Alumni Banquet Recap

As many of you know, last November the Lehigh University Black and Latino Alumni Network for Community and Equity (BALANCE) held its first ever ALUMNI BANQUET!! On the eve of one of the most anticipated weekends in Lehigh history, the 150th Lehigh vs Lafayette Rivalry weekend, alumni, students, faculty, and administrators came together to celebrate.

The evening began with a cocktail hour where everyone was able to reconnect with old friends and network with new friends. During dinner we heard from a panel of guest speakers that included former Lehigh President Dr. Peter Likins, Dean Georgette Phillips, Trustee Maria Chrin and our very own alumna Safiya Simmons. Moderated by Professor Kashi Johnson and Director of Africana Studies James Peterson this discussion led up to a Q&A session. We were able to hear from students and alumni from various generations about their concerns, recommendations and hopes for the future of BALANCE and the future of Lehigh.

If you want to find out more and see photos from the event please join us our page on Facebook and check out this video clip:
BALANCE Banquet Recap Video

As a follow-up to last year’s banquet please SAVE THE DATE for this year’s Lehigh-Lafayette Weekend happening from November 20th-22nd, 2015. We will be sending out more details about BALANCE events in the upcoming months!
Presidential Update

John D. Simon, executive vice president and provost at the University of Virginia, assumed the role Lehigh’s 14th president on July 1, 2015. He is an internationally renowned chemist and widely respected leader in higher education. Simon is married to Diane Szaflarski, an associate professor in Virginia’s School of Nursing, who will serve as a professor of practice at Lehigh. Simon has had a great number of accomplishments at Virginia which include a number of global initiatives, the establishments of a new major in global studies, creating the university’s Endowment for the Arts, and he played a leading role in the launch of Virginia’s Data Science Institute and Advanced Research Institute.

"I firmly believe Lehigh has the strengths and assets necessary to continue its impressive evolution into one of the nation’s most important institutions of higher education."

John D. Simon

More on President John D. Simon

Reference: Lehigh University Website

Second Year of LUSSI

Last summer, the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Provost’s Office hosted the first Summer Scholars Institute. This is an intensive three-week program designed for first-year students to get a taste of college life through multifaceted experiences. During the sessions, students work with Lehigh Professors and students on projects that will allow them to ease into the rigors and culture at Lehigh University. Some of the areas that are explored include academic and social orientation, leadership development, and civic engagement. There were eight student leaders who helped as teaching assistants and residential assistants. Staff and faculty members also played a role in the success of this program. The Summer Scholars Institute hosted its second session this summer, allowing the next incoming class a chance to explore Lehigh, while making connections while other first-years as well as faculty and staff.

“The best part of the program was witnessing the transformation, however slight, of each student within the program.”

Tyrone Russell

“I focused on helping them find their voice and not being afraid of it.”

Kashi Johnson

Video Recapping Summer Scholars Institute
Alumni Spotlight:
Anthony Baker

What year did you graduate, what clubs and organizations were you involved in on campus, and what was your major when you graduated?
Baker: I graduated from Lehigh University in May 2009. I discovered Lehigh through an intriguing pre-college program which was called DECAP (Design Engineering Career Awareness Program), run by Trisha Alexy. During this summer program, our group was challenged to come up with a design for a product, a marketing pitch, and “sell” our product via a presentation to our parents at the conclusion of the program. Freshman year I participated with a program sponsored by the “M-Room” aka the Multicultural Room called KEEP IT REAL, at the time ran by Stephan Coggs, Assistant Dean of Multicultural Affairs. This was an informal first-year program which focused on academics, health & wellness, stress, and career services. I remember there was a competition going on where whoever held perfect attendance throughout all the events for the semester would get an iPod. We went bowling, held study groups, and small discussion groups on various topics. Needless to say, I was the lucky winner and still have the iPod which was engraved “Keep It Real, Lehigh University”. I was also involved with jazz band, Zoellner Arts Center work-study activities, NSBE and HSPE. When I graduated, my major was Industrial Engineering.

What was your Lehigh University experience like when you attended?
Baker: Over a span of four years from fall 2005 to spring 2009, my Lehigh University experience was filled with some positive and some negative experiences. Overall, I made it through thanks to my baby blue 1982 Chevrolet pickup, aka “The Chevy”.

What did you do post-Lehigh?
Baker: At the time I graduated in 2009, the economy was not at its best. A lot of my friends were struggling to find jobs, so most decided to continue their education by staying for Grad School. After four years of studying at Fairchild-Martindale library, taking four o’clocks, and exams I was ready to get started working. I was blessed to find a job which was located on Long Island, NY with a company called Clever Devices. Working here as a Sales Analyst and Field Services Engineer, we developed Intelligent Transit Solutions for various transit authorities throughout the country for buses and subway systems in Chicago (CTA), New York (MTA), and NJ (NJT). After 1 year and 11 months there, I decided I wanted more. So, I reached out to some LU alumni connections via LinkedIn and landed my current job as a Manufacturing Engineer with Zodiac Aerospace in my home state of NJ. I’ve been working here for almost three years now and I am much more satisfied. In the manufacturing of inflatable evacuation systems such as floats, slides, and slide/rafts, I can be sure that what I am working on will someday save a life.

What’s the best advice you would give to current students?
Baker: The best advice I would give to current students is never stop asking questions! There are a plethora of services and opportunities available for everything imaginable. Unfortunately, I waited until midway through my first semester sophomore year to ask for help. In the UC, I reached out to Cheryl Ashcroft who was extremely helpful in getting me setup on a more focused path to success. She took the time to help me setup study schedules during exam time and connected me with the right study groups. After working closely with Mrs. Ashcroft, I saw an almost immediate change (for the better) in my grades for four o’clocks and exams!

What do you think about BALANCE?
Baker: BALANCE is a great resource for both current Lehigh students, as well as fellow LU alums...now that we have begun our journey into the real working world, we are exposed to a plethora of life experiences way more complex than any four o’clock we may have taken. From learning how to maximize on a 401K, to applying for a mortgage, or even being credit-card savvy we can definitely learn from each other. Having the drive to always seek more, never settle, and to take anything to the next level, I live by my quote I developed on graduation day: “NEVER STOP GRINDIN.”
Get Involved! BALANCE Wants You!

Please contact any of these people if you would like to get involved in any of the committees!

Alumni Outreach Committee
Contact: Mario Paredes ’11, marionoeparedes@gmail.com

Student Outreach Committee
Contact: Karl Brisseaux ’11, kbrisseaux@gmail.com

Career Networking and Mentoring Committee
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