The fall semester is rapidly coming to a conclusion and an opportunity for reflection on our collective work this fall semester is timely. We have a core group of faculty members exploring the national program of Difficult Dialogues; we have just formed an Diversity Coordinating Committee from all three campuses; continue to meet with the three established councils on a monthly basis; enhanced the D&E website; designed and developed two e-newsletters - La Visión and Diversity Outlook; hosted the state-wide Tilford Conference and recently held the Big 12 Diversity Officers annual meeting on the KU campus.

This has been an enjoyable semester for this office and I fully understand that without the unwavering support of the administration, faculty and staff at KU we would not be moving forward, and for that I am most grateful.

In this second issue of Diversity Outlook, we bring attention to our Langston Hughes Visiting Professorship, the difficult discussions initiative, the diversity calendar resource, spotlight a new faculty member and a highly successful program in the School of Social Welfare; along with a brief research synopsis on preparing future leaders in higher education.

DIFFICULT DISCUSSIONS:
A MODEL BEING EXPLORED FOR KU

Difficult Discussions is a spin-off of a national model (Difficult Dialogues) that addresses the ever increasing polarization of our society and the need to deal more effectively with breakdowns in civil discourse; specifically in higher education.

How do we address those controversial issues or “hot topics” that are a part of everyday life? Whether in the classroom, lab, studio or in the workplace – our ability to be open, honest and civil is paramount. This national model has several aspects that are currently being considered at KU. For example, basic conflict resolutions skills and strategies, the establishment of an interactive theatre troupe, professional development and training for faculty and staff.

A core group of faculty and staff have been meeting this fall semester and this initiative will begin in the spring 2010 semester. If you would like more information or be involved, please feel free to contact Fred Rodriguez, at fredrod@ku.edu.

THE DIVERSITY CALENDAR

The newly enhanced D&E website (www.diversity.ku.edu) has a new feature – a Diversity Calendar.

It is designed to create a source to post and to access multiple events across campus that are directly or indirectly related to enhancing our collaborative work in the area of diversity. If you have an event, meeting, lecture, a performance in the arts, symposium – please submit to fredrod@ku.edu and we will post it for the KU community.
Grooming a more representative faculty that mirrors the demographic composition of students is essential to creating a campus more attuned to the needs of students and is key to preparing students for life after graduation.

Three suggestions cited are: 1) start young (including undergraduates) when looking for future academics; 2) look for talent in new places and challenge assumptions that may become blinders; and 3) develop work environments that support, encourage, and nurture young talent who may otherwise leave academe.


SPRING 2010: LANGSTON HUGHES VISITING PROFESSORSHIP

Adam Banks, Associate Professor from Syracuse University will be serving as the Langston Hughes Visiting Professor in the spring 2010 semester. Professor Banks recently spent 3 days on the KU campus to acquaint himself with the Department of English, met with faculty, staff and administrators and learned more about KU and he also spent some time in Lawrence and Kansas City.

Professor Banks received his BA in English from Cleveland State University, and his MA and PhD both in English from Penn State University. He currently is an associate professor of Writing and Rhetoric at Syracuse's Writing program where he teaches courses in African American Rhetoric, digital rhetorics, community literacy, and rhetoric and composition theory. He is the author of the award-winning Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: Searching for Higher

A PROGRAM IN THE SPOTLIGHT: REACHING OUT - A WIN-WIN

The program began in the of Spring 2005 with only 6 students attending part-time, and now serves over 40 students with a full complement of required junior and senior-level courses. The KU 2+2 Degree Completion Program is a collaborative effort between the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare, the KU Edwards Campus, and Kansas City Kansas Community College (KCKCC).

The program is designed to serve working adults in the Kansas City metropolitan area by offering KU social work classes during the afternoon and evening on the KCKCC campus. The students graduate with a BSW degree from the University of Kansas. Faculty from the KU Lawrence campus travel to the KCKCC campus and provide the BSW program to students who might have otherwise not considered attending KU.

The School of Social Welfare decided to locate this outreach program in Kansas City, Kansas (Wyandotte County) in order to increase the educational outreach to working adults and to attract ethnic minority and non-traditional students. The approach has been highly successful. BSW students on the KCKCC campus are consistently more racially and ethnically diverse than the Lawrence campus, with more than 35% of KCKCC-based students being ethnically diverse. Many of the KCKCC students are working adults; and nearly all of these students are older than traditional college age. As a group, these students are well-versed in juggling many competing demands (many are married, have children, purchased homes, managed children and parents’ illnesses and changed employment) all while completing their coursework and field practicum.

Twenty-five students have graduated from the 2+2 Program and are now attending graduate school in Social Work or are working in the Greater Kansas City area, primarily with children, youth, and families.