

**Award Title:**

Project ReMiX: A Multiracial Space in a “Check One Box” World

**Awards Categories:**

International, Multi-cultural, Cultural, Gender, LGBTQ, Spirituality, Disability and related

**Executive Summary:**

Biracial? Mixed? Hapa? Multiracial students represent a fast growing, underserved population on college campuses. Project ReMiX, an award-winning program at the University of Southern California, offers a constructed, intentional space for multiracial student community building and for cross-cultural interaction. Project ReMiX is a collaborative, year-long program offered by Asian Pacific American Student Services, the Center for Black Cultural and Student Affairs, and El Centro Chicano.

Project ReMiX presents an example of grounded theory being brought to life as a best practice, as well as showcases an opportunity for cultural and advocacy centers to proactively address student needs with programming that is more than just one-time events. Multiple workshops over the academic year engage students, staff, and faculty in dialogue - ranging from an assessment of the role of America's first mixed race president to the impact of Census 2010 on community formation to family secrets and identity development.

Through this program, students (multi and monoracial) have found a new space in which to grapple with the complex issues of identity formation and community building.

Recent coverage of the Kick-Off event for the second year of Project ReMiX highlighted the program's value for the campus community:

[http://uscnews.usc.edu/university/thinking\\_outside\\_the\\_white\\_box.html](http://uscnews.usc.edu/university/thinking_outside_the_white_box.html)

A program we submitted in relation to this topic has just been selected for the March conference. It is our hope that NASPA will choose to recognize and award Project ReMiX both as a cutting-edge program that is responsive to dynamic student needs, as well as a model of collaborative, thoughtful programming between cultural and advocacy centers.

**Award Description:**

Now entering its second year, Project ReMiX is helping to craft an intentional space on campus for both multiracial and non-multiracial students to explore multifaceted aspects of identity, history, politics, culture, sexuality, and more. We aim to facilitate the development of a healthy, multiracial identity, as well as provide a space for cross-cultural understanding. Project ReMiX received the 2009 USC Division of Student Affairs Outstanding Collaboration Award and commendation from Dr. Michael L. Jackson, Vice-President for Student Affairs. For a snapshot of the second year's programming: <http://sait.usc.edu/apass/pages/involvement/collab.html>

Project ReMiX uses technology, storytelling, spoken word, "artivism," and more to empower students to holistically engage with their (and others') identities. Learning outcomes state that, following each workshop, participants will:

- Be able to articulate at least 1 issue concerning the mixed race population
- Be able to describe the mixed race population through a variety of data sources and appropriate terminology
- Be able to identify tools used, by self and others, to navigate multiple identities
- Be able to locate appropriate resources for further growth & identity development
- Be able to effectively use knowledge gained through the program to serve as an advocate for the mixed race community
- Be able to build a stronger sense of community

While collaboration between APASS, CBCSA, and ECC has been crucial to the launch and progress of Project ReMiX, a high level of collaboration with community partners, academic and student affairs departments has also contributed to the overall success of the program. Our guest speakers included officers from the Multiracial Americans of Southern California (MASC) and the Association of Multi-Ethnic America (AMEA). Guest speakers from campus have included Professor and Playwright Oliver Mayer, Sociology Professor Amon Emeka, Dean of Religious Life Varun Soni, and Crisis Counselor Maria Pozo-Humphreys.

Informal student feedback and scholarly literature review both suggest similar themes: that despite the rapidly increasing numbers of multiracial students on college campuses, very little effort is placed on learning more about this population or offering targeted, sustained programming for multiracial students. Renn (2000) writes that while college campuses offer multiple settings in which students can explore identity, "still unexplored are the questions of whether or how the college environment facilitates or inhibits the identity development of young people whose parents of different...races" (p. 400). Mono-racial identity models can often force a student to abandon one part of her heritage in order to immerse in a "single selection" identity. Or students may feel that they are living bifurcated lives, with dual or triple identities, without the ability to full integrate into any particular reference group (Renn, 2000; Root, 2006). As Renn (2000) also points out, "Lack of immersion in a reference group or rejection by one's selected reference group can inhibit identity formation" (p. 400). In Renn's (2000) study, echoed in Root's (2006) work, "students spoke of finding space – both physical and psychological – to fit in" (p. 402).

Aside from a student group known as HapaSC, a structured environment for multiracial students or students interested in learning about the multiracial community was practically nonexistent on campus. And yet, the number of multiracial/multiethnic students at the University of Southern California has been increasing each year, in a similar fashion to the rest of the nation's campuses. For example, 420 of the incoming 4493 students this fall self-identified as

multiracial/multiethnic (9.3%). Armed with scholarship, institutional, and anecdotal data, colleagues at the three USC cultural centers (Asian Pacific American Student Services, the Center for Black Cultural and Student Affairs, and El Centro Chicano) came together to design a truly collaborative, theory to practice, year-long program model.

### **Assessment Data:**

Project ReMiX is guided by specific learning outcomes (included in the narrative) that are tied to theory, as well as to institutional mission. The USC Division of Student Affairs has set forth five strategic initiatives that are meant to guide our work. APASS, CBCSA and ECC reviewed each strategic initiative and brainstormed different ways we could address them through Project ReMiX.

-Fostering an Intellectually Centered Student Culture (Pillar 1) – Invite USC Faculty to speak on discussion panels; Allow ample time for small group discussion; Provide students with appropriate supplemental readings or resources

-Preserving and Advancing the Unique USC Student Experience (Pillar 2) – Create a tradition by setting a standard date, time and location

-Inventing the Future of Student Services (Pillar 3) – Provide a space to discuss issues concerning the mixed race population

-Promoting Local and Global Citizenship (Pillar 4) – Provide an opportunity for students to develop skills that can be used to navigate multiple identities; Invite community leaders from the mixed raced community to speak on panel discussions; Build a stronger sense of mixed race community on campus

-Creating a Culture of Evidence (Pillar 5) – Administer and collect evaluations at each program; Make changes to the next program based on feedback from the previous program

Assessment is based on our learning outcomes, which are tied to the Student Affairs pillars. All participants submit evaluations following each Project ReMiX workshop, allowing us to assess the program in an on-going fashion over the course of the year. This affords us the flexibility to adjust and make "course corrections" as needed, but also to understand evolving student needs in the most up-to-the-minute fashion.

Closed-ended (Likert-scale) feedback and open-ended responses have reflected very positively on the program's impact. For example, feedback from workshops thus far this year show:

66% of respondents Strongly Agreed and 34% of respondents Agreed that "After tonight's program, I can articulate at least 1 issue related to the mixed race population."

42% of respondents Strongly Agreed and 51% of respondents Agreed that "Project ReMiX helps me to better understand myself and different aspects of my identity."

61% of respondents Strongly Agreed and 39% of respondents Agreed that "Project ReMiX helps build a multiracial community on campus."

Open-ended feedback included statements such as:

"It made me feel validated for battling with my identity and affirmed that maybe I don't have to try to be my race - whichever that one would end up being."

"I learned to think more broadly about the mixed community and also to think about how other people embrace their roots."

"It made me re-evaluate what sorts of identities or non-identities people can take - both the privilege and the burden of being multiracial."

As a team of colleagues, the Directors and Assistant Directors from the three cultural/advocacy centers use the collection of data over the year to make programmatic decisions. For example, participants expressed an interest in higher levels of involvement, so for year two, the ReMiXers committee was born. Students serving on this committee not only serve as the "street team" to spread the word about the program, but are involved in program design and have been trained to serve as facilitators for the small group discussions at each workshop.