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Jeff Teunisen

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Multicultural dean vacancy may soon be filled

By Jeff Teunisen
Staff Writer

Shari Clarke has been recommended for the Associate Dean for Minority Student Services and Multicultural Programs, according to Dwight Rideout, dean of Student Services.

"She will advise, council and provide support services to minorities and ensure that our programs, procedures and policies are sensitive to minority issues," Rideout stated.

The position provides support services to underrepresented groups through advocacy and programs. Clarke would also work with the university community at large to promote an appreciation of racial, ethnic and cultural diversity.

Clark currently is the Director of Multicultural Student Affairs at Whitman College in Washington. At Whitman, she organized five minority student groups, established a Multicultural Advisory Committee and even developed an exchange program with a historically black college. Dean Rideout said he hopes she will bring the same enthusiasm to UMaine.

"Her ideas, creativity and energy will translate into new and exciting programs here," Rideout said.

"Multiculturalism deals with all of us. The 500 international students, all minority students and all Caucasians," Rideout claimed.

The low numbers of African Americans and the high proportion of male African

Americans compared to female are two complaints some African-Americans have with UMaine, Rideout said.

Rideout said he hopes Clarke's ideas, such as the exchange program with a historically black college, will balance the African American, male-to-female ratio.

"We also want her to work with gay, lesbian and bisexual students as well as women and to be sensitive to their needs," Rideout said.

Clarke's work will also include promoting UMaine to prospective minority students. She will be required to create brochures and other public relations material that promote minority programs and services. Also, she will be required to provide racial awareness programs for UMaine, including staff development programs for administrative offices.

Although the numbers of minority students on campus are small, they do represent the number of minorities in Maine. Rideout expressed his concern for the lack of minority students on campus. He stated UMaine needs more minority students to prepare students for a world outside of Maine.

"We want to see more minorities with leadership positions on campus. It's our responsibility to do that," Rideout said.

Clarke has been recommended to President Frederick Hutchinson for the position, which is currently vacant.

Ted Mitchell previously held the position for two decades, but he is now focusing on American Indian affairs at UMaine. Clarke is anticipated to join UMaine's staff in March.