Date: May 15, 2012

To: Bilin Tsai

From: Elias Mokole

Re: Diversity Initiative Award

Diversity Initiative proposal to advance Goal 2 of the UMD Strategic Plan

Title: Inside the Actor’s Studio
Approved Funding: $1,000.00

“Diversity Dialogue...through Concert & Conversation,” took place at noon on Friday, March 30, 2012 in the Tweed Museum of Art Lecture Gallery. The format for the talk was reminiscent of "Inside the Actor’s Studio," and was hosted by Elias Mokole. A reception with light refreshments followed in the Tweed Activity Gallery. The event was well attended, and the event sparked many interesting individual conversations at the reception.

I interviewed the acclaimed black American soprano Geraldine McMillian and pianist David Mayfield as they spoke about their professional and personal journeys. Hearing Geraldine and David tell their stories served as an additional way for faculty, students and the community to gain a better understanding about how to welcome diversity. Q & A followed, where the audience had the opportunity to ask Geraldine specific questions.

Questions/Topics covered

Speak to the importance of study abroad as it relates to aiding one’s cultural competence,

Has McMillian performed music that she felt was racist/discriminatory in some way? What kinds of research does she do to prepare for performances?

What it was like breaking barriers and entering into a euro-centric dominated field/area. Are there specific stories that stick out in your mind? What motivated you to keep going?

A discussion of identity would be useful. Something that gets at the “African American opera singer” versus “opera singer” - how is that for her? Who were some of your role models as you were very young, and then later during your years of preparation?

Were there particular mentors or teachers who had a great deal of influence on you? What have been some of your most memorable performances? Why?

How does she navigate the experience being treated significantly differently by someone before or after they found out she is a talented artist? (e.g. on an airplane, hotel, restaurant etc)