

A 21st-century Chautauqua

What is a chautauqua? Originally, the term referred to a 19th-century program that brought educational speakers and performers together for families vacationing on the shores of Lake Chautauqua in upstate New York (<http://www.ciweb.org/history.html>). It became synonymous with any open public forum for the discussion of cultural and scientific issues of the day.

The 21st-century *Chautauqua* at MSU is a new program focused on building a stronger culture of responsibility through campus dialogues on issues of pressing concern to students, faculty and staff(<http://www.jmc.msu.edu/core/>).

What are the goals?

1. Take stock of the current climate of personal, social, and institutional responsibility. This will involve a survey of student views on responsibility (e.g., student views on academic integrity, taking the opinions of others seriously, and making reasonable moral arguments).
2. Hold discussions of important issues on campus in the three residential colleges (e.g., freedom of religious expression, freedom of speech, freedom of artistic expression, living sustainably, peace and justice).
3. Build the capacity to reach mutual understanding on these issues through structured dialogues
4. Build the capacity to discuss how questions of personal, social and institutional responsibility are embedded in these issue-specific dialogues
5. Assess progress on resolving these issues through dialogue
6. Create a sustainable culture of responsibility for resolving these and future divisive issues within the residential colleges and eventually across the campus.

Who will be involved?

Initially the 21st Century *Chautauqua* will include faculty, students, administrators, and staff in James Madison College, Lyman Briggs College, and the Residential College in the Arts and Humanities. This will include leaders of student organizations in these colleges and resident mentors. In addition, students from the LeaderShape Institute, the Multi-Racial Unity Living Experience (MRULE), the Residence Halls Association (RHA), and the Associated Students of MSU (ASMSU) will also participate. On the faculty side there will be three *Chautauqua* Fellows, one from each residential college; and there will be an Honors College Professorial Assistant assigned to work with each Fellow on this project. Out of this diverse group we will form a **Chautauqua Planning Board** (CPB) responsible for planning specific activities and dialogues.

What will happen next?

In **fall 2007** the CPB will publicize the 21st Century *Chautauqua* goals and alert the campus to upcoming events. With the help of campus and outside consultants, the CPB will also recruit and train dialogue facilitators from among its constituent student and faculty groups. At the same time, the CPB will convene a model dialogue of its own to discuss the initial results of the AAC&U survey of the campus climate of responsibility which is currently being developed by the AAC&U and the University of Michigan Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education.

Then, in **spring 2008**, several “21 C” courses will be offered in the three residential colleges in which structured dialogues will play a central role. These courses have been identified tentatively as sections of the Tier 1 Writing Courses and possibly upper level electives. The CPB will collect data and assess the work done in these courses and make proposals for their revision and possible expansion in 2008-09 to include community service-learning courses, cross-college courses, and capstone experiences.

The 21st Century *Chautauqua* project has been organized by the following individuals, with the support of President Lou Anna K. Simon and Provost Kim Wilcox as well as other units on campus. For additional information contact either Stephen L. Esquith or Douglas W. Estry.

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