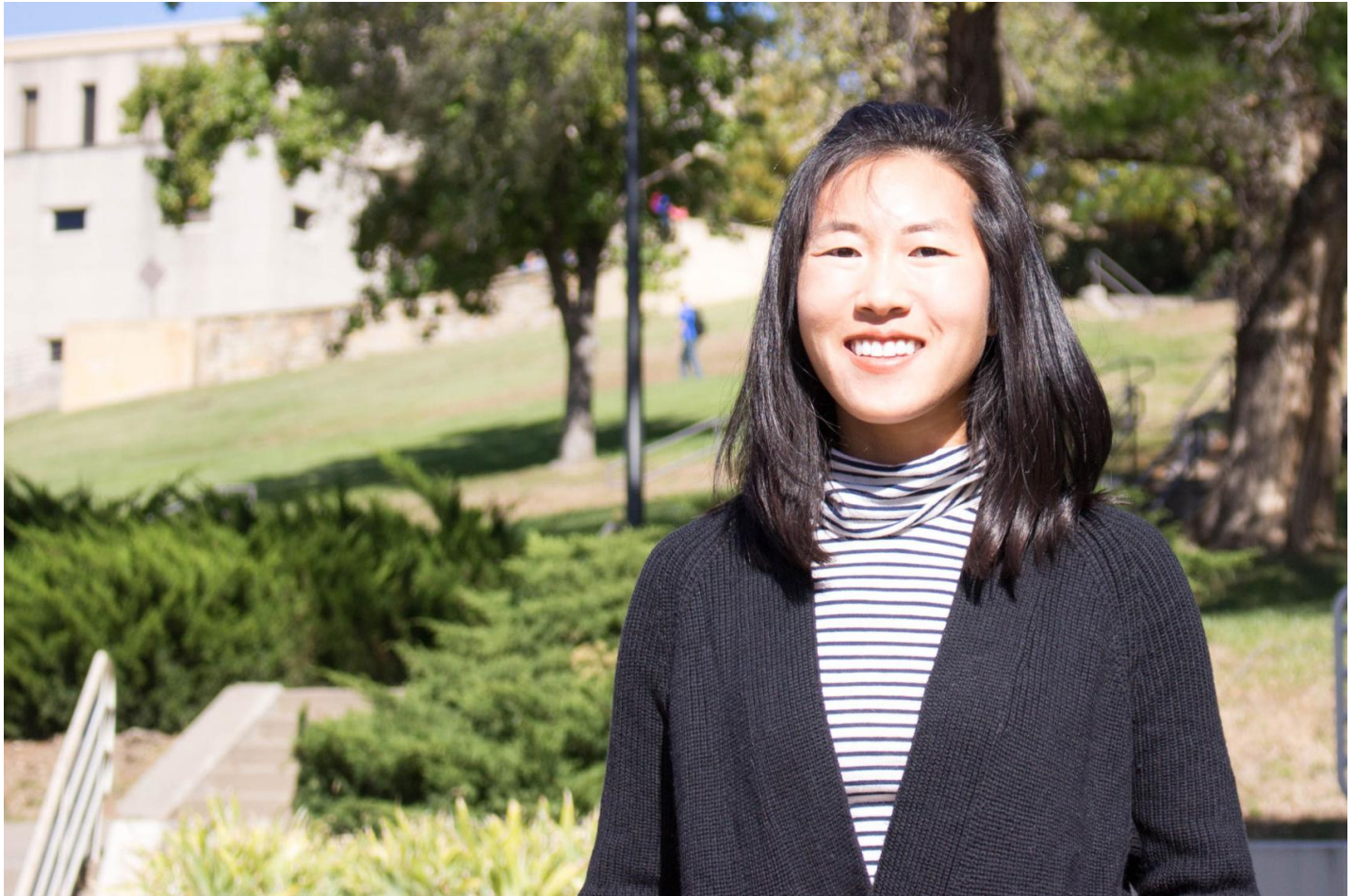


http://www.kansan.com/news/upcoming-panel-looks-to-provide-ways-to-improve-diversity-and/article_fa04b886-b933-11e7-a185-c33c675f58c3.html

Upcoming panel looks to provide ways to improve diversity and equity on campus

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Teresa Girolamo, a fourth-year doctoral student from Syracuse, New York, is speaking among a panel of doctoral students who will share their experiences during “Our Voice Counts and Our Stories Matter: An Open Discussion of Multicultural Experiences at KU.”

Andrea Ringgenberg/KANSAN

Feeling “unwelcome” and like their “voices are not being heard” by the University, a panel of doctoral students will share their personal stories and challenging experiences Wednesday during a moderated discussion. The discussion is an effort to improve multicultural experiences at the University.

The discussion, "Our Voice Counts and Our Stories Matter: An Open Discussion of Multicultural Experiences at KU," is part of the Child Language Proseminar Panel, which hosts a series of discussions pertaining to child language. These topics include linguistics, special education and more, according to Teresa Girolamo, a fourth year doctoral student from Syracuse, New York.

Panelists will include Girolamo, Joshua Alison-Burbank, Brittany Williams and Kavita Indar. The panel will serve as a way to share experiences and to "self-advocate," Girolamo said.

"In talking with these other people, you know, there are folks on our panel who have reached out to the Office of Multicultural Affairs and who have served on the Diversity and Equity work group, but we still overall feel unwelcome and like our voices are not being heard," Girolamo said.

Girolamo said she feels that "many experiences are not being met by Diversity and Equity."

"We want the Diversity and Equity folks to know that they're not succeeding. And we hope that this panel will not be a one time event, but perhaps could serve as a model for other students to voice and share their experiences," she said.

Vice Provost of Diversity and Equity Jennifer Hamer said, when the panelists reached out to her, that more needed to be done for graduate students. But, Hamer said she won't be able to attend the panel due to scheduling conflicts.

"I was happy to meet with them because I couldn't make the forum, and I think it's really important that I hear from them," she said. "I applaud them."

Hamer said she wanted to work with the organizers to expand the discussion into a broader event so that more students, staff and faculty members could attend, but that the organizers had not emailed her back.

Girolamo said she plans to share experiences of verbal assault and racial profiling she encountered while at the University and conducting lab work in Kansas communities.

While Indar is not in the child language department, she was asked by Girolamo to be in the panel to share her experiences.

Indar is two and a half years into a four-year doctoral program in the School of Education. She spent the first 10 years of her life in South America, but the majority in the Bronx borough, New York.

Indar taught in New York City for 10 and a half years. She came to the University to focus on diversity and equity using technology, she said.

“The University itself has problems with diversity and equity,” she said. “So how can they train people to, you know, manage a diverse classroom or to recognize mental illness or to accommodate it in children and not make the mistake of thinking its poor behavior?”

During the panel, she plans to focus on the “complexities of having an intersectional identity in a top-ranked program,” she said.

“The University will not change unless they feel pressure from the community, and that’s what I really want people to recognize,” Indar said.

The discussion will be held from 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. in room 2092 of The Dole Human Development Center. A free dinner will be provided to the first 50 people, starting at 7 p.m. The discussion is open to the University community and Lawrence community alike.

Girolamo said that when events like this one are held, people should attend them and learn.

“I think much of the racism and oppression and things that are going on at KU, and more broadly in our fields and academia are things that can be addressed as there are more opportunities from learning from one another,” she said. “And I think many folks are not aware of them, or of what’s going on for people who don’t look like them and who are outside their bubble.”

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