

Proposal for  
establishment  
of the IC

## 1. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The IC must be a space that exists not only physically, but also in the mind of the Swarthmore community, where people can speak and be heard. Currently there is a serious imbalance in meeting the needs of the student body. Students have organized to approach the administration with strategies for meeting those needs. These resources, however, are scattered and divided. Facing this reality, it has been difficult and discouraging for students to engage in a dialogue with the administration on one side, the faculty on another, and fellow students all around.

What we need is meaningful recognition from the school that there are indeed significant differences in the way people utilize the resources the college provides to earn a Swarthmore degree. These differences stem from fundamental differences in perspective and background of students. As an egalitarian institution it is key for Swarthmore to create a nominal learning environment for all of its students. To do this the college must evaluate to what extent their programs and strategies are achieving this end. This involves a revision of hiring practices and procedures for faculty members and staff, admissions and recruitment efforts, library resources, and the focus and composition of the curriculum.

We are students who are aware of this problem and have drafted a proposal we think will go a long way to creating a solution. We would like to emphasize that in fact the IC is not an answer to the problems facing marginalized groups on campus. The problems the IC is designed to confront require a long term commitment to change and the IC must be organized to effect the series of gradual changes that will bring about a new consciousness needed at Swarthmore. As students we must be included in the decisions that affect our lives. We have gathered information from other colleges that are engaged in similar processes of heightening sensitivity to race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, demographics, class and physical handicap. We present the result of a great deal of discussion and analysis from our part.

## 2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERCULTURAL CENTER

More than one year ago today, a group of students informally began discussion for the formation of an Intercultural Center (IC) in Swarthmore College. Through the initiation of dialogue for the IC, students, primarily representatives from the Asian, Latino, and Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual communities, said that they were tired of not seeing their reflections on the Swarthmore campus. We would no longer stand to be deemed as culturally "other" and "insignificant." Both physically, academically, and culturally, the demand for the IC represented individuals breaking silence, telling the college that they would no longer be hidden away. Through the IC, we reiterated, we are attempting to end the marginalization of culture.

At the beginning of the movement of the IC, we originally used the term the "Bridge House" because of our original request to have the current "Bridge House" become the IC. While names have changed since that time, the term "bridge" could still be applied to the ideology of the IC. The IC represents a structure which would give a voice to marginalized groups so that they could communicate with the wider campus community on their own terms, providing the entire campus a vehicle to explore issues of difference. We use the word "entire" because from the very beginning, the IC started out as a non-exclusive movement. We have always forged alliances and received student support from many different sectors of the college. For example, the 1990 Senior Class voted to give their class gift to the initiation of an IC.

But when we talk about support, we would also like to stress the difficulties we experienced because of lack of support. These difficulties cannot be ignored. The process of arriving at this proposal has been, to say the least, an arduous and strenuous experience. Many involved found ourselves in positions where we constantly had to explain the purpose and the goals of an IC, to explain our feelings, to talk about where we come from, and to often be asked to speak for all "minorities." But what made this process more difficult was to find that many individuals who held the ultimate power to make this IC proposal a reality, belittled our ideas and experiences. Through the dialogue about the IC, we asked that this institution take a close look at the power dynamics circulating which work to

exclude and marginalize the experiences of whole communities. We asked that this college stop running scared from the diverse reality of this country. The director of the multicultural center at one California university was critical of his campus because he said on issues of diversity, it was involved in a monologue rather than a dialogue. When we run scared from the issues, only a monologue can happen. But if we sit down and listen, than a real working dialogue can happen. We hope that this proposal is the beginning of a working dialogue.

### 3. INDIVIDUAL GROUP'S PURPOSES AND NEEDS

#### *Statement by SAO concerning the ICC*

We of the Swarthmore Asian American community strongly feel the need for an IC. Not only are Asian Americans underrepresented in the faculty, staff, and administration, we are not represented in the curriculum. The administration, under pressure from SAO, has only begun to recognize and address our needs.

Asian Americans have long been considered an invisible or model minority. While our numbers have doubled in the past year, misconceptions about our diverse Asian American community still abound.

It is difficult to provide support for the Asian American community when we are not recognized and do not have a center to work from. For example, SAO has been coordinating activities and speakers for Asian-American awareness. This would have been greatly facilitated if we had had a base from which to work, both in terms of physical space and resources.

Our voices are not encouraged and our frustrations only increase. We cannot pretend to be blind to racism on this campus any longer. The stereotypes and institutionalized racism choke us and assault us.

An IC would help to meet the needs of Asian American students and create a safe space for all on campus to explore issues of diversity and multiculturalism. In view of recent events there can be no doubt that this "safe space" is sorely needed. Finally, an IC would not just be a psychological and physical "space" but an affirmation of our Swarthmore community and cultural interests.

*The Lesbian/Bisexual/Gay Alliance as member of the Intercultural Center*

We, the members of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community, have a need for space. There are several aspects of this need. For us, space can be defined physically, psychologically, socially, and academically.

The current Action Les-B-Gay (formerly <sup>erly</sup> Asis) room is very small and cramped. Because it is inadequate for our needs, we have been forced to split the group. We were unable to comfortably fit all of the people who attended the discussions in our room. Caritas was kind enough to loan us their room on Thursday nights, so now our discussion group meets there. This room is at the opposite end of campus. A larger Action room is definitely needed if our organization is to maintain its unity and strength.

The gay, lesbian, and bisexual community acts as a support for each other. This is an important function. Many of our members are "closeted". They are forced to hid their identity because of the social anathema of homo/bisexuality. Even the members of our community who are not generally closeted, sometimes need to hide that aspect of themselves. We need a space where we can be comfortable with being honest about who we are. Having a comfortable physical space would facilitate a comfortable psychological space by attracting the community to gather together more informally and frequently. These times of safety are important to the forming of the individual, and the community.

Once we have consolidated our group and come together for support, it becomes easier to reach out to the rest of the college community and create a social space. An intercultural center would provide ready space for activities and events that would involve the whole college community (movies, speakers, parties etc.). The result of this would be the visibility of our community and the education of everyone (including ourselves). Only in this way can homophobia be confronted and dealt with.

Not only is visibility and education possible within the social sphere, but within the academic sphere as well. If our library was more visible and easier to access, research on lesbian, bisexual, and gay concerns could be done by students for

classes. Also, professors would be encouraged to include this material if they too had easy access to resources. An intercultural center would provide the type of research facility necessary to encourage the beginnings of academic recognition of gay and lesbian studies on this campus. An academic space would thereby be created.

An intercultural center would provide for the various space needs of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community at Swarthmore. Each aspect of the Alliance would have access to the space for discussions and action. The group Action Les-B-Gay would use the office space, the meeting space, and would hold a position on the IC board since it is the political/educational arm of the alliance. The other branches of the Alliance would use the space primarily for gathering together, and otherwise as they see fit.

## *HOLA' s Purpose and Need for the Intercultural Center*

HOLA (Hispanic Organization for Latino Awareness) sees a definite need for an Intercultural Center on campus. This piece deals with why HOLA must be an integral part of the development of the Intercultural Center.

Our primary goal is to develop a voice on campus in order to create an environment conducive to the positive education of Latinos. Conversely we need to contribute to the positive education of the entire campus community regarding their Hispanic counterparts. At the present time the lack of representation of Latinos/as in the administration, faculty, and student body creates a hostile and unresponsive academic and social environment. Furthermore, the curriculum has voids which demonstrate the colleges ignorance of our collective histories and cultures and makes for an incomplete education for everyone. This situation inhibits the productive participation of Latino students and robs the college community of a valuable asset.

HOLA is presently faced with a dynamic that is circular and self defeating. Growth seems impossible without interest from the college and creating interest and support seems impossible without growth. It seems almost as if it would be more useful to simply not bring the issue to the forefront because of the magnitude of work that needs to be done, given the incredible difficulty in mobilizing the necessary components to educate ourselves and the campus. It is with this understanding that we know a long term commitment is needed to change the present situation in a non-tokenistic manner.

The Intercultural Center gives us access to the larger campus community and to resources we presently are lacking: a director who can put us in touch with our options and advise us, a space to develop a library and files that will have a direct bearing on curricular evolution, and a way to share information and strategies with groups that have similar needs. It is key to our existence and function to have a dialogue with various other student groups, so that we may understand each other better and develop new means of cooperation and solidarity.

#### 4. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE INTERCULTURAL CENTER

The Intercultural Center will be run by the Director who will meet and confer with the IC Board on a weekly basis. The third component of the IC will be the Advisory Committee. The IC Board in conjunction with the Director will make administrative decisions to do with the everyday maintenance of the IC, as well as decisions on budget spending and policy, such as changes in the structure and make up of the Intercultural Center itself. The larger Advisory Committee will meet on a monthly basis with the IC Board to discuss the maintenance and evolution of the IC, and to exchange information and advice between a larger representation of the college at large.

We propose that the IC Board, which will meet on a weekly basis be comprised of the following members: the Director, one representative of SAO, one representative of Action Les-B-Gay, one representative of HOLA, a Faculty member, an administrator and one person from the college community at large. This will be the formal body which votes on all major policy for the Intercultural Center. There will be time set aside during the weekly meetings to review proposals set forth by the Advisory Committee, as well as proposals submitted by anyone on the campus. Once a month the IC Board's weekly meeting will be open to accommodate anyone on campus who wants to discuss a proposal, idea or suggestion for the IC.

The Advisory Committee to the IC will serve as a vehicle to transfer advice on policy to the IC Board. This committee will make suggestions to the board, both through concerns of their own and questions that the board proposes to them. Not only will the meetings serve as a forum to discuss what happens in the IC, but also to share information and opinions on academic policies, hiring practices and admissions procedures of the College. We invite representatives of fellow campus organizations to join us in the larger Advisory Committees of the IC. We specifically extend invitations to SASS, the Womyn's Center and RUACH, a student from the community at large, college administrators and Faculty members (from the Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities).

The Advisory Committee will review all the major decisions and proceedings



of the IC Board and advise on all important matters, as well as presenting concerns and needs of the different sectors of the college community. This structure provides for effective administrative decision making as well as collaborative steering and managing of the Intercultural Center by the main organs of the College community.

## 5. STATEMENT OF SPATIAL NEEDS

The following is a description of the spatial aspects of an Intercultural Center which we envision. It includes those things requested by each organization involved as well those things which we feel will make the center function effectively as a unit. We begin with this general description of what is needed and conclude by telling which building on campus we feel best meets these needs.

**Office spaces-** The Intercultural Center should include at least 5 office spaces, one for SAO, HOLA, Action Les-B-Gay, the director, and at least one more office which would be in preparation for any later expansion. Each space would need to fulfill the needs of the individual or organization which would be occupying it. For SAO and HOLA, the basic needs are a desk and couches, with enough room to sit at least seven people. Thus, they could hold smaller gatherings such as executive board meetings within the individual offices. SAO and HOLA would hold their larger meetings in a common meeting space. Action Les-B-Gay, on the other hand, because of the confidentiality of their meetings, would need an office large enough to hold all of their organizational meetings. Thus, there should be a desk and couches with enough room for 20 or so people. Furthermore, there would need to be some sort of a rear entrance through which members the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and questioning community could enter the intercultural center and reach the Action Les-B-Gay room inconspicuously.

**Common meeting room-** As mentioned above, SAO and HOLA could hold their regular meetings in a common meeting space. This space should contain couches and chairs which could seat up to 30 people.

**Flexible events space-** The largest portion of the IC would be used as a common events space. This space could be used for lectures, films, parties, etc. sponsored by those groups with offices in the IC or by groups who were giving events which centered around multiculturalism. The room should contain enough seating, both

permanent and temporary ( folding chairs), for at least 100 people.

**Library and study-** Although SAO, HOLA, and Action Les-B-Gay have no intention of combining their books into one collection, we would like to have a common library, with three separate sections. A common library would make the books more easily available to those outside of the organizations. This is difficult if each organization is forced to store their books in their separate rooms as they do now. In addition to books, the library should contain a study area with tables, chairs, and possibly some computers.

**Lounge/Recreation room-** One of the main functions of the IC is to create a safe space for students. Thus it seems appropriate to include a lounge, with couches, chairs, a television, etc. where students could study, relax, talk, or just hang out.

#### **Kitchen and Bathrooms**

**Area for bulletin boards-** In order for the IC to function as a unit, it is very important to set aside significant wall space for bulletin boards. Thus, in addition to including a board for each organization involved in the center, there could be a IC calendar posted so that there would be no confusion between groups about when spaces were being used. In this way, each group could plan events so that they did not overlap. This would allow people from each of the groups to demonstrate their support to the others by participating in the public events which were sponsored. Similarly, this would provide a central location for communication with others on the campus.

### PROPOSED SPACE

**Old Tarble-** Of all the available spaces we've looked at on campus, it seems that the most appropriate location for an intercultural center is Old Tarble, which is empty at this point now that dance program has moved over to the Lang Performing Arts Center. Although the building is in considerable disrepair and does not currently

have the layout which could correspond with the outline above, it seems to be the best option. Turning Old Tarble into The Intercultural Center would require significant repairs and remodeling, however, we feel the project is well worth the resources required if the college wishes to follow through on its call for diversity.

We do not have specific architectural plans for the building, however, we have generated some of the possibilities. Starting from the ground up, the basement in its current condition is useless. It is under-partitioned and under-lighted. The areas around the perimeter could be remodeled into offices, as they have some external light from windows. The space in the center, with additional electrical lighting could be made into the lounge/recreation room. The only partitioned spaces which currently exist are a run down kitchen and two bathrooms.

Moving up, the first floor has much better external lighting and would thus be more appropriate for offices and other rooms. Currently, this floor is split into four sections: a dance studio, a large kitchen, and two dressing rooms. Ideal remodeling would create the flexible events space (out of a section of the dance floor), the large meeting room, and three offices. There is a separate entrance to the first floor in rear of the building which would be useful for Action Les-B-Gay, as stated in the needs above, to retain confidentiality.

The partial second floor, which does not extend over the dance floor, is currently arranged into two spaces: an office and an unenclosed large room which overlooks the dance area. The office space, in its current state, would function well, in terms of size, as the directors office. The large unenclosed space might not be usable in its current state. Although it seems appropriate to function as a library and study, in terms of size and location, it could not be used as such if it remains unenclosed and open to all activity which takes place on the floor below.

## 6. BUDGETARY NEEDS (and Director's Job Description)

We have projected a budget for the cost of running the Intercultural Center during its first year (see following page). We ask that the College provide this running budget to the Center, to be managed by the Director of the IC. Once the College has completed the necessary remodeling and furnishing of the building, we project that this budget will allow the IC to run smoothly. Each organization will work closely with the Director to ensure that we are managing our space and resources efficiently.

The first item on the budget is the position of Director. Here, we will briefly outline the duties and responsibilities of such a person, as we envision it.

We ask that for the first year at least the Director be part-time Director of the Intercultural Center and part-time Faculty member. This will ensure the beginning of a strong relationship between the Center and the Faculty, which we see as an integral part as we work on the evolution of Swarthmore and its curriculum. After the first year, we envision that the position will be reviewed so that the second year the best arrangement can be made for the Director. In addition to being part of the faculty we ask that the Director have experience working effectively with individual students as well as student organizations of culturally diverse populations.

The duties of the Director will include administrative and policy responsibilities ranging from overseeing the IC to understanding College wide practices and activities, especially those which affect the students housed in the IC. The Director will serve as an advisor to the student groups of the IC. The Director will also have fiscal responsibilities, and will work closely with the organizations to ensure fair and efficient use of the budget.

The following is a projected budget for the first year of the IC. We have approximated figures and foresee much refinement of the figures listed below. For the moment this is as close as we can get.

<i>Sub Code</i>	<i>Sub Code name</i>	<i>Projected Budget For 1991-1992 (\$)</i>
8031	Director	20000
8041	P/R Student	8650
8203 *	Lectures/Honorarium	4000
8255	Equipment Rental	400
8401	Transportation	1500
8402	Lodging/meals/misc.	600
8410	Bus/Van Rental	300
8420 *	Registrations	150
8450	Catering Services	800
8455 *	Entertainment	2000
8501	Supplies	2500
8503	Supplies-Printed	500
8504	Supplies-Photocopy	700
8510	Postage Shipping	700
8514 *	Publications	2500
8516	Toll Calls and Fax	1000
8532	Equipment-under 1000	2500
8534	Equipment-over 1000	5000

\* Matching Funds from  
individual groups of IC

TOTAL

53800

## 7. CONCLUSION

We hope that we have adequately expressed how an IC center will serve as a tool to address the fragmentation of our campus and marginalization of certain groups of people. In an effort to stop forcing people to the periphery we realize that the structure of the IC itself must be inclusive and responsive to the needs and problems of a changing campus community. Cognizant of the possibility that even with all the care and thought that was put into this proposal, there are powers that be that may not find this proposal suitable for making reality. It concerns us that lack of funds, time and expertise have been cited in the past as obstacles to addressing in concrete terms the socio-cultural rift that impairs all facets of life and education at Swarthmore College. The college has a stated commitment to the rectification of these imbalances which must be realized NOW!