MAAB
MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS ADVISORY BOARD

YEAR IN REVIEW

OCTOBER 13, 2014
MICROAGGRESSIONS WORKSHOP

In the first open meeting of the 2014-2015 school year, the MAAB hosted a workshop on microaggressions, subtle and sometimes unintentional derogatory communications targeted at an identity group. The goal of the workshop was to help students unpack exactly what microaggressions are, how to identify them, and offer ways to respond and address situations in which they feel their identity is being threatened through the form of a microaggression. The board also used this meeting to introduce themselves as an active resource on campus and go over the bias response protocol at Columbia.

NOVEMBER 24, 2014
ON THE CORE - STUDENT IDENTITIES AND EXPERIENCES IN LIT HUM

Our first forum on the Core Curriculum began with Literature Humanities. The MAAB invited students to join us to share praise, concerns, and their experiences in the classroom. The goal was to foster an open dialogue between students, faculty, and administrative representatives. We all reflected on the merits and challenges of Lit Hum, explored the impacts the class and classroom experiences have had on students, identified room for improvement, and used student input to determine what possible improvements could look like.

FEBRUARY - MAY 2015
MEETINGS WITH ROOSEVELT MONTAS, DIRECTOR OF THE CORE

After a productive conversation during our first On the Core forum, we were stirred to action. Professor Roosevelt Montas, Director of the Core, reached out to the MAAB to continue the conversation surrounding how to support students from a variety of backgrounds so that they may feel safe and welcomed in their Core classes. We have had five meetings with him over the course of the Spring semester. As a result of these conversations, we learned that many instructors did not recognize that students are so strongly impacted by how questions of identity are handled in Core classrooms. For that reason, the MAAB is composing a guide for Literature Humanities and Contemporary Civilization instructors in order to help them be aware of possible challenges that may arise around identity, and suggestions on how to address them.

FEBRUARY 24, 2015
PRESENTATION TO CC FACULTY

The MAAB was asked to join instructors for Contemporary Civilization in their weekly faculty meeting. Several members of the board, including a student we invited, presented our work with On the Core to the instructors. In addition to introducing a series of recommendations the board had made based on the Lit Hum forum, the board also fielded questions from faculty members about classroom engagement and facilitation techniques related to addressing student identities. The overwhelmingly positive response from instructors was that it was immensely valuable to hear from students, and that our presentation would inform their future teaching practices.

OCTOBER 2014
“WE’RE A CULTURE NOT A COSTUME”

The Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA), with the support of the MAAB, puts on an annual campaign against cultural appropriation during Halloween. Cultural appropriation happens when people perform the customs and/or practices of a culture which they are not a part of, often without knowledge of the meaning behind the customs and/or practices. Dearly held identities become a costume which can be put on and taken off, thereby removing them of their significance. People of the appropriated culture may feel mocked and disrespected by such acts. The OMA, MAAB, and other universities across the nation seek to raise awareness about cultural appropriation in order to prevent identity-based harm and promote a fun, aware, and respectful Halloween for those who choose to celebrate at Columbia.

NOVEMBER 25, 2014
EVENTS ON PERSONAL IMPACT, POST-FERGUSON VERDICT

Immediately following the public announcement of the non-indictment of Darren Wilson in the Ferguson grand jury verdict on Michael Brown’s death, the MAAB hosted a Healing and Creative Space focused on personal impact and community healing. The non-indictment resulted in many students grieving and grappling with the fact that black lives in the U.S. are not respected or secure. The goal was to provide a space open to all Columbia students to unpack and heal in whatever way they felt necessary to them, whether that be through creating visual art, writing, dialogue, etc. Present in the space were representatives from the MAAB, OMA, and CPS.

FEBRUARY 20, 2015
MEETING WITH SUZANNE GOLDBERG, EVP FOR UNIVERSITY LIFE

Suzanne Goldberg, Columbia’s new Executive Vice President for University Life, had been charged to put together a University-wide committee focusing on race, ethnicity, and justice. As a precursor to this committee, she invited several undergraduate students, including an MAAB representative, to discuss ideas and potential actions. Students and faculty convened and discussed student experiences and needs on campus with Ms. Goldberg in order to develop a slate of programs to add to those that naturally occur on our campus which consider issues of race, ethnicity, and equal justice in our society.

MARCH 27, 2015
ON THE CORE - STUDENT IDENTITIES AND EXPERIENCES IN CC

The MAAB organized a second forum in our On the Core series, this time focused on Contemporary Civilization. We facilitated a conversation between past and current CC students, and instructors, focusing specifically on their experiences in the classroom. Students shared personal stories of their time in CC, many of which expressed a sense of marginalization in regards to their gender and racial identities.

MOVING FORWARD

We hope that the progress made in our On the Core series this year will continue on and eventually result in training for Core instructors in facilitating discussions on identity. Furthermore, we hope that the MAAB will continue to serve as a visible resource on campus for student of all identities, whether that be immediately after national events such as the non-indictments, or support in dealing with more recurrent challenges like microaggressions and cultural appropriation. Overall, the MAAB is committed to advocacy and serving as an intermediary between students, administration, and faculty.

Please email maab@columbia.edu with any suggestions, concerns, or proposals for collaboration.