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IN FOCUS: DR. NINA KIM HANSON

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By Nicole Parker

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Dr. Nina Kim Hanson is the newest member to the Student Development team at Northwest University. Beginning in the fall of 2016, Hanson became the Director of Multicultural Life and the Act-Six Scholarship Leadership Program Coordinator. She has begun the challenging process of advocating for true diversity at NU.

Hanson majored in Women studies and Ethnic studies with an emphasis on Asian American studies and political movements at Washington State University. There, she became heavily involved in multicultural student organizing and activism. While completing her doctorate in Women studies at the University of Washington, she worked with several nonprofits in Seattle and SeaTac learning about how to do community organizing, especially working around issues of poverty and gender for survivors and victims of human trafficking. She has been able to use her valuable knowledge at NU.

There have been a lot of challenges in beginning the development of diversity focus and Christ-centered programming on campus.

"There is a huge support base for multicultural work on campus, but there are also some discussions questioning why multicultural life is even important, so a lot of the work multicultural life does is about dealing with people's perceptions and biases," said Hanson.

Hanson hopes multicultural life will become the work of everyone, campus wide, beyond just students of color and to all students, staff, and faculty.

Many institutions have moved to a model that has diversity and inclusion or multicultural life standing apart from student development as its own staffed department. However, NU is truly just beginning to make efforts to understand the needs of diverse students and the type of structure that will be built in the future. Hanson noted the importance of networking and collaboration across campus in order to get things done.

Beyond the challenges, Hanson has found her interactions with students extremely rewarding.

"I get to work with the most incredible students and student leaders I have ever seen! I really do love the Student Development team as well. We support and encourage each other. That is really important to me," she said.

Hanson's passion for students does not go unnoticed. It is common for students from all backgrounds to visit her office to talk about life, school, and the future.

Hanson relayed what the great advice she ever received.

"Stay teachable...[and] never underestimate the 'low' or 'quiet' times when things don't seem to be rolling the way you want because God uses every season to prepare you for what is to come," she said.

