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Bagley: Race talk should be priority

The multicultural affairs co-director for USG says students should skip Sesquicentennial Games for race session.

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Undergraduate Student Government (USG) Multicultural Affairs Co-Director Mark Bagley urged members of USG Senate earlier this week to consider racial issues and to work harder as school leaders to create an environment of racial equality.

He invited USG members to attend a dialogue hosted by the Race Relations Project (RRP) Sunday to educate student leaders about racial issues and to improve race relations on campus. He added at the Senate meeting that it was particularly important they attend the dialogue because race relations start with student leaders.

The discussion, being held exclusively for USG, conflicts with the Sesquicentennial Games, which many USG members are participating in.

Town Sen. Diana Maxham, who is speaking at the closing events of the Sesquicentennial Games, addressed Bagley at the meeting on Tuesday about USG conflicts.

"I think that it's a very important thing, but that other campus events weren't taken into consideration in the planning," she said. "I think USG members would be more excited to go if there wasn't a conflict that many USG members are part of."

Bagley said the Sesquicentennial Games were not an excuse for missing the diversity training.

"Be there; don't disappoint the students you represent. They are not represented here [among the senators]," Bagley said. "I'm here to be the left foot in your behind. Make sure you are committed to making this a better university. Hands down we are not doing a good enough job."

Outside of the meeting, Bagley added that there are not enough minorities in USG and that the people representing other students should be thinking about and be more concerned with the issues.

"When you deal with diversity

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Diana Maxham
USG Town Senator

on campus, you should never be content. You should always be looking to learn new things," he said.

According to the group's Web site, www.racerelationsproject.psu.edu, the RRP is dedicated to helping students realize their own views on issues of race and diversity through small discussion groups.

Trained undergraduate students from Penn State facilitate the dialogue for hundreds of groups per year under a project that is spearheaded by sociology lecturer Sam Richards.

Multicultural Affairs co-director Merin Thomas said a major objective was to increase sensitivity among students. She added that Bagley's address and encouragement to interact with the campus' multicultural groups on Monday should not have been an issue with Academic Assembly.

"The point of the conversation is to open up people's minds. We aren't trying to change people's minds, just trying to get people to think outside the box," Thomas said.

Thomas added that there was no script for each individual discussion, but topics would vary based on the dynamics of the groups.

USG Vice President Luke Adams said Bagley's comments surrounding the Sesquicentennial Games might have been out of hand, but that diversity training for leaders of Penn State is important and needs to be addressed.

"When you are talking about something not mandatory, sometimes you need a little kick in the butt," Adams said.

After the meeting, Bagley said everyone should participate in this following the incidents with the College Republicans.