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An interview with GREAT Day Coordinator Patty Hamilton- Rodgers

Dimitri Wing-Paul

What changes have you seen in the GREAT Day presentations over the past several years?

I think our numbers have been stabilized. We get typically between 900 and 1,000 students, which is something to be very proud of because we are close to twenty percent participation. The poster numbers have gone up, as well. Two years ago, the poster numbers have gotten so much that we could not fit all the posters in the ballroom. We had to split: one set of posters during the noon time session and one set of posters during the late afternoon session. So, we have had more posters but fewer oral presentations. I have also lost a lot of the dance groups that used to perform. We have tried to work with the cultural dance teams to perform either in the late afternoon poster sessions or in the open poster sessions, whatever we can do to fit them in. However, they have kind of gone by their wayside, and I get tired of tracking them down. I think that it is sad. Geneseo recognizes excellence, achievement, and talent and we have a lot of talent here. But, those groups do not seem to rise on the occasion, so that makes me sad. But other than that, we have tried to make modifications to GREAT Day every year to be more reflective of what is going on in campus, and what people like. Several years ago, that is when we used to have three poster sessions: one in the morning, one in the noon time, and one in the end of the day. We just switched that into two sessions and modified the schedule a little bit. We are always trying to change things up for GREAT Day to be more exciting and engaging for people.

What do you suggest for students who want to present for GREAT Day?

Present! [Laughs] The only qualification is that you need to have a faculty sponsor. But for GREAT Day, I try to be all encompassing. When somebody comes to me with an idea that makes me go, “Wow!” we try to make it work. I never forget when the GEO organization came in, and they wanted to do a dumpster dive. Now, I am getting a picture that they actually want to place a big dumpster in front of the College Union, but that is not what it was. It was very different so we make it work. When the Guerilla Poets wanted to do some different things, we sat down with them to make it work. For our Winter Guard, they [wanted to perform in] the lobby of the Col-

lege Union so we make it work. So, if you have an interesting idea that you wanted to present, come see me because we try to make it work. We try to be encompassing for all in GREAT Day, so the more the merrier. That is why the Geneseo Isonomia [Film] Festival screening and awards are at the end of GREAT Day, which is a perfect place for them to be. We try to include as much as we can. There was a student who got one of the ambassadorships last year, and he came to me earlier on. He wanted to build a tunnel and have it displayed. It did not come up how he wanted it to, but we sat down and worked out a location for him. Even if it is wacky or crazy, we still try to make it work.

What changes have you seen in the *Proceedings* since the first publication?

The quality! The quality has exponentially improved, and it is not just the appearance. I think first it was just, “Okay whoever wants to do it,” but now, you have to have a level of quality before you go into the *Proceedings*. I just think that it adds prestige to it. So, that is far away the biggest improvement, which is the quality.

What does GREAT Day mean to you?

It is my baby. I took it over after I worked with the person that I coordinated with in 2011. I made it my mission to make sure that everybody knows what GREAT Day is. I have been in Higher Education since 1985, and it is probably my favorite program that I’ve ever worked on in my entire career. People supported GREAT Day, and they come out for it. There is an energy on campus on GREAT Day that there is no other day like it. Almost every college does some sort of symposium day or scholars day, but it just does not compare to what we do. The symposium days from other colleges are not as encompassing, and our GREAT Day really speaks to the spirit of Geneseo.