

## **Living/Learning Center Programs**

The University of Vermont

<http://www.uvm.edu/llcenter/>

### **No Boundaries: Redefining Culture**

#### **Overview:**

The No Boundaries: Redefining Culture program affords and encourages members to be involved with both the learning and teaching aspects of cultural and diversity awareness. The program will challenge members to redefine their sense of culture and social awareness by acknowledging all cultures, extending far beyond geography, and delving into an anthropological and sociological look at socio-economic cultures, cultures of differing genders, sexualities, nationalities, abilities, and histories. We will also examine how we choose to acknowledge or omit the existence of a given culture and the impact that this has on the minority and majority groups within our society.

Members of the program will be exposed to many cultures and backgrounds and will be encouraged to share their own cultural identity and experiences with the group. The suite environment will provide us with an organization that will encourage and enhance our educational purposes. Living in a suite environment will allow program members to develop a level of respect and understanding with one another that only comes from daily interactions with each other. As our members search for and are exposed to the different cultures at UVM, the suite environment will also foster an environment of safety and reflection. On a procedural level, the suite environment will also allow for program members to easily organize weekly meetings and will act as base of operations for event planning.

The primary goal for this program is to extend our experiences and newfound or refined knowledge into the UVM and the Greater Burlington community. As such, we will participate in and create events that will help us reach this goal. We will encourage and foster community learning through self guided learning, group learning, and events. We will also require our members to participate in some form of community volunteering to put themselves into a culture that may not be their own. We will also attend and discuss various forms of cultural art, such as movies, plays, art exhibits, and musical performances. By the end of this experience, each member will have tools to identify and respect the intricacies of our immediate and more distant society and the cultures which exist within.

#### **Learning Objective 1:**

Members will expand their understanding and knowledge of other cultures as well as their own.

#### **Action Steps:**

A. Members will attend weekly scheduled meetings, in which they will participate in discussion. Meetings will be mandatory for all members.

1. For the first month of the year, we will focus on what culture means to each individual in the group. Group members will do a brief presentation explaining their perspective of culture, and the cultures that they identify with. The presentation can be a reading, activity, film clip, auditory experience, or whatever medium the presenter wants to use to teach about their chosen culture(s). The presentation will be educational for the rest of the group, and the presenter will be asked to facilitate a discussion or reflection on the topic after the presentation.

2. After the first month, we will focus on exploring culture as a group. Each month, we will decide on a culture of interest and explore that culture together. Our weekly meetings will be centered on a discussion of that culture. Each group member should come prepared ready to discuss. Outside research is encouraged.

B. Twice a semester (or as deemed necessary), we will plan a meeting with members of another "Cultural" oriented suite. This will be done so that members of both groups may learn from each other.

1. The topic to be discussed will be planned ahead of time by the Program Directors, but members will be encouraged to give their input. These inter suite meetings may also act as planning meetings for larger inter suite events.

C. Program Directors will invite community members (both UVM and non-UVM) as they see fit to lead discussion or present on cultures which they hold expert/ real life knowledge in. Some examples would be inviting professors of sociology, history, and anthropology, as well as employees of LGBTQA services, ACCESS, or other organizations on and off campus. We can also attend lectures held on campus that apply to a culture of interest.

### **Learning Objective 2:**

Members of our suite will raise awareness and educate UVM community members about culture.

#### ***Action steps:***

A. Members will collaborate with other suites and participate in their activities. Members are required to attend or assist in at least three cultural activities put on by UVM affiliates per academic year.

B. Two to four movies a semester that will help educate students, faculty, and members of the community about issues concerning culture. These will be put on by program

members. The members will choose these movies and program participants will be expected to sign up for one of the dates per semester to set up the movie, refreshments and facilitate discussion after the film.

### **Learning Objective 3:**

Members will be given the opportunity to experience different cultures first hand.

#### ***Action Steps:***

A. The group will spend a day visiting the Fleming Museum to get a feel for historical European Vermont culture.

B. We are planning one trip a year to francophone Canada so that members can experience cultural foods and traditions of another country. It is the goal for the date to be planned around a cultural event taking place in Canada, and will occur only if border crossing is feasible for all interested program members. If a trip to Canada cannot take place, the group might plan an alternate trip to Boston or New York to experience the diverse cultures available in those areas. This trip would also be planned in conjunction with a cultural event happening in that city.

C. Members will attend local exhibits in the L/L Gallery or area museums that would be of interest to our program and education. These trips will take place as a group or individually, as interest seems to warrant and as decided in weekly meetings.

D. Members will attend one cultural event in the Burlington area, such as a film, concert, or festival as a group to experience culture as it is presented locally.

E. Members will learn about and, if they are comfortable, participate in various holidays throughout the year. Holidays will be chosen based on significance to members. Members will be encouraged to participate as fully as possible in all activities and events associated with these holidays.

#### **Community Service:**

Each member is required to do 10 hours of community service for each academic semester. As the definition is broad, activities can include volunteering at local organizations, cultural events put on by UVM and the community, membership in a campus group of relevance etc.

Community service is encouraged as a means of putting members outside their usual peer groups to experience the cultures of other people. Community service in the wider Burlington community is particularly encouraged.

### **Plans for Interactions With Other L/L Programs:**

Part of the purpose of our suites is to try to unite the Living/Learning community. We intend to regularly interact with other programs and members of the L/L community. We want to contribute to their events, and hopefully they will contribute to, and attend ours as well. We also hope that this unity extends beyond the L/L community.

Because our goal as a program is to learn about other cultures while sharing our own, we can find meaningful connections to nearly every program in L/L. We can collaborate with the Arts Initiative suites to learn about artistic practices of different cultures. We can collaborate with the Global Village in myriad exciting ways. Every program, from Sci-Fi to Anime to PRIDE to Vermont Exploration, has a vital connection to our program.