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This newsletter is published by the Cultural Center. Its overall purpose is to promote and reflect the ethnic richness and diversity of Bucknell's student body.

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COMMON GROUND

BY MATT TILFORD '11

Common Ground Holds Third Annual Fall Break Retreat

For most students, Fall Break is a time to visit with family and catch up on homework and sleep. However, for each of the last three years, a dynamic group of students has spent their Fall Breaks at Bucknell's Cowan Conference Center exploring pressing social issues, developing meaningful personal relationships, and considering ways to positively impact the Bucknell campus community.

The retreat program, Common Ground, was founded in 2008 by Scott Teagarden '10 and Mahdi Woodard '09. Each day of the retreat consists of activities and discussions centering on aspects of personal identity. The first day focuses on race and ethnicity, the second day explores sexual identity, and the third day examines gender. The final day of the retreat consists of personal validations and creating an action plan for returning to campus. The retreat aims to create a supportive community open to diverse perspectives; one of the first activities consists of student participants creating a list of "community norms" for the weekend.

The retreat draws on the expertise of Bucknell faculty and staff members to enhance the experience for participants. The Campus Activities and Programs Office sponsors the program and provides financial and logistical support. Faculty members such as English professor Carmen Gillespie, gender studies professor Erica Delsandro, and Associate Provost Robert Midkiff assist in facilitating conversations.

However, the core of Common Ground's identity lies in the fact that it is almost entirely organized and run by students. This year, a team of sixteen student leaders headed by directors Andy Pascual '11 and Nadia Sasso '11 facilitated the program. The organization has grown in numbers each year, expanding from 25 participants in 2008 to 45 participants this year. Common Grounders have also created a new organization called Engage which hopes to facilitate conversation about issues of identity on campus year-round.

Students who have participated in the retreat seem to speak unanimously about their love for the program. "When you attend Common Ground, you don't leave more educated. You leave...changed," said Sean Fortney '12, a participant in the 2010 retreat. "Common Ground seriously alters your daily routines and how you change the world. I would recommend it to anyone and everyone."

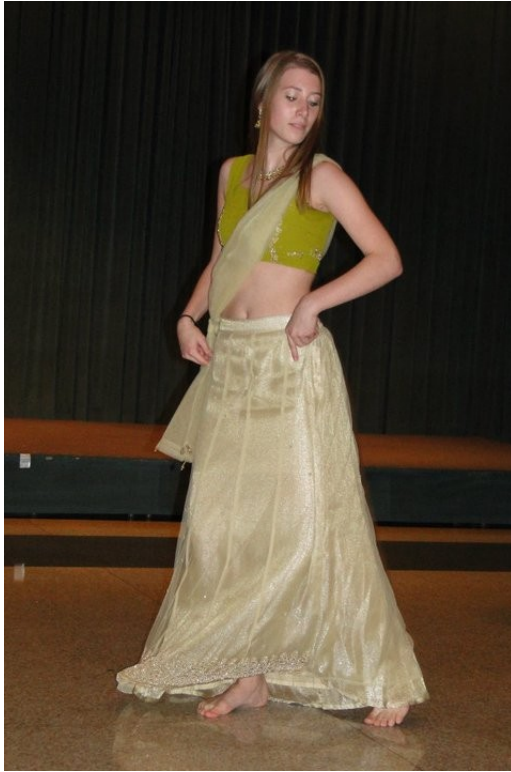
Graduate student Nadir Sharif, a participant in the 2009 retreat and facilitator for 2010, held similar views. "Common Ground repeatedly divides participants along controversial, and often invisible, lines of privilege. By taking people outside of their comfort zones, it creates- in a mere four days- a most understanding and safe community for all those involved."

The power of Common Ground is perhaps best expressed by an outsider's perspective. Anthony Clay, Director of Advancement at Carolina Friends School in Durham, N.C., has spoken to Common Ground on the topic of sexual identity for the last two years. Clay shared the following thoughts about the program. "In three years, [Common Ground] has gone from an event (a five-day retreat) to a network of committed, caring young people on your way to becoming a movement with tremendous influence for good in the Bucknell community."

PROFILE OF KAITLIN KERR, SASA MEMBER

BY KAITLIN HERR '11

While I have been at Bucknell, I have been strongly involved in the South Asian Student's Association. I originally became involved with SASA because I love dancing, I had danced a lot before coming to college, and I wanted to try a new style. I thought Bollywood songs were enjoyable and the dances looked like a lot of fun, so I showed up to a few meetings. After that I just kept coming. I found that the community I had become involved in was really engaging and fun to be part of. Sometimes I was challenged to step out of what I knew and learn about alternate viewpoints, but I think that is the best part of getting to know people from cultures that are different than one's own. Throughout the years we have organized excellent dinners complete with entertaining performances known as SASA annual dinners, we have gossiped over Chai, cooked dinners together, challenged our abilities to eat spicy food, travelled to Indian restaurants together, and put on humorous plays that challenge and poke fun at stereotypes of South Asian culture. I have been thrilled to be part of each and every event that we have made. Performances have been as much fun to put together as they have been to perform, and hopefully to watch. I think some of my favorite times have been spent getting together with some of my good friends from SASA to listen to our newest favorite Bollywood hits, pick new songs to dance to, and choreograph. It sounds pretty simple but it's filled with silly dance moves that get changed almost immediately, jokes, lots and lots of laughter, and of course a sense of pride for what we've accomplished when we present it. I think in the end, joining SASA has been one of the best decisions I've made while at Bucknell and I'm really glad that I was unafraid of joining the group just because I am not South Asian.



Save the Date:

Kwanzaa Dinner on Monday December 6th from 6:30pm-8:00pm in the Terrace Room.

Tickets on sale now in the LC mall from 11am-1pm.

DEMYSTIFICATION OF GREEK LIFE

BY MARIA ZHADNOVA AND FARIA SANJANA'13

When we both first arrived to Bucknell, as like most international students, we had no idea about Greek life on campus, and those Greek letters meant absolutely nothing to us. Now that we have been sorority sisters for more than two months, we want to share our experience and bust some myths about Greek Life.

MYTH 1: Fraternities and sororities are only for rich and cool people; if I don't fall into one of the stereotypes, I won't fit. **NOT TRUE!** There is no one particular type of person who can get into a sorority or a fraternity. Greek organizations welcome everyone! In our sororities no one judges us on what we wear or what music we listen to, instead, I know they care about my personality and my values in life.

MYTH 2: All that they do in sororities and fraternities is socialize, and there is no time left for academics; members of sororities and fraternities are not "intellectuals".

NO WAY: Even during recruitment, we were constantly told: "Academics first" which is true for everyone who joins a Greek organization. In fact, going Greek can be intellectually stimulating. Of course, no one will make you go to the library or check if you've done your homework, but going to the speakers on campus and studying together in group helps you stay motivated. In fact, Greek organizations require a certain GPA in order to consider new members. Also it is a fact that the overall GPA among Greek organizations is higher than the all-campus average GPA. Plus Greek life involves being active in community service.

MYTH 3: I HAVE to go to ALL the social events because everyone else will go and I don't want to be left out.

SO FALSE: One can expect a lot of social events going on but it's not necessary to attend all of them. In fact, we can always pick and choose which ones to attend. Of course, if you have other commitments or priorities then you are free to do so first. And there's absolutely no pressure from your concerning Greek organizations to attend ALL the social events. You can always attend social events according to your ease and so you can rule out the tension of being left out.

MYTH 4: If I join a sorority or a fraternity, I won't have friends outside of it. And if I join a Greek organization, I am likely to lose my old friends.

STOP RIGHT THERE BUDDY: Wearing the Greek letters does not restrain us for hanging with anyone we want. We can say that our friends who are not Greek prove that we do have friends, who are not part of our sororities or any other Greek organization. There are also a lot of cases where best friends can be in different Greek organizations but still remain friends! Greek organizations provide a lot of opportunities which allow (and even encourage) people who are outside their organizations to come and participate.

MYTH 5: I have to commit a large chunk of my time to my respective sororities or fraternities if I join one.

NOT TRUE! While commitment to some events is absolutely mandatory, these are usually small in number. If you have any major conflicts with these mandatory events you can always excuse yourself out by giving a valid reason. Again, all you have to do is prioritize and balance out your obligations along with your interests.

Sorority sisters:

Mary Evans'11 with Maria Zhdanova'13



From Cultural Center Staff...

Please keep the Vedder Cultural Lounge in mind for a unique place to hold your weekly office staff meetings, club meetings, or just a quiet place to study.

In order to reserve the space, you may contact the Event Management Office to schedule your meeting or luncheon. You can also reserve it by logging in to mybucknell, click on Schedule an Event and fill out the form. If the space is available, we'd love to have you join the many organizations that have already made use of our wonderful lounge.

Winning Pictures of the International Education Week 2010

Congratulations to all the Talented Photographers!



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