

The Student Affairs Diversity Council (SADC) strives to cultivate an environment that embraces and promotes the broad scope of diversity within the division.

The Diverse Holiday Traditions of Student Affairs

We recently asked Student Affairs staff to share their holiday traditions with our readers. The following are the received responses.



*Christmas Eve Caroling in Romania
Photo submitted by Nelly Divricean*

One of my favorite Christmas traditions from Romania is the Romanian Christmas Carols. On Christmas Eve, Christmas carols and other carols with religious origin are sung all night long. The act of going through the village or neighborhood, from house to house, singing carols in exchange of traditional Romanian treats, it is a very old tradition. Usually, the host invites the carol-singers in the house, around the table for delicious food. One of the most loved traditional dishes is the sour cabbage leaves stuffed with ground pork and served with sour cream, called "sarmale".

*Nelly Divricean
International Center*

In the Perkins Family, we honor my wife's Chinese heritage by preparing from scratch Chinese pot stickers. My wife mixes the meat and vegetables, I knead the dough, my son rolls out the dough for skins, my daughter and I cut the dough for wrappings and we all wrap them. Then, the best part, we steam and eat them! We've been doing this for the 38 years of our marriage and I don't see it stopping any time soon. They're just too good!

*Roger Perkins
Veterans Support Center*

My partner and I celebrate Bodhi Day (a holiday celebrating the Buddha's enlightenment) and Christmas by focusing on service and generosity. Every year we try to find ways to make a difference in the lives of others. Our goal is to ease some of the suffering that is found in the world, and of course, to spread lots of love and joy. Our efforts usually involve donations of time, money, and/or collected items towards one or more causes. When we share gifts with each other, family, and friends we often focus on a shared experience together (such as dinner), consumable items (food, snacks, wine, etc.), a donation on someone's behalf to a cause that they would appreciate, and sometimes a purchased item that benefits a humanitarian effort.

*Michael Bard
Registrar's Office*

The Scott family's guest book has a diverse collection of names in it. We invite international students (often from Cross Culture Club and conversational English classes I/we have taught) to celebrate with us by reading the Christmas story (and acting it out with a

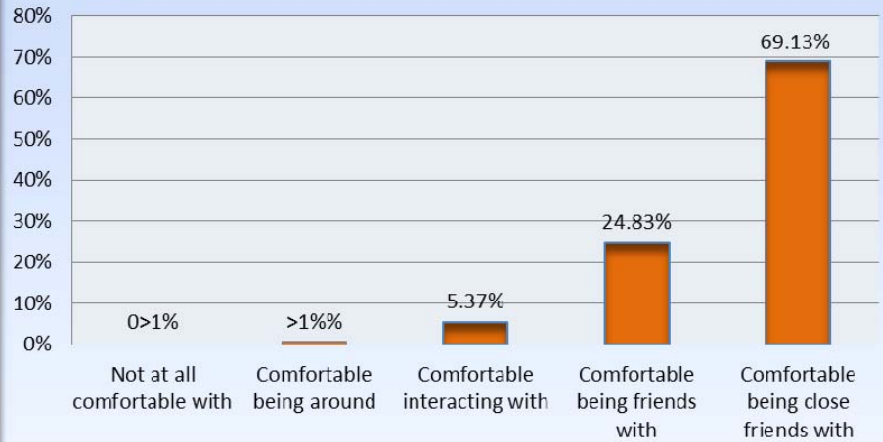
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nativity set!), singing, and feasting! Our table is laden with turkey, stuffing and a traditional fresh cranberry salad, but the side dishes represent the cuisine of our guests ... from Japan, Korea, Turkey, China, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Germany, and more. Everyone tells us they have loved learning, sharing, and (of course) eating together. Lifetime memories!

*Julie Scott,
International Center*

Please complete the following statements by indicating your comfort level. - I am _____ individuals of a different religion as me. *



Interfaith Family Blends Elements of Two Traditions

By Lauren Weitzman, Counseling Center

As an interfaith family, our holiday rituals blend elements of Hanukkah and Christmas. Depending on the timing of Hanukkah, you'll find a lit menorah and a Christmas tree co-existing in our living room.

The menorah is the centerpiece of our Hanukkah observance. We add a candle for each of the eight nights of Hanukkah, placing the unlit menorah in the window during the day and saying the Hanukkah blessing each evening. We love to watch the multi-colored candles burn down, waiting for the tendrils of smoke as



each candle extinguishes. We always have latkes (potato pancakes) with applesauce and sour cream as a special Hanukkah dinner. We share one Hanukkah present with our son on most nights, maintaining my family's Hanukkah tradition of hiding the present in a different room of the house. Our Christmas tree is the focus for our Christmas observance. We select a tree together as a family, and take great pleasure in trimming it with ornaments that we have collected over the years from special places we have visited

together and with the family ornaments from my husband's childhood. We all enjoy spending time just gazing at the tree, smelling the pine scent and enjoying the play of our blue lights against our favorite ornaments. Foods of the season reflect my husband's Scandinavian and German traditions and include Julekage (Norwegian holiday bread) with jetost (caramelized goat cheese), herring and flatbread, and if we are lucky enough to have my brother-in-law in town, Swedish meatballs and savory cabbage on Christmas eve.

These traditions represent the different faiths in which we grew up and our openness to finding personal meaning in each other's holidays. As the Jewish member of our family, I still grumble when I can't find Hanukkah candles and wrapping paper easily in the stores, but I've come to enjoy the annual hunt for just the right Christmas tree and stocking stuffers. I also experience the privilege of celebrating Christmas, which was not the case for me growing up. My son enjoys both sets of rituals and our blended holidays have helped him connect with our respective family traditions while creating something that is uniquely ours.

A Student Affairs Festivus for the Rest of Us, Since 1999!

By Whit Hollis, Union Director

Festivus traditions:

The Union switched our holiday celebration from 'Treats around the Tree' to Festivus in 1999. Festivus is a very inclusive celebration and is more in keeping with the Union's mission of being a welcoming place for all students, staff and faculty.

Festivus is a non-denominational holiday featured in an episode of Seinfeld. According to Seinfeld, Festivus is celebrated each year on December 23, but may be celebrated at other times.

We celebrate it the last working day before the holiday break. Its slogan is "A Festivus for the rest of us!" We celebrate and visit with our University Friends and colleagues in preparation for the Holiday Season.

This year Festivus will be held in the Union Lobby on Friday, December 21, 2012 from 9am to 11am. All are welcome to join us!



The Festivus Pole - The Costanzia's' tradition begins with a bare aluminum pole, which Frank praises for its "very high strength-to-weight ratio." During Festivus, an unadorned aluminum pole is displayed. The pole was chosen apparently in opposition to the commercialization of highly decorated Christmas trees, because it is "very low-maintenance," and also because the holiday's patron, Frank Costanzia, "finds tinsel distracting."

The Airing of Grievances - At the Festivus dinner, each participant tells friends and family all of the instances where they disappointed him or her that year.

The Feats of Strength - The head of the family tests his or her strength against one participant of the head's choosing. Festivus is not considered over until the head of the family has been wrestled to the floor and pinned. A participant is allowed to decline to attempt to pin the head of the family only if they have something better to do instead.

December: A Month of Celebration for Many Traditions

Bodhi Day, Dec. 8th

The Buddhist holiday that commemorates the day that the historical Buddha experienced enlightenment. According to tradition, Siddhartha Gautama had recently forsaken years of extreme ascetic practices and resolved to sit under a Bodhi tree and simply meditate until he found the root of suffering, and how to liberate oneself from it. ([more](#))



Hanukkah, Dec. 8-16

The eight-day Jewish holiday, also known as the Festival of Lights, commemorating the rededication of the Holy Temple (the Second Temple) in Jerusalem at the time of the Maccabean Revolt of the 2nd century BCE. Hanukkah is observed for eight nights and days. The festival is observed by the kindling of the lights of a nine-branched Menorah or Hanukiah, one additional light on each night of the holiday, progressing to eight on the

final night. ([more](#))

Winter Solstice/Yule/Alban Arthan/Yaldā, Dec. 21

Winter Solstice is the time at which the Sun is appearing at noon at its lowest altitude above the horizon. It is the shortest day and longest night of the year. Worldwide, interpretation of the event has varied from culture to culture, but most Northern Hemisphere cultures have held a recognition of rebirth, involving holidays, festivals, gatherings, rituals or other celebrations around that time. ([more](#))

Yule is a celebration of the return of the light at the time of the winter solstice. Yule is a religious festival observed by the historical Germanic peoples and some neighboring peoples, before later being absorbed into, and equated with, the Christian festival of Christmas. ([more](#))

In the Druidic tradition, Alban Arthan is a seasonal festival

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at the Winter solstice. Alban Arthan translates to Light of Winter. On the solstice, druids would gather by the oldest mistletoe-clad oak. The Chief Druid would make his way to the mistletoe to be cut whilst below, other Druids would hold open a sheet to catch it, making sure none of it touched the ground. With his golden sickle, and in one chop, the Chief Druid would remove the mistletoe to be caught below. The early Christian church banned the use of mistletoe because of its association with Druids. [\(more\)](#)



increasing number of non-Christians, and is an integral part of the Christmas and holiday season. [\(more\)](#)

Kwanzaa, Dec. 26—Jan. 1

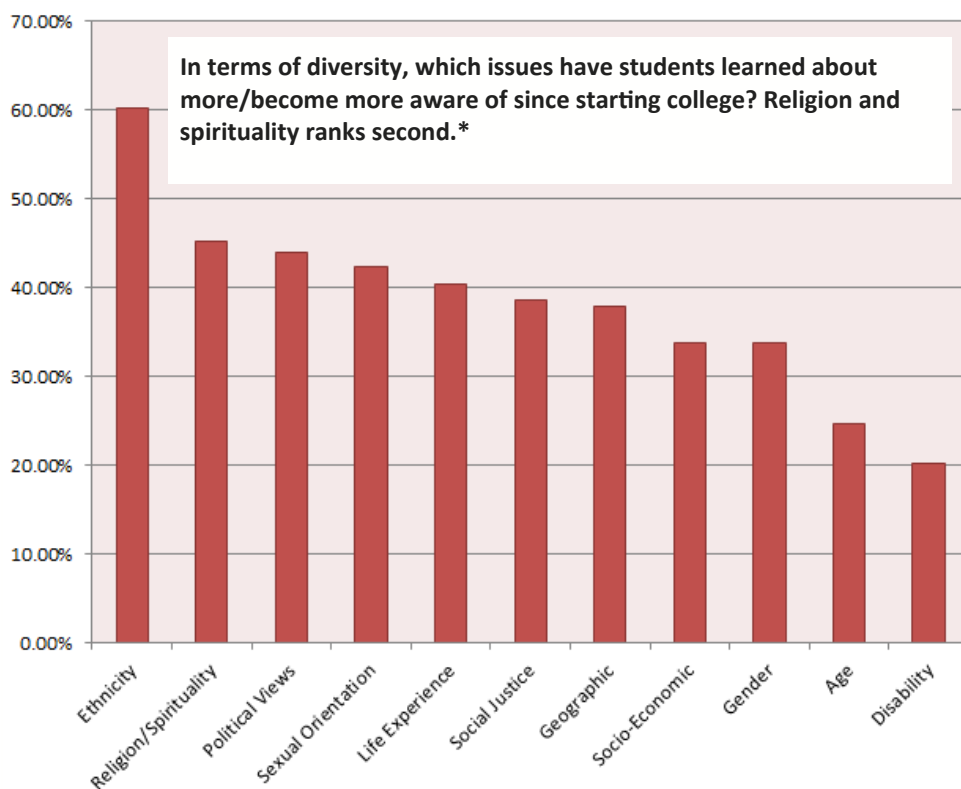
The African American holiday celebrated from December 26 to January 1. It is estimated that some 18 million African Americans take part in Kwanzaa. Kwanzaa is not a religious holiday, nor is it meant to replace Christmas. It was created in 1966 by Dr. Maulana "Ron" Karenga, a professor of Black Studies. At this time of great social change for African Americans, Karenga sought to design a celebration that would honor the values of ancient African cultures and inspire African Americans who were working for progress.

Kwanzaa is based on the year-end harvest festivals that have taken place throughout Africa for thousands of years. The name comes from the Swahili phrase "matunda ya kwanza," which means "first fruits of the harvest." Karenga chose a phrase from Swahili because the language is used by various peoples throughout Africa. [\(more\)](#)

Shab-e Yaldā is the Persian Winter Solstice celebration which has been popular since ancient times. Yalda is celebrated on the Northern Hemisphere's longest night of the year. Depending on the shift of the calendar, Yalda is celebrated on or around December 20 or 21 each year. Yalda has a history as long as the Mithraism religion. The Mithraists believed that this night is the night of the birth of Mithra, Persian angel of light and truth. At the morning of the longest night of the year the Mithra was born. [\(more\)](#)

Christmas, Dec. 25

Christmas is an annual holiday celebrated by billions of people worldwide that commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ. A feast central to the Christian liturgical year, it closes the Advent season and initiates the twelve days of Christmastide. Christmas is a civil holiday in many of the world's nations, is celebrated by an



* Data for both graphs is from the Profile of the American College Student, U of U Data, 2008.



- Debra Daniels, Co-chair Women's Resource Center
- Kari Ellingson, Co-chair Student Development
- Michael Bard, Registrar's Office
- Kajsa Berlin-Kaufusi, Center for Learning Abroad
- Arlyn Bradshaw, Dean of Students Office
- Karen Cone-Uemura, Counseling Center
- Branden Dalley, Union Administration
- Nelly Divricean, International Center
- Kris Fenn, Bennion Center
- Eduardo Galindo, ASUU Student
- Adrienne Howell, TRiO
- Nedra Hotchkins, Graduate Student
- Scott Jensen, Housing & Residential Education

- Trisha Jensen, Orientation & Leadership Development
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- Susan Miller, Campus Recreation
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- Claudia Snow, Union Administration

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