

MANITOU MESSENGER

VOLUME 133, NUMBER 3

WWW.MANITOUMESSENGER.COM



Steven Garcia/Manitou Messenger

Chapel Choir concert revised

Choir members voice concerns about distressing content

By Alyson Brinker
Senior Reporter

Multiple songs were cut from Chapel Choir's Oct. 22 Vespers concert due to singers' concerns that the pieces might be triggering to some.

The concert, entitled "Finding Strength and Hope," seeks to balance themes of loss, grief, hope and belief.

A member of the choir contacted Title IX Coordinator Kari Hohn following a rehearsal of the song "Listen," which addresses themes of sexual violence. Rehearsal of the song elicited concerns from some choir members that the song's content might be distressing for some.

"While it's important to have a discussion about the concepts or topics that they wanted to address with the programming, a lot of those, because of their triggering nature, need to be something that students voluntarily participate in," said Chapel

Choir member Sydney Wagner '21.

That wasn't necessarily the case with "Listen" and a couple other pieces, leading Wagner and other choir members to express concerns.

"It's not really being super cognizant of where everyone's at in healing from trauma," Wagner said.

Due to these concerns, "Listen" will no longer be performed at the Vespers concert. It will instead return in the spring as an "opt-in" experience for vocalists, a decision made between Chapel Choir members and their conductor, Tesfa Wondemagegnehu.

Hohn said Wondemagegnehu was very receptive when she presented him with the choir member's concerns.

"I think he was kind of treating me as a consultant to help him think about how he wanted to approach the song, and how he wanted students to engage with it in a way that was thoughtful and sensitive to where everyone was at in the room," Hohn said.

Wagner said she's "really happy with Tesfa's receptiveness to concerns and that things were changed."

Alekz Thoms '20, a member of Chapel Choir, wrote the lyrics to "Listen."

"If somebody is heavily triggered by the topic, it's not required," Thoms said. "It's not going to be part of a big concert anymore."

The piece was written intentionally to draw attention to those who commit acts of violence such as rape and sexual assault, Thoms said.

"I did not want the onus of the text to focus on the survivor again," Thoms said. "Putting the onus on the person perpetrating the act is really important, because it is an act perpetrated against somebody, and to focus it so much on the experience is re-traumatizing in a lot of ways."

The choir will work with potential collaborators when the piece is revisited in the spring, such as the Title IX team, the Sex-

ual Assault Resource Network (SARN) and Broadcast Media, Wondemagegnehu said.

Another song, entitled "Lament of a Lost Child," was also cut from the concert. The song was removed due to its "aggressive" sound and vocalizations that evoked feelings of "sadness and terror," which did not fit the direction of the concert, Thoms said. Unlike "Listen," it will not be performed at a later date.

A different song relating to the loss of a child and gun violence will be kept, however, as a result of discussions between the choir and conductor Wondemagegnehu.

Another change to the Vespers concert is the elimination of student devotionals. Instead of asking students to share their own personal stories, the students will get a chance to reflect during instrumental and vocal solo reflections, which is an in-

Continued on A5 ...

St. Olaf's 50 year history of race and ethnic studies

By Lydia Bermel
Senior Reporter

This homecoming weekend, St. Olaf will celebrate 50 years since Race and Ethnic Studies (RACE) was founded in 1969. During the weekend events, the College will receive a donation to establish a new Race and Ethnic Studies Program Endowment.

One of the first race and ethnic studies programs in the nation, the RACE program has faced both challenges and successes over the course of its 50-year history.

During the 1960s, students across the nation engaged in protests demanding a curriculum that included the histories of racial minorities. The first ethnic studies department was established at San Francisco State University in 1968 following an extended period of protests.

Nationwide protests and discourse surrounding equity and race sparked a conversation regarding the need for curriculum reform at St. Olaf. The College created the Cultural Union for Black Expression (CUBE) and the Free University in 1967 in response to these growing concerns.

The Free University was founded based on a student initiative to

diversify the College's curriculum.

Jody Olson '68, leader of the Free University committee, saw an opportunity to create the program, as the curriculum "in its present form is 'institutional and conventional' and often fails to speak to relevant and vital issues," according to a September 1967 Manitou Messenger article. Courses were held at night and taught by students and willing faculty.

The first African-American history course commenced in the Free University's wide-ranging curriculum. Ron Hunter '70, a member of the Black Action Committee, created a syllabus in collaboration with a curriculum committee and taught the course in the Free University. The course was offered, "in order to give a better understanding of the Negro's position in the American society today," according to an article in the Manitou

Messenger from February 1968.

Chairman of the history department Henry Fritz received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities due to the expanded CUBE and Free University programs, which led to the establishment and institutionalization of American Minority Studies in 1969.

"Students have always wanted this material," said RACE Program Director and Associate Professor of English Jennifer Kwon Dobbs. "They've seen a need, and it's through student leadership that this curriculum even emerged."

Former President of the College Mel George worked to increase diversity and is credited as a primary supporter of the College's efforts to promote equity and inclusion. During his tenure, American Minority Studies received a Pew Grant and was renamed to American Racial and Multicultural Studies (ARMS).

"President Mel George was the man of vision that made it all possible because he was a president that was in favor of diversity," said Joan Hepburn, Associate Professor of English and former Chair of ARMS. The school faced cutbacks from the administration following the departure of George. At this time, the American Studies department threatened to absorb ARMS. Upon hearing this, Hepburn interrupted the meeting uninvited and filibustered her way to ensuring ARMS would continue to stand alone as a program.

"I called them on the business of

holding a vote concerning the life of another program they never said a sentence to," Hepburn said.

Hepburn and other faculty held meetings to change the mission, goals and learning outcomes to ensure ARMS couldn't be dissolved into another program.

"I don't see a point in ignoring race and ethnic studies, because it influences everything," Hepburn said.

After receiving a Provost's Academic Innovation Fund Grant in 2011, ARMS convened the Mapping Ethnic Studies learning community and renamed itself Race and Ethnic Studies to fully encapsulate the extent of its curriculum and mission.

The demand for RACE courses has increased over the years as students across departments have expressed increased interest. The number of declared majors and concentrations has nearly quadrupled in the past 11 years. Because of this, the amount of courses offered annually can barely sustain the demand.

"We have a lot to do with very little," Kwon Dobbs said. "This fall, the Intro to Race and Ethnic studies class was filled with just pre-registration."

In 2017, following campus-wide protests against institutional racism, St. Olaf alumni created Oles for Racial Awareness, Change and Equity (ORACE). One of ORACE's founders Jane Burnett '72 and Kwon Dobbs met with members of the program to create and fund an endowment to both grow and protect the RACE program. The endowment is set to be completed in the coming months.

bermel1@stolaf.edu

Disclosure: Jennifer Kwon Dobbs is the faculty advisor for the Manitou Messenger.



▲
Director of race and ethnic studies
Jennifer Kwon Dobbs.

Photo by Evan Pak/St. Olaf Marketing & Communications.



Photo Courtesy of Associate Professor of Sociology & Anthropology David Schalliol

Race and ethnic studies faculty, majors, alumni and others stand in Buntrock.

NEWS

PAGE A7

Lutheran Center hires new director

By Claire Drewes
Senior Reporter

Deanna Thompson '89 joined the Lutheran Center for Faith, Values and Community as director last spring, an appointment that comes on the heels of the Center's founding last October.

St. Olaf created the Center in October 2018 because there was a need to define what it means to be a Lutheran school, Thompson said. As a former professor of religion at Hamline University, Thompson aims to build "bridges across religious difference" in her new role.

To support students participating in various religious organizations, the Center created the Student Interreligious Council (SIRC) this fall. SIRC invites members of groups involved in religious or spiritual activities to participate, Thompson said. The Council met for the first time Sept. 26.

The purpose of this meeting was to "build a sense of supporting each other's events," Thompson said. Every participant received a copy of educator and interfaith leader Eboo Patel's book, "Interfaith Leadership: A Primer," which focuses on embracing religious diversity. Patel is visiting campus next fall.

Holly Beck '22, the community events coordinator for the St. Olaf branch of Delight Ministries, a women's Christian bible study organization, attended the SIRC meeting.

"We all had a really nice, candid discussion about things that we really

value about our faith tradition, as well as things that we value about other faith traditions as well," Beck said.

The Center has a bevy of other interreligious initiatives planned for the coming months, such as an ongoing search for an associate chaplain for Muslim life.

"We hope to have that person here by the end of the year," Thompson

into the Lutheran church.

This spring, Thompson hopes to bring Lutheran pastor Lenny Duncan to campus and celebrate the 50th anniversary of allowing women to become pastors in the Lutheran church.

"We're doing all of these things to try to really say that we're going to be a religiously inclusive place," Thompson said. "I don't think we're there, but that's the vision and I'm hopeful that we're starting to take steps in that direction."

The Center received part of its funding from the "To Include is to Excel" (TIITE) grant, which will be used to host book discussion groups among students, faculty and staff from winter through summer 2020. TIITE is a four-year, \$800,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation that supports St. Olaf's efforts to promote equity and inclusion.

The Center also designated Eboo Patel's new book as summer reading for first-year students, part of a new process at the College which hopes to engage students with diverse issues before they arrive.

Finally, the Center wrote a Declaration for Interreligious Commitment this summer. Thompson talked to a group of students about the Center's vision in line with the Declaration, and how St. Olaf can "actively work against stereotypes" regarding members of non-Lutheran faiths.

drewes1@stolaf.edu



Evan Pak/Marketing & Communications

Director of the Lutheran Center Deanna Thompson '89.

"We're doing all of these things to try to really say that we're going to be a religiously inclusive place."

- Deanna Thompson '89

said. The Center funded the hiring of Rabbi Shosh Dworsky as Associate Chaplain for Jewish Life in January.

The Center will host Leading Out: LGBT+ Clergy in the ELCA on Oct. 16, which will invite a panel of Lutheran ministers to talk about their sexuality and faith and celebrate the 10th anniversary of welcoming LGBT+ clergy

SGA to change pay structure, remove some stipends

By Jacob Maranda & Dalton Rains
News Editor & Contributing Writer

The Student Government Association (SGA) is restructuring how it compensates its workers in the coming months, in part by moving to an hourly wage system.

This change has caused cuts to stipends for Marketing Communications Officers (MCOs) and interim proxies starting Jan. 1, 2020, when the hourly wage system takes effect. Interim proxies are the individuals that take over for SGA employees that study abroad during interim.

The change to an hourly system is in accordance with federal law, SGA Chief Financial Officer George Bongart '20 said.

"If you average out how much work

and other workers to be cut down, such as the MCOs."

Aside from the federal law, one of the causes of the compensation restructuring involves deciding which officers should receive compensation for their work and which should not. While the MCO holds significant responsibilities in certain branches, their role is more diminished in others.

Claire Shaw '21, coordinator of the Student Organizations Committee (SOC), chose to move the stipend from the MCO to the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of their branch.

"This year I chose to move the stipend from the MCO to our CFO because SOC rarely requires marketing and other promotional designs," Shaw said. "This was something discussed last year."

Other branches, such as the Volunteer Network, don't choose to issue stipends to their workers.

"The work is split up equally among different members so that all of the officers do about the same amount of work – none of whom get stipends," said coordinator of the Volunteer Network Katie DeFoe '20. "Because of this, the stipend cuts will not affect our branch."

Overall, the changes to pay structures within SGA will cause all branches to reconsider how they manage their individual workloads.

"The work varies a ton between the different branches, and some branches need an MCO to put in more work," Bongart said. "Other branches need their financial officer or another position to do more."

During the restructuring process, SGA executives maintained open discussions with branch coordinators and other affected parties to ensure proper transparency as these changes occurred, according to SGA President and Vice-President Devon Nielsen '20 and Ariel Mota Alves '20.

SGA will continue to consider how it structures itself in the months leading up to the switch to an hourly wage system, with more changes to positions possible. The specifics or extent of these changes have not been established.

maranda1@stolaf.edu
rains1@stolaf.edu

"So starting Jan. 1, we're switching from stipend to hourly – the normal \$9.90 rate – and that is causing us to pay our coordinators more."

- George Bongart '20

they're doing, especially when it comes to coordinators, to how much they're getting paid, they're well under the minimum wage," Bongart said. "The government doesn't like that. So starting Jan. 1, we're switching from stipend to hourly – the normal \$9.90 rate – and that is causing us to pay our coordinators more."

The transition from stipends to hourly wages means branch coordinators will be compensated more fairly for their involvement. The relative increase in pay for coordinators has necessitated the restructuring, which Bongart and other members of SGA are preparing for.

"We have taken action to allow [coordinators] to cut back on some stuff so we don't have to pay them as much," Bongart said. "But that is causing our budget for branches



Lakia Thornton/Marketing & Communications

Director of the Institute Edmund Santurri and Professor Glenn Loury in conversation.

Institute hosts renowned economist

By Logan Graham
Contributing Writer

Professor emeritus of economics at Brown University Glenn Loury arrived on campus Friday, Sept. 27 for a moderated discussion with St. Olaf students, professors and members of the Northfield community. It was the first event in the Institute for Freedom and Community's fall series, "Discrimination and the Search for Justice and Truth."

Loury is a member of the Econometric Society and the first black tenured professor of economics at Harvard University. Alongside these accomplishments, Loury also hosts a podcast called "The Glenn Show," in which he discusses questions of economics and social justice with distinguished guests from the fields of academia, journalism and politics.

To open the talk, Institute director Edmund Santurri asked Loury to enumerate his stances on the idea of "black conservatives," in regard to issues of affirmative action, reparations and police brutality.

In the dialogue, Loury was given the time to thoroughly explain his views on affirmative action. Rather than simply proclaiming himself as "being against affirmative action," he stated that affirmative action is useful for a transitional period but ultimately unjust as a permanent institution.

Loury argued it would be more politically effective to use trans-racial terms and policy to solve these problems, as opposed to labeling economic inequity and police brutality as raceless issues. He went on to claim that

reparations would ultimately be a disservice to the black community. The dispersal of reparations would, politically speaking, discharge the obligation of the history of slavery and ultimately prevent progress on the issue of racial equality, Loury said.

"Why would I convert the birthright moral currency of having descended from slaves and being affected by that into a chip that could be discharged across a bargaining table?" Loury said regarding his argument against reparations.

During the question-and-answer session, students and members of the St. Olaf community posed several questions ranging from whether he was being used by conservatives as a strawman, to the literature behind affirmative action.

The only disruption in the questioning came from some members of the audience being unable to stifle their laughter when another audience member asked whether or not we should replace the word 'white' in racial discourse with the word 'beige.' Loury, to his credit, took the question seriously and offered some insights on the issues of linguistics in racial discourse.

The second event in the Institute for Freedom and Community's fall series will be a moderated discussion with Alice Dreger on "Truth, Justice and the Science of Gender" Thursday, Oct. 10.

graham10@stolaf.edu

**SUBSCRIBE TO
OUR
NEWSLETTER**

email mess-exec@stolaf.edu
to be added for more weekly online content

