Kent State also has added an international component to the annual celebration, featuring for the first time a *Festival of Nations*on Friday, Jan. 20, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Kent Student Center Ballroom

Events feature global performances and honor significant contributions to the promotion of diversity

Dr. Marc Lamont Hill, activist, social critic and one of the nation's most notable African-American leaders, will be the keynote speaker at Kent State University's 10th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration on Thursday, Jan. 26, at the Kent Student Center.

The theme for this year's event is "Empowering the Individual, Strengthening the Community,"

and the celebration is free and open to the public.

Hill is an associate professor of English education and anthropology at Columbia University, and is an award-winning newspaper columnist and blogger. He is known for his thoughtful perspectives on everything from sexuality to education and religion. Hill's respected commentary has been featured on NPR, in *The Washington Post*, *Essence* and *The New York Times*, as well as on Fox News where he is a regular contributor.

"Our program this year not only celebrates the life of Dr. King, but also reflects the ideals that he stood for in reference to civil rights and all people being treated the same," said Dr. Geraldine Hayes-Nelson, executive director of Kent State's Diversity Programming and Community Outreach.

A cultural celebration of music, word, and dance will take place on Thursday, Jan. 26, from 1 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. at the Kent Student Center Kiva. The celebration will continue at 2:10 p.m. with a lecture by Hill at the Kent Student Center Ballroom and the Diversity Trailblazer Awards presentation that will recognize contributions to the promotion of diversity. Signing of Hill's book, "Beats, Rhymes and Classroom Life: Hip-Hop Pedagogy and the Politics of Identity," and reception will follow at 4 p.m. on the Ballroom balcony. The book is now available for purchase at the Kent State University Bookstore and it also will be sold from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. on Jan. 26, prior to his speech.

This year, Kent State will begin with a week of pre-celebratory events, starting Tuesday, Jan. 17, with screenings of documentaries and films about King and the civil rights era, and other diversity-related events leading up to the actual campus-wide celebration on Jan. 26.

Kent State also has added an international component to the annual celebration, featuring for the first time a *Festival of Nations* on Friday, Jan. 20, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Kent Student Center Ballroom. The event will educate and celebrate the diversity of Kent State students and showcase a variety of cultural activities from around the world.

"Dr. King's ideals are in line with Kent State's 'you belong here' mantra, which is all about creating an inclusive environment where everyone feels welcome, valued and respected,"

Hayes-Nelson said. “His impact was felt globally, and that is why we feel it is important to involve our international students in our programming this year.”

Registration tables will be available at the Kent Student Center on Jan. 23, 24 and 25 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., for faculty, staff and students interested in signing up for Kent State’s “100 Commitments” initiative that provides learning experiences about diversity and inclusion.

For more information about Kent State’s 10th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration, visit www.kent.edu/diversity/events/events.cfm or call (330) 672-8563.