

Multicultural council members value student voices, diversity

By **Zahra Nasir** - May 26, 2021

Each fall and spring, the aroma of shawarma, fried rice and treats from around the world waft through the upper level of the Student Center on Salt Lake Community College's Taylorsville Redwood Campus.

In addition to an impressive assortment of international foods, more than 100 students gather at the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs to play games and celebrate global culture with their peers as part of the Multicultural Meet and Greet.

The meet and greet gives new and returning students a place to meet and learn about resources offered by SLCC, including health and wellness, student coordinators and academic advisors. The event is organized and hosted by the Multicultural Student Council, which serves to promote and celebrate intercultural enrichment and diversity.

According to council advisor Glory Johnson-Stanton, a former SLCC student started the council six years ago to strengthen student involvement by encouraging students to use their voices to improve the quality of their educational and academic experiences.

"In the beginning, the MSC was formed to help students with clubs and different ethnicities," she said. "Then, we decided to be inclusive, adding in other groups like veterans, refugees and the LGBTQ+ community."



Beringo Masumbe Netongo represents African, African American and refugee students as a member of Salt Lake Community College's Multicultural Student Council. (Courtesy of SLCC Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs)

Five students make up the council, each representing specific groups on campus.

"I cannot speak for the whole population, but I would rather be a bridge and a voice for some students if given an opportunity to," said Beringo Masumbe Netongo, the representative for African, African American and refugee students.

Netongo said her biggest reason for joining the council was to represent students of color.

"The aim is to bring more [diversity] to Salt Lake Community College," she explained.

Nadia Yahyapour, the representative for Asian, Asian American and veteran students, said bringing different groups together as an underrepresented community is important.

"When I was in high school, I couldn't speak up for myself," Yahyapour said, adding she joined the council to be a voice for other students who were not comfortable speaking up for themselves. "But now being a member of the MSC, I got to be a part of a panel where I can speak up at all times."

In the past, the council has done a lot of projects behind the scenes at SLCC, including the "wear your mask" posters hung up around campus. Council members posed with masks on to encourage other students to wear their masks, too.

"We don't always get credit, but we always contribute," said Yahyapour, who also worked on a project last year that sent "thank you" notes to more than 150 veterans.



Nadia Yahyapour represents Asian, Asian American and veteran students as a member of Salt Lake Community College's Multicultural Student Council. (Courtesy of Nadia Yahyapour)

Other projects included the multi-ethnic student forum, where students of color shared their experiences with the council and voiced all their concerns.

"It is a big job for five students to try helping over 10,000 other students," Johnson-Stanton said, noting students are challenged every day by the work.

Johnson-Stanton hopes that the council can continue to grow and help more students.

The members of the council also benefited from learning to work as a team, working within a professional office and learning social media management. They are also introduced to school policies and acquire leadership skills, Johnson-Stanton explained.

Netongo said the council has helped with her organizing skills.

"With so many emails and so many events, you need to balance yourself," Netongo said, noting she is grateful for the council for wanting the best for students of color like herself.

Yahyapour said the council has also given her a platform for her own voice.

"I am always the go-to person, but I learned to say 'no,'" Yahyapour said, explaining the work has helped her prioritize what's important to her.

For Johnson-Stanton, getting to know the personalities of the students and watching them grow is her favorite part of being the council's advisor.

"I love to see them blossom and grow into their own," she said.

Current council members are expected to graduate this year, leaving openings for students interested in joining the council. For more information, visit the [Multicultural Student Council web page](#).

To Our Black Students, with Love: Letter no. 5

By **Anonymous** - May 26, 2021

To Our Black Students, with Love, is a series of letters from the SLCC student body to our Black students. The Office of Diversity & Multicultural Affairs started this letter campaign to show solidarity with our students in response to the [Zoom bombing](#) that occurred during the Black History Month Poetry Slam hosted by the Black Student Union in February 2021. [Read more letters here.](#)

Dear Black Students of SLCC,

I am deeply disgusted with what happened at the Black History Month Poetry Slam. Although I was not in attendance, the email I received describing what happened left emotions that are too well known by Black and brown bodies. As a brown body, I would like to offer my alliance and love to the Black community, not only at SLCC but within all my communities. That being said, I would like to offer a theme I have taken on in my life as of 2021, which is "rise above." I later realized what I really meant was Michelle Obama's "When they go low, we go high."

People that are still perpetuating anti-blackness are living lives of hate and not of love. I live a life of love. To me, that means seeing communities and people of those communities for what they are, not falling into false perpetuations of individuals of color, which is spread through many sources. It means looking at history and seeing the beauty, perseverance, and resilience of Black people, then wanting to celebrate each victory of the Black community. It means knowing that if challenges like segregation, discrimination, and the absence of civil rights can be defeated then, they can be defeated now as they take on new forms.

I take your hands and will not let go. In places of discrimination, I will speak out for Black individuals. In situations that Black people face injustice, I will fight for much needed social justice. And in times that feel like defeat and isolation, I will still be holding your hand, letting you know that I care, and that you are very loved, and are seen for the abundance of strength, beauty, and resilience that Black and brown bodies have developed.

So when these unnamed sources went low with anti-Black messages during the poetry slam, we go high, coming together and reminding each other of those abundances of strength, beauty, resilience, and love.