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In Photos Across Campus, University's Diversity on Display

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In Photos Across Campus, University's Diversity on Display

Six students, working alongside Professor Stephan Brigidi, create a photo documentary exhibit celebrating the many faces of the RWU community



October 4, 2013 | Alexandria Wojtanowski '15

BRISTOL, R.I. – Eighty faces representing the thousands in the Roger Williams University community. The recently unveiled “Many Faces of RWU Community” photograph exhibit is an illustrative sampling of campus members – with undergraduate and graduate students displayed alongside the University President, dining staff, public safety officers, and faculty – that celebrates the diverse backgrounds and roles each contribute while working toward the same mission of furthering academic excellence and inclusiveness at RWU.

Student photographers Willie Borkai '15, Sarah DelSanto '15, Scott McDavid '16, Bre'anna Metts-Nixon '13, James Payne '14, and Diana Voliakova '16 – working collaboratively with Stephan Brigidi, adjunct humanities professor – devoted more than six months to capture the evolving Roger Williams community, debuting the project just as the University welcomes its most diverse ever freshmen class. Brigidi selected these students – who entered into this project with varying proficiency in photography – for their enthusiasm to tackle the unfamiliar and appreciation of the fine arts.

Via the talent of these sundry student-photographers – students *and* alumni from all different majors – these portraits capture the importance of the individual as well as the unity that connects the RWU community. Expressing this message through the visual arts offers an undeniable impact, according to Brigidi, an accomplished fine arts photographer and author.

“The power of language – photography being visual language – is very universal. It transcends the boundaries that written language, even spoken language, can present,” he said. “If you want to communicate with someone that speaks Spanish or an Asian language there are boundaries. We can all understand visual imagery.”

The students were entrusted with deciding whom to photograph, choosing to represent many components of diversity – including race, ethnicity, sex, gender, alternative lifestyles, and an assortment of roles and functions at RWU. Brigidi explains that, in the finished murals, “everybody is treated at the same equal level, in a way that removes hierarchies.” The goal of this project is to inspire observers to reflect upon themselves and their connections to others – and to reveal that through any medium, every member of the community can find a way to celebrate diversity.

The murals were unveiled in a special exhibit on September 18 in the Global Heritage Hall Atrium. The Many Faces of RWU Community will also be displayed in the Upper Commons and the Center for Student Development. The President’s Council on Inclusive Excellence awarded an Inclusive Excellence Mini-Grant to support this project as part of an initiative to create positive changes on campus that highlight the benefits of diversity and promote a more inclusive and vibrant intellectual community to live, learn and work.

View the slideshow below of all the portraits:

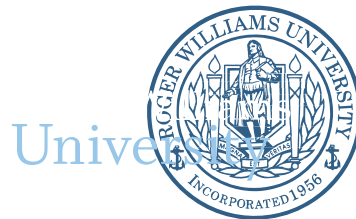
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