INFORMATION ITEM #3
Washington State University Students Promote Higher Education Through Multicultural Conferences
(Michael J. Tate, Ph.D.)

Every year Washington State University students organize three multicultural conferences on the Pullman campus—SHAPING, CASHE, and VIBES. In addition, students in the Native American community organize a WSU Pow Wow called Pah-Loots-Pu. These events may have been mentioned in previous reports, but this month’s report will discuss them in much greater detail.

These conferences are three-day events that provide unique networking and information gathering opportunities for high school students interested in pursuing secondary education. Participation in the conferences is available to all high school students interested in learning about college. Each student must complete and submit an application to attend. All applications are reviewed by the conference chairs who are WSU student leaders. Transportation, hotel, and food are provided for each conference attendee.

The number of students attending SHAPING, CASHE and VIBES has more than doubled since these conferences first began on campus. Currently the SHAPING Conference averages 110 students, the CASHE Conference averages 240 students, and the VIBES Conference averages 170 per year. WSU students and employees, and even the student participants, are awestruck by the sight of over 100 high school age participants who have taken their week-end time to come to WSU to learn about higher education prospects.

By organizing these informative opportunities, our current WSU students are inspiring and encouraging a new generation of students. The students attending these conferences are receiving information and resources needed to make the transition from high school into higher education. They are also developing an expansive network of support that will prepare them for success in all of their future endeavors.

SHAPING Conference:
What is SHAPING?

Shaping High School Asian Pacific Islanders for the Next Generation (SHAPING) is a leadership conference that specifically targets junior and senior high school level students of Asian-American/Pacific Islander decent. However, all high
school student interested in attending are welcome. This annual event began in 1992, on the WSU-Pullman campus. Its intent is to address the need of higher education among the Asian-American/Pacific Islander community while promoting leadership development for current Washington State University students.

Consort Mission:
To promote Asian American/Pacific Islander student involvement and leadership at Washington State University by empowering high school students through multicultural leadership and awareness, while developing a network for students achieving higher education.

Conference Summary:
SHAPING Conference Demographics, October 23-25, 2009
- 113 Participants
- Over 11 percent more student participation than 2008
- 64 percent female participants – 33 percent male participants
- Attendance by high school class:
  - 32 percent Seniors
  - 38 percent Juniors
  - 19 percent Sophomores
  - 11 percent Freshman
- 56 percent – First Generation College, 44 percent – Not First Generation
- 6 percent had attended a prior recruitment conference
- 22 high schools were represented

A survey taken after the conference revealed the following:
- 95 percent of student attendees agreed or strongly agreed that their main concerns about attending a higher education institution were answered at the conference.
- 89 percent reported feeling confident about their ability to attend college after the conference.
- 42 percent of the students listed WSU as a possible college destination in the pre-survey.
- 52 percent reported they are considering attending WSU after the conference which is a 10 percent increase.
- 33 percent of the participants were concerned the most about cost when thinking about attending college.
- 76 percent felt that they developed a better understanding about the financial aid process after the conference.
Comments from student participants

- “The overall community feeling of the Pacific Islanders that ran this conference; how everyone is very welcoming, and making attending WSU seem more appealing.”
- “Learning that there are several ways to help pay for my education gives me a sigh of relief. It helped me decide that I am 100% going to attend higher education.”
- “The most important part was being able to have team leaders. We could connect and ask questions about majors and reason they came here. I think that WSU has resources and people that will help you get into college and succeed your freshman year.”
- “I enjoyed the connection that most of us felt. The banquet was very touching and it impacted me pretty hard. SHAPING gave me and others the feeling of hope and support we need. Thank you so much.”

CASHE Conference:

What is CASHE?

Children of Aztlan Sharing Higher Education (CASHE) is a leadership conference that specifically targets junior and senior high school level students of Latina/Latino descent. However, again, all high school students are invited. This annual event on the WSU-Pullman campus was developed with the intent to address the need of higher education among the Latina/Latino community while encouraging leadership development for current Washington State University students.

Conference Mission:
To promote Latina/Latino student involvement and leadership at Washington State University by empowering high school students through multicultural leadership and awareness, while developing a network for students achieving higher education.

Conference Summary:
CASHE Conference Demographics, November 6-8, 2009

- 242 Participants
- Over 60 percent more student participation than 2008
- 52 percent female participants – 32 percent male participants
- Attendance by high school class:
  - 44 percent Seniors
  - 21 percent Juniors
11 percent Sophomores
07 Freshman
• 63 percent – First Generation College, 22 percent – Not First Generation
• 24 high schools were represented

A survey taken after the conference revealed the following:
• 95 percent of the participants stated that their main concerns about attending higher education were answered at this conference.
• 96 percent of the participants were impacted positively by at least one current WSU student during CASHE.
• 94 percent found interesting information about careers at the college fair.
• 38 percent were unsure or felt that their grades were not good enough to get them into a 4-year University; but 84 percent agreed that it was more important to go to college than earn money.

Comments from student participants
✓ “Thanks all CASHE members and volunteers. You made this an amazing experience. I want to follow in your footsteps.”
✓ “The positive influence by the Dean of Admission and the love for the culture.”
✓ “When John Fraire had me stand up and gave me an ovation….I want to improve my GPA and come to WSU.”
✓ “I enjoyed meeting new friends and feeling accepted being Latino even though I don’t look like it. Thanks for the experience.”
VIBES Conference:
What is VIBES?

Visionaries Inspiring Black Empowered Students (VIBES) is a leadership conference that specifically targets sophomore and junior high school level students of African-American descent, but as with the other conferences, all students are welcome. This annual event on the Pullman campus is intended to address the need of higher education among the African-American community. It also fosters leadership development for current Washington State University students.

Conference Mission:
The mission of V.I.B.E.S. Conference is to motivate young African-American high school students (sophomore/junior status preferred) to come to the campus of Washington State University. Our purpose is to develop a culture of leadership through strong educational objectives, knowledge of self and community, as well as empowering them with the belief they can attain their goals and objectives. We strive to give tomorrow’s youth a sense of direction in higher education and community leadership while mentoring them in the accountability they have to the communities they lead.

Conference Summary:
Vibes Conference Demographics, February 11-13, 2009
- 124 Participants
- 67 percent female participants – 33 percent male participants
- Attendance by high school class:
  - 46 percent Seniors
  - 31 percent Juniors
  - 22 percent Sophomores
  - 02 percent Freshman
- 44 percent – First Generation College, 56 percent – Not First Generation
- 12 percent had attended a prior recruitment conference

A survey taken after the conference revealed the following:
- 87 percent strongly agreed or agreed that they were informed concerning the application process.
- 98 percent of students agree that they had been strongly impacted by a WSU student at the conference.
- 85 percent found interesting information at the career fair.
• 55 percent (68 students) are considering attending WSU, while only 8% had mentioned WSU in their plans on the pre-assessment.

• 27 percent were unsure whether their grades were good enough to get into a 4-yr. university.

• 92 percent felt more confident about attending a 4-yr. university after the conference.

Comments from student participants

- “Well, I am white (100% Italian) so it was neat for me to see what being a minority was like. I learned so much about the African-American culture and about college.”

- “The workshops and when students talked to us and gave us information….because it let me know how college is going to be from someone who is currently experiencing it.”

- “The most impactful part of the conference to me was finding out how I don’t really have to worry about money to come to college. Knowing I have people at WSU that want to help me succeed in life as an African-American.”

- “My team leader, Danyaile was a big impact. Being around students who attend this university and them telling me how it is and how to achieve going to college…..and the workshops.”

Pah-Loots-Pu Pow Wow:

What is the Pow Wow?

The original purpose of this WSU Pow Wow was to provide an opportunity for the WSU community to celebrate and honor Native American culture. Over the years that purpose broadened to include outreach to all communities. It now promotes the educational goals of WSU, and demonstrates how Native culture can both be taught and integrated into the university setting. Even with its expanded scope, the WSU Pow Wow still preserves the integrity of the Native culture.

The first WSU Pow Wow was held in 1975 on Mother’s Day at WSU-Pullman’s Rogers Orton Field. Because rain was a major concern, in 1980, Pah-Loots-Pu was moved to Bohler Gym.
In 1987, the Pow Wow was lengthened from a daylong event to a two-day event. This gave more time for drummers to come from far away and provided more opportunities for tribal participation. In 1996, the event was moved to Beasley Coliseum, where it is held today.

By the early millennium, the average turnout for the WSU Pow Wow was about 2,000 people. That began to decline over the years as other area colleges and universities began to put on their own spring pow wows. It was for this reason that WSU students decided to move the 2010 event to fall semester. Pah-Loots-Pu will be held October 1-2. There are only two or three major pow wows during the fall. Students felt that less competition from other universities would boost attendance at WSU’s event as well as be more attractive for drummers coming from throughout the plateau area. It will provide a better recruitment avenue for prospective students; although, Pah-Loots-Pu has never been considered by WSU students as a recruitment activity. However, discussions are taking place that could result in recruitment programs being held just prior to the WSU Pow Wow.

Approximately 15 to 20 people are involved in planning this fall’s event. The planning includes long-range fundraising through tribes and developing the theme and agenda. The event requires many student and staff volunteers for registration, concession sales, and the traditional dinner.

In 2006, when Pah-Loots-Pu experienced a record attendance of about 25,000 people, 160 volunteers were utilized. These volunteers didn’t come from just the WSU Native American community, but also included students, faculty, and staff from all of WSU’s multicultural communities, the Center for Fraternity and Sorority Life and the ASWSU Senate.

Fundraising Banquet
For many years students struggled to secure the needed funding to put on the conferences. In 2003, the Associated Students of Washington State University (ASWSU) decided to create a fundraising dinner to support them. The dinner has become an annual event and is instrumental in securing conference funding. It is entirely planned and implemented by students, and occurs during spring semester. Invitations go out to administrators, faculty, staff, and community leaders. The attendance at these banquets average approximately 300 people.

This year’s fundraising banquet, held on February 26, was titled Igniting the Flame that will Light the Future. It featured former Regent and Chair, Kenneth Alhadeff as the keynote speaker. The $33,000 raised this year brings the total contributions to $140,000 since the dinner’s inception. Students say that it is a lot of work to put on each fundraising event, but they know these dinners are essential to making sure the conferences will continue for years to come.
**In Conclusion**
Each one of these unique conferences strives to accomplish the following objectives:

- Stimulate and develop student interest in the various university disciplines.
- Strive to increase the number of students of color studying at the undergraduate level.
- Promote public awareness of education and the opportunities that are provided from education.
- Function as a representative body on issues and developments that affect the careers of our WSU students.

These special conferences are part of developing a proud tradition of producing outstanding student leaders who are academically superior and responsible citizens. By redefining the meaning of leadership, we are helping students attain vital skills such as compassion, civility, and integrity. Today, student leaders must have an appreciation of different perspectives and customs.

These conferences serve as a tool for current WSU students. The volunteers are inspired to give back to their university community because they see the impact of their achievement and service. In addition, there are the opportunities for leadership development, and cross-cultural building as the following two volunteers have expressed below:

Vhonda McElroy, junior

“I have been a student leader for many years, but hadn’t done many things with students of color. Being part of VIBES definitely heightened my awareness and passion for my community at WSU and I learned that I can make an impact on other people’s lives.”

Abigail Njuguna, sophomore

“I am usually not the type of person to put myself out there, but VIBES gave me the opportunity to share what I’ve learned about being at WSU and the high school students really appreciated it. Now I am volunteering more of my time to help kids. Organizing an event of the caliber of VIBES will definitely help my career and it showed me that I can make a difference right now rather than later in life.”