The snow has melted, temperatures are climbing and we are officially 5 weeks away from wrapping up the 2014-2015 academic year. These next 5 weeks will be a culmination for all. Budget battles, papers, campus events, and tons of memories are behind us as we move toward new opportunities for summer and beyond. As we finish these last few weeks, let’s remember how fortunate we have been to have had these experiences and to know what we do now. Let us move toward the uncertain future with excitement and optimism. You’ve worked so hard and are so close to the end — finish strong.
This past month, UW-L sent its annual delegation to attend the White Privilege Conference. WPC 16 was located in Louisville, KY and a bus of roughly 50 people made the trek from La Crosse. The experience was full of passion, knowledge, intellectual enrichment and personal challenges. This month we break from the typical spotlight and feature an undergraduate student to gain her perspective on what made this trip worthwhile for her.

“As a young, female woman of color, I found my voice at WPC.”

- GAOZIE VANG
What did you know about the WPC prior to attending?

I’ve heard many things about WPC. I heard that many people got their questions answered and that many people left with more questions than they had before. I heard that WPC changes lives and perspectives. I also heard that a diverse crowd of people attend the WPC, ranging from students to teachers and professionals.

Why did you want to attend the WPC?

I wanted to attend WPC because I wanted to learn. I wanted to attend WPC because I heard that it transforms lives and can totally flip perspectives upside down. I wanted to come back to my campus equipped with how social justice issues can be approached and spread the importance of making these social justice issues aware to not only the students on campus, but with all the faculty and administration as well as the surrounding community.

What was your biggest take away from the WPC? How will you use this knowledge in the future?

For me, WPC was a transformation. Doors were open, and they can never be shut anymore. As a young, female woman of color, I found my voice at WPC. And I discovered that all voices of color need to be heard because racism was never a Black and White binary. I found part of my identity at there. I also discovered that as a person of color, it is simply not my job to educate White people on racism. Racism is an issue that people of color face every day in the United States, and White Privilege is only limited and exclusive to White people. Therefore, White people need to not only be aware of their White Privilege, but they must learn to use it humbly in order to override the corrupt system that is breaking the bondage between all people. People of color and people who are white should not just become allies, but collaborate with each other. We must work together. We must not view one as lesser or higher. We must stand together equally. We must not hate each other. We must love each other.
As told by...

This month’s feature comes from Stephanie Bohlman, Graduate Assistant in Campus Climate.

What is the White Privilege Conference?

WPC is a conference that examines challenging concepts of privilege and oppression and offers solutions and team building strategies to work toward a more equitable world.

It is not a conference designed to attack, degrade or beat up on white folks.

It is not a conference designed to rally white supremacist groups.

WPC is a conference designed to examine issues of privilege beyond skin color. WPC is open to everyone and invites diverse perspectives to provide a comprehensive look at issues of privilege including: race, gender, sexuality, class, disability, etc. — the ways we all experience some form of privilege, and how we’re all affected by that privilege.

WPC attracts students, professionals, activists, parents, and community leaders/members from diverse perspectives. WPC welcomes folks with varying levels of experience addressing issues of diversity, cultural competency, and multiculturalism.

WPC is committed to a philosophy of “understanding, respecting and connecting.”

Who attends the WPC?

The conference is unique in its ability to bring together high school and college students, teachers, university faculty and higher education professionals, nonprofit staff, activists, social workers and counselors, healthcare workers, and members of the spiritual community and corporate arena. Annually, more than 1,500 attend from more than 35 states, Australia, Bermuda, Canada, and Germany.
Why should others attend the WPC?

Attend WPC if you want to change the world. Attend WPC if you desire to make a difference. Attend WPC if you simply want to learn something new. Attend WPC whether you are a person of Color or White. Attend WPC if you identify as straight or gay. Attend

Tell us about your background and path to student affairs. Why did you choose Campus Climate?

I graduated from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse in May of 2014 with a bachelor in Communication Study and 2 minors one in Spanish and another in Professional and Technical Writing. My path for student affairs began my first semester of my senior year. I was freaking out because I was near graduation and was afraid to graduate without a clear path. During one of my venting sessions to Matt Evensen in Campus Climate he brought up student affairs as a profession. I was completely shocked because I had no idea that the work he and Amanda and Will did were in student affairs. This prompted me to attend WCPA and I was hooked. From there on, I began my search which landed me at this university. I choose to work at Campus Climate because it is my home. I also know that they do great work with their grad students and push them to do different tasks.

What does a typical day in your office look like?

There really is no typical day in the office. So, trying to mesh most days a typical day in the Campus Climate office involves meeting with undergraduate students, other faculty and staff. We currently are doing ATP interviews all week so our calendars are booked! We also have the Social Justice Brown Bag Lunch about once a month.

What are the most enjoyable aspects of your work? And what are the most challenging?

I love the work I do because it perfectly aligns with my values and beliefs. I love the time I get to spend with students and my office mates are the best! Every day is new and there is never a dull moment in the office. Also being able to do social justice work as part of my job is the topping on the cake! The challenging part of my assistantship is time management. I love where I work so much that I forget the time and spend more than 20 hours working.
If there's something about Campus Climate that most people don't know that they should, what would it be?

People need to visit campus climate! It is not only a space for serious issues but also just a space to relax and hang out with great people. Also, the staff is so welcoming and helpful. Any student is welcome in our office and we hope you all visit!

Given the nature of the work, do you have a challenge for all members of the SAA Program to incorporate into their grad school experience?

Yes, the nature of my work involves being consciously aware of the systemic oppression that occurs at all levels in higher education. I challenge you all to notice disparities and talk about them. We are in this profession to help all students succeed and graduate from this university. Therefore, we need to speak up in places where our voices are heard especially if there is an inequality of distribution of resources or hate and bias incidents. If you see that please report them using the Hate and Bias reporting through Campus Climate
SAA in Photos & Shout Outs

This month’s photos are a collection of memories from Spring Break, SAA Social events, and a campus grad student game night!
Huge shout out to Andrew Ives for being an awesome person and always making my day shine a little brighter!

Shout out to Sarah P. for organizing the lunch with WTC

A SPECIAL NOTE
Next month will be our final newsletter for the academic year. Our focus for the final newsletter will be all about our graduating colleagues. If you have photos, memories, well wishes, job news, interview tips, or anything at all please share them now! Email Klinton Blair at blair.klin@uwlox.edu with your contributions so we can send our 2nd years off in style. Thanks!