. Orr said leaders could use some of those spots to appoint members of groups like the Black Student Union or NAACP.

Every year, SGA appoints three freshman representatives and others inevitably leave the body to pursue other opportunities, which leaves spots open. This is another avenue for increasing diverse representation.

"When we do appointments, we try to exercise some affirmative action there," Orr said. "Specifically, we look for students who reference diversity and who reference representing an underrepresented minority population."

Orr said they appointed a student earlier this semester because she referenced being excited to represent African American students. The student eventually quit, but Orr said when appointing students they try to appoint people from underrepresented areas.

When Orr leaves at the end of the semester, she is confident these initiatives will continue because they've worked at changing the culture of the body. She said Tyler Miller-Gordon and Gabriella Gessler, the presumptive president and vice president, are both passionate about the issue as well.

At the SGA presidential debate, Miller-Gordon outlined the effort as part of his platform.

"We are also going to touch on a lot of diversity this year," Miller-Gordon said. "It's important and imperative that all students feel safe on this campus, and we need to take the necessary measures to do so."

**Disclaimer: Liam Bouquet has a personal relationship with Ashley Orr, however he was not involved in her interview or the portions of the story that use her as a source.*

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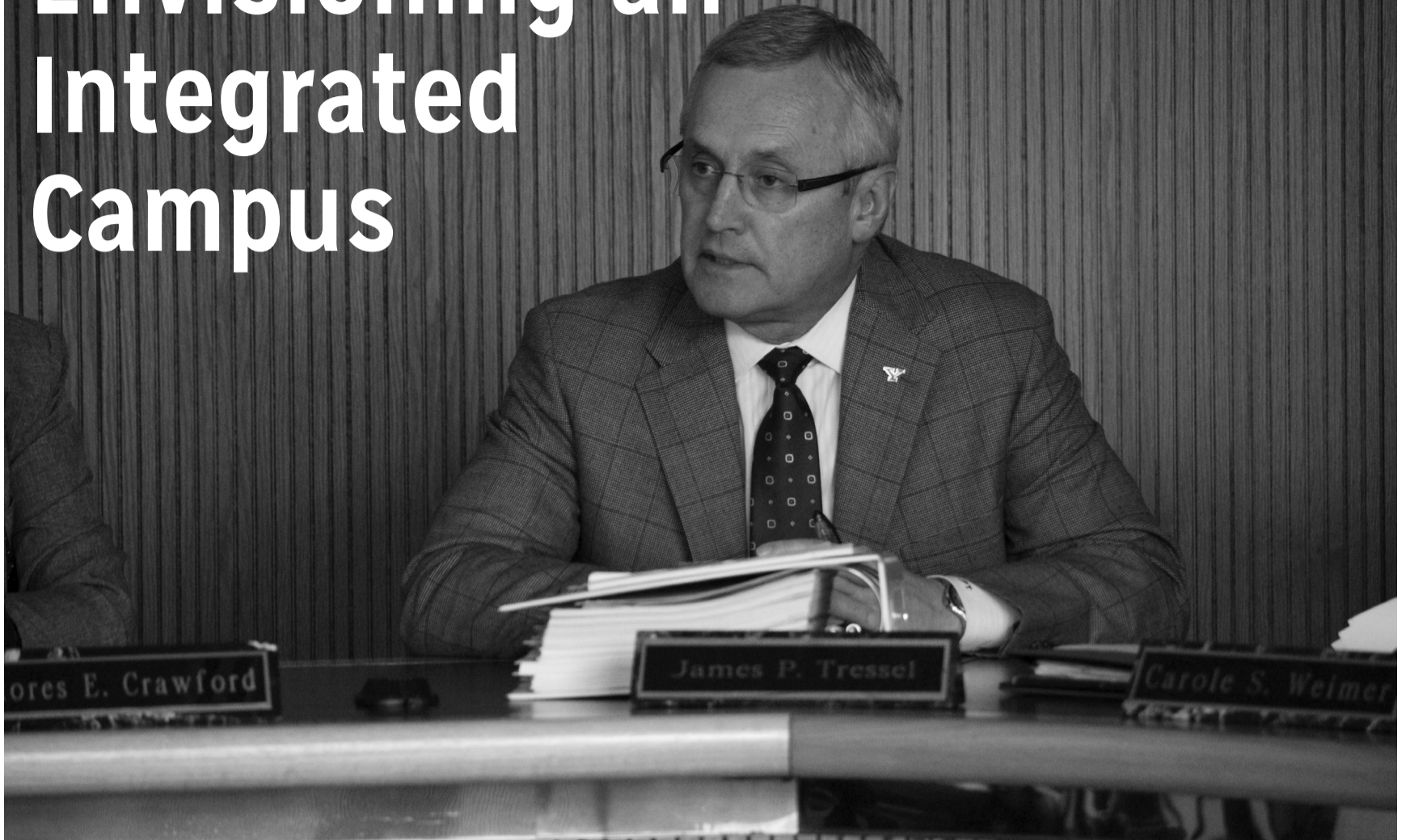
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Envisioning an Integrated Campus



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Youngstown State University President Jim Tressel recognizes the need to dedicate more resources to students of color, but said we need to prioritize work that can be done without additional resources, citing budget constraints.

“The first thing we need to do is everything that only takes a little bit of elbow grease,” Tressel said. “Once we become better at attracting more students, retaining more students and — if we can get our enrollment going which drives your revenue — all of a sudden we can invest in things that we can’t afford.”

He said this not only applies to the administration, but also to students as well.

“That student who is coming in and struggling a little bit now,” Tressel said. “It doesn’t take any talent to ask questions, to be on time, to get involved in a free activity.”

Eddie Howard, associate vice president of student experience, said we also need to prioritize repositioning existing funding strategically.

“I think it is our responsibility as vice presidents and directors who are in charge of these programs to make sure that these initiatives are a priority,” Howard said. “There is no new money anywhere.”

A CULTURE OF COMMUNITY

Tressel said this is why he and Sylvia Imler, executive director of multicultural affairs, created the Culture of Community Collaborative.

The initiative seeks to create a vertically integrated group of students, faculty and staff across campus. The collaborative would report to the administration and a smaller culture of community committee.

They intend to encourage inclusion and diversity across campus. Tressel and Imler have spent the past few months discussing it with various organizations on campus. The group has grown to include around 70 representatives.

Tressel said that many of the strategies to improve black student experience coincide with the goals of the Culture of Community.

“[Culture of Community] is an intentional effort to get people to get involved, become aware and respect things that they haven’t had experience with before,” he said.

Julian Jones, president of the Student Diversity Council, said the collaborative can combat the issue of segregation if the right people are chosen.

“I think it will [help] if they are appointing the right people. Some people really don’t want change, and you need to be willing to change if this is something you want to do,” Jones

said.

Imler addressed the ability of the Culture of Community to properly target black issues concerning students while still being broadly oriented toward diversity.

“As we communicate with other entities [we need to make sure] to not leave certain groups out,” Imler said. “But we don’t want to pull only from that group either. We are trying to represent YSU’s community accurately.”

Tressel said he demanded increased diversity among the presidential mentors when he first arrived at YSU.

“When I got here in May of 2013, there were 32 students and maybe three diverse students ... The next year, we probably had 40 percent diversity,” Tressel said. “You have to be intentional about it. You have to sometimes grab people by the hand.”

William Blake, director of the office for student diversity, supported Tressel’s commitment to diversity.

“There is usually not a program or event that I have that President Tressel doesn’t show up at. He comes in and gives the welcome, or he shakes hands,” Blake said. “He makes himself available for what we have been doing.”

Jones also praised Tressel’s commitment, but wanted to see more follow through.

“He will always ask the questions,” Jones said. “But I feel like nothing ever happens afterward.”

Tressel recognizes that minority students remain skeptical. He believes that choosing people who are passionate about diversity and integration will allow them to carry the vision to others.

GRABBING PEOPLE BY THE HAND

Echoing many student comments, Tressel and Imler said increasing the number of residents and engaging commuters will also increase minority involvement.

“Probably the biggest thing you fight on a commuter campus is you put on a lot of activities and then no one comes,” Tressel said.

“One thing that did come out of that was how many commuters came back to campus [for the Juicy J concert]. It was a nice percentage,” Imler said. “That is a start — to look at some of the things that students not living on campus would like to do and cater to their desires.”

Tressel said student groups play a role as well. If student groups are more welcoming, students will become engaged and a little bolder.

“Once they are bolder, they will not be afraid to ask that question in

class,” Tressel said. “I hope someday we do have that additional resources to do more things, but we are not going to use that as an excuse nor are we going to use the commuter thing as an excuse. It is what it is.”

The university is also in the process of transforming the entire first floor of Jones Hall into a multicultural center that will — along with the Culture of Community — attempt to better serve minorities.

“We do know that a lot of our underrepresented minorities have one, two, three part-time jobs; they have families,” Imler said. “There are so many other factors that keep them from being involved in campus activity. And their course load, sometimes that is interrupted by family situations. There are a variety of factors that can inhibit that”

They plan to convert the third floor of Jones Hall into a student success center to help meet academic needs. Further down the road, Tressel would like to open up Kilcawley Center.

“It is so carved up [right now] that if you want to go sit down with six people, you are segregated,” he said.

UNITY AND DIVERSITY

Imler stressed that these efforts will not force assimilation, but prioritize minority students’ place on an active, integrated campus.

“We aren’t going to come together and be the same — how boring would that be?” Imler said. “There will be a lot of things that we disagree with, but we can respect it.”

Tiffany Anderson, director of the Africana Studies program, agreed, emphasizing the need to confront and discuss differences.

“We have been lied to about being in a colorblind society, which is bullshit,” Anderson said. “Because we have been taught to be colorblind, we are instead becoming race ignorant.”

Imler said this commitment to diversity is oriented toward educating the non-diverse population. She said professors have to adjust their teaching style to respond to students’ feelings of alienation.

“You teach the way you were taught. ... So your instruction should be a diversity of approaches, not just one method,” she said. “Not one culture learns the same way. Within each culture, you have subcultures. They are different. ... In the public education arena, if we are really doing right by our students, why wouldn’t each student have an individualized public education plan.”

Though the Culture of Community could help, Imler and Blake also recommended diversity seminars or training reflecting Safe Zone Training.

CULTURED CURRICULUM

Anderson said another way to increase engagement and decrease segregation is not just more diversity curriculum, but diversity content integrated into previously existing courses.

YSU student Ja-Michael Johnson said if he had not sought it out, he would have never learned about his heritage because of the euro-centric scope of American curriculum.

“We are all taught to live the same, do the same, but the curriculum isn’t for our people,” he said. “If I didn’t look for the knowledge myself, I would only have learned about black history during one month in February. That is where the problem lies.”

Tressel said this needs to change because universities were created to foster responsible citizens, as well as provide knowledge.

“It has got to be a mass wave,” Tressel said. “It has to be woven into the curriculum of every class, even if it is not in the subject matter.”

Anderson and several students agreed that requiring diversity classes for all students may help raise students’ awareness of the experiences students of color have on campus, even if there is some initial resistance.

“People don’t want to sit in the class and talk about people of color all the time,” Shienne Williams, an Africana studies major, said. “Well, what about us? We talk about white people all the time.”

She asked a professor how Christopher Columbus discovered America when there were already people living here. He said Columbus was the first European to discover America.

“How do you disregard every aspect of humanity but your own?” Williams asked. “It is inhumane, and you are educating people to think ‘The world is only me. There is nobody else.’”

Victoria Shaffer, president of the YSU NAACP chapter, Jones, Anderson, Blake, Imler and Tressel all agreed truly effective solution will require the majority’s willing participation.

“I think to see racial reconciliation on this campus, we first have to understand that this is a hard issue,” YSU student Davon Bonner said. “Realize that maybe the idea of racism was inherited ... was a problem in your heart, but you became aware of it and decided to address it.”

He said some people need the truth presented to them, and people should discuss the issue with their family.

“I think opposition will come, but we have to be more than willing to explain to them why racism is a problem and why black lives matter,” Bonner said. “This is something I am interested in because I am a Christian — this is at the heart of my belief.”

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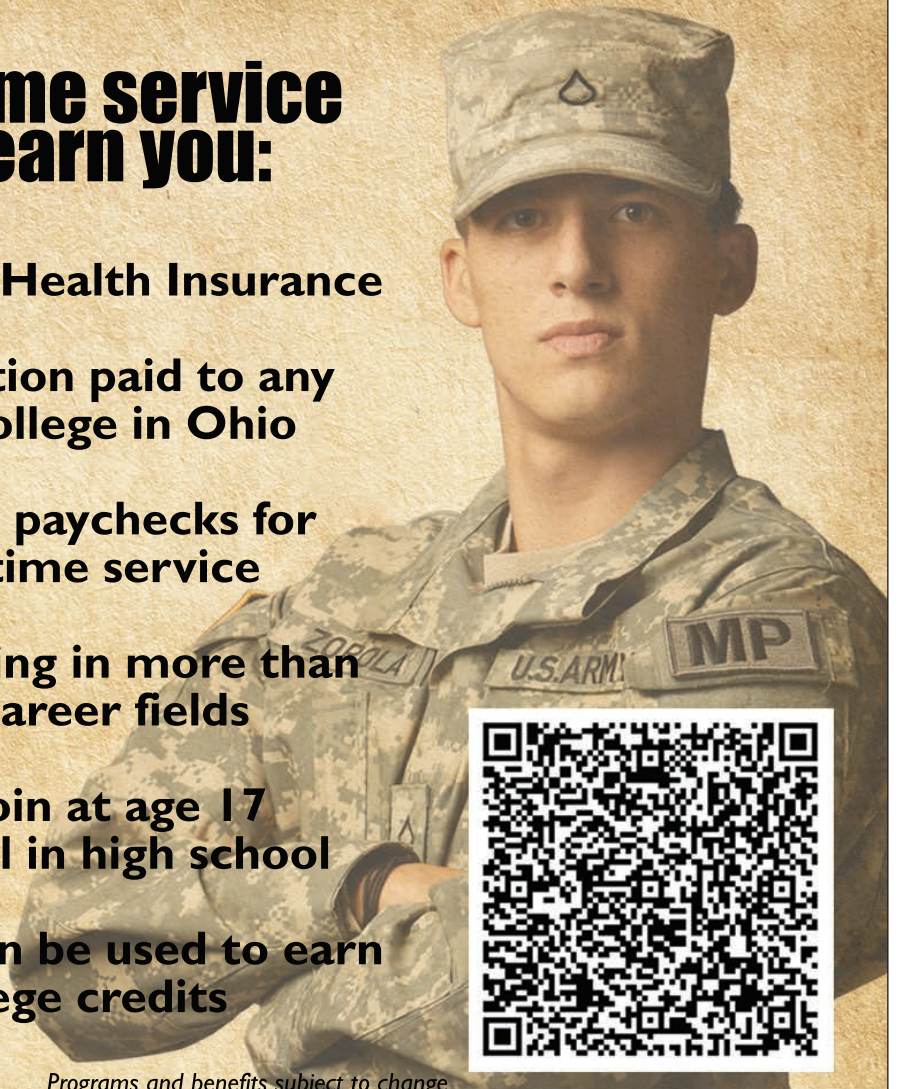
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NEWS BRIEFS

Mexican Printmaker is Guest Artist for YSU Red Press Collaborative April 4-8

Youngstown State University's art department will be having a guest artist from April 4 through the 8 in Bliss Hall room 4025. This is part of the department's Red Press Collaborative. Visitors are welcome and will be able to see the printmaking process from start to finish from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. during the week. People can also buy shirts for \$15 or \$125 for limited edition prints. It is free and open to the public, but there is a nominal fee to park in the Wick Avenue deck. For more information, call 330-941-2307.

YSU Students find Prehistoric Flint Stone Axe in Bahamas Archaeological Dig

Students from Youngstown State University found a flint stone axe while on an excavation in the Bahamas. This was a seven-day trip excavating the Fresh lake Archaeological Site on Salvador Island in the Bahamas. The site was once home to the Lucayan Indians, who lived there in the pre-Columbian times. The axe is the fifth piece of flint found since the excavation by YSU professors began in 1996, and the biggest piece found to date.

POWER PLANT TECHNOLOGY INFORMATION SESSION

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Protester Mitch Xia, center, facing camera, gets a hug from Zakyree Wallace, left, after speaking to the crowd at the intersection of Franklin Street and Columbia Street, where the group formed a circled and stopped traffic for hours on Tuesday, March 29, 2016, in Chapel Hill, N.C. Hundreds attended the rally to protest the recent passage of N.C. HB2. (Chris Seward/Raleigh News & Observer/TNS)

UNDERREPRESENTED FRONT

"YSU is a terrible campus honestly," Shienne Williams, a student majoring in Africana studies, said. "[Students] do what they have to do and then they leave."

Blake said the Office of Student Diversity works with students to elevate them academically and encourages involvement in campus life, citing four graduate students as success stories.

A major obstacle was the movement of the office from Kilcawley to Jones Hall, though the administration has decided to return Blake to Kilcawley.

Anderson said the initial decision reflected the segregation of black students on campus.

"Why the hell is it in Jones Hall?" Anderson asked. "All things cultural and diverse are on the fringe of the university. The metaphor exists in reality. It doesn't make any sense that you would have a student focused office in a building with no students in it."

Blake said he was never invited to give an opinion on moving his office to Jones Hall.

"Those decisions were made above my pay grade," he said. "Basically, you have to stay in your pay grade, and when you step out of your pay grade, there are some serious problems."

Blake said that regardless of the placement of the office, he lacks resources. When Blake was

asked to create and head the office, he said he could only accomplish the office's goals with adequate resources, both physical and financial.

"So when I first came into this office I had two graduate assistants, and I had a secretary," Blake said. "My last secretary just recently took a job this past week with the Department of Defense. ... Her position was eliminated, so she went to part time."

The office is now part of the Division of Multicultural Affairs. Blake said they were provided with no new resources with the move, a situation that is not unique to his office.

"Resources have been removed, and everybody's plate is full, yet we are still piling more on the plate," he said. "We need more hands doing the work. That looks like more staff."

Mike Beverly, a senior coordinator at the Center for Student Progress, manages the Summer Bridge Program, which provides a weeklong college prep program detailing support services available on campus to incoming multicultural students.

This type of program can be especially helpful for minority students coming from the inner-city, who Blake said struggle in particular to overcome alienation and become involved.

"They grew up in a primarily African-American school like that and then when they come to school — for some of them — it is an adjustment," Beverly said.

Beverly said the participating minorities tend to graduate at a higher rate, yet only 28 of around 2,000 incoming minority students attended in 2015.

"I can tell you, we don't have a lot of funds to work with," Beverly said. "I believe more money could definitely help ... Hopefully we could allow for more students to come. We have had years where we have gone over 30."

Though there are available services and staff for minority students to access if a problem arises, the support system does not always work as it is supposed to.

Shaffer shared her experience trying to file a grievance after a professor made a sexist remark to her.

"The person who does grievances passed away, so I was running around for maybe two or three weeks looking for someone to help me with filing a grievance," Shaffer said. "So I was just getting passed around, 'Oh, I am not doing this anymore,' or 'Oh, I am going to be out of town.'"

Shaffer connected her problem back to the effect a lack of visible support in and outside of the classroom can have on minority students.

"I am here paying tuition, getting an education and to have someone not help and physically tell me they are not going to help, and I am paying you to teach me; it is very disheartening," she said. "It is discouraging to know you are not wanted in a classroom setting."

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'You Make Me'

Exhibition Opening at M Gallery

STORY: **AMANDA LEHNERD** | ARLEHNERD@STUDENT.YSU.EDU
PHOTOS: **DAVID POKRIVŇÁK** | PAINTINGS: **HEATHER ANDERSON**

Local artists David Pokrivňák and Heather Anderson are collaborating for the first time in an art exhibit named "You Make Me" that opens at the M Gallery April 1.

The exhibit will showcase Pokrivňák's un-augmented observational photography and Anderson's ritualistic abstract paintings. Both artists found themselves drawn to the same aesthetic qualities and approaches to creative work, which inspired the collaboration.

The name "You Make Me" originated from the idea of wanting to loosely unite both artists' works without forcing a conclusion on the audience.

"You Make Me" stems from a continual exploration of identity," Anderson said. "It is about the people, places and experiences that

have defined and continue to shape our individuality. It is both intimate and private, yet collective and shared."

"You Make Me" was a creative process over several years between Pokrivňák and Anderson. Both artists being drawn to the same aesthetic made the work process easier.

According to Anderson, Pokrivňák is an extremely gifted and sensitive individual, with an intuitive sense of design. Working with him was a very natural process.

The creation of the artwork for the exhibit started last September. Anderson used many different approaches and mediums to create the artwork. Each piece can take anywhere from five to 15 hours to make.

"David and I had approximately 25 days to put ev-

erything together from our initial discussion and agreement, to the actual installation date," Anderson said. "It's been a very emotional and very busy month."

The theme of the event "You Make Me" has an underlying message for the audience. Anderson was inspired by the concept of ritual along with how it relates to her private identity and her public identity.

"Rituals are metaphorical bridges in the way that they connect us to other humans both past and present. Ritual easily lends itself to repetition, and I began to view it as an integral part of a whole method to painting," Anderson said. "I used a highly repetitive process to create abstracted works, which reference persistent memory and human connection

through a formulaic manner of applying and building layers of paint on surface."

Along with Pokrivňák and Anderson's art, the event will showcase a quartet by Newyopercussion performing special improvised compositions inspired by the exhibition.

Johanna George, events manager and M Gallery director, is very excited to host the opening of the event "You Make Me."

"It is my honor to select work for the public to discover and experience," George said. "When David and I began discussing his artwork and his strong connection to Youngstown, it made sense to share his poetic experiences with our community."

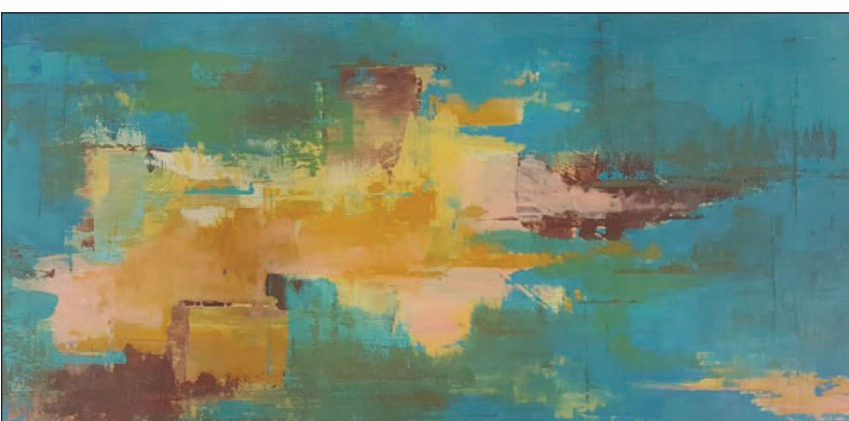
According to George, Pokrivňák was inspired by Anderson's ritualistic paint-

ings and introduced the idea to display their work in one collaborative exhibit. The two bodies of work contrast materials and style yet connect together through similar artistic motives.

The exhibit is free to the public, and attendees can enjoy selections from Inspired Catering by Kravitz. There will also be hand-numbered and signed artist books available only at the opening of the event.

The event is part of the Youngstown Art Hop. The Art Hop is a collaboration between the M and SOAP galleries with their own respective art opening on April 1.

The M Gallery is located on the ground floor of Erie Terminal Place located at 112 W Commerce St. in Downtown Youngstown.



EDITORIAL

CONFRONTING COMPLACENCY

Youngstown State University consistently fails its students of color.

There is no other way to interpret the 8.5 percent graduate rate among black students. They are 10 times more likely to leave the university with nothing to show for it but student debt rather than to walk away with a YSU degree.

In effect, their decision to improve themselves by attending this institution often leaves them worse off.

The sense among black students that they don't belong at YSU, as we found during our interviews, certainly does not help us retain and graduate black students.

Our lack of black faculty and staff exacerbates this sense of alienation.

We can't tolerate an engineering professor telling a black student "a lot of you guys don't make it in the engineering department," but blatant slights also need to be addressed.

There are two things the university can and should do. One is to hire more black faculty. Another is to provide some degree of cultural sensitivity training to existing faculty.

Michael Jerryson, associate professor of religious studies, revealed that he underwent a shift in his perception of issues of race after taking a class about race in graduate school. Maybe other professors would become more attuned to these concerns if they took a similar class.

It would likely benefit students as well. Perhaps we need a program on race that's similar to the Safe Zone program that exists to address LGBTQ issues. Of course, these inequities in outcome are not unique to YSU. They extend across our society. The war on drugs is a particularly salient example. White Americans use and sell drugs at similar rates to black Americans, yet black Americans bear the brunt of the war on drugs. They are more likely to be arrested and incarcerated, and the average sentences faced by black offenders are longer than the sentences faced by white offenders convicted of the same crime. Similar stories exist

in health and education outcomes. There are significant problems in the public school system — particularly in Youngstown.

This means a lot of students of color arrive at YSU already disadvantaged. While it would be easier to blame these problems on society, the university needs to be willing to accommodate those disadvantages. It's not enough to attempt to reform the public school system and wait 12 years for local students to show up college-ready, assuming the reforms are successful.

But we do not just fail students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds or who lack college readiness. We fail academically

successful black students as well.

YSU President Jim Tressel and Sylvia Imler, executive director of multicultural affairs, created a Culture of Community Collaborative, and that deserves praise, but we need targeted efforts directed at vulnerable populations as well.

Students may be working jobs to support loved ones, maybe we could work a bit harder to provide them with on campus jobs to keep them connected to their education. Students may need counseling or support services. The university recently hired a counseling director, but she, like our existing clinician, is white. They might not be attuned to the unique challenges black students are facing. Encouraging applicants of color for the next opening would help.

A common refrain in these interviews is that students don't feel like they have an outlet to discuss these problems.

Of course, it's easier to pretend we live in a colorblind meritocracy. To point to successful persons of color as evidence that progress is possible and to blame those who don't succeed for their own failings. But successful black students are overcoming what amounts to a cultural tax, a tax not applied to students who are not minorities. As a university, we need to make sure the proper actions are being taken to counter this tax.



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Youngstown State University softball pitcher Paige Geanangel releases the ball while on the mound during an YSU home game at the YSU Softball Complex.

Penguins Extend Win Streak

STORY: DAN HINER | DHINERJR@GMAIL.COM | PHOTO: DAN HINER

The Youngstown State University softball team has seen a dramatic improvement to its pitching over the past two weeks.

The Penguins' pitchers were a key to YSU sweeping Robert Morris University on Tuesday and extended its winning streak to eight games.

YSU (15-11, 3-0 in the Horizon League) won the first game of the doubleheader 8-0 on Tuesday afternoon. YSU won after a wild pitch that allowed Cali Mikovich to score, putting the "mercy rule" into effect and ending the game in the sixth inning.

Robert Morris (7-24) scored its first run of the doubleheader in the top of the second inning of the second game, snapping YSU's 27 scoreless inning streak. Caitlyn Minney, Paige Geanangel and Lexi Zappitelli have combined for a 2.43 ERA during the Penguins' win streak.

"They have been doing great. They have been working very hard," YSU catcher Maria Lacatena said. "We have been pitching a lot more this year — doing drills and working at-bats during practice. They've been doing awesome. I couldn't be happier. They've been doing a hell of a job."

With the Penguins down 2-1 in the bottom of the fourth inning, Lacatena stepped into the batter's box with the bases loaded.

Lacatena gave the Penguins a 5-2 lead with a grand slam to straight away centerfield. Lacatena finished the day 3-6 with four RBIs.

"You can't do too much, because when you do too much, it hurts you ... it really does hurt you," Lacatena said. "Going in there with a simple mind of moving the runner one base at a time, it really helps you out."

The Penguins added three additional runs in the bottom of the fifth and sixth innings and won the second game of the night, 8-2.

Minney started the second game for the Penguins, and Geanangel came in relief in the top of the fourth inning. Geanangel pitched 11 shutout innings during the doubleheader.

"She's done a great job, but if you look at the stats, she's getting the defense behind her," YSU head coach Brian Campbell said. "I think the other day, I remember, she pitched, and there was only one ball that went into centerfield for a single, and the rest of the balls were in the infield — we were able to make the plays."

"She's done a good job of keeping the batters off balance and getting groundballs and popups in the infield. Again the defense has worked really hard behind her."

Campbell said the offense is looking to go "60 feet." The Penguins' offense is focused on getting on base and moving the base runners to get into scoring position.

YSU second baseman Brittney Moffatt hasn't gotten off to a fast start this season, but she epitomized the small ball mentality the Penguins have executed in recent weeks. She combined to go 4-5 with three runs scored.

"I just came in feeling like it needed to do something, finally, and I just felt confident throughout the whole day," Moffatt said. "I felt like I needed to do some more work before the game. So I did that, and I think it really helped me."

The Penguins will go on the road for a three-game series against Oakland University on Friday.



SLOCUM RETURNS

DAN HINER | DHINERJR@GMAIL.COM

PHOTO: DAN HINER

Jerry Slocum, the head coach of the Youngstown State University men's basketball team, is returning for the 2016-17 season.

The YSU athletic department confirmed that Slocum will be the coach entering next season after YSU picks up an option in his contract. Next season will be Slocum's 42nd season as a Division I head coach and his 12th at YSU.

The Penguins finished last season with an 11-21 record, 6-12 in the Horizon League, and was eliminated in the first round of the Horizon League tournament by the University of Detroit Mercy for the second time in back-to-back seasons.

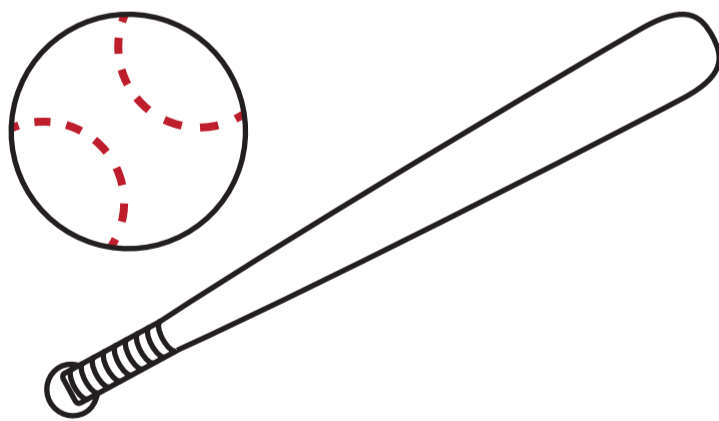
In Slocum's 11 seasons at YSU, the Penguins have compiled a 129-211 record. His 129 wins at YSU is currently second in program history.

Slocum joined the 700-win club last season after the Penguins defeated the University of North Dakota for their first win of the 2015-16 season. He has 710 career wins and is currently in the top 10 coaches in career victories.

The YSU athletic department will issue no official press release due to department policy, because he is a returning coach, and the details of Slocum's option have not been disclosed.

PRESSBOX PERSPECTIVE:

Finally, It's Time For *Real Baseball*



DREW ZUHOSKY | DTUHOSKY@STUDENT.YSU.EDU

As I mentioned about a month and a half ago, I love to watch spring training baseball every year. I've been watching spring training games almost every day since the exhibition season began.

However, every year as spring training nears its end, I reach the point of critical mass when it comes to exhibition games.

About a week ago, I reached said point. By now, when I watch spring training games, I say to myself "Oh, come on! Can the regular season just start already?"

Thankfully, the end of the pre-season is now only a few days away for Major League Baseball with teams packing up from their Florida and Arizona training complexes and heading toward their home markets.

In fact, the Houston Astros, San Francisco Giants and Los Angeles Dodgers will all be back in their home ballparks later tonight for the first

in a series of final exhibitions before Opening Day.

Spring training in baseball is too long for me, but at the same time, the last month has been all about developing a baseball team's farm system.

In baseball, you rarely hear about competitions for the top spot in the starting pitching rotation, like you would in football with the debate as to if a rookie quarterback will come out of training camp with the starting job.

Baseball teams, especially since it has a minor league system, have a general idea as to who starts at what position from year to year. Some teams have long since named a starting pitcher for Opening Day.

Cleveland Indians manager Terry Francona announced right-handed pitcher Corey Kluber as the starter for this Monday afternoon's game against the Boston Red Sox at Progressive Field before the fifth Cactus

League game.

Boston will counter with left-handed pitcher David Price, which will be a great pitching match-up.

Another entertaining Opening Day game has to be the Dodgers vs. San Diego Padres tilt. Any time the Dodgers send Clayton Kershaw to the mound, you just have to watch the game to see what he does.

Now at this time of year, sports-writers and columnists make predictions about the new baseball season. At the risk of sounding like a total idiot in October, I won't be doing that today.

Instead, I'll close the column with what Opening Day in Major League Baseball means to me. In brief, it brings me back to when I was growing up.

As a child, I couldn't wait to get off the school bus on Opening Day, go into the house and see if I could find out what the Indians' score was.

When I was seven years old, I asked my mother to tape the home opener (not Opening Day proper) for the Indians off Channel 43 out of Cleveland.

With blank VHS tapes being very affordable (this was 1999, mind you), Mom pressed record on our old VCR at the stroke of 1:00 that day.

I didn't get around to watching that tape until three days later and didn't get too far into the tape either, but the Indians won that year's home opener in 10 innings.

For some reason, possibly due to my heightened interests in video games, I never asked my mother to tape an Indians home opener again.

Opening Day unleashes my inner child every year. You can be assured that I'll be on the couch with an assortment of snacks watching baseball this Sunday.

Enjoy the new season, everybody!