DIRECTORS’ MESSAGE

Greetings, NAMME – NE:

We hope that everyone has made a smooth transition to fall. The change in the weather came quite quickly – almost as quickly as changes in NAMME! If you have not yet heard, NAMME has entered into a one-year contract with a non-profit management firm, FirstPoint Management Resources. FirstPoint assists many professional organizations with tasks such as financial management, web hosting, membership database management and hosting meetings and conferences. We were able to see first-hand the top quality assistance FirstPoint provides at the national meeting in Marina del Rey. Our administrative director, Felicia Kenan Boyles, was on point with all details. It is the Board’s hope that the relationship with FirstPoint will relieve the BOD of the minutiae of daily tasks, increasing our capacity to serve the membership and to focus on NAMME’s future. FirstPoint will streamline our dues and conference payment options, eliminate several steps in membership processing and allow for real-time, web-based access to membership rosters (I can only imagine the Scholarship Committee’s glee!) If you’d like to see what FirstPoint offers, take a look at their website

http://www.firstpointmanagementresources.com/

NAMME is in good hands!

If you missed the national meeting in Marina del Rey, we are so sorry! The meeting was wonderful. The Ritz Carlton welcomed us with open arms and provided excellent facilities and services. Workshops covered the landscape from interprofessional education, to program evaluation, to leveraging advocacy for funding. Guest speakers and member presenters were equally enlightening. The Awards Luncheon was a lovely affair, conferring awards upon a stellar group of individuals who have contributed greatly to health, diversity and education. A Silent Auction in the Director’s Suite raised a good deal of money for the Scholarship Fund. The Student Development Conference (now named for late NAMME member Larry Keith) was keynoted by NMF President and UNC Chapel Hill Assistant Dean for Admissions and Director of the Office of Special Programs, Cedric Bright, MD. The recruitment fair was outdoors in the LA sunshine. We’ll have to make that memory last until next spring!

Anika Daniels-Osaze, MA and Paula K. Davis, MA
Co-Directors, NAMME - NE

NE STUDENTS WIN NAMME NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS

NAMME NE salutes the members who nominated their fine students for consideration for the 2011 NAMME National Scholarships. The following students were awarded $1,000.00 scholarships. Congratulations to these exemplary young scholars.

NAMME MEMBER
Paula Davis
Eugenia Mejia
Michelle Wells Lockett

STUDENT
Nahom Beyene
Diana Campos
Alyson McGhan

BOARD MEMBERS NILDA Y. SOTO AND LUIS RAMOS AT “SILENT AUCTION” SCHOLARSHIP FUNDRAISING EVENT
The city of Alexandria, Va., has a new town crier!

NAMME-NE Communication Chair Benjamin Fiore-Walker was selected for the position after a grueling "cry off," where a total of 12 candidates did their best proclaiming in front of a panel of city officials.

The potential criers were all judged on their "voice strength and clarity, deportment, verbal and nonverbal communication, and interest in Alexandria."

Fiore-Walker is no stranger to dressing up in period costumes, as he has volunteered at Gadsby's Tavern Museum as a tour guide. But his new duties are less about the finer points of bell-ringing and tri-corner hats and more about serving as what could be considered the first generation of social media in the United States. Town criers delivered the news and status updates in a world without papers, television and Twitter.

All of the auditions for town crier, including Ben's, are on the city’s website at http://alexandriava.gov/TownCrier.

Find him on Facebook as AlexandriaTownCrier.

Congratulations, Ben!

For the past 25 years, the Office for Diversity and Academic Success in the Sciences (ODASIS) of the Division of Life Sciences at Rutgers University has been successfully implementing academic enrichment and support programs designed to decrease the number of underrepresented pre-medical students facing these very barriers when applying for medical school. The remarkable success of the program has gained ODASIS recognition as being among the top 10 programs in the nation for graduating underrepresented students who go on to pursue degrees in medicine, dentistry, and other careers in healthcare (Diverse Education). In the past 21 years the program has produced 963 graduates, the majority of which has entered the health professions.

ODASIS accomplishes its mission by siphoning interested students into a pipeline program which extends from grade 11 to the final year of college. ODASIS offers several high school programs to New Brunswick high school students including free SAT preparation, college and scholarship application assistance, introduction to an array the health careers, and college level introductory English courses. In addition to these high school programs ODASIS also offers a plethora of resources and programs for minority and underrepresented college students. Students enrolled in pre-medical requirements such as General Biology, General Chemistry, and Organic Chemistry receive academic support from ODASIS in which they learn how to properly study and retain important information.

Although essential, good grades alone do not make a complete medical school application; experience in the health field, participating in community service, and conducting research are also important accomplishments of a future doctor. ODASIS is well aware of the importance of being a well-rounded student and provides its students with help applying to pre-medical enrichment programs such as the programs offered through Rutgers University or the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey through which students have the opportunity to participate in basic science research, shadow physicians, or take upper level science courses for credit.
As if providing these resources wasn’t enough, ODASIS also offers a competitive and rigorous MCAT preparatory course that requires students to attend class on Friday evenings and Saturdays mornings for 8 months. ODASIS has recently added GRE and DAT preparatory courses which students at Rutgers University can take for credit and has created an online MCAT course. Once students have successfully completed their MCAT, ODASIS offers extensive guidance and advocates for students throughout the medical school application process through close communication with admissions faculty at the medical school. ODASIS provides its students the entire package. From SAT prep in the 11th grade to MCAT prep in junior year, ODASIS is committed to the students they serve and strives to help minority students in any way they can.

Natasha Ramsey can attest to this statement first hand, having gone through all of the ODASIS programs and now currently attending New York University School of Medicine on a scholarship. Growing up in New Brunswick and being a first generation college student, Natasha knew she wanted to attend college but was not sure how to go about accomplishing this goal. She joined the SAT prep class offered by ODASIS and the rest was history. The support Natasha received from ODASIS gave her the opportunity to succeed and receive a full scholarship to college. She received academic support for all of her science classes from ODASIS, participated in the recommended summer programs, and went through their intense MCAT prep program. With the help of ODASIS, Natasha was able to graduate magna cum laude with several awards and acceptances to medical school. Without the support and guidance she received from ODASIS, Natasha is confident she would not be where she is today. She hopes to graduate with an MD/MPH degree and pursue her interest in global health and working with underserved populations.

“It was through participating in the ODASIS program that I was able to discover my true passion to pursue medicine and to be provided with the tools to reach this goal” states Ramsey.

The ODASIS office strives to continue expanding in order to address the need for more minorities in medicine and health related fields so that more students like Natasha can reach their full potential.

It is important to remember that Natasha’s story is not an isolated case and there are many other students that share her gratitude towards the ODASIS program for all of the support they offer minority students. The program has steadily increased the number of students accepted into medical school over the past 10 years. This year, ODASIS celebrates its 25th anniversary as well as the results of the most recent MCAT class whose scores exceeded those of all classes preceding it.

SAVE THE DATE! NAMME-NE REGION CONFERENCE
FEBRUARY 16-19, 2012
PHILADELPHIA, PA
Lasting Impact: James and Janice Turner have made their mark on Ithaca
By Kara Cusolito, Oct. 12, 2011
Ithaca Times

In their 40 years as Ithacans, James and Janice Turner have worked to reshape a campus, a community and a culture.

James Turner, founding director of the Africana Studies and Research Center, and wife Janice Turner, retired associate dean of the College of Arts and Science, came to Ithaca in 1969, at a time when there no black teachers in the Ithaca City School District, only a handful of black tenured professors and no courses in African-American history, life, culture or literature.

"We had to begin the process of changing that environment," James said.

Though retired on paper, both James and Janice fill their days with meetings and volunteer gigs.

"It's like we never retired," James said with a smile and a laugh.

Four decades after their arrival, the couple is often celebrated for their contributions to Cornell and to the city. In September, the couple was honored at a downtown event for their contributions to the community. Last year, the Cornell Black Alumni Association announced a scholarship named in their honor.

In addition to being the founding director the Africana Studies and Research Center - developing its curriculum and growth - James served on the Board of Directors at Southside Community Center, and was the chair of the Tompkins County Human Rights Commission. He's also worked with the Multicultural Resource Center and the Village at Ithaca.

Janice worked at Ithaca College's Educational Opportunity Program, and later became associate dean in Cornell University's College of Arts and Sciences. She was also a mentor to pre-med students, and was and remains involved in the Black Biomedical Technical Association, which was started by the class of 1973.

Janice continues to be committed to education on campus and in the greater community. She spoke of her concerns that while there are so many colleges and universities in the region, there are still so many young people not going to college.

"It's unacceptable," she said. "We need more advocates from the community. It's a very small town; why isn't every child given the opportunity to go on to higher ed?"

Many of the same issues exist now in Ithaca, Janice said, as existed when they arrived 40 years ago.

We often hear the same problems and concerns," she said. "There are a lot of young people not finishing high school and few holding significant jobs in the community."
James's work inspired the Village at Ithaca's equity report card - a study of equity issues within the Ithaca City School District - which former ICSD board member Jeff Furman works on. Furman, a colleague of the Turners, said the couple's accomplishments are much more than just a laundry list.

"They've always been there, supporting community efforts in a very deep and meaningful way," he said.

Turner's work and his hands-on support helped improve many of the issues that prompted him to run for school board in the first place, Furman said. The Turners have been integral in promoting equity within the school district, he added.

According to Furman, hundreds of educators and students were impacted by his course with Don Barr at Cornell, "Racism in American Society." Roberta Wallit, an ICSD teacher who took Turner and Barr's course, said the class had a profound effect on her and on others who took it.

"Dr. Turner is an inspiring teacher whose commitment to social change has affected a multitude of students, both educators and Africana students, who leave his classes ready to make a positive difference in the world," Wallit said. "Unlike so many of his colleagues, who have remained up on the hill, Dr. Turner has been invested in the well being of the Ithaca community and has contributed his time and energy to the efforts of those working for equity in the ICSD and the Ithaca community."

The Turners relocated to Ithaca from Evanston, Ill., in 1969, where James was a graduate student and Janice was the director of a Head Start program for a local school district.

With two of their three children starting out in the city's school district, Janice began teaching remedial math and reading classes, and James worked to link his students at Cornell with the local school district and downtown recreational programs.

"When we came, we observed that there were no black teachers is the whole ICSD," he said. "We wanted to improve that."

Turner arranged partnerships with his students and the downtown community. If he had students interested in child psychology, development, or education, they could work with local agencies like the Greater Ithaca Activities Center or Southside Community Center.

The family decided early on that because their children had grown up in an environment where they were the vast minority, it was important for their cultural grounding that they attend college in a place where that wasn't the case. So their three children attended Morehouse College, Spelman College and Howard University.

Cornell was not alone in starting an Africana Center that year; there were many other institutions of higher education starting up programs: University of California at Berkeley, San Francisco State University, Ohio State, University of Chicago, Northwestern, Emory University, Syracuse University and University of Massachusetts. That group of universities, James said, worked as somewhat of a support network for one another and to create cohesive pedagogical plans.

"We were the first generation of Africana studies," he said, adding that it was particularly important to him, because so few students at that time had ever had the experience of a black professor.

This start-up of programs dedicated to Africana studies, a term that was actually coined by James, led to a reshaping of an entire culture, the couple said. In particular, he said, Africana studies opened the door for disciplines like women's studies, Latino studies and gay studies.

In his early years, Turner was met with both support and resistance. It was not uncommon to face people who blatantly criticized starting up a program for the Africana studies discipline.

"People would say, 'there is no black culture, there is no black literature,' so how will you teach a course on it?" James said, adding that argument held no water because there was vibrant culture - it just wasn't being taught.
In 1970, the Wait Avenue building that housed the original center was burnt down in an act of arson. Still, much of the university was supportive of the idea of an Africana Center. The idea for the center stemmed from student and faculty demand, the Turners said, and was the spawn of the historic 33-hour standoff between Cornell University and the African American students who led a takeover of Willard Straight Hall as a result of campus-wide racial tension.

"We got here at a very opportune moment in the history of Cornell, at a crossroads in the history of the country," James said. "At that moment, many took off school, left, and put their own ambitions on hold because of their commitment to the larger issue of human rights for black people, to continue the unfinished process of the civil war."

There's still a lot of work to be done in his discipline, Turner said.

"A lot of people think we live in a post-racial society," James said. "But segregation still exists; look at certain neighborhoods."

He noted that having a black president doesn't mean racial tensions are over, any more than having a female prime minister in other countries has made women completely equal to men, James said. And in more recent years, the concept of diversity has been used to deflect attention from racial equality, he said.

"Now, diversity has trumped racial equality," he said. "There are still an unequal number of African American students at Cornell University.

The problem - the difference - James said, is that the proportions are off. While there may be a greater diversity in students' backgrounds than there was just a few decades or years ago, the population still don't reflect the actual percentages that exist in the greater population.

It's quite an undertaking to describe the impact both Turners have had, said Eric Acree, librarian at the Africana Center. Fort and Furman agreed with the sentiment.

"Anything I say will be incomplete," Acree said.