

“The Ground on Which We Stand”

Submitted by the respective communities of color

Introduction:

The purpose of this document is to appoint the utilization of organizations with a dedicated mission to serving their respective communities of color a space within the Multicultural Center. As it stands, there fails to be a clear statement or initiative that highlights this need. It is imperative that the organizations which serve communities of color be present and have office space allocated to utilize within this Multicultural Center both to be able to function on a higher level than already present and also to serve as a lightning rod to organize and gather the thoughts, needs and opinions of the respective groups on campus. In short, our organizations (Black Student Union, Native American Student Alliance, Latino Student Association and South Asian Student Association/Asian Pacific Alliance, etc.) will be left to the new campus center when it's finished and this leads to a further disconnect and more displacement.

Since November 2nd, 2006 Indianapolis University-Purdue University-Indianapolis has had a microscope placed firmly above its urban landscape. As an institution whose primary vocation was and is promoting diversity, attention to a lack there of; along with issues of equity and inclusion were raised by black students who made up a movement forever known as *The Black Student Initiative*. The BSI highlighted several key factors on campus directly related to feelings of exclusivity and provisional equity throughout administrative entities including: Communication, Respect, Support, Funding and perhaps the most important of which; the issue of **Cultural Competency**.

“A Black Student Center to house an area for African American culture, an office that advocates for Black student affairs (consisting of qualified Black faculty and staff), an office for Black Student Union, and an office for the IUPUI-National Pan Hellenic Council.”

-“Through Our Eyes” November 2nd, 2006

In the wake of these reasonable demands, the result has been the formation of a Multicultural Center. To develop this Multicultural Center several committees have been formed to facilitate a much needed change, the first of which was a Multicultural Center Concept Committee, and later a Multicultural Center Implementation Committee. From the first committee a powerful preamble and proposal was created that had valued input from faculty, staff and students and brings up the same needs expressed in the “Through Our Eyes” document.

In the preamble of the MCC proposal, the argument is solidified for the need for cultural competency and the inclusion of historically marginalized ethnic groups in our community.

“It is the committee’s view that the concept of the proposed multicultural center should emphasize “inclusion and focus”. The ‘inclusive’ element would mean that the center

would be one that encompasses all elements of cultural diversity present on campus (e.g. African American, Native American, Latino, Asian Pacific Americans, GLBT, women, and people with disabilities). The focus element is needed to address critical needs and issues related to persons of color on campus, e.g. African Americans, Latino/Hispanics, Asian Americans and Native Americans. Examples of important needs are not limited to the crisis of African American Male retention, the paucity of African Americans, Latino and Native American tenure-track / tenured faculty and under-representation of Asian American faculty and students in the humanities. The needs of both inclusiveness and focus are necessary so as to address contentious discussions in the academy around either one or the other concept.”

-Multicultural Center Concept Development Committee Preamble (2007)

Furthermore the Multicultural Center Concept Development Committee proposal highlighted several points:

Vision

- *The MC will function as a resource center and clearinghouse for materials, visual media, and publications that speak to the experiences of diverse groups in higher education,...*
- *The MC will provide a space for creating partnerships internally to strengthen collaborations among students and student-faculty relationships.*
- *The MC will be comprised of multiple units, each dedicated to African Americans, Latino/Hispanics, Asian Americans and Native Americans, GLBTs and women, **directly including, but not limited to**, the student organizations that serve the communities of color both on and off campus.*

***Clarifying Details re: “multiple units” within the MC:*

- *Identifiable space must be dedicated for a specific community of students – a space that is a welcoming, culturally affirming, and imparts a sense of ownership in response to the Diversity Performance Indicators. In keeping with a theme of “inclusion with focus,” the dedicated spaces will include those established for African American, Latino/Hispanic American, Native American, and Asian Pacific Islander American communities at IUPUI.*
- *The dedicated spaces will be proximal to each other and serve as a “counterspace” in order to foster inter-cultural conversations and programming, e.g., identifying and raising awareness of common experiences/issues as students of color at predominantly white institutions. (The term, “counterspace,” is a concept discussed in Critical Race Theory and can be found in such resources as Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. (2001). Critical Race Theory: An Introduction and Solórzano, D.G., Ceja, M. & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students.*

-Multicultural Center Concept Development Committee Proposal (2007)

As of Tuesday, November 6th, at the State of the Campus Address, Chancellor Charles R. Bantz announced that the Multicultural Center will be housed in University College. The notion of a black cultural center has been ignored for the more inclusive model of a multicultural center. This is acceptable and welcomed in respect to the challenges made by the Black Student Initiative, however only if it does not negate the recommendations made by the Multicultural Center Concept Development Committee.

It is imperative that organizations who serve historically marginalized communities of color have dedicated space within the multicultural center of IUPUI. The Preamble and Proposal put together by the MCCDC indicated that “the center should serve as an external ‘bridge’ to the community comprised of the units who already serve those historically marginalized at our institution.

This statement directly applies to the INCLUSION of Black Student Union, Latino Student Association and Native American Student Alliance at IUPUI. The three aforementioned groups have a dedicated mission to provide cultural programming, raise awareness and be the voice of our respective communities.

Resources:

Although the Campus Center will contain the various services of the Multimedia Production Center, Campus and Community Life, Undergraduate Student Government and Student Activities Programming Board. It is the opinion of the stakeholders in of historically marginalized communities that these services do not outweigh the need to be in close proximity to our REAL resources.

- The Sankofa Room
- Dr. Turner
- *Cultural Arts Gallery* (see inconsistency)

Form and Function:

The Campus Center’s Student Organization space contains desks which do little to accommodate an organization of the stature and magnitude of our key stakeholders. In our existing conditions, student organizations are afforded a desktop computer with security protection enabled, a desk with space for folder storage, desk drawers and a rolling chair. In addition, there is ample wall and/or ledge space to display our display boards, banners, awards and posters or flyers to advertise our various events. Not to mention our fundraising or community service donation bins in which we collect various items for the benefit of non-for-profit entities. A move to the campus center would eliminate our ability to not only have these aforementioned items on display, but hinder us from congregating and conducting business at various times throughout the day as we are now accustomed to doing. A move would directly impede the progress of our organization and in turn handicap a service and grassroots resource to the black community.

As it stands, Black Student Union is the umbrella organization for all other black organizations, a collective well on its way to being an established force in the fight against social injustice. The Jena 6 Rally hosted by the Black Student Union raised funds for the Jena 6 Defense Fund and gathered over 4000 signatures in petition and protest of unfair treatment and bias prosecution in Jena, Louisiana. Black Student Union holds regular AIDS testing twice a month in an ongoing “Fight AIDS” campaign and holds regular study tables for its membership

This defines groups of this stature as more than mere “student organizations”, these organizations serve as communication conduits for social change and therefore need space that will foster growth and efficacy to better not only IUPUI, but the surrounding Indianapolis urban community. This necessitates not only a space to display visual culture, but also a space large enough for synergy to continue.

Key Stakeholders:

Black Student Union

Student African American Brotherhood
Student African American Sisterhood
African Student Association
National Pan-Hellenic Council
Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.
Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.
Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.
Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.
National Society of Black Engineers

Latino Student Association

Dos Cultures

Native American Student Alliance

Black Student Union

IN RECOGNITION OF THE NEED FOR AN ORGANIZATION TO MEET THE ACADEMIC, POLITICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL, AND SOCIAL NEEDS OF BLACK STUDENTS; DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A POSITIVE RACIAL IDENTITY AMONG BLACKS ON THIS CAMPUS AND THE INDIANAPOLIS COMMUNITY; TO PROMOTE SELF-AWARENESS, COMMUNAL SENSITIVITY AND ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AMONG BLACKS; AND TO ASSIST IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP, COMMUNITY UPLIFT AND ARTICULATION OF THE GENERAL CONCERNS OF ALL STUDENTS AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY-PURDUE UNIVERSITY AT INDIANAPOLIS.

The purpose of the Black Student Union shall be to bring about a union of university students, faculty, staff and alumni of similar high ideals of academic achievement, leadership, and community uplift in order.

- To stimulate the attainment of similar high ideals and achievement among members and nonmembers;
- To assist its members in the achievement of their academic and career goals;
- To encourage and foster programs of special interest to black students, IUPUI, and the black community;

- To cooperate with appropriate university administrators in the development of such programs;
- To operate in a progressive, helpful and constructive manner in the university and Indianapolis communities;
- To prepare its members for greater usefulness in the causes of humanity, freedom, and dignity of the individual;
- To aid oppressed humanity in its continuing efforts to advance socially, economically and intellectually

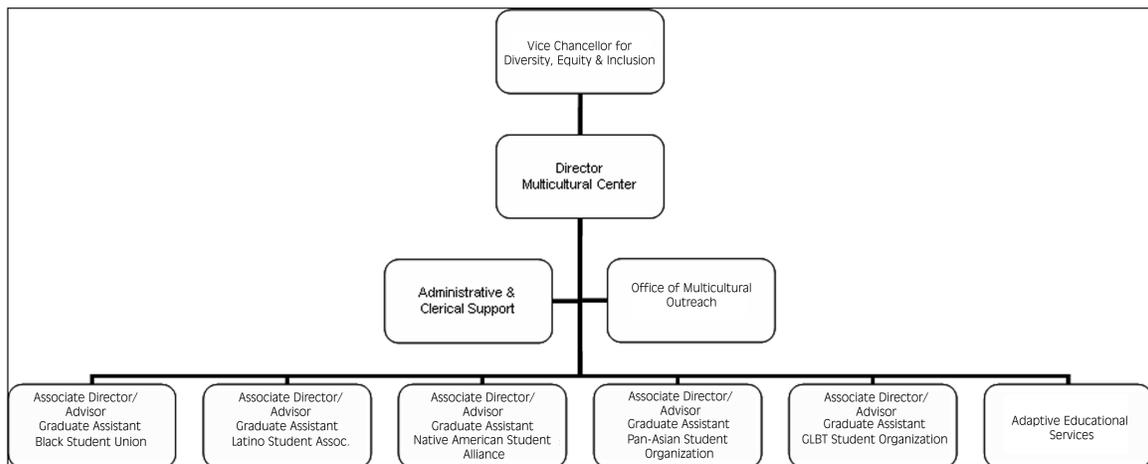
Latino Student Association:

The primary goal of the Latino Student Association is to unify the diverse Latino students at IUPUI in the desire to promote academic excellence in our community and the pride that accompanies the knowledge of self. In this, we embrace all those who are interested in promoting the diversity in our cultures and languages. We are founded in the hopes that by the provision of both social and education opportunities for the IUPUI community, we shall foster understanding of Latino Heritage.

Native American Student Alliance

Identify IUPUI students with an interest in Native American Studies/Culture and offer a Native American community and service base on campus.

Organizational chart devised by students:



Peer Institutions:

Cleveland State University
University of Washington
Wayne State University
University of Massachusetts – Boston
University of Alabama
Virginia Commonwealth University
University of Missouri – St. Louis

Closing:

Is IUPUI Committed to Diversity?

"Using education to develop the potential of all students, faculty and staff for their personal, social, and professional advancement;" –Diversity Mission

"Increase the diversity within the senior leadership."-Diversity Goal Objective

- A. Promote culturally competent practice. **(Black Student Union, Latino Student Association, Native American Student Alliance epitomize culturally competent practice)**
- B. Enhance programs and activities that increase the understanding of diversity. **(These same organizations put on 90 to 100% of all cultural programming for the purpose of enhancing and understanding diversity and have a historic mission to do so)**
- C. Provide curricular, co-curricular and interdisciplinary activities that increase the ability of students to recognize their own cultural traditions and to understand and appreciate the diversity of the human experience, both within the United States and internationally. –Diversity Goal Objective **(These organizations provide both educational and social activities that cross disciplines and culture lines, highlighting not only the diversity on our campus but within our own individual affinity groups)**

Commitment is more than what a person or party says or transcribes, it is however action over rhetoric which this university has failed to demonstrate. Commitment has three components- time, action and transfer of revenue. For a person, party or entity to be committed to an initiative, goal or relationship there must be an equitable share of time between both parties. There has been no time spent in establishing common goal with the communities of color at IUPUI. This is made evident by the fact that there are two separate ideals for how the Multicultural Center is to be designed, conceived and operated. There has to be time to foster an equal-shared relationship that will bring trust and honesty to the collaboration. With time spent, comes action towards the collaborative common goal. Since this time spent has not occurred, there is no faith within the constituency that this or any committee can conceive a cohesive multicultural center. When it comes to a transfer of revenue, in the case of IUPUI there is no equitable commitment to diversity. This point is highlighted by the fact that there is no earmarked funding for cultural organizations who serve this campus to promote diversity and cultural competency outside of campus programs. There is no institutional, financial backing or support for programs that specifically affect the retention and graduation of

underrepresented minorities. The invisible/visible truth of the situation is, when it comes to the transfer or exchange of revenue, IUPUI has done nothing.

In closing, we the student communities of color represented in this document believe there is no commitment on the part of the university in regards to the development and academic success of underrepresented minorities. The development of a multicultural center is paramount to the efficacy of any of these communities, and we feel as though any center will not find purpose on this campus without equitable amenities for Black Student Union, Latino Student Association, Native American Student Alliance (and subsequent groups for Pan-Asian and GLBT communities) to conduct business on a professional level. We were designed to do what your commitment to diversity entails. To not include us in a professional capacity within this center would be an extreme disservice to this campus and will be taken as an insult. It is our challenge to you to take this document as our proposal for the concept of a multicultural center to work in tandem with the concept committee's report.

Sincerely and in collaboration with the student organizations represented in this document,

Dominic Dorsey II
President of Black Student Union