Diversity Awards Article

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Diversity Awards honor commitment to multicultural involvement

BY NANCY LAVIN
News Editor

The University of Rhode Island celebrated its students, faculty, staff and organizations’ commitment to multicultural inclusion at the URI Diversity Awards Banquet last night in the Memorial Union.

The event recognized 13 students, clubs and faculty members who have made unique advancements to URI’s commitment to campus diversity. The winners were selected after being nominated by themselves or another member of the URI community, according to Mailee Kue, assistant director of the Multicultural Center.

“Anybody can nominate someone, and you can even self-nominate,” Kue said. “Our process is that it’s not the number of nominations you get, but what you have actually contributed to the community.”

The Multicultural Center let out a call for nominations in late fall of 2011, according to Kue. After all the nominations were in, nominees were asked to fill out a supplemental form explaining more about themselves “so we could get a full picture of the individual,” Kue said.

“It was a complete surprise [to be nominated],” senior Narvan Hilliard, who was awarded for Undergraduate Student Excellence in Arts and Culture for his commitment as president of the URI Capoeira Club, said. “I was minding my own business and I got an email from Mailee, and she told me I was nominated for an award. It was actually my instructor who nominated me because I guess he got something similar during his day.”

A committee of 12 undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and staff members then read the individual information and ranked them on how they answered the questions against others in the specific pool they were competing in. Kue then calculated the scores, and the group came to a consensus to select either one, two or three recipients, depending on the award category.

“We are a group that works in collaboration, so we really shoot for consensus,” Kue said. “If there’s disagreement, I try to remind the group to look at how we impact the community on a larger level, and just keep the group focused on that.”

Kue said since the committee does not really operate by a majority vote, coming to decisions can be difficult in some instances. Other times, however, there is clear agreement on the winner.

“Typically you’ll find patterns of individuals who are ranked pretty high consistently across groups,” she said. “Choosing a more flexible approach is appropriate, particularly in the work of diversity.”

The event featured keynote speaker John Ramos, who is known for revitalizing urban education in Connecticut and promoting educational reform for students of all backgrounds.

Ramos urged URI students and faculty to be proactive in reaching the university’s diversity goals.

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