

## CEC Recommendation for MLK “Day On”

Friday, April 22, 2011

The CEC recommends that classes be cancelled on the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. federal holiday (January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012) and that day be declared a “Day On” for the campus community. We further suggest that the previously existing MLK Celebration Committee be charged with programming for this day and the existing monies that have funded this event in the past be used to refocus many of the week-long activities that have been done in the past on the actual holiday itself. Finally, we strongly recommend that the announcements of this change to the academic schedule *not* be made as part of a larger announcement that we will also be observing other federal holidays. While we see merit in eventually discussing Memorial Day, Labor Day, and the like, we suggest making this announcement first and articulating this as a decision to celebrate King’s work and reflect on equity and community at Lehigh.

While there are many different ways in which the celebration could be structured, here are some general “guidelines” that the CEC has for the sorts of outcomes we would like to see:

### Involve our *entire* campus community:

- Students: We have some concerns about whether or not students will return to campus on Monday if they know classes are cancelled. We think the planning group should take this into consideration and find creative ways to “encourage” students not to consider this as an extension of the semester break. Some ideas include:
  - Issuing “passports” to students that get stamped at various events. Students hand in passports for course credit, a prize, or some other external motivator.
  - Get the Greeks involved in a significant way by requiring they participate in this toward the diversity components of their accreditation process (make them do a project, have them meet in the morning to discuss project ideas then present at lunch and participate in “professional development” and/or leadership activities in the afternoon).
  - Require participation by Griffins (professional development)
  - See additional similar ideas under “engage academically,” below.
- Faculty: The planning group should also consider substantive ways in which faculty might be actively involved. We suggest reaching out to faculty with expertise in these areas to facilitate conversations, speak to small groups, and the like. Might also assign faculty as “advisers” to student units going through professional development activities (discussed above).
- Staff: We need to give some real thought about how to involve this part of our campus community –particularly exempt staff– in a meaningful way in the programming.

- Administration: University leadership needs to play a very visible role in the day's activities. Messages need to be carefully crafted and substantive.
- Parents: Since students will be returning to campus from the holiday break, consider programming on both that Sunday and Monday and invite parents to participate in the Sunday activities that culminate in some sort of reception (involve Development Office/Parents' Committee?).
- Alumni: Reach out to BALANCE and encourage them to participate in the programming. Consider asking a representative to serve on the planning committee.
- Board of Trustees: Invite trustees to attend. Specifically, ask members of the Diversity Sub-committee to speak and/or play other very visible roles during the programming.

Serve the broader community: Clearly, engaging in service ought to be a central focus of the day given it is at the heart of Dr. King's messages. However, the CEC is concerned about overwhelming an already heavily burdened Community Services Office, particularly in this first year of "Day On." Perhaps, instead, we might organize some sort of fundraising campaign or coat/clothing drive or something similar that would be less burdensome on the CSO. Additionally, we suggest revisiting the "service pledge cards" that were used during the MLK Celebration a few years back, in which campus community members pledged to engage in some service activity during the course of the semester.

Engage academically: In addition to service, the CEC believes it's critically important that this "Day On" clearly connect social justice to our scholarship. There are many ways in which this might be done:

- Consider asking each college to run their own academic symposiums on diversity and how issues of equity and community impact professionalism within their own specific disciplines. Deans would send clear messages to students that they are expected to attend these sessions as part of their professional development.
- Explore ways to incorporate some sort of student "competition" like we do for the Academic Symposium. A service or research project they could present during the College symposiums, perhaps?
- Encourage faculty to make participation in the day's activities some sort of a requirement for their course(s).
- Provide faculty with discipline specific "lesson plans" for how they might incorporate King's message and discussions of social justice issues into their curriculum that week.

Finally, we recommend that whatever is decided in terms of programming for the Day On be organized at a "high level" within the administrative structure and communications about the event given the same level of "stature" that the Academic Symposium has received.