

## Student's civic engagement project benefits first-year black students

IN FALL OF 2002, political science major and Puksta Scholar Ageno Otii initiated the African American Mentorship Program as her civic engagement project. As a freshman, Otii participated in a student-to-student mentorship program through CU's Black Student Alliance and the Boulder-based Institute for African American Leadership where CU students served as mentors to Boulder High School youth.

Inspired by the impact that the program had on the high school students, Otii worked with CU Cultural Unity Center's African American Student Services and her Puksta advisor to develop a student-to-student program for African American students at CU-Boulder. "Students are the best mechanism for retention and recruitment of other students, especially students of underrepresented

groups," says Otii. Nationally, mentorship programs are renowned for producing students who are noted for academic excellence, leadership, social responsibility, and encouraging high retention rates and persistence of students.

At the heart of the African American Mentorship Program are the supportive relationships that students develop with each other. First-year students are mentored by upper-division students who share experiences of being new to the Boulder campus. Through the program, students expand their network of support and broaden their sense of community and connectedness to the Boulder campus. Otii explained that the goals of the program are to show students that they are valuable members of the CU-Boulder campus community, to show them that CU-Boulder is a good place to be, to help

them acculturate to the campus environment, and to promote positive outcomes for African American students.

The African American Mentorship Program is in its second year of operation with 32 faculty and student participants. The next phase of Ageno Otii's Puksta project is to develop a sustainability plan in conjunction with the Cultural Unity Center and the Black Student Alliance. "Black students should play an active role in the recruitment and retention of black students, whether it is going to high schools, participating in the mentorship program, or becoming active in student groups," says Otii. In addition, she would like to expand the philosophy of this student support and retention effort to all underrepresented groups on at CU-Boulder.

## CU-Boulder's best-kept secret: a nationally recognized ceramics program

THE 2003 *U.S. News & World Report* gave high marks to the University of Colorado at Boulder's graduate ceramics program, ranking it ninth in the nation. The program offers both undergraduate—and graduate-level instruction.

According to ceramics Professor Kim Dickey, the course work is a well-balanced mixture of vessel assignments such as pots and vases, and sculptural assignments. A variety of methods and technologies are taught and students have access to the studio 24 hours a day.

"One of the best things about the program is the people," said Caitlin Stone-Bressor, a senior fine arts major. "There are three full-time faculty members—most ceramics programs only have two. It brings an extra bit of personality and diversity to the program."

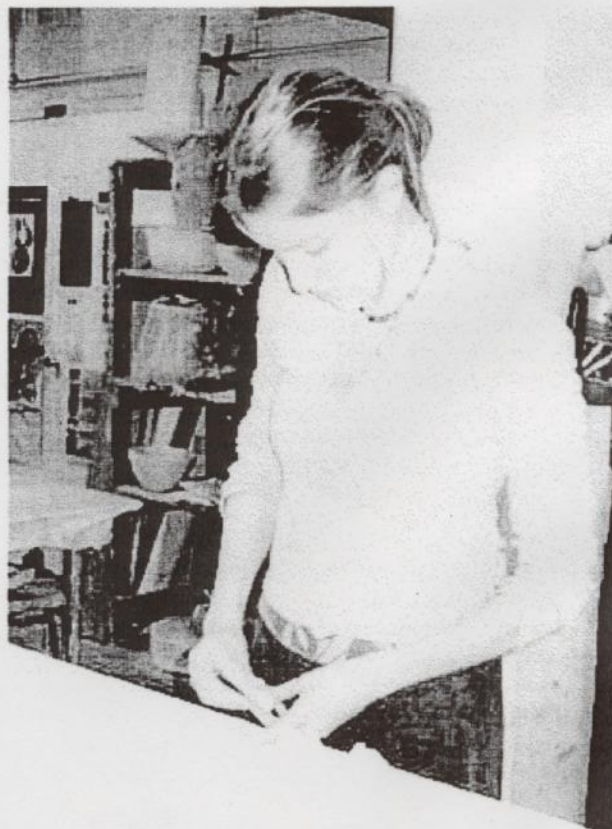
Stone-Bressor also appreciates that the faculty show their own work in national and international exhibitions. Each faculty member has received various awards and grants and has works displayed in museums.

The Student Society of Ceramics also hosts visiting artists to teach studio and seminar classes.

"I can look and look at an artist's work, but to hear them talk about their own process makes a huge difference in understanding my own work and inspiring me," said Stone-Bressor.

In addition to studio and seminar courses for fine arts majors, the ceramics program offers a survey class for non-majors. "It's a nice intro to ceramics and we often have people decide that they want to continue in the program," said Dickey.

For more information on the ceramics program, visit the web page at [www.colorado.edu/arts/areas/areas\\_CE.html](http://www.colorado.edu/arts/areas/areas_CE.html).



Caitlin Stone-Bressor working on a clay project in the ceramics studio.