

Event set to celebrate Latinos

By Alexa Agugliaro
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

In the past, Cultural Night has been a great opportunity for students to get together with faculty members and other student organizations to celebrate Latino culture at Penn State, Latino Caucus President Dahiana Tejada said.

This year should be no different. The third annual Cultural Night, an event honoring Hispanic Heritage Month, will take place Saturday at 7 p.m. at the Days Inn State College, 240 S. Pugh St.

Tejada (senior-geography and Latin American studies) said she is especially looking forward to the Hispanic Heritage Award ceremony. The ceremony is a portion of the evening where students, faculty and community members are recognized and honored for their involvement in Hispanic Heritage Month. Tejada has been nominated for Hispanic student leader this year, she said.

"Events of this magnitude happen only a few times per year, so a night like this is special to us," Tejada said. "The overall atmosphere of this night is socializing, mingling and just having fun."

Melissa Landrau-Rodriguez, the director of the College Assistance Migrant Program, said Cultural Night is one of the largest events of Hispanic Heritage Month — its main objective is to bring together everyone in the community who wants to celebrate Latino culture while also learning a little bit about themselves.

"This event is open to students of all backgrounds because everyone has a lot to learn about each other," she said.

Landrau-Rodriguez said Cultural Night is always a good way to combine different aspects of Latino culture and also have fun. The banquet will include a dinner, a keynote speaker and dancing, she said.

The musical guests who will

perform are international recording artist Edgar Joel Y Su Orquesta, as well as Master DJ Boogie, Landrau-Rodriguez said.

The keynote speaker of the event will be Michelle Habell-Pallan, a women's studies professor at the University of Washington and also the author of "Loca Motion: The Travels of Chicana and Latina Popular Culture," Landrau-Rodriguez said.

To e-mail reporter: ama5453@psu.edu

If you go

What: Cultural Night

When: Saturday, Oct. 2

Where: Days Inn State College, 240 S. Pugh St.

Details: Tickets will be available today only at the HUB-Robeson Center tables. \$15 for students, \$25 for non-students.



Students perform during a Dandia on Fire dance competition last spring. Dandia on Fire will co-host a Garba dance this Saturday.

South Asian dances, worship to fill HUB

By Mike Hricik
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

As a child growing up in the United States, Sonia Devani's Indian parents took her to Garba ceremonies, South Asian spiritual folk dances meant to foster worship to Hindu gods and goddesses.

Saturday in the HUB-Robeson Center, students like Devani can recall their traditions with a Garba dance hosted by the South Asian Student Association (SASA), Hindu Students Council and Dandia on Fire.

Attendees at the event will participate in Garba dances worshipping the Hindu goddess Ambaji with religious icons set up in the middle of the floor, said Devani (senior-supply chain and information systems), SASA's president.

Dandas, or decorated Indian sticks, will be used as parts of the dances. Time will also be set aside for prayer, Devani said.

She expects the response will be large despite the televised Penn State-Iowa football game — a testament, she said, to the devotion of South Asian students.

"It brings back that feeling of being at home, especially if you are of South Asian descent. People really look forward to it," Devani said.

SASA works to bring together South Asian students but this event is open to everyone, SASA Public Relations Chairwoman Sunaina Mehra said.

She urged people walking through the HUB to join in the festivities.

"We have American people

come out and they love it. It's a great cultural experience for everyone who comes," Mehra (sophomore-marketing) said.

She said Garba dance steps can be learned easily by novices, even by older members of the State College community who appear.

The Paul Robeson Cultural Center will sponsor the event and members of the International Student Council will make appearances, Devani said.

The organization Dandia on Fire pairs with SASA to host a spring Garba competition yearly, Mehra said.

Hindu Student Council President Kiran Sridhara said he looks forward to the annual dance because he meets new people.

"It's a night to socialize and meet with other kids who share the same culture and basically have a good time," Sridhara (senior-industrial engineering) said.

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If you go

What: South Asian Student Association Garba Dance

When: 8:30 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. Saturday

Where: Alumni Hall in the HUB

Details: Open to students and members of the State College community. Tickets are free for members of SASA, \$4 for non-members

LGBTQA searches for coordinator

By Leah Gillen
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Despite the smell of pizza wafting through the conference room, Penn State's LGBTQA community was engaged in serious discussion as they addressed a potential candidate for the new position of program coordinator for the LGBTQA student resource center Thursday night.

"You guys are making me nervous," said Edward Johns, a candidate for the position. "This is harder than the committee meeting."

Kristy DeWall, the second candidate, is expected to give an interview next week, and the new program coordinator will be announced the following week. DeWall currently works for Project Oz, a non-profit human service agency in Bloomington, Ill.

About 12 members of Penn State's LGBTQA community gathered in the HUB-Robeson Center Thursday to evaluate Johns. Each candidate spends a day at the university, taking tours and meeting both students and professionals within Penn State's LGBTQA community.

"We want to focus more closely on serving underrepresented communities within the LGBTQA

community here on campus," said Allison Subasic, director of the LGBTQA student resource center.

The new position aims to address different racial and ethnic groups, as well as members in the greek system and of religious and spiritual groups.

The candidates were found through a national search, advertised through different LGBTQA venues as well as in higher education magazines.

"The LGBTQA community really needs a positive representative. We need a mentor, someone who will have our best interests at heart," Undertones Vice President Carmella Cheese (junior-print journalism) said.

"Coming here and having candidate interviews eases that possibility. If the candidate doesn't know who they are supposed to be supporting, they're not going to be able to fulfill their job — and that goes vice versa as well."

Johns, the program coordinator for global education and experience at the University of Hawaii at Hilo, said he hopes to offer a diverse perspective to the LGBTQA community.

"Being a native Hawaiian, I understand what it's like to be gay and ethnically diverse," Johns

said. "The thing about it is that you don't have to explain yourself to another minority — you have a shared set of experiences, a deeper understanding with them. My philosophy in this area would be able to guide me to work with students in different groups within LGBTQA."

For an hour, students interviewed Johns on his experiences and preparation, asking questions ranging from his perspective of the Penn State community to his ability to adjust to a population so different from Hawaii's.

"The committee is looking for skill set and experience, but we, the students, are looking for whether we're going to be able to get along with him," Julian Haas (junior-sociology) said.

As Johns waits until he hears the announcement, he said he's nervous about the outcome.

But, he said, perhaps that's a positive thing.

"The things that make you nervous are often the things that make you grow the most," Johns said.

"If I am offered this job, it might be the most growing experience I've ever had."

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