

[FastStart: Fall 2008 Newsletter](#)

This newsletter is for all FastStart students and mentors. It is written by members of the FastStart Student Advisory Board. We hope that it gives you an idea of some of our terrific experiences this semester.

This issue includes:

[Alumni Spotlight: Janel Bowles](#)
[FastStart's Fall Events](#)
[Campus Events Highlight](#)
[Book and Movies Review](#)
[Upcoming FastStart Events](#)
[FastStart Advertisements](#)

Questions

We welcome your comments and questions. To get involved, please call 814-863-6386 or e-mail FastStartInfo@psu.edu.

The CALL—Cultural Alliance of Lifework Learning

["The Journey to The CALL"](#)

(Janel Bowles '96)



My First Mission

I went on my first missions' trip in 1995. I joined a group of my Penn State friends going to Jamaica during spring break where we ministered to children, distributing toys and clothing in orphanages, schools, and churches.

To be honest, I had no interest in going. I had never flown before and had no idea how I would get the money to go. I just assumed I'd be at home with my family during our spring break.

What an incredible experience!! I was excited. I was nervous—my first flight, first time out of the United States, a time of many first and new experiences!!

I began seeking God about what I was called to do. I knew missions was my calling— I just didn't know the details.

Shortly after returning from Jamaica, I was listening to a broadcast on Family Radio. The news report told of the hanging death of two missionaries, a husband and wife, who had been evangelizing in China, which is illegal.



When I heard the story, I began to pray for missionaries in China. I began to pray for China and the people there. Little did I know, this prayer journey would lead me to go to China.

In 1997, I went on my first trip to China. I joined with the English Language Institute/China, teaching English in Changsha, a city in the Hunan Province, the southeastern part of China.

This year—the year of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games—I had the privilege of returning to China. This time, I taught English in Shanghai. I believe the Chinese teachers learned and gained invaluable knowledge from our time spent with them. However, my life has been changed in indescribable ways. Somehow the people I was sent to impact, had impacted me. I would never be the same.



Testing The Call

Over the years I had been involved in short-term missions—trips to Jamaica, Haiti, the Bahamas, and places in the U.S.—training individuals about how to go into their own communities as well as abroad as a missionary.

After six years of employment at Temple University, I resigned as co-director of Community Outreach and Hiring at Temple University to pursue my life's work calling full time. Prior to directing community outreach, my start in higher education came through an open door at Lincoln University as a career counselor. That opportunity has led to 10 years of service within the university setting, training and developing both youth and adults.

Thanksgiving 2008, I will be a part of a Thanksgiving Crusade in Tijuana, Mexico with Ambassador Fellowship.

The CALL

This year, I launched The Cultural Alliance of Lifework Learning, an organization created to train others to discover their life's work calling. The CALL will be a mission-sending organization, training those who are being awakened to their life's work callings.

Why a missionary??

I am often asked, especially by young people, why I became a missionary. It is impossible to explain entirely. At times, it's a mystery to me!! How could I begin to explain the ways of God? Yet, all I know is that, at a certain point in my life, I knew that God was compelling me to live out my truest self and that was to answer His call. There was a clear sense that what I heard in my heart was no human voice, nor was it just an idea of my own. Christ was calling me to serve Him as a missionary.

I encourage communication:

The CALL International

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FastStart Fall Events

Welcome Reception

By Stephanie Osorio (sophomore, history)



The annual FastStart Welcome Reception was held Aug. 28 in the Hintz Family Alumni Center. This is one of the first events held by FastStart and a crucial event as well, as this is the first time the students and mentors interact with one another. The students were provided with a questionnaire to break the ice with their mentors. The students benefited from this greatly, not only with meeting their possible future mentors but also, having a chance to win football tickets. A raffle was held twice during the course of the evening to win these much sought-after tickets. A total of six tickets were

given away to students.

Matthew Day, FastStart Advisory Board member, welcomed all who came. This year's Welcome Reception was a great success with more than 140 people in attendance. We would like to thank all the students and mentors who attended, and the Penn State Alumni Association for sponsoring such a great program.



FastStart Orientations

By Jasmine Plummer (sophomore, biobehavioral health) and Unique Parker (junior, journalism)

FastStart held two student orientations this past fall semester. One FastStart orientation took place on Aug. 24 at the Hintz Family Alumni Center. This orientation was a chance for first-year students to learn a little more about FastStart and what it means to be a member. The event began with a bagel brunch for everyone and then after all had their fill of brunch, everyone moved into the conference room, where our coordinator Teresa McGowan officially welcomed the students. Then the advisory board members had the opportunity to introduce themselves and go over some of the information that was included in the packets. From my prospective the room was packed, so packed that people had to sit on the floor ... the final attendee count was 122. This was great because



many first-year students will have the opportunity to have mentors help them through the first year of college at Penn State. Information included the advisory boards' top pick of advice for first-year students. Afterwards, advisory board members had a one-on-one conversation with the students.

The alternative student orientation took place on Aug. 27, also at the Hintz Family Alumni Center. The alternative orientation had approximately 25 students who couldn't make it to the main orientation. The orientation went pretty well. I felt like the FastStart Advisory Board got the chance to really converse with the students. We allowed the students to ask us anything that they wanted an answer to and they did have questions for us. When students asked what our majors were, I found some communications majors who asked about what classes they should take. I informed them about the classes they should take and told them some helpful resources that Penn State offers to its underrepresented students on campus. I felt that the students enjoyed talking to us and learned some helpful information about Penn State.

FastStart BBQ/Tailgate

By Unique Parker (junior, journalism) and Teresa McGowan (FastStart coordinator)

This year, FastStart did something different for our BBQ. We turned it into a tailgate. In the past, we always tried to work around the football schedule, but this year the 8:00 p.m. kick-off for the Penn State–Illinois game opened up a great opportunity for FastStart. Despite the rainy conditions, this year's BBQ/Tailgate was a great success with our highest ever attendance for the event.



FastStart first-year students, upperclassmen, and mentors attended the event, which gave allowed everybody to get to know each other. Holding the BBQ on a football weekend allowed our alumni mentors to turn a trip for the game into an opportunity to connect with students.

We had many games and activities planned for outside, which were rained out, but despite the rain, we had a great time playing Penn State Bingo with \$100, \$50, and \$25 gift card as prizes, donated by Barnes & Noble. But nobody walked away empty handed. Each attendee was given an Alumni Association cap.

Haunted Granary

By Stephanie Osorio (sophomore, history)

For the first time, FastStart held an event just in time for Halloween. A trip to the Haunted Granary was held on Oct. 24. Students started arriving at 5:00 p.m. at the Hintz Family Alumni Center to eat and were well-fed and ready to go by 6:15 p.m. The group then made its way to the bus stop. The wait was longer than expected about an hour. There had apparently been a delay for the bus route. After the group arrived, we were divided into two groups of about 30 students each.



The groups went into the Haunted Granary. A man who was dressed as the original owner of the granary told the tale of how it became

haunted. After the story, we went through the granary and were spooked by the ghosts of the past. After a few screams, we were out and were then led to this shed where a small skit consisting of a wizard, two fairies, and prince charming took place. It was humorous. After that, we were led to a tent where images of a cemetery and farm land were shown. That was the least entertaining part of the whole event. The concept was to perhaps frighten the visitors but it did not manage that. We then went to a haunted school bus where ghosts were sitting waiting to give us a good scare. The final part of the event was another skit where a witch was looking for a new boyfriend. The audience was an important part of the skit. It was the funniest and most amusing part of the event.

After that, most of us bought snacks while waiting for the bus to arrive.

It was a successful event with 59 students attending. We would like to thank Teresa McGowan for organizing the event. We hope all those who attended enjoyed the Haunted Granary.

Networking and Etiquette Reception

By Unique Parker (junior, journalism)



This semester FastStart had our annual Networking and Etiquette Reception in the Hintz Family Alumni Center. The event was attended by FastStart first-year students and mentors. During the event we gained useful tips on proper etiquette when networking in any situation. Here are some tips from the reception:

Greeting/Body Language: Your body language always says more than words that you will speak during your personal introduction. Always make eye contact with the person or people that you are conversing with during your networking. Make sure that you research the person or event that you are attending and have your introduction in your mind before the event so that it leads into a conversation that you want to have with them. You should give a good, firm handshake when you are meeting people. It is better to start a conversation with a group or an individual person because it will be harder to start a conversation with two people already in a conversation.

Order of Introduction/Ending Conversation: When introducing others in a conversation, there are various rules. You always introduce the person of the most the importance first when having a business conversation, such as the customer. When you are introducing elected officials, such as senators or the president of the United States, always introduce the them first. A good rule to follow if you are not sure who to introduce first: always introduce your elders first and then the women before the rest of the group. The best way to end a conversation is to introduce another person into the conversation and this will take the attention from you. Do not use any cells phones during your networking and do not take any calls. Keep your phone in your pocket.

Food: Always keep your napkin under your plate when you are eating so that you can clean your hand before you shake another person's hand. Do not eat and drink at the same time if you cannot hold both your plate and cup in the same hand. Hold your plate, cup, and napkin in your left hand so that you can shake with your right hand (sorry lefties, but most people expect to greet others by shaking with their right hand and extending your left can make for an awkward situation). You want to sneeze and cough in your inner arm to prevent the spread of germs when shaking somebody's hand. If you are sick, it is best to decline to shake hands ... people will appreciate that you are not spreading your germs. Eat in moderation, and your food must touch your plate before you touch it with your hands ...

never take food directly from the buffet to your mouth. These are just a few of the tips we received at the Networking and Etiquette Reception. We hope you find them as helpful as we did.

Campus Events Highlight

The Fourth Annual World Cultural Festival (WCF)

By Teresa McGowan (FastStart Coordinator)

The Fourth Annual World Cultural Festival was held on Sept. 12. Originally planned for the HUB-Robeson Center lawn, the forecast for rain forced the event planners to move the event into Alumni Hall in the HUB-Robeson Center—good thing. The forecast held and the decision to move inside and advertise the move days before the actual event, paid off in huge numbers of students—more than 2,000—attended the event.



Picture by Greg Grieco

The students who attended this year's event were able to talk with and take away information from 39 multicultural student organizations and eight University departments. Participants were also treated to performances by student groups such as Nommo, Urban Dance Troupe, Penn State International Dance Ensemble, and Ram Squad, just to name a few. Participants were also enjoyed a delicious buffet of foods from the Taste of the Diaspora of local restaurants.

If you missed this year's event, the good news is that the Paul Robeson Cultural Center plans to host the event again next year. Just be sure to look for it immediately upon returning to campus for the fall 2009 semester, as it traditionally takes place in the first two weeks of classes.

The Epsilon Gamma Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated Presents: The Multicultural Family Reunion

By Sierra Coppage (junior, journalism)

As a part of their service to the community, the Epsilon Gamma Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. hosted the 12th Multicultural Family Reunion on Sept. 7. The event focuses on welcoming and assisting in the acclimation of incoming freshmen and transfer students to the huge and, often times, intimidating campus of Penn State. This program gives new students the opportunity to network with other similar students as well as more seasoned peers and alumni. It also serves to introduce students to the various organizations around campus.



About 200 students attended the Multicultural Family Reunion. Students could be seen laughing, talking, eating, and having fun. The highlight of the event was the dunk tank. Many students got the option to "Dunk and Delta." Besides FastStart, other groups that were represented were S.M.A.R.T., the Multicultural Resource Center, the Paul Roberson Center, and the College of Communications. This event has been a tradition of ours since

the fall of 1992 and has been very beneficial in helping students with the cultural transition from their hometowns to the college scene.

When was the Multicultural Family Reunion started on Penn State's campus?

The Multicultural Family Reunion was started here at Penn State in 1992, but was known as the Black Family Reunion. It was then changed to the Multicultural Family Reunion in 2000. The purpose of the Multicultural Family Reunion is to assist in the acclimation of freshmen and transfer students to the University Park campus.

Why is it important to the Penn State minority community?

This event is important to the Penn State minority community because it allows minorities to network with each other. The minority population here a Penn State is slowly increasing but it's important for minorities to stick together. This event allows minorities to fellowship and start the semester off on a good note. It also allows those new to the campus to make friends and network with others who are already familiar with the atmosphere.

What makes the Multicultural Family Reunion different from any of the other Deltas programs for the minority community?

There is an underlying theme with all of our programs focusing on assisting our community. This program is different from our other programs because it the one time of the year where we can get everyone together before schoolwork really kicks in and organizations come out. This year we had free food, cotton candy, a dunk tank, cards, and other games along with a DJ. This event is the only event outside of parties hosted on campus that brings everyone together and allows them to fellowship and learn about organizations on campus while still having fun.

Race Against Racism

By Johnnie R.M. Geathers (sophomore, health and human development)

Race Against Racism was developed in 2005 by John Hurst, the East Halls Residence Life director. The race and program, held Oct. 4, is an opportunity to send a powerful message that racism is not welcome here at Penn State. The race was a 5k course around the Penn State campus beginning and ending at the East Halls Quad. T-shirts were giving to the first 250 participants and prizes were given out to the top three males and top three females.

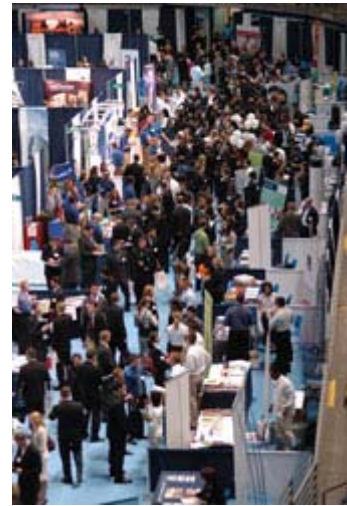


This year, this Association of Residence Hall Students (ARHS) Diversity Chair Johnnie Geathers, took part in helping and planning the race. He will be running the race next year because Residence Life is turning the program over to ARHS. The money raised will go to ARHS to promote the year's diversity programs. There were 115 participants and six student organizations that participated in the fair.

The Fall 2008 Career Fair—A Personal Experience

By Jasmine Plummer (sophomore, journalism)

It was that time again at Penn State when many college students flock to the Bryce Jordan Center in their business attire to look for full-time positions, part-time positions, co-ops, and internships. I, being a sophomore, decided it might be a good opportunity to check out what a fair would really be like and also possibly get an internship for the summer. So on Sept. 17th, I got ready to go. I started by making sure my resumé was in good shape and that I had printed many copies to give out to potential employers. Before my trip to the BJC, I looked at all the companies that were being represented. I had found a couple to target, and I took down their location numbers. The last thing I did to prepare was put on my business outfit. I had the black slacks and professional top. At this point, I was as ready as I would ever be.



At around 5:00 p.m. that day, I left my residence hall in East to make the walk to the Bryce Jordan Center. Upon arriving at the center, I saw hundreds of students dressed the same way I was. When you first get inside, you must check in and wait in a line to get your ID scanned to receive an identification card that includes information like your name, major, and/or college. After receiving my identification nametag, I felt official. It was now time to seek out the employers that I had researched earlier. I needed a map to get around the BJC—that place is huge! After countless minutes of wandering around, I finally found one of the companies on my list that was offering internships, Inroads. I waited patiently to talk to the recruiter. , when it was my turn, I talked about my career goals and my major.

After we talked for about 15 minutes, I actually learned a lot about the opportunities they had for underclassmen. I also learned some tips about resumé that I had not known before. For example, on your resumé, you should include your GPA. So all and all, my experience at the Career Fair was short and a little intimidating. Now, I know what an actual Career Fair is like and how to better prepare for the next one.

Penn State celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month

By Angela Barajas (sophomore, journalism)

Students gathered on the steps of Old Main on Sept. 15 to celebrate the beginning of Hispanic Heritage Month.

It is the first time in Penn State in 14 years that Hispanic Heritage Month was celebrated during the national dates. This year, ended on Oct. 15.



Among the guests of honor were Dr. Norman Bristol-Colon '98, who was appointed by Governor Edward G. Rendell as executive director of the Governor's Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs. Bristol-Colon proceeded to read a proclamation for Hispanic Heritage Month after State College Mayor Bill Welch gave a brief speech celebrating the beginning of Hispanic Heritage Month.

Their guests included Doris I. Conner, finance director of Centre County United Way. Conner considered the kick off as a memorable beginning to the recognition of Hispanics. "It shows newcomers what we are capable of doing," said Connor.

The ceremony marked the beginning of multiple events that will take place during the month. Penn State students highlighted all 21 Latino countries by reading poems or excerpts significant to each country. The serenade theme for the ceremony also had a singer accompanied by an acoustic guitar, playing common songs from various Latino countries.

Melissa Landrau-Rodriguez, chair of the Hispanic Heritage Month Planning Committee, was happy with the turnout of the event although she did mention she would have liked to see more Penn State faculty and staff. The eight-person committee had met since March to plan the Hispanic Heritage Month events.

The Stoop

By Angela Barajas (sophomore, journalism)

Students gathered Oct. 13 in the Waring Lounge in West Halls to hear others recite their work and communicate their empowering messages in the art known as “spoken word.” The event, called “The Stoop,” is hosted every semester by the Paul Robeson Cultural Center with the assistance of Residence Life and has become quite successful drawing large turnouts.



The cozy setting and the sweet smell of chocolate attracted many who were walking by the commons. Within a few minutes, the room was filled and there was barely any standing room.

Anthony Keith, assistant director of the Paul Robeson Cultural Center, welcomed the crowd and made opening remarks. He then proceeded to recite a piece he wrote. “Words have power,” Keith said passionately.



Other performers continued the high-energy vibe with powerful words and thoughtful analogies, with topics ranging from social injustice to hip-hop to daily struggles to love.

The spontaneity of the event was clearly seen. The audience often reacted to the thoughtful words put together by the performers. For various performers, it was the first time reading their work to an audience but the warmth of the audience let the words continue the uplifting flow of the evening.

Yet, the event was also versatile and not solely restricted to “spoken word.” There were musical interludes courtesy of the DJ as well as the vocal talents of Penn State students.

Book series

“Disposable People” by Kevin Bales

Review by: Jasmine Plummer (sophomore, journalism)

Disposable People’s main theme is about modern day slavery and how it is so sad that in today’s world it still exist. Author Kevin Bales takes readers into countries where slavery still exists. While in these countries, we learn more about the people and the evil system that bind them in slavery. After reading this book, my own eyes have been opened to the struggles that people in Africa, Brazil, Pakistan, Thailand, and many other countries face in their daily lives.

“A Thousand Splendid Suns” by Khaled Hosseini

Review by Stephanie Osorio (sophomore, liberal arts)

“A Thousand Splendid Suns,” written by acclaimed author Khaled Hosseini, who also wrote the bestseller, “The Kite Runner,” takes place in modern Afghanistan and focuses on how women are treated. The book shows the life of two different Afghan women and how their worlds collide with one another. This book is a page-turner. It is well-written and brings into perspective a world that many of us cannot imagine. The subject in itself is interesting—a land that still lives under many restrictions especially when it comes to the rights of women. It makes one appreciate all the liberties one has in the United States.

This is a book that is at times quite difficult to read, but it is a book that everyone should read. It is meant to show a part of Afghanistan that we do not see in the media. It illustrates the struggles and obstacles Afghan women must overcome to survive in a world that considers them inferior. It is a powerful book and another great book by Hosseini.

“Letters to a Young Sister: DeFine Your Destiny” by Hill Harper

Review by Unique Parker (junior, journalism)

“Letters to a Young Sister: DeFine Your Destiny” by Hill Harper is a self-help book written for all the young women in the world. He wrote this book to help guide young women by giving us tips and advice on making ourselves better. The book includes letters from some of his female celebrity friends, such as Michelle Obama and Gabrielle Union, answering questions that young women may have. I think that Harper includes useful tips, such as think positive and you will receive positive results. This was useful because when I thought about it, if I find myself thinking negative I will receive that negative result. He also suggests certain activities during the course of the book, such as writing out what you want to accomplish in the future.

“One Day, All Children” by Wendy Kopp

Review by Anna Han (senior, bioengineering)

Educational inequity is our nation's greatest social injustice, according to the non-profit organization Teach For America. Teach for America, designed as a national teachers corps in 1988 by Wendy Kopp during her senior year at Princeton, encourages and actively recruits recent college graduates and professionals to commit two years to teaching low-income schoolchildren in nearly 30 districts around the country. In “One Day, All Children,” Kopp herself describes the trials and tribulations of getting Teach For America off the ground.

Kopp does not sugarcoat any of her experiences: she writes of internal disagreements, logistical problems in organizing summer training sessions, and a lack of funding, which seems to be a constant theme. Still, she and her staff never waver in their commitment to

effect positive change in American education. There are more than enough success stories of great Teach For America corps members leading their students to their full potential to balance out the stories of hardship. For example, Kopp writes of a corps member Tammi Sutton in North Carolina, who achieved a goal she had set for herself and her 60 students: at the end of the school year, 96 percent of them surpassed the state standards for acceptable writing at a time when the school as a whole had just 50 percent of its students passing the state standards. The inspiring style of both Kopp's writing and the subject matter provides the reader with a true sense of possibility and hopefulness for the future of America's children.

Upcoming FastStart Events

Building Your Network/Ice Cream Social

Mingle with your protégé/mentor and learn the importance of networking for your future job preparation while learning from one our presenter and alumni mentors—oh and eat some great Creamery ice cream.

Date: March 21, 2009

Location: TBD

Time: 3:00–5:00 p.m.

Spring Celebration

Celebrate the end of the 2008-09 academic year! Congratulate previous FastStart participants who are now graduating.

Date: April 14, 2009

Location: Hintz Family Alumni Center

Time: 5:00–7:00 p.m.

FastStart advertisements

By FastStart Advisory Board

Congrats/Salutations

Do you want to congratulate your mentor/protégé on a recent accomplishment? Did you do something worth recognition? We want to know. E-mail us at FastStartInfo@psu.edu and we'll post your comments in future newsletters. Be sure to include your name, the name of the person you are congratulating, and a brief description of the accomplishment.

Dear Advisory Board,

Where would I be able to send questions and/or comments about my experiences with FastStart? Thanks.

*Sincerely,
A FastStart Student*



Dear FastStart Student,

This is the perfect place to send your questions or comments. The Student Advisory Board would like to help make your experience with FastStart a more positive one. E-mail us at FastStartInfo@psu.edu, and your questions will be answered by a member of our group. Mentors are welcome to e-mail us as well. We'll pick a question or comment to post in future newsletters.

**Sincerely,
The Student Advisory Board**

Questions

We welcome your comments and questions. To get involved, call 814-863-6386 or e-mail FastStartInfo@psu.edu.