

History of B/AACC

1960s

The *Black/African American Cultural Center's* roots are found in the late 1960's as a result of the great societal upheaval in this country. During this time America's social consciousness was lifted as never before. Colorado State University had its share of demonstrations, sit-ins and protests. In 1968, there were approximately forty (40) Black students attending CSU. These students felt that little or no effort was being made to address the racial disparities on campus, so they staged a series of protests to voice their indignation.

Without any Black faculty or staff to advise or support their efforts, these students (many of whom were athletes) jeopardized their scholarships or status on the team for the cause. Ultimately, the demonstrations led to a showdown with university administrators with a sit-in at the office of then CSU President William Morgan. Eventually, President Morgan and his task force accepted the requests from both the Black and Hispanic student coalitions. Some of the components of the requests were courses added to the CSU curriculum such as, Afro-American history, a Black literature class, and a psychology of prejudice class. But the main element that sprung from the campus dissent was further development of a program called, Project GO (Generating Opportunities). This program was a retention and services program designed to assist Colorado State's Black and Hispanic students. Project GO later evolved into what is now the Black/African American Cultural Center and El Centro.

The first director of the Black/African American Cultural Center was Vivian Kerr. Kerr had also been an undergraduate student involved in the protests. It was under her leadership that the office became visible throughout and beyond the university and Fort Collins communities. The office was first located in 205 Aylesworth Hall, and Kerr developed and implemented the paraprofessional support program, currently called CSU's Black Educational Support Team. Kerr also developed the annual fall retreat for new students and office newsletter entitled, The GRIOT. A recruiting committee and the original grant for the Academic Advancement Center (TRIO Program) originated from Kerr. As a result of this, Kerr also became the first Director of the Academic Advancement Center.

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In the spring of 1981, the office welcomed its second director, Dawn R. Person, to Colorado State. It was under her leadership that the office grew by leaps and bounds. During her tenure, the *Black/African American Cultural Center* expanded and diversified its efforts. Many new programs and services were added to the office, including student professional organizations such as Black Cable Television, the Black Business Scholars Association, and an affiliate chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers and Scientists. During this time, the *Black/African American Cultural Center's* Big Brother/Big Sister program was implemented and also the Black Campus Ministries organization. The Recruitment Committee and the Black Alumni Network were further revamped. The beginnings of the historically black fraternities and sororities came to be on the CSU campus with newly created charters. This began with the Nu Xi Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., followed by the establishment of charters for the Xi Eta chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and the Omicron Tau chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. In addition, a multi-faceted student organization entitled S.T.A.N.D. (Students Together Achieving a New Dimension) was created. The organization consisted of a gospel choir, a dance troupe, and a drama troupe. The Ebony Players was the first formalized African American drama troupe to perform on the Colorado State University campus. A roundtable of student organization presidents met on a regular basis with the Director, and this group was entitled SABU (Students Achieving Black Unity). Under Person's leadership, the annual awards and recognition program, Go for the A's, was created as well as the Spring Leadership Retreat for student leaders. It was also during this time that CSU would have its second Black Homecoming Queen, Pamela Williams (the first was Trudi Morrison in the 1960's) and its first Black Homecoming King, Joe Rogers. Administrative Assistants for the office during that time were Juanita Pendergrass and Carmen Harrell.

A Graduate Assistant position was added and the groundwork was laid out for the Black Graduate Student Network. The office intentionally expanded to serve both graduate and undergraduate students. African students were also incorporated into the program and collaborative social activities were sponsored with the Black Graduate Student network and the African Student Association. The Congress of Afro American Students (CAAS), in collaboration with the office, began to bring internationally prominent speakers such as Jesse Jackson, Maya Angelou, Alex Haley, Louis Stokes and Harry Edwards, with co-sponsors from the university at-large and the Fort Collins community. The *Black/African American Cultural Center* coordinated the first annual Martin Luther King, Jr. March, which was the first of its kind in Fort Collins and Larimer County. Hugh Reagan, a prominent trumpeter, was the first to lead the first vigil from Danforth Chapel to the Lory Student Center. The annual fall retreat was expanded and sponsored by all of the diversity offices working together. There was a full day of workshops and programs culminating with a cultural festival. El Centro and the *Black/African American Cultural Center* took the lead on this program with Person planting the seed for the Advocacy Team to model inclusive team programming and support for all students.

In the fall of 1985, the office's third director, Blanche M. Hughes took the reins. Hughes would remain in this position for 13 years (spending 2 of those years on a sabbatical leave, 1990-1992). This has been the longest tenure of any director. During her tenure, the office was taken to greater heights. Under Hughes' leadership the following programs were implemented: the annual Kwanzaa celebration, the implementation of the Black Student Leadership Development Institute (now the Albert C. Yates Leadership Development Institute), the African American Success Project Seminars, campus-wide diversity training, and the multicultural curriculum infusion project. In addition, it was Hughes who implemented programs to provide academic support and role modeling to student-athletes. Hughes was also instrumental in implementing the Southern University Exchange program for undergraduate students in working with the *Black/African American Cultural Center*. The annual awards program was expanded during these years to include corporate sponsorships and presentations of the souvenir Kente stoles for graduates. It was also during this time that the *Black/African American Cultural Center* had its first Assistant Director, Cheryl Booker (who was previously the Administrative Assistant). The historically black Greek-lettered organization Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. became an officially recognized chapter on campus. It was under Hughes' leadership that the office celebrated its 20th Anniversary by bringing back all the past Directors and Assistant Directors. The theme, "The Lives you Touched," also encouraged alumni to return to campus. The Educational Enhancement Program, a program designed for college students to tutor K-12 children in reading, was implemented as well as the Monthly "Soul Food Chats," which included speakers and a soul food taster during the noon hour. The student organization, Black History Month Organization (BHMO), was created to enhance student involvement in Black History Month planning. Hughes also worked collaboratively with the Office of Admissions to create a 3-day event for Black high school students, the Black Issues Forum (BIF). High school juniors from across the country visit the campus and discuss issues that impact the African American community.

1990s

Many prominent individuals came to the CSU campus to celebrate Black History Month including: Nikki Giovanni, Terry McMillan, Susan Taylor, Bertice Berry, Cornell West, CSU alumnus John Amos, and Phillip Bailey from Earth Wind & Fire. But perhaps the most critical change that happened during Hughes' tenure was the move of the *Black/African American Cultural Center* from 205 Aylesworth Hall to its present location in the Lory Student Center in 1997. During Hughes' sabbatical leave from 1989-1991, Bruce Small served as Director. The Assistant Director was Aswad Allen and Cecilia Bessette was the Administrative Assistant. During his tenure, Small focused on making the university more multicultural. Through his efforts, events like the MLK March and Black History Month became more prominent campus-wide and city-wide events. From 1993-1996, Duane McCadden was the Assistant Director and was replaced in 1996 by Jerry Smith. Blanche Hughes left the University in June of 1998, and CSU alumna Jennifer Williams Molock began her tenure bringing the office into the new millennium.

1990s

2000s to Present

2000s to Present

Molock continued with the many programs and services already set in place by the previous directors. The peer mentoring program was renamed, CSU's B.E.S.T., an acronym for Black Educational Support Team. In addition, Molock and Assistant Director Kent Smith (who joined the office in 1999), created a junior/senior capstone seminar utilizing the African American Success Project format. In February of 2001, the Black Student Leadership Development Institute was renamed after the University's 12th president and 1st African American to lead the University and the Colorado State University System, Dr. Albert C. Yates. The office honored Dr. Yates at a Black History Month closing ceremony, tribute, "A Decade of Excellence." The office was instrumental in having the Office of the Lt. Governor (alumnus Joe Rogers) name Albert C. Yates Day in the State of Colorado while Mayor Ray Martinez named February 28, 2001 as Albert C. Yates Day in the City of Fort Collins. The Leadership Development Institute is now named the Albert C. Yates Leadership Development Institute. In addition, Molock re-created the former big brother/big sister program (which she created as a practicum student during her undergraduate years at CSU), renaming the program M.A.T.C.H. Mentoring-Advising-Teaching-Caring-Helping. The program was a collaborative project between the *Black/African American Cultural Center* and Partners of Larimer County. Dr. Molock also re-implemented the Black Alumni Reunions, consisting of an all-class reunion to be held every other year while constituent reunions are held in the alternating years in between. This was a collaborative project with the Office of Alumni Relations. Molock added the outstanding student staff member, students with the highest cumulative grade point averages, and 4.0 awards to the annual awards program. In addition, she added the Special Friends Awards, which is presented to individuals on campus and in the community who demonstrated exceptional support to the office. In 2003, the "Honoring Our Own: Pillar of Excellence" Award was created to honor an outstanding African American in the Fort Collins community. The first recipient was Dr. William E. Sims, Professor Emeritus of CSU. It was also during Molock's tenure that Ruben "Hurricane" Carter and writer Jim Hirsch filled Moby Arena. This was a collaborative program with the Jewish Student Organization, (((Hillel))). This event became the catalyst for the 2002-2003 Bridges to the Future Program sponsored by Colorado State University and the University of Denver. Although Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated has had a significant CSU presence since the early 1980's, a charter was created in April of 2003. The Tau Lambda Chapter is a shared charter between Colorado State University and the University of Northern Colorado. Molock also developed and implemented the Rites of Passage program, a program whose intention is to improve the academic performance and retention rate of African American first year students. The Sophomore Year Experience program, the second year component of Rites of Passage was also a programmatic effort created by Molock to enhance and increase the retention rate of African American students. Margaret (Mollie) Rollins, a former participant in the original big brother/big sister program and CSU alumna, served as Assistant Director. Kieran D. Coleman, a Ph.D. candidate, served as the Interim Assistant Director from November 2002 until July 2003. Theresa T. Grangruth became the Administrative Assistant in June 2001, and lived in the Fort Collins community for almost twenty years before her departure to Minnesota in October 2007. James White IV, who is also a CSU alum, served as an Interim Assistant Director and in June of 2004, Anthony (T.D.) Daniels served as Assistant Director until June 2005. For the 2005-2006 year, Lydia Kellow served in a one year appointment as the Interim Assistant Director. Marcus Elliott joined the staff in the fall of 2006 as Assistant Director, and later began an appointment of Interim Director in October 2008, due to Molock's departure to the University of Utah. Alfreda Whaley served as Administrative Assistant from November 2007 until her resignation in June 2011. The office saw its 6th director, Bruce Smith, begin his duties at CSU in July 2009 after arriving from the University of Arizona; however he left in July 2010 to pursue an opportunity at Reed College in Portland, OR. In October 2010, Bridgette Johnson began her appointment as B/AACC's 7th director. Many of the programs and services that were implemented under the leadership of each director are still in place and continue to be enhanced. The programs that no longer exist in their original or enhanced format include: the recruiting committee (although B/AACC continues to work closely with the Office of Admissions), Black Cable Television, Black Campus Ministries (Fort Collins' Abyssinian Christian Church originated from this student organization with a large percentage of black members), and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration is now under the leadership of Campus Activities and the planning committee is co-chaired with the B/AACC director. The Southern University Exchange program has been discontinued due to administrative leadership changes at Southern. However, efforts are being made to re-establish the exchange program with Southern or another historically Black college or university. As of September 2011, the Black Graduate and Professional Student Association (BGPSA) has been revived and continues to be a strong closely-knit community. As the *Black/African American Cultural Center* begins its 36th year of service to the university and Fort Collins community, it continues to provide a "safe-haven" and home away from home for all students in general, and African American students in particular.

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