

Diversity Program of the Month

Spirituality Fair

School:	University of Washington	Region:	PACURH
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Target Population: 520	Time Needed to Organize: 1 Month
Number of People in Attendance: 50	Date(s) of Program: Dec. 7, 2011
Number of People Needed to Organize: 5	Cost of Program: 120\$
On-Campus Population: 5600	Chapter Size: 56

Origin of Program:

RAs wanted to do a spirituality fair to educate students around the December holidays of how a variety of religions and faiths understand and express their beliefs.

Word Count: 27

Please give a short description of the program:

Two RAs were in charge of contacting Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) that were faith-based and working with them to get both a representative as well as a visual display that educated students on their religion or belief. Two other RAs were in charge of advertising and created floor fliers and lobby posters that were in the shape of different religious symbols with quotes or questions that would attract people. The fifth RA was in charge of ordering food that was inclusive of the various belief systems that would be present.

The representatives then set up at their own table in Pompeii and were on hand to explain or answer questions. They also came up with one or two questions about their faith that students could answer to be entered into a raffle for gift cards to University Village. The Fair was open for one and a half hours and students visited the different tables. In all, there were tables and representatives from the Meditation Club, the Muslim Student Association, Hillel and Bridges, the Interfaith Council. Unfortunately, the Newman Center could not attend.

Word Count: 182

Goals of the program:

At a time of the year when Christian holidays are quite present and well known, the staff decided they wanted to do a program that would introduce and educate students about other religions and faith systems. This fits with our staff's overarching goals of ensuring that all students feel at home and safe to express their beliefs should they not be in the majority, as well as providing exposure to and education on diverse peoples and communities.

Word Count: 77

Positive and lasting effects of the program:

Hopefully the effects are based on the goals: that students felt McMahan is an inclusive hall where everyone is welcome to practice whichever religion, or lack thereof, they choose or were raised to believe. Another lasting effect for some may be the simple exposure to students of different faiths. With current negative sentiment in the country around Muslims, having a representative from the Muslim Student Association to take questions and provide educational brochures was very helpful in dispelling a variety of myths around that faith. Having Bridges, the Interfaith Council, also hopefully had the effect of letting students know there is a student club they can attend to have interfaith conversations and do more learning if they choose to.

Word Count: 119

Short evaluation of the program:

With around 50 students attending and only positive comments from the RSO representatives about the thoughtful questions from students and the opportunity to speak with them, I think this programs was a success. A number of students took brochures from the Muslim Student Association and Hillel, as well as writing down information regarding Bridges and the Meditation Club. Hopefully students that were interested in learning about any of these clubs were able to gain an access point they didn't have before.

Word Count: 81

How could this program be adapted to other campuses?

This program could easily be adapted to other campuses. Contacting student or local groups of various beliefs and arranging a time for them to all be present is possible at any location. I highly encourage the replication of having each group have a visual display as students are more likely to begin with a passive interaction (reading the display) than they are to walk up to someone and start a conversation. However the few questions on a piece of paper to enter into a drawing also helped with getting more interaction amongst representative and students.

Word Count: 95