Ambassadors and the Council of Latino Admission Volunteers for Education (CLA VE) created this newsletter to give students insight into African American and Latino student life at Northwestern University. Read ahead to learn more about our community and what happened on campus this past quarter.

Welcome.

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Campus Happenings

The end of the calendar year, and subsequently the fall quarter at Northwestern, often brings a sense of busyness and stress, but many student organizations found a way to also have fun. With the holiday season quickly approaching and the campus flying home for the break, many student organizations took the opportunity to throw an end-of-the-year, holiday celebration. The one that we chose to highlight is the party hosted by House on the Rock. House on the Rock (HoTR) is a student-led, Black-interest, Christian organization under the larger InterVarsity umbrella. Usually HoTR members meet weekly for a question and observation based Bible study, but two weeks before break HoTR did something different. The conference room in the Black house (a space where Black identifying students gather to study and relax) was transformed for Christmas with decorations and diverse Christmas music, and HoTR leaders greeted guests joyfully to HoTR’s Christmas party! Upon walking in, guests were asked to fill out a form that would enter them into a raffle. Once settled in attendees were divided into two teams and participated in a number of fun events, including hangman based on Bible verses they studied during the quarter, holiday song association and jeopardy. Try to answer this jeopardy question without looking up the answer: Why do we put up Christmas trees at Christmas? That question stumped the WHOLE room. At the end of the party, there was sweet (read: candy cane) prize for the winning team and the raffle winner won a very soft and comfortable blanket. Oh and did I mention that the party was catered with Olive Garden food? Yum-o indeed! It’s safe to say that it was a fun time had by all and that it was a great break from studying.

Bobbie Burgess
Interview with Alianza Board Member

Nancy Contreras

Name: Nancy Contreras
Year: Second Year (Sophomore)
Major: Social Policy
Involved in: Alianza, Northwestern’s Latinx Student Union

What drew you and the other board members towards re-establishing the organization?

Although the number of Latinx students on campus increases every year, we noticed that gaps within the Latinx community have also grown. Alianza once thrived as the center of this community where students could seamlessly develop connections in informal events. After Alianza ceased its activity, the community began to divide into pockets of smaller groups, making it difficult to meet other Latinos that didn’t have similar physical, artistic, or social talents. We re-established Alianza with the hopes of rebuilding an interconnected community of Latinos on campus.

What are some key strengths the board and members currently possess?

Every member has the same goal in mind: to help improve the social presence of Latinos on campus. Everyone participates in the manner that they see best fit. This includes personal strengths such as media and graphic design, organization skills, social skills, and so much more. Every contribution is crucial to our event planning and fundraising.

How is your relationship with Associated Student Government?

After re-establishing an ASG senate seat for Alianza, we have attended ASG meetings and have been doing our best to ensure that the Latinx voice is heard, and that decisions are made for the betterment of student relationships overall.

How does Alianza want to impact the Latinx community?

We want to create a space where Latinx students can create meaningful connections and support one-another. We hope to do this through both formal and informal events. We acknowledge that Northwestern has a difficult curriculum across all majors. We also acknowledge that it could be difficult to succeed academically without a good system of support, so we want to occasionally give Latinx students a break where they can simply meet people, with similar and different backgrounds from their own, without having to worry about their various commitments.
What drove you towards studying abroad? Specifically the program that you are currently participating in?

Mainly, because study abroad is one of the few opportunities that offers integration in a different culture with such a relatively long time-span. I knew I wanted to go to Europe to be able to give myself the opportunity to visit at some point. I heard that Spain and Mexico shared similar cultures and values--so I found comfort in visiting a place that would be brand new to me but still have a sense of familiarity since I am a native Spanish speaker. I also wanted professional development experience abroad along with regular courses and that’s why BU Madrid Internship program was so unique to me.

How are housing accommodations?

I was in a Homestay, this allowed me to interact with a family in Spain and really see their dynamics and the Spanish way of life. I felt really integrated in the culture by being in their home. Although I was enrolled in all Spanish classes, I would have spent all day interacting with other American students in class so was really helpful when I could go back to a home where I could only speak Spanish and be able to really immerse myself in the language on a daily basis.

Though you are studying and working, would you say that you have plenty of free time? What are some things you enjoy doing in that spare time?

I was afraid that with the internship, I would hardly have much time for myself. But with having no classes on Friday, it offered me a lot more time than I thought where I could choose between traveling to different countries or just staying in Madrid and exploring. We also get a lunch break that is a good block of time in the middle of the day so I am able to go home and eat with my host family, or just get some homework done, or even visit a new place like a museum or gallery during that time. Its this spare time that really makes me appreciate the little enjoyments of being in a different city and being able to discover it little by little.

Would you say that study abroad is feasible for all Northwestern students, not just academically but financially?

Though it is expensive due to the program lasting for a semester, there are specific grants, on top of financial aid, for study abroad. Grants such as Bridge Builder that helps book your flight or assist you in the visa process. Students receive help from both NU and the affiliated school abroad, I received aid from NU as well as a grant from Boston University (the school affiliated with this study abroad program).

What do you love the most about the country and culture that you have entered?

I absolutely love the city of Madrid and all it has to offer. It is a fascinating city with a deep-rooted history in the arts, music, social movements, and a diversity of cultures. I also love the introspective outlook I was able to have while abroad. Spain made me reflective of my own culture as a Mexican-American student by putting into perspective how much my own upbringing in the US has impacted my outlook on certain things. Being in Spain and understanding where certain societal norms differ/ overlap has made me more culturally competent to the different cultures that I’ve been fortunate enough to experience.
Interview with For Members Only Board Member

Taylor Bolding

Name: Taylor Bolding
Year: Third Year (Junior)
School: School of Communications
Involved in: For Members Only (FMO), Northwestern’s Black Student Union

What is your current role in For Members Only (FMO)? How has your experience on the board been?

My current role in FMO is Vice-Coordinator of External Relations. With this position, I am able to interact with other Black cultural-interest groups, which I think is extremely necessary in order to help foster a more cohesive, inter-connected community. Being on this executive board is difficult in that FMO has a legacy, and wanting to uphold and maintain that legacy in a way that would make those that paved the way proud, is something that I have been trying to reconcile with. However, everyone on the board is extremely passionate and altruistic in wanting to improve the experiences of being Black on this campus for other students. I love being in such a Black space where I can articulate my thoughts and feelings without having to worry about hiding behind a guise of respectability or walking on eggshells. There’s something about being with and being able to talk to Black people in such a White space that is extremely comforting.

What drove you towards joining FMO’s board?

For me, something that was important in determining what university I was to attend was the Black community. Being Black is a unique experience and has shaped my identity and trials on this campus and within my life in multiple ways. I wanted to work with my community to incite change and better understand how our community operates, how to be more involved within this community, as well as being a way to meet with people with shared identities and backgrounds as me. I wanted to feel more of a connection and sense of belonging in ways that I know I do not currently feel within the larger Northwestern community.

How does FMO see itself working with and for Northwestern’s Black student body?

Rather than working for, I think we should use the term working WITH the Black student body. The slight change in this language makes it more of a community effort that is collaborative and ongoing. We are not the only people within the Black student body here, but we were elected to try to represent the concerns and voices of a much larger body that we work in tandem with. I think having more collaborations with other Black affinity groups and organizations spearheaded by other marginalized groups is one way along with having more community-based dialogues and better listening and receiving feedback from the greater community are just some ways.

Are there any initiatives or plans that FMO would like to share?

This year, as well as last year, have been centered on rebranding the organization. Compared to years past as I was involved with the executive board in a different capacity last year, I think that we are more visible and active in terms of programming and events that we’ve been sponsoring. In terms of plans, we want FMO to be a space where any Black student, regardless of year, socioeconomic status, religion, gender identity, sexuality, etc. feels like they have a stake within the organization along with feeling represented by us. These goals are a work in progress, but we on the executive board truly want this organization to feel like a safe space and community going forward.
Coordinator spotlight:

Liam Aranda

Name: Liam Aranda
Year: Fourth Year (Senior)
Hometown: Fishers, Indiana
Major(s): International Studies, History
Involved in: A&O, Northwestern’s entertainment organization; Swim Club; ASB, Alternative Student Breaks

How long have you been a CLAVE Coordinator and why did you decide to work in the admissions office?

I first heard about the job opening at an Alianza meeting during the fall of my Sophomore Year. I was eager to gain work experience while having the opportunity to encourage Northwestern to increase its recruitment of minority students, specifically Latinx and Black students. For a large pool of these talented students, they are either unaware of the school or discouraged from applying. I hope to change this through creating a more active voice in these spaces and highlight the available resources, ready for the taking.

What has been your best Northwestern Experience?

Visiting Mexico City before fall quarter for a week as part of Northwestern Course. The trip was paid for by the University. I loved having the opportunity to get close to classmates while exploring and learning the history of my dad’s home city.

As a senior looking back do you have any advice for prospective students?

That as a liberal arts school, Northwestern is drawn to difference. That being said the key is to be assured in yourself. The application is a chance for you to showcase your unique skills and talents, not a race.
Northwestern trivia
How much do you know about Northwestern?
Test yourself with our crossword below.

Across
2. a resource and outlet for graduate and undergraduate students interested in pursuing a career in mass comm. and journalism
5. a student group that strives to expose Mariachi music and culture to our surrounding communities!
8. promotes the advancement of all ethnicities, majors, and backgrounds in education, employment, and society.
9. the voice of the Black community at Northwestern.

Down
1. the largest Hispanic/Latino student organization at Northwestern University
3. an organization for students of Caribbean descent,
4. a student organization that provides a community for African students and promotes African awareness
6. Culturally responsible black engineers who excel academically, succeed professionally