

Black and White' Gala Encourages Social Diversity, Celebration on Campus

Contributed by Lindsey Phillips
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OXFORD, Miss. - As part of the University of Mississippi's continuing efforts to promote social diversity, the Multicultural Affairs Division of the Dean of Student's Office and the Associated Student Body are hosting a gala Wednesday (Oct. 29) to help bring students together and expand their social networks.

The Black and White Affair, in its second year, is scheduled 6:30-11 p.m. in Johnson Commons Ballroom. Free and open to the public, the event is to feature live entertainment, including a jazz band, open-floor dancing and refreshments. Attendees are encouraged to wear black and/or white semi-formal attire.

"Given our history, I think this is just one more step along the way to improving the race relations of our university," said Brantley Sanderson, a senior English major from Waynesboro who is helping coordinate the event. "Our generation doesn't think along the same lines as previous generations, but at the same time, there can still be a disconnect. With this, we wanted to bring students together from diverse backgrounds in an environment they normally wouldn't socialize in."

Gloria Kellum, vice chancellor for university relations, and Don Cole, associate provost for diversity affairs, will deliver keynote addresses. They plan to discuss their time at UM and the evolution of race relations on campus, as well as the direction in which they think the university is headed in that respect.

"We're going to reflect upon our differences and our commonalities," Cole said. "We're going to share a vision for the institution in regards to the racial makeup and direction of the institution. Anytime that we have the opportunity to get together and learn from one another, we have a sense of social growth, which can be just as important as academic growth."

Sanderson said he hopes the gala provides an atmosphere that will encourage participants to interact with people from different cultural groups and backgrounds. Many times, students tend to interact socially with people who are similar to themselves, Sanderson said.

"We want students to see that we're not all as different as we sometimes think we are," he said. "We just want to provide an opportunity for students to get to know each other. There's just a lot of cultural boundaries that sometimes can be broken down so easily."

About 300 people attended last year's gala. Besides the speakers, this year's event coordinators have added an awards ceremony, celebrating three students for their excellence in community service, scholarship and social equality.

"The event has been totally student planned and coordinated," said Valeria Beasley-Ross, assistant dean of students for multicultural affairs and volunteer services. "I hope students will enjoy this event and that they will also feel encouraged to share additional multicultural programming ideas with our office."

For more information or to request assistance related to a disability, contact the Dean of Students Office at 662-915-7248.

