Group raises black women’s status

By Maria Reynolds
Lantern staff writer

Several black female faculty and staff members are working hard to improve the standing of black women on campus and open opportunities for career advancement.

A support group called Women of Color Consortium, created in 1981 to enhance the status of black women on campus, provides informational programs and a support network for personal and professional growth.

"In our jobs we wear many hats," said Ruth Gresham, special assistant to the executive officer of the Human Relations Office and one of the founders of the organization. "Because of vast responsibilities, a majority of our time is spent helping others and little to no time is spent developing our own personal and professional growth.

"Women of Color Consortium is an organization that forces us to set aside a little time to address and share those issues and concerns we, as black women, need to know."

Gresham said career advancement for black women and mentoring of students by resourceful faculty, staff, and professors are the group’s primary concerns.

"Black women don’t get enough promotions at Ohio State, but what’s the point (of saying this) if we can’t find the vehicle to do something about it," Gresham said. "Since we know the current status of black women on campus we need to look at why people are saying that we are not eligible for promotions."

She said if black women are told they are lacking financial management skills or technical skills, the group will get someone to help train them.

Gresham said with this type of support, employers will be less able to turn the women away.

She said if employers say, ‘Hey look, you don’t have that kind of background for this kind of position,’ members of Women of Color Consortium can answer ‘Yes we do. We have the training, we’ve got the contacts and we know where to get it (help) if we need it.’

Since its establishment, the group has held several informational luncheons and coordinated numerous seminars titled “Career Development, Connections and Financial Planning.”

Each quarter the group selects a theme and plans activities around it. This quarter the theme is financial management, personal and professional. During spring quarter the theme will be physical awareness.

“Our programs have been successful,” said Pat Williams, assistant to the university ombudsman and co-founder of Women of Color. "We’ve had good turn-outs and in autumn quarter, after a week-long showing of an art exhibition from the Smithsonian Institute, we were able to get women’s services to purchase it with its accompanying video so that it would be used by the university as a permanent reference."

Since its first gathering of four people, the group has grown to 15 (depending on complexity of program planning).

Brenda Fields, clerical specialist from the Ohio Union reservation office and a newcomer to the group, said her involvement with Women of Color Consortium has been a growing experience for her and the group has given her the push she needed to pursue higher career goals.

"My participation in the group has given me knowledge that I did not have before. Just recently, I applied for a professional development program that I wouldn’t have known about if it was not for the group."

Fields said the group’s best characteristic is its informality. "The meetings are carried out in a friendly and informal manner yet it’s structured enough that we are getting down to business and accomplishing things."

Women of Color Consortium meets at noon the first Thursday of each month and is actively recruiting members. For further information contact Tina Sullivan-Love in the Black Student Programs Office at 292-6584.
'Women of color’ help support diverse groups

By KARLA THORNHILL
Lantern staff writer

For women of color on campus, finding support within the traditional university structure can sometimes mean only one thing: frustration.

But four black women from the university set out seven years ago to make some changes. They formed the Women of Color Consortium, an organization that focuses on networking and providing programs to fulfill the personal and professional needs of women of color.

“We were totally frustrated,” said Ruth Gresham, a charter member of the group’s steering committee. She is also the special assistant for the Office of Human Relations.

“We were meeting for lunch and would talk about how we were having students referred to us with particular problems when there were offices on campus to help them,” she said.

Gresham said the organization is not for students and staff members only, but is designed to bring all women of color from all parts of the university together.

“Most students need to be with people who have been around the block a couple of times,” she said. “There are things that people just don’t have to go through by themselves.”

For example, Gresham said she had come in contact with undergraduate and graduate black women students who would travel home for a hair appointment, but she and other staff members and administrators who have lived in Columbus for a while could recommend a place in town.

Although the students were the reason the group was formed, Gresham said, the organization also gives faculty, staff and administrators a chance to network and meet other women of color on campus.

Along with trying to meet personal needs, the group sponsors programs on career development, mentoring, health and other concerns.

The Women of Color Consortium meets at noon on the first Thursday of each month in the State room of the Ohio Union.

The consortium held its fifth annual orientation last Thursday in which nearly 30 women of all races and different parts of the university came together to talk and see old friends.

Dr. Mary Harris-Pegram, associate professor in the School of Social Work and guest speaker at the orientation, said women of color on campus, particularly black women, have a difficult time finding support and feeling comfortable here. She said the reason lies with the small number of positions held by black women on the faculty, and in administration and staff.

“When we look around the university we can see that this is a microcosm of the nation,” she said. “The majority of women here are on the clerical staff and there are very few faculty members and administrators.”

Pegram said she believes the university's efforts toward affirmative action, including recruiting and retaining black students as well as faculty and administrators, is a step in the right direction, but she will have to wait and see its results.
COLUMBUS, Ohio -- The sixth annual Distinguished Affirmative Action Awards at Ohio State University honored a diverse group of recipients.

The awards were presented at a banquet May 5 to an Ohio State medical student, a staff member, three faculty and administrators and a campus organization.


This year's awards went to:

-- Alvin D. Jackson, a third-year medical student in the College of Medicine, 237 S. 18th St., COLUMBUS (43205);

-- Ernest W. Johnson, chairperson of the Department of Physical Medicine and associate dean for external affairs in the College of Medicine, 3744 Lyon Dr., COLUMBUS (43220);

-- Anne S. Pruitt, director of the Center for Teaching Excellence and professor of educational policy and leadership, College of Education, 3440 Olentangy River Rd., COLUMBUS (43202);

-- S. Yolanda Robinson, a program coordinator for the Department of Black Studies Community Extension Center, 2960 E. 11th Ave., COLUMBUS (43219);
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-- Women of Color Consortium, a university women's support organization; founders and co-convenors are Patricia Williams, assistant ombudsman, 444 E. Tompkins St., COLUMBUS (43202); Tina Sullivan-Love, director of minority services, Student Life, 3070 Pine Valley, COLUMBUS (43230) and Ruth Gresham, special assistant in the Office of Human Relations, 1631 Roseview Dr., COLUMBUS (43209);

-- Elsie Williams-Wilson, associate professor in the College of Nursing's Department of Family and Community, 671 Greenwood Road, WHITEHALL (43213).

The awards recognize individuals or university units which have done the most to improve affirmative action at Ohio State. Each recipient received a plaque and a $1,000 honorarium.

The winners were selected by the University Senate Committee on Women and Minorities from 32 nominations from faculty, staff and students.

In establishing the awards in 1982, President Edward H. Jennings said, "Through this award, we pay tribute to individuals and academic units who have made significant strides in meeting Ohio State's commitment to the real goal of equality of opportunity for all people -- equality of opportunity in access to a college education, in career development and professional advancement, and in all aspects of human relations."

The award winners and a summary of their efforts:
The women of color Consortium offers a coordinated effort to provide programs and support networks for women of color. Since 1981, the consortium has attempted to improve the status of women of color at Ohio State, providing a forum which supports and encourages these women and supplies avenues for mentoring, linking and communication. The work of the consortium is done entirely by member volunteers. Much of the work done by consortium leaders is done entirely outside the framework of their university positions, with limited financial resources. The consortium attempts to encourage other campus units to attend to the needs of women of color. It has helped the Center for Women's Studies identify areas in which it could better serve minority women students and staff. Similar efforts have been carried out with Black Student Programs, Hispanic Student Programs, Women's Services, the College of the Arts and University Gallery. Each year, the consortium sponsors a reception and a series of programs addressing issues of concern to women of color.

Contact: Ned Cullom, Office of Human Relations (614) 292-4747. Written by David Tull.
The University's 6th annual Distinguished Affirmative Action Awards honor a diverse group of recipients. The awards were presented May 2 to a medical student, a staff member, three faculty and administrators and a campus organization.

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The banquet speaker was U.S. Rep. William H. Gray III (D-Pa.) Philadelphia, chairperson of the House Budget Committee.

Women of Color Consortium

Since 1981, the Women of Color Consortium has attempted to improve the status of minority women at Ohio State. The group provides support and encouragement and supplies avenues for mentoring, linking and communication. Its founders and co-convenors are Patricia Williams, assistant ombudsman; Tina Sullivan-Love, director of minority services, Student Life; and Ruth Gresham, special assistant, Human Relations. Volunteers do the work, much of it done entirely outside the framework of their University positions, with limited financial resources. The consortium also attempts to encourage other campus units to attend to the needs of women of color and each year sponsors a reception and a series of programs.