

UMBC is no exception to having cultural cliques on campus

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I am sure that it is common knowledge that UMBC is culturally diverse. In fact, we are ranked the second most diverse college campus in the nation. Even though this is true, like any other university have cliques, some of which are dependent solely on ethnicity. Before I get started, we should define what a clique actually is.

Generally, a clique is a group of people who have a similar interest or quality. Anything from sports teams to clubs and organizations to a select group of friends could be considered as a clique. Therefore, when I hear the term cultural clique, I think of a clique based upon ethnicity, religion, or other defining cultural aspects.

Just like any clique, there are some positive and negative aspects. In fact, those negative aspects are more apparent because someone not in the clique might be able to spot them more easily. How? It would be very difficult to identify a clique based on the idea of a study group, but it would be much less difficult to see that many hockey players hang out. The hockey players have things to better identify them and unite them visually (like hockey gear, sports wear, UMBC hockey jackets).

Take this same idea to a cultural clique and it is easy to see that many

Indian or Asian (or African American, Hispanic, or Caucasian) cliques hang out together (the only reason why I am using Indian and Asian cliques is because they stand out more to me). The idea of a clique is a very great concept. It unifies people with similar interests, and therefore builds a support system. In the sense of an ethnic clique, people can gain further insight into their culture. This could be very beneficial to someone who wants to learn more about why they are who they are.

Unfortunately, my experience with these cliques (or any clique) has been that if my values have not been exactly the same as the general cliques', then my experience was not welcoming. This exclusion is normal in any group of people with different thoughts, but sometimes it has negative side effects.

I live in Potomac (an athletic dorm) and it was difficult for me to initially become friends with many of the athletes (remember that I don't play a sport). After some of the walls of the clique fell down, I felt more connected to some of them. In the sense of an ethnic clique, I could (or anyone could) become friends with them. Just like I don't actually belong to an athletic clique, I could not really be a part of someone else's ethnic clique.

Asian cliques, naturally, have their own culture (and I'm white). Likewise, Indian cliques have a separate



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You could be in a clique right now and not even realize it. Odds are it's not as famous as this clique though.

culture. Both of which, I don't fit into because I don't have the same understanding of their culture. This is okay. It really isn't a bad thing because it just shows that people are finding their social niche in their educational experience.

Sure, there are drawbacks. People

who aren't involved may feel that they can't fit in with a group of people (maybe they aren't supposed to then). With any group of people, not everyone is going to fit in. That is why it is such a great thing that UMBC is such a diverse school. If I don't fit in with the Asian or Indian

cliques, okay, that's nice; I'll find a different set of people to hang out with. Drawbacks aside, cliques can add to an experience.

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