

African American Cultural Center (AACC) Town Hall Meeting Assessment Feedback

On January 23, 2008, a Town Hall meeting was held to obtain comments on the future programming efforts offered by the African American Cultural Center (AACC). Seventy-eight stakeholders consisting of concerned students, faculty, alumni, and community members completed a written questionnaire. Majority of the stakeholders were aware of the various AACC events due to personal involvement or being informed by others. In fact, many reported that they had attended more than nine AACC sponsored events. Overall, a significant number of individuals indicated that the AACC assisted with their adjustment to Indiana State University (ISU).

Many of the stakeholders view the center as an invaluable resource. Individuals indicated that the center provides them with a sense of belonging and an opportunity to grow professionally. A stakeholder reported that, "I would not have graduated from ISU without the AACC." The center was stated to have culturally and educationally enriched the lives of students. Some reported that the center exposes them to a myriad of cultural events that enhances their learning. For instance, an individual was quoted, "I've never been to a Kwanzaa celebration before until college and I loved it." Another individual indicated that "every time I come here, I learn something new about African American history". Individuals consistently noted that the AACC allows them to socialize with other African American students. This is echoed in the words of stakeholders who stated, "It is a place where Black students can feel like the majority and not the minority." In sum, based on the stakeholders' responses, the AACC is a place where they can develop and nurture themselves culturally, educationally, and personally.

It is evident that many of the stakeholders view the center as a vital organ of Indiana State and the Terre Haute community; however, many offered suggestions for improving services. For instance, some suggested that the center should update its facility (lighting, carpeting, and furniture), technology (computers and smart classroom), an updated library, and an updated website. It was stressed that the AACC's library should be fully integrated to the on-line main library card catalog and that it should become a hub for African-centered research.

Stakeholders believed that the center should increase its visibility at campus wide events. Some indicated that the AACC should be on campus tours during student orientation sessions. Many individuals suggested that visibility could be improved through the use of university

publicity at sponsored events. Specifically, AACC staff members should be available at resource fairs. Moreover, it was strongly suggested that the AACC should develop a newsletter or newspaper to announce events and other relevant information.

Stakeholders reported that there are a number of new program offerings and needs the AACC can fulfill. Stakeholders noted a number of specific programs that the AACC could develop, such as a mock WEB DuBois/Booker T. Washington Debate or a Black history bowl. Furthermore, stakeholders suggested that there is a need for cultural activities that are specific to people of African descent. Additionally, it was indicated that the AACC should develop a program to improve the retention rate among African American students. Some stakeholders reported that the AACC should develop scholarship programs. Alumni presented stated that they would be willing to donate if those funds could be earmarked to specific activities or functions of the AACC.

With regards to racial and social concerns that occur on campus and in the Terre Haute community, many believed that the AACC should be the first line of defense. A stakeholder noted that a “town hall meeting should be held regarding the noose incident that occurred in October 2007. Some suggested that the Affirmative Action and MAPS divisions should be housed in the center. Overall, many urged that the AACC be the first place to report racial incidents and develop actions plan to eradicate racial and social injustices on campus.